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Ballads, Culture and Performance in England 1640-1660

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BALLADS, CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE IN ENGLAND 1640-1660

by

SARAH PAGE WISDOM

Under the Direction of Jacob Selwood

ABSTRACT

Ballads published during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum were a uniquely potent cultural medium. Ballad authors and publishers used the tools of format and genre, music, and available discourses to translate contentious topics into a form of entertainment. The addition of music to what would otherwise have been merely another form of cheap print allowed ballads to be incorporated into many parts of daily life, through oral networks as well as through print and literacy. Ballads and their music permeated all levels of society and therefore the ideas presented in ballads enjoyed a broad audience. Because any given ballad was subject to repeated performances, its meaning was recreated with each performance. Performances of ballads published in the 1640s and 1650s created a vision of an imaginary England of the past, and projected hope that this past would be restored in the future.

INDEX WORDS: Ballads, English Civil Wars and Interregnum, Literacy, Music, Orality

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DEDICATION

To Dave

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Chapter One

Introduction

God prosper long our noble King,
 Our lives and safeties all,
 A woeful hunting once there did,
 In Chevy Chase befall.

...

God save the King and bless the land,
 With plenty joy and peace,
 And grant henceforth that foul debate,
 'Twixt noblemen may cease.¹

These are the opening and closing lines of the popular English ballad *The Unhappy Hunting in Chevy Chase*. Though the edition of the ballad cited here was published in 1650, versions of the Chevy Chase ballad had been in print for at least a century, and oral versions potentially existed prior to that.² What is noteworthy about the lines that bookend the story of *Chevy Chase* is that they would have been relevant at any time in English history when a king was on the throne, despite the fact that *Chevy Chase* was an apocryphal story about an incident that occurred centuries before 1650.

When this particular edition of the ballad was printed however, there was no king on the throne of England. Charles I had been executed the previous year, and the English government was now in the hands of Parliament and the New Model Army. Given this context it is provocative to consider how an English man or woman would have understood lines such as these that evoked the peace, prosperity, and harmony apparently enjoyed under the rule of the Crown.

¹ Anon., *The Unhappy Hunting in Chevy Chase* (London, 1650), single page. I have chosen to modernize the spelling and various archaic grammatical elements (such as contractions and capitalizations) found in the sources used throughout this paper. However, I have not altered the actual words or syntax in any way.

² Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19-20.

By 1640 ballads were an omnipresent form of entertainment in England. Topics treated in ballads ranged from the sacred to the profane, from moralistic tales to raucous drinking songs. As censorship rapidly disintegrated in the early 1640s, ballads that explicitly dealt with current events proliferated, along with all manner of printed material. Harsh satirical and polemical language was a main feature of these ballads. Ballad authors and printers drew from elements of many established conventions of form and genre to heighten the critical or satiric tone.

This study argues that ballads were a uniquely potent cultural medium. Because ballads were used for popular entertainment, the discourses about contemporary political and religious controversies contained in them pervaded culture more so than messages contained in other kinds of print. The authors, printers, and publishers of ballads could convey meaning through a variety of tools: manipulation of a ballad's form and genre; use of music; and the images and tropes of language. Because early modern people most frequently experienced political authority through texts, the manipulation of the forms, genres, and discourses in ballads challenged textual authority and by extension indirectly challenged political authority. Ballad music, which was popular with those from elite and popular ranks, provided a point of unity between elite and popular cultures and helped to span the divide between oral and print cultures. Because any given ballad was subject to repeated performances, the meaning of a ballad was reestablished with each performance of a ballad. Among other things, the performances of ballads published in the 1640s and 1650s created an imaginary England. This was a place in which each singer or hearer of a ballad could project a personal and idealistic vision of the future. These visionary futures were constructed upon memories of an idyllic past and their realizations were dependant upon the restoration of this imagined past order.

Ballads and Print Culture in Historiography

Ballads represent only a small section of the larger topic of early modern print culture. Before examining ballads, it is helpful to place them in the larger body of scholarship on print culture in early modern England. Scholars like David Cressy have studied print and literacy broadly. Cressy provided an extensive overview of literacy in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. His study included pedagogical methods for teaching reading and writing, and quantitative analyses of literacy among various social groups in different geographic locations.³ Other scholars have analyzed print culture and its connection to Protestantism. Ian Green explored the link between print culture and the spread and communication of Protestantism and offered an encyclopedic look at all types of Protestant publications from bibles to sermons, catechisms, and religious ballads.⁴ Tessa Watt has examined the interplay of longstanding oral tradition with the new culture of cheap print, and how both interacted with the rise of Protestantism.⁵ These scholars studied large trends, but, with the exception of Watt, did not investigate the usefulness of cheap print in understanding cultural change among non-elites.

Other scholars have focused specifically on ways print culture fostered debates in an emerging public sphere. Jesse Lander has examined the creation of a polemical literature that was unique to early modern England. This polemical style developed from the religious debates coming out of the English Reformation together with improved print technology. Lander argued that this style of literature declined after the Restoration in 1660, which brought a more measured and courteous style of literature.⁶ Joad Raymond and Jason Peacey both have focused on one

³ David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴ Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵ Watt, *Cheap Print*.

⁶ Jesse Lander, *Inventing Polemic: Religion, Print, and Literary Culture in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

type of polemical literature, the pamphlet. Raymond discussed the craft of polemic as it developed in pamphlets, while Peacey examined the production of propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum through an analysis of the relationships between politicians, pamphlet writers, and print.⁷ Also dealing with the English Civil War and Interregnum, David Norbrook found that republican ideals in literature can be traced back long before the start of the English Civil Wars.⁸ These scholars focused on a specific style of print culture, the polemic, and on one genre of cheap print, the pamphlet. However, they did not examine the ballad as polemical tool, or the significance of the ballad in the context of the English Civil Wars and Interregnum.

Outside of folklorists, few scholars have focused their studies on the early modern English ballad. Natascha Würzbach, who studied English popular ballads published between 1550 and 1650, examined the ballad as a form of text, and specifically argued that the “street ballad” (or cheap broadside ballad) is a genre worthy of study.⁹ Her ultimate goal was to “discover the differential criteria which mark the English street ballad as a genre which comprised the mass of broadsides.”¹⁰ Würzbach also explored the ballad-seller’s role as mediator between text and audience, and argued for the importance of the “street” ballad as a mode of popular communication. Würzbach’s work provided valuable textual insights; this study complements hers by examining the aural aspect of ballads and the interstitial place between oral and print culture that ballads occupied.

⁷ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda and the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited).

⁸ David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁹ Natascha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad, 1550-1650*, trans. Gayna Walls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Würzbach, *English Street Ballad*, 9-10.

Dianne Dugaw focused her attention on a character that recurred in many popular ballads: the warrior woman.¹¹ By 1650 the story of the warrior woman had developed into a predictable narrative that was present in all subsequent ballads in this genre. In the quintessential plot, the heroine in love left her father's house, and, disguised as a man, went off to battle. After withstanding many trials as a man, she finally tested her lover's faithfulness to her. Her adventures ended when she married and readopted female clothing. The warrior woman fought for love (as a woman) and glory (as a man). Depending on her disguise, she adopted the "proper" actions and motivations of her assumed gender. Dugaw suggested that these stories were popular because audiences understood the "grammar" of gender, or in other words, saw gender as a cultural construction, not a biological imperative. As understandings of gender changed in the nineteenth century to a system based on biology, stories of warrior women also changed, the characters becoming weak to the point of ineffectiveness. Slowly these stories waned in popularity. Dugaw's study is evidence that ballads were an important medium for expressing cultural concerns, and that they carried information about larger cultural elements.

Historian Tessa Watt devoted a significant portion of *Cheap Print and Popular Piety* to a study of the religious broadside ballad.¹² Continuing Margaret Spufford's work on chapbooks, Watt traced the evolution of the ballad from 1550 to 1640, focusing in particular on the cultural significance of the new Protestant religion as it was represented in ballads.¹³ Watt found that, contrary to previous historical orthodoxy, Protestantism did not completely transform popular culture or abolish the importance of images. Instead, Protestant ideals and Catholic traditions

¹¹ Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹² Watt, *Cheap Print*, Part I.

¹³ Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1981).

slowly blended together in popular culture, as ballads and images began to represent a Christian culture that was no longer Catholic, but was also not definitively Protestant. Thus for Watt, ballads, along with other forms of cheap print such as woodcuts and chapbooks, bridged the gap between literacy and illiteracy, and mediated between old and new ideas.¹⁴

More recent studies of ballads include Robin Ganev's work on eighteenth century English ballads.¹⁵ Though her period of study was later than that of my focus, it is useful to note one aspect of Ganev's work. For Ganev, ballads were "an expression of a popular voice, and represent[ed] one aspect of a rural labouring [sic] identity broadly defined."¹⁶ Thus, according to Ganev, ballads were a forum for the expression of identity. Additionally, Ganev found that the ballad as an expression of identity became more important as rural agricultural identity was threatened. Ballads then were important for establishing identities and areas of shared values among groups of people.

Orality and Performativity

Ballads are significant to the historical record not only because they were one of the most available forms of print, but also because they were accessible to those who could not read or purchase them. Most ballads were printed as one page broadsides, which cost approximately a penny in 1641.¹⁷ At this price most people could purchase at least the occasional broadside. However, it was the performance of ballads that made them accessible in aural form to potentially every man, woman, and child. Watt described how peripatetic tradesmen and

¹⁴ Watt, *Cheap Print*.

¹⁵ Robin Ganev, *Songs of Protest, Songs of Love: Popular Ballads in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Ganev, 2.

¹⁷ Watt, *Cheap Print*, 11.

“masterless” men such as peddlers, minstrels, and ballad singers sold and performed ballads throughout all of England.¹⁸ Additionally, printed ballads adorned the walls of inns and taverns where they were also sung. Because hearing, reading, and performing ballads was an ordinary part of life for many English men and women, the study of these ballads is vital for the historian of popular culture.

Ballads also formed a connection between long-standing oral traditions and newer print culture. On one hand, illiterate people could experience and interact with print culture through the public performance of ballads. On the other hand, many ballads that descended from oral tradition eventually found their way into print. Because the “experience of print for many ordinary people may have been a public and communal one,” it is possible to conclude that in these circumstances “the clear boundaries between oral and literate culture would have been blurred.”¹⁹ Tessa Watt found this to be the case in her study of the evolution of religious ballads after the English Reformation.²⁰ A person who could not read could still participate in a form of literacy by listening to a ballad, learning the words, and then repeating the ballad with his or her own additions. This method also allowed people during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum to negotiate with discourses presented in ballads dealing with current religious and political themes.²¹

Manuscript libels were a cultural form where print culture, oral tradition, and ballads converged. A manuscript libel was a set of verses, typically crude and scandalous, that excoriated an important political or religious figure. Because libels were illegal, the author or

¹⁸ Watt, *Cheap Print*, 11-38.

¹⁹ Jonathan Barry, “Literacy and Literature in Popular Culture: Reading and Writing in Historical Perspective,” in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1995), 82.

²⁰ See part 1 of Watt, *Cheap Print*.

²¹ For a thorough study of how oral tradition worked in early modern England and how it interacted with print culture, see Adam Fox, “Remembering the Past in Early Modern England: Oral and Written Tradition,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999): pp. 233-256.

distributor copied the verses by hand and circulated them surreptitiously, either leaving them in public places or handing them out in a crowd. The manuscript libel was a piece of ephemera that was nearly impossible for authorities to trace back to the perpetrator. A person caught with one in his or her possession could conveniently claim to have simply picked it up somewhere.²²

According to Thomas Cogswell, libels in verse form (as opposed to prose) were most effective because ordinary people could fit them to a tune, and then orally transmit them through music.²³

While a manuscript libel was not a ballad or even necessarily a song, it occasionally functioned and was transmitted like one. Thus, although a libel was a written item, its dissemination depended at least as much on traditional oral culture networks as on newer literary methods. It seems reasonable to make similar claims about the transmission of ballads.

The value of ballads as a source for historians comes partly from their cheapness and ubiquity and partly from their easy accessibility to a wide range of English men and women. Ballads were both a private and communal form of entertainment, and would have been repeated multiple times each so that the audience could learn them. Therefore, ballads also had a performative component. This makes them valuable for the historian, because each performance of a ballad could create a new meaning, could reemphasize a meaning that was previously established, or could alter the meaning of a ballad.

Cheap print, oral culture and modes of literacy all existed within a larger category, which scholars often label “popular culture.” Images of uneducated, illiterate peasants hover around the term “popular,” while anything from ballads to beer to Shakespeare make up the nebulous term

²² For an explanation and discussion of manuscript libels see Thomas Cogswell, “Underground Verse and the Transformation of Early Stuart Political Culture,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no.3, The Remapping of English Political History, 1500-1640 (1997): 303-326; Alastair Bellany, “Singing Libel in Early Stuart England: The Case of the Staines Fiddlers, 1627,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69, no.1, “Railing Rhymes”: Politics and Poetry in Early Stuart England (2006):177-193.

²³ Cogswell, “Underground Verse,” 310.

“culture.” For these reasons and many more, “popular culture,” is a contentious term for scholars. This current study sits squarely in the realm of popular culture, and its themes address various aspects often contained within it. Therefore it is necessary to examine some of the recent scholarly definitions of “popular culture,” and then discuss how the term will be used, defined, and understood to work in this study.

The Ballad and “popular” culture

The term “popular culture” is problematic first and foremost because it contains a large group of assumptions about how the early modern world worked and who early modern people were. “Popular” implies the majority of the early modern population, or any person who was not a member of the elite or the clergy. This moniker insinuates that “popular” people were uneducated (or at best poorly educated) and largely impoverished peasants whose daily experiences were essentially the same, despite differences in such things as geographic locations, occupation, and education level. Similarly, “culture” can imply that all people in the area of study shared a hegemonic set of values, customs, and rituals. Thus the term “popular culture” often suggests that with the exception of the nobility and clergy, early modern people were a unified group that participated in a static culture.

A second serious problem with the term “popular culture” is that it sets up a dichotomous system, with elite culture on one hand and popular culture on the other. While elite culture engages with and responds to the latest academic developments, popular culture remains the same as ever, stubbornly resisting change and innovation. Here too elite culture is superior to and more important than popular culture. Popular culture is whimsical, illogical, and not the stuff of serious study. Clearly neither of these extremes is accurate, and in recent decades scholars have

come to see popular culture as a valuable area of study and have moved away from simplistic understandings of the term “popular”. Nevertheless older cultural studies have sometimes fallen into these traps and scholars today still struggle to avoid them.

In light of these problems, scholars have long debated several aspects of popular culture: what it is; how it can or should be defined; how scholars can study it; and if they can study it at all. Peter Burke, a pioneer in the field of early modern European cultural history, identified a division between popular and elite cultures and argued that members of the elite could participate in both popular culture and elite culture, while members of the non-elite could only participate in popular culture. Burke found examples of change within popular culture and therefore argued against the idea that popular culture was static. Burke argued that a rift developed between popular and elite cultures which widened over the course of the early modern period as authorities attempted to reform popular practices and elites increasingly distained them.²⁴

Martin Ingram challenged Burke’s depiction of a growing chasm between elite and popular cultures, and instead suggested that there remained areas of shared culture even in the eighteenth century. In his study of charivaris and similar rituals, Ingram showed that members of all groups of society participated in these rituals in various ways, and though groups such as the Puritans attempted to suppress charivaris, many elite patrons and law officials continued at least to allow them, and sometimes even to encourage or participate in them.²⁵ This evidence demonstrated that “although charivaris might at times appear indecorous and disorderly, fundamentally they made conceptual, moral and social sense to the majority of contemporaries of

²⁴ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

²⁵ Martin Ingram, “Ridings, Rough Music and the "Reform of Popular Culture" in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 105 (November 1984): 79-113

whatever social rank, and hence were unlikely to come under severe attack.”²⁶ In other words, all members of society did share certain values and concepts of society, whether they fell into the “popular” or “elite” group.

Uncertainty ensued due to the conflicting ideas of popular culture present in these studies. Bob Scribner assessed the state of the historical study of popular culture and expressed scholarly anxiety over the field in the title of his article “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?”²⁷ One of Scribner’s concerns was that the true voice of popular culture is difficult to identify and extricate from the types of sources that are available as these sources more often reflect the voice and authority of a member of the elite. Scribner suggested that perhaps it would be more authentic to focus on studies of material culture and the rhythms of daily life. Additionally, “we should approach cultures such as that of early modern Europe as functional wholes” rather than dividing culture into arbitrary categories.²⁸ However, each “functional whole” contained many groups and sub-groups that could oppose or overlap each other. The resulting “stratification of culture is determined by many things, but above all it is determined by the distribution and exercise of power.”²⁹ Thus, according to Scribner, the formation of the cultural groups that made up a “functional whole” culture were the symptoms of and reactions to the working of power and authority.

Looking at culture as a whole however becomes problematic because of the unwieldy size of the whole. No matter how a scholar defines “culture” and the elements that comprise it, it will never be possible to study the entire whole without missing the subtlety of its various parts.

Tim Harris, who also addressed scholarly concerns about popular culture, called for more

²⁶ Ingram, “Ridings, Rough Music,” 112.

²⁷ Bob Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?” *History of European Ideas* 10, no. 2 (1989): 175-191

²⁸ Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?” 182.

²⁹ Scribner, “Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?” 183.

nuanced studies of culture that, for example, take into account areas of consensus and opposition between groups, questions of power and authority, and shy away from dichotomous relationships.³⁰

A particularly problematic issue was the production of elite and non-elite culture. Scholars pondered whether popular culture was merely a simplification of elite culture or if it was unrelated to elite culture. Conversely, they asked whether popular culture influenced elite culture in any way, or if elite culture remained untainted by it.³¹ Roger Chartier rejected the idea of an exclusive elite culture and inclusive but uneducated popular culture. Instead he considered culture as a whole that was comprised of a set of practices that were available to groups for appropriation in whole or in part.³² Additionally, Chartier broke down the walls between oral and written cultures and action. For Chartier, these things related to one another in a circular fashion: “From the spoken word to the written text, from the written work to the act, from printed matter back to the spoken work: Such are a few of the trajectories that I shall attempt in this book to describe and to analyze, with the hope of restoring their full complexity to the various forms of expression and cultural communication.”³³ Chartier discussed the *Bibliothèque bleue* as one example of how less educated French men and women appropriated print culture and literacy as well as stories and tales from other countries and eras.³⁴ In other words, the *Bibliothèque bleue*

³⁰ Tim Harris, “Problematizing Popular Culture,” in *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850*, ed. Tim Harris (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1995), 1-27.

³¹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). Ginzburg examines the interplay of popular and elite cultures through the testimony of the miller Menocchio. Ginzburg saw a “circular, reciprocal influence between the cultures of the subordinate and ruling classes that was especially intense in the first half of the sixteenth century.” (See page xvii for this quote.)

³² Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987), 6-8.

³³ Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print*, 6.

³⁴ For Chartier’s primary discussion of the *Bibliothèque bleue* see Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print*, Chapters 7 and 8.

was not a form that was unique to or created specifically for a “popular culture,” but rather it reflected the borrowing and appropriation from other parts of culture.

In more recent studies of early modern culture, historians such as David Cressy and Keith Thomas have largely avoided distinctions between “popular” and “elite” or “urban” and “rural” and have instead presented images and vignettes of a wide range of practices and attitudes arranged around topical themes.³⁵ In these studies Cressy and Thomas looked for areas of conflict, consensus, and gradual changes over time. While these broad studies provide much valuable information from primary sources, they offer little theoretical analysis, and are not always successful at finding or including the voices of non-elites.

