

**‘A People’s History of England’**

*Print, Authority and the Past in Early Modern English Ballads*

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

Early modern broadside ballads, the chief objects of this study, were a significant part of the developing print trade, with potentially as many as 3-4 million broadsides circulating in the second half of the sixteenth century. Ballads on historical subjects appear to have made up a relatively small, if significant, part of the ballad corpus. When broadsides were reprinted in collections or 'garlands', however, historical ballads made up a disproportionate amount of the contents. It has frequently been recognised that history was a subject of considerable importance throughout the early modern period. History was present in a wide variety of elite and popular discourses, such as humanist scholarship, Tudor chronicles, the plays performed in the public theatres, and more 'popular' texts such as almanacs and broadside ballads. Ballads were one of the chief sources for the 'popular' historical culture which was available to non-elite subjects.

This thesis will provide evidence of popular historical culture which is found in early modern broadside ballads. It provides new evidence to show how ballads established truth claims through paratextual markers, negotiated their relationship with a variety of historical discourses, and both drew on and helped to construct the various competing narratives from which this 'popular' history of England' was constructed. My thesis includes close readings of texts which have previously been neglected by scholars, and contributes to a historiography which is focused on the contemporary understanding, reuse and reinvention of the past for a variety of secular and religious ends.

This thesis finds that the 'people's history of England' constructed in early modern broadside ballads uses historical events and narratives to create both national and religious identities for a popular ballad audience. Largely unconcerned with the details of the historical record, they construct a nostalgic, timeless image of the past, directed towards contemporary polemical ends. In bringing together contemporary representations of historical events, the role of print culture, and the construction of communities in early modern broadside ballads, this thesis enlarges our understanding of the popular historical culture available to early modern audiences.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Thesis Abstract.....	ii
	List of Figures.....	iv
	Acknowledgements.....	v
	Author’s Declaration.....	vi
INTRODUCTION	‘History – True & Fabulous’: Early Modern Popular History	1
CHAPTER 1	Truth, Time and the Art of Printing	30
CHAPTER 2	‘Modern Histories’: History Seen From Within ‘News Ballads’	75
CHAPTER 3	‘Halfpenny chronicler[s]’: The Monarchy and the English Nation in Early Modern Ballads	124
CHAPTER 4	Protestant Histories and Communities of Faith in Religious Ballads	178
CONCLUSION	.....	225
	Bibliography.....	vii

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Rafe Norris, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* (London: John Alde, 1577). The Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California. RB 18324. 67
- Fig. 2 L.P., *A wonderfull vvonder, being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life, and miserable death of Thomas Miles...* (London: John Wright junior, 1635). © The British Library Board C.20.f.7[482]. 69
- Fig. 3 [Anonymous], *A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiiii. daye of May. This being the very length, and bygnes of the same* (London: By Leonard Askel for Fraunces Godlyf..., 1562). © The British Library Board Huth 50[30]. 71
- Fig. 4 Thomas Deloney, *Strange histories, of kings, princes, dukes earles, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlemen With the great troubles and miseries of the Dutches of Suffolke* (London: William Barley, 1602). The Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California. RB 31361. A1v. 130
- Fig. 5 [Anonymous], *[The] sheppard and the King, and of Giilian the shepheards vvife, with her churlish answers: being full of mirth and merry pastime. To the tune of Flying fame* (London: [1640?]). © The British Library Board C.20.f.7[504]. 163
- Fig. 6 John Awdelay, *A godly ditty or prayer to be song vnto God for the preseration of his Church, our Queene and realme, against all traytours, rebels, and papisticall enemies* (London: John Awdelay, 1569). © The British Library Board Huth 50[18]. 203
- Fig. 7 [Anonymous], *The story of David and Berseba* (London: [1635?]). © The British Library Board C.20.f.7[88]. 219
- Fig. 8 [Anonymous], *A new ballad; declaring The excellent parable of the prodigal child* (London: F. Coles, T. Vere, and J. Wright, [1663?]). By permission of the University of Glasgow Library Special Collections. 223

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In September 2009, we lost Mum rather suddenly to cancer. Given all of her support throughout my life, I can easily imagine just how proud she would be to see the completion of this project. She will always be much missed.

*Dedicated to the memory of Vivien Elizabeth Moon (1950-2009).*

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

All work in this thesis is my own. It has not been submitted at this or any other institution for another award. A version of material included in Chapter 2 will be appearing as the article, “‘This is Attested truth’: The Rhetoric of Truthfulness in Early Modern Broadside Ballads”, in Simon Davies and Puck Fletcher, eds, *News in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

## ‘HISTORY – TRUE & FABULOUS’: EARLY MODERN POPULAR HISTORY

In the mammoth, if incomplete, modern edition of *The Roxburghe Ballads*, William Chappell, the editor of the first three volumes, offers a series of notes and generic identifications. In particular, he singles out ‘A Courtly new Ballad of the Princely Wooing of the faire Maid of London by King Edward’ as a prime example of what he calls ‘the people’s history of England’.<sup>1</sup> This is a resonant phrase; the ballad offers not just a ‘history of England’, but a ‘people’s’ history, identified with an audience which is assumed to be a transparent social category. Like many ballad editors of the nineteenth century, Chappell appears to have held the majority of the objects of his scholarship in low regard. ‘[T]he Princely Wooing of the faire Maid of London’ is, in his view, ‘rather below than above the average of ballad writing’, its apparent popularity, judged in this instance on the basis of its having survived in multiple editions, is due, he suggests, to the fact that ‘the class to whom it was addressed, learnt all their history (like Aubrey’s nurse) from ballads.’<sup>2</sup> The example of Aubrey’s nurse refers to the claim made by John Aubrey in *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme* (c. 1688), that his nurse had ‘the History [of England] from the Conquest down to Carl. I in ballad’.<sup>3</sup> Ballad histories, whether issued as individual broadsides or brought together in collections, are defined by Chappell as ‘popular’ because they are addressed to a particular social category, exemplified by a lower status subject such as John Aubrey’s nurse. Chappell’s argument thus implicitly defines ballad histories as a distinct part of the popular culture of the early modern period and as a means of both expressing and inculcating popular views of the national past.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. by W.M. Chappell and J.W. Ebsworth, 9 volumes (London: The Ballad Society, 1869-1901), 1 (1869), p. 181n.

<sup>2</sup> Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, p. 181n.

<sup>3</sup> John Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, ed. John Buchanan Brown (Fontwell and London: Centaur Press, 1972), p. 287.

Historical ballads, therefore, are present in several discursive fields, most prominently historical culture and the popular. A driving question of this thesis is precisely what sort of historical knowledge would have been available to early modern ballad audiences. This thesis is concerned not only with broadsides, but also ballad collections – known as ‘garlands’ – compiled by writers such as Richard Johnson and Thomas Deloney, and ballads which have survived only in manuscript.<sup>4</sup> In choosing to focus on ballads which represent historical events and figures, albeit within a broad definition of the ‘historical’, this thesis runs the risk of repeating a bias identified by the mid-twentieth century folk song collector and promoter Albert Lloyd when he claimed that ‘songs based on the chronicles of great events and big battles...seem to have remained more interesting to the scholars than the folk.’<sup>5</sup> Although Lloyd readily acknowledged the mutual influence of the broadside ballad trade and the English folk song, his primary concern was with ballads which survived in oral tradition, recorded through the efforts of song collectors in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ballad histories conversely are more likely to be found in early print than in later oral performance. A version of *The Death of Queen Jane*, which first appeared in print as early as 1612, was recorded by Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles in Lee County, Kentucky, sometime between 1916 and 1918 from Mrs. Kate Thomas. This suggests that it enjoyed wide circulation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in both Britain and North America, but *The Death of Queen Jane* is something of an exception.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ballads found in manuscript make up the contents of *The Shirburn Ballads, 1585-1616*, ed. by Andrew Clark (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907). The ballads recorded in this manuscript from the library of the Earl of Macclesfield at Shirburn Castle, Oxfordshire were copied from printed broadsides (see Hyder E. Rollins, ‘Notes on the ‘Shirburn Ballads’’, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 30:117 (1917), 370-377).

<sup>5</sup> Albert. L. Lloyd, *Folk Song in England* (London: Panther, 1969), p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The Wofull death of Queene Iane, Wife to King *Henry* the eight: and how King *Edward* was cut out of his mothers belly’ was printed in Richard Johnson’s *A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses* (1612), but is almost certainly older. While Bruce Smith has suggested that it might date back to the event itself (*The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago and



Whilst Sir Philip Sidney famously recorded his guilty appreciation of the ballad *Chevy Chase* sung by a ‘blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style’,<sup>7</sup> our knowledge of the ballad’s text is due entirely to its having been printed, as it was never discovered in oral circulation.<sup>8</sup>

If historical ballads had little purchase in oral tradition, they are also not the dominant genre found in the corpus of early modern broadsides. ‘History – True & Fabulous’ is one of the ten categories under which Samuel Pepys arranged his collection of over 1,700 broadsides, where they make up only three per cent of the total. While the relative proportion of ballads found within Pepys’ categories undoubtedly reflects his personal preferences, Christopher Marsh’s research, comparing the contents of the Pepys’ collection with earlier collections, suggests that courtship and marriage were overwhelmingly the most popular themes found in ballads throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. News or political ballads, ‘State & Times’ in Pepys’ formulation, increased their share of the market in the first half of the seventeenth century, stabilising at around fifteen per cent.<sup>9</sup> As later chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, there are good reasons for seeing at least some of the ballads which have been placed into the category of ‘News Ballad’ as a form of history. If, however, we are looking for ballads which solely narrate events which are a part of the past from the viewpoint of the

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London: University of Chicago, 1999), pp. 198-9), Adrian Wilson has suggested to me in conversation that it most likely dates from the reign of Elizabeth, written in response to the controversy about the birth of Edward VI generated by the claims of the Catholic apologists Nicholas Sanders and Nicholas Harpsfield. If, as Wilson contends, Sanders’ *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani* (1585) was the text which originated the theory about Edward’s birth being what we would today recognise as a Caesarean operation then the ballad cannot have been written any earlier. It also raises the intriguing possibility that ballads may have been commissioned by the government as a means of influencing opinion. See also the evidence of Edward Wilson-Lee below (n. 74).

<sup>7</sup> Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: Henry Olney, 1595) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig.G1.

<sup>8</sup> Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, p. 150.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 227-8.

contemporary ballad author and singer – as a ballad such as *The Death of Queen Jane* clearly was in the later part of the sixteenth century, when it most likely first appeared – then historical ballads make up a relatively small part of the ballad corpus.<sup>10</sup> As William Chappell suggests, historical ballads do, however, make up a significant part of the contents of several of Johnson and Deloney’s ballad ‘garlands’.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst Johnson’s *The golden garland of princely pleasures and delicate delights* (1620) includes ballads on a variety of subjects, the title page foregrounds only ‘the histories of many of the kings, queenes, princes, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlewomen of this kingdome’ it contains.<sup>12</sup> Publication as a garland, retailing for a higher price than a single broadside, can be read as expressive of a desire on the part of authors and printers for a cultural respectability that was usually denied broadside ballads.<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> In her work on chapbooks, a genre which provided competition with ballads, Margaret Spufford has observed that historical fictions comprised a ‘larger proportion of the chapman’s stock in trade than in France. 14% of the whole of the Pepys collection was devoted to tales with an historical setting. . . . A third of the books belonging to [Captain] Cox had been historical novels, and no less than thirteen of those were chivalric.’ (Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth Century England* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 145). Similarly, if ballad histories were not a dominant genre, this is not to suggest that they were not a significant presence. Even ballads which were not explicitly historical in their subject matter had strong associations with the past.

<sup>11</sup> These were small chapbooks containing a number of ballads, many of which were previously available as broadsides. To date, while there has been work on broadside collections (see, for example, Patricia Fumerton, ‘Remembering by Dismembering: Databases, Archiving, and the Recollection of Seventeenth-Century Broadside Ballads’, in *Ballads and Broad­sides in Britain, 1500-1800*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010) pp. 13-34), garlands such as these have tended to be excluded from discussions of ballads and popular print.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Johnson, *The golden garland of princely pleasures and delicate delights. Wherin is contained the histories of many of the kings, queenes, princes, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlewomen of this kingdome. Being most pleasant songs and sonnets to sundry new tunes now most in vse: the third time imprinted, enlarged and corrected by Rich. Iohnson. Deuided into two parts* (London: A. Mathewes for Thomas Langley, 1620) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig.A1.

<sup>13</sup> Alexandra Halasz has persuasively argued that in Deloney’s printing (or else his tacit consenting to the publication of) his ballads in book form, ‘he simultaneously asserts the importance of ballads and claims a privileged position in relation to a popular, anonymous voice’ (Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 124). For more on the garlands of Deloney and Richard Johnson, see Chapter 3.

subject of history was a marker which helped to establish the cultural capital of these garlands within the marketplace.

### **“I always said that song must be true”: Historical Culture**

Whilst all histories are ostensibly concerned with recovering or recording past events, they are, as recent scholarship has asserted, equally concerned with particular ends, and frequently with specific polemical or political positions.<sup>14</sup> The list of ‘kings, queens, princes, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlewomen’, also establishes that ballads, at least those collected in ‘garlands’, offer a particular type of history.<sup>15</sup> This would appear to be a ‘people’s history’ with little room for the ‘people’ themselves, if that term is taken to mean the lower status subjects who are presumed to make up the majority of the audience for ballads. History is defined as an established, official narrative, primarily concerned with the actions of the elite. As Phyllis Rackin has argued in the context of the popular stage, many Tudor histories constructed an historical narrative concerned with ‘authorizing present power in genealogical myths of patriarchal succession’.<sup>16</sup> Whilst Rackin’s formula risks oversimplifying the dynamics of the early modern stage, this thesis will demonstrate that not all ballads reflect such a simplified view of what is important in historical narratives. The ballad corpus is sufficiently large that no single, coherent history can be derived from it, but the centrality of royalty and the nobility to

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<sup>14</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1985); Phyllis Rackin, *Stages of History: Shakespeare’s English Chronicles* (New York and London: Cornell University Press and Routledge, 1990); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973); Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, *The golden garland*, in *EEBO*, sig.A1.

<sup>16</sup> Rackin, *Stages of History*, p. 198.

the national past is a common historical trope which informs much historical writing, popular and elite, then as now.

So too, a number of ballads defined history precisely through the eruption of ‘great events and significant battles’. Robert Greene employs just such a trope in order to explain the providential meaning of the Armada in his history of the Spanish Armada, *The Spanish masquerado* (1589), published only a year after the events it describes. The Spanish are a punishment sent by God, a spur ‘to waken vs out of our dreams, to teach the braue men of this realm, that after peace comes warres’.<sup>17</sup> This appeal to wakefulness can be understood as an element drawn from apocalyptic discourse, appealing to the nation to reform itself so as to be worthy of God’s favour. The ‘long and peaceable time of quiet’ which supposedly preceded the coming of the Armada, a time of ‘sleep’ and ‘dreams’, also implies that ‘peace’ is a moment which is essentially ahistorical.<sup>18</sup> Consequently it is the condition of wakefulness which is a sign of the creation of history. History resides in ‘Warres’, or more broadly in political and official events, which serve to define the narrative of the nation.

Whether secular or religious, many early modern histories are implicitly concerned with defining the English nation. Scholars have observed how important history was to this ‘national project’; in Claire McEachern’s resonant phrase, ‘[i]n 1533, Henry VIII founded an English nation.’<sup>19</sup> Following the break with Rome and the

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Greene, *The Spanish masquerado* (London: Thomas Cadman, 1589) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig. B4.

<sup>18</sup> Greene, *Spanish masquerado*, sig. B4.

<sup>19</sup> McEachern, *Poetics of English Nationhood*, p. 1. Igor Djordevic, *Holinshed’s Nation: Ideals, Memory and Practical Policy in the Chronicles* (Burlington and Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1992); Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood 1590-1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England 1530-1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and*

consequent religious reformations, there was a renewed interest in history as a means to construct a coherent vision of the nation. As is clear from many of the titles of scholarly works on the subject, literature and writing were central to this process.<sup>20</sup> The representations of a nation are part of the way in which a nation is constituted. Where Shakespeare and Spenser were involved in ‘writing’ it, I will argue that ballad authors such as Thomas Deloney gave ordinary English subjects the opportunity to ‘sing’ the English nation, opening up a complex relationship between composition, appropriation, and experience.

Thomas Betteridge has defined history as ‘the production of truth-claiming representations of the past’.<sup>21</sup> On being told that the people who appeared in *The Death of Queen Jane* were real historical figures, Mrs Kate Thomas’ response was that she knew it must be true ‘because it is so beautiful’.<sup>22</sup> In confidently equating ‘truth’ with ‘beauty’, she unwittingly exposes ‘history’ as a rhetorically constructed category. The history presented by the ballad, of course, is a largely fictional one; despite the claims of politically-motivated rumour-mongers, Jane Seymour did not undergo a Caesarean operation during the birth of Edward IV. Nor is *The Death of Queen Jane* unique in narrating a story which is fictional in its details. Deloney’s ‘A Mounfull Dittie, on the death of Rosamond, King *Henry* the seconds Concubine’, which appeared in several of his garlands and as a separate broadside, contains legendary stories about the famous mistress of Henry II, Rosamund Clifford: that Henry constructed the hunting lodge at

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*Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Although concerned with a longer time span, Hastings regards England as the prototype of the nation and the nation state, a process of formation which intensified in the sixteenth century, and which encompassed historical narratives.

<sup>20</sup> Shrank’s ‘*Writing the Nation*’ (my emphasis) articulates this connection most clearly.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530-83* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p.4.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 199.

Woodstock for her and surrounded it with a garden that was a labyrinth, as well as her being poisoned by the jealous Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry's Queen.<sup>23</sup>

Like any popular historical narrative, ballad histories can hardly be classed as a form of formal history writing. The category to which Pepys assigned ballad histories – 'History – True & Fabulous' – appears to recognise a clear distinction between history which is accurate and history which is 'fabulous'; yet it also places both types of history within the same overarching category. For Pepys, at least, both kinds of history are a legitimate part of popular history. Equally, the same story about Rosamond's labyrinth at Woodstock appears in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, a text that was the product of elite literary culture, which suggests that there was no clear separation between popular and elite representations of the past.<sup>24</sup> A 'popular history' reveals what were deemed to be significant moments from the nation's history and is therefore more concerned with what was important for people to know at a particular moment than with what 'actually happened'. As the example of Mrs. Kate Thomas demonstrates, an audience's belief in a popular history entails an element of choice. It is quite conceivable that an original audience might have believed in a history which was 'false', but this hardly precludes the possibility that such fraudulent histories might also have been enjoyed purely as stories, precisely because of their 'fabulous' nature.

In any era, history is present within a wide variety of elite and popular discourses and texts, both learned and unlearned. In the early modern period, this included humanist scholarship, Tudor chronicles, the plays performed in the public

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<sup>23</sup> 'A mournfull ditty of the Lady Rosamond' was entered in the Stationer's Register in 1656 and 1675 (Hyder E. Rollins, *An Analytical Index to the Ballad-Entries (1557-1709) in the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London* (Hatboro and Pennsylvania: Tradition Press, 1967), p. 159). It first appeared in *The Garland of Good Will* (c.1593), and was later added to the 1607 edition of *Strange Histories*. Copies of the broadside survive from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (See *The Works of Thomas Deloney*, ed. by Francis O. Mann (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912), pp. 562-63).

<sup>24</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 563.

theatres, as well as more ‘popular’ texts, such as chapbooks, almanacs and the ballads which are the focus of this study. Whilst issues such as price and education might have limited the readership of some texts, as the example of Rosamond’s labyrinth demonstrates, there was considerable mutual influence between the different kinds of texts in which historical discourse was presented. Relatively few people may have been able to afford the expense of a copy of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, but Thomas Deloney’s ballads in *Strange Histories* (c. 1602) made selected episodes from those chronicles accessible to a wider, more inclusive audience, perhaps already familiar with Shakespeare’s earlier History plays. Although my main focus is on the ballads themselves, throughout this thesis I also draw these texts into conversations with a range of other historical discourses, from the Biblical to the national, in order to chart their shared concerns, or mark points of particular contrast and difference.

‘Historical culture’ is a broad-ranging concept, which encompasses the whole range of texts through which history might be perceived and understood. It is an umbrella term, which has been defined by Daniel Woolf as consisting of ‘habits of thought, languages, and media of communication, and patterns of social convention that embrace elite and popular, narrative and non-narrative modes of discourse. It is expressed both in texts and in commonplace forms of behaviour’.<sup>25</sup> Rather than any abstract idea, the historical notions with which the study of ‘historical culture’ is concerned are part of ‘the mental and verbal specie of the society that uses them, passing among contemporaries through speech, writing and other means of communication.’<sup>26</sup> In charting the ‘social circulation’ of knowledge about the past in the ‘cultural marketplace’ of the early modern period, Woolf’s work stands in contrast to previous work on early modern historiography and history writing. Scholars have been

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<sup>25</sup> Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 9. See also Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England*, Creighton Lecture (London: University of London, 1983).

<sup>26</sup> Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 10.

most concerned with the role of Humanism as well as, more broadly, Antiquarianism, and the changes in religion which occurred in England throughout the sixteenth century. Earlier histories displayed little awareness of anachronism, tending to view past time as essentially the same as the present, with human nature and society as unchanging and accounted for by Providence, in a largely ‘static’ picture of historical time. Exposure to revived Classical culture and Humanist scholarship, it is now widely agreed, led to a greater awareness of social change and anachronism, and the beginnings of a modern historical methodology.<sup>27</sup>

The prominent role given to Humanism in the changing patterns of historical writing in this period is partly due to an understandable desire on the part of historians to locate respectable ancestors for their own discipline. It has, however, had the unfortunate consequence of constructing a teleological account of the development of the subject, in which certain types of historical knowledge are privileged over others. As Daniel Woolf observes, ‘[a]wareness that the Plantagenets and the Heptarchs ruled England in “times past” implies a relatively rudimentary level of historical knowledge. Knowing, without having to look up the fact, that King Henry II immediately preceded King Richard I who preceded King John requires a more robust grasp of chronology’.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969); Frank S. Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); Joseph M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Fred J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1967); Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perceptions of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1979); Arthur B. Ferguson, *Utter Antiquity: Perceptions of Prehistory in Renaissance England* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); John G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law: A Study of English Historical Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Norton, 1967); Daniel R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the ‘Light of Truth’ from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Daniel R. Woolf, ‘From Histories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500-1700’ in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paulina Kewes, special issue of *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68: 1 and 2 (2005), 33-70 (p.42).



Whilst there is certainly a distinction to be drawn between a ‘robust...chronology’ and more explicitly teleological modes of history, the title of Woolf’s article, which promises to chart a move ‘[f]rom histories to the historical’ does invite a progressive reading by distinguishing between inferior and superior forms of historical knowledge. Clearly, a great deal of the historical knowledge available to an early modern subject does not fit into a precise chronological scheme, but nor should we assume that it suggests a substandard or basic understanding of the past. Set in an ill-defined ‘times past’, historical events become part of a mythic timescape, and a resource for the present.

### **The Popular Voice**

The transformation in the writing of history which occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also led, it has been suggested, to the ‘progressive subordination of oral and mnemonic modes of commemorating and transmitting information to scribal/mechanical ones.’<sup>29</sup> In investigating the porous boundary between oral and print culture, considerable scholarly effort has gone into constructing a concept of an authentically ‘oral’ culture, ‘uncontaminated’ by the effects of print. Folk music was an important part of the popular culture which was ‘rediscovered’ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Hudson has shown how the concept of oral tradition was first constructed in the eighteenth century as a result of scholars becoming increasingly aware of the differences between speech and writing.<sup>31</sup> Homer was

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<sup>29</sup> Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, rev. ed. (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994), pp. 3-22.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholas Hudson, ‘“Oral Tradition”: The Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Concept’, in *Tradition in Transition: Woman Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth-Century Canon*, ed. by Alvaro Ribeiro and James G. Baker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 161-76; Nicholas Hudson, ‘Constructing Oral Tradition: The Origins of the Concept in Enlightenment Intellectual Culture’, in

reconceived by one editor as ‘a blind Ballad-Singer, who writ Songs of the Siege of Troy’.<sup>32</sup> Concerned with texts which were both oral and printed, ballad scholarship was central to the shaping of this ‘oral tradition’.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, oral and print cultures have frequently been imagined as firmly opposed, with the former constantly threatened by the ‘colonising’ activities of the latter. In the words of one eighteenth-century ballad editor, ‘[t]he art of printing was fatal to the Minstrels who sung’, a sentiment echoed in the twentieth century by David Buchan when he described literacy and print as the ‘death-knell’ for techniques of traditional oral composition.<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, accounts of ballads have insisted upon a split between traditional ballads, deriving from oral culture, and the broadside ballads produced by the commercial print trade.<sup>35</sup> The decisive historical split was located in the second half of the sixteenth century: ‘...the traditional ballad is a form of popular folk poetry that crystallised towards the end of the Middle Ages. With the decline of folk memory and the oral tradition, the broadside ballad grew out of the remains of traditional balladry’.<sup>36</sup> This division was raised into an aesthetic judgement in the work of Francis James Child,

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*The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850*, ed. by Adam Fox and Daniel R. Woolf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 240-55.

<sup>32</sup> *A Collection of Old Ballads. Corrected from the best and most Ancient Copies Extant. With Introductions Historical, Critical, or Humorous, Illustrated with Copper Plates*, ed. by Ambrose Phillips, 3 volumes (London: J. Roberts, 1723-5), p. iii. A3.

<sup>33</sup> 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 Broadside in Britain, 1500-1800*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 35-56.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph Ritson, ‘Observations on the Ancient English Minstrels’, *Ancient Songs from the Time of King Henry the Third to the Revolution* (London: J. Johnson, 1790), pp. i-xxvi (p. xvii); David Buchan, *The Ballad and the Folk* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 214.

<sup>35</sup> In this context, it is interesting to note the appearance of the word ‘street’ in the titles of several studies of broadside ballads (e.g. Natascha Würzbach, *The Rise of the English Street Ballad, 1550-1650*, trans. by Gayna Wallis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Leslie Shepard, *The History of Street Literature: The Story of Broadside Ballads, Chapbooks, Proclamations, News-Sheets, Election bills, Tracts, Pamphlets, Cocks, Catchpennies, and Other Ephemera* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973)), where it serves the function of defining the objects under discussion as the products of the London print trade, a literate as opposed to an oral culture.

<sup>36</sup> Shepard, *The Broadside Ballad*, p. 34.

who famously described the great collections of broadsides as ‘veritable dung-hills, in which, only after a great deal of sickening grubbing, one finds a very moderate jewel’.<sup>37</sup> Child’s judgement about the aesthetic worth of the majority of broadsides was in spite of the fact that broadsides provided the sources for at least a third of the ballads included in his monumental work, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1882-98).<sup>38</sup> Against such idealising tendencies, Albert Lloyd long ago observed from his own experience of song collecting that literacy and print were, in fact, much more likely to be a means of revitalising and reinforcing orally circulating balladry and folksong.<sup>39</sup> Current estimates of the percentage of songs collected directly from singers, which also circulated in cheap printed form, are as high as ninety-five per cent.<sup>40</sup>

Early modern England was far from being fully literate; hence, in many circumstances, the spoken word was still paramount. It was, however, a society which was fully penetrated by the written word through the media of both script and print. The complementary nature of orality and literacy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been attested by a range of scholarship.<sup>41</sup> As much as it is now recognised that oral

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Mary Ellen Brown, ‘Child’s Ballads and the Broadside Conundrum’, in *Ballads and Broadsides in Britain, 1500-1800*, ed. by Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 57-72 (p. 67).

<sup>38</sup> See Brown, ‘Child’s Ballads’, pp. 57-72; Roy Palmer, ‘‘Veritable Dunghills’: Professor Child and the Broadside’, *Folk Music Journal*, 7:2, (1996), 155-66.

<sup>39</sup> Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, pp. 13-93.

<sup>40</sup> Robert S. Thompson, ‘The Development of the Broadside Ballad Trade and Its Influence Upon the Transmission of English Folksongs’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1974), p. 274, placed the figure at seventy to eighty percent. More recently Steve Gardham has put it as high as ninety-five percent. In addition, Gardham estimates that fifteen percent of English folk songs can be found on broadsides of the seventeenth century or earlier. See David Atkinson, ‘Folk Songs in Print: Text and Tradition’, *Folk Music Journal*, 8:4, (2004), 456-483 (n. 7, p. 475).

<sup>41</sup> See Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Donald F. McKenzie, ‘Speech-Manuscript-Print’ in *Making Meaning: ‘Printers of the Mind’ and Other Essays*, ed. by Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), pp. 237-258; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982); Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*; Keith Thomas, ‘The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England’ in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. by Gerd Baumann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 97-131; Tessa

and written modes are not opposed processes of communication, scholars still struggle to move beyond a rigid binary. Print and oral tradition are conceived of as ‘fundamentally distinct entities’, with print as the contaminant and displacer of oral culture.<sup>42</sup> In the interaction between orality and print in the early modern period, we are told that oral culture was ‘seriously altered, marginalised or even eliminated’ in the face of the ‘imperialistic potential’ of the products of the print trade.<sup>43</sup> Whilst forcefully arguing that, for broadside ballads of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, ‘the dominant factor is clearly orality’, Bruce Smith simultaneously argues that broadsides ‘demonstrate their power to colonize oral culture’.<sup>44</sup> That both Thomas and Smith reach for the same political metaphor to describe the supposed relationship between orality and literacy is telling. What is at stake in any concept of an ‘uncontaminated’ popular oral culture is that it is also free from the values of commerce. Whilst Smith demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the ways in which ballad texts circulated between print and oral culture, the broadside is still viewed as part of a process of the commodification of an older popular oral tradition.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, Tessa Watt has persuasively argued that ballad authors’ anonymity was a product of the development of the print trade. Anonymity is a feature of the ‘traditional’ folk ballad formed by oral culture. So it might be expected that print would be more likely to preserve signs of authorship. Initially, in the sixteenth century, many broadsides did carry names or at the very least initials, but by the

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Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Daniel R. Woolf, ‘Speech, Text, and Time: The Sense of Hearing and the Sense of the Past in Early Modern England’, *Albion*, 18:2 (1986), 159-93.

<sup>42</sup> McDowell, ‘Print Commerce and the Idea of Oral Tradition’, p. 37. See also Dianne Dugaw, ‘Anglo-American Folksong Reconsidered: The Interface of Oral and Written Forms’, *Western Folklore*, 43:2 (1984), 83-103.

<sup>43</sup> Adam Fox and Daniel R. Woolf, ‘Introduction’, in *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain 1500-1850*, ed. by Adam Fox and Daniel R. Woolf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 1-51 (p. 8); Thomas, ‘The Meaning of Literacy’, p. 113.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 177, 186.

seventeenth century, names were simply dropped from reprinted broadsides as copyrights changed hands.<sup>45</sup> The only exceptions to this anonymity were those authors whose names attracted a popular following such as Martin Parker and Lawrence Price.<sup>46</sup> In the sixteenth century, the most prominent authors included William Elderton and Thomas Deloney.<sup>47</sup>

Modern scholarship has tended to privilege the four prose narratives Thomas Deloney (c.1543-1600) produced in the final years of his life. His name even appears as part of the subtitle of Margaret Schlauch's *Antecedents of the English Novel 1400-1600: From Chaucer to Deloney*.<sup>48</sup> Deloney's twentieth century editor, Francis Oscar Mann, orders his edition of Deloney's complete works by placing the four prose narratives – chronologically the last texts Deloney produced – first.<sup>49</sup> Mann thus privileges Deloney's writing in the context of the Elizabethan novel and relegates his ballads to a subsidiary role, yet he was principally known to his contemporaries as an author of ballads. Modern critics have both positioned Deloney's status as an author within a narrative about the emergence of the novel as a distinct literary genre and have privileged those four 'proto-novels' above the other texts for which he was responsible. Ironically, the one ballad written by Thomas Deloney to which modern criticism has paid any sustained attention is one for which the text has not survived: a ballad 'containing a Complaint of great Want and scarcity of Corn within the realm' came to the attention of the authorities in July 1596, accused of depicting Elizabeth 'speaking

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<sup>45</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>46</sup> Hyder E. Rollins, 'Martin Parker, Ballad-Monger', *Modern Philology*, 16:9 (1919), 449-74.

<sup>47</sup> Hyder E. Rollins, 'William Elderton: Elizabethan Actor and Ballad-Writer', *Studies in Philology*, 17 (1920), 199-245; Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. vii-xliii.

<sup>48</sup> Margaret Schlauch, *Antecedents of the English Novel 1400-1600: From Chaucer to Deloney* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Deloney, *Jack of Newbury* (1597), *The Gentle Craft Parts I* (1597) and *II* (c. 1597-1600), and *Thomas of Reading* (c.1597-1600). See Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 1-272.

with her People Dialogue wise in very fond and undecent sort...and prescribing Order for the remedying of this Dearth of Corn'.<sup>50</sup>

Yet Will Kemp, in his reference to Deloney in his pamphlet *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600), identified Deloney as 'the great Ballad-maker T.D., alias Thomas Deloney, Chronicler of the memorable lives of the Six Yeoman of the West, Jack of Newbury, the Gentle Craft, &c., and such like honest men, omitted by Stow, Hollinshead, Grafton, Halle, Froissart, and all the rest of those well deserving writers'.<sup>51</sup> Kemp's ironic and inadvertent eulogy clearly identifies Deloney as a ballad author. It also places him amongst a list of historians, positioning him as not only an author of ballads but specifically as an historian who is filling in the gaps in chronicle and Humanist histories. As a ballad author, Deloney was responsible for several garlands, as well as a number of individual broadsides, which are either ballad histories, or else contain contemporary accounts of events such as the Armada, which are framed as histories. The broad range of Deloney's work and literary career are discussed at length in Chapter 3, but ballads written by him are examined throughout this thesis. As an unintended consequence, Deloney has become something of a presiding spirit over this thesis. In addition to discussing ballad histories, the thesis also serves to reposition this significant, if minor, Elizabethan author within the framework of early modern popular culture in which his work originally flourished.

The circulation of print in cheap and widely-dispersed forms has, of course, been central to recent discussions of what precisely constitutes 'popular culture'. As Richard Helgerson has observed, Chappell's idea of a 'people's history of England' is

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<sup>50</sup> See Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. viii-xiii.

<sup>51</sup> William Kemp, *Nine Daies Wonder*, 1600, ed. by George B Harrison, Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), p. 30. The irony in Kemp's 'eulogy' arises from the fact that the titles which he names, 'Jack of Newbury, the Gentle Craft', were not ballads, but prose fictions. See Chapter 3 for further discussion.

one which can have several different meanings. Historical ballads were a people's history 'in two senses: they were the history commoners heard and knew, and they were history from a commoner's point of view'.<sup>52</sup> Helgerson finds this commoner's point of view in the ballads' preoccupation with oppression and innocent suffering in their depiction of historical figures such as Jane Shore, Rosamond Clifford, Queen Eleanor and others, victims of royal power or Catholic persecution. Helgerson's account of ballad histories is somewhat reductive, a part of his critical effort to chart a rival tradition of history plays which appropriated their material from ballad sources in opposition to the cycle of chronicle-inspired history plays written by Shakespeare. This opposition relies on a view of the Tudor chronicles as monolithic conveyers of official ideologies and an equally univocal view of the popular ballad as a repository of the 'commoner's point of view'. More recent scholarship has demonstrated that such a view of the chronicles is, at best, only partial, as they contain a far more heterogeneous range of materials than Helgerson supposes.<sup>53</sup>

Notwithstanding the presence of 'Queen' Eleanor in Helgerson's list of the victims of royal power, the definition of the popular implicit in his remarks also presupposes a fairly stable meaning for the category of the 'people', who are explicitly identified as 'commoners'. Helgerson's conception of the popular is broadly in line with that of the earlier scholar Victor Neuberg who defined popular culture as encompassing 'the values, assumptions and attitudes of the unprivileged', the audience for popular literature consisting predominantly of both the 'unsophisticated reader' and 'the poor'.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 237.

<sup>53</sup> See Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation; The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. by Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer and Felicity Heal (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013); Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Alison Taufer, *Holinshed's Chronicles* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1999).

<sup>54</sup> Victor E. Neuberg, *Popular Literature: A History and Guide from the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 236, 12.

Whilst Neuberg does demonstrate flexibility in what kind of texts constitute ‘popular’ literature, definitions such as these assume that the popular can be unproblematically and straightforwardly equated with a particular social category, which risks producing a homogenised entity of ‘the people’. In addition, culture is defined as a set of ‘things’ or practices which are intrinsically ‘popular’.

The difficulties of defining what is meant by the term ‘popular culture’ lie in its broadness, since definitions can encompass subjects, objects, or practices. Equally, the concept can be applied both to the culture produced *by* lower class subjects, and to the culture produced *for* such subjects. The recent editors of the Arden Critical Companion, *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture*, place this distinction at the heart of their definition, distinguishing clearly between two different types of popular culture.<sup>55</sup> The first is the culture created by a nascent commercial enterprise and distributed through channels of capitalist exchange. It includes both the commercial stage for which Shakespeare wrote and the many products of the emerging culture of cheap print: jest books, almanacs, rogue literature, and printed ballads. The second type of popular culture is broadly defined as the ‘cultural expressions of the people themselves’.<sup>56</sup> These include communal festive practices associated with ritual holidays, clowning, and an oral tradition of stories, proverbs, ballads and songs. Throughout the seventeenth century, Gillespie and Rhodes argue, this older popular tradition was gradually commodified or displaced both by the effects of print and by the commercial marketplace. Thus, the new commercial stage appropriated figures such as the vice from medieval morality plays, and ‘traditional’ ballads circulated in print.

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<sup>55</sup> Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes, ‘Introduction’, in *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture: Arden Critical Companion*, ed. by Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes (London: Arden, 2006), pp. 1-17.

<sup>56</sup> Gillespie and Rhodes, ‘Introduction’, p. 1.



The idea of a culture which is produced by the ‘people themselves’ implies that there is some kind of ‘pure’ popular culture, which can be defined as a ‘traditional’ or ‘folk’ culture and located outside the discursive boundaries of both a privileged ‘high’ culture and the commercial world of print production. While popular festive practices certainly existed, and undoubtedly were subject to decline throughout the seventeenth century, in part as a result of the efforts of religious and moral reformers, the problem with such a concept is that the practices encompassed by the term had an often tenuous relationship with the written or printed word. Consequently early modern festive culture survives principally in records left by culturally elite subjects, or else in the imagination of the scholar who is describing it. In their examination of early modern popular print, Garrett Sullivan and Linda Woodbridge have forcefully argued that all surviving artefacts of popular culture ultimately have their roots in literate or elite cultures: ‘[p]opular culture keeps receding as we approach. Whether or not the Folk ever significantly contributed to what now looks like “popular” literature, mediation by the educated seems always already in place’.<sup>57</sup> Ronald Hutton has similarly demonstrated that the ‘folk’ custom of the Morris dance likely had its origins in court dances of the fifteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Despite the sophistication of their arguments, the trajectory of the development of popular culture and its relationship with the commercial marketplace that Gillespie and Rhodes trace implicitly posits the existence of an earlier golden age in which this ‘traditional’ communal culture presumably flourished. It is a view which owes much to the seminal work both of Mikhail Bakhtin with his theories of the

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<sup>57</sup> Garrett Sullivan and Linda Woodbridge, ‘Popular Culture in Print’, in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1500-1600*, ed. by Arthur F Kinney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 265-286 (p. 282).

