

V. Ballads in Black and White

Up to this point in my dissertation, I have chronicled the ways that the ballad was an innovative force in literary history even as it was being increasingly cut off from that very history. This final chapter looks at another moment in the history of the ballad—one in which it becomes reactive rather than innovative and, as a result, is subtly reintegrated into literary history. The sign of the changing status is in its changing typography—the move from black letter to white letter (or roman font). This change was in some respects inevitable: The majority of literary texts were being printed in white letter by the early seventeenth century. But black letter persisted for ballads (as well as for chapbooks, law books, and proclamations) for almost a hundred more years. This chapter seeks to address why this change occurred when it did and assess some of the consequences of that change. Why did the broadside ballad, after maintaining its form for so long, finally move in line with other literary texts?

Scholars have put forth various explanations for the continued use of black letter, particularly in relation to popular literature. One of the most influential explanations for the prolonged use of black letter comes from Charles Mish in his 1953 article, “Black Letter as a Social Discriminant in the Seventeenth Century.” In this article he argues that—at least as far as literary publishing goes—black letter was reserved for works that were aimed at the middle and lower classes. He makes this argument by comparing romances that were printed in black letter and white letter. Mish finds the white-letter romances to be consistently longer and more sophisticated

productions, making them out of reach for many, both economically and intellectually; the black letter was reserved for those who were “at the same time insensitive to aesthetic considerations and desirous of an inexpensive book, two characteristics which one would expect to find among a middle-class group of readers” (629). From Mish’s point of view, then, ballads remained black letter for so long because their audience was middle-class.

More recently Keith Thomas has argued that black letter would have been more legible to the lower classes since that is the font in which reading text books were published. There is logic to this argument, though as Zachary Lesser points out, cognitive studies on reading suggest that readers are comfortable with any widely used typeface, putting the argument in doubt (103). Thus even if the argument holds true for readers in 1600, it is unlikely to be true for readers in 1660. In regard to ballads, the argument is even more problematic because ballads so frequently used white letter for titles and proper nouns, raising what seems to me a fairly common sense question: why would stationers print the title, the first thing potential customers would see, in a font that they had difficulty reading?

Lesser employs a more heterogeneous concept of black letter that does not rely on assumed reading tastes or legibility. Thus he objects to Mish’s argument because of its dismissive and narrow view of the middle class as “insensitive to aesthetic considerations,” and, more significantly, he argues that assigning a singular use for black letter is untenable. Lesser notes that black letter carried several possible connotations: “state authority, antiquity, the English language, the established English

church, even the foreign quality of the ‘stage Dutch’ spoken by characters in many printed plays. . . . We must resist the reductionism that would see only a single meaning to the typeface” (107). Lesser continues on to argue that in certain contexts the primary function of black letter is to imbue a text with nostalgia. Lesser is certainly correct to complicate the significance of typeface in this way, and his argument about the nostalgic quality of black letter is persuasive in the context of printed drama—the subject of his essay. But for black letter on broadside ballads to invoke nostalgia, it would need to be less common, thus black letter would fail to signify nostalgia in most ballads until the closing years of the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century.

Angela McShane-Jones undertakes one of the more directly relevant studies of the function of typeface and the ballad. In her efforts to distinguish the uses of black- and white-letter ballads on the political broadside ballads from 1640 to 1689, she usefully introduces the modern notion of branding. Though her argument relies a bit too much on the assumption of white letter’s illegibility and imposes a bit more regularity on the ballad market than is warranted, her basic premise that white-letter political ballads were aimed at a different audience than were the black-letter ballads seems sound, at least until the 1680s (as we shall see). The concept of branding is helpful because it helps us think about the ways that the same or similar texts can be reformatted for different purposes.

The shift from black letter to white letter involved more than the obvious change in font; it also included an increasing variety of formats. The woodblocks

disappear or give way to musical notation, though often the notation is meaningless; certain printers are more likely to print in the new form, even while both kinds of ballads were being printed. These features of the white-letter ballad indicate a shift in the marketing strategies of ballad printers and a shift in the public uses of ballads. The decline in woodcuts and the use of the less-ornate font indicate that ballads were less likely to be seen as visual aesthetic objects, decorations to be pasted on walls, in the case of the notation ballads, emphasizing instead their musical quality. But before long, woodcuts make a comeback on white letter ballads, updating even the more traditional look for a new generation.

An early instance of a white-letter ballad book, or garland and its changing format will give us some context will demonstrate that this change could not have happened at any time. The book is Thomas Deloney's *Strange Histories*, which was printed in 1602, 1607, and in white letter in 1612. It is significant to note that in these ten years *Strange Histories* contained all the pieces of white-letter and notation ballads, even if it did not have them at the same time. In content, this might seem to be simply another garland. There are several garlands of Thomas Deloney, a popular example is *The Garland of Good-Will*, a collection of ballads on various topics, though primarily on history. *Strange Histories* is more closely restricted to historical topics than is *The Garland of Good-Will*, often showing the downfall of wicked leaders. In this sense, it is very much like a poor-man's *Mirror for Magistrates*.