Some scholars simply admit that it is not possible to reconstruct objective truth or the reality of the past. Because each person’s experience is different, perhaps a unified reality never existed in the past. For the scholar who works from this assumption, what is important is not so much the reconstruction of “fact” but the analysis of what people imagined or believed to be true. Scholars following this concept therefore do not attempt to reconstruct practices or a cultural reality, but instead attempt only to study representations.³⁶ For example, Frances Dolan showed how representations of Catholicism and of Catholic women in seventeenth century England shaped the life experiences of men and women, both Catholic and Protestant.³⁷ In this sense, representations became real.

³⁵ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life: Roads to Fulfilment in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995). Foucault first expressed the idea of power/knowledge and the construction of discourses.

³⁷ Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

In his insightful essay on the origins of cultural history and the subsequent developments in this field of study, Peter Burke noted that as scholars have expanded the term “culture” in recent decades to accommodate more areas of history, the term has become ever more difficult to define.³⁸ Historians like Jacob Burckhardt and Johan Huizinga, who wrote what Burke called “‘classic’ cultural history,” viewed culture as “the history of the classics, a ‘canon’ of masterpieces of art, literature, philosophy, science and so on.”³⁹ This is the most basic definition of culture and it relies almost exclusively on the work of those with elite status either by birth, education, or talent. Marxist scholars of the early twentieth century did have room in their theoretical models to delve into culture. Burke traced the evolution of cultural history as scholars like Antonio Gramsci, E. P. Thompson, and Pierre Bourdieu broke away from the Marxist concept of the superstructure. Later scholars adopted techniques of “thick description” from anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz. Michel Foucault’s work on discourses and the authority of regimes over bodies and Norbert Elias’s work on emotion and self-control influenced scholars greatly.⁴⁰ Though cultural history continues to flourish, Burke suggests that it should venture into new territory. Potential new directions for cultural history include the revitalization of the study of “classic” cultural history, the expansion of cultural history into yet unexplored areas, or the reframing the study of history as entirely a study of cultures.⁴¹

Scholars have yet to resolve the problems inherent to the term “popular culture” and to the study of culture. However, the debates over these issues are evidence that scholars continue to find culture a fruitful field of study and contention. In the current study, I eschew the

³⁸ Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 3.

³⁹ Burke, *What Is Cultural History?*, 7.

⁴⁰ Burke’s main discussions of the examples mentioned here occur in Burke, *What Is Cultural History?*, Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

⁴¹ Burke, *What Is Cultural History?*, Chapter 6.

bipolarity of “popular” and “elite” cultures. Instead, I consider culture in early modern England as a whole which was comprised of a large number of groups, which could overlap and oppose each other. A person could participate in many cultures over a lifetime and I assume that these did not represent a unified set of values and practices. For example, while it might be possible to speak of distinct urban and rural cultures, a person could participate in both through travel or relocation. Similarly, a recusant who wished to hide his or her Catholicism would potentially participate in both Catholic and Protestant cultures.⁴² As evidence in this study shows, though “elite” and “popular” cultures were by no means the same, there were too many similarities and areas of exchange in the sixteenth century to assume that they were entirely distinct, or that “popular” culture did not influence “elite” culture.

I do employ the terms “elite” and “non-elite” to distinguish between the forms of culture practiced at court, church, and in family homes of the aristocracy from the forms of culture practiced in more plebian settings such as London ale houses, shops and markets, and city streets. It should be clear from these descriptions that the terms “elite” and “non-elite” describe the place of performance rather than the composition and rank of audience members. This study assumes that persons from all ranks were likely present at both “elite” and “non-elite” performances.⁴³

⁴² Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 1993).

⁴³ For example, Burke mentioned that servants “lived on the border between two cultures [elite and non-elite].” Certainly servants had access to ‘elite’ cultural performances, while members of the elite ranks had access to ‘non-elite’ cultural performances as they chose. Burke, *Popular Culture*, 84.

Music as Part of Cultural History

Another area of study that Burke suggested scholars examine is “the cultural history of perception.”⁴⁴ The study of perception includes an examination of how contemporaries experienced and understood the smells, sights, and sounds that they encountered and the study of how these understandings changed over time. Smell, sight, and sound, whether observed consciously or unconsciously, were and are vital elements that structure a person’s daily life. Music, one aspect of sound, surrounds us in this modern age where technologies like portable music players allow music to accompany us through every portion of our routine.

Although the technology was different, music was also an important part of the aural environment of early modern English men and women. However, when studying cultural history, most historians leave out music entirely. This study seeks to demonstrate that music is a fruitful and even necessary area of study for the cultural historian. First, music in early modern England was a locus of cultural exchange and unity rather than division, a cultural form where elites and non-elites shared similar elements which they adapted and repurposed. That many popular tunes appeared in both elite and non-elite cultural forms was evidence of this. Second, music carried meanings and emotions known to early modern people. Certain styles of music or modes of tunes evoked activities such as dancing, drinking, or sitting in church while some tunes evoked specific discourses, stories, or emotions. Third, because music carried inherent meaning, historians must uncover this meaning in order to understand the full meaning of certain other cultural forms such as the broadside ballad. In other words, it is not enough to examine the text of a ballad alone. Instead it must be placed in the context of its tune.

⁴⁴ Burke, *What Is Cultural History?*, 110.

Chapter Two of this study examines the physical and structural form of the standard English ballad and explores some of the many literary genres that ballad authors employed. In the early modern context each structural element of a ballad held meaning which authors and printers could manipulate for dramatic effect. Music is the subject of Chapter Three. It explores the origins of several common ballad tunes, and finds that many tunes carried meanings of their own, which were then layered onto the meaning of a ballad's text. This chapter finds that music was a place in early modern English culture where it was difficult to distinguish between "elite" and "non-elite" forms. Additionally, music was important as a bridge between oral and print cultures. Chapter Four examines the language of ballad texts. This chapter investigates how discourse, images, and metaphors conveyed meaning and what this meaning was in the historical context. Finally, this chapter suggests that this language, through the act of performance, created an imaginary space in the minds of the audience that helped to make the Restoration desirable.

Chapter Two

Form, Genre, and Authority

“Keep thy head on thy shoulders and I will keep mine” advised the author of a ballad published in London in 1641.¹ This quite literally was gallows humor as this ballad referred to the recent beheading of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. Strafford’s execution contributed to the tumultuous climate of the months leading up to the first English Civil War, which was a time of fear and uncertainty for the English people. Despite this, the ballad’s anonymous author shrugged his shoulders and took a pragmatic approach to the situation, asking “for what is all this to thee or to me? Then merrily and cheerily lets drink off our beer, let who as will run for it, we will stay here.”² Perhaps this chorus provided solace for the men and women who sang it in 1641 while working at a trade or relaxing in the taverns.

As this example suggests, purveyors of popular entertainment did not hesitate to comment on controversial current events. Between 1640 and 1642 the social, political and religious order in England rapidly disintegrated.³ Nearly two decades of civil wars and religious and political experimentation followed the breakdown of traditional order. Throughout the 1640s and 1650s debates over politics and religion raged not only in Parliament, but also on the streets among ordinary people. These debates occurred concomitantly with the spike in production of cheap printed materials such as pamphlets, chapbooks, tracts, and ballads. The collapse of press censorship in 1641 allowed the publication of an unprecedented volume of information which

¹ Anon., *Good Admonition* (London, 1642), single page.

² Anon., *Good Admonition* (London 1642), single page.

³ David Cressy, *England on Edge: Crisis and Revolution 1640-1642* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Cressy goes so far as to describe these two years as a revolution.

fueled the fires of religious and political controversy.⁴ Ballads, an enduring form of popular entertainment, were among the flood of printed items. While traditional ballads remained in print, many ballad authors used ballads to make polemical pronouncements about contemporary issues. Many authors of ballads printed between 1640 and 1660 engaged in the political and religious fray with witty treatments of contentious topics. Popular entertainment provided a forum in which English people encountered new and radical ideas and negotiated with them in a humorous, engaging way. A study of the tools such as form and genre that authors and printers could use to convey meaning in ballads can help the historian understand how the complex religious and political debates surrounding the English Civil Wars and Interregnum were interpreted and represented in popular culture.

This chapter examines the tools of form and genre that helped ballad authors and printers translate political and religious debates into a form of widely available cultural entertainment. Ballads expressed meaning in many ways. Traditional ballads acquired new meanings in the context of current events and could be reprinted and re-circulated. Similarly, authors could apply traditional tropes to contemporary situations and refashion them into new ballads. Elements of the conventional ballad form could be manipulated to convey tone and emotion. Subsequent chapters discuss the importance and meanings of ballad tunes, and scrutinize the language, images, and themes present in many ballads.

Problems intrinsic to the study of ballads

The historian who studies ballads to learn about culture encounters a few problems that it is necessary to consider before proceeding with this study. The first of these problems is the

⁴ Cressy, *England on Edge*, Part III. Cressy describes the breakdown in censorship and the resulting flood of cheap print in detail.

question of audience: who was the audience and how did audience members interpret or appropriate ideas proffered in ballads? Tessa Watt, when addressing these questions, suggested that “The audience presupposed within the cheap print itself appears to be inclusive rather than exclusive.”⁵ In other words, audiences were potentially comprised of people from all sections of the social hierarchy. Watt also studied audience participation and interpretation through printing and purchasing habits and found evidence that both elites and non-elites purchased and displayed similar, if not the same, stories, ballads, and images.⁶ Older studies of cheap print have yielded similar results. Roger Chartier found that the readership of the *Bibliothèque bleue* encompassed a much larger segment of the non-elite population than previously thought.⁷ Margaret Spufford, who studied English chapbooks, concluded that chapbooks provided entertainment for people engaged in even the meanest sort of occupation.⁸ Based on this research, this study assumes that ballad audiences were potentially comprised of both elites and non-elites of all professions, ages, and gender.

The identity and motivation of ballad authors is another problem to consider in a study of ballads and popular culture. Jason Peacey examined this problem in detail in his study of pamphleteers and their sponsors and patrons in the years between 1640 and 1660. He suggested a method for determining the degree to which a pamphlet and its author were influenced by a politician, and by extension, determining if the pamphlet in question was an official piece of propaganda.⁹ Despite the networks of patronage (and therefore the production of propaganda) on all sides of the political and religious conflicts, Peacey argued that not only is there “no such

⁵ Watt, *Cheap Print*, 3.

⁶ Watt, *Cheap Print*. While this is a theme throughout Watt’s book, see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the printing patterns of popular ballads, and Chapter 5 for a similar discussion of pictorial stories.

⁷ Chartier, *The Cultural Uses Of Print*, especially Chapters 6-8.

⁸ Spufford, *Small Books*, especially Chapters 1-3.

⁹ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, Chapter 3.

thing as a single political message in any given work,” but that additionally “the meaning of texts is not determined by authorial intention, and it is certainly not fixed, but rather is liable to change in different circumstances, and is highly dependent upon readership and reception.”¹⁰ In other words, the response of an audience to a polemical pamphlet or ballad certainly did not always conform to the agenda and motivations of the sponsor or author. Because this study is concerned with representations and constructions of meaning rather than authorial intent, it does not attempt to uncover the identities of ballad authors or their potential patrons. It does however, examine the traditional tropes and discourses with which authors engage and suggest ways that audiences might have understood or negotiated with these.

The number of items printed in early modern England was a direct function of the effectiveness of censorship enforcement. During the personal rule of Charles I censorship was strictly enforced. The Company of Stationers held a monopoly on printing and owning the rights to an author’s book or pamphlet. In exchange for economic control of printing, the Stationer’s Company worked to ensure that heretical religious material and treasonous or subversive political ideas were not published. The Archbishop of Canterbury and his representatives also monitored and approved the content of printed items. The Star Chamber Decree of 1637 decreased the number of printers in London and reinforced and tightened control over print.¹¹

As Charles’ authority rapidly decreased in 1640 and the Long Parliament’s increased, the Crown’s previously tight control of censorship and the press crumbled. The Stationer’s Company lost control of its monopoly with the end of Charles I’s personal rule. Similarly the authority of the Church of England collapsed, and with it the authority of the Archbishop to disallow printed

¹⁰ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 16.

¹¹ Cressy, *England on Edge*, 281-290; Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 66-71.

items.¹² By 1641, for the first time in England, “almost anyone could publish almost anything.”¹³ The new freedom of the press, combined with incendiary political and religious debates lead to the doubling of the number of print-shops in London in the 1640s and an astronomical increase in the number of items printed relative to previous decades.¹⁴ Cressy found that “[t]here were more items published in 1641 than in any year in the previous history of English printing” and “[m]ore appeared in 1642 than at any time again before the eighteenth century.”¹⁵ While the number of items printed did decline after 1642, it remained very high throughout the 1640s and 1650s, and saw another spike in 1660 with the Restoration.¹⁶

Traditional and Polemical Ballads and Tropes

Ballads published between 1640 and 1660 fall into two broad categories: traditional ballads that treated popular legends, subjects, and characters; and new ballads that treated contemporary themes. Traditional ballads that were printed between 1640 and 1660 hearkened back to the orderly times of earlier days. Some contained religious themes such as the birth and passion of Christ, chaste Susanna, and the misfortunes of Job; others retold events from legend and popular memory such as the story of Rosamond, the unfortunate mistress of Henry II who was murdered by Queen Eleanor, and the battle of Chevy Chase.¹⁷ Perhaps these ballads provided wistful reminders of the days when the King ruled the land and when people uniformly professed “A King, a Christ, Prophet, Priest, a Jesus, man, a King, a son.”¹⁸ Alternately these

¹² Cressy, *England on Edge*, 290-292.

¹³ Cressy, *England on Edge*, 295.

¹⁴ Cressy, *England on Edge*, 292.

¹⁵ Cressy, *England on Edge*, 292.

¹⁶ See similar graphs in Cressy, *England on Edge*, 293; and Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 164.

¹⁷ Watt, *Cheap Print*, chapter 3. Watt makes this distinction between traditional and religious ballads, and identifies and discusses several popular ballad themes.

¹⁸ Anon., *The Birth and Passion of Our Savior Christ* (London, 1658), single page.

ballads could have underscored the freedoms available under the new regime in contrast to those available under the old.

Some traditional ballads gained new significance in the context of the events of 1640-1660, though their texts remained the same. This certainly was the case with old pamphlets, some of which Joad Raymond found were “reissued because of renewed relevance.”¹⁹ Raymond points to the Marprelate tracts as an example. The Marprelate tracts, originally published in 1588 and 1589, attacked the episcopacy of the Church of England; they were reprinted in the 1640s when the episcopacy was once again under attack.²⁰ The issues of the late sixteenth century had suddenly become pertinent again, and therefore these fifty-year-old tracts had wisdom to offer.

Kevin Sharpe came to a similar conclusion in his study of how people read in seventeenth century England. He found that readers frequently returned to the same text seeking answers to different contemporary questions. In other words, a single text, which could be ancient or modern, provided its reader with different insights at different times.²¹ Perhaps people applied this same sort of reading to literature more humble than books. It is logical to conclude that some traditional ballads had an uncanny relevance to current themes.

One traditional ballad, “Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem,” was reprinted in London in 1640. This ballad, which was likely first published in 1593, was part of a larger popular genre which used biblical examples of cities destroyed for their transgressions to urge social reformation.²² This particular ballad briefly recounts Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem and his subsequent execution. It then gives a graphic description of the destruction of Jerusalem when “the mighty

¹⁹ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 125.

²⁰ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 124-5.

²¹ Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), Chapter 4, especially pages 170 and 171.

²² Watt, *Cheap Print*, 96-98.

Emperor of Rome, came there with courage bold” to punish the Jews for “their great sin and wickedness.” The ballad concludes with a call for England to repent “because like to Jerusalem thou dost despise his [God’s] grace.”²³ The threat of destruction pending immediate and sincere repentance was particularly relevant in 1640 as people saw the social, political and religious orders descending into chaos, just like in sinful Jerusalem. This ballad was perhaps a sober call for religious conformity and obedience to the King, or perhaps an incitement to reject all forms of religious and political authority.

“The Unhappy Hunting in Chevy Chase” is another traditional ballad that was reprinted in London both in 1645, which was during the Civil War, and in 1650, which was just after the regicide. According to Watt, this ballad, which was likely transcribed from oral tradition, was one of the “oldest and best-loved” ballads in England.²⁴ In this account, the Earl of Northumberland encroached on Scottish land during a hunting excursion. When the Scottish Earl Douglas confronted him, a heated verbal exchange ensued in which Northumberland declared “thy proffers I do scorn, I will not yield to any Scot, that ever yet was born.” Words turned to blows and both Earls and many of their men were subsequently killed in battle. The ballad closes with a blessing and an intriguing plea: “God save the King and bless the land, with plenty joy and peace, and grant henceforth that foul debate, `twixt noble-men may cease.”²⁵ Joy and peace were absent from England in this period of intense conflict between noblemen, and in 1646 King Charles I surrendered to the Scots. In the context of these events the traditional ballad of Chevy Chase became ironic.

²³ Anon., *Christ’s Tears over Jerusalem* (London, 1640), single page.

²⁴ Watt, *Cheap Print*, 81.

²⁵ Anon., *The Unhappy Hunting in Chevy Chase* (London, 1650), single page.

While some old ballads gained new meaning in a contemporary context, other new ballads employed traditional tropes to comment upon current religious and political debates. The character Robin Hood, with his company of Merry Men, was one of these popular tropes, and the exploits of Robin Hood and his Merry Men form the subject of many ballads.²⁶ The ballad “Robin Hood and the Bishop” was published in 1650. In this adventure Robin escapes from a greedy bishop by trading clothes with an old woman. The bishop arrests the old woman, thinking she is Robin; meanwhile Robin hurries off to rally his band. The tale ends when a triumphant Robin robs the Bishop, and as a final insult, “Robin Hood took the Bishop by the hand, [...] and bound him fast to a Tree, and made him sing a Mass God-wot, to him and his Yeomanree.”²⁷ Those opposed to the episcopacy of the Church of England saw bishops as symbols, and perhaps even practitioners of “popery.” Thus it was fitting for Robin Hood to force the bishop to display his “true allegiance” to the Catholic Church. Parliament’s recent abolition of bishops in no way diminished anti-Catholicism, which remained a strong and flexible category.²⁸ The story of a bishop robbed and humiliated by a resourceful Englishman would elicit a chuckle or a groan depending on the religious convictions of the audience.

St. George, the patron saint of England, was another character that appeared in many cultural incarnations through English history.²⁹ The classic story of St. George was a subject of many traditional ballads. A version of this story was published in London in 1658 which told of

²⁶ Fox, “Remembering the Past in Early Modern England,” 255-256. Here Fox gives a brief overview of the origins of the Robin Hood legend, which he suggests entered oral tradition from stories composed for elites; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Hutton mentions the various ways in which Robin Hood appeared in elite and non-elite festivals and celebrations throughout his book; Spufford, *Small Books*, 231-232. Spufford discusses Robin Hood’s career as a folk hero.

²⁷ Anon., *Robin Hood and the Bishop* (London, 1650) single page.

²⁸ Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*; Harris, *London Crowds*. Both authors deal with some of the ways in which anti-Catholic discourses were used.

²⁹ Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*. Festivals and celebrations featuring St. George are a frequent topic of discussion in Hutton’s book; Spufford, *Small Books*, 227-231. Spufford discusses the interplay between oral and printed traditions as found in the St. George stories.

St. George “and the King’s daughter of Egypt, whom he delivered from death, and how he slew a mighty dragon.”³⁰ The printing of this ballad coincided with Oliver Cromwell’s death in 1658 and the ensuing political confusion. As political and religious anarchy increased, England needed a great hero to restore order and authority.