<sup>58</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 264-65.

carnavalesque subversion of official culture and to Peter Burke's influential 'withdrawal' thesis.<sup>59</sup>

Burke posits the existence of two cultures: a 'little tradition' to which everyone had access and a 'great tradition' accessible only to the elite who throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries withdrew from the 'little tradition' leading to a split both between the two 'traditions' of culture and between the subjects who participated in them. This 'little tradition' was subsequently rediscovered in the following centuries under the influence of romantic nationalism as a popular culture and tradition belonging only to the people or the 'folk', an independent universalised plebeian group, separate from, and even in opposition to, those belonging to more elite cultural and social groups. The withdrawal of the elite from the cultures in which they had previously participated is indicated in the increasingly severe judgements expressed in the descriptions of the artefacts and practices of popular culture made by elite subjects, in which the practices and objects identified with such a culture are increasingly stigmatised as 'low' and 'vulgar'. Ballads were clearly involved in and affected by this 'civilising process'. The range of elite voices gathered in an appendix to Natascha Würzbach's study provides a representative sample of contemporary comment and attests to the ways in which ballads, and their makers and users, were stigmatised.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Sharon Achinstein has demonstrated how the status of ballads as emblematic of 'low' popular culture was used to construct an elite literary culture.<sup>61</sup>

Gillespie and Rhodes' double-sided definition is also representative of a common scholarly desire to locate a 'voice' for subjects who were otherwise excluded

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<sup>59</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1964); Burke, *Popular Culture*.

<sup>60</sup> Würzbach, *Rise of the English Street Ballad*, pp. 253-84.

<sup>61</sup> Sharon Achinstein, 'Audiences and Authors: Ballads and the Making of English Renaissance Literary Culture', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 22:3 (1992), 311-26.

from elite discourses, as well as a concern with the ways in which this ‘popular’ voice was either suppressed by the dominant class, or else appropriated by an early modern commercial culture.<sup>62</sup> One consequence of this has been a desire to locate an oppositional politics within the popular against a dominant elite culture. Michael Bristol and Annabel Patterson, for example, have examined how the commercial theatre and Shakespeare drew upon festive practices and popular traditions to articulate a political resistance to and scepticism about official culture.<sup>63</sup> The cultural theorist John Fiske has forcefully argued that ‘popular culture is formed always in reaction to, and never part of, the forces of domination’.<sup>64</sup> Fiske’s argument not only precludes the possibility of a conservative popular culture existing, but it also requires the existence of a larger category of a ‘mass’ culture produced by a modern industrial society from which the texts of popular culture are selected. Prior to the nineteenth century, Fiske posits the existence of yet another idealised ‘folk’ culture, ‘the product of a comparatively stable, traditional social order, in which social differences are not conflictual, and that is therefore characterised by social consensus rather than social conflict’.<sup>65</sup>

Whilst such a vision of pre-nineteenth century society in England is scarcely credible, where Fiske is more helpful is in his engagement with the theories of Roger Chartier who has demonstrated how culture is more usefully thought of as a process of appropriation. Meanings become attached to texts through the use to which readers and

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<sup>62</sup> See for example, Mark Thornton Burnett, ‘Popular Culture in the English Renaissance’ in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. by William Zunder and Suzanne Trill (Harlow: Longman, 1996), pp. 106-22; Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989); Pamela H. Smith, ‘Giving Voice to the Hands: The Articulation of Material Literacy in the Sixteenth Century’, in *Popular Literacy: Studies in Cultural Practices and Poetics*, ed. by John Timbur (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), pp. 74-93.

<sup>63</sup> Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985); Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice*.

<sup>64</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 43.

<sup>65</sup> Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, p. 169.

consumers put them.<sup>66</sup> Rather than speaking of a single homogenous ‘popular culture’, it is better to speak of the existence of multiple cultures – whether popular or elite – in complex interactions with one another. ‘Popular’ and ‘elite’ are not intrinsic to particular texts and practices, but are also produced through discursive self-definitions. In the words of Mary Ellen Lamb, the ‘popular’ is ‘a social sign, to refer to a simulacrum existing in early modern imaginaries created from cultural materials assembled from various lower status groups’.<sup>67</sup> It is the product of an elite imagination, which was ambivalent about the popular culture it was constructing, seeing ‘folk’ traditions both as a point of nostalgia for something which has been lost and simultaneously as a method of forging an identity distinct from and in opposition to that culture. Similarly, in his analysis of the ballad audience, Christopher Marsh has found evidence for what he calls ‘an alternative tradition of confused consumption’, in which attraction and repulsion operated simultaneously for elite subjects in their enjoyment of ballads.<sup>68</sup>

Similar anxieties were also expressed in the early modern period by self-consciously popular texts. John Rhodes’ introduction to the later reprint of his *The Countrie Mans Comfort* (1588, repr. 1637), a book of instructional songs, advises any ‘wise and learned’ readers that it is not intended for them but for the ‘Scholler of pettie Schools the poor Countrieman and his familie’.<sup>69</sup> The presence of an introduction excusing the text in the eyes of elite readers can partly be explained by the gap of nearly

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<sup>66</sup> Roger Chartier, ‘Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France’, in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Mouton, 1984) pp. 229-53.

<sup>67</sup> Mary Ellen Lamb, *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser and Jonson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-23.

<sup>68</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 266.

<sup>69</sup> John Rhodes, *The Countrie Mans Comfort. Or Religious recreations fitte for all well disposed persons. Which was printed in the yeere of our Lord 1588. And since corrected, amended, and enlarged by the same author* (London: M. D[awson], 1637), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig. A2.

forty years between editions, spanning the most likely point when the idea of a division between ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ cultures was first proposed and constructed. Once such a divide has been widely disseminated and understood within the wider culture, it then becomes possible not only for elite subjects to appropriate images of popular culture, but also for voices to speak from the other side of the divide. From the point of view of the print trade, it becomes possible to market particular cultural forms to the particular social groups with which they have become associated. As Angela McShane has shown, by the mid-seventeenth century, black and white letter ballads were established formats ‘consciously and carefully adapted for different kinds of consumers’.<sup>70</sup> Latinate ‘white letter’ ballads were self-consciously ‘popular’ texts aimed at an elite audience, printed on better quality paper and containing a greater ‘sophistication of their language, their political content and their style’.<sup>71</sup> In contrast, ‘black letter’ was the preserve of older, ‘traditional’ ballads, accessible to a much broader audience. Black letter type was also used for official proclamations and religious works intended for the least educated, which allows for the possibility that many of the wider ‘popular’ ballad audience may have failed to see the distinction between popular and elite cultures that was so clear to the many contemporary critics of ballads.

‘Accessible’, as opposed to ‘inaccessible’, cultural products are McShane’s preferred terms in place of ‘popular’ and ‘elite’. Popular culture is built out of the elements and cultural products which are broadly accessible to a wider audience. This also raises the question of whether ‘cheap’ print can be so easily equated with popular culture. The recent work of Cathy Shrank and Edward Wilson-Lee suggests that, even before the establishment of the format of ‘white letter’ ballads, ‘elite’ subjects were not

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<sup>70</sup> Angela McShane, ‘Typography Matters: Branding Ballads and Gelding Curates in Early Modern England’, in *Book Trade Connections from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Centuries*, ed. by John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong (New Castle and London: Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2008), pp. 19-44 (p. 20).

<sup>71</sup> McShane, ‘Typography Matters’, pp. 28-29.

above using ballads to engage with contemporary politics for polemical ends. Wilson-Lee has argued that a series of ballads which report and comment on events of the Northern uprising, some of which will be considered in Chapter 2, were, if not actually commissioned by the Privy Council, certainly evidence of ‘the speedy transmission of information from the Council to the balladeers’, who ‘in many cases also have suggestive links to the Elizabethan government’.<sup>72</sup> Shrank’s work on two series of broadsides exchanged in 1540 and then in about 1551, demonstrates how a number of authors attempted to initiate debate about, and sought to influence, contemporary affairs.<sup>73</sup> Both scholars see the texts under their consideration as manifestations of the ‘episodic’, post-Reformation, pre-Revolution public sphere in early modern England, as identified by Peter Lake and Steve Pincus.<sup>74</sup> As Shrank has argued, ‘cheap print was not a medium insulated from the political debate and actions that concerned the governing elite, but was an instrument that partisans in these contests could, and did, employ’.<sup>75</sup>

One advantage of examining broadside ballads in the context of ‘popular’ cultures is precisely that, despite the expressed doubts of scholars such as Sullivan and Woodbridge, they do give us mediated access to the voices of lower class subjects in a very literal manner. In choosing to sing or to recite a ballad, and thereby make it a part of the early modern soundscape, a ‘lower’ status subject in turn appropriated the ballad from the broadside text. In addition, the object that is the broadside could be appropriated by being pasted up on a wall. As self-consciously verbal texts, whilst

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<sup>72</sup> Edward Wilson-Lee, ‘The Bull and the Moon: Broadside Ballads and the Public Sphere at the Time of the Northern Uprising (1569-70)’, *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 63:259 (2011), 225-42 (p. 228).

<sup>73</sup> Cathy Shrank, ‘Trollers and Dreamers: Defining the Citizen-Subject in Seventeenth-Century Cheap Print’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 28 (2008), 102-18.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, ‘Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England’, in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*, ed. by Peter Lake and Steve Pincus (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 1-31.

<sup>75</sup> Cathy Shrank, ‘Trollers and Dreamers’, p. 118.

broadside ballads may not reproduce vernacular speech, they do enable oral cultures to find resonances between them and their own speech patterns. The voice which is preserved in a ballad is usually an anonymous ‘popular’ voice which any subject is able to appropriate as a member of the community on whose behalf the ballad speaks.<sup>76</sup> Throughout this thesis, I am attentive to this idea of appropriation and subject position, especially with regards for the new perspective it offers on the relationship between monarch and commons in the early modern period, and on what I define as popular conservatism.

If a reading of the popular as radical posits a refusal to submit to power, then a conservative popular culture is a way of identifying with and of aligning the self with that power. Historians have found copious evidence for what we might term ‘conservative’ popular culture. The work of Martin Ingram, for example, suggests that the carnivalesque celebrated by Bakhtin and his followers could also be deployed as a means of ensuring social cohesion. Ridings and ‘rough music’ used a combination of the festive and the penal to reinforce community norms.<sup>77</sup> In a similar spirit, Tessa Watt has located a consensual popular Protestantism in many of the cheapest printed texts available in the period, a point reinforced by Alexandra Walsham’s work on the ways in which Protestant reform fused with pre-existing oral culture.<sup>78</sup>

These approaches all fit the ‘consensual model of community agreement’, which is the province of historians such as Barry Reay and Tim Harris, who find evidence of

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<sup>76</sup> Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 196-205.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Ingram, ‘Ridings, Rough Music and the ‘Reform of Popular Culture’ in Early Modern England’, *Past and Present*, 105 (1984), 79-113.

<sup>78</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘Reformed Folklore? Cautionary Tales and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England’, in *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850*, ed. by Adam Fox and Daniel R. Woolf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 173-95; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 33-127.

interaction and co-operation between diverse social groups.<sup>79</sup> Reay has even argued that violent protests, such as riots, were usually backward-looking in their appeals to community values and ‘traditional’ rights, and should therefore be more properly considered as a negotiation with, rather than rebellion against, elite culture, for all their infrequency and ineffectiveness.<sup>80</sup> None of this, of course, invalidates the fact that many of the elite would still have found such protests threatening. Similarly, Christopher Hill has noted that, in the years before and during the civil war, the ‘common people’ were much more susceptible to conservative impulses. Where radicalism was expressed, it more usually took the form of ‘a backward looking and idealised communism’.<sup>81</sup>

In such a context, a radical politics is not merely ideological but also contextual. A ballad like *The map of Mock-begger hall, with his scituation in the spacious countrey, called Anywhere* for example, invests with a strong sense of nostalgia its protest against economic change and contemporary abuses perpetrated by a privileged class which has abandoned its land and country houses so as to afford to ‘spend their time in sport’ (15).<sup>82</sup> The ruinous present is contrasted with an idealised ‘ancient times of yore’ (1) where such economic abuses were absent and the nobility lived up to its traditional responsibilities within the social system. The ballad’s complaint on the behalf of an

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<sup>79</sup> Tim Harris, ‘Problematising Popular Culture’, in *Popular Culture in England c. 1500-1850*, ed. by Tim Harris (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan Press, 1995), pp. 1-27; Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England, 1550-1750* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, Ltd., 1998).

<sup>80</sup> Reay, *Popular Cultures*, pp. 176-91. On popular politics, see also Michael J. Braddick, and John Walter, eds., *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> Christopher Hill, ‘The Many-Headed Monster in Late Tudor and Early Stuart Thinking’, in *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly*, ed. by Charles H. Carter (London: Cape, 1966), pp. 296-324 (p. 317).

<sup>82</sup> [Anonymous], *The map of Mock-begger Hall with his scituation in the spacious countrey, called, Anywhere* (London: Richard Harper, 1635), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2, pp. 449-53.



exploited commons clearly takes the form of a ‘backward looking’ nostalgia, through which it expresses its opposition to the present. Unlike Thomas Deloney, subject to royal censure for writing his lost ballad about the ‘dearth of corn’, the author of *The Map of Mock-begger Hall* does not appear to have got into trouble. Where earlier critics have defined Deloney’s politics as oppositional in spirit, in contrast I argue that the radicalism which has been found in his prose fictions instead springs from a conservatism and loyalty to the monarchy. Popular conservatism is, potentially, equally as threatening to the official order as is overt radicalism.

My opening chapter then, offers a corrective to recent work which has tended to privilege the oral qualities of ballads, with print conceived of as a threatening ‘other’. In contrast, I argue that the broadside texts made as important a contribution to the meaning of the ballad as the tune, and played a significant role in determining how ballads were perceived within early modern culture. The chapter explores the interplay between orality and print through the figure of the early modern ballad seller, Anthony Now now, before going on to consider the construction of what I have termed a ‘rhetoric of truthfulness’ produced through a range of textual and paratextual markers designed to convince the ballad audience that their accounts were essentially true, no matter how fanciful.

A popular genre in the broadside ballad is what has been termed the ‘news-ballad’. Many of these contain accounts of events now considered to be major historical occurrences. In the second chapter, I build on Angela McShane's argument that the term ‘news-ballad’ is an anachronistic one; McShane prefers the term ‘political ballad’. I contend that the ‘timeless’ values which these ballads construct and articulate mean that they can also be defined as ‘modern histories’, establishing current events as part of a longer historical and providential pattern. The bulk of the chapter considers the ballad representations of two major events in the reign of Elizabeth I – the attempted invasion

of the Spanish Armada and the Northern Uprising – and analyses how these ‘historic’ events are used in ballads to construct a coherent image of the national community.

For English history, the monarchy and its succession of reigning monarchs is both the simplest and most obvious unit of division for organising the history of the nation. The ballads at the heart of the third chapter all contain representations of both the monarchy and the monarch. I compare representations of the monarch and English subjects contained in the ballads collected in Thomas Deloney’s garland *Strange Histories*, which takes selected episodes from Holinshed to produce the closest thing we have to a ballad ‘chronicle’, alongside individual broadsides belonging to the popular ‘king-commoner’ tradition. I consider how these different types of ballad histories depict royal authority, arguing that it is those ballads which adhere most closely to the facts of recorded history, which produce the most problematic depiction of royal authority.

Finally, I turn to religious histories. For early modern subjects, the Bible was conceived, not only as a religious text which could be depended on for its authority and godliness, but also as a set of histories. In this chapter, I explore the interweaving of biblical narrative, recent religious history, and godly Protestant polemic in a series of ballads from 1559 to 1624. I consider the different tonalities of religious ballads, arguing that they were a key arena for a wide audience to reflect on and insert themselves into, not only national history, but wider providential narratives derived from biblical histories, resulting in an ongoing construction of a community of faith.

The different chapters of this thesis make up a composite and contradictory ‘people’s history of England’, which uses historical events and narratives to create both national and religious identities for a popular ballad audience. It is my contention that the majority of these histories are evidence of a popular culture which is broadly ‘conservative’ in its historical context, intent on forming and imagining subjects who

are part of a coherent English nation. Under threat, as in the representation of rebellions, this coherent nation is liable to become fragmented and, in particular contexts, it may even appear to present a radical threat to the early modern state, as the example of Thomas Deloney's work demonstrates. At its most idealised, the English nation of the early modern broadside ballads provides a vision of social harmony in which the monarch and commoner are able to meet as equals, indeed even function as equal parts of the same construction, albeit within the structures of social hierarchy.

## TRUTH, TIME AND THE ART OF PRINTING

‘Parson’s Farewell’ is the title of a dance tune which initially appeared in print in the first edition of John Playford’s *The English Dancing Master* (1651).<sup>1</sup> A recent recording of the tune by the early music group, Tarleton’s Jig, appears alongside a number of other popular tunes and songs from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, on an album produced for sale by Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, *Elizabethan Street Songs* (2008). Consciously targeted at a modern theatre audience, the paratextual elements of the album cover and sleeve situate the contents of the CD in a particularly urban context. The cover informs its audience that this is an ‘authentic collection’, whilst the album’s subtitle links the music with a suggestive range of cultural sites: ‘From the Alehouse to the Whore-house – Jigs, Ballads & Bawdy Songs’. A note on the rear of the sleeve promises that its contents ‘captur[e] the atmosphere of 16<sup>th</sup> century street life’.<sup>2</sup> ‘16<sup>th</sup> century street life’ is identified here as a site for ‘low’ commercial activity, drink, sex and raucous behaviour. Despite its claims to authenticity, what is actually being sold by the album’s cover is a caricature of urban life in early modern England. The interior sleeve notes supply an alternative vision of authenticity, with details of the period musical instruments on which the music is performed, and notes about where the songs and tunes originated. As artificial as the surrounding marketing might be, it is consistent with the sleeve notes which state that the band have ‘tried to encapsulate part of the vibrant musical soundtrack of London towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century’.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Dean-Smith ed., *Playford’s English Dancing Master 1651: A Facsimile Reprint with an Introduction, Bibliography and Notes* (London: Schott and Co., 1957), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Tarleton’s Jig, *Elizabethan Street Songs* (Globe Editions, GE 002, 2008) [on CD], sleeve notes.

<sup>3</sup> Tarleton’s Jig, *Elizabethan Street Songs* [on CD], sleeve notes.

The Globe's advertising perpetuates many of the same stereotypes which contemporary commentators attached to ballads and ballad authors and singers. The same associations can be found in the scorn of William Webbe, who dismissed 'ryming Ballet makers' for producing 'Alehouse song[s] of five or sixe score verses',<sup>4</sup> and of John Earle, who claimed that ballads were written while 'sitting in a Bawdy-house'.<sup>5</sup> Ironically, where the modern recording places 'Parson's Farewell' in a specifically urban context, Playford's original text gives the tune an explicitly rural origin.<sup>6</sup> The title page for *The English Dancing Master* advertises its contents as, 'Plaine and easie Rules for the Dancing of *Country* Dances [my italics]'.<sup>7</sup> Whilst the Globe's advertising appears to misrepresent the original cultural context of at least some of the tunes included as 'Elizabethan Street Songs', Playford's text is equally self-conscious in its navigation of the divide between rural and urban culture. In Playford's opening address to his readership, he constructs an image of his audience as the urban 'Gentlemen of the Innes of Court', to whom he recommends the art of dancing on the grounds that it is part of an appropriately Classical education syllabus.<sup>8</sup> *The English Dancing Master* not only self-consciously presents the products of a popular rural culture for elite urban consumption it also transforms those products into a part of elite culture.

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<sup>4</sup> William Webbe, *A Discourse of English Poetrie 1586*, ed. by Edward Arber (Westminster: Constable, 1895), p. 36

<sup>5</sup> John Earle, *Micro-cosmographie, or A piece of the world discovered in essayes and characters* (London: E.A. for John Alott, 1633) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> Several tunes found on *Elizabethan Street Songs* have also been performed by acts such as Martin Carthy and Dave Swarbrick, Shirley and Dolly Collins, and Bellowhead, all of whom are part of the contemporary English folk scene. This further complicates any secure place for a tune such as 'Parson's Farewell' within an urban-rural binary. With its roots in the earlier folk revival of the early twentieth century, when figures such as Cecil Sharp firmly positioned English folksong as part of an idealised rural oral culture, the majority of English folksong is still defined by modern practitioners and audiences as originating from just such a context. See Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival*, rev. edn. (Leeds: No Masters, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Dean-Smith, *Playford's English Dancing Master*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Dean-Smith, *Playford's English Dancing Master*, p. 2.

The urban-rural binary is easily mapped onto the equally problematic divides between the popular versus the elite, tradition versus commerce, and most importantly, print versus orality, within which early modern broadside ballads have commonly been understood by both contemporaries and later critics. Since virtually all broadsides printed before 1695 were printed in London, it is not unreasonable to define ballads as part of a specifically urban culture, aimed predominantly at a London audience. The theme of a foolish countryman confused by the complexities of city life was a perennial one.<sup>9</sup> Not all broadsides, however, were the products of London authors. Bruce Smith has noted the presence of six ballads from ‘oral tradition’ entered in the Stationers’ Register before 1600.<sup>10</sup> Equally, broadsides were distributed throughout England, available in provincial towns and rural areas. Contemporary commentators regularly associated them with the countryside. Richard Braithwaite observed that broadsides were so common by the early seventeenth-century ‘as every poore Milk maid can chant and chirp it under her Cow’, while John Davies complained of ‘North-Villages, where every line / Of Plumpton Park be held a work divine’.<sup>11</sup> As Bruce Smith has observed, even a ballad which apparently constructs a spectacle of the countryside for urban consumption might in turn be appreciated by a rural audience, who desired to project themselves into that spectacle.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 254.

<sup>10</sup> B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 176-7. As the opening of this chapter makes clear, the identification of oral tradition with rural culture is at the very least problematic, but certainly the range of sources for popular tunes included both urban and rural origins (Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 238).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Braithwaite, *Whimzies: or, A New Cast of Characters* (London: Felix Kingston, 1631) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 19; John Davies of Hereford, *A Scourge for Paper-persecutors. Or Papers complaint, compil'd in ruthfull rimes, against the paper-spoilers of these times. By I.D. With a continu'd iust inquisition of the same subiect, fit for this season. Against paper-persecutors. By A.H.* (London: Holland and Gibbs, 1625) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 185.

In this chapter, I will consider the implications of the broadside as a printed artefact. In recent scholarship, the divide between print and orality has come to the fore. Attesting to an admirable desire to recover the dimension of orality and musicality towards which the broadside text gestures through textual markers, it has, however, the unfortunate consequence of reducing the broadside to the status of a ‘container’ for a text which will only properly be realised in performance.<sup>13</sup> Implicit in the way in which the term is deployed by early modern subjects is a dual concept that defines a ballad as both an aesthetic form – a text which can be sung or chanted in performance – and also a material object, the printed artefact which circulates the ballad text. As Angela McShane has argued, illustrated broadsides were ‘decorative objects...exchanged as expressions of love between lovers, friends, and family... Though cheap and ubiquitous, for the lower sorts ballad sheets were hardly mere ephemera’.<sup>14</sup> The ballad is both a verbal and a visual text. This chapter, then, returns to the ballad as material text. The first section focuses on the figure of ‘Anthony Now now’, a contemporary literary representation of a ballad seller, who featured across a range of early modern texts, and whose representations confront a range of issues arising from the ballad as a printed object. The chapter then moves on to consider what I term a ‘rhetoric of truthfulness’ via a range of textual and paratextual markers designed to convince the ballad audience that their accounts were essentially true, no matter how fanciful.

Encompassing a diverse array of topics and subjects, broadside ballads were one of the cheapest forms of print available in the period. Initially priced at a halfpenny

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<sup>13</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 225-327; B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 168-205. Natascha Würzbach, (*Rise of the English Street Ballad*, pp. 39-104) dismisses the musical dimension of broadsides, but still defines them as performative texts.

<sup>14</sup> Angela McShane, ‘Subjects and Objects: Material Expressions of Love and Loyalty in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 48:4 (2009), 871-86 (p. 878).

each, the cost of broadsides had risen, at least by 1641, to a penny.<sup>15</sup> Distribution also took the form of ‘garlands’, small chapbooks containing several songs. The trade was rationalised in 1624, when a syndicate known as the ‘ballad partners’ was formed. Establishing a near monopoly on the copyright to the majority of the most successful ballads, this group and its descendants dominated the trade for centuries.<sup>16</sup> Since only a small proportion of the total ballad publications from this period have survived, the sheer size of the trade can be difficult to assess. Estimates put the total number of individual broadside ballad texts produced by early modern presses as high as between three and four million by the middle of the seventeenth century, and the 3,000 titles registered between 1557 and 1709 are only the tip of an iceberg which consisted of approximately another 15,000 unlicensed titles.<sup>17</sup> While manuscript and printed texts, such as broadsides, are the only sources we have for ballad texts from this period, broadsides are clearly texts intended for dramatic performance. Few broadsides appear without a direction for the tune to which the words were set. Ballads which lack a tune direction all date from the middle of the sixteenth century at the latest, suggesting that some early ballads were not designed to be sung.<sup>18</sup> Since, with few exceptions, they lacked any musical notation, many ballads were, therefore, set to popular tunes already

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<sup>15</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 11-2. Other historians have assumed a price of a penny throughout the early modern period: see Hyder E. Rollins, ‘The Black Letter Broadside Ballad’, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association*, 32: 2 (1919), 258-339 (p. 296); Thompson, ‘Broadside Ballad Trade’, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> For details of the publication and distribution of broadsides and chapbooks see: Carole Rose Livingston, *British Broadside Ballads of the Sixteenth Century: A Catalogue of the Extant Sheets and an Essay* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1991); Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 225-87; Neuberg, *Popular Literature*; Rollins, ‘The Black Letter Broadside Ballad’; Shepard, *The Broadside Ballad and The History of Street Literature*; Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*; Margaret Spufford, ‘The Pedlar, The Historian and the Folklorist: Seventeenth Century Communications’, *Folklore*, 105 (1994), 13-24; Thompson, ‘Broadside Ballad Trade’; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 39-127; Würzbach, *Rise of the English Street Ballad*, pp. 18-26.

<sup>17</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 11; Claude M. Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1966), p. xi, n. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Shrank, ‘Trollers and Dreamers’, pp. 103-4.



familiar to their audience. Alternatively, a prospective purchaser might learn the tune from the ballad seller. The occupational label ‘ballad singer’ encompassed both the performance and retail of ballads.<sup>19</sup>

As the trade developed, broadsides were increasingly adorned with decorative borders and pictures, until these became a standard aspect of the broadside text. To date, criticism of the broadside picture has tended to follow Natascha Würzbach’s dismissive statement that the woodcuts employed by many ballads were ‘a crude affair...which resulted not infrequently in a crass incongruence between illustration and text’.<sup>20</sup> Most recently, Malcolm Jones has characterised ballad images’ ‘‘generic’ relevance’ to the texts they illustrated as ‘notorious’.<sup>21</sup> The assumption has been that the ballad picture served a purely decorative function, a means of facilitating sales, and that ballads often employed mismatched images from a common stock. Although not all critics have been so dismissive of the ballad picture, it has still tended to be an element relegated to secondary or even tertiary importance, after the ballad text and tune.<sup>22</sup> Many images, however, were newly cut for ballad publication.<sup>23</sup> Even in instances where images have clearly been reused from a common stock, some printers, or perhaps their commissioning booksellers or authors, made considerable effort made to try and match

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<sup>19</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, pp. 238-50; B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 168-83; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 11-38; Würzbach, *Rise of the English Street Ballad*, pp. 39-104.

<sup>20</sup> Würzbach, *Rise of the English Street Ballad*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England: An Historical Oversight* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> See Patricia Fumerton, ‘Not Home: Alehouses, Ballads, and the Vagrant Husband in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 22:3 (2002), 493-518; Angela McShane, ‘Subjects and Objects’ pp. 878-84; Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 131-216; B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 204-5.

<sup>23</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 227; Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 148.

an appropriate image to the ballad text, as I demonstrate below. Potentially, the reuse of images also placed the narrative within a framework of familiar associations.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, visual aspects of the broadside such as these images are not available to a text in oral circulation. Other differences are signalled through the form of the title. If we compare the title of the orally transmitted *The Daemon Lover* with the title it carried in its earliest recorded appearance as a late seventeenth-century broadside, *Warning for Married Women, being an example of Mrs Jane Reynolds (a West-country woman), born near Plymouth, who, having plighted her troth to a Seaman, was afterwards married to a Carpenter, and at last carried away by a Spirit, the manner how shall be presently recited*, we can easily identify a clear distinction between the way in which the narrative is positioned in the different texts.<sup>25</sup> Without privileging one form as inherently superior to another, the journalistic qualities of the latter title, which identifies the subject by name and situates the narrative in an identifiable location, provide the ballad with several truth claims of the sort which are examined in the second half of this chapter, and which are absent from any of the versions found in later oral circulation. Whilst the art of printing was far from fatal to oral circulation, and broadside ballads are clearly texts which provide evidence for the interweaving of orality and print in the early modern period, it is equally clear that print extended both how ballads could interact with their audience and affected how they were perceived.

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<sup>24</sup> See further, albeit in different contexts, Sarah Barber, 'Curiosity and Reality: the Context and Interpretation of a Seventeenth-century Image', *History Workshop Journal*, 70 (2010), 21-46; Helen Pierce, *Unseemly Pictures: Graphic Satire and Politics in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> [Anonymous], *A warning for married women Being an example of Mrs. Jane Reynolds (a west-country-woman) born neer Pilmouth [sic] who having plighted her troth to a seaman, was afterwards married to a carpenter, and at last carried away by a spirit, the manner how shall presently be recited* (London: 1650) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>. For details of *The Daemon Lover*, see *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. by Francis James Child, Dover Books on Literature and Drama, 5 volumes, (New York: Dover Publications, 2003), 4, pp. 360-69.

In a meeting between the pioneering folk song collector, Cecil Sharp, and Henry Larcombe, an aged and blind singer from Somerset, Larcombe sang eleven verses of *Robin Hood and the Tanner*, a text which corresponded precisely with that of a black letter broadside found in the collection of the seventeenth century antiquarian Anthony Wood.<sup>26</sup> For Sharp, this was evidence of the continuity, across centuries, of the tradition he was documenting in the early twentieth century, a tradition which could survive wholly on the basis of oral transmission. In this light, the fact of Larcombe's blindness has particular significance, since it is a familiar trope in the representation of ballad singers. In his account of his enjoyment of *Chevy Chase*, Sir Philip Sidney was careful to note that it is specifically the singing of a 'blind crowder [emphasis mine]'<sup>27</sup> which he finds so moving. Equally, in Henry Parrot's cynical characterisation of the 'common Fidler', the importance of blindness as a trope is noted: 'Should he be blind, and after vse his trade, it must assume howere a larger priuiledge'.<sup>28</sup> In granting a 'larger priuiledge' to a blind musician, Parrot is implicitly endorsing the same division between print and oral cultures made by later critics. Blindness, whether metaphorical or literal, as in the case of Lawcomb, authenticates a singer's status within an oral world, since he is literally unable to read the songs that he performs, and so must perforce rely on his aural and oral retention of their words.

Tessa Watt has interpreted George Puttenham's distinction between 'Cantabanqui upon benches and barrels heads' and 'blind harpers or such like tavern minstrels that give a fit of mirth for a groat' in similar terms.<sup>29</sup> The 'Cantabanqui'

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<sup>26</sup> Lloyd, *Folk Song in England*, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie* in *EEBO*, sig.G1.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Parrot, *Cvres for the Itch* (London: Thomas Iones, 1626) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig.A1.

<sup>29</sup> George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie. Contriuied into three Bookes: The first of Poets and Poesie, the second of Proportion, the third of Ornament*. (London: Richard Field, 1589) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 69.

(charlatans) are equivalent to commercial ballad sellers-and-singers, whilst the ‘blind harper’ made his living through performance instead of the retail of the printed artefact.<sup>30</sup> The repertoire of a ‘blind harper’ is characterised as consisting of ‘stories of old time, as the tale Sir Topas, the reports of Bevis of Southampton, Guy of Warwicke, Adam Bell and Clymme of the Clough’.<sup>31</sup> Although, as Watt has observed, these titles were not the authentic products of oral tradition, but literary romances that had all appeared in quarto form since 1500 and were beginning to appear as broadsides, it is still significant that they associate the ‘blind harper’ with a past that is as fabulous as it is historical.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, broadsides were often associated with ‘presentness’. A character in the court masque *The World Tost at Tennis* (1620) complains of how broadside ballads dealt in ‘fashions, fictions, felonies, fooleries – a hundred havens has the balladmonger to traffic at, and new ones still daily discovered’ (34-35).<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Henry Parrot cynically claimed of the stereotypical ‘ballad maker’, ‘that if any witch bee by chance condemned, hee’l have a ballad out in print before such time as she goes to Tyburne’.<sup>34</sup> Many ballads proclaim their newness in their title, in the attempt to encourage potential purchasers. ‘A new Courtly Sonet, of the Lady Green sleeues. To the new tune of Greensleeves’ appeared in *A Handful of pleasant delites* in 1584. The title page claims that the contents of the garland are ‘[n]ewly devised to the newest tunes that are now in

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<sup>30</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>31</sup> Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, ‘The World Tossed at Tennis’, ed. by C.E. McGee, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), pp. 1405-1430.

<sup>34</sup> Parrot, *Cvres for the Itch*, sig.A2.

use'.<sup>35</sup> From the Stationers' Register, we know that at least six ballads set to the tune of Greensleeves appeared in 1580-81, suggesting that it was indeed as new as it proclaimed.<sup>36</sup>

This idea that print is oriented towards the present has been embraced by a number of critics. Michael McKeon has claimed that it 'enforced a sensitivity to, and an acceptance of, the undeniable newness that distinguished the present from the past', whilst Bruce Smith has argued that broadsides are 'insistently topical' as a result of their appearing in print.<sup>37</sup> If print did indeed encourage 'sensitivity' to the significance of the present moment as distinct from the past, then a consequence of that would also be a greater awareness of the past as 'past'. Nor is print's association with the present entirely secure. Angela McShane and Zachary Lesser have both argued that the use of black letter type carried strong associations with the past. The dominant meanings of black letter 'conveyed tradition and guaranteed accessibility of content', combining 'Englishness...and past-ness' to create a 'typographic nostalgia'.<sup>38</sup> The material form of a black letter broadside prompted its audience to perceive it as a text arriving from the past, despite what its titles might proclaim.

Any tune which was used repeatedly would rapidly become a tune of 'the old ancient sort', as Thomas Deloney has it in his direction for 'A New Song of King Edgar, King of England, how he was deprivied if a Lady, which he loved, by a knight of

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<sup>35</sup> Clement Robinson, *A Handefull of pleasant delites* (London, Richard Jones, 1584) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig.A1.

<sup>36</sup> B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 187-88.

<sup>37</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 46; B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 187-88. See also Leonard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

<sup>38</sup> McShane, 'Typography Matters', p. 27; Zachary Lesser, 'Typographic Nostalgia: Play-Reading, Popularity, and the Meanings of Black Letter', in *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England*, ed. Marta Straznicky, (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), pp. 99-126 (p.107).

his Court'.<sup>39</sup> The list of popular tunes compiled by Christopher Marsh suggests that a ballad was as likely to be set to an old tune, one with familiar associations for a prospective audience, as it was to be set to one that was new.<sup>40</sup> Marsh has written extensively on the role which the ballad tune played in the ways in which ballads might have been received by their audience, with melodies 'capable of reinforcing, altering and destabilising textual messages'.<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, a popular tune like 'Packington's Pound' appears to have carried no associations, being used for ballads on subjects ranging from *The Praise of the Dairy-Maid* to *The History of the Prophet Jonas*.<sup>42</sup> As Mark Booth has suggested, the appeal of a familiar tune was precisely the fact that it was familiar, providing reassurance to an audience that was only partly literate. The patterning of the tune mediated the reading of print.<sup>43</sup> This neatly reverses the more recent scholarly privileging of the oral text; it is the tune which is the container for the printed words of the broadside.

### **'[T]he firkin Fidler of *Finchlane*': Examining Anthony Now now**

The figure of a ballad singer bearing the name 'Now now' bears a peculiar resonance, with the repetition in the name clearly signalling an emphasis on the present moment. As a literary representation of the ballad singer, 'Anthony Now now' is far less well known to modern scholarship than the characters that appeared on the early modern stage in *The Winter's Tale* or *Bartholomew Fair*; yet his appearances in the works of

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Deloney, *The Garland of good Will* (London: Robert Bird, 1631) in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 295-380 (pp. 305-9).

<sup>40</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England*, pp. 235-6.

<sup>41</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society*, p. 289.

<sup>42</sup> Mark W. Booth, *The Experience of Songs* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 111.

<sup>43</sup> Booth, *Experience of Songs*, p. 112.

several authors encapsulate an equally rich set of associations for the understanding of how ballads were understood within early modern culture. He appeared in two works of the 1590s, and then lingered on in a curious seventeenth-century afterlife as part of a ballad refrain. Anthony Now now's movements between texts might be likened to the real life mobility of the ballad seller, who sold his or her wares at multiple sites and whose vagrancy was of much concern to Elizabethan and Jacobean authorities. As will be seen, unlike Autolycus or Nightingale, he was also a figure produced by writers who were actually involved in the ballad trade, and was therefore not simply a commentary on the trade from a self-consciously elite point of view.

Anthony Now now's first appearance is within the pages of Henry Chettle's *Kind-Harts Dreame* (1592). This short pamphlet is, as its title suggests, a dream narrative in which the narrator Kind-Hart is confronted by five 'apparitions' or ghosts, who each, in turn, give him a text containing their complaints about the abuses present in contemporary society. Kind-Hart can be construed as a persona for Chettle himself, who retains the papers given to him in his dream and then presents them to an audience in the form of the published pamphlet. Both John Jowett and Alexandra Halasz have interpreted Chettle's pamphlet as a text which self-consciously negotiates representations of the print trade in early modern London.<sup>44</sup> The ghosts are a jumble of personae drawn from other works, textual representations of figures drawn from life. The famous Elizabethan clown, Richard Tarleton – who died in 1588, and whose persona was thereafter adopted by a number of pamphlets, such as *Tarlton's News Out of Purgatory* (1590) and *Tarlton's Jestes* (1600) – appears under his own name, whilst the author Thomas Nashe appears under the guise of his character, 'Pierce Penniless'.

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<sup>44</sup> Halasz, *Marketplace of Print*, pp. 46-81; John Jowett, 'Henry Chettle: 'Your Old Composer'', *Text*, 15 (2003), 141-61.