Despite these similarities, however, *Strange Histories* is formatted quite differently from other garlands of the time. Aside from its early printing in white

letter (*The Garland of Good-Will* remained in black letter until about 1700), the ballads are numbered as cantos (Canto 1, Canto 2, etc.) and in the 1602 edition (there are no earlier editions extant, though it was likely printed earlier since Deloney was dead by this time) each song begins with a line of musical notation along with the familiar “To the tune of...” Somewhere between 1602 and 1607, the musical notation was dropped, though the cantos remained. The 1612 edition not only changes the font to white letter but also adds a few ballads, mostly from *The Garland of Good-Will*. Why the musical notation is dropped is rather puzzling. The 1602 imprint reads “Printed by William Barely, the assign of T. M.” (Thomas Morely). Morely had successfully lobbied for a music patent in 1598 and took on William Barely as a partner, though Barely does not appear to have owned any presses (Krummel 23). By about 1600 their partnership seems to have weakened, but Barely would still need assignee status to print *Strange Histories* with musical notation in 1602. Morely died around 1603 and the patent was not enforced until Barley successfully asserted himself as heir to Morely’s patent in 1606. Thus Barley could have easily continued to print *Strange Histories* with its music, but he chose not to.

Barley’s constant tinkering with the format of the book may be the result of lower than expected sales. *Strange Histories* was only reprinted three times, and though three reprints is a lot for many early modern texts, for a work of Deloney, it was a bit of a failure. This suggests that Barley was trying to find more effective ways to market the book with his changes in each edition, including appropriating some of the ballads from the more popular *Garland of Good-will*. Yet it seems that it was too

early for these innovations to be connected to ballads. The simple music and small type would not likely draw in a sufficient musically literate readership, and the pretense of sophistication through the use of the “cantos” and white letter may have put off the book’s likely readers while failing to bring in others. The shift required a different environment than existed in the early seventeenth-century book trade. And it took until the latter seventeenth century for that environment to arrive.

As we might expect from the example of *Strange Histories*, the changing typography and format of ballads coincides with another shift in the general structure of the print trade. The varieties of cheap print were expanding, making for increasing competition for broadside ballads. One could as easily buy a chapbook on the “Guy of Warwick” as one could a ballad. It was also a time of musical development, and the London theaters were using music to a degree they never had before. In this context, black-letter broadside ballads may have begun to look a bit old and stale. To put it in modern terms, it was time for re-branding. Printers began to print ballads in white letter with increasing frequency so that by around 1700, black-letter ballads are the exception rather than the rule. Ballads drew on theater and court songs, expanding their scope and extending the reach of their appeal. Thus ballads, which had been an innovative force for English literary history in so many ways, had become reactive, and the changes we see in white-letter ballads point to their attempts to adjust to a changing market: specifically, they become a sort of complimentary text to the other kinds of print that were increasingly appropriating their material.

The chapbook illustrates this point nicely. Though a specialized chapbook trade began developing as early as the 1620s, by the later seventeenth century the content of ballads and chapbooks began to compete more directly. The early stages of the chapbook trade focused on religious themes that were becoming less frequent in ballads. It took until the later seventeenth century for “penny merries”—works whose content more closely aligned with the popular ballads of the time—to really take off. Watt speculates that “penny merries” developed later (at least as a genre), because the “still-thriving trade in broadside ballads satisfied the public demand for stories. The ‘penny godlies’ developed earlier, filling a hole in the market where the old godly ballads had been” (289).

It is important to note, however, that the ballad publishers were also prolific chapbook publishers. By examining the estates at the death of several major ballad publishers, Margaret Spufford argues that chapbooks may have been a more important part of the ballad partners’ business than ballads. This fact questions the accuracy of describing someone as a “ballad partner” even though their business consisted of far more chapbooks than ballads, as did Thomas Passenger’s who inherited Tias’s business: “The question of whether the title is the most apt description of the activities of this group of men or whether it only reflects the interests of those first investigating the trade, is immediately raised” (99). Thus ballads were not competing with chapbooks in the sense that printers felt as though they needed to out sell chapbooks, but rather they were trying to find a way to maximize sales of both. If we take Spufford’s conclusion that chapbooks were more

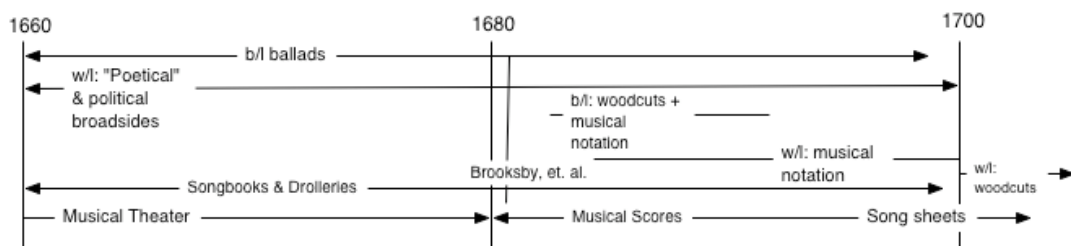
important to the ballad partners' trade by the 1660s, then we might postulate that ballads were viewed in many cases as complimentary to other forms of print. Such a postulation would suggest a strategy in which ballads were marketed along with, in connection with, the musical theater, songbooks, and poetry miscellanies. Indeed, these mediums often drew on ballads, removing them from their broadside context. The broadside ballads then adapted to this new context, experimenting with formats that would be more complimentary to the new venues in which ballads could be found. The impact of these appropriations and adaptations is twofold: first, their new look removed their typographic otherness, weakening the barriers between the ballad and more respectable traditions of poetry and song, and second, it imbued black letter with an aura of a by-gone era, even while ballads were still common.