England’s real life hero, General George Monck, Duke of Albemarle, conveniently shared a name with England’s mythical hero of choice, St. George. General Monck eventually aided the restoration of King Charles in the spring of 1660. However, Monck, who had supported both Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, and now was in contact with the soon to be Charles II, did not take decisive action until February of 1660. Before this his intentions were “shrouded in obscurity,” which left the people wondering about his allegiance and hoping for his aid.³¹ Nevertheless, royalists looked to him as the one who, if he would, could restore the monarchy. Therefore ballads celebrating the heroism of St. George directly implied George Monck and served as an entreaty to him to play the hero and slay the Parliamentary Dragon.

A flood of ballads published between 1658 and 1660 made the connections between St. George and George Monck and between Parliament and the Dragon explicit.³² For example, the ballad “Saint George and the Dragon,” dated February 1659 (1660), recounts Monck’s initial victory over Parliament when he forced the Rump Parliament to re-admit the members of the Long Parliament who had been excluded in Pride’s Purge of 1648.³³ Once readmitted, the former excluded members would then force a vote for Parliament to dissolve itself. The ballad title clearly suggests the Saint George/George Monck, Dragon/Parliament connection. Similarly, the

³⁰ Anon., *St. George for England and the King’s Daughter* (London, 1658), single page.

³¹ Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic*, 409. Also, see Chapter 9 for a discussion of the Restoration and Monck’s role in it.

³² A detailed discussion of the images of Parliament as a beast appears in Chapter 3 of this study.

³³ Anon., *Saint George and the Dragon* (London, 1659), single page.

ballad “St. George for England” pleads with Monck to “strike up thy drum, and do they devoir [sic] this Rump to destroy, that noble King Charles the second may come, and our streets may echo with vive le Roy.”³⁴ Monck was the only one with the courage and the resources to inflict the death blow on the Rump Parliament and then to usher in a new king. When Monck did complete the trope he thus surpassed St. George who “but one dragon slew, but one virgin freed, but thou three kingdoms hath redeemed (best deed!).”³⁵ Comparing George Monck with Saint George and Parliament with the dragon employed a familiar trope that had a happy result. This language gave people the means to celebrate a long awaited hero. But it also sent a powerful message to Monck that he must fulfill the story with the destruction of Parliament and the restoration of Charles II.

Ballad Form

The use of familiar tropes in ballads provided interpretive clues that everyone singing, reading, or hearing a ballad would understand. Another method authors used to give political or religious meaning to their ballads was to play on various parts of the conventional ballad form and to creatively use the conventions of standard genres. According to Sharpe, the renewed study of Greek and Latin classics in early modern England inspired a proliferation of genres of English literature. Sharpe found that “Renaissance genre, however, was not a rigid system. [...] But throughout early modern society, as well as literary culture, we encounter an addiction to genres and forms.”³⁶ Genre and form therefore, constituted much of the meaning of a text. It is necessary to understand in some detail the form of ballads and the common genres into which

³⁴ Anon., *St. George for England* (London, 1660), single page.

³⁵ Richard Farrar, *A Panegyric to his Excellency, the Lord General Monck* (London, 1660), single page.

³⁶ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 57.

ballads divided in order to understand how these conveyed meaning and to understand the overall meaning of ballads.

By 1640 printed ballads had a fairly standardized form. Most ballads were printed as broadsides with the text divided into approximately four columns. The title sat at the top of the page, and a descriptive phrase such as “a pleasant new ballad,” “a lamentable ballad,” or “a Godly ballad” often preceded the section of the title that described the contents of the ballad.³⁷ The phrase “to the tune of” and then the name of the tune to which the ballad should be sung followed the title. Many ballads, though not all, had woodcut illustrations situated between the title and the text.³⁸ The text itself was divided into verses, which often ended with a chorus or refrain which remained the same for each verse of the song. Finally, traditional ballads conventionally listed no author.³⁹

Gothic, or “black-letter” type was also part of the standard ballad form. Many printers continued to print broadside ballads in Gothic type into the seventeenth century, which was long after Roman type became the standard for other printed items. Sharpe argued that even typography was “a medium of direction and control.”⁴⁰ According to Sharpe, Gothic type was associated with authority because until the Restoration, most ordinances and proclamations were printed in Gothic type.⁴¹ However, the association of “black letter” type with authority does not explain why this style of type was commonly used for broadside ballads. Dianne Dugaw

³⁷ For these examples see Anon., *The Miller of Mansfield in Sherwood* (London, 1658-1674), single page; Anon., *The Tragical End of a Gallant Lord* (London 1658-1664), single page; Anon., *The Just Man Job* (London 1658), single page.

³⁸ Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Watt, *Cheap Print*. This study does not focus on the significance of the woodcut to the ballad. Scholars such as Tessa Watt and Robert Scribner have studied images in printed texts and postulated that these were important because they gave illiterate or semi-literate people access to print.

³⁹ See Watt, *Cheap Print*, 78-81 for a discussion of standardized ballad form in the early seventeenth-century.

⁴⁰ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 51.

⁴¹ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 51

suggested that Gothic type, though more difficult for the modern eye to decipher, was in fact more familiar than Roman type to those who were less literate.⁴² Therefore, printed items that were to be read and understood by all English people, such as proclamations and ordinances, were printed in Gothic type. Also forms of print intended for consumption by all people were also often printed in this archaic type. It seems then, that rather than simply conveying authority, items printed in “black letter” type indicate that a broad audience was intended.

Because people were familiar with the standard ballad form, they would recognize an alteration in it. Joad Raymond found that pamphleteers exploited this technique when writing pamphlets. Raymond argues that in the Marprelate tracts, for instance, the anonymous author “subverted his readers’ expectation of form” through such means as an ironic imprint, humorous marginal notes, and “a spoof list of errata.”⁴³ The seventeenth century reader would certainly recognize analogous techniques applied to ballads. Therefore an author with a political or religious agenda could manipulate one or more of elements of the conventional ballad form to underscore his point. These alterations appear most frequently in the title, tune designation, and song type.

Authors occasionally employed the conventional descriptors at the beginning of a ballad title to indicate satire. An example of this is the title “A Proper New Ballad of the Devil’s Arse a Peak” which obviously promises to be anything but proper.⁴⁴ A less crude example is a ballad published in 1660 entitled “A Psalm Sung by the People before the Bonfires, made in and about the City of London, on the 11th of February.” The title indicated that this was perhaps a hymn of praise or celebration for Monck’s actions against Parliament, but the first stanza quickly dispels

⁴² Dugaw, *Warrior Women*, 18-19.

⁴³ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 39-40.

⁴⁴ Anon., “The Devils Arse a Peak,” in *Rats Rhymed to Death* (London, 1659), 36-39.

this notion: “Come let’s take the Rump and wash it at the pump, for ‘tis now a shitten case: nay if it hang an arse we’ll pluck it down the stairs, and roast it at Hell for its grease.”⁴⁵ In this case the label “psalm” was tongue-in-cheek and actually referred to a raucous celebration.⁴⁶ There are many similar examples of title manipulation, but from these examples it is possible to see that even the title of a ballad could indicate ironic or satiric meaning.

The tune was another clue to the meaning of a ballad.⁴⁷ Typically ballads were set to one of several standard tunes that would be familiar to most people.⁴⁸ This meant that many different ballads could be sung to the same tune. Alastair Bellany, in his study of libels that were to be sung, found that the tune provided an additional layer of meaning to the accompanying verses. A libel directed towards James I and the Duke of Buckingham was sung to the tune of a song that was about a wife who ruled over her weak husband. The tune of the libel, therefore, referenced an “upside down” balance of power, which was precisely the crime of which the libel writer accused James I and Buckingham.⁴⁹ Ballad tunes could imply meaning in similar ways. A traditional ballad tune was “Tom of Bedlam.” While many traditional ballads designated this tune, new ballads also employed it. One of these, “The Church in Child-bed,” lamented the chaos of the official church in 1647.⁵⁰ Another such ballad, “A New Ballad to an Old Tune,” published in 1660, decried the ravages of the “red-coat” for whom “the gun and the blade are his tools, -- and his trade, is to pay, to kill, and to plunder.”⁵¹ Disorder and lack of authority were clearly

⁴⁵ Anon., *A Psalm Sung by the People* (London, 1660), single page.

⁴⁶ Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Chapter 3. Harris describes several instances of celebratory bonfires in London in 1660.

⁴⁷ Tune is mentioned briefly here as a part of the standard ballad form. However, a detailed discussion of the music and implied meaning of tunes is found in chapter 3.

⁴⁸ For a study of the tunes designated on religious ballads see Watt, *Cheap Print*, Chapter 2.

⁴⁹ Bellany, “Singing Libel,” 189-192.

⁵⁰ Anon., “The Church in Child-bed,” in *The Scotch Presbyterian Weathercock* (London, 1647), 5-6.

⁵¹ Anon., *A New Ballad to an Old Tune* (London, 1660), single page.

themes of both ballads. Therefore singing them to a tune which evoked insanity was a clever way to underscore these themes.

While some ballads used traditional tunes to advance their message, others employed new tunes that were written for the occasion. Londoners could learn these new tunes from ballads singers who performed the songs in the streets.⁵² Several ballads about the Rump Parliament of 1659-1660 were set to the tune “Parliament sat as snug as a cat” which, as it does not appear in ballads before this time, seems to be a new tune.⁵³ “Fill up the Parliament full” also appeared at this time and may be new.⁵⁴ Several ballads that treated the return of the excluded members of Parliament designated this tune. These tunes were either newly composed for ballads about Parliament, or perhaps they were simply comic riffs on the conventional tune designation.

Some ballads clearly did use the standard tune designation as a joke. The ballad entitled “A Display of the Headpiece and Codpiece of Valor” made merciless fun of a Colonel Robert Jermy. This ballad was sung “to the tune of a turd, or the Blacksmith.”⁵⁵ While “the Blacksmith” was an actual traditional tune, it seems that the author gratuitously added “a turd” to indicate the lack of importance and dignity ascribed to the unfortunate Colonel. Thus even the tune to which a ballad was set provided a chance for commentary.

Marginalia and footnotes were other tools available that could convey additional information to readers.⁵⁶ Sharpe found that margin notes (as added by the author or editor) were important “ideological, indeed political sites in Renaissance books and culture” because the

⁵² Harris, *London Crowds*, 102.

⁵³ See Anon., *The History of the Second Death of the Rump*, (London, 1660), single page; Anon., *Rump Rampant*, (London, 1660), single page.

⁵⁴ Anon., *England's Triumph, or the Rump Routed*, (London, 1660), single page.

⁵⁵ Anon., “A Display of the Headpiece and Codpiece of Valour,” in *Rats Rhimed to Death* (London, 1659), 60-65.

⁵⁶ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 274-277.

information in the notes could change, alter, or obscure what was found in the text.⁵⁷ This type of device was often found in books and pamphlets, but some polemical ballads contain marginalia perhaps to mimic these more austere forms of print.

The marginalia and notes in ballads both informed and provided humor and satire. *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament* included a note in the margin that instructed the reader or performer of the ballad to “sing this through the nose.”⁵⁸ The instructed tone of voice would certainly have heightened the sarcasm of the corresponding stanza, and probably have entertained the audience as well. This ballad also contained a footnote which clarified why “Harrison’s plight” was mentioned in conjunction with Hugh Peters: “Harrison promised his people that he should rise again the third day, and the maid cleansed the house with much curiosity, expecting him the Tuesday, the day after his execution.”⁵⁹ Major General Harrison, religious radical, regicide, and parliament supporter, was executed on October 13, 1660, the same day as Hugh Peters.⁶⁰ Samuel Pepys, who witnessed Harrison’s execution, noted that he was “looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition.” According to Pepys, “It is said, that he [Harrison] said that he was sure to come shortly at the right hand of Christ to judge them that now had judged him; and that his wife do expect his coming again.”⁶¹ It appears that Harrison’s claim about his resurrection was well known. Though it was tangential to a ballad about Hugh Peters, the reference to it certainly heightened the overall sarcasm and put both Peters and Harrison in the proper context of ridicule.

⁵⁷ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 275.

⁵⁸ Anon., *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament* (London, 1660), single page.

⁵⁹ Anon., *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament* (London, 1660), single page.

⁶⁰ Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*. Harrison appears throughout Underdown’s narrative. For details on his role in Pride’s Purge see pages 128-131 and 140-141.

⁶¹ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys M.A. F.R.S.* ed, Henry B. Wheatley F.S.A. (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 1:260.

Even the closing epithet and printing information could provide a place to add additional humor or sarcasm. Many ballads concluded with the Latin “Finis” printed at the bottom of the page.⁶² The polemical ballad *The Arraignment of the Devil* ended with the three words “Finis Fustis Funis,” which perhaps was meant to poke fun at the presumptuousness of the usual Latin “Finis.”⁶³ Similarly, a printer’s inscription was often found at the conclusion of the text in nearly every broadside. These typically mentioned the printing location and the name or names of the persons for whom the piece was printed. Some examples of such inscriptions include: “London: Printed for John Andrews, at the White Lyon [sic] in the Old Bailey 1655,” and “London: Printed for F. G. on Snow Hill. Entered according to order.”⁶⁴ However, at the foot of the broadside *A Vindication of the Rump*, one finds the following: “Rumpatur. London: Printed for Rosicleer Arsewind, the Rump’s leather seller.”⁶⁵ “Rumpatur” here stood in the place of the usual “Finis,” and clearly the printing information presented here was purely an opportunity to continue the farce of the ballad printed above. It likely also served as a ploy to protect the actual identity of the printer.

Genres of Ballads

Just as ballads had a standard form which printers could alter and tweak to provide additional information, authors could draw on many standard genres to structure their ballads. In her study of English street ballads, Würzbach divided ballads into several sub-genres based on

⁶² For a few examples see: Anon., *A Lanthorne for Landlords* (London, 1640), single page; Anon., *An Old Man and His Wife* (London, 1654-1664), single page; Anon., *The Loving Lad and the Coy Lass* (London, 1658), single page.

⁶³ Anon., *The Arraignment of the Devil* (London, 1659), single page.

⁶⁴ Anon., *A True Portraiture of a Prodigious Monster* (London, 1655), single page; Anon., *Love Lies a Bleeding* (London, 1653), single page.

⁶⁵ Anon., *A Vindication of the Rump* (London, 1650 and 1659), single page.

the type of communication and narration presented in the ballad.⁶⁶ Both Dugaw and Watt looked at specific sub-genres of ballads, that of the “warrior woman” and the “godly ballad” respectively.⁶⁷ While these methods were fruitful for the aforementioned scholars, the present study uses a different tactic. Rather than considering ballads as an isolated genre comprised of sub-genres, this study examines how ballads borrowed from genres of a variety of types of literature and print. Authors used elements of these genres seriously and also satirically and humorously. While there are many types of ballads, this study examines a select few here.

Some ballads functioned as a news narrative. Of these, some, such as the previously discussed *Chevy Chase*, had long become traditional ballads that were no longer “news.” Other ballads related stories of current events. These accounts were in verse form, complete with a refrain, and seemed to give somewhat fictionalized accounts of the events they described. *Gallant News from the Seas* recounted “certain speches made by Prince Charles, the Duke of York, the Lord Montrosse, sea-men and land-men with their resolutions.”⁶⁸ *Last News From France* told an exciting story of “the escape of the King of Scots from Worcester to London, and from London to France, who was conveyed away by a young gentleman in woman’s apparel: The King of Scots attending on this supposed gentlewoman in [the] manner of a servingman.”⁶⁹ These accounts openly took sides; in the case of the ballads just mentioned the bias was in favor of the Crown.

The “monstrous creature” or “monstrous birth” was a common type of pseudo-news ballad, both of which described in lurid detail a hideous, deformed creature that had supposedly been sighted or born to a poor mother in Europe. *A True Portraiture of a Prodigious Monster*

⁶⁶ Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad*, Chapter 4.

⁶⁷ See Dugaw, *Warrior Women*; Watt, *Cheap Print*, chapters 1-3.

⁶⁸ Anon., *Gallant News From the Sea* (London, 1649), single page.

⁶⁹ Anon., *The Last News From France* (London, 1647-1665), single page.

described a creature from Spain, with a body “of a strong well set man, with seven heads, [...] arms and hands of a man [...] From the middle downward it is like a satyr, with goat’s feet, and cloven; it hath no distinction of sex.”⁷⁰ Such a frightening monster was sure to give a thrill to those who read or heard about it. This genre of ballad also provided at least one author with an intriguing way to express a religious opinion. *A Brief Relation of an Aethistical Creature Living at Lambert* described another horrifying type of monster, the “aethistical” one, or in other words the man with heretical beliefs. This man was a monster because he thought that “his sins are too big for him to go to heaven, and too little for him to go to hell, he thinks he shall die a Pharisee.”⁷¹ Clearly the author of this ballad drew upon the audience’s knowledge of the “monstrous creature” genre, and therefore made the comparison between terrible monsters and religious heretics. This provides a small example of how genre could convey meaning to a ballad.

Another genre of popular print centered on criminal cases, and particularly on the sensational confessions made by the poor creatures on the gallows as they awaited their doom. *The Salisbury Assizes*, which gave an account of the witch trial of one Mistress Bodnam, is an example of a traditional confessional ballad.⁷² Though written in the third person, this ballad was essentially Mistress Bodnam’s confession of her evil deeds. The final two stanzas of the ballad mentioned her execution and God’s rejection of her. *Canterburies Conscience Convicted* was a riff on this confessional genre at the expense of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who was incarcerated in 1641 for enforcing his Arminian beliefs.⁷³ The ballad’s narrator was a man who happened to walk under Laud’s prison window at just the right moment to overhear Laud

⁷⁰ Anon., *A True Portraiture of a Prodigious Monster* (London, 1655), single page.

⁷¹ Anon., *A Brief Relation of an Aethistical Creature Living at Lambert* (London, 1649), single page.

⁷² Anon., *The Salisbury Assizes* (London, 1653), single page.

⁷³ Anon., *Canterburies Conscience Convicted* (London, 1641), single page.

confessing his sins against England. The lucky narrator then related all he overheard to the ballad's audience. Of course, Laud "confessed" to those things which anti-Laudians would most want to hear. For example, Laud bemoaned what "an ill shepherd I have been" and admitted that "twas I that lately made a way / For popish wolves to suck thy [England's] blood."⁷⁴ Once again, the author of this ballad employed a familiar genre and used it to convict the very person who was supposedly confessing.

The "last will and testament" was also a popular genre of ballad. A traditional ballad entitled the *Norfolk Gentleman His Last Will and Testament*, told the story of a man and his wife who died, leaving their two young children in the care of an uncle and well supplied with money. Unfortunately for the children, the will stipulated that all their wealth would transfer to the uncle should they die before reaching the age of maturity. As one might expect, the children soon died from maltreatment. However, injustice did not go unpunished: God inflicted Job-like sufferings upon the uncle, who was eventually put to death.⁷⁵ Although this sort of morality tale featured the strong preying upon the weak, it ended with justice. Shortly after this traditional version of the "last will and testament" genre appeared, several satiric versions of the genre were printed which included *Hugh Peter's Last Will and Testament*, "The Cobbler's Last Will and testament" and "The Hangman's Last Will and Testament."⁷⁶ The first two detailed the "legacies" of Hugh Peters and Lord Hewson, while the later was a lament by a man in a dishonorable profession about how he could no longer do his work honestly because justice was no longer upheld. Perhaps this genre of ballad reminded its audience to contemplate the meaning of life and death in both serious and satiric ways.

⁷⁴ Anon., *Canterburies Conscience Convicted* (London, 1641), single page.