Anthony Now now, the first of these apparitions, is described as ‘...an od old fellow, low of stature, his head couered with a round cap, his body with a side skirted tawny coate, his legs and feete trust uppe in leather buskins,’ with ‘gray haire and furrowed face’, and carrying a ‘trebble viol in his hande’.<sup>45</sup> It is this last detail which identifies for Kind-Hart both his name and profession. The clear implication from Kind-Hart’s statement that he ‘assuredly remembred’ the identity of the old ballad singer is that he recognises Anthony from prior acquaintance.<sup>46</sup> In a text which is constructed out of a patchwork of textual elements, most of which were already known to the pamphlet’s presumed readership, Kind-Hart’s recognition functions as a sign to its audience that they were expected to identify the real figure that Anthony represents. It even raises the possibility that there may have been earlier, and now lost, textual appearances of the figure of Anthony Now now.

Just a few years later, Anthony appeared in the second part of Thomas Deloney’s *The Gentle Craft*, where he is also treated as a recognisable figure.<sup>47</sup> Rather than referring to a known individual outside the text, in *The Gentle Craft*, Anthony Now now has become an emblematic figure of the early modern ballad singer. Written and published between 1596 and 1598, both parts of *The Gentle Craft* are fictional prose narratives which celebrate the trade of shoemaking, recounting the mythical origins and tales of numerous figures, both legendary and ‘historical,’ all of who more or less relate to the shoemaking craft. It is one of several prose fictions which have given Deloney a place within the early history of the novel.<sup>48</sup> In a manner similar to Chettle’s pamphlet,

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<sup>45</sup> Henry Chettle, ‘Kind-Hart’s Dreame’, 1592, ed. by George B. Harrison, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1966), pp.11-12.

<sup>46</sup> Chettle, ‘*Kind-Hart’s Dreame*’, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Deloney, *The Gentile Craft, The Second Part* (London: Elizabeth Purslow, 1639), in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 137-210.

<sup>48</sup> See Chapter 3.



Deloney's work borrows characters and stories from multiple earlier sources. Anthony Now now appears near the end of the text in a section which tells of the 'merry feats' of the semi-mythical shoemaker known as 'the greene king of S. *Martins*', so named because he was once responsible for clothing Henry VIII's men in their green liveries.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast to the dreamscape of Henry Chettle, Deloney's 'greene king' encounters Anthony within the mundane topography of a richly detailed early modern London, whilst heading towards Billingsgate. Anthony Now now, here given the additional label of 'the firkin Fidler of *Finchlane*',<sup>50</sup> propositions the prosperous shoemaker with an offer of music. As in the case of Kind-Hart, it is clear from their conversation that the 'greene king' and Anthony are already familiar, greeting each other as old acquaintances. Deloney even supplies an origin for the name 'Now now' when, having retired to a tavern, Anthony plays for the 'greene king' a song which has a repeated refrain including his name, and which forms a response to the questions which structure the verses:

*When should a man shew himself gentle and kinde,*

*When should a man comfort the sorrowfull minde?*

*O Anthony now, now, now.*

*O Anthony now, now, now.*<sup>51</sup>

Triply insistent here with the addition of a third 'now', the narrative of *The Gentle Craft* informs us that having 'sung this song so often in Saint *Martins*...thereby he purchast a name which he neuer lost till his dying day, for ever after men called him nothing but *Anthony now now*.'<sup>52</sup> This naming clearly displeases the old ballad singer, as in his next

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<sup>49</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 203-10.

<sup>50</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 204.

<sup>51</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 205.

<sup>52</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 205.

appearance, he complains that, in giving him this name, the people of St Martins, ‘haue made it as common as a printed Ballad’.<sup>53</sup> This peculiar characterisation signals how the representation of Anthony has shifted. No longer representative of the print trade, he belongs to a world of reciprocal hospitality that characterises his relationship with the ‘greene king’. Print, constituting the beginnings of an early modern public sphere in the formulation of Alexandra Halasz, is figured as a corrupting force of the popular culture to which he belongs.<sup>54</sup>

If Anthony ever did possess an original name before having earned his peculiar nickname, it may well have been that of the playwright, prose writer, translator, poet, pageant-maker and pamphleteer Anthony Munday, who most commentators believe is the figure represented by Now-now in Chettle’s original pamphlet.<sup>55</sup> As John Jowett notes, *Kind-Hart’s Dream* makes considerable use of the tropes of friendship, and Chettle and Munday were not only known to each other, but were probably also collaborators on *Sir Thomas More* and the *Robert Earl of Huntingdon* plays.<sup>56</sup> In *Histrion-Mastix*, Munday is satirically depicted as the playwright and ballad maker ‘Posthaste’, a name which like Anthony’s, also associates ballads with a sense of urgency and contemporaneity, and suggests that more than one of Munday’s contemporaries may have enjoyed playing with an ironic representation of the social status of an author who claimed to be, and may well have been, a gentleman.<sup>57</sup>

This doubleness of person, both elite and popular, is also present in the figure of Anthony Now now in Chettle’s pamphlet. He addresses his ‘friendly’ admonition at

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<sup>53</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 208.

<sup>54</sup> Halasz, *Marketplace of Print*, pp. 162-203.

<sup>55</sup> Jowett, ‘*Henry Chettle*’, p. 150.

<sup>56</sup> Jowett, ‘*Henry Chettle*’, pp. 149-51.

<sup>57</sup> [John Marston], *Histrion-Mastix. Or The Player whipt* (London: Thomas Thorp, 1610) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

‘*Mopo and Pickering, Arch-ouerseers of the Ballad singers, in London, and else-where*’, complaining to them about ‘a company of idle youths, [who] loathing honest labour and dispising lawfull trades, betake them to a vagrant and vicious life, in euery corner of Cities & market Townes of the realme singing and selling of ballads and pamphlets full of ribaudrie, and all scurrilous vanity, to the prophanation of Gods name, and withdrawing people from Christian exercises, especially at faires markets and such publike meetings,’ and whose suppression by the authorities he enthusiastically recommends.<sup>58</sup> Here is a ballad singer calling for the regulation of the trade in which he once trafficked. It is a consequence of the unofficial activities of unscrupulous printers that ‘such a flocke of Run-agates shoulde ouerspread the face of this land, as at this time it does’.<sup>59</sup> Anthony voices a common elite complaint about, not only ballads, but also about what was seen as the unchecked mass of material produced by printers, representing it as a flood which needs to be checked and properly regulated by the authorities.<sup>60</sup>

In a manner which parallels Sidney’s description of his encounter with *Chevy Chase*, Anthony acknowledges his own doubleness: ‘...where that I may show some abuses, and yet for shame let slip the most odious, they heare no better matter, but the lasciuious vnder songs of Watkins ale, the Carmans whistle, Chopingkniues, and frier foxtaile, and that with such odious and detested boldness, as if there be any one line in those lewd songs than other more abhominable’.<sup>61</sup> ‘Watkins Ale’ is part of the title of a broadside, whilst ‘Carman’s Whistle’ refers to a ballad tune used on several broadsides, whose content could certainly be described as ‘lasciuous’.<sup>62</sup> The phrase ‘under songs’

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<sup>58</sup> Chettle, ‘*Kind-Hart’s Dreame*’, p. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Chettle, ‘*Kind-Hart’s Dreame*’, p. 15, 16.

<sup>60</sup> Halasz, *Marketplace of Print*, pp. 14-45.

<sup>61</sup> Chettle, ‘*Kind-Hart’s Dreame*’, p. 17.

<sup>62</sup> [Anonymous], *A ditty delightfull of mother watkins ale A warning wel wayed, though counted a tale* (London: 1590), in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>. ‘The Carmans

implies that they are properly something which should be repressed, kept hidden and private. The implication is that, like those he attacks, Anthony knows these ‘lasciuous’ songs, but that he retains the required sense of propriety, excluding them from his repertoire. What brings such material into public view is the medium of print, the work of ‘lewd’ printers, which facilitates their circulation throughout the nation.

Deloney’s text echoes this sense of public versus private utterances when Anthony compares himself to a ‘printed ballad’. In print, the ballad is a piece of public property, a ‘dainty commoditie’, which is subject to commercial transaction.<sup>63</sup> In *The Gentle Craft*, Anthony displays an ambivalent relationship to such a mode of exchange, being both subject to its rigours and also resenting the fact, and attempting to place himself outside it. The questions found in the song from which he supposedly derives his name includes the pertinent, ‘[w]hen is it meetest my money to spend?’ and, after parting from the ‘greene king’, we are explicitly told that he is ‘seeking to change musicke for money’.<sup>64</sup> Yet his performance for the ‘greene king’ has been provided without any payment. Since he is heading for war in Flanders, the ‘greene king’ has no money with which to pay the ballad singer for his performance. Anthony’s carefree reply to this is that he does not ‘allways request coyne of my friends for my cunning’, and he ends his song with an appeal to the ‘greene king’ which frames their relationship in terms which place it in the realm of traditional hospitality:<sup>65</sup>

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whistle’ is a tune direction for several broadsides from the late seventeenth century: [Anonymous], *The courteous carman, and the amorous maid. Or, the carman's whistle* (London: F. Coles, T. Vere, J. Wright, J. Clarke, W> Thackeray, and T. Passinger, c.1678) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; [Anonymous], *All is ours and our husbands, or The country hostesses vindication* (London: P. Brooksby, c. 1670) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>. See also William Chappell, *The Ballad Literature and Popular Music of the Olden Time*, 2 volumes (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 1, pp. 137-40.

<sup>63</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 208.

<sup>64</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 205.

<sup>65</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 205.

And when should I bid my Master farewell?

Whose bountie and curtesie so did excel?

Anthony gains no profit from their exchange – he even pays for the wine they consume at the tavern – but hints at the promise of future patronage when the ‘greene king’ returns from Flanders.

Contrary to the consensus which has identified Anthony Munday with Chettle’s ‘Anthony Now now’, Francis Oscar Mann disputed it by pointing out that ‘Now o Now’ was originally the name of a dance tune, to which several authors later added words.<sup>66</sup> If the title of this dance tune is yet another source for Anthony’s name, it need not preclude the identification with Munday. No longer attached to the persona of the old ballad singer, the line ‘O Anthony now, now, now’ survived as the refrain of a ballad titled simply ‘O Anthony’. Since Anthony’s earliest textual appearance was a ghost, his disembodied presence in the later ballad is curiously apposite. The ballad first appeared in print when it was included in Sir Benjamin Rudyard’s *Le prince d’amour; or the prince of love*, (1660) in the section entitled, ‘A Selection of Several Ingenious Poems and Songs By the Wits of the Age’.<sup>67</sup> Separately, the first stanza was also set to music by a Mr. White and was included in the 1667 edition of John Hilton’s *Catch That Catch Can*.<sup>68</sup> In this context, the line ‘O Anthony, now, now, now’ asserts not temporality and the present, but instead contributes to the ballad’s proud assertion of royal English manhood.

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<sup>66</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 535-36. The only evidence Mann provides for this identification is John Dowland’s ‘Now, O now, I needs must part’ in his *First Books of Songes* (1597).

<sup>67</sup> Sir Benjamin Rudyard, *Le prince d’amour; or the prince of love* (London: William Leake, 1660) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 179-81.

<sup>68</sup> John Hilton, *Catch That Catch Can* (London, W. Godbid for J. Playford, 1667) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, p. 71.

The narrative of 'O Anthony' mangles the history of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, with Henry's inconclusive attack on the North of France in 1524 becoming a heroic rescue of Anne in which the martial king simultaneously defeats the forces of both France and Spain. Henry's arrival at the city gate of 'Bullin' (Boulogne) is depicted in a romantic and robustly heroic manner at odds with the historical record:

Like a royal noble man,  
 He could not abide their prate,  
 But he called for the lady Nan;  
 He swore that he would have her  
 And her maiden-head, he did vow  
 Their strong walls should not save her,  
 O *Anthony* now, now, now. (10-16)

The ballad merges martial and sexual conquest; the King's victory over the French and the city's walls are aligned with his taking of his new Queen's maidenhead. Another stanza combines Henry's martial valour with scatology:

King Harry laid about him  
 With Spear, and eke with Sword,  
 He car'd no more for a *French* man,  
 Than I do now for a T\_\_\_\_. (25-28)

'Anthony' has thus found himself within the text of a ballad of which Chettle's Anthony would thoroughly disapprove. Paradoxically, the presence of scatology in the text may indicate that this is not actually a 'popular' ballad. Black letter broadsides rarely, if ever, included such material; where it does appear is in self-consciously elite appropriations of the ballad form, such as the white letter 'Rump' ballads which appeared at the outset

of the Restoration.<sup>69</sup> Unlike the song recorded by Thomas Deloney, where the refrain provides a clear answer to the stanzas it concludes, here the line ‘O *Anthony* now, now, now’ has a much less precise meaning. Like the ballad of which it is a part, the repetition of ‘now, now, now’ merges martial sentiment and sexual conquest. It is close in spirit to the onomatopoeia of the lines in which we hear that ‘Tantarra went the trumps / And Dub a dub went the guns’ (17-18), a forceful, body-based assertion of martial pride and masculinity, reflecting in its sound, the emotion which this mangled retelling of Tudor history wishes to inspire in its audience. It functions in the spirit of the dance to which it may be an implicit reference.

The obvious inaccuracies of the ballad’s details count against the likelihood of its having been written close to the events it describes, especially in the absence of any evidence of its earlier circulation. If this ballad’s first appearance in print in 1660 was close to the date of its composition, then clearly it is an historical narrative. Despite this, like all ballads, it situates the subject position from which it is written in close proximity to its content. In celebration of the King’s victory, the lines, ‘We had both crowns and dollars / And drank healths to our king’ (35-36), encompass both singer and audience in an implied national community which is imaginatively present at the moment of Henry’s triumph and marriage to Anne Boleyn. The final lines of the ballad bring the narrative, which is otherwise told in the past tense, into the present at ‘*Ludow*, / Whereas his grace lives now’ (45-46). This creates another image of a national community in which monarch, singer and audience are joined in mutual respect along with, finally, the presence of an old ballad singer:

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<sup>69</sup> These ballads have recently been at the centre of a scholarly debate between Mark Jenner and Angela McShane (see Mark S.R. Jenner, ‘The Roasting of the Rump: Scatology and the Body Politic in Restoration England’, *Past and Present*, 177 (2002), 84-120; Angela McShane, ‘The Roasting of the Rump: Scatology and the Body Politic in Restoration England’, *Past and Present*, 196 (2007), 253-272). It is Angela McShane’s contention that extreme scatology was not a characteristic of ‘popular’ white and black letter ballads (McShane, ‘Scatology and the Body Politic’, p. 261).

God morrow to our Noble King, quoth I,  
 God morrow quoth he, to thou,  
 And then he said to Anthony,  
 O *Anthony* now, now, now. (47-50)

Just as the ballad text combines print and performance, here it also joins the past with the present in an idealised moment of national pride.

The figure of the poor ballad singer moves from a voice of moral authority in Henry Chettle's pamphlet to the pathetic figure of Deloney's novel. His final end is as a disembodied presence in a refrain which paradoxically signals the presence of the body. Whilst representing a ballad singer in their texts, it is important to note that both Henry Chettle and Thomas Deloney were themselves the authors of ballads. Chettle has been plausibly identified as 'H.C.', author of the broadside *A dolefull ditty, or sorowfull sonet of the Lord Darly*, whilst to his contemporaries, as has already been argued, Thomas Deloney was far more famous as an author of ballads than of the prose fiction for which literary posterity has tended to notice him.<sup>70</sup> In representing a figure from the trade with which they had some association, Chettle and Deloney also represent the tensions which surrounded the reception and interpretation of ballads. The figure of the ballad singer – memorialised as 'Anthony Now now' – embodies these tensions between the real and constructed binaries inherent in the ballad form and its dissemination, both in his time and in ours. It further highlights the tension between ballad as printed text and ballad as oral performance, ballad as historical past and ballad as performative present.

### **Sight and the Rhetoric of Truthfulness**

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<sup>70</sup> H.C., *A dolefull ditty, or sorowfull sonet of the Lord Darly, sometime king of Scots, newew to the noble and worthy King Henry the eyght* (London: Thomas Gosson, [1579?]) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.



If we are to judge by the interest they aroused in the London publishing industry, there were extraordinary sights to behold in Cork in 1621, sights which inspired several pamphlets and at least two broadside ballads. Locals apparently witnessed the strange occurrence of ‘an vnusual multitude of birds called Stares,’ (starlings), who gathered near the city of Cork in order to ‘fight together the most bitterest and sharpest battell amongst themselues, the like, for the manner of their fight, and for the time the battell did continue, neuer heard or seene at any time in any Country of the world.’<sup>71</sup> In an address to the reader, the pamphlet which supplies these details, *The Wonderfvll Battell of Starelings*, complains about other accounts of this spectacular sight: ‘so many poetically fictions haue of late passed the print, that they [i.e. the pamphlet’s audience] haue some cause to suspect almost euery extraordinary report that is printed’.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to these ‘fictions’, the pamphlet’s narrative should be accepted as truthful since its author was in possession of ‘Letters, from Right Honorable persons in Ireland where the accident fell out, to Right Honourable persons at Court, and diuers in London at this present: as also by the testimony of Right Honourable and Worshipfull persons, & others of good reputation now in London, who were eye-witnesses’.<sup>73</sup>

It is hard not to suspect that, amidst the generic complaint at the quality of sensational publishing (a common technique for asserting a writer or text’s own credit by comparison), the pamphlet is concerned with a particular ballad. *A battell of Birds* – or to give the ballad its full title, *A battell of Birds, Most strangly fought in Ireland, upon the eight day of September last, 1621. where neere unto the Citty of Corke, by the river Lee, weare gathered together such a multytude of Stares, or Starlings, as the like*

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<sup>71</sup> [Anonymous.], *The Wonderfvll Battell of Starelings: Fought at the Citie of Corke in Ireland, the 12. and 14. of October last past. 1621. As it hath been credibly enformed by diuers Noblemen, and others of the said Kingdome, andc.* (London: Printed for N.B., 1622) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, A3v.

<sup>72</sup> [Anonymous.], *The Wonderfvll Battell of Starelings*, A2v.

<sup>73</sup> [Anonymous.], *The Wonderfvll Battell of Starelings*, A2v.

*for number, was never seene in any age*, – provides an abbreviated account of the same events.<sup>74</sup> The pamphlet’s criticism seems to be implicitly directed at this alternative narrative owing to discrepancies in their accounts, not least the fact that they disagree on exactly when this incredible avian conflict is supposed to have taken place. Yet, as its closing stanza makes clear, the ballad manifests the same anxiety as does the pamphlet; it is equally concerned to establish its status as a truthful account, as it is to highlight its content as news that is worthy of a receptive audience: ‘What now for trueth is publisht forth / esteeme it as a newes of worth’ (103-4).

The truth claims, and types of reliability, claimed by both texts are central to the concerns of this section. Present in both pamphlet and ballad versions of this narrative is a concern with sight. This extraordinary occurrence is defined as something which has been seen, and which can be recounted and understood only thanks to the presence of eyewitnesses. It is through the testimony of trusted individuals that the truth of this fantastical sight can be guaranteed. The basis of the ballad’s truth claims is also the very fact of its having been ‘publisht forth’ (103), an ambiguous phrase that relates to a ballad’s dual status as both an oral and printed text; the ballad is ‘publisht’ both in the sense that it makes its narrative known, as well as in the sense that it is disseminated to its audience through the medium of print. It implies that part of the reason the ballad should be accepted by its audience as ‘newes of worth’ (104), both truthful and worth knowing, lies in its being a printed, and widely circulated, text.

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<sup>74</sup> [Anonymous], *A battell of Birds, Most strangly fought in Ireland, upon the eight day of September last, 1621. where neere unto the City of Corke, by the river Lee, weare gathered together such a multytude of Stares, or Starlings, as the like for number, was never seene in any age* (London: W. I[ones], 1621) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; *A Pepysian Garland: Black-letter Broadside Ballads of the Years 1595-1639, Chiefly from the Collection of Samuel Pepys*, ed. by Hyder E. Rollins (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 150-54.

Ballads which provide accounts of official or military events, natural catastrophes or miraculous happenings, appear to have a greater concern to declare and authenticate their veracity than do other examples of popular song. If an account is labelled as ‘news’, then it not only prompts the interest of its audience, but declares that the reported events actually occurred, and that the account being offered is both truthful and reliable. Any news text, whether it is a newspaper or ballad, contains not only linguistic but paratextual and social rhetorics which attempt to establish its truthfulness. It is obviously impossible to know the full extent to which such truth claims would have been believed by a contemporary audience. When Will Kemp disparaged the ‘abominable ballets’ which he believed had defamed him with their false accounts of his famous solo Morris danced between London and Norwich, his concern for his reputation reveals an anxiety that the audience to whom his text is addressed might actually believe such fraudulent texts.<sup>75</sup> Kemp’s anxiety provides evidence that ballads could succeed in establishing their truthfulness in the minds of an early modern audience.

Purely in terms of the numbers produced, the ‘political’ or ‘news’ ballad must have been one of the most widely available printed sources for news in early modern England.<sup>76</sup> It is the printed text which bears the majority of the markers examined in this section, suggesting that the desire to rhetorically establish the truthfulness of a ballad was predominantly the product of print culture. Famously, the possibility that print could be viewed as a guarantor of a ballad’s truth claims is mocked in *The Winter’s Tale*. When confronted with the ballads offered for sale by the roguish Autolycus, the

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<sup>75</sup> Kemp, ‘*Nine Daies Wonder*’, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> Rollins has argued that the news ballad outnumbered all other types (*A Pepysian Garland*, p. xi). Marsh’s more recent calculations however, following the categories used by Samuel Pepys, estimates that ballads whose contents placed them in the category ‘State and Times’ ranged between thirteen and fifteen percent of the ballad market (*Music and Society*, pp. 227-28).

innocent shepherdess Mopsa responds with the naïve statement, ‘I love a ballad in print, a life, for then we are sure they are true’.<sup>77</sup> Adrian Johns has argued that the conviction that print was a guarantor of truth and reliability was one which initially had to be constructed by the early modern print trade in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary.<sup>78</sup> Printers and booksellers pursued a number of strategies to attest to the ‘credit’ and reliability of their various publications. As this section’s opening examples indicate, this was a concern also demonstrated by what might be considered less credit-worthy works, such as short pamphlets and broadsides, genres whose credibility was often called into question.

Broadside ballad truth claims are chiefly situated in their titles and other paratexts. The simplest way for any text to argue for the veracity of an event was to claim that it is true. A claim to be a ‘true report’ or description appears in many broadside titles, typically when describing sensational or fantastical occurrences:

*The true reporte of the forme and shape of a monstrous Childe borne at Muche Horseleye, a village three myles from Colchester, in the Countye of Essex, the xxi daye of Apryll in this yeare 1562.*<sup>79</sup>

*The true description of two monstrous children, lawfully begotten betwene George Steuens and Marjerie his wyfe, and borne in the parish of Swanburne in Buckynghamshyre the [4<sup>th</sup>] of Aprill, Anno Domini 1566.*<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Winter’s Tale*, ed. by John Pitcher (London: A & C Black Publishers Ltd., 2010), iv.iv.260-61.

<sup>78</sup> Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 1-186.

<sup>79</sup> [Anonymous], *The true reporte of the forme and shape of a monstrous Childe borne at Muche Horseleye, a village three myles from Colchester, in the Countye of Essex, the xxi daye of Apryll in this yeare 1562* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1562) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; *A Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides, Printed in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, Between the Years of 1559 and 1597*, ed. by Joseph Lilly (London: Joseph Lilly, 1867), pp. 27-30.

*Strange Newes from Brotherton in Yorke-shire, being a true Relation of the raining of Wheat on Easter day last, to the great amaizment of all the Inhabitants...*<sup>81</sup>

Elsewhere, the formula is applied to an account of military victory:

*A true discour[r]se of the winning of the towne of Berke by Grave Maurice, who besieged the same on the 12 day of June 1601, and continued assaulting and skirmishing there until the last day of July, at which time the towne was yielded.*<sup>82</sup>

All of these examples also demonstrate a somewhat pedantic urge, typical of many news ballads – as will also be illustrated by some of the ballads examined in the following chapter – to delineate details of place and time within their titles, so as to fix their accounts in a precise geographic and temporal space, and thereby authenticate their ballads’ status as ‘true’ accounts.

This pedantry extends to the inclusion of apparently precise measurements. In *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange fall of Christ’s Church pinnacle in Norwich, the which was shaken down by the a thunder-clap on the 29 of Aprill 1601,*

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<sup>80</sup> [Anonymous], *The true description of two monstrous children, lawfully begotten betwene George Steuens and Marjerie his wyfe, and borne in the parish of Swanburne in Buckynghamshyre the [4<sup>th</sup>] of Aprill, Anno Domini 1566* (London: Alexander Lacy for William Lewes, 1566) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Lilly, *Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides*, pp. 217-20.

<sup>81</sup> [Anonymous], *Strange Newes from Brotherton in Yorke-shire, being a true Relation of the raining of Wheat on Easter day last, to the great amaizment of all the Inhabitants. It hath rained Wheate more or lesse every day since, witnessed by divers persons of good ranke and quality, as the Lady Ramsden who gathered some her selfe, some of it was sent to Judge Green, and M. Hurst dwelling at the Fountaine Taverne in Saint Anns Lane neere Aldersgate in London* (London: John Hammond, 1648) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; *The Pack of Autolykus Or Strange and Terrible News of Ghosts, Apparitions, Monstrous Births, Showers of Wheat, Judgements of God, and Other Prodigious and Fearful Happenings as told in Broadside Ballads of the Years 1624-1693*, ed. by Hyder E. Rollins (Port Washington and London: Kennikat Press, 1969), pp. 36-43.

<sup>82</sup> [Anonymous], *A true discour[r]se of the winning of the towne of Berke by Grave Maurice, who besieged the same on the 12 day of June 1601, and continued assaulting and skirmishing there until the last day of July, at which time the towne was yielded* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 272-6.

*about 4 or 5 o'clock in the after-noone: with a description of a miraculous fire, which the verye next morning consumed and burnt downe a great part of the cloyster,* details provided in the fifth and sixth stanzas perform the same rhetorical function as the details of time and place in the title:<sup>83</sup>

Some three score yards it was in height...  
 ...Above the steple, which (at least)  
 is fvescore yards from ground.  
 The stone, which on the top thereof  
 (to crowne the other) lay,  
 Is thought to be a good Cart-loade,  
 as many people say.  
  
 Vpon the stone there stoode a crosse,  
 about three yards hie,  
 Which bare a stately wether-cocke...  
 ...The cocke was full an ell in length;  
 and in the breadth (full out)  
 Three quarters of a yarde it was;  
 syxe quarters ruond abovt. (37, 38-46, 48-52)

Where there is room for doubt about a specific detail, the wider community is appealed to as a source of authority; that ‘many people say’ that something is true is sufficient reason to believe in its truthfulness. The full title of the biblical narrative *The Historie of the Prophet Ionas* includes similar details about the City of Nineveh: *...which was 48. miles in compasse, hauing a thousand and fiue hundred Towers about the same, and at*

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<sup>83</sup> [Anonymous], *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange fall of Christ's Church pinnacle in Norwich, the which was shaken down by the a thunder-clap on the 29 of Aprill 1601, about 4 or 5 o'clock in the after-noone: with a description of a miraculous fire, which the verye next morning consumed and burnt downe a great part of the cloyster* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 204-6.

*the time of his preaching there was a hundred and twenty thousand Children therein.*<sup>84</sup>

In both examples, there is something inadvertently comic in their pretensions to detailed accuracy. They both exaggerate the dimensions of the subjects they are describing, but for an audience which lacks either access to more accurate information or the means of testing the ballads' claims, such details function simultaneously as truth claims as well as a means to impress their audience through their exaggerated proportions.

Designed to advertise the ballad texts, and thus possessing an effect comparable to newspaper headlines, ballad titles such as these simultaneously function as narratives in their own right. As short as these titles are, they still provide the precise details of name, place and date which, as Helen Smith has observed in relation to early modern imprints, are 'the three key indicators on which so many fictional narratives are built'.<sup>85</sup> Serving to establish the verisimilitude of the narrative, they produce what Roland Barthes has termed 'the reality effect'.<sup>86</sup> Where a narrative consists only of these three details, Smith suggests, '...the effect is one of absolute verisimilitude: a reality effect which renders its rhetorical or narrative effects invisible'.<sup>87</sup> Longer titles might contain more extraneous detail, but still fulfil this basic function.

As the print trade developed over the course of the seventeenth century, ballad titles tended to become longer and more elaborate, fulfilling more emphatically this

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<sup>84</sup> [Anonymous] *The Historie of the Prophet Ionas. The repentance of Niniue that great Citie, which was 48. Miles in compasse, hauing a thousand and fiue hundred Towers about the same, and at the time of his preaching there was a hundred and twenty thousand Children therein* (London: E.A., 1620) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>85</sup> Helen Smith, 'Imprinted by Simeon such a signe': Reading Early Modern Imprints' in *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. by Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 17-33 (p. 28).

<sup>86</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Reality Effect' in *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*, ed. by Tzvetan Todorov, trans. by R. Carter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 11-17.

<sup>87</sup> H. Smith, 'Reading Early Modern Imprints', p. 28.

fictive and accrediting role. The proliferation of elaborate titles is clearly both the creation of and a function of print. Thus, by 1661, a ballad advertises its contents as:

*A most wonderful and sad judgement of God upon one Dorothy Mattley late of Ashover in the County of Darby, within fourteen miles of the said Town of Darby; who for so small a thing as two single pennies which she was charged with the taking of from a boy, did most presumptuously with sad imprecations wish and desire, that if she had taken or stole the same, that the ground might open and she sink therein, which by her neighbours relation was an expression very common with her, but so it pleased God to deal, that upon the same words the ground did open, and she with a Tub which she was washing Lead-Oare in sunk into the ground, to the amazement of the beholders, and the ground closed again upon her, as here underneath it is more fully declared; and this was done upon the 23 of March 1660. All which may well serve for an example to all wretches of this age whatsoever, who to advance themselves by falshood, or for the trifles of this world, take to themselves assumptions, and imprecations, nay will not at all stand to forswear themselves to compass their own ends, as if there was no God or iudgment to be expected; but they may hereby take notice that some time God will punish such creatures even in this life for example sake; yet if not here, their reward will be according to their works hereafter, and none shall be able to let it.*<sup>88</sup>

Unsurprisingly, since there is nothing more to recount, the boast that ‘here underneath it is more fully declared’, goes unfulfilled. The two hundred and fifty-two words of this extravagant title would never function successfully in oral circulation, nor could they

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<sup>88</sup> [Anonymous] *A most wonderful and sad judgement of God upon one Dorothy Mattley late of Ashover in the County of Darby, ...and none shall be able to let it.* (London: W. Gilbertson, 1661) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.



work as a simple headline, to be read quickly and capture the imagination. Detached from the ballad which it nominally announces, it operates quite successfully as a narrative of the events of which the ballad text is supposed to be informing its audience. The sixteen stanzas of the ballad serve only to recapitulate a narrative which has already been presented.

In his analysis of the relationship between the broadside ballad and its title, Mark Booth argues that this repetition is precisely the point, and compares ballads specifically to modern sensationalist journalism. The intention of such journalism is not to inform its audience of news and convey information, but rather to retail sensation, and stir up excitement at being part of a community which responds to a particular event in a specific manner. It is unlikely that many people would purchase a ballad in order to learn about ‘news’; rather, reading or repeating the ballad, texts which were, after all, sold through performance, offers a means of taking possession of existing information, of confirming what the audience already knows. According to Booth’s analysis of Martin Parker’s *A description of a strange (and miraculous) Fish, cast upon the sands in the meads, in the Hundred of Worwell in the County Palatine of Chester, (or Cheshire[ ])*. *The certainty whereof is here related concerning the said monstrous Fish*, then, the news-ballad’s text does nothing more than recapitulate the single point that what is being described is a ‘monstrous’, and very big, fish.<sup>89</sup> The ballad’s audience is offered the repeated and varied certainty that the fish in question was huge. The printed broadside becomes a means of taking possession of the experience of the thing

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<sup>89</sup> Martin Parker, *A description of a strange (and miraculous) Fish, cast upon the sands in the meads, in the Hundred of Worwell in the County Palatine of Chester, (or Cheshire[ ])*. *The certainty whereof is here related concerning the said monstrous Fish* (London: Thomas Lambert, 1636) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Rollins, *A Pepysian Garland*, pp. 438-42.

which is being described at such length, rather than learning anything of substance about it.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, despite superficially more serious concerns, the ballad about Dorothy Matley is equally concerned with sensation in bringing the account of God's retribution to the attention of its audience, re-iterating both the news of Matley's punishment, and the providential 'news' of God's responsive omnipotence. Indeed, the framework within which virtually all news ballads situate their narratives is a popular providential discourse.<sup>91</sup> In addition, a providential reading of the news or the recent past places events within an enclosed narrative framework which was not simply 'timeless', but also an essential element in early modern historical understanding. With history conceptualised as a providential narrative for most early modern subjects, presenting the news in the context of such a reading transforms the recent past into a part of this larger historical framework, as will be seen in some of the ballads examining religious histories in Chapter 4.

Another, more visible, sign of ballad titles' rhetorical effects is shown in titles which, instead of boldly proclaiming their truthfulness, signal their truth claims by identifying the emotional response they expect from their audience. Most commonly this reaction is a lamentation, whether the news is an account of murder, for example *The unnaturall Wife: Or, The lamentable Murther, of one goodman Davis, Locke-Smith in Tutle-streete...*, or events of wider political import, such as *A lamentable Ditty composed upon the Death of Robert Lord Devereux, late Earle of Essex...*, or the description of natural disasters, as in *The lamentable Burning of the Citty of Corke (in the Prouince of Munster in Ireland) by Lightning: which happened the Last of May,*

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<sup>90</sup> Booth, *Experience of Songs*, pp. 103-9.

<sup>91</sup> See Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

1622... which also functions as a sequel to the earlier ballad of the ‘battell of the Birds’, describing the events for which those of the earlier text were interpreted as an omen.<sup>92</sup> More local concerns might similarly be described in terms that prompt sorrow or sad contemplation, as in *A dolefull dittye of five unfortunat persons that were drowned in their drunknes in crossing over the Thames neare Ivy Bridge....*<sup>93</sup>

The audience’s emotional response is also directed within the ballad text. This last ballad of drunken calamity at Ivy Bridge, for example, opens with the assertion, ‘What hart so hard, but will relent / of Strangers’ suddaine death to heare’ (1-2), whilst *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange sight of Christ’s Church pinnacle in Norwitch...* begins by asserting,

If ever words did moue a wight  
to shed a wofull teare,  
Then can no creature choose but weepe,  
this dolefull tale to heare       (1-4)<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> [Anonymous], *The vnnaturall wife: or, The lamentable murther, of one goodman Dauis locke-smith in Tutle-streete, who was stabbed to death by his wife, on the 29. of Iune, 1628. For which fact, she was araigned, condemned, and adiudged, to be burnt to death in Smithfield, the 12. Iuly 1628*(London: M.T[rundle] Widdow, 1628) in *Early English Books Online*<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>; [Anonymous], *A lamentable dittie composed vpon the death of Robert Lord Deuereux late Earle of Essex who was beheaded in the Tower of London, vpon Ashwednesday in the morning. 1601* (London: Margaret Alde, 1603) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2, pp. 202-11; [Anonymous], *The lamentable Burning of the City of Corke (in the Prouince of Munster in Ireland) by Lightning: which happened the Last of May, 1622. After the prodigious Battell of the Stares, / which Fought most strangely ouer and neere that City, the 12. and 14. of May. 1621* (London: E.A., 1622) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Rollins, *A Pepysian Garland*, pp. 155-60.

<sup>93</sup> [Anonymous], *A dolefull dittye of five unfortunat persons that were drowned in their drunknes in crossing over the Thames neare Ivy Bridge, upon sundaye night the 15 of October last, 1616: set forth for an example for all such prophaners of the Lord’s Sabaoth daye* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 68-71.

<sup>94</sup> [Anonymous], *A newe Ballad of the most wonderfull and strange sight of Christ’s Church pinnacle in Norwitch, the which was shaken downe by a thunder-clap on the 29 of Aprill 1601, about 4 or 5 a’clock in the after-noone: with a description of a miraculous fire, which the verye next morning consumed and burnt downe a great part of the cloister* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 204-7.

Specifying an audience's correct emotional response, either in the title or opening stanza, is inherently more subjective. It becomes a promise that the ballad's narrative will satisfactorily evoke this emotional quality. 'Truth' here is attested through a quality of feeling, bolstering ballad claims to be considered as truthful accounts through the fulfilment of an aesthetic quality.

As has already been noted, the emotional content of ballads could also be supported by the choice of tune. Where a ballad is set to 'Fortune My Foe' (popularly known as the 'hanging tune'), a tune which is sober in feeling, the importance of its message would be underlined by the tune to which it was sung. Equally, where 'Fortune my Foe' was the tune direction for the apparently celebratory ballad, *A joyful new ballad of the late victorie obtained by my Lord Mount Joy and our Maiestie's forces in Ireland, against that archtraytor Tirone and confederates, upon the 24 of December last...* the emotional response specified by the title would appear to be in conflict with the choice of a doleful tune:<sup>95</sup>

England, giue prayse vnto the Lord thy god,  
 the which in mercye doth withhold the rod  
 From vs, whose synnes deserued haue the same:  
 yet we continue, Sodome-like, past shame (1-4)

As the ballad's opening lines make clear, the credit for this military victory, defending the English nation from its enemies is granted to God, to whom the unreformed nation should turn in thanks for their victory.

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<sup>95</sup> [Anonymous], *A joyful new ballad of the late victorie obtained by my Lord Mount Joy and our Maiestie's forces in Ireland, against that archtraytor Tirone and confederates, upon the 24 of December last. Also of the yeeldinge of the Towne of Kingsalt, with 3 or 4 other houldes, by Don John at Aquila, Generall of the Spanish army, which was yielded by the 9 of January last 1602* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp.124-28.

As well as the title, some ballads also employed postscripts, a short prose section placed after the main ballad text, which would never have been intended to be sung, and which explicitly foregrounds the broadside's claims to truthfulness and authority. In *The Winter's Tale*, as proof of his ballads' truthfulness, Autolycus offers the signatures of 'one Mistress Taleporter, and five or six honest wives that were present', or 'Five justices...and witnesses more than my pack will hold'.<sup>96</sup> The copies of the signatures, which the ballad seller boasts of, are clearly not part of the text which would be sung by the ballad's purchaser. Either they might appear as part of the ballad's title, or more likely they are part of a postscript. Significantly, they are something which Autolycus shows to his on-stage audience of potential customers, a visual signifier of the text's truth claim. An example of the simplest form of postscript, akin to the signatures offered by Autolycus, is found at the end of *The lamentation of Henrye Adlington, one of the cutting crewe of London...* where it states that the ballad contains the words of 'Harrye Adlington, made with his owne hand in the Marshalsye, after his condemnation' (73-74).<sup>97</sup> This example, like many 'good-night' ballads which purport to be the farewell statement of a criminal made shortly before execution, provides a striking example of Bruce Smith's assertion that 'what ballads offer the singer and the listener is the possibility of becoming many subjects, by internalizing the sounds and rhythms of those subjects' voices'.<sup>98</sup> In this case, the reader or performer is reminded that they have ventriloquised or occupied the subject position of a condemned man, speaking effectively in the exemplary voice of the corpse that hangs at Aldgate.