The White-Letter Timeline

As I noted in the opening paragraphs of this chapter, the move to white letter is multifaceted and does not happen all at once. Thus we cannot fully understand the typographic shift of the ballad without understanding the different facets and timeline of the shift. Figure 2 visualizes the timeline, along with other key developments in ballad format and related mediums (specifically songbooks, musical scores, and “drolleries”). This timeline does not represent absolute begin and end dates; rather I have charted various formats from the moment when high concentrations begin, and I end the lines when they appear to be in decline. For example, white-letter political and “poetical” broadsides were at times printed prior to the 1660s, but most that survive

are from 1660 and later (for example in volume 1 of the Luttrell collection, only twenty out of 188 are printed prior to 1660).

Figure 2: White-letter ballad timeline



The white-letter “poetical” broadsides—so named for a collection residing at the British Library—begin around the time of the civil war and interregnum, though most extant sheets date from the 1660s and continue through the seventeenth century.¹ These broadsides both have and lack features we would expect for ballads. Many of these are titled with “Elegy,” “Poem,” “Panegyric,” and other literary descriptors that suggest a place outside of balladry in the seventeenth century. Latin is more frequent in these texts, and they also tend to lack specified tunes and are often printed by stationers not generally associated with broadside ballads.² Taken together, these variances may suggest marketing to a higher social rank, or at least one that is better educated. They have a place on this timeline, however, because clear divisions between these broadside forms often break down. Their similarity to the political white-letter ballads of the same era suggest similar readership. In at least a few cases stationers active in the black-letter ballad market printed “poetical” broadsides.

Furthermore, some of these texts straddle the two broadside forms. “*A Hew and Cry after Blood and Murther*, or an ELEGIE on the Most Barbarous Murther of Thomas Thinn,” for example, is just the kind of sensational and topical subject that frequently found its way onto black-letter ballads. And though the large print, white-letter “ELEGIE” in the title might suggest an attempt to distance the text from ballads, that designation is preceded by a line of black letter in only slightly smaller font that reads, “Hew and Cry after Blood and Murther,” calling attention to the ballad just as strongly.

Moving to the right of the 1680 narrative line in figure 2, we have black-letter ballads with woodcuts and musical notation, which range in date from the early 1680s to the early 1690s. Only a handful of ballads with this format are extant, but they provide a link to the white-letter notation ballads that appear in the 1680s and through the 1690s, a line for which is located below and slightly to the right in figure 2. The ballads in this format also help us see the role of a certain group of printers. Phillip Brooksby prints the majority of these black-letter musical notation ballads. Jonah Deacon, who was a partner in many of Brooksby’s ballads, prints another. There are also a couple which lack an imprint, one printed for “The Protestant Ballad Singers,” and one each by Dennisson, Millet, and Hussey. Both Millet and Dennisson partnered with Deacon on occasion. The connections of these printers demonstrate an innovative group, at the center of which is Phillip Brooksby. I have included a full list of the ballads I have found in this format in Appendix 2. Finally, we have a return of woodcuts—the same basic format of the black-letter ballads, though now with white-

letter text—which occurs roughly around 1700. A discussion of the related forms, songbooks and drolleries, and musical scores and song sheets, will come below.

In order to clarify our view of Brooksby and his group's role, it will be useful here to step back and look at the bigger picture of broadside ballad printing practices for a moment.³ The practices and preferences of ballad printers is a somewhat difficult subject to analyze. The core group of ballad partners—comprised at various times of Francis Coles, John Wright, John Clark, Thomas Vere, Thomas Passenger, and William Thackeray—avoid white-letter ballads. Their age is an important factor here in that the partnership begins before the shift to white letter really began. However, white-letter ballads did start appearing as early as the 1640s, and were fairly common in the 1680s, the time period in which these partners were quite active.⁴ The ballad partnership of Phillip Brooksby, Jonah Deacon, John Back, and Josiah Blare begins to break into white letter, though the majority of their extant output is still black letter. Furthermore, these printers are connected to the above printers through apprenticeship: both John Back and Josiah Blare were apprenticed to Thomas Vere, and Jonah Deacon was apprenticed to Mary Wright, the wife of John Wright. Though Brooksby did not apprentice with any of the ballad partners, he was connected to the prominent ballad printer Francis Grove, though twice removed. He was apprenticed to Elizabeth Andrews, widow of John Andrews who apprenticed with Francis Grove (see Watt 276-7). Brooksby did, however, print several short books with William Thackeray and Thomas Passenger in the late 1670s and early 1680s. Most of these, however, are by a single author (Andrew Jones, alias John

Hart). I have not been able to find any instances of Brooksby printing ballads in connection with Thackeray or Passenger, though he did print Deloney's *Royal Garland* with them. This suggests that the partnership was not particularly deep and did not extend to broadsides.

We must be careful not to over credit this group in the shift to white letter. In Pepys's ballad collection, only 54 of 188 ballads by this partnership are printed in white letter. This number may be skewed somewhat by the fact that Pepys collected far more black-letter than white-letter ballads, but nevertheless, this partnership by no means abandoned black letter. Other printers that come on the scene at the tail end of the Brooksby partnership are much more devoted to the new format. Jeremiah Wilkins, for example, produced white-letter ballads almost exclusively, as did John Shooter and Thomas Moore. None of these printers, however, were especially prolific. Charles Bates seems to have stuck with black letter throughout his career (he died in 1716), though he is more likely to print ballads "To a new tune" as white letter; but Bates's pattern does not seem to extend to ballad publishers more generally. Considering that the Brooksby partnership began in the early 1680s, when the partnership of Wright, Clark, Passenger, and Thackeray was quite productive, it is a significant move and thus warrants giving them a place of significance on the timeline above. We can see the Brooksby group, then, as a transitional group, rooted in the broadside ballad on which they were apprenticed, but willing to explore and expand to new forms.