⁷⁵ Anon., *The Norfolk Gentleman His Last Will and Testament* (London, 1658), single page.

⁷⁶ Anon., *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament* (London, 1660), single page; Anon., "The Cobbler's Last Will and Testament," in *The Rump*, K2v; Anon., "The Hangman's Last Will and Testament," in *The Rump*, K4r.

Between 1640 and 1660 many pamphlets, poems, and ballads designated as “litanies” were printed. Typically a litany made up part of a Christian church service when a leader invoked God and the congregation responded with a short spoken refrain. The litany originated in the Catholic Church and was thus originally performed in Latin. After the Reformation, the Church of England retained the litany form although it eventually changed the Latin to English and purged the litany of its references to saints.⁷⁷

During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum the litany form gained a more secular purpose and found a place outside of religious services. Removing the litany from the church was particularly provocative within the contemporary religious context. In the 1630s, Charles I and the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, worked to reestablish high church ceremony and strict church discipline in the Church of England. People who opposed these changes associated the move away from the preaching of the word and towards ritual and ceremony with a return to Catholicism. Thus, opposition to the “Laudian” reforms often took the form of anti-Catholicism.⁷⁸

The appearance of litanies in popular print in the 1640s was striking because they had been excised from their Laudian church context and removed from the oversight of the clergy. This was clearly a statement against the authority of both the Church of England (at least in Laudian form) and Catholicism. Initially though, these printed litanies retained a semi-religious tone, acting as a sort of popular prayer for protection from perceived political and religious evils. Shorter litanies were difficult to distinguish from ballads as they were printed on broadsides like

⁷⁷ See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Throughout the book Duffy studies the culture of Catholicism and the transition to Protestantism. See page 443 for a discussion of Cranmer’s 1544 English translation of the litany and removal of the saints from it.

⁷⁸ For a detailed study of this topic see Cressy, *England on Edge*, Part II.

ballads, and had a similar verse and chorus structure. Some litanies clearly adhered to the ballad format, as they designated a ballad tune.

Litanies published in the 1640s, while not specifically religious, did preserve a religious tone and function. “The New Litany” of 1647 asked for protection among other things “From the doctrine of despoiling a King,” and “from an Anabaptist and a Presbyter-John.” The anonymous author concluded the final verse “I wish the Round-heads had a fall; or else were hanged in Goldsmiths hall.” Perhaps hearkening back to the Catholic litany, the Latin invocation “libera nos Domine” punctuated each verse.⁷⁹ This litany was a prayer for deliverance from those who worked to undermine royal state and church authority, but it was also a declaration of the author’s stance on political and religious issues. As such others could use it as a statement of agreement or of opposition. Another litany printed in 1647 petitioned for protection for soldiers from such things as greed, false doctrine, disease and bad weather. It ended with a request: “That it may please thee now at last, The King now in his throne be placed, And those that hate him down be cast.” This litany employed three Latin refrains “libera nos,” “libera nos domine,” and “que sumus te.”⁸⁰ It definitively announced a royalist position while it prayed for the safety of soldiers.

In contrast to the litanies of the 1640s, litanies printed in the late 1650s followed the ballad form more distinctly and largely eschewed all religious undertones. “A Free-Parliament Litany,” printed in 1660, was sung, like a ballad, “to the tune of an Old Soldier of the Queen’s.” This ballad transformed the petitions of a litany into attacks. For example, this litany asked for protection “From long-winded speeches, and not a wise word, From a gospel ministry settled by the sword, From the act of a rump, that stinks when’t is stirred; From a knight of the post and a

⁷⁹ Anon., *The New Litany* (London, 1647), single page.

⁸⁰ By the Author of the *Mercurius Melancholicus*, *The Army’s Litany* (London, 1647), single page.

cobbling Lord.” The ballad’s chorus, “From fools, and knaves, in our Parliament free, libera nos domine” inserted a political statement before the usual pious “libera nos domine.”⁸¹ Here the author employed the vestiges of religious sentiment for purely sarcastic means. “The City of London’s New Litany” set “to the tune of the Blacksmith” eliminated religion almost entirely. The list of things from which protection was needed included “rumps that stuff coffers to pleasure their whores,” those who “in dread of a gun are scared at a fart,” and “such that would law and gospel confound.” The chorus, “Good Jove deliver us all,” exchanged Latin for English and Jove for God.⁸² This catalogue was both derisive and humorous, and decidedly irreverent. It seems that the litany-as-ballad form began as a hybrid of a religious supplication and a political ballad. It became, however, an entertaining, primarily secular expression of the need for relief from a disorderly social, political, and religious scene.

Conclusion

Ballads published between 1640 and 1660 existed within particular conventions of form and genre. Though many ballads did not exhibit all features of ballad form, most features were present. Similarly, though some ballad authors applied a genre irreverently, they applied one nonetheless. For example, several of the polemical ballads published in the two years prior to the Restoration did break significantly with standard ballad form: they did not have wood cuts and were printed in roman type.⁸³ However, these ballads still often had “ballad” somewhere in the title, and had both a designated tune and a refrain. Similarly, polemical ballads still drew from

⁸¹ Anon., *A Free Parliament Litany* (London 1660), single page.

⁸² Anon., *The City of London’s New Litany* (London 1659), single page.

⁸³ For a few examples see Anon., *The Arraignment of the Devil* (London, 1659), single page; Anon., *The City of London’s New Litany* (London, 1659), single page; Anon., *The Rump Routed* (London, 1660), single page.

traditional genres of literature and print, even if they used these loosely and sarcastically.⁸⁴ When ballad authors broke with convention in some ways, they held onto it in others. This use of form and genre is important when considered in the context of Sharpe's assertions about the authority of texts.⁸⁵ It seems that form created an element of order and authority within a ballad. By manipulating (but not wholly excluding) the elements of form and genre, an author could show subversion of authority, humor, and sarcasm. This suggests then that these ballads invited people to engage with and manipulate the "authority" present in texts of ballads. Once ballad audiences were comfortable engaging with the authority of ballad texts in this way, perhaps they would be more comfortable engaging with other texts (or institutions) of authority in similar ways. Now that we have a greater understanding of the form and genres of ballads we will be prepared to understand them as important tools for negotiating political and religious discourses. However, first we must consider another vital element of ballads: their music.

⁸⁴ A discussion of adaptations of genres and tropes, sarcastic and otherwise, is found in Chapter 4.

⁸⁵ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 27-28. This concept is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter Three

Music: A Link Between Cultures

“If thou read these ballads (and not sing them) the poor ballads are undone.”¹ Thus an anonymous editor warned the reader in the introductory letter of *The Rump*, a collection of polemical ballads published in 1660. The author of this letter recognized that music made ballads unique; without it a broadside ballad would be simply a printed poem. His admonishment suggested that the meaning of ballads came from more than just texts. It also hinted that something important happened during the performance of a ballad that would be lost if the ballad were simply read or spoken. If these things were true of ballads in seventeenth century England, then it is essential for the modern scholar to rediscover what meaning was inherent to the music of ballads and what happened during performances of ballads that made singing so powerful.

One clue that ballad tunes were vital to the meaning of ballads is found in two collections of polemical ballads that were published in London in 1660: *The Rump*, and *Ratts Rhimed to Death*. The ballads in these collections excoriated the actions of parliament and mercilessly satirized the political and religious disorder of the few years prior to the restoration of the monarchy. It is striking to note that many of the ballads in these collections share the same tunes; “The Blacksmith” and “Cook Lorrel” are two of the most common.² Although seventeenth-century broadside ballads rarely included musical notation for a tune, they almost always named

¹ Anon., *The Rump* (London, 1660), Ar.

² For examples of ballads set to “The Blacksmith” see “The Rump,” “The Re-Resurrection of the Rump,” “The Rump Carbonado’d,” “The City of London’s New Litany,” “The Rump Serv’d in with a Grand Sallet,” in Anon., *The Rump* (London, 1660), C5r, Aar, Ev, F7r, H2r. Also see “The Re-Resurrection of the Rump,” “A Display of the Headpiece and Codpiece of Valor,” in Anon., *Ratts Rhimed to Death* (London, 1660), 16, 60. For “Cook Lorrel” (which appears with many orthographic variations such as “Cook Lawrel” and “Cook Laurel”) see “The House out of Doors,” “Another to the Same,” “The Rump Roughly but Righteously Handled,” “The Devil’s Arse a Peake,” and “St. George for England” in *The Rump*, Cv, C3r, Dd5r, E6v, H6r. “St. George for England” and “The Devil’s Arse a Peake” also appear in *Ratts* on pages 30 and 36, respectively.

the tune to which the text was to be sung. Most ballad texts were set to well-known melodies and consequently many texts often shared a single tune. Some scholars have suggested that the tune conveyed a meaning that contributed to the overall message of the ballad.³ What this meaning was and how it contributed to the meaning of the texts set to it must still be established.

This chapter therefore examines common seventeenth-century ballad tunes such as “The Blacksmith,” “Cook Lorrel,” and several others. In an effort to place ballads and their music in the larger cultural context, the chapter first briefly summarizes the state of music in early modern England. It then probes the origins and meanings of specific ballad tunes. The chapter concludes with a consideration of how music, and specifically ballad tunes, worked within the interactions of oral and print cultures. Throughout this study, a major theme that emerges is the ability of music to traverse cultural and social boundaries, particularly the boundaries between oral and print cultures, and between the ranks of elites and non-elites.⁴ This chapter asserts that the importance of ballad tunes goes far beyond their potential to add meaning to ballad texts. The real significance of ballad tunes is their ability to mix cultural elements such as orality and print, and elite and non-elite practices, and to establish meanings through performance.

Music in Early Modern England

Musicologists have divided early modern music into two fundamental categories: sacred and secular music. Sacred music denotes music composed specifically for use in a church during

³ Diana Poulton, “The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad and Its Music,” *Early Music* 9, no. 4 Plucked-String Issue 2 (October 1981): 427-437; Bellany, “Singing Libel,” 177-193. Poulton suggested that certain popular tunes were associated with ballads of particular themes. For example, the tune “Fortune my Foe” was most commonly used for ballads about hangings, while “Walsingham” was used almost exclusively for ballads “deal[ing] with a pilgrim on his way either to or from the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk”(434). Bellany gave an example of how a tune could add an additional layer of meaning to a verse libel (see pages 189-192).

⁴ The controversial term popular culture is implicit to this chapter. See the introduction for a complete discussion of the scholarly debates over the issues ‘popular culture’ raises and for this studies position in the debate.

a religious service. Composers of sacred music took their texts from sacred sources like the Bible or the mass. As the English Reformation progressed, sacred music became a contested category as various groups within the Church of England debated their convictions about the role of music in a church service.

It is important to note that the division between sacred and secular music is somewhat misleading. This division implies that the “sacred” and “secular” categories were distinct and did not overlap when in reality the line between the two was often blurred. For example, wealthy families often used musical settings of the psalms in their familial devotions.⁵ In this instance, the music, though clearly religious in nature and function, did not fit into a strict definition of “sacred” music. Though it seems somewhat contradictory to classify this type of music as “secular,” this is how musicologists define it.⁶

Secular music was not necessarily “irreligious” or “anti-religious,” but merely music performed outside of the church as recreation or entertainment. It could certainly contain religious themes, as religion was not really distinct from any aspect of culture during this period. Early modern music theory differed from that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in that it did not provide the harmonic structure that was necessary to sustain long pieces of instrumental music. Therefore texts supplied the structure for most musical compositions in the seventeenth century. Instrumental music was reserved primarily for dancing and accompaniment, though there were advances in solo and consort music during the seventeenth century. The song, however, was the highlight of this period, particularly in England. Some of the most esteemed

⁵ John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music: From the Beginnings to c. 1715*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). See pages 389-396 for a further discussion of the definition of ‘secular’ song and for examples of music that was technically ‘secular’ in function (i.e. not used in the church) but entirely religious in theme.

⁶ Again, see for example Caldwell, *The Oxford History*, Chapter 7. Though Caldwell pointed out the ambiguity of music that was sacred in content, but intended for private or at least non-ecclesiastical use, he still included it in his chapter entitled “Secular Vocal Music, 1575-1625.”

examples came from famous composers such as William Byrd, John Dowland, Thomas Morely, and Thomas Weelkes, who practiced their art around the turn of the seventeenth century.⁷

There were many types of songs in the sixteenth century: songs for solo voice, songs for several voices, and songs for full choirs. Beyond the number of voices, varieties of texture characterized the songs of this period. For example, in a homophonic song all the vocal parts moved together, while in a polyphonic song all the voices moved independently of each other. Song composers chose from an array of methods to musically describe the song's text. Some composers focused on a melodic presentation of the text and used musical effects to literally describe the words or phrases of a text.⁸ As the seventeenth century progressed, composers began to express texts in a style that attempted to mimic spoken expression and emotion.⁹

Though a detailed study of the evolution of early modern English song would be tangential to the current topic, one aspect of song is relevant to a study of ballad tunes: structure. The composer who set a poetic text to music chose one of two structural devices. On one hand, the composer could treat the poem as a continuous text, which meant that he would set every line

⁷ Craig Monson, "Songs of Shakespeare's England," in *The World of Baroque Music: New Perspectives*, ed. George B. Stauffer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) 1-24. For more about music in early modern England see Caldwell, *The Oxford History*, chapters 5-9.

⁸ For example, melodies for words like "ascend" and "descend" often ascended or descended stepwise along the scale, while those for words like "jump" or "leap" often skipped notes in the scale.

⁹ It is curious to note that scholars of early modern English music are constantly searching for hints of Italian influence in English music. It seems that they are waiting for English music to 'arrive' at the Italian musical idea while simultaneously trying to explain why English music did not follow the same developmental path of Italian music. English ayres of the early seventeenth century were "largely untouched by the *more striking developments* in solo song occurring in Italy [my emphasis]." Similarly, Spink judged the quality of Nicholas Lanier's surviving opuses on how closely they imitated the new Italian recitative (not closely enough, according to Spink). Claims like these cause one to wonder why English song 'should have' mimicked the "more striking developments" of Italian song. Though Italian composers developed opera as a theoretical and philosophical ideal, English composers of same period did not have this as a goal. Why then, should they be judged by this standard? It seems that this is a false teleology that should be reassessed and reexamined. Scholars should study and seek to understand early modern English music on its own terms rather than as a lesser version of continental European music. Monson, "Songs of Shakespeare's England," 22; Ian Spink, *English Song: Dowland to Purcell* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 100-106. See also Caldwell, *The Oxford History*, 555. When discussing the masques and theater of the seventeenth century Caldwell opines that "the more elaborate and complete the music might be, the less probable was it that the libretto contained the potential for true opera."

of text to distinct music. This method resulted in a through-composed song. On the other hand, the composer could treat the poem as a set of verses. With this method, the composer would compose a melody for the first verse of text that fit the meter. This melody would then repeat with each subsequent verse of the poem. This method resulted in a strophic song.¹⁰ Ballad tunes were short, and repeated with each verse of the ballad (often ending in a refrain that also remained constant). Therefore they were strophic songs. Because a through-composed song would not be suitable to adopt as a ballad tune, this study focuses on strophic songs.

Before 1640, the court, wealthy elites, or the church employed artists and musicians according to the patronage system.¹¹ However, when the Civil Wars and Interregnum temporarily destroyed church and court patronage, these musicians had to seek work outside of these traditional avenues. Many began giving private music lessons, working on commission, and publishing musical instruction manuals and collections of songs. During this time a “lasting culture of public concerts emerged” in London, which made skilled musical performances accessible to any who could afford to purchase a ticket.¹² These new avenues for musicians and audiences meant that secular music became increasingly available to those outside of the elite ranks. Though the Restoration reestablished patronage, it did not end the new practice of publishing, teaching, and performing music independent of the patronage network.¹³

It was not necessary to be a member of the elites to hear and participate in frequent musical performances. Besides hearing sacred music in church and perhaps overhearing secular

¹⁰ See Spink, *English Song: Dowland to Purcell*, 91-94, for a discussion of types of strophic and through-composed songs.

¹¹ This does not include the musicians and performers who traveled the country in a less-official capacity.

¹² Stephen Rose, “Music in the market-place,” in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Time Carter and John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See page 60 for this specific quote and see entire chapter for an overview of the increasing demand for music that was available to non-elites.

¹³ For more information about the impact of the Civil Wars and Interregnum on music, see Caldwell, *The Oxford History*, Chapter 9.

art music in the home of an elite family, a member of the non-elite had other ways to experience and engage with music. A variety of traveling musicians such as minstrels and ballad mongers performed in towns and villages throughout England.¹⁴ All manner of sacred and secular village festivals and celebrations featured dancing, singing, and the playing of instruments such as pipes and fiddles.¹⁵ Music of a perhaps less dignified sort was also a feature of the Charivari and Skimmington rituals.¹⁶ Though some of these amateur musical performances may have left something to be desired, “One thing of which we can be certain is that singing was ubiquitous in pre-industrial society.”¹⁷ It seems reasonable to conclude then, that early modern English culture was a musical one for those at every level of society.

Ballad Tunes in Early Modern English Culture

Recovering the music of ballad tunes is problematic for scholars. Because of the ubiquity of ballad mongers, traveling musicians, and the like, scholars have concluded that early modern English people learned common ballad tunes from professional or amateur musicians (which included vagrants and “masterless” men who hawked ballads and performed songs to earn money).¹⁸ This informal method of transmission did not leave a paper record. Though some music existed in manuscript form, most music did not leave a paper record until the printing of music became popular. This lack of evidence presents a challenge for the present day scholar who wishes to uncover the origins of particular ballad tunes.

¹⁴ Watt, *Cheap Print*, Chapter 1.

¹⁵ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*; Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*. These scholars bear witness to the presence and importance of music in the wide variety of rituals, festivals, celebrations, and rites of passage that they describe.

¹⁶ Ingram, “Ridings, Rough Music,” 79-113.

¹⁷ Vic Gammon, *Desire, Drink and Death in English Folk and Vernacular Song, 1600-1900* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 10.

¹⁸ A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd, 1985), 96-99. Watt, *Cheap Print*, particularly chapters 1 and 2.

The first known printed versions of many common ballad tunes are found in the musical instruction guides and song books that were published beginning in the 1650s. John Playford, a vitally important figure for many scholars of music, entered the publishing world in 1651 with *The English Dancing Master*, which is better known by the title of the 1653 edition, *The Dancing Master*.¹⁹ For the next fifty years, Playford, and eventually his son Henry, published numerous collections of songs and musical instruction manuals. The importance of Playford's work is such that "it is with Playford's first publications in the 1650s that the continuous documented history of English popular music can be said to begin."²⁰ While this was not the first time music had appeared in print, it was the first time it had been published with such volume and frequency. Such collections of printed music quickly gained wide popularity among those of the "middling sort."

The English Dancing Master, as its subtitle suggested, provided its readership with "plain and easy rules for the dancing of country dances," and, importantly for scholars of music and for the current study, included "the tune to each dance."²¹ Playford compiled the tunes in this volume for instructional purposes, and therefore the tunes were most likely not newly composed for the occasion. It is logical to assume then that the tunes in the 1651 edition were already in circulation prior to the publication of *The English Dancing Master*.

Some scholars, perhaps most notably Claude Simpson, have successfully paired many broadside ballads with their tunes. However, even Simpson in his encyclopedic volume entitled *The British Broadside and Its Music*, often had to rely on Playford's printed sources that dated

¹⁹ John Playford, *The English Dancing Master* (London, 1651); John Playford, *The Dancing Master* (London, 1653).

²⁰ Caldwell, *The Oxford History*, 554. For more about John and Henry Playford see also Spink, *English Song: Dowland to Purcell*, 131-135.