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<sup>96</sup> *The Winter's Tale*, iv.iv.269-71, 283-4.

<sup>97</sup> [Anonymous], *The lamentation of Henrye Adlington, one of the cutting crewe of London, who, for murther, was executed without Aldgate, and yet hangeth in chains* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 106-8.

<sup>98</sup> B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 201.

Other versions of the postscript are oriented towards providing authoritative proofs. *News out of East India...*, which recounts the massacre of English colonists and the destruction of their settlement at Cambello, on the island of Amboyna, in 1623, by the Dutch, provides two lists of names.<sup>99</sup> In one column are the names of those who were executed, whilst the names of those who were pardoned by the Dutch appear in the other. Their individual names act as a referent, signifying the truth of the gruesome events described in the main ballad text. The same effect is achieved in Thomas Deloney's *A proper new ballad briefley declaring the Death and Execution of fourteen most wicked Traitors, who suffered death in Lincolnes Inne feelde neere London: the 20 and 21 of September, 1586*, where the postscript supplies the names of the fourteen traitors.<sup>100</sup> Somewhat more whimsically, the Ivy Bridge ballad includes a list of '[t]he professions of these persons, so vnfortunately drowned' (121-23), these being a haberdasher, a tailor, a saddler, a barber, and a waterman. This mundane list of professions links the unfortunate persons, whose deaths the ballad records, with the ordinary concerns of the ballad audience, and produces a sense of verisimilitude, though perhaps also of exemplarity, as it takes in a cross-section of city traders, producing an effect of universal (or at least London mercantile) applicability.

The postscript of *A discription of a monstrous Chylde, bourne at Chychester in Sussex...*, works in a similar manner, identifying the profession of the child's father, and stressing the moral worth of both parents: 'The father hereof is one Vyncent, a boutcher, bothe he and hys wyfe being of honest & quiet conuersation. They hauing had chyldre

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<sup>99</sup> [Anonymous], *Nevves out of East India of the cruell and bloody vsage of our English merchants and others at Amboyna, by the Netherlandish gouernour and counsell there* (London: F. Coules, 1624) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Rollins, *A Pepysian Garland*, pp. 201-6.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Deloney, *A proper new ballad briefley declaring the Death and Execution of fourteen most wicked Traitors, who suffered death in Lincolnes Inne feelde neere London: the 20 and 21 of September, 1586* (London: Edward Alde, 1586) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 464-8.

before, in natural proportion; and went with this her full tyme' (49-50).<sup>101</sup> The postscript is part of the ballad's engagement with popular Reformation hermeneutic practices which attempted to read such monstrous children as evidence of God's role within the world, but it also serves as a purely literal sign which validates the child's existence in the world against any claims that might be made about the fabulous nature of the child.<sup>102</sup> *Nature's Wonder?...*, another ballad about a monstrous child from 1664, with a full title nearly as long as the earlier ballad about Dorothy Mattley, gives its postscript its own separate title: 'A true Relation of this strange and wonderfull MONSTER' (97).<sup>103</sup> This repeats information about the names and occupations of the child's parents, a physical description of the child, and details of its place of birth, all of which has already been given in the ballad title. The only new information it supplies, at the tail end of the text, are details of the witnesses who saw this child: 'There hath been both Lords, Ladys, and much Gentry to see it; The Father (being a poore man) had twenty pound given him the first day, by persons of Quality. I Josiah Smith, Practitioner of Phisick, saw them all three alive' (106-8). The visitors' value as witnesses is explicitly tied to their social status and profession, whether they are members of the 'Gentry' or 'Practitioner[s] of Phisick'. As Adrian Johns has argued, part of the way in which print

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<sup>101</sup> [Anonymous], *A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiiii. daye of May. This being the very length, and bygnes of the same* (London: By Leonard Askel for Fraunces Godlyf..., 1562) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Lilly, *Black-Letter Ballads and Broad-sides*, pp. 201-4.

<sup>102</sup> See Helaine Razovsky, 'Popular Hermeneutics: Monstrous Children in English Renaissance Broadside Ballads', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.3 (1996), 1-34.

<sup>103</sup> [Anonymous] *Nature's Wonder? OR, [An ac]count how the Wife of one John Wate[...]man an Ostler in the Parish of Fisherton-Anger, near Sali[s]bury, was Delivered of strange Monster upon the 26<sup>th</sup>. of October 1664. which lived untill the 27<sup>th</sup>. of the same Moneth. It had two Heads, foure Armes, and two Legs. The Heads standing contrary each to the other; and the Loines, Hipps and Leggs Issueing out of the middle, betwixt both. They were both perfect to the Navell, and there joyned in one, being but one Sex, which was the Female. She had another Child born before it (of the Female Sex) which is yet living, and is a very comely Child in all proportions. This is Attested for truth, by several Persons which were eye witnesses* (London: E. Andrews, 1664) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Rollins, *Pack of Autolykus*, pp. 140-45.

manufactured authority was through the appropriation of social credit.<sup>104</sup> The presence of Josiah Smith also places this particular ballad, and the monstrous child which is at its heart, within a medical discourse which advertises the body of the child as an object of curiosity: ‘This *Monster* lived two days and then dyed, and is Imbalmed, and to be brought to *London* to be seen’ (105-6). As the title of one news ballad makes clear, the function of all such narratives is to show their audience, ‘[t]ruth brought to light.’<sup>105</sup> In the form of a printed broadside, the news is, like the child of *Nature’s Wonder?*, an object to be seen and examined.

As has already been noted, the majority of news ballads invoke a providential reading in order to explain the events and prodigies they describe. Certainly within the ballad text, if not within their titles, the use of the word ‘warning’ signifies their providential import: for example, *A Warning for all Murderers, A most rare, strange, and wonderful accident, which by God’s just judgement was brought to pass, not farre from Rithin in Wales...*, or *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp*.<sup>106</sup> By labelling themselves as a ‘warning’, these ballads are basing their authority, and thus their truth claims, on the authority of divine Providence. The appeal to Providence places a ballad’s subject matter within a ‘timeless’ set of communal values. In the example of *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp*, the broadside’s didactic purpose obscures

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<sup>104</sup> Johns, *Nature of the Book*, pp. 30-40.

<sup>105</sup> [Anonymous], *Truth brought to light, or, wonderful strange and true news from Gloucestershire, concerning one Mr. William Harrison, formerly steward to the Lady Nowel of Cambden, who was supposed to be murdered by the widow Pery and two of her sons* (London: Charles Tyus, 1662) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Rollins, *Pack of Autolytus*, pp. 96-100.

<sup>106</sup> [Anonymous], *A warning for all murderers A most rare, strange, and wonderful accident, which by Gods just judgement was brought to passe, not farre from Rithin in Wales, and showne upon three most wicked persons, who had secretly and cunningly murdered a young gentleman named David Williams, that by no meanes it could be knowne, and how in the end it was revenged by a childe of five yeeres old, which was in his mothers wombe, and unborne when the deed was done* (London: Henry Gosson, 1620) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Rafe Norris, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* (London: John Allde, 1577) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.



any value that the ballad might have had as news. The warning represented by the fall of Antwerp is apparently a reference to the sacking of Antwerp by Spanish troops in November 1576, information about which is absent from both ballad title and text. Instead the ballad makes a didactic appeal to the people of England to ‘Forsake thy Deuilish drunken trade’ (29). Antwerp appears only as a symbolic example of what may happen if the English people fail to repent, a fact with which it assumes its audience is already conversant.

In this respect, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* is actually at the other extreme from many of the ballads discussed in this section. Since, by gesturing to a reality beyond its page that the audience can only infer from its reference to ‘Antwerp’, it is interfacing with an oral culture as part of a conversation around a shared object of knowledge. Visually, however, the ballad still employs the techniques made



Figure 1: Rafe Norris, *A warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* (London: John Allde, 1577). The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. RB 18324.

available by print, adorned both with a picture and an elaborate border. Since Antwerp would have been well-known to many Londoners in the period, it is quite conceivable that the woodcut image (Figure 1) which adorns the broadside of *A Warning to Antwerp* is a reasonable if crude attempt at representing the area around Antwerp Cathedral. Even if it is only a ‘generic’ image of an urban context, its imagery still matches the ballad’s argument. The four figures surrounding the city, representing the winds which buffet it, are consistent with the metaphors employed in the ballad’s argument that London needs to ‘stand fast’ against the threatening forces surrounding it, lest it should suffer the same fate as its exemplar.

Another attempted match between ballad image and text is found in the ballad *A Wonderfull wonder: Being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life and miserable death of Thomas Miles...* who died by choking to death at table after uttering blasphemies against God (Figure 2).<sup>107</sup> His corpse was, apparently, cut open by surgeons at St. Bartholomew’s hospital who discovered that he had choked on a ‘gub of meate’ (46). The ballad opens by appealing to God, ‘Looke down, O Lord, upon this sinfull land!’ (1), establishing that it is sight which allows God to discern human wrongdoing. A more human investigation is described later in the ballad:

...the surgeons tooke in hand  
 To rip him up, that they might understand  
 The truth and reason how he lost his breath,  
 And how he came by his untimely death. (41-44)

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<sup>107</sup> L.P., *A wonderfull vvonder, being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life, and miserable death of Thomas Miles, who did forswear himselfe, and wished that God might shew some heavie example upon him, and so it came to passe for as hee sate at his meate hee choked himselfe, and died in short space after, which hapned the 8. of August last, 1635. and being ript up by the chirurgions of S. Bartholomewes Hospitall, was found to have a gub of meate sticking fast in his throate, which was the cause of his death. Written to warne all rash swearers to forsake their evill wayes, which God grant we may* (London: John Wright junior, 1635) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.



Figure 2: L.P., *A wonderfull vvonder, being a most strange and true relation of the resolute life, and miserable death of Thomas Miles...* (London: John Wright junior, 1635). © The British Library Board C.20.f.7[482].

In this context the image presented above it, which is much more likely to be a representation of a murder, here stands in as a representation of the surgeons' examination, identified as such by the ballad. It represents an opening of the body to the agency of human sight, an operation necessarily carried out by 'Men of good credit' (50), paralleling the means by which God spies out wrongdoers and the providential reading of events which the ballad foregrounds throughout.

The anxieties about an event's truthfulness which are, as noted above, signalled by an emphasis on both the existence of witnesses and their moral worth, emphasises how most of the paratextual devices employed by ballads to bolster their truth claims claim to be substitutes for vision; it is only through sight – through direct witnessing – that 'true events' can be perceived. With their emphasis on the thing which is being perceived, ballads about monstrous children create perhaps the clearest relationship between text and image, most markedly emphasising their status as printed objects. As the title of one monstrous child ballad has it, it offers its audience not a text or a

description, but '[t]he true fourme and shape' of monstrosity.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, the full title of the aforementioned 'discription of a monstrous Chylde', boasts that it is '...the very length, and bygnes of the same'. This refers, not to a description contained in the ballad text, since there is none, but to its picture (Figure 3). The ballad text is concerned to moralise the meaning of this monstrous birth, referring to the appearance of the childonly in passing, in lines which clearly relate the truth status of the ballad to its medium: 'But here thou haste by Printing arte / A signe therof to se' (61-62). Without the aid of the arts of printing, there would be nothing for the audience to see. The 'sign' of the illustration substitutes for the act of witnessing, and indexes the 'truth' of its referent as a visible, and quantifiable, object. Evidence that broadsides functioned as visual objects as well as a medium for the transmission of an oral text is clear from reports of broadsides being pasted to walls as decoration.<sup>109</sup> The audience is thus invited to repeat, or participate in, the act of witnessing and attestation which the ballad describes.

Critics have frequently noted how the shepherdess Mopsa naively equates print with truthfulness in *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>110</sup> Less often remarked, however, is that the ballads offered for sale by Autolycus give examples of many of the same devices which have been examined throughout this section in a parodic form. Their titles, which give accounts of absurd events such as 'how a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden, and how she longed to eat adder's heads and toads carbanadoed' and how 'a fish that appeared upon the coast on Wednesday the fourscore

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<sup>108</sup> William Elderton, *The true fourme and shape of a monstrous Chylde, Which was borne in Stony Stratforde, in North Hampton shire. The yeare of our Lord, M.CCCCC.LXV* (London: Thomas Colwell, 1565) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; *Broadsides and Ballads chiefly Of the Elizabethan Period and printed in black letter. Most of which were formerly in the Heber collection and are now in the library at Britwell Court Buckinghamshire*, ed. by Herbert L. Collman (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), p. 113.

<sup>109</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 148-49.

<sup>110</sup> For example, B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 187.

**A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiiii. daye of May.  
This being the very length, and bygnes of the same. M. CCCC. LXX.**



**W**hen God sayd thus, his plage hath mit  
Although, he longe defarde  
He saith truly, strange hath sent  
To make his foes a feare.

What they thereby, might take remedie  
In their ill life mispent  
And more of laze, then feare of paine  
What so small faultes repent.

Before the earth was overflown  
With waters huge throughout  
He sent them flae, that holy one  
All to deeply went about.

To call them then, to Godly life  
As to haue they laughed and sunde  
He was content of man and wyfe  
Well they were all confunde.

Loth all preache most earnestly  
What it did not purnyt:  
Then eye and eyndoure verely  
Upon this house did wyrt.

Pharases heart had no remorse  
Ethough woundes strange he take  
But rather was therof the woise  
Without all feare of awe.

Wytill hee he and his therofe  
By iustice sent of God  
In raginge flae, were all folowe  
And then he felt the rod.

Then tymes truly here the felow  
In captiue brought and led  
Whiche eke tyme, if God see like  
Wytill thus strange he red.

The peere before Waspatian came  
The felow a beyer best  
Whiche beyng slayne, did calne a lawe  
This signe they sawe did best.

As others doe, and still haue done  
In making it as hayne  
By this good lucke, they saye shal come  
As pleat their foolish byayne.

The heathen could feare and saye  
What wden such woundes were  
It did foreshew to them alwaye  
That some ill daye wold were.

The scripture sayth, before the ende  
Of all things shal appeare  
God will woundes strange things sende  
As some is sent this peere.

The selve infant, boye of shape  
The Calues and Pygges so straunge  
With order mo of such misshape  
Declareth this weyde change.

But here, lo, see about the rest  
A wonder to beholde  
Proceeding from a Christian best  
So monstrous to be tolde.

So Corne can, no wynter maye  
The same so ongly make  
As doeth it selfe thus at this daye  
A sight to make the quake.

But here thou haste by painting arte  
A signe therof to se  
Let eke men saye within his herte  
At preachtlye noly, to me.

That I shoulde fele to youe benedictiō  
In Godly life alwaye  
For these be tokens noly sent forth  
To preache the later daye.

Also it doeth demōstrate playne  
The great abuse and vice  
That here in Englands noly doeth ragge  
That monstrous is the gyfte.

By readinge booke, we shall fynde  
In scripture, and eke in tober  
That when such things came out of kynde  
Gods wyrd it wold declare.

But if we lightly were the same  
And make but vnye wordes wonder  
The Lord our sourses, sent will come  
And sharplye iudge to vnder.

Then ponder well beynges, long past  
The sequel of such signes  
And call to God by prayer in hast  
From sinne to change our mynde.

Repent, amende bothe byrd and lotte  
The iustice of God embrace  
To lyue therof, as he should doe  
God graue us all the grace.

quod. Item. D.

The father herof is one Wymer, a hant-  
cher, bothe he and his wyfe being of bench  
quiet conversation. They hauing had chylde  
before, in natural proportion; and went with  
this her full tyme.

**Printed at London, by  
Leonard Askel for Francess Godlyf. In  
the yeare of our Lorde, 1562.**

Figure 3: [Anonymous], *A discription of a monstrous Chylde, borne at Chychester in Sussex, the .xxiiii. daye of May. This being the very length, and bygnes of the same* (London: By Leonard Askel for Francess Godlyf..., 1562). © The British Library Board Huth 50[30].

of April, forty thousand fathom above water, and sung this ballad against the hard hearts of maids', appear designed to mock their rustic audience's attempts to establish their truthfulness.<sup>111</sup> The nonsensical 'Wednesday the fourscore of April' is clearly parodying, through exaggeration, the apparently sincere attempts to establish a precise date like those which are found in the titles of many contemporary ballads.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, the signatures offered by Autolycus burlesque the weight that genuine ballad postscripts place on the signatures they employ to signify authority and truthfulness. The extravagant events of his ballads are perhaps not so different in kind from warring flocks of birds, but Autolycus' untrustworthiness is made clear to the theatre audience from his first appearance, where he presents himself as a 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles', and mocks his customers for their having trust in his wares: 'What a fool honesty is, and trust – his sworn brother – a very simple gentleman!'<sup>113</sup>

*The Winters' Tale* provides us with a double view of ballad audiences. We are faced both with the rustic, on-stage audience who appear happy to accept the ballads they purchase at face value, placing trust in ballad accounts and claims to truthfulness, however outlandish the narratives they present. Off-stage, there is the urban theatre audience, which is invited to laugh at the naivety of this rustic acceptance of ballads' truth claims, since its members know such texts to be notoriously false, a source of amusement and entertainment. No doubt, the real reception of broadside ballads, if it could be recovered, would not map so easily onto the rather simple rural-urban divide with which the play presents us. What this theatrical representation of a ballad seller shows is that there was a multitude of possible responses to ballad texts, responses

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<sup>111</sup> *Winter's Tale*, iv.iv.262-65, 275-78.

<sup>112</sup> *Winter's Tale*, iv.iv.276-77.

<sup>113</sup> *Winter's Tale*, iv.iii.26, iv.iv.600-1.

which ballads, in their turn, responded to by providing ever more elaborate apparatuses by which their audience might establish the truth of the news ballad.

The employment of such paratextual devices by broadside texts to bolster their authority and status as true accounts is clearly a result of the growing influence of the print trade, their visual effects only achievable through the medium of print. The very extravagance of some ballad truth claims, and the proliferation of markers intended to assure readers, singers, and viewers of their authenticity, encourages modern critics almost universally to ally themselves with the clear-sighted, urban elite conjured by Shakespeare's play, imagining a playful self-awareness in place of what might just as easily be read as a deeply felt sincerity. To do so, however, is potentially to lose sight of the ways in which early modern news ballads were part of a culture which was both highly invested in providential discourses and increasingly concerned to establish the authenticity of their accounts. Best viewed as a form of multi-media text which combined oral and print modes of dissemination and communication, the news ballad was a genre which enthusiastically and creatively embraced the credit inherent in printed texts, the satisfaction of aesthetic qualities, and a sense of divine order to produce a compelling series of truth events, which inextricably yoke together the wonderful and the mundane, the urgency of proof and the requirement for belief.

With few exceptions, none of the ballads examined in this chapter can be easily defined as ballad histories; although, as the following chapter will argue, at least some of them are 'modern histories'. 'News ballads' are connected to larger time frames by the providential and communal concerns which are at their heart. Rather than seeing the designation 'new' as insistently topical, we should perhaps see it as designating a text that was self-consciously positioning itself within a broadside culture that relied as much on long standing associations as with any appeal to novelty. Ballads were represented as both oral and as a product of print culture; traditional and yet part of a

world of commercial exchange; popular, but appreciated and appropriated by elite subjects; and confusing both the past and the present. It is this bringing of the historical into the present moment that brings together the subjects of the following chapters. As Anthony repeatedly reminds us, no matter what its subject or when it takes place, in its performance, a ballad always occurs ‘now, now.’



## ‘MODERN HISTORIES’: HISTORY SEEN FROM WITHIN ‘NEWS BALLADS’

First published in 1586 and surviving in an edition from the latter half of the seventeenth century, the content of *Bloudy news from Germany or the peoples misery by famine...* would appear obvious from its title.<sup>1</sup> The appeal of this ballad to its potential audience apparently resided in the promise of foreign news. Any audience encountering the later publication of a ballad that had originally appeared in print one hundred years previously would evidently be mistaken if they took its ‘song of joyful news’ (7) as an account of current events. But, in fact, the ballad’s ‘news’ was already an historical narrative in 1586. The third stanza makes it clear that, far from being a ‘news ballad’, *Bloudy news from Germany* is instead a ‘true report’ of ‘what’s done in former time’. The ballad tells the tale of ‘one *Harto*, a Nobleman...of the Town of *Ments* [Mainz]’ who ‘when the people were decayed (by reason of a hard famine), he gathered the poorer sort into a barn and burned them (saying these are but as rats that eat up all and do nothing else)’. For these actions, his castle was visited by a divinely-inspired plague of man-eating rats. These exaggerated and supernatural events are part of the well known narrative of the tenth-century prelate, Archbishop Hatto.<sup>2</sup> Instead of the ‘something new’ promised by the title, the ballad in fact gives its audience something very old.

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<sup>1</sup> [Anonymous], *Bloudy news from Germany or The peoples misery by famine, Being an example of Gods just judgement on one Harte a noble man in Germany of the town of Ments who when the people were decayed (by reason of a hard famine) he gathered the poorer sort into a barn, and burned them (saying these are but as rats that eat up all and do nothing else) but the allseeing God left not this wickedness unpunished; for he was so sore beset and beat with rats, that his castles top was never after free of them, and at last devoured by them* (London: Philip Brooksby, c.1670-1696) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>2</sup> The entry in the Stationers’ Register for the original 1586 ballad gives it the more accurate title of *The wrathfull Judgement of God vpon Bishop Hatto* (Hyder E. Rollins, *An Analytical Index to the Ballad-Entries (1557-1709) in the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London* (Hatboro and Pennsylvania: Tradition Press, 1967), p. 262). The change from ‘*Bishop*’ to ‘*Noble*’ raises the possibility that this may not, in fact, be an earlier printing of the latter text but a different ballad on the same subject. Even if this is the case, it still suggests that the story, and many of its details, were current for more than a century in the popular historical and religious discourse in which both of these ballads participate.

Whether the account of Bishop Hatto's spectacular comeuppance is best considered as Protestant fable or as an attempt at an historical account, the ballad's opening lines further establish its status as an item of 'news' by arguing for the relevance of its narrative to the present concerns of the ballad audience. If not exactly current, its subject is, at least, topical:

When as my mind was fully bent

Some story for to rhyme,

Amongst all others none I found

So fitting for the time (1-4)

The ballad's response to present economic hardship – whether that is the present of the 1580s or the 1680s, or any time in between – is to provide a narrative for its audience which, in its details and the moral lessons that can be drawn from it, will act as an historical exemplum and thus be 'fit... for the time'. The penultimate stanza explicitly identifies the usefulness of the ballad for its audience as being 'a guide / to them that are so high', a warning to the most prominent members of the community to avoid acting towards the poor in a like manner, lest they be subject to the same punishment as was visited on the monstrous Hatto.

Alexandra Walsham has observed that the immediate source of the tale in the original ballad was Sebastian Muenster's *Cosmography* (1544), but the central narrative of divine retribution by a plague of rats existed in multiple versions in other texts.<sup>3</sup> It is the providential nature of the ballad's discourse which conveys the fitness of its narrative of the past to present concerns. This is explicitly signalled by the plague of rats being likened to the biblical 'Egyptian frogs'. It places historical events in a wider

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<sup>3</sup> Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 98. Robert Southey's later poem about Bishop Hatto, 'God's Judgement on a Wicked Bishop', suggests that this particular story had a prominent place in popular providential discourse over the course of several centuries.

religious narrative, one which encompasses the entirety of human history. In doing so, ‘Bloody news from Germany’ tells an audience something which it already knows. Providential narratives were a prominent part of popular religious discourse, a mode of understanding the world familiar to all within the typical ballad audience.<sup>4</sup> Although the example of Bishop Hatto is directly addressed to the privileged members of the social hierarchy, who might conceivably be in a position to commit the same sort of violence against the poor of the community, the ballad’s appeal lies in its articulation of a set of shared communal values. It posits a timeless, idealised moment in which the demands of the poor, as articulated by the ballad, will be answered by the privileged members of the community, for whom Bishop Hatto stands as an example.

In applying the label of ‘news’ to a narrative which largely fails to fit a modern definition of the word, *Bloody news from Germany* was far from unusual. According to Leonard J. Davis, during this period, ‘news’ was a signifier without a stable meaning, one that was ‘...applied freely to writings which described either true or fictional events, quotidian or supernatural occurrences, and affairs that may have been recent or several decades old’.<sup>5</sup> Out of this unstable discourse developed a recognisably modern definition of ‘news’, alongside the novelistic discourse which is the primary concern of Davis’ study. Notwithstanding the ambiguity in the way in which the term was deployed by many early modern texts, it is evident that there were at least some early modern subjects who had a clear understanding of what the term meant, an expectation of what ‘news’ should be, which was broadly in line with modern understandings. The satire of Ben Jonson’s *The Staple of News* (1626) is clearly dependant on a stable notion of truth which the purveyors of ‘news’ are charged with having failed to uphold.<sup>6</sup> As the

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<sup>4</sup> See Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*.

<sup>5</sup> Davis, *Factual Fictions*, p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Staple of News*, ed. by Anthony Parr (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988).

satirical *The Post of Ware: With a Packet full of strange Newes out of divers Countries* advises its fictional Post-Boy, ‘Truth doth abound / In euery Taylors Shop to bee found’ (9-10).<sup>7</sup> ‘News’ and ‘truth’ are held to be interchangeable terms. Contrary to Davis’ argument, the ballad’s mockery of the contents of the typical coranto is dependent on its audience’s awareness of a stable definition for the term ‘news’, despite the fact that many texts which were labelled ‘news’ might have failed to meet the standards for which it argues.

Given their status as ephemeral texts, it is surely unsurprising that critics have sought antecedents to the newspaper within the early modern ballad corpus. Hyder Rollins has argued that broadsides were essentially ‘the equivalent of modern newspapers’.<sup>8</sup> There is an obvious objection to the inclusion, in both this and the previous chapter, of ballads on contemporary subjects in a study dedicated to the representation of history and the past within early modern ballads. Whilst it is clear, for example, that a ballad which is written about the defeat of the Spanish Armada and published in 1588 is ‘historic’, it is not obviously ‘historical’. Thomas Deloney’s *The Queenes visiting of the Campe at Tilsburie with her entertainment there* for example, was entered into the Stationers’ Register only a day after Elizabeth’s visit to the camp, on 10 August 1588.<sup>9</sup> For an audience either reading or hearing it in 1588, such a ballad is informing them about an event with which they themselves are contemporaries, the

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<sup>7</sup> [Anonymous], *The Post of Ware: With a Packet full of strange Newes out of divers Countries* (I. Trundle, London, [1622?]) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>8</sup> Rollins, *A Pepysian Garland*, p. xi.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Deloney, *The Queenes visiting of the Campe at Tilsburie with her entertainment there* (London: Iohn Wolfe, 1588) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 474-78. Given the distance between London and Tilbury, and assuming Deloney was actually present at the camp, Thomas Healy has suggested that his ballad might have been commissioned (‘Elizabeth I at Tilbury and Popular Culture’, in *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. by Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 165-177 (p.168). As Healy also acknowledges, there is no evidence that Deloney was regularly in the pay of the government. Equally, if Deloney was commissioned in advance, then his employer might just as easily be an enterprising printer who was aware in advance of the significance of the queen’s imminent visit to the camp.

details of which might already be familiar from alternate sources of information. It is only for a later audience that such a ballad then becomes a genuinely ‘historical’ document, giving us a contemporary account of events from which we are separated in time. The distinction between ‘historic’ and ‘historical’ is one which Roy Palmer makes in the introduction to his *Ballad History of England*, but there are grounds for thinking that this distinction is less secure when considering ballads produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>10</sup>

As will be seen below, *Bloody news from Germany* is unusual in so clearly labelling itself as ‘news’ in its title. Rather than ‘news’, printed texts – whether ballad or pamphlet – which most readily fit the modern definition of topicality and factualness were more usually identified as a ‘discourse’, ‘relation’, ‘report’ or ‘story’, foregrounding the element of narrative over concerns about novelty or topicality.<sup>11</sup> These alternative labels suggest either that such texts were attempting to obscure their own function as news, or else that they were never intended to be read as such. In tracing the transformation, in the seventeenth century, of ‘the present’ from an instant to a more prolonged duration (similar to a modern comprehension of current events as distinct from the past), Daniel Woolf has noted that the earliest newsbooks and corantos of the 1620s ‘speak of news as history and often were published under the rubric of history’. As a consequence, ‘at its earliest stage, the published news was perceived as a record of the recent past, not an ongoing present’.<sup>12</sup> Not only is this evidence of a culture which had yet to decisively separate news from history, it also indicates the

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<sup>10</sup> Roy Palmer, *A Ballad History of England: From 1588 to the Present Day* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1979), p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Sandra Clark, *Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 10

<sup>12</sup> Daniel R. Woolf, ‘News, History and the Construction of the Present in Early Modern England’ in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 80-118 (p. 98).

authority of history, a discourse with far more trustworthy associations than news which was ‘both new and difficult to verify’.<sup>13</sup>

‘News’, a term which encompasses a variety of related discourses, is clearly related to history, with a notion of what is defined as the present differentiating between them. M. A. Schaaber has defined ‘news’ as ‘primarily matter of fact, data, particulars which tell a story, the story of today’s intimate history’.<sup>14</sup> In attempting to provide a simple definition of ‘news’, Schaaber unwittingly defines ‘news’ as another form of history writing. Additionally, in his chapter on ‘Ballad News’, Schaaber notes the existence of a number of ballads published long after the events they commemorate, which plausibly suggests that ballads about events such as Evil May Day or the Gunpowder Plot circulated for a century or more after the events themselves.<sup>15</sup> Any ‘news ballad’ which remained in circulation for a prolonged length of time would eventually acquire the status of history, whatever it might have meant to its original audience. Whatever value they had as ‘news’ at their original date of publication, ballads such as these had a much longer life as historical accounts.

Those ballads typically labelled ‘news ballads’ encompass a wide range of subjects from natural disasters or miraculous happenings to military and official events. In this chapter, I will argue that the ‘news ballad’ can be seen as a form of history writing. It is political events such as military conflicts and events involving royal and noble display which most easily fit into a framework of history, since these are precisely the kind of events from which history has traditionally been constructed. History is consequently defined as specifically a narrative of ‘great events’ which affect the nation and its self-definition as a whole. From a survey of the ballads produced during the

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<sup>13</sup> Woolf, ‘News, History and the Construction of the Present’, p. 100.

<sup>14</sup> Matthias A. Shaaber, *Some Forerunners of the Newspaper in England, 1476-1622* (London: Octagon Books, 1966), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Shaaber, *Forerunners of the Newspaper*, pp. 201-3.

reign of Elizabeth I, it is relatively simple to construct just such a narrative, one focussed on Elizabeth, Essex, and prominent events such as the Armada, Northern Rebellion and the execution of Mary.<sup>16</sup> The people of the nation appear in such a narrative only as soldiers or rebels, roles which define them as subject to monarchical and state power. As both a presence within the ballad texts and as part of the audience, the majority of early modern subjects are reduced to the role of spectators, confronted with forms of aristocratic display. This chapter examines the historical discourses present in ballad representations of the Spanish Armada and the Northern Uprising, considering how these ‘historic’ events are used to construct a coherent image of the national community.

In constructing an essentially linear, teleological account of the history of ‘news’, scholars such as M. A. Schaaber have interpreted earlier media for transmitting it using terminology derived from the modern newspaper, against which the earlier forms are judged as essentially inferior. Beginning in the 1620s with the earliest corantos, the first texts to display the characteristics of seriality and periodicity which we associate with the newspaper, other media used for conveying news such as ballads, proclamations, corantos and pamphlets, are ultimately subsumed by the narrative of this development which has its apotheosis in the modern newspaper.<sup>17</sup> Revising such a rigid definition both of what ‘news’ is and the forms in which it is disseminated, Joad Raymond has defined it more broadly as ‘...not a set of events with shared characteristics, nor a set of institutions with shared procedures, but a basis for verbal (and partly visual) exchanges. It is a footing for intercourse, [and] a conversation...’.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Charles H. Firth, ‘The Ballad History of the Reigns of the Later Tudors’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser, 3 (1909), 51-124.

<sup>17</sup> Shaaber, *Forerunners of the Newspaper*, pp. 301-26.

<sup>18</sup> Joad Raymond, ‘Introduction’ in *News, Newspapers and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 1-11 (p. 9).

Daniel Woolf makes a similar argument; in contrast to history which ‘relates acts which are complete with a narrative beginning, middle and end’, news ‘recount[s] events that are part of a larger story, still in play; it solicits possible resolutions to that story’.<sup>19</sup> These broader definitions, in which news is a basic element of communication between both individuals and groups, acknowledge that it is a discourse which is distinct from though related to newspapers, and also encompasses the less formal media through which news can be transmitted, such as letters and oral communication. Rather than defining it purely as a specific type of information, or as the media through which it is transmitted, Raymond and Woolf define ‘news’ discourse as an approach which organises information into specific forms, defined by a notion of the present. In C. John Sommerville’s polemical take on this history, the periodicity of the newspaper in the seventeenth century created a sense of an ‘absolute present’. With its concerns orientated towards the future and the need for change for its own sake, this ‘absolute present’ was part of the colonisation of the public sphere by the news industry. Older news cultures, disseminated in the form of newsletters, letters, and oral communication were partial, fragmented, and in principle allowed individuals to form their own judgement about the content of the ‘news’.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding Sommerville’s nostalgic view of the culture which preceded the rise of the newspaper, in defining ‘news’ primarily as a discourse, all three critics define it through formal qualities as opposed to an essentialist definition linking ‘news’ to an assumed truthfulness.

Angela McShane has argued that news ballads should not be considered part of the history of journalism, and that there was, in fact, no such thing as a ‘news ballad’.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Woolf, ‘News, History and the Construction of the Present’, p. 96.

<sup>20</sup> C. John Sommerville, *The News Revolution in England: Cultural Dynamics of Daily Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 3-16.

<sup>21</sup> Angela McShane Jones, ‘*The Gazet in Metre; or The Riming Newsmonger: The English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer: A New Narrative*’ in *News and Politics in Early Modern Europe (1500-*



In her view, the term is wholly the creation of modern commentators who have imposed anachronistic aesthetic judgements on the ballad, primarily as a means of gaining respectability for the ephemeral texts they study. It is a term which would never have been recognised by any early modern ballad audience. With the main source of news for early modern subjects being largely word of mouth, or else manuscript letter, the principal purpose of a ballad was not to inform its audience about specific events, but to participate in a wider debate and to offer a commentary on news which was already known through other sources. As a corrective to a view which castigates such ballads for their failure to meet modern journalistic standards, she proposes the idea of a ‘continual currency’. Events were used as ‘exemplars of wider truths or warnings of generic evils and the information...acted as advertisement, reminder or support’.<sup>22</sup> In place of the term ‘news ballad’, McShane has proposed the more taxonomic ‘political ballad’, ballads whose content concerns the ‘four basic axes, royal events; military affairs; punishment of traitors and rebels and foreign events where Protestantism was seen to be under threat from Papist or Turk.’<sup>23</sup>

As persuasive as this argument is, it is also not so far from the description of the ‘news ballad’ offered by Shaaber: ‘...not so much a record of events as a commentary upon them; it is not a harbinger of news but a follower in its wake, expressing the opinion of the mass of people about it.’<sup>24</sup> The ‘news ballad’, whatever its title might proclaim, was always facing backwards. Moreover, any ballad which provides a narrative of events which are ‘complete with a beginning, middle and end’, already

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1800), ed. by Joop W. Koopmans (Paris and Dudley, MA: Peeters, Leuven, 2005), pp. 131-50 (p. 137).

<sup>22</sup> McShane Jones, ‘English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer’, p. 144.

<sup>23</sup> McShane Jones, ‘English Broadside Ballad as Intelligencer’, p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> Shaaber, *Forerunners of the Newspaper in England*, p. 193.

meets Daniel Woolf's requirements for a narrative of history.<sup>25</sup> In describing ballads as 'timeless' in their concerns – a term which Thomas Healy has used more critically in the same context – McShane, again like Schaaber, comes close to including 'political ballads' within the category of history writing.<sup>26</sup> A text which is 'timeless' in its concerns, or else presents its audience with the tropes of a 'timeless' community, places its narrative of events within a preconceived moral framework with roots in the past. In addition, just as *Bloody News from Germany* does, the vast majority of 'news ballads' situate themselves within a popular providential discourse. This has the effect, not only of tying their narratives to present concerns, but also of insisting that events of the recent past should be understood within the larger historical framework, invoked by their providential readings of events.

The term 'modern histories', from which this chapter takes its title, articulates the tension between the historic and the historical, as well as the porous boundary between news and history where these ballads are situated. It appears within a letter written by the French Ambassador, Antoine Lefèvre de la Boderie, in 1608, to the Marquis de Sillery, in which de la Broderie gives an account of his efforts to have George Chapman's play *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron* banned.<sup>27</sup> The coining of such an apparently contradictory term for the offending text, based on the career of the Marshal of France whom the French king, Henri IV, had executed in 1602, was the consequence of the gap of six years which lay between the original 'contemporary affairs' and their subsequent theatrical representation. A gap of

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<sup>25</sup> Woolf, 'News, History and the Construction of the Present', p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> In reference to the contemporary ballad representations of Elizabeth's visit to Tilbury, Healy notes that 'Ballad conventions...forge *timeless*, continuing communities' (my italics) ('Elizabeth I at Tilbury', p.168). Notwithstanding McShane's persuasive arguments against it, I continue to use the term 'news-ballad' throughout this chapter on the grounds that it is still the most recognisable term used to describe such ballads, and also the most useful within the framework of my thesis.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Ronald Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1991), pp. 182-83.

six years is more than sufficient to disqualify an event as ‘news’, even though a play such as Chapman’s was still ‘contemporary’ in its concerns through the onstage representation of still-living figures, such as the French king. It existed on the border between history and news, functioning simultaneously as both. Like the ballads considered in this chapter, it was a ‘modern history’.

### **Placing the Recent Past on Display**

Oriented predominantly around visual effects, the paratextual devices used to establish the truth of a broadside account examined in the previous chapter were an extension of how the ballad functioned as a performed text. As Natascha Würzbach and Bruce Smith have separately argued, the performance of a ballad is itself already a form of display. For Smith, what is displayed is the body of the singer, who enjoys the opportunity to impersonate multiple subjectivities through performance of the ballad.<sup>28</sup> For Würzbach, it is the performed text which is on display. In her focus on the point of sale in the early modern marketplace, it is the subject of communication, the ‘linguistic display object’ which is sold to potential customers through the act of performance, an object which is for sale like any other.<sup>29</sup> The characteristic practice of presenting the speaker within the ballad text developed between around 1600 and 1650. Along with the growing predominance of paratextual markers in broadside texts, this heightened the self-consciousness of the ballad as ‘a concretised display object at the disposal of the speaker.’<sup>30</sup> As Rayna Kalas has argued, in the sixteenth century, words were considered a form of matter, whether on the page or uttered as sound. Poetic language was an instrument of figuration that partook of worldly reality rather than an artefact which

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<sup>28</sup> B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 196-205.