The Literary Context: Songbooks, Musical Theater, and Miscellanies

I have given an outline of the changing ballad format and indicated some of the key players in those changes. The timeline in figure 1 shows that this period is one of great fluidity between print formats and musical and poetical forms, intensifying in the 1680s. In this environment, ballads become source material for songbooks, musical theater, and even poetic miscellanies.⁵ And in turn, the intense interest in music finds its way back into broadside ballads. The songs of Thomas D’Urfey, for example, are frequent on broadside ballads in both black and white letter, though rarely mentioning his name.⁶ I turn now to this larger context. English music was going through a transformative period at this time. Of course music was an important part of English culture well before the later seventeenth century, but as John Harley argues, English music was in a formative stage between 1660 and 1710, and these years may be “considered one of the most important periods of English musical history” (5).

When John Playford began printing songbooks in the 1650s, he revitalized music printing in England. To do this, he needed a lot of material, and one of his sources was the existing stock of broadside ballads. During this period songbooks were increasingly being printed for amateur rather than professional audiences, thus becoming simpler musically—a change favorable to ballads (Horner 52-3). Playford’s popular and well known collection of catches, or rounds, “Catch that Catch Can,” printed in 1652 initiates the English songbook of ayres and dialogues. These songs in

this first edition do not appear to have been broadside ballads, though they often have much in common with ballads textually. “Will you buy a New merry Book” explicitly reenacts the marketing of a ballad:

Will you buy a New merry Book, or a doleful Ditty, then look here’s a proper Ballet, most fit for the pallet of a chamber-maid that was overlaid, which she ru’th, ‘tis call’d a warning for youth: he took her ‘bout the middle so small, he threw her down, but that was not all, I should howl out-right, to tell of the rest, how this poor-a maid was overpressed, therefore quickly come and buy, and read for your penny, come my hearts, ‘tis as good a Bargain as e’re you had any: here’s no Sussex Serpent to fright you here in my Bundle, nor was it ever Printed for the Widow Trundle. (50-51)⁷

This song captures many elements of the ballad trade and ballad content of the time: John Trundle and his widow were ballad printers in the early to mid seventeenth century. It mentions the price of a penny and the Chapman’s bundle, and ballads proclaiming themselves as a voice of warning were common. Though singers would here experience ballad culture as a spectator rather than as a participant, this song shows an enduring interest in ballads and that the ballad form was always near. Other songs show an interest in the practices of chapmen, and there are many songs of a pastoral bent with stock characters such as Coridon, Strephon, and Celia who find frequent enactment in broadside ballads. Such forms are not exclusive to ballads, of course, but again the association is not far removed. *Catch that Catch Can* went through several editions, and by 1667 it was printed with a “Second Book containing Dialgoues, Gleees, Ayres, and Ballads.” Included is “The Wandering Prince of Troy” divided into parts, though the other ballad content is much in the spirit of the first edition. (122-5)⁸

By 1659, we see at least one songbook explicitly naming ballads in its title, and this writing by Oxford professor of music John Wilson. *Cheerfull Ayres or Ballads First Composed for one Single voice and Since set for three voices*, takes the popular ballad and dresses it up for more sophisticated audiences. Those writing the dedicating poems realize that some readers might be dismissive of a musical work that so proudly displays the name “ballad.” R. R., in his dedication titled, “To my worthy Friend that incomparable Musician Dr. John Wilson,” believes that those who do not know Wilson will be misled:

When they shall on the title page
See Ballads first come on the stage,
Will think, because the word so gross is,
These songs are fit for market crosses.

For many, ballads clearly still bore the mark of crass street literature. But publishers like Playford and writers like Wilson were changing that. Another dedicatory poem for Wilson’s book, “To the ever honored Dr. John Wilson on his incomparable Book of Ballads,” claims that Wilson has written “Angel’s music though in Mortal dress,” and raised the “low and creeping words” of ballads “to be celestial”—ballads were moving into polite circles.

As songbooks began to proliferate, they increasingly drew on ballads. One example that exemplifies this trend is *The Newest Collection of the Choicest Songs, As they are Sung at Court, Theatre, Musick-Schools, Balls, etc. With Musical Notes*, printed by T. Haly for D. Brown and T. Benskin in 1683.⁹ This collection includes musical notation for most of its songs and several of those songs are also broadside

ballads, though often with alterations. The list below gives a summary of those ballads along with a corresponding Pepys edition.

1. “Song.” First line, “Ah! Jenny Gin, your Eyn do kill” (sig. B4r-v). Pepys 4.110, “A Scotch Wedding.” Last stanza of the song is not in the ballad. The song also removes the dialogue between Jenny and (John).
2. “Song.” First line, “The night her black sables wore” (sig. D1r) (pg. 25). Pepys 3.162, “The kind lady.” “A new court song much in request.” First two stanzas are the same. The others differ, but tend to express similar ideas.
3. “The deceived Nymphs Complaint. A New Song.” First line, “Iris on the Bank of Thames” (sig. G1r). Pepys 5.198, “A Beautiful Nimph. An Excellant New court song much in request (R. Kell 1691). The ballad also adds Amintor’s response.
4. “Song.” First line, “Sad as Death” (sig. I1v-I2r) p. 66. Pepys 3.386, three stanzas.