²¹ Playford, *The English Dancing Master*, title page.

from the mid-seventeenth century and later.²² This is not problematic if one merely wishes to locate the tune for a ballad, but it is problematic if one wishes to find the original composer of a tune, or to locate the first known performance of a tune.

Diana Poulton, a scholar of English ballads, rejected the idea that ballad tunes “are corruptions of something originally nearer to folk song in character, and that what we know is the result of their being moulded [sic] into art forms.”²³ (Presumably “folk song” in this context referred to songs and tunes transmitted orally by non-elite English men and women.) Instead, Poulton suggested that ballad tunes came from a variety of sources such as lute tunes, jigs (which were a comedic type of theatrical entertainment), Italian ground basses, and dances. As evidence she pointed to the ballad tunes with dance meters and the ballad tunes that used familiar early modern bass lines.²⁴ Tessa Watt confirmed this when she examined several tunes derived from Tudor court dances.²⁵ It seems then, that ballad tunes had organic origins, and that early modern people appropriated them from a variety of sources.

It is particularly important to note the ease with which a tune could transverse categories: from a dance tune to a ballad tune, from a ballad tune to an artistic arrangement for solo lute. As Poulton found, “At no other time in England does it appear that popular and art music were so closely linked.”²⁶ Here was a clear area of overlap and exchange between “popular” and “elite” cultures in seventeenth-century England.

²² Claude M. Simpson, *The British Broadside and Its Music* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1966).

²³ Poulton, “The Black-Letter Broadside,” 435.

²⁴ Poulton, “The Black-Letter Broadside,” 435.

²⁵ Watt, *Cheap Print*, 57-66.

²⁶ Poulton, “The Black-Letter Broadside,” 428.

The English Dancing Master of 1651 included the tunes “Cheerily and merrily,” “Cuckolds all in a row,” and “Uptails all.”²⁷ Each of these tunes appeared on polemical ballads written in the 1640s and 1650s.²⁸ This shows several things. First, the tunes of these polemical ballads were already in use prior to the writing and publication of the ballads. Second, these tunes functioned as more than merely ballad tunes. They also served as dance tunes which were probably performed instrumentally. Third, people from several layers of society knew and enjoyed these tunes. While *The English Dancing Master* targeted the “middling sort,” polemical ballads presumably reached a larger audience. Consequently, the inclusion of these tunes in *The English Dancing Master* indicates that they were appropriate for members of the “middling sort” who wished to improve their dancing skills, while the instructional purpose of the manual hints that the “middling sort” was already familiar with these tunes. Additionally, the appearance of these tunes on polemical ballads indicates that they were also appropriate and familiar to an audience that extended outside of the “middling sort.”

More evidence of the ability of tunes to cross genres and social boundaries comes from the musician Henry Lawes, whose *Ayres and Dialogues for One, Two, and Three Voices* was published by Playford in 1653.²⁹ In his introductory note addressed to “All understanders or lovers of music,” Lawes complained about those who used his music without his permission.³⁰ This was possibly a reference to the fact that, the year before, Playford had published several of

²⁷ Playford, *The English Dancing Master*. For “Cheerily and merrily,” see page 78. For “Cuckolds all in a row,” see page 67. For “Row well ye mariners,” see page 102. For “Uptails all,” see page 97.

²⁸ For a polemical ballad with the tune “Cheerily and merrily,” see Anon, *Good Admonition* (London, 1642), single page. Ballads that list the tune “Cuckolds all in a row” include “The She-Citizens Delight,” in *The Rump*, Dd9r; “London’s True Character,” in *Ratts*, 57. For ballads with the tune “Uptails all,” see “A Vindication of the Rump,” in *The Rump*, Dd3r, and also in *Ratts*, 19. See also “A Psalm Sung by the People before the Bonfires,” in *Ratts*, 54. Most of the ballads here were also published as individual broadsides before they were included in *The Rump* and *Ratts*.

²⁹ Henry Lawes, *Ayres and Dialogues for One, Two, and Three Voices* (London, 1653).

³⁰ Lawes, *Ayres and Dialogues*, a2v.

Lawes' songs in *Select Musical Ayres and Dialogues for One and Two Voices*.³¹ However,

Lawes goes on to say:

I could tell ye also, I have often found many of mine [his compositions] that have walked abroad in other men's names: how they came to loose their relations and be anabaptized, I think not worth examining. Only I shall say, that some who so adopted and owned my songs had greater kindness for the children than for the father: else sure they had not bestowed some other late ayres (which themselves could not own) upon foreigners and strangers, because I composed them to Italian and Spanish words.³²

Lawes' use of the word "anabaptized" to describe compositions that have strayed from his purview provides an amusing testament to his contemporary context. More to the point though, his words implied that it was difficult to control the dissemination and transmission of music in mid-seventeenth century England. Tunes easily lost their associations with their original composers which made it easy for people to re-appropriate or re-assign the tunes.

It is important to examine how a ballad's tune might have effected or influenced the comprehensive meaning of the ballad. Certainly some tunes were closely associated with ballads about certain themes. For example, the very popular tune "Fortune my Foe" appeared on ballads that gave "solemn or lugubrious accounts of murders, natural disasters, warnings to the impious, deathbed confessions, and the like."³³ *The Complaint and Lamentation of Mistress Arden*, which was set to "Fortune my Foe," told the story of Mistress Arden, who fell in love with Mosbie, and thereafter "hired certain ruffians and villains most cruelly to murder her husband." Upon completion of the deed, this unfortunate lady and her accomplices "by Justice [...] were straight condemned, each came unto a shameless end."³⁴ Other ballads set to "Fortune my Foe" include

³¹John Playford, *Select Musical Ayres and Dialogues for One and Two Voices* (London, 1652). Spink, *English Song*, 97-98. It is Spink who suggested that Lawes was referring to Playford's publication of the year before.

³²Lawes, *Ayres and Dialogues*, a2v.

³³Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 225.

³⁴Anon., *The Complaint and Lamentation of Mistress Arden* (London, 1633), single page.

*The Godly End and Woeful Lamentation of One John Stevens, Who was Hanged, Drawn, and Quartered for High Treason [...] and An Excellent Song Wherein You Shall Find Great Consolation for a Troubled Mind.*³⁵ Clearly then, this tune evoked feelings of solemnity and impending doom.

It is more difficult to determine exactly when “Fortune my Foe” first appeared as a ballad tune. Simpson found evidence that this tune was perhaps used as early as 1565, and was certainly in use by 1589.³⁶ He also identified versions of the tune in contemporary settings for instruments such as lute, cittern, viol, and keyboard. Even John Dowland, the famous composer of art songs, arranged a version of “Fortune my Foe.”³⁷ While this does not conclusively determine when or by whom the tune was written, it does attest to the ubiquity of popular tunes in all levels of society.

Returning to the tunes “The Blacksmith” and “Cook Lorrel” that appeared on polemical ballads of the 1640s and 1650s, it is necessary to ask what, if anything, was the significance of these tunes. Simpson suggested that “The Blacksmith” tune was a version of the popular tune “Greensleeves.”³⁸ The tune’s new title came from a song written by James Smith in 1656.³⁹ Smith’s song appeared in print in the 1661 collection *An Antidote Against Melancholy: Made up in Pills*, which was a collection of “witty ballads, jovial songs, and merry catches.”⁴⁰ “The Blacksmith” began with a few verses detailing the mythological origins of the blacksmith trade, particularly focusing on Vulcan. The remaining verses consisted of various aphorisms and jokes that referenced blacksmiths. For example, “Though your lawyers travel both near and far, / And

³⁵ Anon., *The Godly End and Woeful Lamentation of One John Stevens* (London, 1633), single page; Anon., *An Excellent Song Wherein You Shall Find Great Consolation for a Troubled Mind* (London, 1628), single page.

³⁶ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 225.

³⁷ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 226-227.

³⁸ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 273-278.

³⁹ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 273.

⁴⁰ Anon., *An Antidote Against Melancholy: Made up in Pills* (London, 1661), title page.

by long pleading, a good cause may mar, / Yet your blacksmith takes more pains at the bar.”

Each verse ended with the refrain “which nobody can deny.”⁴¹ Most of the polemical ballads set to “The Blacksmith” tune also employed the chorus “which nobody can deny.”⁴² Though the authors of the ballads in *The Rump* and *Ratts Rhimed to Death* may not have been interested in the connotation of blacksmiths and their work, perhaps it was this chorus that made the tune attractive.⁴³ The regular repetition of “which nobody can deny” would have affirmed the truth of statements made in each verse.

“Cook Lorrel,” another tune often assigned to polemical ballads in *The Rump* and *Ratts Rhimed to Death*, derived its name from a song with the same title written by Ben Jonson for the 1621 masque *The Gypsies Metamorphos'd*.⁴⁴ This ballad described the Devil enjoying a feast at the invitation of Cook Lorrel and detailed each “dish” as it was served. The “dishes” at the feast were men and women whose transgressions had made them fair game for the Devil. One such offering was “A London cuckold hot from the spit / And when the carver up had broke him, / The devil chopped up his head at a bit, / But the horns were very near like to have choked him.”⁴⁵ Ballads set to the tune of “Cook Lorrel” invoked the theme of “The generally unpleasant exploitation of mankind’s foibles.”⁴⁶ For example, “A Proper New Ballad of the Devil’s Arse a Peak, or Satan’s Beastly Place” was a direct reference to Cook Lorrel’s abode, first called “the

⁴¹ Anon., “The Blacksmith. A Song,” in *An Antidote Against Melancholy*, 11-14. See page 13 for the verse quoted.

⁴² The exceptions are “The City of London’s New Litany” in *The Rump*, F7r, which uses the chorus “Good Jove deliver us all” and “A Display of the Headpiece and Codpiece of Valor” in *Ratts*, 60, which has no consistently repeating chorus.

⁴³ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 273-278. In his discussion of “The Blacksmith” tune and song, Simpson suggests that the chorus “which nobody can deny” is a key to this tune, and also notes the prevalence of both the tune and this chorus in *The Rump* and *Ratts Rhimed to Death*.

⁴⁴ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 130.

⁴⁵ Ben Jonson, “Cook Lorrel,” in *An Antidote Against Melancholy*, 9-11. See page 10 for the verse quoted.

⁴⁶ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 130.

peak” and by the end of the banquet renamed “the devil’s arse.”⁴⁷ Other ballads that used the tune “Cook Lorrel” played on the idea of a meal where the Rump Parliament and its members were on the menu to be eviscerated by the devil. The scatological content of Jonson’s “Cook Lorrel” was high, and the ballads about the Rump Parliament followed suit. In the case of these ballads then, the tune clearly complemented and inspired their meanings.

With a little more elaboration “Cook Lorrel” provides another example of how music flowed across boundaries between “elite” and “popular” cultures. “Cook Lorrel” originated as part of a court masque written by Ben Jonson. Masques, such as *The Gypsies Metamorphos’d* (which included “Cook Lorrel”), were elaborate, exclusive court productions that included music, scenery, acting, and dancing, and invited audience participation.⁴⁸ This makes it all the more striking that by the 1650s the text from a portion of Jonson’s masque appeared in a published collection of songs for a non-elite audience, and that the tune to this text was popular on cheaply printed polemical ballads.

Repetitions of tunes also occurred in ballads published individually outside of *The Rump* and *Ratts Rhimed to Death* collections. The tune “Tom of Bedlam,” mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, is one such example. Though the origin of this tune and its original story line are unclear, Simpson believed that the tune was in use at least by the early seventeenth century in ballads like *The Cunning Northern Beggar*.⁴⁹ The tenor of this ballad was clear from its opening lines: “I am a lusty beggar,/ and live by others giving,/ I scorn to work,/ but by the highway lark,/ and beg to get my living.”⁵⁰ The beggar then detailed the various disguises and tales of woe he

⁴⁷ Anon., “The Devil’s Arse a Peak,” in *Rhatts*, 36; also in *The Rump*. Simpson also mentions that “The Devil’s Arse a Peak” is a reference to the “Cook Lorrel” text.

⁴⁸ For a description of masques during the reigns of James I and Charles I see Lois Roscow, “Power and display: music in court theatre,” in *The Cambridge History*, 219-223; and Caldwell, *The Oxford History*, 454-459.

⁴⁹ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 711-712.

⁵⁰ Anon., *The Cunning Northern Beggar* (London, 1646), single page.

employed to encourage generous giving. Here then was a man (albeit a fictional one) who played to all the most acute fears that respectable seventeenth century English people entertained about vagrants and “masterless” men: he begged by choice because he distained the toil and hardship of work, and he wandered from place to place.⁵¹ His peregrination kept him outside the dominion of any constant authority and the watchful eyes of a community and allowed him to assume any identity he chose. Underscoring this story with “Tom of Bedlam” then surely was a reminder of the lunacy of this way of life.

Polemical ballads that were set to “Tom of Bedlam” also depicted scenes of “the world gone mad” due to some type of baffling disorder. Besides “The Church in Child-bed” mentioned previously, the polemical ballads written to “Tom of Bedlam” included the non-descriptively titled “A New Ballad.” The text of this ballad bewailed the new existence of a standing army because it inverted duty and loyalty; soldiers who were paid to fight had no loyalty to any master other than Mammon, and by implication had no morals either.⁵² “News From Colchester” detailed the unnatural sexual relationship of a Quaker.⁵³ “The Cock-Crowing at the Approach of a Free Parliament,” also set to “Tom of Bedlam,” at first glance seems to betray the argument that this tune denoted lunacy and disorder. This ballad looked forward to the day when General Monck (hopefully) would restore all the excluded members to Parliament. The full Parliament would then set England back to rights. There was certainly no madness or inversion here. However, the opening lines of the ballad suggested that this wish was made in a drunken fog: “More wine boy; To be sober/ Is sottish, in my opinion,/ When so near we do see/ The day that

⁵¹ Beier, *Masterless Men*. Throughout the book Beier discusses many aspects of the beggar’s life and of social anxieties about beggars. See pages 112-119 for a discussion of ‘true’ and ‘false’ beggars. Here Beier also mentions “Tom O’Bedlam men,” or beggars who either were mentally ill or pretended to be (pages 115-117).

⁵² Anon., “The Church in Child-bed,” in *The Scotch Presbyterian Weathercock* (London, 1647), 5-6; Anon., *A New Ballad to an Old Tune* (London, 1660), single page. This ballad also appears in *Ratts*, 65, and *The Rump*, Aa5r.

⁵³ Anon., “News From Colchester, in *The Rump*, B3v. This ballad is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

will free/ Three Kingdoms, and a Dominion.”⁵⁴ When combined with this prefatory stanza, the tune “Tom of Bedlam” perhaps insinuated that one must stay drunk to imagine that a restoration was possible. It also suggested that the Restoration was still a crazy, impossible dream for which only the mad man (or woman) could hope.

The tune “When the King enjoys his own again” carried a great deal of significance between 1640 and 1660. According to Simpson, this tune referred to a ballad of the same name published in 1643 in support of Charles I. The original ballad has not survived and therefore it is unclear if the actual tune was unique to the ballad published in 1643, or if this ballad used another tune which then became known by the ballad’s title.⁵⁵ Either way, “When the King enjoys his own again” was the tune designated on several ballads during the Civil Wars, and then again at the time of the Restoration.⁵⁶ “When the King enjoys his rights again” and “When the King comes home in peace again” were two tunes with very similar names. These most likely indicated an identical tune as the subject matter of the ballads was the same as those which employed “When the King enjoys his own again.”⁵⁷ The meaning of this tune was well established. During the 1640s it evoked love of the monarchy, and hope for its endurance; in the 1650s it transformed love for the crown into yearning for its Restoration.

If people associated love for the King with the tune “When the King enjoys his own again,” then perhaps a person humming this tune while working would, consciously or not, experience positive feelings toward the crown. Similarly, a person singing a ballad with the tune

⁵⁴ Anon., “The Cock Crowing at the Approach of a Free Parliament,” in *The Rump*, L5v.

⁵⁵ Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 764-765.

⁵⁶ For example, see Anon., *The World is Turned Upside Down* (London, 1646), single page; Anon., *The Last News from France* (London, 1647-1665), single page; Anon., *England’s Great Prognosticator* (London, 1660), single page.

⁵⁷ For “When the King enjoys his rights again” see Anon., *A Review of the Rebellion* (London, 1647), single page; for “When the King comes home in peace again” see Anon., *A Loyal Subject’s Exultation for the Coronation of Charles II* (London, 1660), single page; Simpson also suggested that these are all the same tune. See Simpson, *The British Broadside*, 765.

“The Blacksmith” was perhaps thinking about the abuses of Parliament while a person humming “Tom of Bedlam” under her breath was contemplating the chaos and madness now present in everyday life. In this way ballad tunes would have helped to establish and shape the opinions and convictions that people held about contemporary religious and political events.

Music as a Bridge between Cultural Boundaries

Ballad tunes defied both musical and social classification. An early modern English man or woman could dance, sing a ballad, or listen to (or play) a lute song that all used the same tune. An esteemed composer could pen an elaborate arrangement of a tune for solo lute and then perform it for an elite audience. A family of the “middling sort” could purchase a book of music and learn to sing the tune in parts and to play it on the virginal. A member of the non-elite could learn the tune in an ale house and then sing ballads to it. However, music worked in more ways than this.

Ballads were also a cultural form where orality and print interacted. When considering ballad tunes, it is important to examine how tunes contributed to this interaction. Beginning with the late eighteenth-century collectors of ballads, scholars of early modern England have long believed that there was a strong dichotomy between a literate elite class and an illiterate, non-elite class.⁵⁸ From this perspective, the illiterate, uneducated class participated in oral tradition, which included traditional ballads. Ballads that existed in the oral tradition were (apparently) untainted by conventions of print and literacy as long as they remained ensconced in communities into which new technologies and improved education (supposedly) had not yet

⁵⁸ Paula McDowell, ““The Art of Printing was Fatal”: Print Commerce and the Idea of Oral Tradition in Long Eighteenth-Century Ballad Discourse,” in *Ballads and Broadsides in Britain, 1500—1700*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 35-56. McDowell discusses this historiography in her essay.

encroached. According to this view therefore the advent of print and the rise of literacy eroded an ancient, monolithic oral tradition.⁵⁹

Recently, though, scholars have historicized this understanding of oral tradition. For example, Paula McDowell found “that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ballad critics, responding to the perceived dramatic spread of print in their own time, contributed significantly to the emergence of our modern secular concept of ‘oral tradition.’”⁶⁰ These ballad critics, beginning with Thomas Percy (1729-1811), viewed oral tradition as a part of England’s timeless past. In 1765 Percy published a three volume collection of ballads entitled *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Percy traced the history of the English ballad to “Our Saxon ancestors, as well as their brethren the Ancient Danes.”⁶¹ Though at first these ballad singers, or minstrels as Percy called them, were esteemed “for their skill [which] was considered as something divine,” their position gradually declined, particularly during the reign of Elizabeth I, as poor quality, cheaply printed ballads became more popular.⁶² Percy was convinced however, that “most of the old heroic ballads in this [his own] collection were produced by this order of men [i.e. England’s ancient bards and minstrels].”⁶³ With statements such as these Percy helped to propagate the understanding of oral tradition as something to be revered and preserved from the polluting influence of print. The scholar of print and oral cultures in early modern England must reject Percy’s interpretation of oral culture as an anachronism and instead seek to understand the interactions between oral and print as contemporaries understood it.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (London: Methuen, 1982). These scholars have suggested many ways in which printing radically changed the Western world.

⁶⁰ McDowell, ““The Art of Printing was Fatal,”” 39.

⁶¹ Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (London, 1765), 1:xv.