<sup>29</sup> Würzbach, *Rise of the English Street Ballad*, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> Würzbach, *Rise of the English Street Ballad*, p. 95.

reflected reality through its adherence to mimetic conventions of pictorial representation.<sup>31</sup> Although the poetic tracts from which Kalas draws her insights into Renaissance literary theory could easily be expected to be largely dismissive of the products of ballad authors, they are produced by the same essential cultural assumptions.

With their focus on bodies, objects and most importantly actions, all ballads are concerned with narrating things that are available to sight. Even in an apparently internalised account, such as the first person narrative of a criminal, what is narrated is an account of something which has been done, and actions which can be seen. *The lamentation of Henrye Adlington* derives its authenticity in part from its claim to be a text from the criminal's own hand, but also places his confessions within an account of all that Henry Adlington has done.<sup>32</sup> His audience is informed that he was born in London, that he has killed two men, and that, 'In quarrels, brawles, debate, and strife, / I spent the springtime of my life' (21-22). Abstract feelings of guilt and piety are related to a world of concrete things:

Gods holy worde I disobayde;

I carde not what his preachers sayde.

All sacred churches I despizd,

and Playhowse stages better prized (37-40)

The abstraction of 'Gods holy word' is experienced within a material world of 'churches' and 'Playhowse stages' which will be familiar to anyone within the ballad audience. As Adlington recognises, his crimes will 'be showne / to every one that hath

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<sup>31</sup> Rayna Kalas, *Frame, Glass, Verse: The Technology of Poetic Invention in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> [Anonymous], *The Lamentation of Henrye Adlington* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 106-8.

me knowne' (8-9). 'Showne' refers to the fact of publication, which makes the ballad's account of Adlington's life available to a wider audience, but also suggests that, through the ballad text, Adlington's actions are made available not only to the sight of those who knew him when he was living, but also the 'sight' of the wider ballad audience who witness its performance.

News events, whether they are of a local or national importance, are also defined as something which is available to sight. 'News' is something which either has been or can be seen, which accounts for both the frequent stress on eyewitness accounts and tropes of sight in much news writing. This chapter considers the representations of two events now clearly recognised as important historical events in the reign of Elizabeth I, which were also the subject of a considerable number of ballads produced by the London print trade, both whilst they were taking place, and in the immediate aftermath. The battle against the Spanish Armada was an episode in England's national history that was rapidly 'magnified by memory'.<sup>33</sup> For at least a century after the defeat of the Armada, the victory became a constant theme in sermons and histories, and it is still a major element in the construction of the 'myth' of both Elizabeth and Elizabethan England.<sup>34</sup> Whilst less significant in the construction of the 'myth' of Elizabethan England, the Northern Rebellion, led by the Catholic Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland in 1569, was an important crisis point for a Protestant nation still insecure in its position, and was similarly memorialised as a significant moment as part of a 'Protestant nation-building narrative'.<sup>35</sup> Both the Spanish Armada and the Northern

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<sup>33</sup> David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1989), p. 110.

<sup>34</sup> See Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 110-40; Michael Dobson and Nicola J. Watson, *England's Elizabeth: An Afterlife in Frame and Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Krista J. Kesselring, *The Northern Rebellion of 1569: Faith, Politics, and Protest in Elizabethan England* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 178.

Rebellion gained heightened significance from the ease with which they could be interpreted as specifically Catholic threats. Where the events of the Armada were both remembered and interpreted as a major symbol of national unity, in contrast the Northern Rebellion can be understood as an event which signified a worrying split in the nation's self-definition.

Although only a handful have survived, a total of twenty-four ballads on the subject of the Spanish Armada were licensed between 29 June and 27 November 1588.<sup>36</sup> It is hard to be certain about the extent to which awareness about this national emergency existed amongst the population as a whole, whilst it was occurring. However, it is clear that the Armada was a popular subject amongst ballad authors. Similarly in 1569, three-quarters of all licensed ballads were concerned with the Northern Rebellion.<sup>37</sup> The increase in the production of ballads devoted to contemporary political events at such times of national import can be taken as a sign that the London print trade was responding to a genuine demand amongst the ballad audience for news and information about these events. The polemical character of many ballads concerned with both the Armada and the Northern Rebellion also suggests the possibility that printers and authors were taking an active role and attempting to construct a polemical narrative of contemporary events, which emphasised both the workings of Providence and the importance of those events to the self-definition of the nation as a whole.

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<sup>36</sup> Four have survived as broadsides. Another ballad text, of uncertain date, was included in Richard Johnson's *The golden garland of princely pleasures and delicate delights* (1620). Another two, which were entered in the Stationer's Register in 1588, have recently been reconstructed from manuscript. See Arthur F. Marotti and Steven W. May, 'Two Lost Ballads of the Armada Celebration [with texts and illustration]', *English Literary Renaissance*, 41:1 (2011), 31-63; Firth, 'Later Tudors', p. 102.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, *Factual Fictions*, p. 47.

As the author of no less than three of the surviving ballads about the Armada, Thomas Deloney was clearly deeply concerned to construct a meaningful narrative for the attempted Spanish invasion. The opening stanza of *The Queenes visiting of the camp at Tilsburie* consciously places its account of the Queen's visit to the gathered army in an historical framework:<sup>38</sup>

Within the yeare of Christ our Lord  
 a thousand and five hundredth full:  
 And eightie eight by iust record  
 the which no man may disannul.  
 And in the thirtieth yeare remaining,  
 of good Queene *Elizabeths* raigning... (1-6)

Entered into the Stationers' Register only a day after Elizabeth's speech was made at Tilbury, the ballad is both an item of 'news' and a self-consciously historical text. David Cressy observes that Deloney's ballads on the Armada all appeared at a time when victory was far from assured. Whilst historically we now know that the Armada was severely depleted following the battle of Gravelines on 29 July, the English had no way of knowing this until many weeks later; Deloney's ballads therefore seized on the tokens of a victory which was still to come.<sup>39</sup> The sonorous opening lines transform the ballad into an 'instant history' by framing it within both an implicitly providential calendrical framework as well as an account of the reign of Elizabeth. Even for a subject encountering Deloney's ballad in late August 1588, the perspective offered by the ballad is one which is already historical, looking back on an event which is securely in the past. In a similar manner to the way in which modern news cultures self-consciously

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<sup>38</sup> Deloney, *The Queenes visiting*, EEBO; Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 474-78.

<sup>39</sup> Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, pp. 115-16.

define specific events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall or the destruction of the New York World Trade Centre as historic moments while they are still occurring, Deloney uses the historic as a signifier for the national importance of his narrative. The overproduction of ballads on events such as the Armada and the Northern Rebellion functions in a similar manner. It is the means of announcing the significance and meaning of such events to a ballad audience defined as English subjects.

The importance that representations of Elizabeth had, not only for the Queen and her advisors, but for anyone who wished to try and influence her decisions about public policy during her reign, has been explored at length.<sup>40</sup> Where the Armada ballads have been examined, they have usually been interpreted within this scholarly narrative, examined for their contribution to the ‘myth’ of Elizabeth.<sup>41</sup> The three ballads which depict Elizabeth’s speech at Tilbury disseminate, for popular consumption, the image of a patriotic Protestant icon also found within more official and elite representations of the Queen. For all the nuance of such readings, they still largely acquiesce to the earlier judgement of C. H. Firth: ‘The Queen the ballads picture is the exact counterpart of the Queen the memoirists of the time depict’.<sup>42</sup> Thomas Healy’s examination of two of the three Tilbury ballads is the most searching attention they have received to date, offering a rich exploration of how the concerns of the contemporary audience fundamentally differ from the reasons these ballads have attracted the attention of modern

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<sup>40</sup> See Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*; John N. King, ‘Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43 (1990), 30-74; Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth: Elizabethan Portraiture and Pageantry* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977); Francis A. Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1975).

<sup>41</sup> See Susan Frye, ‘The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23:1 (1992), 95-114; Janet M. Green, ‘“I My Self”: Queen Elizabeth I’s Oration at Tilbury Camp’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28:2 (1997), 421-445; Sara Mendelson, ‘Popular Perceptions of Elizabeth’, in *Elizabeth I: Always Her Own Free Woman*, ed. by Carole Levin, Jo Eldridge Carney and Debra Barrett-Graves (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 192-214.

<sup>42</sup> Firth, ‘Later Tudors’, p. 105.



scholarship.<sup>43</sup> While conceding that the uncertainties surrounding Elizabeth's gender were a concern, the Tilbury ballads largely relegate such concerns to the background, instead foregrounding the material wealth that the soldiers at the camp could expect as a reward following their victory, as well as the need for obedience and keeping order in the camp.<sup>44</sup> Although Elizabeth is at the centre of all three ballads' representation of Tilbury – her presence at the camp interpreted as both the material and spiritual inspiration which will ensure her soldiers' martial victory – the ballads' chief concerns were those of the ordinary ballad audience, concerned with violence from the gathered soldiers, as well as the concern of the soldiers themselves that they would be paid.

In descriptions of Elizabeth's visit to the camp, considerable attention is paid to the display of the clothes and armour worn by the Queen and her train:

Like to a noble Amazon:

in siluer plated Armour brauely went

Unto her campe at Tilbery,

With many Knights of Chiuairy,

Coragiously her Army to content. (44-48)<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Healy, 'Elizabeth I at Tilbury', pp. 165-77. Healy examines Deloney's *The Queenes visiting of the Campe at Tilsburie* and Richard Johnson's *A ioyfull song of the deserved praises of good Queene Elizabeth, how Princely she behaued her selfe at Tilbury Campe in 88. when the Spaniards threatened the inuasion of this Kingdome* in *The golden garland of princely pleasures and delicate delights* in EEBO. Healy leaves out of his consideration a third ballad: T.I., *A ioyful song of the royall receiuing of the Queens most excellent Maiestie into her highnesse campe at Tilsburie in Essex: on Thirsday and Fryday the eight and ninth of August. 1588* (London: Richard Jones, 1588) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>. On the basis that Johnson is known to have collected some of the ballads he published in his garlands, Healy questions his authorship of the Tilbury ballad which appears in *The golden garland of princely pleasures and delicate delights*. As there appears to be no evidence of a separate appearance of the ballad outside of the collection, and since in addition it was clearly written some time after the death of Elizabeth, there seems to be no reason to suppose that he could not have been the author in this instance.

<sup>44</sup> Healy, 'Elizabeth I at Tilbury', pp. 167-72.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, *A ioyfull song of the deserued praises of good Queene Elizabeth*.

Then came the Queene on prancing steede  
 aired like an Angell bright:  
 And eight braue footmen at her feete,  
 whose Ierkins were most rich in sight.  
 Her Ladies, likewise of great honor,  
 most sumptuously did waite vpon her.  
 With pearles and diamonds braue adorned,  
 and in costly cales of gold:  
 Her Guardes in scarlet then ride after,  
 with bowes and arrows stoute and bold. (121-30)<sup>46</sup>

In comparing Elizabeth to an 'Amazon', Johnson's ballad does briefly consider her gender, stressing her martial qualities, but both ballads are far more concerned with the costly display exhibited by her court. Healy convincingly argues that the materialistic emphasis in Deloney's representation of the costliness of the clothes worn by Elizabeth and her court, as well as the heraldic 'famous Armes of England' (107) manufactured from the 'finest blew and crimson / that for silver can be sold' (109-10) served two functions. It offered reassurance to the ballad's audience that a court, which was known to be financially in poor condition, was able to afford the troops it had gathered. More significantly it intersected with the early modern culture of credit in which the richness of aristocratic display and material wealth was seen as evidence of spiritual wealth, the visible signs of legitimate leadership. The play on 'angels', the gold coins so named because they were stamped with a portrayal of the archangel Michael, in both Deloney

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<sup>46</sup> Deloney, *The Queenes Visiting of the Campe at Tilsburie*.

(120-22) and Johnson's ballads (68-72), represents the coins as both natural and supernatural commodities available to Elizabeth's soldiers at Tilbury.<sup>47</sup>

In both ballads, the presence of Elizabeth at Tilbury is depicted as a form of pageant or progress. Similarly, the editors of the recently reconstructed ballads about the Armada Thanksgiving celebrations have observed that it is an Elizabethan progress which is being depicted:<sup>48</sup>

Then came hyr Royall majestye  
 Most vyrgyn lyke in sight  
 And gloryously attyred was  
 In clothe of sylver whyte  
 And Eke the chyot wheare she sate  
 Of sylver clothe Dyd shyne  
 And mylke whyte Steed[s] Dyd beare the same  
 All trapped Ryche and [f]yne. (81-88)<sup>49</sup>

That I the order might espye  
 Of hyr graces goyng to London  
 Hyr pryncelye trayne abowte hyr there  
 Of manye a Lord and noble peere  
 And gentylmene suche a number weare  
 Dyd guard hyr Grace to London  
 And she the godlyest mayden queen

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<sup>47</sup> Healy, 'Elizabeth I at Tilbury', pp. 169-72. For evidence of the phenomenon of the early modern culture of credit see Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996); Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1998).

<sup>48</sup> Marotti and May, 'Two Lost Ballads' pp. 35-40.

<sup>49</sup> 'Ballad 1', Marotti and May, 'Two Lost Ballads' lines 81-88

That ever eye on earthe hathe seene  
 Hyr heighnes sat on a throne betwene  
 Two palfrayes whyte through London. (36-45)<sup>50</sup>

The first person address of the second Armada celebration ballad emphasises the extent to which both ballads are concerned with display and with what is visible. The listing of personages and details mimics the sense of the progress passing by an appreciative audience and reinforces the authority of the monarch who is responsible for such a grand aristocratic display. It is an essentially communal value which links the progress with its audience in an image of national community. Similarly, at Tilbury, the display offered by Elizabeth both reinforces her authority and offers inspiration for the coming battle, in which the ordinary soldiers will fight on behalf of both their monarch and the nation to which they belong.

Such representations of costly aristocratic display appear elsewhere in the ballad corpus, where they serve similar ends. Several generations after the defeat of the Armada, Martin Parker's *A Briefe description of the triumphant show made by the right honourable Aulgeron Percie, Earle of Northumberland, at his Installation and Initiation into the princely fraternite of the garter, upon the 13 of May, 1635* authoritatively announces its contents in the title, describing the display of the nobility as they ride through London in honour of Lord Percy:<sup>51</sup>

The common eyes were dazeled  
 with wonder to behold  
 The Lustre of apparel rich,

<sup>50</sup> 'Ballad 2', Marotti and May, 'Two Lost Ballads', lines 36-45

<sup>51</sup> Martin Parker, *A Briefe description of the triumphant show made by the right honourable Aulgeron Percie, Earle of Northumberland, at his installation and initiation into the princely fraternite of the garter, upon the 13 of May, 1635* (London: Francis Coules, 1635) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads* Vol. 1, pp. 220-4.

all silver, pearle and gold,

Wich, on brave coursers mounted.

did glister through the Strand (40-45)

Even more emphatically than the soldiers at Tilbury, the commons are reduced to the role of spectators. Along with the ‘apparel’ of the procession, the element of display encompasses the area of London through which it moves:

The famous Fleet-street conduit,

renown’d so long agoe,

Did not neglect to expresse what love

shee to my Lord did owe;

For, like an old proud woman,

shee painted fayre doth stand (63-68)

In the person of ‘an old proud woman’, the Fleet Street conduit becomes as much a spectator as are the commons. The ambivalence of the comparison to an old woman using makeup also risks self-consciously exposing the theatricality and artifice of the progress. When so much of its aristocratic significance lies in outward appearance, the ‘painted fayre cloth’ reveals the arbitrary nature of the show.

The honour awarded to Percy is, as the ballad makes plain, ‘The honour of his pedegree’ (19), an inward virtue which is made manifest through the parade of ‘noble earles and viscounts, / and barons’ (84-85). The wealth on display here resides not only in costly apparel but also in the titles of the nobility appearing in the procession. The honour which is displayed through such extravagance is not merely personal but essentially communal in spirit, derived from Percy’s place within a social hierarchy, which is validated by the authority of the past. Similarly, every ballad depiction of an

Elizabethan progress, whether at Tilbury or otherwise, calls attention to the lineage of the Queen, identifying her monarchical authority with the cultural authority of the past. In Deloney's *The Queenes Visiting of the Campe at Tilsburie*, she is identified as 'King Henryes royall daughter' (36), whilst in *A famous dittie of the Ioyful receauing of the Queens most excellent maiestie...* which describes Elizabeth's progress on her return to London from the country in 1584, she is 'The daughter of a noble King, / desending of a royall race' (57-58).<sup>52</sup> Johnson's Tilbury ballad both identifies Elizabeth as 'King Henries daughter' (3) in its opening stanza, and also declares that it is to be sung to the tune of 'King Henries going to Bullaine'. The tune's title not only identifies Elizabeth's lineage, but also places the events of Tilbury within a history of English renown.

The same concerns are found in *A new ballade of the trumpes kept in Ireland upon Saint Georg's day last, by the noble earle of Essex and his followers...* which depicts the procession of troops in Ireland held in celebration of St George in 1599:<sup>53</sup>

The Earle of *Essex*, by report,  
 That day did keepe a gallant Court,  
 Most loyallye in seemely sort,  
 ...Attended on by many a Lord.  
 ...The Seargeants there that day were seen  
 In purple veluet, red, and greene,  
 ...The corporals, with gallant grace,

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<sup>52</sup> Richard Harrington, *A famous dittie of the Ioyful receauing of the Queens most excellent maiestie, by the worthy Citizens of London the xij day of Nouember, 1584. at her graces comming to Saint Iames* (London: Edward Allde for Yarath Iames, 1584) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>53</sup> [Anonymous], *A new ballade of the trumpes kept in Ireland upon Saint Georg's day last, by the noble earle of Essex and his followers, with their resolution there* in Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, pp. 322-26.

In rich array did keepe their place,

With garments dekt with sylver lace,

in honour of famous *England*. (13-15, 17, 37-38, 41-44)

Essex is at the heart of the celebrations as their chief instigator, but what is being honoured and celebrated through this martial display is England, the unified nation invoked in the fourth and eighth line of every stanza in the ballad, whose authority is represented through a catalogue of the ordered procession of the troops, in which each rank is noted and displayed.

At the centre of the procession are the ordinary troops, who are as much on display as Essex and the aristocracy. Their clothing displays a wealth of effect, which matches that of the monarch and nobility. While the ‘Seargeants’ are dressed ‘In purple veluet, red and greene’ (45-46) and the ‘corporals’ in ‘garments deckt with sylver lace’ (49, 51), the ‘Pikemen’ also appear in ‘glistening corslets’ (61-62), with the ‘bilmen... / Attired braue in armour bright’ (77-78). This display not only represents the authority of the English nation which has been sent against ‘the Traytor, base *Terone*’ (97), but also represents that nation as a stable hierarchy in which all levels of society have a secure position. It is also something of a fantasy of martial English manhood, since it is unlikely that the troops would have been equipped in such elegant style. Arguably the ballad gains an additional historical irony from the knowledge that Essex and his troops would be unsuccessful against Tyrone’s forces, and it is possible that the ballad was produced in response to this military failure. Since it was not entered into the Stationers’ Register, it is difficult to precisely date the ballad’s composition, but the emphasis on Essex’s ‘loyall[t]ye’ suggests that it might well have been composed after the failure of the exhibition. The ballad’s vision of a unified martial English nation is implicitly undermined then by the actions of the popular Earl who occupies its centre, since he

was neither successful militarily, nor loyal to the monarch against whom he subsequently rebelled.

We see something of the same effect in the third Tilbury ballad, *A Ioyful Song of the Royall receiuing of the Queenes most excellent Maisetie into her highnesse Campe at Tilsburie in Essex*.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to Johnson and Deloney, here it is the gathered troops who are on display, as opposed to the Queen and her train. While it makes the same points about order in the camp and the promised rewards for the soldiers as do the other Tilbury ballads, it also, as its title indicates, complicates the relationship between monarch and commons. The Queen was not only visiting her troops, they were also ‘receiuing’ her. Instead of parading herself and her train in front of the troops, in this ballad Elizabeth has instead gone ‘to see and know’ (50), actions which place her in the position of the audience. Paying more attention to the reality that she actually visited the camp on two days, on the first day Elizabeth is welcomed with a display of the agency of the commons:

Such playing on piphes and many a drum,

to welcome the Queene of England.

Displaying of Ensignes verie braue,

Such throwing of hats as would ye haue,

Such cryes of ioy...

And then to bid her grace good night,

Great Ordenance shot with pellets pight,

Fourteene faire peeces of great might (75-79, 81-83)

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<sup>54</sup> T.I., *A ioyful song*, EEBO.



It is likely that such public displays would have been stage-managed by the army's commanders, but the ballad creates the impression that they are a spontaneous expression of loyalty to their monarch from the commons of England. This is in contrast to the following day, when the captains present the troops in an orderly display of ranks which has the quality of a pageant: 'Each point...ordered so in frame / Which serued to set forth the fame, / of a royall campe in England' (94-96). The ninth through eleventh stanzas (97-132) give a catalogue of the troops in the camp in which they are simultaneously presented and displayed to both monarch and ballad audience.

Elsewhere in the ballad, there is greater emphasis on the agency of the troops, although this takes the form of a fantasy of loyal service which transforms the ballad's account of its news or history into a romance. In the third stanza, the ballad informs its audience that the troops gathered at Tilbury are all 'willing harts' that have emerged from 'euery shire in England' (27-28). The army is explicitly defined as an image of national unity opposed to the threatening Spanish enemy. While this is an accurate description in depicting the make-up of the troops, since Trained Bands and the General Muster were both drawn from throughout England, it obscures the fact that this was an operation managed by a centralised Tudor state as part of defence procedures which had been developed over the course of the previous sixteen years.<sup>55</sup> Certainly, individual communities had the ability to make their own decisions about the training of the troops they supplied for the defence of the nation, with some making efforts to obtain experienced captains in 1587.<sup>56</sup> In describing them as 'willing harts', the ballad represents the raising of troops as a spontaneous act on the part of English subjects who choose to join Elizabeth's army because of their innate loyalty and patriotism.

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<sup>55</sup> See John S. Nolan, 'The Muster of 1588', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 23:3 (Autumn, 1991), 387-407 (pp. 388-91).

<sup>56</sup> Nolan, 'Muster of 1588', p. 388.

Whilst maintaining the same emphasis as the other Tilbury ballads on the material rewards the soldiers can expect from their monarch – ‘Meate or drinke, or cloth for backe, / Goldes and siluer should not slake, / to her marshall men of England’ (138-140) – *A Ioyful Song* also represents their reaction to the proffered largesse:

...many a one did say and sweare,  
 to liue and dye for England.  
 And would not aske one penny pay,  
 To charge her highnesse any way,  
 But of their owne would finde a stay,  
 to serue her grace for England. (151-56)

The soldiers’ assertion that they do not require payment for their service to the nation is belied by the historical reality that less than a fortnight after Tilbury, the unpaid disbanded troops were already reduced to attempting to sell their armour, and a royal proclamation was issued that tried to prevent them from doing so.<sup>57</sup> Like the assumption of agency on the part of the soldiers, this is part of the ballad’s representation of the historical reality of Tilbury as chivalric romance. It also transforms the relationship between monarch and commons into one which is explicitly reciprocal, with the commons empowered to ‘charge’ their monarch for their services. While this is framed as service to Elizabeth, in line with the ballad’s sense of chivalric romance, the soldiers’ ultimate loyalty lies, not with the monarch, but with the English nation to which she is as much a subject as they are.

Of the three ballads Thomas Deloney wrote about the events of the Armada, his Tilbury ballad is unrepresentative in the emphasis it places on the representation of

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<sup>57</sup> Healy, ‘Elizabeth I at Tilbury’, p. 173; Frye, ‘The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury’, pp. 113-4.

Elizabeth and her train. In his other ballads, Deloney is much more concerned to represent the crisis which threatens the unified English nation. *A ioyful new ballad, declaring the happie obtaining of the great galleazzo, wherein Don Pedro de Valdez was the cheife, through the mightie power and prouidence of God...* addresses itself in its opening lines to ‘Noble *England*’ (1).<sup>58</sup> It appeals to the personified nation to praise God for His preservation of the country from the Spanish, through the capture of the galleon captained by Don Pedro. Throughout, Deloney’s patriotic call to defend the nation is made through a collective voice aiming to defend ‘Our wealth and riches’ (145). The ballad ends with an appeal, now apparently in the single voice of its author, urging his fellow English subjects to:

Regarde your dueties,  
  
thinke on your countries good:  
  
And feare not in defense thereof,  
  
to spend your dearest bloud. (181-84)

Unlike the Tilbury ballad, here Deloney makes no mention of payment or reward but instead exhorts his fellows to join Elizabeth’s army through an appeal to their patriotism, implying a similar belief in the spontaneous rising of English subjects to defend their nation as does the anonymous ‘T. I.’

In his final ballad about the Armada, which appeared once consciousness of the danger of the Spanish threat had passed, *A new ballet of the straunge and most cruell whippes which the Spanyards had prepared to whippe and torment English men and*

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Deloney, *A joyful new ballad, declaring the happie obtaining of the great galleazzo, wherein Don Pietro de Valdez was the chiefe, through the mightie power and prouidence of God, being a speciall token of his gracious and fatherly goodnes towards vs, to the great encouragement of all those that willingly fight in the defence of his gospel and our good queene of England* (London: John Wolfe for Edwarde White, 1588) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 468-73.

women: which were found and taken at the ouerthrow of certain of the Spanish Shippes, in Iuly iust past, 1588,<sup>59</sup> Deloney is more concerned with providing evidence of the threat that the Spanish posed to the English nation. The opening stanza frames its narrative as a direct appeal to its audience: ‘...turn your eyes and bend your eares, / and you shall heare and see’ (5-6), arguing that it will disprove the claims made by the Spanish that ‘...they seek for *Englands* good, / and wish the people well’ (9-10). The evidence for the dishonesty and cruelty of the Spanish, which Deloney presents to his audience, is divided into two related sets of evidence. The first is the material proof of the whips which, as the title claims, were found on board captured Spanish ships:

And not content by fire and sword

To take our right away:

But to torment most cruelly

Our bodies night and day. (25-28)

The broadside picture reinforces this point with its depiction of the threatened whips. The Spanish threat to the English is not simply one of the re-imposition of Catholicism on an unwilling nation, but also a physical threat of torture, which is described in considerable detail. Half the ballad is given over to this gruesome description:

That euery stroke might tear the flesh

they layd on with the same,

And pluck the spreading sinews from

the hardned bloudie bone,

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas Deloney, *A new ballet of the straunge and most cruell whippes which the Spanyards had prepared to whippe and torment English men and women: which were found and taken at the ouerthrow of certaine of the Spanish shippes in Iuly last past. 1588*, (London, Thomas Orwin and Thomas Gubbin, 1588) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 479-82.

To prick and pearce each tender veine,

within the bodie knowne. (47-52)

In contrast to the aristocratic wealth which is displayed in Deloney's *Tilbury ballad*, here the bodies displayed to the ballad audience are 'ours', those of ordinary English subjects, whose suffering echoes that of Christ. Different physical torments are designed for men and women, who suffer the additional threat of rape: '...on them first their filthie lust / and pleasure for to take' (67-68). The violence, which the ballad claims the Spanish intended to visit on the bodies of English subjects, parallels the metaphor of the threatened English nation present in the other ballads about the Armada.

Following the ballad's lurid account of the violence its English subjects could have expected from a successful Spanish invasion, it turns to reports of imperial violence from both elsewhere and the past. The fantasy of violence posed by the Spanish threat is set within an historical framework, as elsewhere in his *Tilbury ballad* Deloney historicises the expected victory of the English. The report of Spanish violence in the West Indies (89-96) functions as evidence for how the Spanish treat subject peoples elsewhere, and as a guide for what the English could have expected from a victorious Spanish army. More interesting is the historical parallel Deloney draws with the Roman suppression of the revolt led by Queen Boadicea (97-112). The aptness of the historical parallel is evident, down to the comparison with the 'Romish Spanyards' (115), as well as the presence of another female military leader to parallel Elizabeth's role in the defeat of the Armada. The linguistic sleight-of-hand which identifies the Spanish with Roman historical oppressors also represents Catholicism as an international force which threatens the English nation.

Of the seven Armada ballads considered in this section, Richard Johnson's is the only one for which the events of the Armada are clearly in the past. With Elizabeth

‘now in heauens high Pallace’ (97), her speech at Tilbury functions as a sign of her worth to the nation she ruled, and of the success of her reign as whole. Similarly, for later ballad authors, for whom it was both directly and indirectly a subject, no longer an uncertain threat but a known historical event, the Armada was reduced to a signifier of a fixed providential meaning for the defiant Protestant nation:<sup>60</sup>

God blesse our gracious King and Queen

and our brave English fleet,

And give then victory on the seas,

when they with foes do meet:

Defend them from ill sands and rocks,

and Lord their bateell fight

As thou didst for Elizabeth

in the yeare 88. (93-100)<sup>61</sup>

The value of the Armada here is not as an historical event. Instead, it has been memorialised as a sign which confirms both the present-day bravery of the English navy and the continued divine support of the English.

Where Thomas Deloney wrote multiple ballads about the events of the Armada, William Elderton fulfilled a similar role for the Northern Rebellion. In *A ballat intituled Northumbrland newes Wherin you maye see what Rebelles do vse*, Elderton

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<sup>60</sup> John J. McAleer, ‘Ballads on the Spanish Armada’, *Text Studies in Literature and Language*, 4:4 (1963), 602-12 (p. 609-11).

<sup>61</sup> John Looks, *A famous Sea-fight: Or, [A Bloo]dy Battell, which was fought between the Spaniard [and t]he Hollander, beginning on the sixth day of the present month of September, 163[9,] being Friday; and continued for the most part, till Sunday-noon fo[ll]owing; being neer 70 sail of the Spaniards when they begun, and [b]ut 15 of the Holanders, till 12 sail more cam to their ayd. The Relation you sha[ll] have in the insuing Dity, with what hapned on the [thr]ee days above-named* (London: Fr. Grove, 1639) in Rollins, *Pack of Autolyucus*, pp. 26-30.

includes an image of the nation which self-consciously joins its disparate parts into a unified whole: ‘The Northe, and West, countrie, the sowth, east, and all, / The people of Englande maye cleaue to the Crowne’ (39-40).<sup>62</sup> Nonetheless, this image of national unity appears in the text of a ballad which begins by taunting the rebels for being ‘Nouthcountrie nodies’ (1), and finishes on the wish that ‘...all the Northe Countrie yet nosseld in Popeerie, / Might knowe theyr duetie to God and the Crowne’ (43-44). In stigmatising the North of the country as ‘nosseld’ in Catholicism, and thus failing to display the proper loyalty to the English crown, the ballad enacts the division of the nation within its own argument.

What is most striking about the ballads produced in response to the events of 1569 is their uniformity of tone. Whilst it is likely that ballads in support of the uprising were produced at the time, all surviving ballads produced by the London printing press, whether in response to official censorship or because of genuine feeling against the rebels, unanimously vilify the rebels as ‘traitors’. Their offence is not only against Elizabeth and the English nation, but also against the laws set down by God:

...Traytours vnto god likewise,

By right we may them call:

That do his laws and worde despise,

Their country queene and all. (33-6)<sup>63</sup>

In fact, despite the extravagant claims of the ballad title, there was little danger of the Northern Rebellion ‘devour[ing]’ those who remained loyal to the Crown. Throughout

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<sup>62</sup> William Elderton, *A ballat intituled Northumbreland newes Wherin you maye see what Rebelles do vse* (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1570) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>63</sup> [Anonymous], *A Ballad reioysinge the sodaine fall of Rebels that thought to devour us all* (London: William How for Henry Kirkham, 1570) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

the uprising, support for the rebels remained geographically limited and the rebellion itself became largely incoherent in its aims following Elizabeth's successful outmanoeuvring of the gentry over the issue of Mary, Queen of Scots.<sup>64</sup> Ironically, in light of the anxieties exhibited by the ballads, the resolution to the crisis of the rebellion actually led to the consolidation of power by Cecil and his Protestant colleagues, who were never seriously challenged in government again.<sup>65</sup> Not only that, but the rebellion provoked a hardening of attitudes and polarisation of religious identities. Krista J. Kesselring has argued that the Northern Rebellion was 'a central element in the crisis that stretched from 1568 to 1572'.<sup>66</sup> It marked the end of a period which had been punctuated by rebellions: 'spurred by the northern rebels, crown and parliament issued new definitions of treason, endorsed firmer doctrinal standards, and more firmly linked Protestant and English identities'.<sup>67</sup>

Where the Armada ballads depict the event through narrative and description, the ballads about the Northern Rebellion mostly lack events which they could describe for their audience. Practically, this may simply reflect the fact that the print trade was centred on London. Consequently, authors had little opportunity to travel or gather factual information, especially if they aimed to get their work quickly into print. Consequently, the 'newes' they present to their audience lacks any specificity. Their ballads occur within an abstract landscape, which is largely defined by their invective. Where ballads do take place in a landscape, it is more likely to be allegorical. A *ballad intitled, Prepare ye to the Plowe* imagines Elizabeth as a mower of grass which is 'both

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<sup>64</sup> Accounts of the uprising can be found in Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Harlow: Longman, 1997), pp. 102-16; Kesselring, *Northern Rebellion of 1569*; Wallace MacCaffrey, *The Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), pp. 221-62

<sup>65</sup> Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, p. 111.

<sup>66</sup> Kesselring, *Northern Rebellion of 1569*, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Kesselring, *Northern Rebellion of 1569*, p. 185.



ripe and rotten' (90), whilst in *The Plagues of Northumberland*, Elizabeth is represented as, 'The light and bright beames of the Sonne' (4) who defeats the Earl of Westmoreland's Bull and Northumberland's 'cloudy Moone' (5), both Earls having been allegorised as their family emblems.<sup>68</sup> Elsewhere, Elizabeth is the 'good mother Queene' of the nation to whom the rebels are illegitimate offspring.<sup>69</sup>

Edward Wilson-Lee has recently suggested that the heraldic allegory employed by many of these ballads, whilst partly derived from 'popular prophecy and...allegorical romance', is also both 'elitist and exclusive'.<sup>70</sup> The suggestive links, which Wilson-Lee has found between the authors responsible for these ballads and members of the Privy Council, suggest that like *The Death of Queen Jane*, and Deloney's Tilbury ballad, these are all attempts by elite subjects to appropriate a 'popular' voice for polemical ends. This is not to suggest that such texts should not be defined as popular culture. As Wilson-Lee acknowledges, their circulation in ballad form 'invites a very inclusive public to participate in an economy of decryption, textual circulation and display of knowledge'.<sup>71</sup>

The threat to England's definition as a unified Protestant nation may partly account for the hysteria with which the rebellion is treated in the ballads. Unsurprisingly, the rebels are given no opportunity to speak for themselves. While the title of William Gibson's *A description of Nortons falcehod of Yorke shyre, and of his fatall farewel* echoes that of a goodnight ballad, the only voice which is heard is that of

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<sup>68</sup> William Elderton, *A ballad intituled, Prepare ye to the Plowe* (London: William How for Henry Kirkham, 1570) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; John Barker, *The Plagues of Northumberland* (London: Thomas Colwell, 1570) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>69</sup> William Gibson, *A description of Nortons falcehod of Yorke shyre, and of his fatall farewel* (London: Henrie Kyrkeham, 1570) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>70</sup> Edward Wilson-Lee, 'The Bull and the Moon', p. 228.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Wilson-Lee, 'The Bull and the Moon', p. 228.

the author of the ballad's diatribe against the Catholic rebels.<sup>72</sup> Catholicism is seen as not only the source of the rebellion but almost a form of existential threat:

It was the Erle of *Westmerland*,  
 That thought him selfe so sure:  
 By the aid of his Rebellious bande,  
 His countrie to devoure.  
 The Earle eke of *Northumberland*,  
 His Traitorous parte did take:  
 With other Rebels of this Lande  
 for *Aue Maries* sake. (13-20)

The rebellion is represented as a force which, unless it is resisted, will 'devour' the vulnerable nation.

This refusal to grant the rebels a legitimate voice also extends to a fear of rumour and unsanctioned news. In *A newe ballade intituled, Agaynst rebellious and false rumours*, Thomas Bette is concerned less with the rebellion than with, 'What Rumores now are raised of late / Within this English lande' (1-2). He complains of 'babbling tongues' (8), and of how 'Rumor still abrode he flyes' (32).<sup>73</sup> William Elderton voices the same fear in his *Newes from Northumberland*.<sup>74</sup> This ballad begins in a

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<sup>72</sup> William Gibson, *A discription of Nortons falcehod of Yorke shyre, and of his fatall farewell The fatal fine of traitours loe: by iustice due, deseruyng soe* (London: Alexander Lacie for Henrie Kyrkeham, 1570) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Bette, *A newe ballade intituled, Agaynst rebellious and false rumours* (London: Wylliam Gryffith, 1570) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>74</sup> William Elderton, *Newes from Northumberland* (London: Thomas Colwell, [1570]) in *Popular Ballads and Songs, from Tradition, Manuscripts, and Scarce Editions, Volume II*, ed. by Robert Jamieson (Edinburgh and London: Archibald Constable and Co., Cadell and Davis and John Murray, 1806), pp. 210-14.

confrontational manner with its address to ‘You whisperinge fellowes, that walke every where’ (1), whose rumours Elderton claims he will refute with the news his ballad contains. The fear expressed by both ballads is of information which is mobile, figured both as flight and movement, and that ‘filles the peoples eares with lyes’ (Bette, 31). Wilson-Lee is correct in arguing that both authors make a ‘very sharp distinction between legitimate representations of public opinion and the real limits of public free speech’.<sup>75</sup> What is noteworthy is how both ballads define ‘illegitimate’ speech as orally transmitted information. Rumour consists of ‘whisperinge’ and ‘foolish talke’ (Bette, 10). The legitimacy of their ballads derives from the fact that they appear in print.

All the ballads produced by the London print trade about the rebellion convey the fear that these English ‘traitors’ are betraying their country to an international Catholicism which will consume Protestant England’s identity as a secure unified nation. As the conclusion of yet another ballad on the Northern Rebellion defines it, they are betraying ‘lyttell Brittain’ (104), an image of the nation as something fragile and in need of protection from ‘poore Englands Foes’ (107), with whom the rebels have aligned themselves.<sup>76</sup> Where the rebellion was in fact at least partly inspired by the fears of the Northern nobility that their rights and power were being eroded under successive monarchs – a concern which clearly has its roots in the traditions and history of England – in the ballad’s reading of events, by aligning themselves with Catholicism, their act of rebellion has symbolically placed them outside the English nation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Edward Wilson-Lee, ‘The Bull and the Moon’, p. 239.

<sup>76</sup> [Anonymous], *A Balad intituled, A cold pye for the papistes wherin is contained: the trust of true subiectes for suppressing of seditions papistrie and rebellion: to the maintenance of the Gospell, and the publique peace of England* (London: William How for Henry Kirkham, 1570) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>77</sup> Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, pp. 104-7; Kesselring, *Northern Rebellion of 1569*, pp. 46-61.