Ballads are a natural source of material for an editor collecting songs, and the success of the ballads in this format demonstrated the appeal of ballads printed in white letter with musical notation. The notation ballads are in some ways an imitation of this form—a way to extend the appeal of these books to those with a less disposable income. An image of the black-letter version of “Ah! Jenny Gin, your Eyn do kill,” song number one above is available on the English Broadside Ballad Archive (<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/21774/> image). The songbook version of this song is illustration 1 below. One can also find an image of a notation ballad of a very similar

nature, though not the same, titled “Jockey and Jenny,” on EBBA (<http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/22253/image>). The visual similarities are quite clear.

Apart from miscellanies that include musical notation, we also begin to see miscellanies that include many ballads printed in white letter as early as the 1650s.¹⁰ These are often presented as collections of songs, though without any music or even named tunes. *Wit and Drollery*, first printed in 1656, advertises itself as book of “Jovial Poems / Never before Printed.” There are, however, at least two poems that also existed as broadside ballads, “The Blacksmith” and “Sir Eglamore.” The drolleries represent, as Friedman remarks, “the first intrusion of poetry of a frankly popular nature into books read by persons who in their serious moments were among the arbiters of literary fashion. This intrusion was admission by the back door, but it was not an unimportant step in the more formal acceptance of balladry” (123-4). In light of the argument of my first chapter, we might more accurately say that we are seeing the reintroduction, the remixing of the ballad and other forms of poetry that had been separated in the late sixteenth century.

An Antidote Against Melancholy, printed in 1661 contains, as the title page explains, “Witty Ballads, Jovial Songs, and Merry Catches.” Unlike *Wit and Drollery*, the ballads are unabashedly displayed. This collection is somewhat oddly framed in that it emphasizes music at the top of its title page, yet throughout it treats the songs more as poetry. Somewhat unusually for a collection that boasts ballads and songs, *An Antidote Against Melancholy* includes neither musical notation nor tune names, with

the exception of two: “A song of the hot-headed ZEALOT,” and “The CAVALIERS Complaint.” The tension between viewing these pieces as songs or poems is also evident in a couplet at the bottom of the title page: “These witty Poems though sometime may seem to halt on crutches, / Yet they’l all merrily please you for your charge, which not much is.”¹¹ More important than the word “Poems” in these lines is the comment on the meter. A rough meter in a song can be smoothed over by the rhythm and melody to which the words are sung; poems do not have the same degree of flexibility, thus the editor of this book displays a keen awareness of the faults that will appear when these works are read as poetry. The tension in this volume displays a real sense of ballads being stretched beyond their original use and context, a move that expands the ballad’s marketable possibilities.

Returning to the texts contained in *An Antidote Against Melancholy*, six of the ballads are also in the Pepys collection, though some of them are altered, with a few more in collections like Roxburghe and Bagford.¹² It is important to emphasize that all of these ballads were well-known and long lasting black-letter ballads, not the kind of white-letter political ballad one might find from the same era. The ballads include “The Ballad of the Black-smith,” or “The Bonny Blacksmith’s Delight” in Pepys 4.264; “The Ballad of Cook Lawrel,” or “A Strange Banquet” in Pepys 4.284; “The Old Courtier and the New,” or “An Old Song of the Old Courtier of the King, With a New Song of the New Courtier of the King” in Pepys 2.211; “The Gelding of the Devil,” same title in Pepys 4.351; “Sir Eglamore,” or *Courage Crowned with*

Conquest” in Pepys 2.134; and “Blew Cap for me,” same title in Rox. 1.74. This collection was reprinted throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth.

Finally we come to musical scores, and here the influence of the broadside ballad format is felt once again. It is unsurprising that the printing of musical scores increases dramatically in the late seventeenth century. Searching the ESTC’s notes field for “music” returns 338 hits for 1500-1600, 500 for the years 1600-1650, and 927 for the years 1650-1700. Furthermore, in the 1680s and 90s, there is an increase of single sheet musical scores and an even larger increase in 1700. The link between musical scores and ballads is in some ways tenuous, but there are interesting connections that need to be addressed. At the theater, it became common to sell scores of the songs sung in performances. Certainly such productions demonstrate a market for printed music and songs, including the kinds of songs often found in songbooks of the time. Krummel notes that most of the song sheets were very much like ballads in format: one folio sheet printed on one side, from one plate (166). Krummel, however, finds any link inconclusive. First, the sheets are difficult to date beyond decade—as are so many broadside ballads—making a chronology of production speculative at best. Second, the music on the sheets is more sophisticated than those found in ballads. The melodies are more intricate; there was often music for instrumental support, rather than just a vocal melody; and the style was more operatic than that of the ballads.