⁶² Percy, *Reliques*. See volume one, page xv for this quotation, and pages xv-xxiii for this history as Percy wrote it in “An Essay on the Ancient Minstrels in England.”

⁶³ Percy, *Reliques*, 1:xii.

Present day scholars like Adam Fox and David Atkinson have argued against a dichotomy between oral and print cultures in early modern England. According to Atkinson, “English folk songs [...] largely exist not just as the transient products of oral performance but simultaneously as the products of a process of ‘textualization,’ whereby a work of verbal art becomes a written or printed ‘text,’ and acquires characteristics associated with the condition of being a ‘text.’”⁶⁴ Similarly, Fox suggested a tripartite process where oral tradition, manuscript culture, and print culture existed simultaneously and where each constantly expanded and reinforced the others.⁶⁵ Oral culture was inextricably linked in a symbiotic relationship with the written and printed word. Ballads were a prime example of the fluidity of oral, manuscript, and print cultures. In print, broadside ballads were unique in that they were the only form of cheap print to regularly include a tune. Ballad tunes, which easily traversed boundaries of social rank and modes of transmission, were one of the important tools that enabled this fluidity.

Some early modern English men did see a connection between music and text.⁶⁶ During the proliferation of song and poetry in the late-Elizabethan period, William Webbe wrote *A Discourse of English Poetry*. In a section on varieties of English verse, Webbe gave a few select examples, but decided that:

[...] I should avoid the tedious rehearsal of all the kinds [of verse] which are used: which I think would have been impossible, seeing they may be altered to as many forms as the poets please: neither is there any tune or stroke which may be sung or played on instruments, which hath not some poetical ditties framed according to the numbers thereof: some to Rogero, some to trenchmore, to down right squire, to galliards, to pavaues, to jigs, to brawles, to all manner of tunes which every fiddler knows better than myself, and therefore I will let them pass.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ David Atkinson, “Folk Songs in Print: Text and Tradition,” *Folk Music Journal* 8, no. 4 (2004): 457.

⁶⁵ Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500—1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). Fox makes this argument throughout the book, but explicitly explains it in the introduction.

⁶⁶ I say ‘men’ intentionally here because thus far I have only encountered this opinion in the writings of men.

⁶⁷ William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetry*, (London, 1586), Fiiiiv.

There are two relevant things to observe here. First, Webbe saw that texts and music were intertwined to the extent that poets created meters of verse that fit the rhythms of popular types of dances. In other words, there were as many types of verses as there were types of dance, and the two evolved simultaneously. Second, Webbe testified to the wide-spread knowledge of dance tunes, which he assumed amateur musicians knew. Knowledge of music was widespread, and music aided the increase of the word.

More testimony for the power of music over texts is found in the front matter of Henry Lawes' 1653 *Ayres and Dialogues*. Several patrons and fellow musicians eulogized Lawes' skill and talent in poems published at the beginning of the book. In one of these, Will[iam] Barker wrote: "That princes die not they to poets owe;/Poets themselves owe their lives to you [Henry Lawes];/ Whose fancies soon would stifle, and declare/ they could not breathe unless you lent them ayre."⁶⁸ According to Barker, poets immortalized princes through fine words that perhaps held more merit than the deeds of the prince. However, even the best poem would not last long unless it was set to a tune. "Ayre" here was a play on both "oxygen" for breathing, and "ayre" in the sense of a song. While this poem was clearly hyperbole that was intended to flatter Henry Lawes and probably also intended to sell copies of his work, the idea that song gives texts staying power is important. Adding a tune to a poem, or ballad text, gave the text additional potency in the minds and hearts of the audience.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that not only did music provide additional meaning to ballads, but it also traversed cultural boundaries and categories. Tunes linked members of both elite and

⁶⁸ Lawes, *Ayres and Dialogues*, b2v.

non-elite ranks, and also bridged the gaps between the dynamic oral, manuscript, and print cultures. In this model, the music of early modern England was a flexible cultural category that was not imposed in a “top-down” style. Rather, music was easily adaptable and flowed through boundaries and categories in a dynamic, circular pattern.⁶⁹ Music was a conduit which enabled the transmission, exchange, and procreation of culture.

⁶⁹ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xvii. See the Introduction of this study, footnote 33.

Chapter Four

Discourse and Imagination

Sexually deviant Quakers, treasonous Papists, seditious members of Parliament, and masterless “children” of England: these are some of the many characters who populated the texts of the ballads that were published during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum. The martyred King Charles I, the evil and ridiculous Oliver Cromwell, and the Parliament beast all fought for authority over this motley assortment of subjects. As the battle for the political and religious upper hand raged, the only hope of the unprotected English people, who were enslaved by the warring parties, rested on the reincarnation of an ancient hero such as St George or Hercules. Only a hero of epic valor and strength could restore peace, order, and tranquility, and only a true king could extend to the English people forgiveness and restoration of Biblical proportions.

Such was the language many ballad authors used to describe and discuss the events, people, and political and religious issues of the years between 1640 and 1660. Discourses favorable to Parliament, Oliver Cromwell, or new religious groups were notably absent from the ballads of these years. The scholar must consider why authors used these particular images and metaphors and not others. Additionally, it is important to consider how the ballad-singing public potentially understood these images and metaphors. Though it is difficult and perhaps impossible for a scholar to recreate the reactions or interpretations of an audience to a particular performance, it is possible to consider the meanings of language, images, and metaphors within the historical context of a period. This is the approach used here.

This chapter inspects the images and metaphors found in ballads. It investigates these through the lenses of the power of the printed word, the use of polemic during the Civil War and

Interregnum, and the importance of ballad performance for constructing an imaginary England. This chapter argues that ballads challenged English people to engage with authority, religion and politics in particular ways, and that they helped to create an imaginary vision of England that each person could fill in according to his or her own preference. The result was a widespread yearning for a conservative utopian future that was based on the restoration of an imagined orderly, harmonious past.¹

Historical Context

Understanding the discourse present in ballads depends on understanding the narrative of political events as they unfolded between 1640 and 1660. Therefore a brief summary of these events is useful; the emphasis is on Parliament, references to which appear most frequently in the subsequent study. The Long Parliament, which effectively ended Charles I's personal rule, began in November of 1640. This session of Parliament, which enacted a law in 1641 that only Parliament had the authority to dissolve itself, technically sat until March of 1660. As the Civil Wars began, the New Model Army, created in 1645, increased in power, contesting political dominance with Parliament. In January of 1649, Colonel Pride forcibly excluded the members of Parliament who still supported Charles I. Immediately after Pride's Purge, the remaining members of Parliament, now called the Rump Parliament, condemned Charles to death. The Rump sat until 1653, when Cromwell expelled it. A secession of brief Parliaments (the Barebones and Protectorate Parliaments) sat until 1659. Oliver Cromwell had died in 1658, leaving his son Richard to succeed him. Richard did not successfully hold power, and in May of

¹ Throughout this chapter I use the term 'conservative' to indicate distaste for change and desire to preserve continuity with the past. Here, for instance, 'a conservative utopian future' does not signify the desired type of political system, but rather means a system based on old ways. I have adapted this definition from David Cressy's in *England on Edge*, 129.

1659 the army generals recalled the original Rump Parliament, which ended Richard's brief time in power. The Rump was briefly dissolved by the army in the fall, but regained power. The situation in London deteriorated throughout the end of 1659 and early 1660 as the Rump and the army struggled against each other. Because the members of the Rump Parliament would not vote to dissolve themselves, General George Monck forced the Rump to readmit the members of Parliament who had been excluded in Pride's Purge of 1649. With the readmission of the excluded members, Parliament voted to dissolve itself, and the Long Parliament finally ended. This opened the door for Charles II to return to London on May 29, 1660.²

The Authority of Print

For early modern English people, authorship, which was experienced through the printed word, was an expression of power and authority. The ultimate example of the power of authorship experienced through print was the words of the King; most people experienced monarchical authority through the reading or hearing of the King's words in printed form.³ However, this was not a direct experience of authority. The printed page, the printer, and the binder (in the case of books) all "assisted the process of depersonalising [*sic*] authority" until eventually, text "became *identified* with authority."⁴ Thus, for example, when the King's physical presence was absent, the text itself embodied the King's authority. However, the indirectness of text also created distance between subjects and the King (or other authority), and made it easier to challenge or negotiate with that authority. Kevin Sharpe cites the Reformation as an example of the "simultaneous capacity of print to disseminate and to challenge and

² This summary is based on Harris, *London Crowds*, Chapter 3; Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), 111-118.

³ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 27.

⁴ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 28.

ultimately destroy ‘authorities’ – both textual and political.”⁵ Ballad texts, though more humble than the books Sharpe examines, could also draw on the authority of the printed word to challenge, critique, ridicule, and recreate authority.

The Bible was both the most well known and most authoritative text in seventeenth century England. One result of the English Reformation, which began over a century earlier, was a drastic change in people’s relationship to the Bible; the Bible went from a text that had to be mediated by a priest, to a text that was now available in English for personal study and interpretation. While not every English person became a scholar of the Bible, many stories and texts from the Bible were deeply ingrained in the culture.⁶ Therefore people would have understood the significance of the Biblical references and imagery in ballads. Similarly, the outlawing of celebrations based on central Biblical events, particularly Christmas, was particularly heinous to many English people.

Parliament banned the celebration of Christmas first in 1644, when Christmas fell on a prescribed fast day, and officially in 1647.⁷ Complaints about this previously unthinkable assault on a celebration of one of the fundamental tenets of Christianity recurred in many printed items, including ballads.⁸ The 1646 ballad *The World Is Turned Upside Down* specifically explored the paradoxes of this new time when “Holy Days are despised,/ New fashions are devised./ Old

⁵ Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, 28.

⁶ Watt, *Cheap Print*. Throughout this book Watt examines how religious themes in cheap print (such as ballads, chapbooks, and images) changed in response to the Reformation. Stories of characters from the Bible and texts expounding Biblical texts and principles replaced stories of Catholic saints and Catholic practices.

⁷ A printed ordinance declared “For as much as the feasts of the Nativity of Christ [...] and other festivals commonly called holy days have been heretofore superstitiously used and observed, be it ordained by the Lords and Commons in the Parliament assembled, that the said feasts [...] be no longer observed [...] within this kingdom of England.” *Die Martis 8. Iunii 1647* (London, 1647), single page.

⁸ For a few examples of printed defenses of Christmas (outside of ballads) see: John Taylor, *The Complaint of Christmas* (London, 1647); T. H. *A Ha! Christmas* (London, 1647).

Christmas is kicked out of town.”⁹ Abuses of such magnitude had not been seen since the days of the godless Caesar and Herod of the Bible. The consequences of such religious apostasy included the end of the charity shown by the wealthy to the poor and also the end of the proper roles of masters and servants. The ballad’s pertinent question “Why should we from good laws be bound?” expressed confusion over this sudden new order.¹⁰ Similarly, in “A Christmas Song,” another ballad which lamented the absence of Christmas celebrations, it was obvious to the author that the same kind of authority that saw fit to ban Christmas was exactly the type of authority that would “maintain ‘twas law to kill their sovereign.”¹¹ If one could deny the supreme importance of celebrating Christ’s coming to earth, it was only natural that one could deny the legitimacy of Christ’s representative on earth, the King.

Images of disasters and monsters from Biblical and mythological stories often appeared in ballads as metaphors for current events. This type of metaphor underscored the idea that dangers of such epic proportions had not been known since ancient times. For example, references to Noah and the flood occur in many ballads. The flood conjured up thoughts of the destructive wrath of God that once cleansed the earth of all sinfulness. However, even such drastic action ended with a promise of hope, when God promised Noah that he would never do such a thing again.¹²

The ballad *Love Lies a Bleeding* was an elegy to love. The ballad’s text makes clear that love, which radicals tossed off the throne along with Charles I, seemed to be all but dead in the land, but was the only hope for restoring England to health and prosperity. The ballad’s final stanza equated peace with God’s pardon. The dove who brought back an olive branch back to

⁹ Anon., *The World Is Turned Upside Down* (London, 1646), single page.

¹⁰ Anon., *The World Is Turned Upside Down*, single page.

¹¹ Anon., “A Christmas Song,” in *The Rump* (London, 1660), D7v.

¹² Gen. 9:9-17 (King James Version).

Noah signified this divine pardon: “Then let us live in peace and turn our swords to sickles,/ when Noah’s Dove went out/ then God’s pardon was sent out,/ They that would have it so, I hope will say amen to it.”¹³ Though the wave of current events might have felt like the deadly flood of Biblical times, it would hopefully end with an assurance of God’s pardon and restoration of peace.

Another ballad author compared the long wait for the return of the King to Noah and his family’s wait inside the ark for the flood waters to recede. “’Till when, Ararat upon thy hill, / My hopes did cast her anchor still,/ Until I saw some peaceful dove,/ Bring home that branch which dear I love,/ ‘Til then I did wait, / the waters abate, /Which most disturbed my brain,/ and never did rejoice,/ ‘Til I did hear the voice,/ That the King enjoys his own again.”¹⁴ Those who read and sang this ballad would have recognized that Ararat was the name of the mountain upon which Noah’s ark came to a rest.¹⁵ The dove brought hope that order would be restored. The narrator waited to rejoice until “I did hear the voice” just as Noah waited for God’s summons to come out of the ark.¹⁶ Similarly, when the flood ended, God was, in a sense, back in control of his creation, just as Charles II “enjoyed his own again” upon the restoration of the monarchy.

The Israelites’ period of enslavement in Egypt was another Biblical reference found in ballads. The Israelite slaves spent their days at the arduous task of brick-making. Not only did the Israelites live in slavery, but they also could not practice their religion freely because they were in a “pagan” land. Pharaoh, angered by Moses’ repeated requests that he allow the Israelites to worship God in the desert, ordered the Israelites to make bricks without straw. Now the Israelite slaves had to collect the straw necessary for brick making without decreasing their

¹³ Gen. 8:11; Anon., *Love Lies a Bleeding*, single page.

¹⁴ Anon., *England’s Great Prognosticator*, single page.

¹⁵ Gen. 8:4.

¹⁶ Gen. 8:15-16.

production of bricks: a nearly impossible task.¹⁷ The famous ten plagues of Egypt soon followed as God inflicted his punishment on the Egyptians for not allowing the Israelites to worship in accordance with their customs.

Ballad authors used this story to describe the plight of the English people under Parliamentary rule. According to one ballad, members of Parliament worked only for the advancement and enrichment of themselves and their friends while they viewed all other English men and women as only a means to an end. The author described it in these words: “Religion they waved,/ Now they had us enslaved/ And got us sure in their claw,/ they pulled off their mask,/ and set us our task,/ which is next to make brick without straw.”¹⁸ Here was an analogy that compared Parliament to an unspecified type of beast who had English men and women in its “claw.” The full stanza drew on the account of the Israelites’ time in Egypt from the book of Exodus. The mention of the “waving” of religion, “enslavement,” and making “bricks without straw” all in a single stanza of a ballad clearly equated the plight of the English men and women under the Rump Parliament with that of the Israelites under the Egyptians.

The presentation of current religious and political issues in Biblical terms would likely have resonated with contemporary audiences, familiar as they were with these stories. Contemporary events couched in Biblical terms also had further implications. Equating members of Parliament with the Egyptians found in Exodus also equated them with God’s displeasure, and God’s ultimate scourging of the Egyptians. Conversely, comparing English men and women with the Israelites, or with Noah and his family, implied that God’s blessing and favor would eventually fall upon them.

¹⁷ Exod. 5:1-19.

¹⁸ Anon., *Rump Rampant*, (London, 1660), single page. This ballad also appeared in *The Rump*, Bb3v; and *Ratts*, 7.

Images from Roman mythology, which were also common currency in seventeenth century culture, would similarly have made sense to contemporary audiences. One such image was that of the Hydra, the frightening serpentine creature with many heads. This creature was nearly indestructible and violence only increased its strength; if one of its heads was cut off, two more grew in its place. Only the hero Hercules finally vanquished the terrible creature. The Rump Parliament was a Hydra of sorts because “If one head ye kill,/ Another starts up, and another full as ill;/ So, though one Rump is gone yet another sits still.”¹⁹ If the Rump Parliament was the Hydra, then it would take a Hercules to slay it.

Continuing the Hercules myth, some ballad authors described Parliament as the Augean Stables, which only someone as great as Hercules could clean.²⁰ The real life hero who slew the Parliamentary Hydra and cleaned its stable was of course George Monck. The analogies between Monck and Hercules, and between Parliament and the Augean Stables seemed to have been well known, as references to these analogies appeared in ballads that did not otherwise explicitly relate the two: “But our Hercules Monk [*sic*],/ Though it grievously stunk,/ Now hath cleansed that Augean stable.”²¹ The implications here was that the filth Parliament had created was unrivaled by anything since the days of Hercules, and only a hero of mythic strength could clean up the mess.

The application of characters and events from authoritative texts to religious and political issues emphasized the gravity of current events. It also served as a way to satirize contemporary actors and institutions. Satire removed the authority of these actors and institutions by making them look ridiculous in the context of truly authoritative texts. Describing the collective

¹⁹ Anon., *The Rump Served In With a Grand Sallet*, single page.

²⁰ Anon., “Chippes of the Old Block; or Hercules Cleansing the Augean Stable,” in *The Rump* (London, 1660), Bbr, and in *Ratts* (London, 1660), 49.

²¹ Anon., “The Second Part of Saint George for England” in *The Rump* (London, 1660), K8r. See K8v for this quote.

members of Parliament as the ancient Egyptians, or the institution of Parliament as the Hydra or the Augean Stables made these look godless, evil, and filthy. This kind of language and the ideas it evoked was also a part of polemical writing.

Polemic in ballads

Polemic played an important role in early modern England, particularly during the Civil Wars and Interregnum. Jesse Lander, who examined the literary culture of polemic in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, defined polemics as dialogues with other discourses that “always attack a target.”²² In Lander’s study of pamphlets, these targets were other literary sources such as books or pamphlets. Polemic also was present in ballads, but here it attacked identities. In this context the arrows were polemical discourses and the targets were religious sectarians and political adversaries. This fits with Lander’s assertion that “Polemic is not only a literary form; it is also a social and cultural practice, a practice devoted to the constitution of particular communities.”²³ Polemic in ballads did not remain on the printed page, but instead permeated daily life through such means as oral tradition.

The practice of singing ballads containing polemical discourses was performative; or in other words, repeated performances of polemical ballads established and then reinforced the stereotypes and other tropes these ballads contained. The performative aspect of ballads made the polemical discourses found in them particularly effective. Between 1640 and 1660, political and religious fragmentation and sectarianism were a regular part of life. The practice of polemic helped form and solidify people’s understanding and conception of current political and religious issues.

²² Lander, *Inventing Polemic*, 30.

²³ Lander, *Inventing Polemic*, 34-35.

The polemical image of Parliament as a dangerous, unruly beast occurred frequently in ballads. This image began even before the regicide. “A strange sight to be seen in Westminster,” which dated from 1647, called Parliament “such a monster as hath not been/ at any time in England, nay.”²⁴ The monster had a tail instead of a head and had too many eyes, ears, mouths, and hands. It was well armed, and was afraid of “nought in this world but cavaliers.”²⁵ The monster’s father was unknown, but the devil was a likely candidate. The monster’s religion was difficult to determine: “Some think it is a Jew disguised/ And why, because ‘tis circumcised./ [...] In some points ‘tis a Jesuit Priest,/ In some it is a Calvinist./ For ‘tis not justified, it saith,/ By good works but by public faith./ Some call it an Anabaptist, some/ Think now that Antichrist is come.”²⁶ Though the Parliament monster in this interpretation represented political anarchy and religious radicalism, the ballad’s author hopefully instructed the audience to “Make haste to see it or it will be gone,/ For now ‘tis sick and drawing on.”²⁷ What the author did not know at the time was that this monster would continue to terrorize England for many more years.