A very different interpretation of the rebellion, and the nobles who led it, is found in the three ‘traditional’ ballads discovered in the folio manuscript used by Bishop Percy in the compiling of his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* (1765).<sup>78</sup> To varying degrees, all three overlay the facts of history with elements of romance. *The Rising in the North* is predominantly concerned with the domestic tragedy of Richard Norton, the most important supporter of the two Earls, and the conflict with his eldest son and heir, Francis, over the rightness of their rebellion against the lawful authority of the monarch. The other two ballads provide accounts of the banishment of Northumberland and Westmoreland following the failure of their rebellion. *Northumberland Betrayed by Douglas* provides what is largely an historical account of Northumberland’s betrayal by the Scottish lords with whom he had taken refuge. *The Earl of Westmoreland*, after an opening which recounts Westmoreland’s escape to sea from Scotland, where he had initially taken refuge, transforms into a purely fantastical account of his adventures in the service of the Queen of Civill (Seville). In Firth’s reading, these ‘traditional’ ballads are examples of ‘how a plain story was shaped and altered and embellished by the popular imagination’, and demonstrate attempts by a popular culture to explain historical facts in familiar and understandable terms.<sup>79</sup>

The ‘popular imagination’, as it is expressed in these three ballads, is considerably more sympathetic to the rebels than are the ballads that were produced by the London print trade of the time. None of them go so far as to express explicit support for the aims of the Northern Rebellion; yet, whilst there is some acknowledgement that the rebels had taken up arms against their monarch, collectively the ballads express little disapproval of their actions. The ballads’ focus is either on the experience of the key figures of the rebellion or on its consequences. Unlike the ballads produced by the

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<sup>78</sup> John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnival, *Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript*, 3 vols (London: N. Trabner, 1867).

<sup>79</sup> Firth, ‘Later Tudors’, p. 82.

London print trade which were reactions to the Northern Rebellion as it was occurring, the ‘traditional’ ballads describe events which, however improbable, are located in the past. The rebels appear as sympathetic figures and are given a voice, which the ballad singer is free to appropriate. The ballad scenes are witnessed by the narrative voice in the third person. While the voices of the rebels might not provide any defence of their rebellion’s cause, they do generate sympathy, transforming the two Earls into figures of tragedy and romance.

The very title of *Northumberland Betrayed by Douglas* indicates that the central concern of this ballad is not the Earl’s betrayal of Elizabeth in the Northern Rebellion, as it would be in a ballad written by William Elderton, but Northumberland’s own betrayal, which the ballad attributes to William Douglas, the individual responsible for selling the historical Northumberland back to the English in June 1572.<sup>80</sup> In fact, it was Hector Armstrong who initially betrayed Northumberland to the soldiers of the Scottish Regent, Murray, in December 1570. Northumberland remained a prisoner at Lochleven Castle under the control of Douglas who then sold him to Lord Hunsden, the Governor of Berwick. Hunsden then made him over to the Warden of the Middle Marches, Sir John Forester. Northumberland was finally executed at York on August 27, 1572.<sup>81</sup>

The ballad telescopes this history into a brief narrative in which Douglas is the central betrayer. Represented at the opening of the ballad as a ‘banished man, / Driuen out of his countrie’ (3-4), there is no sense of the historical Northumberland’s captivity. He first appears at ‘supper sett, / Beffore many goodly gentlemen’ (9-10), in the process of being invited to a shooting party in the North of Scotland. This invitation is merely a means of deceiving of Northumberland into going on board a ship that will then

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<sup>80</sup> [Anonymous], *Northumberland Betrayed by Douglas* in Hales and Furnival, *Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript*, 2, pp. 217-226.

<sup>81</sup> Firth, ‘Later Tudors’, p. 86.

transport him to Berwick, where he will be handed over to Hunsden. The romantic element in the ballad is found in the figure of Douglas' sister Mary, who possesses supernatural gifts, and warns Northumberland of the danger posed to him by her brother. As proof of her warning, she has his steward James Swynard look through 'the weme of her ring' (82), through which he is able to view the English lords, including both Hunsden and Forester, waiting for his master in Berwick. Although different in kind, this magical act literalises the trope of vision found in ballads produced in print culture. Here, the act of sight fails to convince Northumberland, who obstinately refuses to believe that he is in any danger until it is too late.

The suppression of the reasons for Northumberland's banishment allows him to appear as a sympathetic and tragic figure. It is only in the final stanzas, as the ship, which Northumberland has wrongly believed is taking him to a shooting party in the North of Scotland, is nearing Berwick that the now doomed Earl realises his error:

A false Hector hath my horse,  
 And euer an euill death may hee dye!  
 And Willye Armstronge hath my spurres  
 And all the geere belongs to mee. (205-08)

The penultimate stanza contains the only reference to Hector Armstrong found in the ballad, along with a reference to Kinmont Willie Armstrong, famous from the traditional ballad 'Willie Armstrong'.<sup>82</sup> The appearance of this famous figure from the history of the Anglo-Scottish border is puzzling. The historical Willie Armstrong was active over a decade later, from 1583, and played no role in Northumberland's

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<sup>82</sup> Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 3, pp. 469-474.

betrayal.<sup>83</sup> The confusion likely arises from the family name, but also places the now tragic Earl within a fabulous history which conflates Classical allusions and popular historical figures.

In contrast to the tragic account of Northumberland, *The Earl of Westmoreland* provides a narrative of redemption for his fellow rebel.<sup>84</sup> The ballad opens in the voice of the Earl, as he bemoans his fate:

How long shall fortune faile me now,  
 And keep me heare in deadlye dreade?  
 How long shall I in bale abide,  
 In misery my life to leade?  
 To fall from my rose, it was my chance;  
 Such was the Queene of England free;  
 I tooke a lake [look], and turned my backe,  
 On Bramaball More shee caused my flye. (1-8)

While here there is at least some recognition of the reason for the Earl's banishment in the allusion to a conflict with Elizabeth, the ballad still omits from its account any motivation for their conflict other than the simple statement that, 'Our prince and wee cold not agree' (164). The Earl implicitly identifies himself as a Catholic when he later swears, 'By Mary mild, that mayden free' (114), but his Catholicism is never explicitly identified as the source of his banishment. Instead, his exile and misery are blamed on both the impersonal machinations of 'fortune' and his own cowardice in fleeing from

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<sup>83</sup> George MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets: The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers* (Harper Collins: London, 1995), pp. 102-3.

<sup>84</sup> [Anonymous], *The Earl of Westmoreland* in Hales and Furnival, *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, 1, pp. 292-312.

the field at 'Bramaball More' as soon as he caught sight of the Queen's forces. It is the Earl's failure of nerve, and inability to live up to the ideal of conventional aristocratic martial masculinity expected from someone in his social position, which has led to his banishment: 'I rue the last time I turnd my backe; / I did displease my prince and countrye' (91-92).<sup>85</sup> The dispossession of his country and the prestige associated with his former rank is symbolised through his assertion that Westmoreland is a former identity: '...Charles Nevill itt is my name (125) / ...When I was att home in England faire, / I was the Earle of Westmoreland' (127-8).

The otherwise wholly unhistorical adventures which make up the bulk of the ballad's narrative after the former Earl and his companions have escaped from Scotland are also the means by which Westmoreland may redeem himself. Once at sea, they first encounter Duke John of Austria. At the sight of the fearsome ship in which the Duke sails, the Earl's companion 'Martinefeld' (Markanfield) advises him to flee, only to be rebuked by Westmoreland with the announcement to his followers that he will, 'Sett me vp my faire Dun Bull, / With gilden hornes all soe hye' (95-96). The beginning of both the redemption of the Earl and his reclamation of his masculinity is figured through aristocratic display. It is this refusal to flee, along with his determination to identify himself through his family coat of arms, which impresses the Duke of Austria. In fact, the Duke has already heard of the former Earl through a prophecy: '...I haue read in the Booke of Mable, / There should a Brittain come ouer the sea, / Charles Nevill with a child's voice' (145-47). This peculiar emphasis on his 'child's voice' reinforces the ballad's obsession with the issue of the Earl's masculinity. 'Duke Iohn' explicitly proposes to the former Earl that he should 'try [his] manhood on the sea', by sending his companions into France, whilst he and Martinefeld progress to Seville alone.

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<sup>85</sup> For discussion of early modern concepts of masculinity, see for example Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003); Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).



Westmoreland's refusal provokes the admiring comment, 'There is soe much manhood in your bodye' (184).

Once in the service of the Queen of Seville, the former Earl is made,  
 ...captaine ouer forty thousand [to],  
 Watch and ward within Ciuill land to keepe,  
 And for to war against the heathen soldan,  
 And for to helpe her in her neede' (209-12)

Westmoreland soon gains the chance to redeem himself, when the 'heathen soldan' of 'Barbarye' (214) challenges him to a trial by combat. In appealing to the Queen for permission to take up the challenge, Westmoreland again refers to his previous failure: 'I will goe fight with yond heathen soldan, / If you will bestowe the nahood on mee' (235-36). Having failed one Queen through his earlier cowardice, the former Earl is now able to redeem himself by fighting on behalf of another, who even offers to crown him King as reward for his triumph over the 'heathen soldan'. His refusal of this honour is down to fact that he is already married to 'a ladye in England fayre' (315), and the Queen's substitution of a reward of 'a hundred pounds a day' (319) lends some support to Firth's suggestion that this elaborate fantasy is simply an attempt to account for the historical reality that Westmoreland and his companion, Thomas Markenfield, lived as exiles for many years in Flanders, supported by pensions from the Spanish.<sup>86</sup> The main focus of the ballad, however, is on the issue of the former Earl's reclamation of his masculinity through the performance of appropriate symbolic and martial tasks. The Northern Rebellion is reduced to an almost trivial disagreement between monarch and subject, and the Earl of Westmoreland is transformed into a heroic figure of romance.

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<sup>86</sup> Firth, 'Later Tudors', pp. 85-6.

Of the three ‘traditional’ ballads, *The Rising of the North* is the only one which takes the rebellion itself as its subject.<sup>87</sup> As a consequence, the issue of the legitimacy of rebellion is directly confronted. The first half of the ballad contains two debates on the issue, with characters voicing starkly opposing positions, in a structure which allows the singer to embody both viewpoints. The first debate occurs between Northumberland and his wife:

Earle Percy is into his garden gone,  
 And after him walkes his faire ladie;  
 ‘I heard a bird sing in mine eare,  
 That I must either fight or flee.’  
 ‘Now forfend, my dearest lord,  
 That ever such harm should hap to thee:  
 But goe to London to the court,  
 And faire fall truth and honestie.’ (5-12)

The setting of the scene in a garden, and the reference to the bird from whom Northumberland has received his warning, locates their debate in a romance landscape. This romance narrative does, however, reflect elements of the real history from which it is derived. It was Elizabeth’s summoning the suspect earls to court which ultimately forced them into open revolt.<sup>88</sup>

Throughout the ballad’s opening stanzas, Northumberland’s wife urges him to go to court in order to prove his honesty to the monarch. Hers is the voice of submission to legitimate authority against her husband’s protestations. In protesting that he must

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<sup>87</sup> [Anonymous], *The Rising of the North* in Hales and Furnival, *Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript*, 2, pp. 210-16.

<sup>88</sup> Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, p. 97.

flee, Northumberland fails to give any reason for why he is in such danger. Catholicism, so present in the fears expressed in those ballads produced by the London print trade, is largely absent from all three ‘traditional’ ballads. Nor is the danger Northumberland faces specifically identified with the Queen. Instead, it is blamed on his nameless enemies: ‘The court is full of subltie / And if I goe to the court, ladye, / Never more I may thee see’ (22-24). Again, this reflects the real history. The proclamations issued by Northumberland and Westmoreland in justification of their rebellion both asserted that they were loyal subjects, placing the blame on ‘ill disposed persons about the Queen’s majesty [who] have by their crafty and subtle dealing to advance themselves overthrown in this realm the true and catholic religion’.<sup>89</sup> The absence, in the ballad, of any reference to the Earl’s adherence to the ‘old faith’ transforms the rebel Earl once again into a tragic figure.

The second debate, which occurs between Richard and Francis Norton, makes it clear that it is the authority of the monarch against which they are rebelling. In defending himself against his father’s accusation of cowardice, Francis makes an extraordinary boast:

‘But, father, I will wend with you,  
 Unarm’d and naked will I bee;  
 And he that strikes against the crowne,  
 Ever an ill death may he dee.’ (89-92)

Francis’ assurance that he will accompany his father ‘Unarmed and naked’ (90) in the Rebellion, despite his concerns about its legitimacy, is an action which has a clear echo in the promise from the Armada soldiers that they would fight on Elizabeth’s behalf without the promise of any pay. Both gestures surely belong in the world of romance

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Kesselring, *Northern Rebellion of 1569*, pp. 58-59.

rather than history, yet this gesture, at least, did have some basis in history. Not Francis, but William, the fourth of Richard Norton's seven children, accompanied his father in just such an unarmed state, despite his disagreement over the Rebellion.<sup>90</sup>

In the ballad's final stanzas, the domestic tragedy of the Nortons is made to stand for the losses incurred by the Rebellion. The narrative voice switches to the second person, directly addressing Richard Norton:

Thee, Norton, wi' thine eight good sonnes,  
 They doom'd to dye, alas! For ruth!  
 Thy reverend lockes thee could not save,  
 Nor them their faire and blooming youthe.  
 Wi' them full many a gallant wight  
 They cruellye bereav'd of life:  
 And many a childe made fatherless,  
 And widowed many a tender wife. (145-52)

This direct address combines sympathy for the losses Norton and his family have suffered with an accusatory tone that brackets their deaths with those of the nameless 'gallant wights', the members of the commons who have also lost their lives in the rebellion. The same sentiment appears in *Northumberland Betrayed by Douglas*, when the Earl acknowledges:

'Therefore I left a many a child fatherlese,  
 And many a widow to looke wane;  
 And therefore blame nothing, ladye,

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<sup>90</sup> Firth, 'Later Tudors', pp. 84-85.

But the woefull warres which I began.' (65-68)

Northumberland acknowledges, not only the deaths of the commons in the rebellion, but also accepts a sense of personal responsibility which is only implicit in the other ballad. In these isolated moments in these two 'traditional' ballads, the common people finally make an appearance in an account of their nation's history, not as spectators of aristocratic display or as soldiers, but as the victims of aristocratic pride and indifference.

In their analysis of the methods employed by the Tudor court to prevent the proliferation of resentments which might break out in rebellion, Anthony Fletcher and Diarmaid MacCulloch point to the importance of progresses. Those parts of England which had been visited by the monarch and experienced the major royal spectacle which accompanied such visits tended not to rebel.<sup>91</sup> It was this royal display which was the main point of such progresses, manufacturing a sense that the monarch, and hence the government, were accessible to the populace and responsive to their concerns. This is clearly represented in the ballads which depict Elizabethan progresses. In the second of the Armada celebration ballads, it is clear that what is being depicted is not only Elizabeth's progress into London, but also London's reception of the monarch:

All members good of London  
 All theis Dyd stand in order grave  
 In fayre Ryche fures and sylkes so brave  
 And stages for the nonce they have  
 To Receyve the prynce in London  
 And humby they salute the Quene &c /

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<sup>91</sup> Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, pp. 123-24.

These companies all, fayre banners have  
 Wherin theyr armes are sett out brave  
 Set over theyr heads in wynde to wave  
 A sumptuous shewe in London  
 Wythe Wyslers in velvets fayre  
 And chaynes of gold whiche they do weare  
 In Rychelye sorte theyr orderes are  
 To Recyve the queene in London (98-111)

The ‘Ryche furrees and sylkes’, ‘velvets fayre’ and ‘chaynes of gold’ of the city’s leading citizens and commercial men are evidence that it is not only the nobility who were engaged with representing their value through external signs. The representatives of the commons are engaged in precisely the same forms of display which Elizabeth was so successful at manipulating.

Richard Harrington’s ballad of Elizabeth’s 1584 progress into London which, like the Tilbury ballad of ‘T.I.’, describes its contents as the ‘*receauing* of the Queen’ (my italics) in its title features the same ‘veluet coats and chaines of golde’ (7) displayed by the leading citizens of London:<sup>92</sup>

Each company in his degree,  
 stood orderly in good aray:  
 To entertain her maiesty (9-11)

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<sup>92</sup> Richard Harrington, *A famous dittie of the ioyful receauing of the Queens moste excellent maiestie, by the worthy citizens of London the xij day of Nouember, 1584. at her graces comming to Saint Iames* (London: Edward Allde for Yarath Iames, 1584) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

Another detail later in the ballad represents a deepening of the relationship between monarch and commons:

A poor man at the length she spied,  
 which down before her grace did fall.  
 And courteously she then did stay  
 to heer what he had then to say.  
 To whome he did present anon,  
 an humble supplication. (39-44)

Precise details of the communication that passed between Elizabeth and the old man are pointedly withheld from the ballad's audience; nor do they learn whether his 'supplication' was a success. It is a lacuna in the narrative, a visible sign of what has been labelled 'the politics of proximity'.<sup>93</sup>

What is depicted in these ballads is a conscious manipulation of the forms of display which is also found in the form of romance between Elizabeth and soldiers at Tilbury in the ballad by 'T.I.'. The reciprocal relationship shown here is still one which exists between privileged individuals; the commons are again reduced to the role of spectators. It is only in the 'traditional' ballads that the commons are treated with anything approaching sympathy or respect. That such sentiments are absent from the ballads produced by the London print trade is interesting given the nature of their audience, if surely unsurprising given the patriotic nature of their output on both the Armada and the Northern Rebellion. We should be wary of enforcing a too rigid division between print and oral cultures, although it is noteworthy that it is a division which some ballad authors were keen to enforce, as seen above. In the different

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<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 3, 'Chronicle History' for more details.

treatments of the Northern Rebellion found across the range of different ballads, it is also clear that, in this instance at least, oral culture preserved not only a greater sympathy for the earls who had rebelled against their legitimate monarch, but also an un-idealised sympathy for the nameless common victims of those aristocratic conflicts.

Since the manuscript in which the three traditional ballads of the Northern Rebellion were found also contains material which dates back as far as the twelfth century, it is not inconceivable that they could have originally been composed at a date relatively close to the events they describe. There were reports of ballads sympathetic to the rebels circulating in the Scottish border counties offered as proof of treachery in letters to the Privy Council.<sup>94</sup> It is impossible to know precisely what connection there was between such reports and the ballads later found in manuscript in the seventeenth century. As with the 'O Anthony' ballad, the inaccuracies in the accounts provided by all three ballads suggest that they were composed sometime later and possibly were subject to the kind of communal shaping that Firth assumes. Certainly they read much more clearly as historical narratives than do those produced by the London print trade.

Yet, as Angela McShane has shown, the term 'news ballad' is an anachronism; events were the framework on which wider concerns were hung. Any ballad which remained in circulation for a prolonged length of time would eventually acquire the status of history, whatever it might have meant to its original audience. Print might proclaim its newness, but it also has a preservative aspect, enabling ballads to remain current and significant long after the moment of their initial production and purchase. As well, it can be easily imagined how a ballad printed in London, only a day or two after the events it described, could function as news. The further away from London it travelled, however, the more those events would recede into the past, with the 'timeless'

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<sup>94</sup> Edward Wilson-Lee, 'The Bull and the Moon', p. 231.



concerns of the commentary rising to prominence. Print preserved a snapshot of an event after it had receded into the past.

**‘HALFPENNY CHRONICLER[S]’: THE MONARCHY AND THE ENGLISH  
NATION IN EARLY MODERN BALLADS**

The title page of Richard Johnson’s *A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses*, first printed in 1612, states that its contents have been, ‘[g]athered out of Englands royall garden. Being the liues and strange fortunes of many great personages of this Land’.<sup>1</sup> The ballad which opens the collection – ‘A Princely Song made of the Red Rose and *the White*, royally vnited together by king *Henry* the seauenth, and *Elizabeth Plantaginet*, daughter to Edward the fourth, from whom our now Soueraigne Lord King James linnially descended’ – places its subjects within the ‘royall garden’ identified by the title page.<sup>2</sup>

These Roses sprang and budded faire,  
and carried such a grace:  
...And flourish may these Roses long,  
that all the world may tell,  
The owner of these princely flowers,  
in vertues doe excel. (49-50, 53-56)

The ballad celebrates both the end of the English civil wars and the restoration of royal legitimacy through the marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, and the reign of the present monarch, James I, the details of whose dynastic claim to the English throne it provides in exhaustive detail over several stanzas in order to demonstrate that James is ‘by lineal course’ descended (146). The historical narrative which it constructs is both providential and teleological.

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Johnson, *A crowne garland of goulden roses Gathered out of Englands royall garden. Being the liues and strange fourtunes of many great personages of this land. Set forth in many pleasant new songs and sonnets neuer before imprinted* (London: John Wright, 1612) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>, sig.A1.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *A crowne garland* in EEBO, sig.A2-4.

The English nation is figured in spatial terms, as the garden which has produced the ‘great’ subjects of the ballads contained within the garland, subjects which the title page of another garland compiled by Johnson defines as ‘the kings, queenes, princes, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlewomen of this kingdome’.<sup>3</sup> If the past is to be made understandable for a contemporary subject, then it inevitably requires some formal organising principle. For English history, the monarchy and its succession of reigning monarchs is both the simplest and most obvious unit of division for organising the history of the nation. It is the principle employed by such early modern historical texts as chronicles and almanacs, and it invests the monarch with an authority over history, so that their reign comes to define a specific span of historical time. The history of the nation is elided with the life of the monarch, so that the monarch also comes to represent the nation as a whole, a merging of the spatial and temporal. As a means of narrating the past, the use of the reign of a monarch as an organising principle also serves to privilege politics and the powerful as the ‘proper’ subjects of historical narratives.

It is garlands such as these, as well as Thomas Deloney’s *The Garland of Good Will* (c.1593) and *Strange Histories* (c.1602), which William Chappell specifically identified as constituting a ‘people’s history of England’.<sup>4</sup> The history Chappell finds in early modern ballad culture is not dependant on ballads sold as single broadsides, but is instead constructed when they are brought into relationship with each other by being gathered together in collections or ‘garlands’. Chappell’s history is equated largely with chronology, created via the process of organisation and collation. It is also a history dependant on royal power and authority. The presence of the monarch within a ballad’s text makes it part of a national history. John Aubrey makes the same assumption as

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<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *The golden garland*, in *EEBO*, sig.A1.

<sup>4</sup> Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, p. 181n.

Chappell, when he defines the history his nurse possessed in purely chronological terms as ‘the Conquest down to Carl. I in ballad’, equating an understanding of history with an awareness of chronology.<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Schwegler has plausibly suggested that the ballad Aubrey quotes from his old nurse is actually a single extant broadside, *The Wandering Jew’s Chronicle*, first entered into the Stationers’ Register in 1634.<sup>6</sup> This ballad, in which the titular legendary subject bears witness to successive reigns of the British monarchy, presents an easily memorised chronology and, although far from unique, it is unusual in covering such a large span of time.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to this ‘chronicle’ history, most historical ballads are episodic. It is questionable, therefore, to suppose that Aubrey’s nurse would have understood in a clear, sequential and chronological manner the ballads and stories she recounted to the young Aubrey. Individual ballads only become part of a ‘chronicle’ history when collected into a ‘garland’.

Reflective of the ephemeral cultural forms in which they were disseminated, the ‘chronicles’ produced by early modern ballad culture were fragmentary and discontinuous. That they only approached the form of a chronicle when they were gathered together in ‘garlands’ demonstrates again the importance of print culture in the construction of popular history. Both Johnson’s collections and Deloney’s *Garland of Good Will* contain ballads on a mixture of historical and other subjects, with little effort made to order them in terms of chronology. This is not to suggest that they lack ordering principles. Esther Yael Beith-Halahmi has suggested that the first half of Deloney’s *Garland of Good Will* might have been intended as a ‘new ballad-mirror’ in self-conscious imitation of the more elite *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), intended to

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<sup>5</sup> Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, p. 287.

<sup>6</sup> Robert A. Schwegler, ‘Oral Tradition and Print: Domestic Performance in Renaissance England’, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 93:370 (1980), 435-441 (p. 436-7)

<sup>7</sup> *The Pepys Ballads*, ed. by W. G. Day, facsimile ed., 5 volumes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1, pp. 482-83.

‘teach morality not merely to the princes and rulers of the land but also to the less exalted town and country people’.<sup>8</sup> Whilst this is certainly a plausible judgement, and one which is in keeping with the didactic impulse of most of Deloney’s ballads, it still only accounts for the first half dozen ballads in the collection. The first two are stories of kings’ concubines (Rosamond and Jane Shore), the second pair show wives outmanoeuvring their husbands (including Lady Godiva), and the third illustrate the victims of usurpers regaining their rightful place (including Isabella, wife of Edward II). The pattern breaks down in the following two ballads, respectively an account of Henry Bolingbroke’s exile and eventual return to defeat Richard and capture the throne, and the story of King Arthur and Lancelot. While several of the following ballads are in pairs, so that, for example, ‘A Song in praise of women’ is followed by ‘A Song in praise of the single life’, the overall impression of the garland’s contents is one of a miscellany.<sup>9</sup>

The contents of Johnson’s *A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses*, despite the claim made by its title page, are similarly disparate. What order there is, derives from the grouping together of ballads on the same or similar subject. Three ballads concerned with Queen Elizabeth and her reign follow each other, and ‘The lovers fairing sent to his best beloved’ is paired with ‘The Maidens kind answere to her lover’. The numerous pairings which occur in these collections essentially reflect those found on single broadsheets which printed two ballads next to one another, the second of which is typically a response to the first. If the audience is to construct a chronology of their nation’s past from the disparate elements found in these collections, then they are dependant, not on the text, but on their own historical knowledge. As I observed in my

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<sup>8</sup> Esther Y. Beith-Halahmi, ‘*Angell Fayre or Strumpet Lewd*’: *Jane Shore as an Example of Erring Beauty in 16<sup>th</sup> Century Literature* (Salzburg: Universitat Salzburg, 1974), pp. 195-96.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Deloney, *The Garland of Good Will. Divided into three parts: Containing many pleasant Songs, and pretty poems, to sundry new Notes* (London: Robert Bird, 1631) in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 295-380.

introduction, the presence of figures such as King Arthur and Lady Godiva in these collections, as well as the maze in the ballad of Rosamond, mingles true and fabulous history in a manner not dissimilar from the larger chronicles, which serve as the potential model for these ‘halfpenny chronicle[s]’.<sup>10</sup>

‘Chronicle’ history, even if available for the price of only a halfpenny, stressed the importance of the monarch in defining the nation’s history, since it was the monarch whose reign defined the temporal space. The presence of a king within a ballad’s narrative not only places it within a national timeframe, but also uses the presence of the monarch to establish the ballad’s essential truth and the authority of what it shows its audience. This chapter will begin by exploring the presence of the monarch within Thomas Deloney’s ballad history *Strange Histories* and his attempt to valorise royal authority in a series of chronicle-derived ballads. Alongside these garlands, individual broadsides featured stories of kings encountering one of their subjects, representative figures of the commons. This popular ‘King-Commoner’ tradition contains a more nuanced take on royal authority and allows space for the voices of commoners to be heard. These will be considered in the second section, alongside several ballads which depict the popular historical figure and ‘victim of royal power’, Jane Shore. None of the ballads considered in this chapter are concerned with contesting royal authority. Ironically, it may be these far more flexible depictions of the relationship between the monarch and the commons which contain the more stable depiction of royal authority.

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. x.R.W., *The Epistle to Martin Mar-sixtus*, (London: 1591), sig.A3v.

### ***Strange Histories*: Thomas Deloney's 'Chronicle' history**

In contrast to the other 'garlands' mentioned above, the ballads in Deloney's *Strange Histories* have been much more carefully organised.<sup>11</sup> It is a sequential series of ten ballads, all drawn from English history, beginning with the reign of William the Conqueror and finishing with an account of the Peasants' Revolt in the reign of Richard II. Chiefly derived from Holinshed's *Chronicle*, the ballads of *Strange Histories* function as versifications, which make selected episodes from that larger and more expansive history available to a wider audience.<sup>12</sup> Each ballad is designated as a 'Canto', with a short prose argument included after its title, and placed in chronological order. There is also another short prose section at the end of the volume that attempts to act as a summation that can encapsulate the text as a whole. There has been no effort made towards comprehensiveness. The neat chronological arrangement has also already been spoilt in the 1602 edition with the insertion of another of Deloney's ballads – *The Dutchesse of Suffolkes calamitie* – between the second and third cantos (Figure 4).<sup>13</sup> The subsequent edition from 1607 adds further texts, inserting Deloney's *Salomons good huswife, in the 31 of his Proverbes* after the first Canto and adding his *A Mournfull Dittie, on the death of Rosamond, King Henry the seconds Concubine*, as well as further ballads on miscellaneous subjects following the short prose section which ends the earlier edition, probably written by other authors.<sup>14</sup> That the text's printers clearly found nothing amiss with the insertion of other ballads, which disrupted its historical ordering

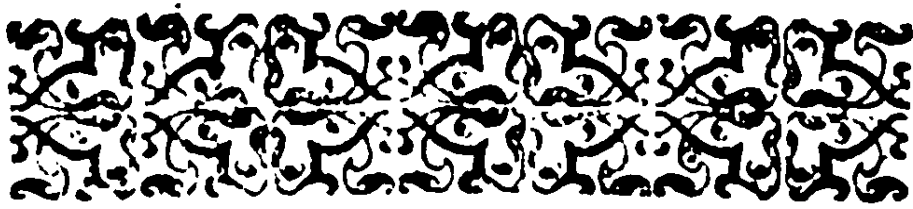
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<sup>11</sup> Thomas Deloney, *Strange histories, of kings, princes, dukes[,] earles, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlemen With the great troubles and miseries of the Dutches of Suffolke* (London: William Barley, 1602) in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 381-416.

<sup>12</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 585-93n.

<sup>13</sup> I discuss this particular ballad further in Chapter 4. Francis Mann has plausibly suggested that this insertion indicates the existence of an earlier edition (*Thomas Deloney*, p. 585).

<sup>14</sup> The inclusion of the ballad on Rosamond is in keeping with the volume's other contents since it already contains two ballads on the reign of Henry II. The inclusion of the ballad on Solomon is equally in keeping with an historical culture which saw biblical narratives as a part of history. See further, Chapter 4.



**THE TABLE.**

- Cant. I}**  
**The Kentishmen with long tayles.**
- Cant. I I.**  
**Of King Henrie the first and his children,**
- The Dutchesse of Suffolkes calamitie.**
- Cant. III.**  
**King Edward the second crowning his Sonne King of Englaud.**
- Cant. IIII**  
**The imprisonment of Queene Elenor**
- Cant. V.**  
**The death of King Iohn poisoned by a Frier.**
- Cant VI.**  
**The Imprisonement of King Edward the second.**
- Cant. VII**  
**The murthering of King Edward the second, being kild with a hot burning spit.**
- Cant VIII.**  
**The banishment of the Lord Matreuers, and Sir Thomas Gurney.**
- Cant IX.**  
**The winning of the Ylc of Man.**
- Cant X**  
**The rebellion of VVat Tilor and Iacke Strayv.**
- A spech betweene Ladies, being Shepheards on Salsburie plaine.**

Figure 4: Thomas Deloney, *Strange histories, of kings, princes, dukes earles, lords, ladies, knights, and gentlemen With the great troubles and miseries of the Dutches of Suffolke* (London: William Barley, 1602). The Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California. RB 31361. A1v.



in later editions, suggests that this was considered to be an issue of little importance in marketing the text to its audience. Even in the putative earliest edition, with two ballads concerning the reign of Henry II and three about that of Edward II, inevitably there are gaps in the larger historical record. Deloney's choice of episodes to adapt into ballads appears to be based on what would make the most sensationalist narrative.

The ballad texts are also marked by signs that they have been conceived as a whole since they are self-referential and aware of each other in ways that are dependent on their ordering in this particular volume. The final lines of the second 'Canto', 'How King *Henry* the first had his children drowned in the sea, as they came out of *france*', gestures towards what, if it were not for the insertion of the Duchesse of Suffolk ballad in the 1602 edition, would be the next ballad:

For by this means no child he had,  
his kingdome to succede:  
Whereby his Sisters Sonne was King,  
as you shall plainly reede       (125-28)

The penultimate line's 'Sisters Sonne' refers to Henry II, whose reign is the subject of the two ballads following. The following three ballads, concerning the reign of Edward II and his murder, clearly follow on from each other in a linear narrative. Rather than reaching a conclusion, the narrative of the first ballad simply stops, to be taken up by the next ballad. The final ballad in the sequence, 'Of the Lord *Matreuers* and Sir *Thomas Gurney*, being banished', makes little sense outside of the context of the preceding two ballads. As well, there are links with other ballads written by Deloney. Already noted is the inclusion of his ballad on the death of Rosamond in the expansion of the 1607 edition, which had previously been collected in *The Garland of Good Will*. That collection contains another ballad dealing with the reign of Edward II which

depicts events outside the chronological scheme of the three ballads collected in *Strange Histories*.

The fact that these ballads have specifically been designed as a complete text, rather than individual broadsides, adds credence to Alexandra Halasz's argument that Deloney 'asserts the importance of ballads and claims a privileged position in relation to a popular, anonymous voice', in producing a more elaborate volume, the cost of which would limit its accessibility.<sup>1</sup> While Deloney's appropriation of material from Holinshed does make episodes from the larger chronicle available to a more inclusive audience, it also asserts the author's 'privileged position' as a subject who has access to such material. These considerations complicate Laura Caroline Stevenson's claims that Deloney's work is important because it represents one of the few instances of a lower status literary voice found in the 1590s, making him 'the one craftsman who can be said to have written for craftsmen'.<sup>2</sup> Whilst Deloney clearly was a craftsman, one who identified his interests with the community from which he came, he was also a craftsman who had benefited from an education at an Elizabethan grammar school, and who possessed a good working knowledge of both Latin and French.<sup>3</sup>

It has already been observed how, in the critical attention which has to date been paid to Deloney's work, the main focus has been on the four prose fictions he produced in the last few years of his life, after his entanglement with the Elizabethan authorities. Of the four, *The Gentle Craft* has long been regarded as important owing to its status as the source for Thomas Dekker's play, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599). More recently, Deloney's prose fiction has received greater attention in its own right, often placed

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<sup>1</sup> Halasz, *Marketplace of Print*, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup> Laura C. Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. viii. Since the evidence Mann supplies is his reference to a passage of Montaigne's *Essays* in a text published several years before they were translated into English, we must also presume that he had some means of gaining access to another elite text.

within a narrative about the emergence of the novel as a distinct literary genre.<sup>4</sup> A recurrent concern in the criticism of Deloney's fiction has been its relationship with the contemporary political scene and changing economic interests. Traditionally, this has entailed a connection with a supposed 'middle class culture', concerned with upholding traditional social hierarchies, or else as speaking for the rising merchant class, a 'bourgeois propagandist' in the words of David Margolies, despite the 'residual aristocratic values' his work retains.<sup>5</sup> Although the aristocracy may be depicted with ambivalence, the monarch is still presented as 'the fountainhead of justice and magnanimity'.<sup>6</sup> In Laura Caroline Stevenson's more nuanced reading, this ambiguity arose from the failure of Elizabethan writers to show that trade and commerce had any intrinsic merit beyond being a means of serving the commonwealth. Consequently, 'Elizabethan praise of bourgeois men was expressed in the rhetoric of – and by extension, in the terms of the social paradigms – of the aristocracy'.<sup>7</sup>

More recently, in the work of a number of critics, there has emerged the argument that Deloney's prose fiction contains an oppositional politics, hostile to the interests of the monarch and the state. For Roze Hentschell, Deloney's novels are 'an instructive form of protest, one that aims to engender a new vision of the English clothworkers as a cohesive group of individuals', and which displaces the monarch as 'the site for the nation's unity in favour of an alternative commonwealth in which the

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<sup>4</sup> For criticism which treats Deloney solely within the paradigm of the Elizabethan 'novelist', see David Margolies, *Novel and Society in Elizabethan England* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985); Constance C. Relihan, *Fashioning Authority: The Development of Elizabethan Novelistic Discourse* (Kent, Ohio and London: Kent State University Press, 1994); Paul Salzman, *English Prose Fiction 1558-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> See Merritt E. Lawlis, *Apology for the Middle Class: The Dramatic Novels of Thomas Deloney* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960). Margolies, *Novel and Society*, pp. 144, 155.

<sup>6</sup> Margolies, *Novel and Society*, p. 153.

<sup>7</sup> Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox*, p. 6.

*wealth* of the nation is founded upon the *common* people'.<sup>8</sup> That Deloney's lost ballad 'containing a Complaint of great Want and scarcity of Corn within the realm' has received such attention is surely due to the fact that its contents, at least as far as they can be gleaned from the brief description which survives, would align the interests of both the ballad, and by extension its author, with the lower status subjects suffering from the effects of the economic crisis current in the mid-1590s.<sup>9</sup> Along with several of his fellow weavers, Deloney was also the co-author of a petition, the 'Complaint of the Yeomen Weavers Against the Immigrant Weavers' in July 1595, for which he and his fellow authors were temporarily imprisoned. The petition complained that the state was failing to control immigrant workers, whose presence in the English nation was undermining the trade of 'poore Englishmen'.<sup>10</sup>

Since both ballad and petition failed to bring about the hoped for political changes, and moreover brought the unwelcome attentions of the authorities, the assumption is that Deloney turned to prose fiction as a means of disguising his, in Mihoko Suzuki's words, 'hostility toward the Crown and the aristocracy', employing strategies of 'functional ambiguity', in order to avoid further censorship.<sup>11</sup> In Suzuki's reading, Deloney's advocacy for the interests of apprentices in his fiction comes at the expense both of the foreign workers demonised in his earlier petition and also of the interests of the women who had historically been fully involved in the work of cloth making. For David Morrow, Deloney's fiction articulates an ideal of the commonwealth and the nation in which poverty and idleness are banished and all are engaged in

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<sup>8</sup> Roze Hentschell, *The Culture of Cloth in Early Modern England: Textual Constructions of National Identity* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), pp. 58, 70.

<sup>9</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. ix.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Mihoko Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects: Gender, the Political Nation, and Literary Form in England, 1588-1688* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects*, p. 37; Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 18.

productive work. In contrast to the majority of criticism which emphasises the role of Deloney's individual heroes, Morrow argues for the presence of a communal ideology opposed to individual enrichment at the expense of the collective.<sup>12</sup>

Roze Hentschell has also noted that the wording of the complaint against Deloney's lost ballad may indicate that its chief fault lay, not in its representation of the monarch, as has been generally supposed, but instead in its having been 'extracted' from a royal proclamation of the previous year that had similarly called for restrictions on the sale of corn and promised that the poor would be 'relieved in their provisions during this time of dearth'.<sup>13</sup> Supposing that this was the case, then Deloney's appropriation of the royal voice in his lost ballad should be seen, not as subverting royal authority, but instead as insisting on that authority being applied in precisely the terms it had itself set in that earlier proclamation. This appeal to royal authority can equally be seen in the wording of the petition Deloney co-authored with some of his fellow weavers, which appeals for the preservation of 'the good estate of her loveing Subjects. Every Christian Kinge and Queene is sworne to maintain the good estate of the Commonwealth and wellfare of the people with noe doubt they have a great Care to performe'.<sup>14</sup> This is a wholly normative position of loyalty to the Crown and patriotism, which becomes radicalised when it sees the actions of the Crown as being antithetical both to its interests and to the responsibilities of the monarch. It is by looking at a broader range of Deloney's writings, most of which, unlike the novels, were produced before he came to the attention of the authorities, that we will gain a better understanding of the complexities of his ideological position in relation to the state.