But despite these important differences, there is more evidence of a connection between the printed forms (if not the music) than Krummel notes. Even his own

summary of dates suggests an overlap of at least a decade, and very possibly nearly two between these song sheets and the musical notation ballads. Thomas Cross, for example, printed many of these sheets, and he was working between 1683 and 1700. Krummel observes that a few can be dated as early as 1694, but is uncertain about the rest (168). Even that date, however, indicates overlap. Tantalizingly, Phillip Brooksby printed at least one song sheet in 1683, Dryden's *Love and Jealousie*. This appears to be printed with movable type rather than engraved, and the music is fairly simple, but this is an example of which Krummel seems entirely unaware and demonstrates that at least one ballad printer did in fact print at least one song sheet. Song sheets become far more common after 1700, perhaps because they made good on a promise of music in a way that musical notation ballads did not. The simple and familiar tunes of most notation ballads may have made notation superfluous. Certainly that is true of those with meaningless notation. Yet the expansion of the song sheets suggests that Brooksby and other printers of notation ballads were on to something, even if they didn't quite hit on a long-term, winning formula. These song sheets are a strong indication that printers were actively seeking new ways to disseminate texts and music, and looking to all kinds of texts for inspiration. More generally, the developments in the book trade discussed in this section raised awareness that ballads could be marketed in different ways and provided printers with an opportunity to combat the typographic habituation engendered by a fairly rigid format.

Return of the Woodcuts

The period of experimentation (1680-1700) had lasting consequences. The spread of white letter in all kinds of ballads demonstrated that the market for ballads, even the traditional black-letter ballads, would tolerate—perhaps even prefer—white letter. But the market also liked pictures, and so it was only a matter of time before someone united these two features. William Onley makes this move fairly systematically, transferring the traditional black-letter stock of ballads with woodcuts to white letter while keeping the woodcuts. Onley was a printer and publisher associated with the ballad partners. As the ballad partners stock was handed on to him and Alexander Milbourn, they continued to print those ballads in black letter, though they tended to farm out their ballads to a greater number of booksellers. Thus it becomes common to see imprints reading “Printed by and for A.M. and W.O. and are to be sold by the booksellers of London,” or “to be sold by the booksellers of Pye-corner and London-bridge.” However, after Alexander Milbourn left the business sometime around 1695, William Onley began to print those same ballads with woodcuts, but in white letter, thus transferring this stock of traditional black-letter broadside ballads to white letter. I have yet to find a white-letter ballad of this traditional stock with an imprint including Alexander Milbourn, but there are many that read “Printed by and for W.O. and are to be sold by the booksellers of Pye-corner and London-bridge,” and “are to be sold by the booksellers of London.”

The transition is not quite so simple, however, as William Onley also printed many of these ballads in black letter. It is not clear whether or not he printed these in

black letter and then moved to white letter or whether he was printing them in both typefaces simultaneously. Providing some support to the idea that Onley shifted typefaces is the Bagford ballad collection. This is a three-volume collection in which almost all of Onley's black-letter ballads are collected in the first volume and almost all of his white letter ballads are collected in the second volume (see Appendix 4). Bagford does not give his collection much organization, unlike Pepys, and thus it is very possible that he simply collected the ballads in the order in which he got them. However, there are also black-letter ballads of various dates in the second volume, thus there is no way of knowing from Bagford's collection the chronology of printing. Regardless of Onley's practice, he saw an opportunity to innovate, and he took it.¹³

The changing nature of the partnership indicated by the shared stock of booksellers may offer some clues to the situation that prompted Onley's innovation. When Alexander Milbourn and Onley took over the majority of printing, they distributed their products to booksellers more generally, rather than restricting them to their own shops or that of a small partnership. As is clear from the imprints quoted in the above paragraph, Onley continued the practice after Milbourn departed. Robert Thomson suggests that this loosened grip might be because topical ballads were more popular or because chapbooks had "usurped the place once occupied by ballads with the populace" (73). Either way, the new commercial arrangement coupled with the change in format points to an environment in which printers and booksellers were looking to diversify their product. The strategy of both the notation ballads and the

white-letter ballads with woodcuts serves as a way to connect broadside ballads with other forms of popular print.

Such a strategy is not entirely new for ballads. They were often sold as complimentary products. “Titus Andronicus,” for example, was sold as a ballad that also served as an advertisement for the play, and chapbooks and ballads frequently were on the same topic. The earlier strategy, however, was text based. It did not involve significant alterations in the format of the ballad. In the late seventeenth century, however, the forms of print had expanded significantly, including the availability and interest in music, and ballad printers began taking advantage of the new fluidity.

Black letter and “Ancient” Ballads

By way of conclusion, I want to jump forward to the first ballad collection to take a serious interest in ballads, *A Collection of Old Ballads*, the first volume of which was published in 1723. Friedman credits the collector (who remains anonymous throughout) with having “definitely inaugurated the ‘museum life’ of the ballad” (152). The collection indeed takes an antiquarian approach, even claiming that the ballads are “corrected from the best and most Ancient Copies Extant.” This claim, however, is problematic. As Diane Dugaw shows in her article “The Popular Marketing of Old Ballads,” the revival (if we can call it that) was not simply a phenomenon of elite collectors, for ballads were being printed on broadsheets and sold to a wide public at this time. Furthermore, *A Collection of Old Ballads* provided the

text for many of the Dicey prints (Thomson 107-8). The move to white letter played a role in making this approach possible. By creating a typographic distinction that signified England's past, those ballads that had been printed in black letter gained an aura of being part of a lost past and it is this element that fascinates the editor of *A Collection*.