By the time of the Restoration, the image of Parliament as a headless beast was nearly ubiquitous in polemical ballads and appeared in both brief references and long analogies. The author of one ballad entreated his audience to “Lend me your ears, not cropt, and I’ll sing/ of an hideous monster, or Parliament thing.”²⁸ Before proceeding with his song, the author then warned his audience to “take care that no sectary be in this place,/ For if you offend the least babe of grace,/ The Rump will be ready to fly in your face.”²⁹ The beast was unpredictable, and

²⁴ Anon., “A Strange Sight to be seen at Westminster,” in *The Rump* (London, 1660), Hr. Note that though *The Rump* was published in 1660, this ballad dates from 1647, as noted in the collection.

²⁵ Anon., “A Strange Sight to be seen at Westminster,” Hr.

²⁶ Anon., “A Strange Sight to be seen at Westminster,” Hv.

²⁷ Anon., “A Strange Sight to be seen at Westminster,” Hv.

²⁸ Anon., “The Rump Carbonado’d,” Ev.

²⁹ Anon., “The Rump Carbonado’d,” Ev.

the least offense could provoke it to lash out in rage against innocent bystanders who were perhaps the very people who gathered to sing ballads.

The image of the Parliament beast as the Antichrist, as already seen in the 1647 ballad “A strange sight to be seen in Westminster,” continued until the Restoration. In the days leading up to the Restoration one ballad author professed that though “‘Tis much disputed who Antichrist is,/ I think ‘tis this Rump, nor am I in jest.”³⁰ It was common to accuse a hated figure or organization of being the antichrist at this time. For example, anti-Catholic literature routinely labeled the Pope the Antichrist. Though English men and women did not necessarily believe that Parliament was the actual Antichrist, this language did express the degree of animosity felt towards the Parliament as an independent “creature” or institution. The repeated references to Parliament or the Rump as the antichrist helped to establish this as part of Parliament’s identity in the minds of the people.

Because ballads were a widely accessible form of entertainment, the polemical discourse they contained was uniquely effective. A polemical ballad sung in a tavern with other members of a community could establish group identities. Alastair Bellany, when discussing the power of libels that were set to music and performed, suggested that “repeated refrains, tune and lyric combin[ed] to bring the audience into the performance, implicating them in the mockery of Buckingham [who was the target of the libel].”³¹ The performance of or participation in the singing of lyrics, polemical or otherwise, implied at least an unconscious approval of the subject matter at hand. The entertainment value of ballads then ensured that ballads were frequently repeated through reading, singing, and transmission.

³⁰ Anon., “St. George for England,” in *Ratts*, 30. This quote is on page 31.

³¹ Bellany, “Singing Libel,” 191.

The Parliament beast provided a vulgar, but amusing and pertinent way to make a point about the legitimacy of authority. *The Rump Roughly but Righteously Handled* details the history of ‘this Rump-Regnant,’ which, “like a wild skittish tit/ [...] would let neither prince, peer, nor prelate sit.”³² Oliver Cromwell temporarily succeeded in mounting and riding the beast, but when “restive it grew, and left its true pacing” Cromwell “resolv[ed] on his own legs to stand/ and turn[ed] the rump out of the stable.”³³ However, the beast returned, and now it was necessary for “Monck the St. George to kill dragon Rump/ and safely return to the King his fair daughter.”³⁴ The Parliament beast was more formidable than an ordinary beast. No authority could harness it and tame its spirit. More frightening perhaps was that the beast developed a will of its own which it used first to dispose of its masters and then to rule in their place. Only a great hero, and one who was loyal to the true authority, the king, could ultimately slay the beast, thereby returning to the king what was rightfully his: both monarchical authority and his child, England.

The name “Rump Parliament” afforded ample opportunities for ridicule, which included the image of an animal ruled by its rump, or with a “Rump” for a head. “The Rump,” which “’tis a thing dressed up in a Parliament’s hood” is like a real Parliament, except that “the tail stands where the head should.”³⁵ Its locus of leadership made “the Rump” different from other beasts: “A cat has a rump, and a cat has nine lives,/ Yet when her head’s off, her rump never strives;/

³² Anon., *The Rump Roughly but Righteously Handled*, single page.

³³ Anon., *The Rump Roughly but Righteously Handled*, single page. This section of the ballad appears to complement Cromwell for bridling Parliament. Nevertheless this is clearly a Royalist ballad. For one thing it was published in 1660 after Cromwell’s death. The line “King Charles in heaven, in hell tyrant Noll is” near the end of the ballad clears up any further confusion.

³⁴ Anon., *The Rump Roughly but Righteously Handled*, single page.

³⁵ Anon., “A New Year’s Gift For the Rump,” in *Ratts*, 13. The quoted section is found on page 16. Also found in *The Rump*, Aa3r.

But our rump from the grave hath made two retrieves [*sic*].”³⁶ Without its proper head, the King, “the Rump” exhibited most unusual behavior that defied the rules of nature and the natural order of things.

The word “rump,” then as now, indicated the hindquarters of a person or animal and many ballad authors capitalized on this double meaning. Some focused on the “rump” as a cut of meat to be cooked and eaten. For one author, the rump made a poor feast that required an herbal cure to settle the stomach: “Poetical muses have fallen heavy as a mallet,/ upon the poor rump for disgusting their pallet,/ to cure the distress now take a grand sallet [*sic*].”³⁷ The author of a ballad celebrating General Monck’s order for the readmission of the excluded members of Parliament (which effectively ended the Rump Parliament’s reign) couched the text entirely in terms of preparing, roasting, and eating the rump. The rump “hath lain long in brine,/ Made by the people’s eyne [*sic*]” and was ready to go into the fire where “Like a roasting pig’s ear/ it sings, do ye hear/ ‘Tis enough, come quickly the platter.”³⁸ The table was set, and the people sat down to eat, only to discover that “This rump it stinks above ground” and therefore must be burnt: “This fire we’ll style/ The funeral pyre.”³⁹ The rump, described as a piece of meat, was so putrid that no amount of preparation would render it palatable.⁴⁰

Other authors stooped very low indeed and based their polemical language on the biological functions of the rump as an anatomical feature. The results were often hilarious.

³⁶ Anon., *The Resurrection of the Rump* (London, 1660), single page. This ballad is also found by a similar title “The Re-Resurrection of the Rump” in *Ratts*, 16; and *The Rump*, Aar.

³⁷ Anon., *The Rump Served in with a Grand Sallet*, single page.

³⁸ Anon., *A Psalm Sung by the People Before the Bonfires* (London, 1660), single page. Also in *Ratts*, 54.

³⁹ Anon., *A Psalm Sung by the People Before the Bonfires*, single page.

⁴⁰ Londoners literally roasted rumps in celebration on the night of February 11 according to Samuel Pepys: “In King-street seven or eight; and all along burning, and roasting, and drinking for rumps. There being rumps tied upon sticks and carried up and down. The butchers at the May Pole in the Strand rang a peal with their knives when they were going to sacrifice their rump. On Ludgate Hill there was one turning of the spit that had a rump tied upon it, and another basting of it.” Pepys, *Diary*, 1:55.

According to one author “The rump is derived by lineal descent,/as the undoubted heir and excrement,/ of the yet perpetual Parliament.”⁴¹ The Rump Parliament then, was comprised of the digested remains of the (seemingly) eternal Parliament. The ballad “Bum Fodder” takes this type of humor farther. The ballad’s subtitle, “Waste Paper, proper to wipe the Nation’s Rump with, or your own” referred to both the author’s intentions towards the Rump Parliament, which was “all arse and no body”, and also an early-modern alternate use for cheap print.⁴² The author proceeded ignobly: “Old Noll [Cromwell] when we talked of *Magna Charta*,/ Did prophesy well we should all smart-a;/ And now we have found his Rump’s *Magna Farta*.”⁴³ Discussing Parliament with scatological humor indicated a freedom to criticize this now ridiculous and hated authority. It also placed Parliament on the level with the most reviled and disgusting of substances.

Images of disorder comprised the majority of the images found in ballads. These images were certainly polemical, but could also be humorous. People have described the period of the English Civil Wars and Interregnum as “the world turned upside down” almost from the beginning of the chaos. The “topsy-turvy” or “upside-down” world was a common theme in the early modern period both in England and in Europe as a whole.⁴⁴ This image was therefore one with which English people of this time were well acquainted. However, the author of the ballad *The World Is Turned Upside Down* suggested that this time, the world, or natural order of the world, had indeed been overturned. In fact, contemporary conditions were unprecedented: “Since

⁴¹ Anon., *The Rump Served in with a Grand Sallet*, single page.

⁴² Anon., “Bum Fodder,” in *Ratts*, 40; Spufford, *Small Books*, 49. Spufford mentions this ballad as an explicit reference to the fate that often befell cheap print.

⁴³ Anon., “Bum Fodder,” 42.

⁴⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Bakhtin was the first scholar to elucidate the importance and centrality of the carnival atmosphere to early modern society; Burke, *Popular Culture*, Chapter 7, “The World of Carnival”. In this chapter Burke discusses instances of the carnival, or ‘upside down’ order as found throughout the European continent; For examples of times when ‘upside down’ rituals were performed in England, see Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England*.

Herod, Caesar, and many more,/ you never heard the like before.”⁴⁵ This “world turned upside down” was not a good-humored, sanctioned celebration when people performed inverted roles for a limited period of time. Suddenly the carnival act had become a pernicious reality that could not be undone by the removal of a mask or costume. Subsequent authors and scholars have continued to use the image of the “upside down world” to describe the period between 1640 and 1660, with Christopher Hill’s book of the same name standing as perhaps the most famous recent example.⁴⁶

Ballad authors drew heavily from the theme of the “upside down world” when describing the contemporary religious situation. Sexual depravity was perhaps the ultimate form of disorder, and therefore it was a popular discourse used to defame religious sects. The ballads “The Four Legged Elder,” “News From Colchester,” and “The Four Legged Quaker,” each describe in great detail the sexual transgression of bestiality and its consequences. In “The Four Legged Elder,” the maid of a Presbyterian elder “made herself a bride to one that had four legs [a dog].” Her master, the elder, was upset because now people would think “that a lay-elder is a thing made up half-dog half-man,” which was clearly the implication of the ballad. The dog was hanged for his crime, but the maid, who was incarcerated in Newgate Gaol, escaped with her life after a severe whipping. The ballad’s author commented that “had she been a cavalier, surely she had been hanged.”⁴⁷ Bestiality was also the theme in “News from Colchester,” which told of “certain carnal passage betwixt a Quaker and a colt,”⁴⁸ and in “The Four-Legged Quaker,” which told essentially the same story. As the name suggested, “The Four Legged Quaker” was a nod to “The Four Legged Elder,” and this connection was made explicit within the ballad: “But though ‘twas

⁴⁵ Anon., *The World Is Turned Upside Down*, single page.

⁴⁶ Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*.

⁴⁷ Anon., “The Four Legged Elder,” in *The Rump* (London 1660), Br-B3r.

⁴⁸ Anon., “News From Colchester,” in *The Rump* (London 1660), B3v-B5r.

foul ‘tween Swash and Jane, [the dog and the maid from “The Four Legged Elder”] yet this is ten times worse, For then a dog did play the man, but man now played the horse.”⁴⁹ The inflammatory connection between sectarians and sexual perversion became clear in these examples, and this theme pervaded ballads that mention sectarians.⁵⁰

Discourses of disorder, which were similar to those of the “upside down world,” were frequently employed to describe both religious sects and political radicals. Sectarians, besides being guilty of alleged sexual improprieties, created social chaos. One ballad author referred to the “mad and frantic fits” of Brownists, Adamites, and Fifth Monarchists, and then decried lay-preaching: “A Shoemaker a Dipper was, and left off stitching leather, he ducked poor fools to save their sins, like silly sots together.”⁵¹ The assertion here was that not only did sectarians exhibit unruly behavior, but they also ceased to function as contributing members of society. Another ballad complained that “these wild sectarians do annoy and fill the land with sin” and that “the Antinomians lead the way, for to commit all evil, saying to sin it’s for their good, though it lead them to the Devil.”⁵² This ballad indicted sectarians for sinning indiscriminately and unrepentantly, and thereby threatening social order. Thus sectarians, regardless of what they believed or practiced, represented chaos and social disorder.

Royalists, who believed in monarchical authority, applied the discourse of disorder to Parliament. In 1647 when Charles I was in captivity, the ballad “*Lex Talionis*” was published. It was precisely *lex talionis* (a Latin term meaning “war of reprisal”) that people feared during the

⁴⁹ Anon., “The Four Legged Quaker,” in *The Rump* (London 1660), B5r-B7v.

⁵⁰ Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982). See Bray for more information on discourses of sodomy and bestiality, particularly Chapter One.

⁵¹ Anon., *A Lecture for all Sects and Schismatics to Read* (London 1641-1643), single page.

⁵² Anon., *An Atheistical Creature Living at Lambert*, single page.

Civil Wars.⁵³ However, in this ballad the author applied the term *lex talionis* to describe the mayhem created by the King's fall from authority. In the new order, "the army and the Parliament must now dispute what government shall be established in this nation." Yet in the absence of monarchical authority the people "can neither act or yet prevent those dangers which do now appear." Even worse, in the religious chaos created by the absence of a state sanctioned church, the people can not worship properly, although "we would serve God if we knew how."⁵⁴ The author associated Charles I with political and religious order, which was more important than the actual person of Charles I.⁵⁵ Here we see the separation of the world of actual events from an imaginary world of ideals.

Two years later, after the execution of Charles I, a ballad was published that presented a fictitious conversation between Charles I "in his coffin," Oliver Cromwell "on the throne," and the people "in the pit." The people, who cried to Charles I for forgiveness and salvation, lamented that under Parliament "excise doth give free-quarter birth while soldiers multiply. Our lives we forfeit every day, our money cuts our throats: our laws are taken clean away, or shrunk to traitors' votes."⁵⁶ Without divine rule, the people had no rights, were abused, and were subjected to lawlessness. Complete disorder reigned supreme. The language of disorder was also used to describe the Rump Parliament in 1659 and 1660, but clearly the discourse was established before then.

Just prior to the restoration, the restored Rump Parliament became perhaps the supreme example of the world turned upside down, and by extension, the most relevant and convincing

⁵³ Barbara Donagan, "Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War," *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 4 (October, 1994): 1137-1166. See page 1140 for this definition of *lex talionis*. See the complete article for a study of how violence worked during the English Civil Wars.

⁵⁴ Anon., *Lex Talionis* (London 1647), single page.

⁵⁵ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

⁵⁶ Anon., *A Coffin for King Charles A Crown for Cromwell* (London 1649), single page.

reason that the reestablishment of the monarchy was an absolute necessity. Supporting the monarchy in early 1660 has little to do with Royalism, and much to do with conservatism. As Harris asserted, even “[t]he sects, outmanoeuvred [sic], eventually came to accept the inevitability of the Restoration.”⁵⁷ The images of “the Rump” as a headless beast, and as a beast ruled by its hindquarters have been examined above. These clearly fit into the “upside down world” scheme. Even the idea that the state should serve the people was considered an inversion of the natural order. As one author bitterly described it: “Our masters won’t supply us, / With money, food, and clothing: / Let the state look to it, / We’ll find one that will do it.”⁵⁸ The deaths of Oliver Cromwell and his son Richard in quick succession left Parliament truly without a master of any kind. Thus Parliament became the ultimate authority in England. The dissolution of political order corresponded with the dissolution of religious order, which could only lead to political anarchy and religious damnation.

The image of the devil unleashed in England appeared in ballads as a response to the crisis. *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament* was a pertinent example of this kind of imagery. The ballad described how the devil entered England in 1641 (before then he had resided on the European continent) and traveled around the country spreading his deceitful messages. First he commandeered the pulpits, from which he enticed people to “Come buy of my balsam approved to be / an antidote against the episcopacy, / and here is that most precious thing / frees all my saints from the thrall of the King.”⁵⁹ Clearly such things could only be thought of, let alone acted upon, under the influence of the devil. The devil worked his way through the church, the crown, and the commonwealth, and eventually ruled alongside Oliver Cromwell. However, “The dearest

⁵⁷ Harris, *London Crowds*, 59-60.

⁵⁸ Anon., “A New Ballad,” in *The Rump* (London, 1660), Fr. The quoted section is from page F3r.

⁵⁹ Anon., *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament*, single page.

friends they say must part, / So did Noll [Cromwell] and the devil with a heavy heart.”⁶⁰ Finally, after more alliances, the devil came to rest in Hugh Peters, one of the regicides. Upon Peters’ execution, the devil finally departed, though “a thousand years hence [he] means to see you again.”⁶¹ This ballad was biting and funny and delivered a scathing review of the years between 1641 and 1660. However, it also made an interesting point: the Restoration of the monarchy was necessary to excise the devil from England and return him to his former exile on the continent. Only after the Restoration could justice (here indicated by the execution of the regicides), and consequently order, return to England.

Creating an Imaginary England

What is noteworthy about the images and discourses in most polemical ballads is that while they vehemently and specifically enumerated the many problems and abuses inflicted by radical politicians and religious groups, they did not offer solutions or suggest ways to bring about change. In other words, though most polemical ballads were “against” many things, they were “for” very little other than a general sense of order and morality. Even some of the abuses listed were fictionalized, or at least subjective and therefore difficult to accurately assess: the “enslavement” of the English people; the disappearance of “love,” or perhaps human kindness, between people; and the eschewing of right belief (right belief according to whom?). These seem like generic topics that nearly everyone would agree were a problem. The mood was conservative despite the biting language. Consequently it is more logical to categorize this group of ballads as generally “anti-radical” rather than “against” anything particular.

⁶⁰ Anon., *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament*, single page.

⁶¹ Anon., *Hugh Peters Last Will and Testament*, single page.

It was possible to find a generic “anti-radicalism” in ballads. Following the end of Charles I’s personal rule in 1640, some ballad authors tried to blame an undefined type of “radicalism” for Charles I’s shortcomings rather than blaming Charles himself. *Canterbury’s Conscience Convicted*, printed in 1641 upon the arrest of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, was a first-person confession from the Archbishop, as overheard by a passerby, who was the narrator of the ballad. Laud enumerated his sins, and included among them that “’Twas I that mobbed the King of late/ To take up arms against the Scots, / I have offended King and State,/ But Parliament found out my plots.”⁶² In one short stanza this fanciful apportionment of blame expunged King Charles’ record while it reassigned full culpability to Laud, who was presented as the deceitful religious radical. It is important to remember that whether Laud was a religious radical or a religious reformer was in the eyes of the beholder; in this case he was clearly the former.⁶³ It is also interesting to note that at this time Parliament was still an instrument of justice, at least to the author of this ballad. Even before Parliament morphed into the “headless beast” and the ultimate radical body it appears that radicals were easiest to blame for England’s woes.

A few years later Parliament sentenced Charles I to death and executed him. Again, radicals were responsible for this catastrophe. A ballad published in 1649, the year of Charles’ death, closed with the following two stanzas:

Let us cheer up each other then,
And show ourselves true Englishmen,
And not like bloody Wolves and [illegible],
As we have been these many years,

⁶² Anon., *Canterbury’s Conscience Convicted*, single page.