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<sup>12</sup> David J. Morrow, 'The Entrepreneurial Spirit and 'The Life of the Poor': Communal Ideology and Social Struggle in the Prose Fictions of Thomas Deloney', *Textual Practice*, 20:3 (2006), 395-418.

<sup>13</sup> Hentschell, *Culture of Cloth*, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Mihoko Suzuki, 'The London Apprentice Riots of the 1590s and the Fiction of Thomas Deloney', *Criticism*, 38:2 (1996), 181-217, p. 186.

In choosing to advertise these histories as ‘strange’ in the garland’s title, Deloney or his printer were most likely attempting to advertise their wares as ‘unfamiliar or rare’.<sup>15</sup> The usage of the word ‘strange’ here is also in line with the way in which many ballads advertised their contents as ‘new’. More suggestively, the use of the plural in the title, specifying ‘histories’ as opposed to ‘history’, also suggests that the overarching narrative the garland contains is multiple. Yet the second half of the title works against this sense, listing the ballads’ subjects as ‘...Kings, Princes, Dukes, Earles, Lords, Ladies, Knights, and Gentlemen’.<sup>16</sup> Implicitly excluded from this ‘people’s history of England’ are the people themselves, the lower class subjects who are typically assumed to have made up the bulk of the ballad audience. Lower class subjects do appear in two of the ballads, but then only in the context of rebellion. The national history Deloney presents his audience with here is essentially royalist, focused on the interests and actions of the powerful. The presence of a king’s name in the titles of half the ballads in the collection underlines this focus on royal authority. Despite this, the various monarchs who appear in these ballads are typically displaced from the narrative’s focus. Henry I may be the source of authority in the second ballad, but, as its title makes clear, the monarch is sidelined by the narrative which is chiefly concerned with describing how Henry’s children came to drown when returning from France. Similarly, out of the six stanzas of ‘Of the winning of the Isle of *Man*, by the Earle of *Salisbury*’, the first four narrate the defeat of the Scottish by William de Montacute.<sup>17</sup> The appearance of Edward III in the final stanzas serves only to authorise this victory, ‘To giue the Earle this pleasant Ile, / for his most valiant deed’ (47-48). The king is identified only through his identification as the founder of the knightly Order of the

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<sup>15</sup> ‘strange, adj’, entry I.8, in *OED Online*, June 2013. Oxford University Press  
 <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/191244?rskey=eqHcai&result=1>> [accessed 25 March, 2011].

<sup>16</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 381.

<sup>17</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 411-13.

Garter (58-66). In describing his role in the Order's creation, the ballad embodies the monarch's authority in the line 'with his person royallise' (61). Although he is clearly the source of authority through his gifting of the isle to the Earl, the monarch is displaced by the narrative focus on the Earl of Salisbury's martial victory, celebrated in the resonant musical imagery of the refrain 'Drummes sticking on a rowe, / trumpets sounding as they go. / Tan ta ra ra ra tan.' (9-11 and *passim*.)

The authority of the monarch is held to be absolute whilst the person of the monarch is effaced. This effect is literalised in the fifth 'Canto', 'The lamentable death of King *John*, how he was poysoned in the Abbey at *Swinstead*, by a false Fryer', which retells the apocryphal story of John's murder by a friar who poisoned the king whilst he was a guest at the abbey.<sup>18</sup> The inclusion of a ballad on John may owe something to the way in which he had been celebrated by Protestant polemicists for his conflicts with the Catholic Church and the Papacy and interpreted as a proto-Protestant martyr. The account of John's poisoning is found both in Deloney's source text, Holinshed, and in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which also includes the detail of the sweating precious stones. The poisoning is also included in Shakespeare's *King John* and the anonymous *The Toublesome Raigne of Iohn*, suggesting that Deloney's decision to concentrate on this particular episode in his ballad was also a response to the popularity of within the historical and religious discourses within which his text is situated.<sup>19</sup> Deloney is commonly seen as a Puritan in his religious beliefs, but there is little internal reference in the ballad to John's status within Elizabethan Protestantism.<sup>20</sup> The ballad is largely a sensationalistic account of the murder, devoting most of its space to elaborating small details. Three stanzas are occupied with describing the jewels John happened to have

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<sup>18</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 399-401.

<sup>19</sup> The apocryphal story is also the subject of a stanza of the anonymous *A Newe Ballade* (c.1560), which I discuss in Chapter 4.

<sup>20</sup> See Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. vii-xiv.

had about his person, whose sweating revealed the presence of the poison (21-32). A further five stanzas are taken up with details of the excruciating bodily pains John suffered from the effects of the poisoning and his eventual death (37-48, 61-68). The ballad makes it clear that its narrative is an account of a ‘Trecherous deede’ (1) against ‘*our* royall king’ (54). By identifying John as ‘*our*’ king, the ballad identifies him as the head of a national community, one to which the audience is assumed to belong. The offence against the royal body becomes an offence against the nation as a whole. The presence of the Catholic friar, and the wider cultural dissemination of John’s status as a proto-Protestant martyr, also signals that this is an explicitly Protestant community.

The three ballads about Edward II also relate to royal power and the national community in ways which are complicated by the fact that the history they are concerned with involved the deposition of a monarch. The narrative of the sixth ‘Canto’, ‘Of the Imprisonment of King *Edward* the second’, begins in the middle of events following wars which are referred to only in passing:

When *Isabell* faire *Englands* Queene,  
 In wofull warres had victorius beene:  
 Our comely King her husband deere,  
 Subdued by strength as did appeare,  
 By her was sent to prison stronge,  
 For hauing done his countrie wrong. (1-6)

The wrongs which Edward has done to the English nation are largely omitted from the ballad’s narrative; although on receiving the news of his deposition, he does ask the Nobility ‘for to forgiue him all was past’ (70), it is never made clear what he is supposed to have done. Parliament merely decides that ‘he was vnworthie for to reigne’ (28). The ballad seeks to present the king as a victim of Isabella’s machinations, through his imprisonment, and the efforts on the part of the queen and her supporters to



have his son crowned in his stead. It thus preserves the absolute nature of royal authority, since only he can renounce the crown. His son initially refuses to accept it, despite the judgement of Parliament:

Thinke not I will thereto consent,  
 except my Father be content:  
 And with good will his Crowne resigne  
 and grant it freely to be mine. (45-48)

The emphasis is on the crown being ‘freely’ given. Despite ultimately assenting to the demands of Parliament, it is the king alone who has the authority to pass on the crown.

The next ballad in the sequence, ‘Of King *Edward* the second, being poisoned’ describes, at length, the details of his ‘cruell murder’ (73). As with the murder of John, this is an attack directed at the king’s body, described in particularly gruesome fashion:

Then turning vp the cloathes aboue his hips.  
 to hold his legges, a couple quickly skips.  
  
 Then came the murtherers, one a horne had got,  
 which far into his fundament downe he thrust:  
 Another with a spit all burning hot,  
 the same quite through y<sup>e</sup> horne he strongly pusht.  
 Among his entrels in most cruell wise,  
 forcing hereby most lamentable cries. (47-54)

It is another three stanzas before Edward finally ‘resign[s] his final breath’ (70). This unpleasant description both sensationalises the murder and emphasises the transgression being carried out against the king’s body and royal authority.

The final ballad of the three – ‘Of the Lord *Matreuers* and Sir *Thomas Gurney*, being banished’ – is, for the most part, narrated in the voices of the two aristocrats. From their exile, they bemoan their banishment, and their remorse at the ‘great wickednesse’ (20) they have perpetrated is crystallised in the repeated complaint, occurring as a refrain at the end of each stanza, ‘that euer we forced king *Edward* to die’ (8 and *passim.*). The ‘countrie so sweete to our sight’ (38) from which they have been banished is described in terms of the people and social relationships they are leaving behind, ‘our friends & our kindred... / Our honours and dignities’ (42-43), as well as in terms of material possessions, ‘Our Parkes and our Chases, our mansions so faire, / our Iems and our Iewels most precious & rare’ (45-46). Their guilt is framed in terms of an offence against the ‘Countrie’ (53), the nation which will despise the families they have left behind, now equally guilty by association. As a punishment, banishment literalises their offence as one which is committed against the nation as a whole, in this case through their attack on the body of the king. The final stanzas return to the third person in describing the attempt of Thomas Gurney to return to England only to be killed, whilst Lord Matreuers lives out his exile in Germany, where he ‘ended his life most penitently’ (94). The crime of which they are guilty, for all that it was committed at the behest of, and through manipulation by, the queen, is one which is seemingly unforgivable.

As noted above, there is another ballad written by Deloney which depicts events from Edward II’s reign that occurred before those included in the narrative constructed by the three *Strange Histories* ballads, *A song of Queene Isabel, wife to King Edward the second, how by the Spencers she was constrained secretly to goe out of England with her elder sonne Prince Edward, to seeke for succour in France, and what hapned vnto her in her journey.*<sup>21</sup> Here, Isabella is presented in a considerably more sympathetic

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Deloney, *A song of Queene Isabel, wife to King Edward the second, how by the Spencers she was constrained secretly to goe out of England with her elder sonne Prince Edward, to seeke for succour in France, and what hapned vnto her in her journey* in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 313-17.

light than the Machiavellian politician who appears in *Strange Histories*. She is the ‘queen and faithful wife’ (9) to Edward II, who escapes into exile with her son, fleeing the power of the Spencers over the King and the nation. When she eventually returns to England, aided by the German knight Sir John Henault, many of the disaffected English nobles rally to her cause, prompting the Spencers to depart from London with the king, leaving the city in the charge of the ‘stout Bishop of *Exceter*, / whose pride was soone pul’d down.’ (83-84). The Bishop is defeated by the ordinary citizens of London:

The Mayer of *London* with citizens great store

The Bishop and the *Spencers* both,

in heart they did abhore:

Therefore they took him without feare & dread,

And at the *Standard* in *Cheapside*,

they soone smote off his head.

Vnto the Queene this message then they sent,

The City of *London* was

at her commandment (85-93)

The authority, which has been temporarily asserted by the London citizens, is quickly returned to the place where it rightfully belongs, in this case to the queen who has appropriated the king’s royal authority, is able to ‘assemble all the Lords / and Knights, both all and some’ (146-47), and whose role is to ensure that power is invested in the correct royal body.

The ballad ends with the crowning of Edward III, who, unlike his father, possesses the correct royal virtues of being both ‘wise and sage’ (154), despite his youth. None of these ballads openly articulate the faultsof Edward II. Here, the blame for the conflict besetting the nation is explicitly identified with the Spenser family, from the ballad’s opening lines: ‘Proud were the *Spencers*, and of condition ill, / All *England*

and the King likewise, / they ruled at their will' (1-3). Their crime is to have appropriated the authority which should properly reside with the king. Ordinary citizens of the nation play a greater role here than in the ballads contained in *Strange Histories*. Not only do the citizens of London act on the queen's behalf, but when the captured Hugh Despenser is brought to London to stand trial, they participate in a scene of 'Rough Music' where 'to deride this Traytor lewd and ill, / Certain men with Reeden Pipes, / did blow before him still' (139-41). This apparently disruptive social practice is here performed in support of royal authority.<sup>22</sup> It is the Despensers who are seen to be truly disruptive.

In a more ambitious example of the patterning Beith-Halahmi has elsewhere discerned in *The Garland of Good Will*, *Strange Histories* is bookended by two differing accounts of rebellion, clearly intended to comment upon each other with their contrasting depictions of lower class subjects acting in defiance of royal authority.<sup>23</sup> The final 'Canto' – 'How *Wat Tiler* and *Iacke Straw*, rebelled against king *Richard* the second' – is an account of the Peasants' Rebellion of 1381. The rebels are repeatedly represented in unflattering terms. Just over half of the ballad is taken up with describing the violence of the rebels in terms which explicitly condemn them. They are 'rude disordered franticke men' (52) responsible for releasing prisoners (22-24, 61-65), intimidating priests (53-54), murdering such figures of authority as the 'Lord Chauncelor' and the 'Lord High Treasurer' (45-47), burning lawyers' books (33-34), and destroying records (58-60) and property:

They spoyled *Southwarke* round about

...they set the *Sauoy* all on fire,

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<sup>22</sup> See Ingram, 'Rough Music and the 'Reform of Popular Culture'', 79-113, for discussion of how such 'charivaris' combined both penal and festive forms to reinforce patriarchal values.

<sup>23</sup> Beith-Halahmi, '*Angell Fayre*', pp. 195-96.

For the hate which they did beare,  
 vnto the Duke of *Lancastere*,  
 Therefore his house they burned quite,  
 through enuie, malice, and dispighte. (21, 28-32)

Attributing the motivation of the rebels to ‘envie, malice, and dispighte’ (32) the ballad precludes the possibility that there could be any justice to their complaints. Their rebellion is stigmatized as a violent affront to social hierarchy and monarchical authority. Despite this, Mihoko Suzuki has suggested that Deloney is here employing the same ‘functionable ambiguity’ that she detects in his prose fiction in order to avoid the effects of the censorship he was subject to elsewhere. The rebels function as ‘agents of satire’, representative of Deloney’s own attitudes towards the established social order.<sup>24</sup> There is little indication of satirical representation within the text and, although we cannot dismiss the way in which performance would add to the meaning of a ballad text, this analysis feels disingenuous. As Richard Helgerson has succinctly observed in his discussion of the representation of Jack Cade’s rebellion in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI*, ‘[o]ne cannot represent rebellion, however negatively, without permitting it to speak its discontent’.<sup>25</sup> In Deloney’s ballad, the rebels are not even allowed to speak, whether they would speak their discontent or anything else. They are denied a voice, represented only as the sound of animals, ‘hooting lowd and shrill’ (49). The ballad works to ridicule and trivialise them, opening with a description of the various leaders of the rebellion gathering their followers, until there are ‘An hundred thousand men in all / whose force is not accounted small’ (13-14). Whilst the bathos generated in these lines might be an accidental consequence of redundancy – the line needed to fill out the

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<sup>24</sup> Suzuki, *Subordinate Subjects*, p. 38n.

<sup>25</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 213.

rhyme scheme and the tune – it still serves to trivialise the size of the rebels’ forces, transforming them into something ridiculous.

Nor does the ballad suggest that the ‘taxe the which our king, / vpon his Commons then did bring’ (17-18), the purported cause of the rebellion, could be an unjust one. The rebels belong to ‘*his* Commons’ and are therefore subject to the monarch’s absolute authority. What is still articulated here, however, is the sense of a reciprocal relationship which is held to exist between monarch and commons. Richard is consequently held to be personally responsible for the tax, which has been brought in under the aegis of his royal authority. In calling for Richard to meet with them personally, the rebels attempt to invoke this personal relationship, but it is not one which Richard reciprocates. While, historically, the youthful monarch did meet with the rebels, here he refuses to speak to them, sending a member of his nobility in his place, and removing himself from any contact with his subjects. Although the narrative takes place during the reign of Richard II, the king himself has very little presence in the account. His sole action occurs when ‘the King gaue pardon all, / So that they would part home quietly’ (68-69), an allusion to the historical meeting between Richard and the rebels. This pardon can be understood as a royal command, with Richard having the freedom to grant it through his monarchical authority, rather than a meeting of the rebels’ demands. After the rebels ignore his pardon, it is Sir John Newton, the man whom the king has sent in his place, and the Mayor of London, William Walworth, representative of the city’s civic authority, who are responsible for the rebels’ symbolic defeat when they kill Wat Tyler (71-94). Whilst Richard’s authority is absolute, it is felt here only in his absence, embodied in his name. The Mayor articulates this when he demands that Wat Tyler yield: ‘in the Kings name I thee arrest’ (86).<sup>26</sup> Despite

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<sup>26</sup> As with the King John ballad, Deloney’s decision to include this episode in his depiction of the rebellion may also stem from the popularity of theatrical representations. The episode is both recalled

Richard's absence, royal authority is still represented as absolute. He is the focus for the demands of the rebels, his name functioning as the marker of the time in which the narrative occurs, embodying the society and its authority, which is threatened by the rebellion.

This unflattering image of the 'commons' stands in stark contrast to the depiction which appears in *Strange Histories*' first 'Canto': 'The valiant courage and policie of the Kentishmen with the long tayles, whereby they kept their ancient Laws and Customes, which *William* the Conquerer sought to take from them'. As the title makes clear, this ballad depicts the rebellion of the people of Kent against the newly crowned King of England, in response to his having 'changed quite, / the customes of this land: / And punisht such as daily sought, / his statutes to withstand.' (9-12). Although the first stanza makes it plain that William has been crowned as King by 'Albert Archbishop of Yorke, / with many a noble Peere' (7-8), his authority confirmed by the nobility and ecclesiastical elite, it is also clear that the Kentish rebellion is legitimated by the fact that the new king is a foreign invader, who has gained the throne by conquest. As the Kentish commons put it to their leaders:

Let vs not live like bondmen poore,  
to Frenchmen in their pride  
But keepe our ancient liberties,  
...And rather die in bloudie field  
...Then to endure the seruile yoake,  
which we so much detest.(33-35, 37, 39-40)

Here, in contrast to the other ballad, the commons are given a voice. The sentiments they articulate are suitably chauvinistic however, and loyal to the English crown. Their

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in the first of Thomas Heywood's *Edward IV* plays (1599), and earlier staged in *The Life and Death of Jack Straw* (1594), and would likely have been well known to his original audience.

rebellion is not in defiance of an English monarch, but a French invader. William is referred to variously as ‘Duke of *Normandie*’ (1), ‘The Conquerour’ (77), and ‘Duke *William*’ (104). Nowhere in the ballad is he acknowledged as the legitimate King of England. The title, too, explicitly praises the Kentishmen who oppose him for their ‘valiant courage and policie’. Their demands for the retention of their ‘ancient liberties’ (35) are the means of granting their rebellion historical legitimacy. It is not a rebellion against royal authority but an assertion of an older, more legitimate authority, based on the land.

Emerging in ambush from Swanscombe Hill, the Kentishmen appear to their opponents ‘to be a walking groue, / or els a mouing wood’ (59-60). Although this line seemingly echoes the famous scene in *Macbeth*, it is actually a detail Deloney has taken from his source.<sup>27</sup> It underlines how the Kentishmen’s identity is explicitly tied to the land on which they live and with which they are identified. This is not, however, a local identity in conflict with an oppressive and centralising state. When William sends word to discover the rebels’ demands, he is informed that, ‘for libertie we fight: / And to enioy King *Edwards* lawes, / the which we hold our right’ (86-88). These are not laws and customs sanctioned only by the authority of history or memory, but laws which are specifically derived from a royal authority, descending from the word and person of the historical King Edward. William’s authority is effaced, replaced with the older English authority of the absent King Edward, who exists only as historical memory. The rebellion of the Kentishmen is, therefore, one which is in favour of the law and of a history which would actually place them in a hierarchical relationship to the monarch, since their rights and ‘liberties’ are seen to be ultimately derived from a king. Their local identity is subsumed within a national identity dependant on royal authority.

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<sup>27</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 586.



The account of the rebellion, as it is represented in the ballad, is one of conflicting royal authorities. William is both a national outsider and usurper, whereas Edward, the only ‘king’ whom the ballad acknowledges as such, for all that he is absent, is the source of ultimate royal authority in the English nation. The Kentishmen’s rebellion is best understood as a successful form of negotiation between monarch and commons, of the sort that the rebels under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw fail to achieve. In return for their ‘ancient liberties’, William explicitly requests that the Kentish rebels acknowledge him as ‘chiefe king of faire *England*’ (96), acknowledging that he, too, is subject to the larger national identity. These two ballads depict, variously, a successful and an unsuccessful rebellion. In both cases, the figure directly invested with royal authority is largely absent from the action depicted, either temporally or physically, but it is still held to be absolute.

In her discussion of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, Phyllis Rackin has discerned three temporal perspectives.<sup>28</sup> The first is a ‘chronological’ perspective, which presents the past as a remote historical pageant, with the audience separated from the action. It marks a clear temporal distance between the past and the present. The second, an ‘achronic’ perspective, erases the fact of temporality and engages the audience in the performance of the action. Finally, there is the ‘anachronistic’ perspective which exposes the contradictions at the heart of the whole project of historical recuperation. By exposing its own theatricality, it directs the audience’s attention towards the differences between past and present. While there is little evidence of anachronism in Deloney’s ballads, there is movement between the first and second of Rackin’s perspectives.

Deloney repeatedly evokes the present throughout these ballads. The use of the term ‘our royal king’ to make the historical monarch the head of the national

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<sup>28</sup> Rackin, *Stages of History*, p. 117-25.

community to which the audience is assumed to belong has already been mentioned. It occurs not only in the ballad about King John but also in the second ‘Canto’. It is a generic tag used, not only by Deloney, but in several of the ballads examined in the following section of this chapter. This invocation of the past monarch is even historicised in the opening ballad, in the relationship between the Kentishmen and the memory of Edward the Confessor. The final lines of the ninth ‘Canto’ transform the ‘chronological’ perspective of the rest of the ballad into an ‘achronic’ perspective, when they evoke the institutional history and grandeur of the Order of the Garter: ‘With princely royaltie, / great fame and dignitie. / This knight-hood still is held’ (64-66). The final lines of the seventh ‘Canto’ similarly invoke the perspective of the present after describing the villiany of Isabella:

The knowledge of the deed shee still denied,  
 that shee of murder might not be suspected:  
 But yet for all the subtiltie she wrought,  
 the truth vnto the world was after brought. (93-96)

The anxiety at the possibility that the truth might *not* have been brought into the world is apparent in these lines. It points to a desire for Isabella to be recognised as guilty, as a means of punishing her historical reputation, despite the fact that the historical Isabella was never punished for her transgression against royal authority.

This effect is most emphatic in the third ‘Canto’. The lengthy title – ‘How King *Henry* the second crowning his Sonne king of *England*, in his owne lifetime, was by him most grieuously vexed with warres: whereby he went about to take his Fathers Crowne quite from him. And how at his death he repented him thereof, and asked his Father hartily forgiuenance’ – gives a clear idea of its narrative’s concerns. Yet the opening stanza also places it in a wider social context:

You parents whose affection fond,  
 vnto your children doth appeare:  
 Marke well the storie now in hand.  
 wherin you shall great matters here.  
 And learne by this which shalbe tolde,  
 to holde your children still in awe:  
 Least otherwise they prooue too bolde,  
 and set not by your state a strawe. (1-8)

Despite being concerned with ‘great matters’, the ballad’s history is offered to its audience as a moral exemplar. It imagines the family as an institution analogous to the state; the lessons it teaches are applied, not to issues of kingship or statecraft, but to the ordinary domestic concerns of the ballad audience.

An ‘achronic’ perspective is most powerfully achieved through the presence of speech or first person narration in a ballad. If the king’s body is displaced or absent from these ballads, the body of the ballad singer is present. So, in performance, it is not only the Kentishmen who command their leaders in the opening ballad, but also the ballad singer, likely a subject who possesses the same social status as the rebels, who performs their commands. Similarly, in the fourth ‘Canto’, ‘The Imprisonment of Queene *Elenor*, wife to King *Henrie* the second’ and in the eighth ‘Canto’, the first person narration disrupts the ‘chronological’ perspective, which the paratextual elements of the text seem designed to impose. This is most apparent in the concluding prose section ‘A speeche betweene Ladies, being shepheards on *Salisbury* plaine’, which discusses yet another rebellion.

There is a tension in the status markers of these ‘Ladies’ who are also ‘shepheards’. The section concludes with the return of their husbands who, after they hear of how their wives had escaped from the violence of the rebels, slyly insinuate ‘that

such shepherds neuer kept sheepe on *Salisburie* plaine before.’<sup>29</sup> Their status as ‘shepherds’ is an element of the pastoral, the same kind of elite disguise which will be explored further in the following section’s discussion of the ‘King-Commoner’ tradition. Here, the elite subjects are concerned only with judging the actions of the commoners which they witness from their vantage point on Salisbury plain. The voices of this chorus of elite ‘shepherdesses’ are located, not only spatially, but also temporally, since their discussion of a current rebellion places them in the time of Henry VII. Their initial speech is explicitly directed at the history depicted in the collection’s final ballad, first praising the actions of William Walworth, and then going on to describe the eventual fate of the rebels: ‘Truly (said the Ladies) this was a most hardie & couragious Mayor, that durst in the midst of so mightie a multitude of his enemies arrest so impudent and bold a Traytor’.<sup>30</sup> Their conclusion both moralises the rebellion and universalises its lesson: ‘And such ends (said the ladies) send all Rebels, and especially the desperate Traytors, which at present vexeth the whole state.’<sup>31</sup>

The ladies’ present of course, is distant from the present of the text’s reader, as the ballad goes on to describe the defeat of the rebellion of ‘*Thomas Flamocke*, and *Michael Ioseph* the blacke Smith’.<sup>32</sup> Their presence, on the heights of Salisbury plain, afford the ladies a vantage point from which to look down on both the surrounding land and the history of the nation to which they belong. It is analogous with the ‘chronological’ view of history which Deloney seeks to impose on his ballads. In this instance, the point of view, which the ballad singer is granted by the preponderance of the third person narration, is not an identification with a subject position, but an objective point of view above the narrative being recounted.

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<sup>29</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 416.

<sup>30</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 415.

<sup>31</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 416.

<sup>32</sup> Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, p. 416.

The irony here is that Deloney's desire for sensationalist narratives means that almost all of the ballads in *Strange Histories* are concerned with moments of historical crisis for monarchical authority. The ballad author's desire to sensationalise his narratives conflicts with his didactic purpose. Even the ninth 'Canto', apparently the most straightforward narrative, with its depiction of martial valour being rewarded by royal authority, features the creation of an alternative royal authority within its narrative when the Earl of Salisbury is 'Crowned *king*' (50, my italics) of the conquered Isle of Man. Yet by separating the body or person of the monarch from the monarch's authority, Deloney's 'chronicle' history represents royal power as an absolute to which everyone within the nation, including the reigning monarch, is subject.

### **King-Commoner Ballads, Jane Shore and the Politics of Proximity**

'King-Commoner Encounter' is a term Rochelle Smith has coined in her discussion of the popular motif where a king encounters one or more of his commoner subjects.<sup>33</sup> This motif occurs, not only in many ballads, but also in early modern dramas by such authors as Shakespeare and Thomas Heywood. Smith's term is designed to replace that of the 'disguised king' deployed by critics such as Alexandra Walsh and Anne Barton.<sup>34</sup> This broader term is proposed by Smith for two reasons. Firstly, as she rightly points out, in these ballad narratives, it is rare for the king to go in disguise. Rather, it is more usually the case that the commoner fails to recognise the monarch during much of their encounter, until the king chooses to identify himself. Secondly, it emphasises social class and the juxtaposition of extreme social hierarchies which, in Smith's analysis, is at

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<sup>33</sup> Rochelle Smith, 'King-Commoner Encounters in the Popular Ballad, Elizabethan Drama, and Shakespeare', *Studies in English Literature*, 50:2, (2010), 301-336

<sup>34</sup> See Anne Barton, 'The King Disguised: Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the Comical History (1975)', in *Essays, Mainly Shakespearean* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 207-33; Alexandra Walsh, 'The King in Disguise', *Folklore*, 86:1 (1975), 3-24.

the heart of these narratives.<sup>35</sup> Such a broad term as ‘King-Commoner Encounter’ could also be applied to other relationships between kings and commoners depicted elsewhere in broadsides, those which in Richard Helgerson’s formulation, focus on the victims of royal power, specifically the famous royal mistress to Edward IV, Jane Shore.<sup>36</sup> The relationship between monarch and royal mistress is certainly of a different type to the chance encounter between king and commoner, but in the example at least of Jane Shore, both involve the proximity of the body of a monarch to a lower class subject.

The ‘politics of proximity’ is a term deployed by Daryl W. Palmer in his exploration of the differences in the various representations of the court of Edward IV.<sup>37</sup> Edward’s personal rule was characterised by both chroniclers and playwrights as one which depended in large part on familiarity and personal affiliation between the monarch and his noble subjects. In the plays of both Shakespeare and Heywood, this familiarity has implications for the ways in which it potentially breaches social hierarchy. Jane Shore is a figure whose person ‘mingles sexuality and social agency’<sup>38</sup> and thus her presence on stage represents a challenge to that hierarchy. ‘Proximity’ or intimacy is also a quality which Claire McEachern has argued is intrinsic to national sentiment. It is a corporate identity of social unity, which imagines a reciprocal relationship: ‘Nations urge connections between past and present, between members of a group and between people and the state’.<sup>39</sup> One way in which the government could be made known to the people is by imagining it as a person, as in Shakespeare’s history plays when he portrays the Crown as a ‘fleetingly personable monarch... Embodied, the

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<sup>35</sup> R. Smith, ‘King-Commoner Encounters’, pp. 306-7, 312-4.

<sup>36</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 237.

<sup>37</sup> Daryl W. Palmer, ‘Edward IV’s Secret Familiarities and the Politics of Proximity in Elizabethan History Plays’, *English Literary History*, 61:2 (1994), 279-315 (pp. 283-91).

<sup>38</sup> Palmer, ‘Secret Familiarities’, p. 298.

<sup>39</sup> McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood*, p. 5.

state becomes familiar'.<sup>40</sup> In the performative mode of a ballad, the ballad singer embodies the monarch, allowing for the appropriation of the king's personhood. Both Palmer's and McEachern's arguments revolve around the conflation of the image of the nation and the person of the monarch. When a lower class subject encounters their monarch in a narrative such as a 'King-Commoner' ballad, it is also an encounter with the royal authority to which they are subject as members of the English nation.

The popularity of 'King-Commoner Encounter' ballads is attested by comments from ballad-collectors and scholars, such as Thomas Percy and Francis James Child, who observed that '[n]ext to the adventures of Robin Hood and his men, the most favourite topic in English popular poetry is the chance-encounter with a king, unrecognised as such, with one of his humbler subjects'.<sup>41</sup> Linda Hutjens has helpfully summarised the recurring narrative sequence found in such ballads and poems as: '...the unrecognised king, a rude subject who becomes his host, abuse of the king and/or his laws, a moment of recognition, the subject's expectation of hanging, a plea for forgiveness, the king's pardon, a generous reward, and occasionally plans for subsequent reunion in a courtly environment'.<sup>42</sup> Both Hutjens and Walsh have connected the popularity of this narrative type with notions of hospitality deriving from the biblical story of Abraham giving hospitality to three strangers, one of whom turns out to be the Lord, as well as the later New Testament exhortation by Christ that hospitality to strangers is one of the criteria for successful entry into heaven.<sup>43</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, ed. by Thomas Percy (1766), p. 240; Child surveys the ballad type in his introduction to 'King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tamworth' (Francis J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 5 vols. (Boston, New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882-98), 5 (1898), pp. 67-75.

<sup>42</sup> Linda Hutjens, 'The Disguised King in Early English Ballads', in *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. by Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 75-89 (p. 84).

<sup>43</sup> Hutjens, 'Disguised King' pp. 87-88; Walsh, 'King in Disguise', pp. 3, 21-22.

assumption, which appears to underlie such analyses, is that these narrative patterns are, in Nora Corrigan's words, 'timeless...folk motifs' which idealise the relationship between monarch and subject and thus reinforce the social hierarchy.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to the tendency of such critics to idealise the narrative structure of these ballads, Rochelle Smith has attempted to place them in historical context, arguing that the trope was employed in different ways in ballads composed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In her reading, the earliest ballad narratives expose the idealising fantasy at the heart of literary and popular pastoral.<sup>45</sup> These incognito ballad kings encounter a far rougher landscape than would be expected in pastoral, along with a peasantry who subvert class assumptions and aristocratic pretensions, since the ballads 'refuse to idealise either king or subject, instead presenting in comic form the conviction that those in the highest seats of power have much to learn from a rough encounter with common life.'<sup>46</sup> For the brief period of the ballad narrative, a commoner is able to speak with the monarch as an equal, even a temporary social superior, demystifying the social hierarchy. When, for example, in *A Pleasant new Ballad betweene King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tam-worth...*, the Tanner is asked for directions to Drayton Bassett, he rudely directs the king towards the nearest 'paire of Gallowes' (23) and takes the unrecognised monarch to be a thief, insisting that the king has stolen the fine clothes he wears (41-52).<sup>47</sup> Royal authority is ultimately secure,

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<sup>44</sup> Nora Corrigan, 'The Merry Tanner, the Mayor's Feast, and the King's Mistress: Thomas Heywood's *1 Edward IV* and the Ballad Tradition', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 22 (2009), 27-41 (p. 28).

<sup>45</sup> R. Smith, 'King-Commoner Encounters', pp. 304-14.

<sup>46</sup> R. Smith, 'King-Commoner Encounters', p. 313.

<sup>47</sup> [Anonymous], *A pleasant new ballad betweene King Edward the fourth, and a tanner of Tamworth as hee rode vpon a time with his nobles on hunting, towards Drayton Basset* (London: A. M[athews], [1630?]) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2, pp. 166-169. There is also a printing in a longer text of 56 stanzas over 10 pages from 1596 which is referred to below. It is impossible to determine whether this longer text is



reaffirmed at the ballad's end, once the king reveals his identity, but the encounter still articulates a 'subversion of elite ideas about class'.<sup>48</sup> This satirical edge was present throughout the seventeenth century in ballads which reprinted or retold earlier tales, but otherwise disappeared from those composed from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. In *The King and the Northern-Man* (c. 1640), the relationship is between a wise and generous monarch who has nothing to learn from his encounter with the loyal but simple commoner.<sup>49</sup> Tellingly, the movement of the narrative has been reversed. Instead of the monarch travelling amongst his subjects, in the 'The King and the Northern-Man', it is the commoner who seeks out the king.

There are a total of seven extant ballads containing the 'King-Commoner' motif recorded in the Stationers' Register between 1578 and 1690.<sup>50</sup> The ballad which has received the most critical attention to date is the ballad of *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tam-worth*, thanks to its status as one of the sources for Thomas Heywood's two-part chronicle play *Edward IV*.<sup>51</sup> Although the ballad's title defines the narrative space of the ballad clearly in temporal and spatial terms, locating its events in the reign of Edward IV and the countryside near the town of Drayton Bassett, the opening stanzas locate it in a less defined space:

In Summer time, when leaves grew greene,

and birds sitting on every tree:

King *Edward* would a hunting ride,

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an expansion of the broadside or whether the surviving broadside represents a contraction of an earlier, longer text.

<sup>48</sup> R. Smith, 'King-Commoner Encounters', p. 308.

<sup>49</sup> R. Smith, 'King-Commoner Encounters', pp. 313-4.

<sup>50</sup> R. Smith, 'King-Commoner Encounters', pp. 303n.

<sup>51</sup> Corrigan, 'Thomas Heywood's *1 Edward IV*'; Richard Rowland, 'Introduction', in Thomas Heywood, *The First and Second Parts of King Edward IV*, ed. by Richard Rowland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 26-36; Richard Rowland, *Thomas Heywood's Theatre, 1599-1639: Locations, Translations and Conflict*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 24-72.

some pastime for to see.

Our King he would a hunting ride  
 by eight a clocke of the day,  
 And well was he 'ware of a bold Tanner  
 come riding on the way. (1-8)

The meeting with the Tanner is to provide the King with his 'pastime', for which he instructs his followers to stand aside under a tree, so that he may meet the commoner alone. Although the second stanza gives the precise time of day at which the king would go hunting, rather than any particular summer, the 'Summer time' described in the opening stanza is the idealised time of a generalised past. As seen in *Strange Histories*, the use of a communal voice in defining Edward as 'Our King' also connects the present day audience with their idealised national past. Here, though, it is not a 'chronological' past defined by institutions such as the monarchy or the Order of the Garter but a mythical idealised 'times past'. Aside from the opening stanza and the title, Edward is otherwise never identified by name but only referred to as either 'the King' or alternatively the more possessive, 'our King'.

It has frequently been noted that the kings who appear in these ballads are little more than stock, generic figures, with little to distinguish them. Daniel Woolf has suggested that they are little more than 'textual ghosts...that provide a slender connection between history as the historians told it and history as ordinary listeners liked to remember it'.<sup>52</sup> Again, Woolf inadvertently sets up a hierarchy between different historical discourses. If there were also, as both Woolf and Nora Corrigan have separately observed, particularly popular ballad kings ('Alfred, Henry II, Edward III') then this suggests that, outside the ballad texts at least, there was an historical awareness

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<sup>52</sup> Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 324.

which privileged certain kings as superior to others.<sup>53</sup> Richard III, for example, is never encountered travelling incognito in a ballad. That the ballad kings are largely interchangeable is evidence of the idealised and absolute nature of the authority that the commoner encounters in such ballads.

Focussing on the figure of the monarch also serves to overlook the fact that the commoner whom the king encounters is equally generic. Although Heywood gives the Tanner of Tamworth a name – Hobs – in his appropriation of the ballad for the stage, he remains nameless in the ballad text itself. He is individualised only in the sense that class markers separate him from the aristocratic world to which the king belongs. He lives within a commercial world clearly defined by references to his clothing, ‘A good russet coat’ (9), and the cost of his horse, ‘a mare of foure shilling’ (12). When the king asks him if he has heard any news, he replies only that he has heard ‘that Cow-hides be deare’ (56). The only news in which he has any interest concerns commerce, in contrast to the great events conventionally held to constitute history. He boastfully refuses the king’s offer to cover the cost of their dinner as payment for correct directions to Drayton Bassett, confidently asserting, ‘I have more groats and nobles in my purse / than thou hast pence in thine’ (39-40). The world of commerce is the source of the Tanner’s pride. In the second half of the ballad, the Tanner consents to the exchange of their horses in return for ‘a Noble in Gold so round’ (72), which demand again connects the Tanner to a world of commercial transactions. Although he is willing to sell his horse, he flatly refuses to exchange his ‘Cow-hide’ saddle, the cowhide which symbolises both his livelihood, as well as an industry of national importance with which

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<sup>53</sup> Corrigan, ‘Thomas Heywood’s *1 Edward IV*’, p. 30; Woolf notes the popularity of Edward III and Henry V (*Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 325).

many in the ballad's audience would have had a connection, whether as consumer or source of employment.<sup>54</sup>

In contrast to the named monarch, the Tanner is not an historical figure, but a generic type who belongs to the present of the ballad audience. As a generalised type, he is also representative of the community from which he comes. In emphasising the highest and lowest social spheres, the 'King-Commoner' ballad provides an idealised past encompassing the whole nation. Social hierarchy is reasserted when the Tanner exchanges their saddles, placing his own cowhide on the king's particularly fashion-conscious horse:

But when the Steed saw the black Cow-taile wag,  
 for and the blacke Cow-horne,  
 The Steed began to run away,  
 as the Devill the Tanner had bourne,

Untill he came unto a nooke,  
 a little beside an Ash;  
 The Steed gave the tanner such a fall,  
 his necke was almost brast.

'Take thy horse again, with a veengeance!' hee said,  
 'with me hee shall not abide.'  
 'It is no marvell,' said the King, and laught,  
 'he knew not your Cow-hide.' (97-108)

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<sup>54</sup> Rowland, 'Introduction', p. 29.