The editor of *A Collection* essentially puts forth two reasons for taking ballads seriously. First they embody "true" rather than "false" wit; they are pure and simple poetic expressions. Second, they are a source of history through which all stripes of England's populace can learn about their past from authors who lived it. The editor goes about demonstrating the artistic merit of ballads by showing their antiquity. But the antiquity with which he is concerned in the prefaces is not merely that of England. Rather, he links them to the poetic practice of the classical poets of Greece and Rome. "The very Prince of Poets, old *Homer*," he argues, "was nothing more than a *ballad-singer*" (iii). He continues in more detail, arguing that nearly all the classical writers were in some respects ballad writers, and that the ballad writers of England are directly participating in that tradition:

For what else can we make of *Pindar*'s Lyrics? *Anacreon* would never sit down contented without his Bottle and his Song. *Horace* could drop the Praises of *Augustus* and *Maecenas*, to sing the Adventures of his Journey to *Brandusium*, and the Baulk he met with from a Servant Wench in a Country Alehouse; and this song of his it was, which gave Occasion to a modern Ballad amongst us, called, *The Coy Cook-maid*. *Cowley* has left too many Works of this kind to need quoting; and *Suckling*'s Wedding will never be forgot. (v-vi)

This passage is rich in its implications for understanding the editor's conception of ballads. He suggests that poets such as Horace, Anacreon, and Pindar are most comfortable in writing ballads—though his conception of ballad is rather broad. He also includes stereotypical characteristics of ballad writers, whose songs were notoriously linked to the bottle. This is an important move, as it aligns even seemingly negative traits of ballad writers with classical, respectable authors. Since at least the sixteenth century, writers with high aspirations had been patterning their careers on the examples of classical authors.¹⁴ It is also important to note that he associates ballads with dead authors, not the living, thus serving as foundational figures in his thinking. The editor returns to this line of thinking in the preface to the second volume of *A Collection*, arguing that they had all the talent and even education required of great poets but lacked either the “Leisure or Inclination for greater Works,” and so “they contented themselves with giving the World a small specimen of their Talents” (ix).

The editor does not leave the connection between the classical poets and modern ballad writers simply to style or subject matter; he makes a direct connection to the past by linking the ballad “The Coy Cook Maid” directly to Horace, creating a direct link in the poetic traditions of the ancients and modern writers. And just in case that is not enough, he throws in references to well-known writers, Cowley and Suckling, whose poems may fit the ballad style well, but were not linked to the medium of broadside ballads. The editor, then, in a few short paragraphs, attempts to reorient the way his readers think about ballads by removing them from street corners,

booksellers stalls, and traveling chapmen, and placing them instead beneath the pens of noble men and unacknowledged bards.

In this strain, he follows Addison's writings in the *Spectator* on ballads, finding them to be worthy examples of "true wit." According to the editor, in "Chevy Chase" and songs like it we cannot "find one piece of false, or as a modern Author calls it, Gothic wit; no vile Conceit, no Low Pun, or double Entendre; but the whole is of a Piece, apparel'd in the Majestic Simplicity and true Poetical Genius appears in every Line" (Vol. 2, vii-viii).¹⁵ This is a bit disingenuous, as puns and especially double-entendre are not hard to come by in many ballads, but we are concerned with presentation of ballads in this preface more than its accuracy. Taking a step further than Addison, the editor argues that ballad writers were well acquainted with the classics, and "Chevy Chase," for example, was written in imitation of classical greats such as Virgil (viii).

The editor is aware that his recasting comes with risks, and he hedges against them by adopting a rather playful and self-effacing persona. He opens his preface to volume one by asserting that, contrary to the usual custom of authors,

I would always put my self upon the Level with a Reader, and think myself under no manner of obligation: I have his Money, and he has my Works; and I am sure he may keep the one in his Study, much longer than I shall keep the other in my Pocket. If there be any Beauties in the Book 'tis certainly his Business to find them out; and if there ben't—why—he can't say I cheated him: I never pretended to give him any thing more than an *Old Song*. (ii-iii)

Right at the start, then, he shields himself from criticism by laying the foundation for backtracking on his strongest claims on behalf of ballads by giving himself a way out.

He is making it possible to respond to criticism by simply saying, “oh you took me entirely too seriously.” This is evidence that the editor is at the forefront of those who would see ballads in this way.

By the time he puts out the third volume, however, he is less concerned about the criticism he might face. The collection has been successful, and even encouraged by the King (iii). He begins this preface, then, by changing tone:

My two former Prefaces I wrote in a ludicrous manner; but would willingly take leave of my Readers in a more serious stile; I am not very fond of the Title of a Buffoon, nor do I think common Civility inconsistent with an Author or Editor, let his concerns for the success of his Works be never so great or small. (ii)

No longer facing the prospect of severe criticism, he is able to present himself as a serious scholar and editor. He does, however, offer one telling apology. It is for the use of copper plate illustrations in his volumes. Following the example of broadside ballads, the editor includes an illustration for most of the works in his collection. Apparently, some of his readers found them “too light and trifling for the subject.” He defends himself by saying he put them there to attract young readers who stand to learn much about history through reading his collection (v). His inclusion of copper plates, however, also shows respect for the broadside ballad form. The criticism of the copper plates and the editor’s half-hearted defense of them reveals a continued tension between the broadside ballad and more “elite” tastes. If the style and subject matter of the ballads has become respectable, their medium of distribution, the broadside ballad with woodcuts, has not.