⁶³ Cressy, *England on Edge*. See Part II for a discussion of Laud’s reform efforts prior to 1640 and for a description of the breakdown of the Church of England between 1640 and 1642. Laud was a religious radical to those who supported the Calvinist direction of the Church of England under James I. However, Laud was a religious conservative to those who considered Calvinism radical.

A royal health I then begun,
 Unto the rising of the sun,
 Gallant English spirits do not thus complain,
 The sun that sets may after rise again.

The father of our Kingdom's dead,
 His royal sun [*sic*] from England's fled,
 God send all well that wars may cease,
 And we enjoy a happy peace;
 A royal health I then begun,
 Unto the rising of the sun,
 Gallant English spirits do not thus complain,
 The sun that sets may after rise again.⁶⁴

This ballad, which lamented the king's demise, spoke to "true Englishmen" who were longing for a "happy peace." These "true Englishmen" were the opposite of the "bloody wolves," which seems to indicate those responsible for and participating in radical religious and political activity. As true Englishmen, they should "cheer each other up" so that they might be "gallant English spirits" who did not "complain" about their reduced circumstances.

This ballad, though more of an elegy to the dead king, was still anti-radical. And while it was clearly royalist and favored a monarchy, it was more in favor of the king as a concept or an office than the king as a particular person. This position then left much room for imagination, as the hoped for office of king could be filled by any sort of king a person imagined was suitable for the role. Many anti-radical, pro-monarchy ballads were published in late 1659 and early 1660 either in anticipation or celebration of the restoration of Charles II.

The Royal Health to The Rising Sun illustrated another theme that was prevalent throughout ballads published between 1640 and 1660: nostalgia for the past, and hope that the nostalgic past would be restored in the future. The ballad's author expressed nostalgia for the past by calling Charles I "the father of our Kingdom," and by distinguishing between the "bloody

⁶⁴ Anon., *The Royal Health to the Rising Sun* (London, 1649), single page.

wolves” of the present (“as we have been these many years”) and the “true Englishmen,” who were presumably relics of times gone by. The chorus that followed each verse of the ballad repeatedly pointed the audience to their only source of hope that this nostalgic past would return: the eventual restoration of the monarchy. The word “sun,” which appeared both in the chorus and in various verses of the ballad, seems to be interchangeable with the homophone “son.” Therefore, this ballad reminded the English that the monarchy was their source of life, (or “sun”), and their only hope for continued life was to be found in the “son” of the executed king.

Nostalgia for times past and hope that those days would be restored in the future appeared often. Though in reality there was much conflict and discontent in the days leading up to the Civil Wars, many ballads presented this time in language that was almost utopian. According to one ballad, Charles I, during his personal rule, had only the most pure of intentions when he called the fateful Parliament of 1640: “He did it with full intent,/ Our grievances for to remove,/ And to settle us with peace and love.”⁶⁵ Prior to 1640 then, it would seem that Charles I was the ideal ruler. Similarly, “Religion [was] once so purely taught” in England, but now “Most of our old clergy martyrs be,/ For loving God and their loyalty.”⁶⁶ In other words, the clergy of yesteryear could be accused only of loving God and King too much. The author went on to lament the loss of common law, liberty, and property, among other things, each of which was apparently enjoyed perfectly prior to the outbreak of the Civil Wars.

Now though, the order of the day was determined by authorities who “rule against customs and laws.”⁶⁷ Even the poor hangman testified that “I have lived to see such wretchedness,/ When none but honesty are crimes,/ [...] The high court of justice was out of

⁶⁵ Anon., *A Review of the Rebellion*, single page.

⁶⁶ Anon., *A Review of the Rebellion*, single page.

⁶⁷ Anon., *The City of London’s New Litany*, single page.

use,/ the thieves and the bench had made a truce.”⁶⁸ According to the hangman, justice was clearly on its head, as criminals now consorted with officials of the law and the only crimes were good deeds. The striking implication here is that these deplorable conditions contrasted sharply with the conditions of the past (“I have lived to see...”). It seems for this hangman then, that people in the past meted out justice properly and prized and rewarded good deeds.

Taking a more acerbic tone, one ballad author told how “Old Nick [Satan], who lurked this many a year/ In Calvin’s stool and Luther’s chair/ At Amsterdam in ‘forty one/ did hold a convocation,/ and resolved to cross the brine/ and enter a herd of English swine.”⁶⁹ The author’s feelings about the reformers Calvin and Luther are clearly apparent here. The devil “entering a herd of English swine” referred to the Biblical story of Jesus and Legion. The group of demons called Legion taunted Jesus, who cast them out of the man and into a nearby herd of swine. The swine, now demon possessed, hurled themselves over the edge of a cliff to their deaths.⁷⁰ The reference to this story in this ballad suggested that the events of 1641 year made it possible for the devil finally to cross the English Channel and take up residence in the English people. However, this implied that before 1641, the faith of the English kept the devil at bay across the channel, relegated to the European continent. A faith pure enough to keep the devil at bay was a true faith indeed.

Ballads portrayed the days prior to the Civil War as a time of peace, justice, and safety. People practiced religion freely and purely, and authority was loving and just. As the ballad *Love Lies a Bleeding* put it, “When love did nourish,/ England did flourish.”⁷¹ However, it is

⁶⁸ Anon., “The Hangman’s Last Will and Testament,” in *The Rump*, K4r. Quoted sections are from pages K4r and K5r.

⁶⁹ Anon., *Hugh Peter’s Last Will and Testament*, single page; Note also that the quoted text also references the unleashing of the devil in England, as discussed earlier.

⁷⁰ Mark 5:1-14.

⁷¹ Anon., *Love Lies a Bleeding*, single page.

profoundly telling that authors did not define “love,” nor did they define what form this perfect religion and authority took, despite the assurance that “It was not thus [...] when Betty ruled in Britain.”⁷² Though these ballads were for the most part clearly anti-radical, “radical” was not defined outside of scathing satirical stereotypes. Was the authority of the nostalgic past an authoritarian monarchy or a constitutional one? Did the religion of the nostalgic past espouse a Laudian style of worship, a “Puritan” style, or did it allow for pluralism? These unanswered questions were important because they left room for the imagination. A person longing for the return of Laudian ceremony was free to envision “the past” as a time when this form of worship predominated. Or a person could long for the return of the Halcyon days enjoyed “when Betty ruled in Britain.”

A recurring discourse in many ballads was the prediction that this subjective, utopian past would return in the future, often upon the restoration of the monarchy. The text of “The Cock-Crowing”, though it was published in 1660 in *The Rump*, was written sometime prior to George Monck’s entry into London, as seen in such lines as “Though Monck’s mind lies not open/ To every eye that’s busy, / A free Parliament/ Is in his intent.”⁷³ Therefore, at the time this ballad was written, there was still no assurance that the Restoration of Charles II would indeed come to fruition. Nevertheless, the ballad provided a picture of the many things that would be restored with the end of the Rump Parliament. Among other things, theatres would operate freely, harvests would be fruitful, “We’ll preach and pray [wi]th out canting,” “All nations shall adore us,” “The citizens shall flourish,” all when “Charles waine’s ore the new chimney.”⁷⁴ Clearly, none all of these things were unconditionally true before 1640, nor would they be true again in

⁷² Anon., *Love Lies a Bleeding*, single page.

⁷³ Anon., “The Cock-Crowing,” in *The Rump* (London, 1660), L5v. Quoted portion is from page L6r.

⁷⁴ Anon., “The Cock-Crowing,” in *The Rump*. Sections referenced are on pages L6v, L7r, L7v, and L8v.

1660. Additionally, they were left quite undefined. What it would mean to have all nations adore England or for all citizens to flourish is left up to the imagination of the individual.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, it was clear to the author that all this would happen once Charles II assumed the throne.

England's Great Prognosticator presented a utopian vision that referenced Biblical descriptions of heaven. Prophecy and astrology were important elements of early modern English culture into the seventeenth century.⁷⁶ However, now that the King has returned, "I think myself to be as wise/ as most that gazes in the skies,/ [...] by which I can tell/ all things will be well/ Now the King enjoys his own again."⁷⁷ In other words, it no longer took an expert to foresee that all things would return to order and prosperity. The ballad's "Prognosticator" went on to describe how wise men would once more be elevated to powerful positions, economic prosperity would return, and Parliament would strive only for peace. The final effect would be an Elysian dream: "When all these things to pass shall come,/ Then farewell musket, pike, and drum,/ The lamb shall with the Lion feed,/ That were a happy time indeed."⁷⁸ The Restoration, at least until it actually happened, offered the ultimate picture of peace and contentment, the perfect respite from tumult of the previous two decades.

Another opinion, though less visionary, was that "Since the realm lost its head/ [...] We have tried many new,/ But find it too true/ that no head fits so well as our own."⁷⁹ In this case it was England, rather than the Rump Parliament, who was a headless creature. No other type of head had been found that could substitute for its own and competently care for and govern the

⁷⁵ Harris, *London Crowds*, 52-61. Here Harris explored various expectations the people of London had about the Restoration. He also cites several ballads about the Rump.

⁷⁶ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 283-432.

⁷⁷ Anon., *England's Great Prognosticator*, single page.

⁷⁸ Anon., *England's Great Prognosticator*, single page.

⁷⁹ Anon., "A City Ballad," in *The Rump* (London, 1660), C5v.

body. On a more satirical note, in *The Rump Ululant*, “The Rump” itself spoke and bid farewell to the larks and privileges it enjoyed. These included “false honors and usurped power,” making “Religion do our drudgery to base ends,” and robbing “the whole of food to pamper up a few.”⁸⁰ Though this ballad did not offer an explicit vision of a utopian future, it certainly implied one. The confessions of “The Rump” formed an image of all that would be absent now that the Rump was no longer in power. “The Rump” ended its confession with the acknowledgement that, due to the severity of its crimes, “We know our high affronts to Church and State make room for us in hell;/ But yet we’ll hope ‘till the sad rope says, ‘bid the world farewell.’”⁸¹ “The Rump” brought to justice is a sign of order restored. And though “The Rump” might hope otherwise, justice seemed inevitable. This ballad reminded its audience what the world would be like when creatures like “The Rump” were no longer free to live in it.

Imagining the Restoration of Tradition

Traditional ballads, which were printed alongside polemical ballads during this period, likely contributed to the establishment of an imaginary England. The traditional ballads most often reprinted during this period included: *The Tragedy of Phyllis*, *The Constancy of Susanna*, and *The Murder of Sir John Barley-Corn*.⁸² Unlike polemical ballads, these ballads did not directly engage contemporary events or concerns, nor did they represent a particular side of any political or religious dispute. What they did do though, was present a picture of tradition, of unified culture, and of a nostalgic past. For example, *The Tragedy of Phyllis* told the story of

⁸⁰ Anon., *The Rump Ululant* (London, 1660), single page. This ballad is also in *Ratts* (London, 1660), 23; and *The Rump* (London, 1660), K6r.

⁸¹ Anon., *The Rump Ululant*, single page.

⁸² Anon., *The Tragedy of Phyllis* (London, 1641-1648), single page; Anon., *The Constancy of Susanna* (London, 1640, 1650-1659), single page; *The Murder of Sir John Barley-Corn* (London, 1641-1700), single page.

poor Phyllis who died from her unrequited love for Amintas. Despite the unhappy ending (at least for Phyllis), this story was one of all-consuming, self-sacrificing love: something many polemical ballads claimed was absent in the present age. This ballad then, was a reminder of how people experienced such love in the past.

The Constancy of Susanna told the familiar story of the Elders who came across Susanna while she was bathing. The Elders propositioned her, and when Susanna repeatedly refused their advances, they vindictively brought her to court on charges of adultery. God heard Susanna's innocent prayers, and sent Daniel to expose the Elders and to pronounce judgment on them just in time to save Susanna from death. This story emphasized the godliness of Susanna: "Virtuously her life she led, She feared God, she stood in awe,/ As in the story you may read,/ Was well brought up in Moses' law."⁸³ Here, orthodox beliefs and righteous living, even in the face of adversity, brought Susanna mercy and relief from God. Perhaps this ballad reminded people of what they used to expect from God when "true" religion was uniformly practiced throughout England, and also of what they could again enjoy if and when correct religion was restored.

The Murder of Sir John Barley-Corn was part of an (already) long tradition of songs that celebrated the cultivation and harvest of the barley plant, and of the beer that the crop produced. Sir John Barley-Corn, a personification of the barley plant, was ploughed to death and buried in the ground, only to return again when "he grew up on branches green,/ Which sore amazed them all."⁸⁴ Of course, once poor John ripened, workers "cut his legs off by the knees/ and limb from limb divide[d]."⁸⁵ The ballad continued in this fashion, describing the "bloody" results of the harvest, threshing, and brewing of "Sir John." It even ended with a sort of benediction: "All you

⁸³ Anon., *The Constancy of Susanna*, single page.

⁸⁴ Anon., *The Murder of Sir John Barley-Corn*, single page.

⁸⁵ Anon., *The Murder of Sir John Barley-Corn*, single page.

good wives that brew good ale/ God keep you all from teen,/ But if you put too much water in,/ the Devil put out your eyne [*sic*].”⁸⁶ The ballad celebrated beer and a sort of “Englishness” through its description of the agricultural rhythm of the year and the pastime of drinking. Though this did not describe the daily experience of every English man and women, the long standing popularity of this ballad in various forms is evidence that it did resonate with many people. Perhaps during the Civil Wars and Interregnum the ballad’s carefree attitude evoked a feeling of the harmony and fun experienced during the “good old days.”

Conclusion

It seems logical to suggest that the juxtaposition of traditional ballads with polemical ballads worked to intensify the nostalgic images of an imaginary past. Any evocation of “love,” “orthodox belief” or “good old days” found in either type of ballad was largely undefined which left these definitions for individual imaginations to determine. Each of these terms could consequently take on as many definitions as there were people to define them. Similarly, there were as many “nostalgic pasts” as there were people to long for them. It stands to reason then, that the same principle would apply to visions of a utopian future in which the order, harmony, and the orthodoxy of the past would be restored. Each person could imagine this future to his or her liking. It was certain that the future hinged upon the Restoration of the king, but this king was an imaginary perfect ruler rather than the king embodied in Charles II.⁸⁷

Finally, it is necessary to ask why the particular images discussed in this study, and not other images, populated ballads published between 1640 and 1660. As Peter Burke said,

⁸⁶ Anon., *The Murder of Sir John Barley-Corn*, single page.

⁸⁷ Harris argued that “support for the king was conditional upon his ability to solve specific economic, constitutional, and religious grievances.” Harris, *London Crowds*, 61.

“Historians need to explore the limits to cultural plasticity, limits that are sometimes set by economic factors, sometimes by political ones, and sometimes by cultural traditions, even though they are capable of modification – up to a point.”⁸⁸ That is to say: at any given point in history, it was only possible to imagine certain things.

The images and tropes available in the mid-seventeenth century were varied and flexible, and could be adapted to describe many aspects of the political and religious issues at play. However, there were limits to what could be imagined. For example, Biblical imagery was ubiquitous and powerful because at this historical moment a world where the authority of Scripture was disputed, or not upheld, was inconceivable. Though radical religious sects had severely challenged many fundamental points of Biblical and theological teaching, they still regarded the Bible as a force with which they must reckon. On the other hand, an England without a king was almost unimaginable until this abruptly became reality in 1649. For eleven years England was bereft of a king, but during this time of tumult and disorder, people looked back to the imaginary harmony of the past, when they were under monarchical authority. Peace, order and harmony in England without the headship of a king were not yet imaginable. The Restoration was still necessary, at least in many people’s imagination.

⁸⁸ Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 98.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that through an analysis of ballads a scholar can learn much about how early modern people framed the religious and political controversies of the English Civil Wars and Interregnum. Ballad authors and publishers used the tools of format and genre, music, and available discourses to translate contentious topics into a form of entertainment. The addition of music to what would otherwise have been merely another form of cheap print allowed ballads to be incorporated into many parts of daily life, through oral networks as well as through print and literacy. Ballads and their music permeated all levels of society and therefore the ideas presented in ballads enjoyed a broad audience.

It is important to remember that there are limitations to what the historian can infer about culture from a study of popular ballads. For example, it is often impossible to identify the authors of ballads, which eliminates the historian's ability to draw conclusions about authorial intent and motivation. It is also impossible to know precisely who purchased, sang, or heard ballads and what their exact reactions and interpretations were. Additionally, the scholar cannot take the information presented in ballads at face value, as much of it consists of satire, hyperbole, or fictitious discourse. These things can make it difficult to determine what, if anything, these ballads disclose about early modern English culture.

And yet, it is precisely in the fictions and discourses present in ballads that historians find a wealth of information about English culture. Contemporary events described in Biblical terms, or important people described as ancient heroes illuminate some of the ways in which early

modern people thought about and understood their surroundings. These images and discourses demonstrate to us what early modern people could imagine, and what they could not. For example, though there was no king on the throne of England in 1649, the majority of English men and women could not imagine a future England without a king.

Standard forms, like that of the ballad, when altered or manipulated, suggest first, that this form held meaning in itself, and second, that a change in the form would therefore be an important signal to readers. Authors, who changed a standard form or genre, particularly to create a satirical or humorous tone, modeled how to contest the authority of the written word. The inversion of the meanings of genre, form, and discourse had a similar effect. This manipulation of authority in ballads instructed early modern people in a new way of reading and engaging with authority. Members of sectarian groups were already reading the Bible in new ways and challenging standard interpretations. Ballads helped to disseminate such radical methods into the wider culture and encouraged people to examine standard discourses in new ways.

Ballads required action, and could not be enjoyed passively. The act of singing brought a ballad tune to life. As we have seen, singing, which comprised a large part of early modern English culture, occurred at many times and in many places: in church, at celebrations and festivals, at work, and in ale houses. For example, an English gentlewoman noted in 1653 that she saw “a great many young wenches [who] keep sheep and cows and sit in the shade singing of ballads.”¹ On the other end of the social hierarchy, Samuel Pepys was playing music with William Howe and the Earl of Sandwich on the evening of April 23, 1660, when the Earl “fell to singing of a song made upon the Rump, with which he played himself well, to the tune of ‘The

¹G.C. Moore Smith, ed., *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple* (Oxford, 1928), 50-1. Quoted in Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life*, 97-98.

Blacksmith.”² Throughout England ballad singers wandered through cities and country side performing and selling their wares. Broadsides, including ballads, papered the walls of ale houses. Songs infiltrated nearly every aspect of early modern English life.

Ballad singing was the type of performance that invited the audience to participate either through joining in, or listening while tapping or humming along. People sang favorite ballads over and over again until the lyrics and tunes presumably became unconscious parts of themselves. A man or woman could hum a tune, or experience it through a dance or instrumental performance without the text of a ballad. If, as Peter Burke found, “meaning is created anew on each occasion,” then each time a person repeated a favorite ballad or hummed a favorite tune was a chance to re-experience and re-create the meaning of the text or music.³ A result of this repetition was that the images and discourses present in ballads resided in the imagination of English men and women.

While ballads prompted early modern English men and women to challenge the authority of the written words and the discourses they encountered, they also helped to create a longing for the restoration of the King, who exemplified traditional authority. This may not be as contradictory as it appears. In both of these cases, people created their own visions of what they wished England to be. It is appropriate that the words of a ballad author best express this idea of the English man or woman’s prerogative to choose for themselves:

² Pepys, *Diary*, 1:117.

³ Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, 93; Peter Burke, “Performing History: The Importance of Occasions,” *Rethinking History* 9, no. 1 (March 2005): 35-52.

Let it go as it will
We are citizens still
And free to this side, or that
We may prate, and may vote,
But when it comes to it
We'll be true to nobody knows what.⁴

⁴ Anon., "A City Ballad," in *The Rump*, Dv.

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