A Collection of Old Ballads, then, is engaged in antiquarian recovery, but it is a recovery influenced by the typographic change of the ballads. Many of the ballads he selects are from sources that were still in print at least until 1700 (such as *The Garland of Good-will*). For a more specific example, we can turn to “Chevy Chase.” This long-popular ballad was printed within twenty years of this edition in both black letter and white letter, and several earlier editions survived in various collections and libraries throughout England. By comparing three broadside versions of “Chevy Chase” with the version in *A Collection of Old Ballads*, we can see that the editor likely based his text on a fairly recent printing of the ballad in black letter.¹⁶ I will compare a few lines which contain significant changes. In a copy of this ballad printed by Henry Gosson sometime between 1603 and 1640, the devastation of the battle is described thus:

O Christ it was a grief to see,
 how each one chose his Spear,
And how the blood out of their breast
 did gush like water clear. (Pepys 1.92-93)

A black-letter and white-letter version of this ballad in the Bagford collection (both printed around 1700) change these lines significantly. These versions replace the last three lines with more sensory description, adding that it was not only “grief to see,” “but likewise for to hear, / The Cries of Men lying in their Gore, / And scattered here and there.” The white-letter version, however, opens the first line with the less evocative, “Alas it was grief to see”; *A Collection* retains “O Christ” from the black letter version. Though we cannot know for certain which copies that editor would

have had access to, it seems that for him, simply being printed in black letter was enough to mark it as “ancient,” a distinction that would have been impossible without the shift to white letter.

* * *

I have, in a way, ended this dissertation where I began. After tracing the connections of the ballad and lyric in my first chapter and how the two spheres separated, I have moved to other moments in ballad history in which the ballad was further specialized—through the narrowing of the range of authorial presence and the narrowing of the range for publics addressed. For most of the seventeenth century, the ballad had a niche, and it was a niche that was not just textual but typographic and material. It was not something that could survive forever, though. There came a point when commercial and cultural forces demanded a change. But contrary to the claims of scholars such as Blagden and Rollins, the ballad did not gutter out “in the stronger light of the eighteenth-century chapbook” (Blagden 179). Rather, the ballad found a way to adapt, but unlike prior moments of change in which the ballad became increasingly narrow and specialized, it now expanded. In the face of an increasing market for all kinds of cheap print, the ballad found itself in an environment where it could more comfortably assume a place in literary history, though the nature of that place had been obscured by years of exclusion. Previous scholars have mistaken this diversification as a sign of obsolescence, and narrowly defined as a medium in black

letter, this is of course true. But with a broader view, we can see the ballad being acknowledged in a way that it had not been in nearly a hundred years.

Illustration 1: *The Newest Collection of Choicest Songs*, Sig. B4r (Houghton 25252.11)

[6]

S O N G.



SEE what a Conquest Love has made, beneath the Myrtles am'rous shade, the charming fair *Corinna's* lyes, all melting in desire, quenching in tears those flaming Eyes, that set the World on fire.

What cannot tears and beauty do,
The Youth, by chance, stood by and knew
For whom those Chrystal Eyes did flow;
And tho' he ne'r before,

[7]

to her Eyes brighte fit rays did bow,
Weeps too, and does adore.

So when the Heavens serene and clear,
Gilded with gaudy light appear,
Each craggy Rock and e'ry Stone
Their native rigour keep;
But when in Rain the Clouds fall down,
The hardest Marbles weep.

S O N G.



AH! *Jenny Gin*, your Eyn do kill, you'll let me tell my pain, geud faith I've lov'd against my will, but wad not break my Chain: I eance was call'd a bonny Lad, till that fair face of yours, betray'd

Notes

¹ Shelfmark c.20.f.2.

² These features, including the lack of tunes, harken back to the broadside ballad of the sixteenth century.

³ I do not mean to say that Brooksby was somehow the head of this group, but he is the most active.

⁴ The white-letter ballads of the 1640s are almost entirely political ballads.

⁵ The kinds of miscellanies I am referring to are sort of a hybrid between a songbook and a poetry collection. They are labeled and advertised as songs and ballads, but often with no music or even tune.

⁶ I've compiled a list of the ballads in Pepys in which the tune is identified as "a playhouse tune," or some variation thereof in Appendix 3.

⁷ As the verse is printed with musical score, I have not attempted to reproduce lineation.

⁸ All songs are identified by first line only. Thus *The Wonder Prince of Troy* is listed as "When Troy town."

⁹ Hand written on title page is "21 feb." with a "2" written under the "3", indicating 1682/3.

¹⁰ There are also black-letter garlands and chapbooks that use ballads, but these connections have been noted for many years by scholars such as Hyder Rollins, Margret Spufford, and Tessa Watt.

¹¹ This is adapted from the prefatory verse to *Catch that Catch Can* (1652).

¹² As a side note, I asked William St. Clair about publications like *Antidote* and *Pills* and whether or not there are crossovers. He thought there were not.

¹³ William Onley left the business by 1709, thus giving him around twelve years of work after Milbourn left the business.

¹⁴ For more on this, see Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*.

¹⁵ I might also point out here that black letter was also called gothic type, and thus the editor's distaste for gothic style poetry might have seeped into his perception of the black letter typeface.

¹⁶ The earliest version is in Pepys 1.92-93. The two later versions are both in the Bagford collection, shelfmarks c.40.m.9[32] (black letter) and c.40.m.10[37] (white letter).