The humour which the Tanner provides for the king is firmly associated with both the material world and the low material body. He even swears ‘By the faith of my body’ (67),<sup>55</sup> and when the king is helping him into his saddle ‘he girded a fart so round’ (90). The amusement for the king lies in the Tanner’s farting and his slapstick fall from his horse, as well as his comic association with the gallows. This comes from both his initial directions to the king, and the threat which the Tanner fears when he finally realises that it is the monarch with whom he has been interacting. The Tanner’s body possesses characteristics of the ‘grotesque body’, as theorised by Mikhail Bakhtin.<sup>56</sup> Whilst carnival is typically seen as being a mode of release for the lower orders, here the Tanner’s carnivalesque body is a representation of the ‘low’ which provides the king with his ‘pastime’. The enjoyment of this provides the king with a temporary removal from the elite world of clear social hierarchy symbolised elsewhere in the ballad’s narrative by the knights who accompany him in the opening stanzas, and who then reappear at the ballad’s end, in order to confirm his royal status.

In the introduction to his edition of Heywood’s *Edward IV*, Richard Rowland has also observed how monarchical authority was reinforced by paratextual elements in the longer, possibly expanded, printing of the ballad text.<sup>57</sup> The text is interrupted by a series of woodcuts ‘which cumulatively stamp the booklet as a document of amelioration. Stabilization is underlined by the framing of the text with two identical representations of the King, mounted on a plumed horse, armed, and alone’.<sup>58</sup> The final image depicts a monarch dispensing justice to a kneeling supplicant, an image of

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<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to note the appearance of the same oath in the Robin Hood ballad, ‘Robin Hood and Allen a Dale’. See Child, *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 3, pp. 172-74.

<sup>56</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, pp. 303-67.

<sup>57</sup> [Anonymous], *A merrie pleasant and delectable historie, betveene King Edvvard the fourth, and a tanner of Tamworth as he rode vpon a time with his nobles a hunting toward Drayton Basset. Verie pleasant and merrie to read* (London: Iohn Danter, 1596).

<sup>58</sup> Rowland, ‘Introduction’, p. 30.

hierarchy and monarchical authority. The broadside pictures are less authoritative in their relationship to the text, but the form of the text itself serves to reinforce that authority, with the narrative framed as an account of the king's pastime. In contrast to the unknowing Tanner, the audience knows the king's identity throughout the encounter and, therefore, would have negotiated the line between sympathetic identification with the boastful tanner, and a bawdy humour identified with the omnipotent subject position of the king. *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tam-worth* negotiates the line between monarch and commoner by offering grotesque humour to both singer and listeners, while at the same time bringing the figure of the king into that demotic world.

Whilst the authority of the monarch is ultimately affirmed, the social hierarchy is still subverted by the extravagant reward the king grants the Tanner:

For Plumton Parke I will thee give,  
with the Tenements three beside,-  
Which is worth five hundred pound a yeare,-  
to maintain thy good Cow-hide (149-52)

This reward is far beyond what a person of the Tanner's social standing in the ballad's audience could ever expect to achieve. The idealised prize is presumably part of the ballad's attraction to such an audience of commoners. It is a fantasy of the idealised relationship between commoner and monarch, which underlies all 'King-Commoner' ballads. It still upholds the social hierarchy because of the king's insistence that the property is for the maintenance of his 'Cow-hide', which connects it to the commercial world to which the Tanner belongs, rather than elevating the Tanner into the aristocracy. While the Tanner's status and personal wealth may have altered at the ballad's end, he himself remains the same Tanner who has won this wealth through the agency of his low material body. The ballad shows an acute awareness of how status is communicated through clothing when the Tanner accuses the king of being a thief: 'That apparell thou

wearest on thy backe / may seeme a good Lord to weare' (47-48). The use of the word 'seeme' here can be taken to mean that the commoner recognises that such clothing is 'seemly' (i.e. appropriate) for a person of such status to wear, but it also recognises that social status is constructed through signs and consequently is not intrinsic to the person.

*King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tam-worth* differs from most other 'King-Commoner' ballads in that its action takes place, not in the Tanner's home, but outdoors in a rural landscape, identified only by its being close to the town of Drayton Bassett. More usually the king is invited into the commoner's domestic space, as in *The Shepherd and the King, and of Gillian the Shepherds Wife...* in which King Alfred, like the later Edward IV, travels into the countryside in search of 'pastime'.<sup>59</sup> As in *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tam-worth*, the location of his meeting with the Shepherd is clearly defined spatially as occurring in 'Somerset-shire, / near Newton-Court' (21-22) but is temporally more uncertain, being located only in 'An Elder time there was so yore' (1). In this example of the 'King-Commoner' narrative, the king is in disguise, Alfred having left his court deliberately dressed in clothes 'rag'd and torne' (15) and wearing a 'Monmouth Cap' (20) in place of his crown. Just as the Tanner of Tamworth does, the Shepherd whom Alfred meets initially takes him for a 'sturdy theef' (35), an insult which leads to a fight between the two, lasting for four hours (53-64). Their combat is ended only when Alfred appeals to the 'King's truce' (65), an invocation of royal authority that might be taken ironically since the ballad's audience knows the king's identity. Yet, it is also an authentic appeal, which represents royal authority as an absolute. The Shepherd then overcomes his misgivings and offers the disguised King Alfred an apprenticeship and accommodation in his home. The rewards

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<sup>59</sup>[Anonymous], [*The*] *shepherd and the King, and of Gillian the shepherds vvife, with her churlish answers: being full of mirth and merry pastime. To the tune of Flying fame* (London: [1640?]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 3, pp. 210-19.

of this employment are framed in terms of the bodily comforts on offer: ‘harden sheetes, / upon a fresh straw bed / ...good peas-straw fires, / And now and then good barley Cakes’ (91-2, 94-5). This promised comfort may be modest, if appropriate to the social standing of the commoners amongst whom the king lodges in the ballad’s second half, but it stands in marked contrast to what he actually finds on going to bed, where he is confronted with ‘hung spiders’ webs’ (179) and kept awake by ‘cackling geese and hens’ (185).

There is little of the Bakhtinian grotesque body in the description of the Shepherd. There is, however, a clear, if temporary, inversion of the social hierarchy. The king acknowledges the superiority of the Shepherd in their combat: ‘A sturdier fellow than thy selfe / lives not within the land!’ (67-68). In agreeing to become the Shepherd’s apprentice, the king is ‘well content to be *his* man’ (115, my emphasis), emphasising his subservience to the commoner, whose superiority he has already acknowledged. This social inversion is seen in the ballad’s second half, when the king is blamed by the Shepherd’s wife for allowing the cake she had placed on the hearth to burn, an allusion to the apocryphal story of Alfred’s burning of the cakes. Her accusation culminates in a threat of physical violence on the King’s person: ‘...serve mee such another tricke, / Ile thwack thee on the snout!’ (169-70). The seventeenth century broadside picture, in which a crowned figure is shown being threatened by a robust looking woman wielding a staff (Figure 5), clearly emphasises this threat of physical violence. Through the positioning of the figures, with the king cowering subserviently before the female figure so that his head is on a lower level to hers, the picture also reinforces the authority that the Shepherd’s wife wields over the monarch in a temporary inversion, reflecting the ‘world upside down tradition’.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>David Underdown, ‘The Taming of the Scold: The Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England’ in *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*, ed. by Anthony Fletcher and





Figure 5: [Anonymous], *[The] shepherd and the King, and of Gillian the shepheards vvife, with her churlish answers: being full of mirth and merry pastime. To the tune of Flying fame* (London:[1640?]). © The British Library Board C.20.f.7[504].

The mortification which King Alfred undergoes in the Shepherd's bed is also present in *A pleasant new Ballad of the Miller of Mansfield in Sherwood; and of king Henry the seconde; and how he was lodged in the Miller's House, and of their pleasant communication*, which also possesses a sequel, *A merry ballad of the miller and king Henry the second; shewing howe he came to the Court with his wife and sonne, and what merry conceits passed between the king and them*.<sup>61</sup> Here the idealised historical

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John Stevenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 116-136 (p. 117); see also, Ian Donaldson, *The World Upside Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>61</sup>[Anonymous], *A pleasant new Ballad of the Miller of Mansfield in Sherwood; and of king Henry the seconde; and how he was lodged in the Miller's House, and of their pleasant communication* (London: E. Wright, 1640) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2, pp. 170-181. The earliest surviving broadside from c.1588 does not contain the sequel describing the visit to court by the Miller and his family. Both texts are found in the *Shirburn Ballads* (see Clark, pp. 215-19, 311-15), so clearly they were both in circulation before 1616. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that both texts were produced c. 1585. Interestingly, later broadsides reverse the ordering of the ballad's protagonists in the title. Granting the Miller primacy in the earlier title, so that it becomes his meeting with the King, as opposed to the King's meeting with him, suggests that it is the Miller's subject position which was originally dominant, giving

time in which the ballad is located is achieved, by both a reference to the ‘long Summer’s day’ (7) in which the narrative begins, similar to the idealised summer found in the opening lines of *King Edward the Fourth and the Tanner of Tam-worth*, and also through allusion to the mythical past of the Robin Hood stories. Not only is the narrative set in ‘merye *Sheerewood*’ (95) but in the ballad’s sequel the Miller’s wife is likened to ‘*Mayd Marrian*’ (180). The idealised past is connected to the audience’s present when the Miller’s wife anachronistically asks the king to show them his ‘passport’ (48). This refers to the Elizabethan statute of 1563 requiring servants to carry a testimonial, as proof of their honesty, when travelling from one parish to another.<sup>62</sup> By assuming that the king is a servant, the Miller’s wife also assumes her social superiority to the stranger who is now her guest.

In this version of the ballad motif, the king has become separated from his nobles, with whom he was out hunting, and lost in the forest. He seeks lodging and hospitality at the house of the Miller, who once again takes the king to be a ‘gentleman-theefe’ (22), one who lacks ‘a groat in thy purse; / all thine inheritance hangs on thy Backe.’ (27-28). As in *King Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tam-worth* there is an awareness that, whilst fine clothing may signify nobility, the sign may be betrayed by the wearer. This insight is repeated in the ballad sequel. On revealing himself to his common subjects, the king extravagantly rewards the Miller with a knighthood. In the sequel, the Miller and his family make a visit to the Court for a feast on St George’s Day. The social gap between the Miller and the nobility is signalled by the messenger’s condescension at the Miller’s attempt to reward him for his services. An offer of ‘three farthings’, is received with a ‘smile...at this their simplicytye’ (153, 157-59). The Miller is manifestly concerned about the signs of their social status, complaining that,

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credence to Rochelle Smith’s argument that the ‘King-commoner’ tradition became more conservative over the course of the seventeenth century.

<sup>62</sup> Clark, *Shirburn Ballads*, p. 215n.

‘Here comes expenses and charges, in deede!

...for of new garments we all have great neede.’

‘Of horses and servingmen must we haue store,

with brydles, and saddles, and twenty things more.’(164, 166-68)

These extravagances are needed in order to, not only impress the elite circles they will now be moving in, but also to signal their belonging to such circles. His wife placates his worries with the claim that she ‘will turne, and trim vp, my old russet gowne, / with every thing as fine as maye be’ (171-72). Their exchange demonstrates an awareness both of how those of an elite social status engaged in conspicuous consumption, and of how easily these signs of elite status may be counterfeited by a thrifty commoner. It potentially contains an implicit critique of the social order, with the values of good housekeeping contrasted with courtly excess.

As with the Tanner encountered by Edward IV, King Henry is also confronted by the grotesque material body of one of his common subjects, in this case the body of the Miller’s son Richard with whom he spends the night. Richard impertinently demands of the King: ‘Art thou not lowsye, nor Scabbed?... / If thou beest, surelye thou lyst not with me’ (71-72). His reference to the bodily proximity they will enjoy in the night again marks the temporary suspension of the social hierarchy, as he takes the King as nothing more than a fellow member of the commons. Far from offending the monarch, who has chosen to maintain his masquerade, this impertinent questioning only causes him to ‘laugh out most hartelye, / tyll the teares trickled downe from his eyes’ (73-74). It is simply a part of the king’s enjoyment of the Miller’s hospitality, which also includes feeding him with venison which has been poached from his own forest (85-102).

In the ballad sequel, when being welcomed to the court, Richard again creates mirth through an association with the material body, when he reminds the king of ‘How

we with farting made our bed hot' (190) when they were bedfellows. In response to this his father, the now knighted 'Sir *Jhon Cockle*' (184) attempts to discipline Richard's language, only to be betrayed by his own speech: 'Speak cleanly to our King, or else go and shite' (192). The humour Richard creates is all associated with the low material body, and it is this humour for which he is appreciated by his social superiors: 'The King and his Councillors hartely laft' (193). In both instances of Richard's bodily humour, the laughter of the king is described as being 'hearty', suggesting not only an excess of enjoyment which is in keeping with Bakhtin's theories of the grotesque body, but also placing the king, throughout his encounter with the Miller and his family, in the position of an audience member.

The entertainment that the Miller and his family provide for the king and his court is characterised as 'good cuntrye cheere' (204) and 'great meryment' (223). These ballads, describing the historical meeting between monarchs and subjects, also relate to contemporary anxieties about changing patterns in hospitality. Felicity Heal has shown how the feeling that traditional patterns of hospitality were in decline had, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, become a literary trope which idealised the hospitality that had supposedly been available in a mythic past or which might still be found in the countryside.<sup>63</sup> These communal values of 'openness and giving, ...according all men a temporary place within domestic society' accorded a status to strangers and guests.<sup>64</sup> This was primarily an elite discourse, but one which was also found within the wider populace: 'Whilst some customary rights to entertainment might be exacted only from the 'better sort', this was probably more a matter of convenience than fixed principle: when modest claims were involved all householders might be

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<sup>63</sup> Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 91-140.

<sup>64</sup> Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, p. 4.

brought into the web of hospitality'.<sup>65</sup> The hospitality offered by the commoners in these ballads would have been understood within this widely known framework. Additionally, in *The Shepherd and the King*, the extravagant reward which is bestowed on the commoner also comes with the promise of a future visit: '...the next time I come hither, / My lords with me, here in this house, / will all be merry together' (254-56). The stately hall he has given to the Shepherd has also become a space for the king to self-consciously enjoy the 'low', as a respite from the Court. In both these ballads, the commoners are the repository for traditional values of hospitality, which are no longer to be found at the Court.

As noted above, the relationship of a royal mistress to the monarch is of a different type to that which is seen in those ballads where a chance encounter occurs between king and commoner. The popularity of Jane Shore as an exemplary figure is attested to by the multitude of poems, plays and ballads which were produced about her in the latter half of the sixteenth century and subsequently. She was first mentioned in Thomas More's *History of Richard III* (c. 1513/14) as one of Edward IV's mistresses. Thomas Churchyard's *Shore's Wife*, which first appeared in the second edition of *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1563), inspired both her major fame and a literary fashion for the genre of 'female complaint', encompassing not only Jane Shore but also other royal mistresses such as Rosamond, mistress to Henry II.<sup>66</sup> When Deloney opened his *The Garland of Good Will* (1592-3) with two ballads about Rosamond and Jane Shore, he was perhaps only following literary fashion. Samuel M. Pratt has provided a comprehensive survey of the fascination that the story of Jane Shore held for

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<sup>65</sup> Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, pp. 382.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Helgerson, 'Weeping for Jane Shore', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 98:3 (1999), 451-476 (p. 455). Palmer, 'Secret Familiarities', pp. 282-310. The larger tradition of the complaint genre is surveyed in Lawrence Lipking, *Abandoned Women and Poetic Tradition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988); John Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe: Shakespeare and "Female Complaint"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Elizabethans, concluding that the interest her story held for its audience lay in its depiction of the evils of forced marriage, as well as the moral lesson to be deduced from a cautionary tale of the downfall of a morally suspect individual.<sup>67</sup> For Richard Helgerson, as for Daryl Palmer, the significance of Jane Shore lies in her identification with both the domestic sphere and the urban London bourgeoisie from which she emerged. Her presence in chronicle history challenges the assumption that, in Richard Johnson's words, it is only 'great personages of the Land' who are the proper subject for history. It is a 'commoner's history', opposed to the political history of the monarchy and nobility.<sup>68</sup>

Jane Shore's story was also a history which, through its various retellings, came to be firmly associated with the city of London. Richard Rowland has argued that one of the things which made Thomas Heywood's retelling of Jane Shore's story in *Edward IV* distinct from earlier literary accounts was that it located her story not in the 'sparsely populated rural or pastoral landscape' of so many 'complaint' poems, but instead tied it to a detailed landscape of London through the 'incorporation of a detailed chorographical tour'.<sup>69</sup> Whilst they do not provide such an extensive 'tour', several of the extant Jane Shore ballads, similarly, locate her story not just in the city, but in a precise location. Deloney's *A New Sonnet, conteining the Lamentation of Shores wife, who was sometime Concubine to King Edward the fourth, setting forth her great fall, and withall her most miserable and wretched end* gives her the address of 'Flower-deluce in Cheapside' (10), whilst *The Woful Lamentation of Mrs. Jane Shore, a Goldsmith's Wife of London, sometime King Edward the Fourth's Concubine, who for her Wanton Life came to a Miserable End. Set forth for the Example of all wicked Livers,*

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<sup>67</sup> Samuel M. Pratt, 'Jane Shore and the Elizabethans: Some Facts and Speculations', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 11:4(1970), 1293-1306.

<sup>68</sup> Helgerson, 'Weeping for Jane Shore'.

<sup>69</sup> Rowland, 'Introduction', p. 41.

largely derived from Heywood's play for the outline of its action, places her in 'Lumbard-street' (19) and, following her penance, sees her end up destitute and repentant in 'Shoreditch' (136).<sup>70</sup> These topographical references not only lend plausibility to the history by tying it to known places, but represent it as a pertinent element of civic history.

Both ballads appropriate the female voice in order to emphasise the pathos of the story and to give authority to the moral and social judgements made by the ballads. *The Woful Lamentation* also takes on the voice of Shore's husband in its second half, giving his version of events and a description of his exile. In fact Matthew Shore's version of events largely accords with Jane's. Both halves of the ballad give a moralistic account of events, which places all the blame for their situation on Jane's unchecked desires and agency. Jane clearly states that it is as a result of her actions that her name comes to the ears of Edward IV:

I spread my plumes as wantons do,  
Some sweet and secret friend to woove,  
Because my love I did not find  
Agreeing to my wanton mind. (123-26)

The word 'wanton' occurs repeatedly in the two line refrain with which each stanza ends: 'Then, wanton Wives, in time amend, / For love and beauty will have end' (5-6). The moral which the ballad seeks to apply to Jane's story is applied to all wives in the ballad audience, who are directly addressed at the conclusion of each stanza.

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Deloney, *A New Sonnet, conteining the Lamentation of Shores wife, who was sometime Concubine to King Edward the fourth, setting forth her great fall, and withall her most miserable and wretched end* (London, 1593) in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 302-4; [Anonymous], *The woful lamentation of Mrs. Jane Shore a goldsmith's wife of London, sometime King Edward the Fourth's concubine, who for her wanton life came to a miserable end. Set forth for the example of all wicked livers* in Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2, pp. 108-21.

Matthew's half of the ballad reconfirms this morality, stressing patriarchal control in his direct address to Jane:

I married thee whilst thou wert young,  
 Before thou knewst what did belong  
 To husband's love, or marriage state  
 ... Thus wanton pride made thee unjust,  
 And so deceived was my trust. (177-79, 181-82)

The ballad grants Jane agency only in order to condemn it. Matthew's chief complaint about her conduct appears to be of the effect that it has had on him, 'To think how unto publick shame / Thy wicked life brought my good name' (187-88), and his exile is defined as his response to these public accusations about his wife's behaviour (189-94). In the misery of exile, he condemns not only Jane but all women:

But women, now I well espy,  
 Are subject to unconstancy;  
 And few there be so true of love,  
 But by long suit will wanton prove;  
 For flesh is frail, and woman weak (201-6)

The final lines underline the social import that the ballad places upon the story of Jane Shore, when Matthew concludes that the text contains 'The story of a Strumpet lewd, / *In hope thereby some women may / Take heed how they the wanton play*' (277-78). The ballad transforms Jane's story into a moral exemplar for proper behaviour within the community, deriving its authority for its pronouncements from the well known historical personage.

The same moral exemplar appears in Deloney's ballad which begins with a direct appeal to an explicitly gendered audience:



Listen, faire Ladies,  
 Vnto my misery:  
 That liued late in pompous state,  
 most delightfully.  
 And now by Fortune's faire dissimulation,  
 Brought to cruell and vncouth plagues,  
 most spightfully. (1-7)

The same audience is addressed again at the ballad's conclusion with the exhortation: 'Fair Ladies, / With your sweet babies, / My grieuous fall beare in your mind' (78-80). Shore's story is again held up as a moral exemplar for an explicitly female audience, the reference to 'sweet babies' gesturing toward a woman's proper domestic and familial sphere. Despite the reference to 'Fortune's faire dissimulation' (5) in the ballad's opening lines, the motive for Jane's actions is held to be her own agency. She identifies herself as,

The only daughter of a wealthy merchant man,  
 Against whose counsel euermore,  
 I was rebelling.  
 ...No affection moued  
 My heart or mind to giue or yeeld  
 to their [her parents] consenting. (12-14, 16-18)

Jane's failings lie in her refusal to consent to proper patriarchal control, as well as her own failure to properly regulate her desires. Judging her own actions in the retrospective tone adopted by both these ballads, Jane acknowledges her 'transgression' (44) and the 'pennance for my former life, / so to tame me' (48-49).

In their construction of the historical Jane Shore, both these ballads narrate their accounts through the appropriation of the female voice in order to give greater authority to their condemnation of female agency. The ballad singer adopts the subject position of both Jane and Matthew in order to narrate a story which is already known to the community to which, and on whose behalf, they speak, thereby creating authority for the moral instruction they provide. Both *A Woful Lamentation* and Deloney's ballad acknowledge that it was the death of Edward and the actions of Richard as Lord Protector which caused Jane's fall, but the indignities which she then undergoes as a result of Richard's actions are also framed as the proper punishment for her behaviour. This paradoxical treatment of Shore's story derives from the ballad authors' desire to impose a narrative pattern on the history. Although Richard is demonised as a usurper, his actions, in this respect at least, can still serve the proper moral and patriarchal social values. The retrospective tone of the ballads, in which Jane's appropriated voice tells the audience her story, also aids the shaping of the narrative's moral. The ballads' history is teleological, with Jane receiving her just punishment, the narrative shaped to give the correct moral lesson.

There is another ballad which has been tentatively identified with the story of Jane Shore, one which offers a more nuanced appropriation of the female voice and female commoner's agency. Beith-Halahmi has questioned the identification of Shore with figure of the maid in *A Courtly new Ballad of the Princely wooing of the faire Maid of London by King Edward*, citing the fact that the maid is apparently unmarried, in contrast with Jane Shore, for whom one of the salient features of her story is the fact that she was married.<sup>71</sup> She also questions the line 'Two Brides, young & princely, / to Church have I led' (25-26), spoken by 'King Edward', which would appear to identify

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<sup>71</sup> [Anonymous], *A Courtly new Ballad of the Princely wooing of the faire Maid of London by King Edward* (London: Henry Gosson, 1640) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>; Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 1, pp. 181-85.

him with Edward I, both of whose marriages were to ‘princely’ women, in contrast to Edward IV’s non-royal marriage to Elizabeth Woodville. Yet Beith-Halahmi also acknowledges the ‘verbal echoes’ of Michael Drayton’s courtly poems about Jane Shore found in his *England’s Heroical Epistles* (1597).<sup>72</sup>

The identification of the female subject as ‘the...Maid of London’ also suggests that she is meant to be recognised as Shore. In an early scene of Heywood’s *Edward IV*, occurring before Jane has appeared on stage, Falconbridge, the leader of the rebels, demands that Matthew Shore reveal his identity, and on learning it responds: ‘What, not that Shore that hath the dainty wife, / ‘Shore’s wife’, the flower of London for her beauty?’ (Pt. 1, iv, 40-1). In this, a play which Richard Rowland has described as ‘so often appear[ing] to expect of its spectators extraordinary levels of localised knowledge’, Falconbridge’s words seem to be directed not just at Matthew Shore, but outwards towards the spectators of whom Heywood expected so much.<sup>73</sup> The reference to ‘Shore’s wife’ is likely a meta-theatrical allusion to the treatment of her story in *The True Tragedie of Richard III* (c.1594), but ‘flower of London’ is directed at local knowledge of a figure associated with the city. The ballad, then, appears to confuse the details of two, temporally distinct monarchs. The story of Jane Shore becomes both a moral exemplar and a trans-historical paradigm for the figure of the royal mistress. It is a history which has little concern with what ‘actually happened’, instead providing a narrative which is intended to be pertinent to the lives of the ballad audience.

As in ‘The Woful Lamentation’, the ballad’s two halves allow the ballad singer to embody two voices, in this case the voice of the anonymous Jane Shore, alongside King Edward. Juxtaposed in this way, the lower class subject, Jane Shore, is heard to speak with an authority that matches that of her monarch. Edward’s portion of the

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<sup>72</sup> Beith-Halahmi, ‘*Jane Shore*’, pp. 182-85.

<sup>73</sup> Rowland, *Thomas Heywood’s Theatre*, p. 62.

ballad consists of his attempts to persuade her to grant him her love and lie with him.

He voices an assumption based on a sense of his royal and elite status:

I grant that faire Ladies may poore men resist,  
 But Princes will conquer and love whom they list;  
 A King may command her to lie by his side,  
 Whose feature deserveth to be a King's Bride.       (33-36)

In claiming that a monarch may 'love whom they list', King Edward is both embodying his sexual prowess in his royal authority, and potentially subverting that same authority by proposing to cross the boundaries of the social hierarchy.

Edward's promise of the reward he will grant his lover if she does lie with him is framed in terms of social advancement; she will be 'advanced to princely degree' (20), and '[Her] head shall be decked with England's fair crown' (38). The honours that Edward would bestow on Jane Shore are otherwise figured in entirely material terms:

Thy garments most gallant with gold shall be wrought,  
  
 ...Great Ladies of honour shall 'tend on thy traine,  
 Most richly attired with scarlet in graine:  
 My chamber most princely thy person shall keepe,  
 Where Virgins with musicke shall rocke thee asleep.

...Kings' gallant Courts, where Princes do dwel,  
 Afford such sweet pastimes as ladies love wel.       (39, 41-44, 47-48)

The focus is all on the clothing she will wear, the ladies who will attend to her and the rooms in which she will live. This emphasis on the material rewards that Jane Shore will receive for agreeing to the king's demands demonstrates just how Edward is

defining the relationship, in terms of a commercial transaction.<sup>74</sup> Her love becomes a commodity which ‘for treasure, of thee may be bought’ (40), or else may be used to ‘purchase renown’ (37). It is simultaneously both the coin with which she may purchase material luxury, and the commodity which she is selling to the king, who, in presuming to know what ‘ladies love wel’ (48), constructs a version of femininity which is passive and devoid of agency, dependant on his royal power and authority.

In his opening line, King Edward has elevated the status of this ‘Maid of London’, proclaiming her to be a ‘Faire Angell of England!’ (1). His rhetoric serves to transform the object of his love into a national symbol, containing both a pun on England and on Angel. An ‘Angell’ is both the sign of the king’s appreciation of the Maid’s beauty, and a reference to the coin, the symbol of the terms within which he is defining their proposed relationship. England is the nation from which Jane Shore comes and to which she belongs, but she is also the beloved ‘of England’ in the person of the king himself. The nation is conflated with the body of the monarch, a twinning to which Jane Shore also refers in the final couplet of her reply: ‘Though England will give me no comfort at all, / Yet England shall yeeld me a sad buriall.’ (103-4). England is figured both as the king whose advances she wishes to rebuff, and the land where she will find her final rest in burial. As in all the Jane Shore ballads, this is a ‘politics of proximity’ which explicitly makes the nation available to the subject through the body of the monarch, and in which the ‘familiar’ relationship between monarch and subject is not confined to a private space. All three ballads place the relationship between Jane

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<sup>74</sup> *The Woful Lamentation* and Deloney’s ballad highlight the contrast between the elite status she enjoyed with Edward, and the poverty to which she was then reduced, in similarly material terms, obscuring any emotional attachment Jane might have had to Edward. Despite the references to the King’s ‘love’, their relationship is solely defined as a financial transaction. In *The Woful Lamentation*, Jane tells her audience: ‘My Gowns, best with pearly and gold, / Are turn’d to simple graments old; / My chains and jems and golden Rings, / To filthy rags and loathsome things.’ (119-22). Deloney’s version deploys the same trope: ‘My rich attire, / By fortunes yre, / To rotten rags and nakednesse / they are beaten.’ (64-67).

and Edward within a wider social context: the social hierarchy and the patriarchal values which uphold that hierarchy.

In seeking to rebuff the advances of the monarch in *A Courtly new Ballad*, Shore continually appeals to social authorities, in an attempt to preserve her place within the social hierarchy, insisting that ‘The name of a Princesse I never did crave’ (69). She appeals to authorities both paternal in her ‘old Father’s reverent teares / ...[and] his bright honour’ (89, 91), and religious: ‘The heavens forbid that when I should dye, / That any such sinne upon my soule lye’ (93-94). Her decision to preserve her chastity could be read as a form of rebellion against royal authority, since it is the king’s explicit ‘command’ that she is defying, but it is not a rebellion against the social hierarchy. Instead, in defying the king, she is attempting to uphold that hierarchy. Here, female agency is represented as a force which will uphold patriarchal values, the same values Jane Shore would impress upon the audience in the other ballads through the medium of a moral exemplar. At the same time, Shore is also able to speak to the monarch as an equal in familiar terms: ‘Oh, wanton King Edward! thy labour is vaine / To follow the pleasure thou canst not attaine’ (53-54), and the form of the ballad preserves her voice on an equal level of authority. In performance, both voices would be heard by an audience, with the narrative then left permanently unresolved. She is never heard agreeing to the king’s wishes and so, in contrast to both the historical Jane Shore and the figure presented by the other ballads, is left in permanent defiance of the monarch’s authority in an eternal present. Unlike the other ballads about Jane Shore, this ballad avoids passing a moral judgement over her, according the royal mistress a greater degree of sympathy as well as agency; yet she is still subject to the same patriarchal social hierarchy that provides the moralising content of the other ballads.

In addition, the ‘eternal present’ found in the anonymous Jane Shore ballad is analogous to the ‘achronic’ perspective, in which the difference between the past and

present is erased. Just as in the earlier 'King-Commoner' ballads, the king's rule is shown to operate through his personal and bodily relationships with the commoners he encounters. The temporary inversion of royal authority and mortification of the king's body can be interpreted as a form of anti-pastoral, but, as history, it also brings the king into bodily proximity with the lives of his subjects. If Daniel Woolf is right in his assertion that these ballads represent the history that commoners wished to remember, then it is one in which monarchical authority is idealised, but in which commoners have agency.

The different kinds of historical narrative which have been examined in this chapter are all forms of popular conservatism. This is most obvious in Thomas Deloney's 'chronicle' histories where royal power is an all-encompassing authority based on the land, to which all are subject, even the monarch. This separation of the person of the monarch from royal authority means that the monarch is less available to the commons than in the ballads about Jane Shore and the 'King-Commoner' tradition. Deloney's histories, derived from elite discourses, and adhering closer to recorded history, treats the commons, where they do appear, as a threat. Only where a rebellion can be defined as being in accord with royal authority, as in the confrontation between the Kentishmen and William, is it treated as legitimate. Despite superficially presenting the monarch as a force which can be negotiated with, and including satirical criticism of the social order, ultimately they present nothing which is a threat to social hierarchy.

## PROTESTANT HISTORIES AND COMMUNITIES OF FAITH IN RELIGIOUS BALLADS

In 1631-32, the ballad publisher, Henry Gosson, was brought before the High Commission, accused of printing a ballad ‘wherin all the histories of the bible [sic] were scurrilously abused’. Gosson’s defence, that it was ‘printed before he was born and he hath but renewed it’, as well as the one stanza which was recorded, strongly suggest that the reasons the ballad came to the attention of the High Commission lay more in changing standards about what was deemed acceptable than in its supposedly ‘scurrilous’ content.<sup>1</sup> What is clear from this exchange is that the Bible was understood not only as a religious text, which could be depended on for its authority and godliness, but that it was also a set of histories, where ‘contemporary history was part of a seamless historical fabric continuous from biblical times’.<sup>2</sup> Of all the multiple and competing historical narratives available to them, for most early modern English subjects, some of the most prevalent were drawn from the Bible. Daniel Woolf has observed that, for many people, episodes from the Bible would likely have been more familiar historical landmarks than the Norman Conquest or the signing of the Magna Carta.<sup>3</sup> Even those who did not have direct access to a Bible would still encounter it in a variety of forms and locations. Whereas before the Reformation, there were Mystery Plays and interludes, as well as images, both within and without the Church, after it, the Protestant emphasis on the scriptural word meant that biblical narratives might be encountered in a plethora of both oral and printed texts including sermons, psalms,

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 43, 74. From Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A128, printed in *Reports of Cases in the Courts of the Star Chamber and High Commission*, ed. by Samuel Rawson Gardiner (London: Camden Society, 1886) p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Paul J. Korsch, *Typologies in England, 1650-1820* (Princeton and Guildford: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 307.



almanacs and ballads. Both before and after the Reformation, the parish church was at the centre of community life.

The Bible supplied not only the narratives, which were both appropriated and disseminated through a wide range of popular and elite religious discourses, it also provided a framework within which England's recent history of changing religion, and conflict between Protestant and Catholic, could be understood and interpreted in explicitly providential terms. In this chapter, I explore the interweaving of biblical narrative, recent religious history, and 'godly' Protestant polemic in a series of ballads dating from 1559 to 1624, many of which, as the case of Henry Gosson illustrates, remained in print for some years to be reappropriated by later generations, in a similar fashion to the news ballads discussed in my opening chapter. The 'godly' ballad is another category which has been created by modern criticism. Recent criticism has tended either to argue for a decline in 'godly' ballads in this period, or else to dismiss their role in popular religion on the basis that they convey little that is authentically Protestant. In contrast, I will chart a move from a militant godliness to a more enduring concern with Christian community and everyday practice, rooted in scripture. The first section will focus on a series of ballads published within the opening years of Elizabeth's reign, which provides access to a version of popular history which seeks to construct a Protestant nation in response to a threatening Catholic 'other'. The following section examines different versions of Protestant polemic and their connections to a threatened Protestant community of faith, which is no longer so easily unified, whilst the final section focuses on the way in which scriptural history was appropriated for ends which were directed towards the present.

As with every other aspect of popular culture, popular religion is a subject which is both elusive and difficult to satisfactorily define. The beliefs and practices found in popular religion do not make up a single coherent culture, but rather borrow from and

draw upon a multitude of sources, encompassing a range of beliefs which were both radical and orthodox.<sup>4</sup> J. W. Martin has forcefully argued for a stark division between ‘official’ and ‘popular’ religious cultures: ‘Official religion, directed by a clerical elite, sought order, coherence and continuity; popular religion, dominated by laymen, was more fluid, more focussed on the immediate worries of the believer, much more concerned with religious practice than codified doctrine’.<sup>5</sup> While his emphasis on practice over doctrine and the ‘immediate worries of the believer’ as the defining characteristics of popular religion has considerable merit, Martin’s focus on religious radicalism misses how popular religion may be just as focused on ideals of ‘order, coherence and continuity’ as official religion.

In considering the changes in religion which occurred in the sixteenth century, we face the problem of what Christopher Marsh has defined as the ‘compliance conundrum’, the problem of how to account for why there was large-scale acceptance of changes with which many in local communities may have disagreed.<sup>6</sup> Despite the undoubted significance of the changes brought about by Protestantism, the English state lacked the means to enforce a zealous Reformation. Reform occurred in a piecemeal fashion over a number of decades, encompassing several reversals of official policy. Christopher Haigh has characterised this period as witnessing not one but several

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press* (London: Faber, 1979); Stephen Foster, *Notes from the Caroline Underground* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978); Martin Ingram, ‘From Reform to Toleration: Popular Religious Cultures in England, 1540-1690’, in *Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1850*, ed. by Tim Harris (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan Press, 1995), pp. 95-123; Joseph W. Martin, *Religious Radicals in Tudor England* (London and Ronceverte: Hambeldon Press, 1989); Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke and London: MacMillan Press, 1998); Reay, *Popular Cultures*, pp. 71-87; Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin, 1973).

<sup>5</sup> Martin, *Religious Radicals*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Marsh, *Popular Religion*, pp. 197-98.

English Reformations.<sup>7</sup> As well as disruptions, there were also continuities, so that ‘old energies and impulses could find expression through new objects’, and the overriding mindset was a basic obedience inherent in an ‘ethic of neighbourliness’ encompassing both a moral sense about what constituted right living and feelings of community. Moreover, this ‘ethic of neighbourliness’ was one which transcended religious differences, whether Catholic and Protestant, or the Puritan ‘godly’ and the multitude.<sup>8</sup>

Peter Burke’s influential ‘Reform of popular culture’ thesis has tended to place Protestantism in polar opposition to popular culture. This is in large part because, throughout early modern Europe, it was religious reformers at all levels of society, who were the primary instigators of change in communal sociability and sport.<sup>9</sup> However, there was an earlier period in the sixteenth century when at least some Protestant reformers were open to the idea of using the popular pastimes and cultural practices to which Protestantism later came to be opposed. In the 1530s, the early Protestant evangelist Robert Wisdom advised his Essex followers that they should ‘take the scripture in their hands...to talk, commune and reason of it’ when they gathered on Sundays and other holy days in the apparently unlikely location of the alehouse.<sup>10</sup> When challenged on the suitability of reading the scripture in such an environment, Wisdom argued that reading and debating the scripture in such a location would serve to prevent people from getting drunk. In the same period, under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, John Bale could be found writing popular interludes containing Protestant

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<sup>7</sup> Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Marsh, *Popular Religion*, pp. 199-209.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture*, pp. 207-43. As Burke of course acknowledges, reform in this period was carried out equally under the auspices of Catholic as well as Protestant reformers, part of a wider movement for cultural reformation.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke and London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1988), p. 107.

polemic and William Gray composed anti-Papal ballads.<sup>11</sup> Robert Wisdom lived at a time when Protestantism was still a religion of protest. By the end of the sixteenth century, it would have been considerably harder to find a Protestant reformer willing to advise people to meet in a tavern. The alehouse was part of a popular culture which was, by then, less welcome to the developing English Protestant culture.

Patrick Collinson's narrative of the development of Protestantism throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries depicts a shift from 'iconoclasm' to a more extreme 'iconophobia' in the middle decades of Elizabeth's reign. Collinson has identified the year 1580 as an approximate dividing line, when Protestant publicists turned their backs on the cultural forms they had previously used for polemical and didactic ends. This gradual hardening of the viewpoint of the more radical Protestants, and the development of what came to be known as Puritanism from the 1560s onwards, came about partly in reaction to the realisation that Elizabeth and the religious settlement which she enacted were not going to take reform as far as had been hoped, and that the 'ungodly multitude' that made up the majority of English society had little enthusiasm for further reforming efforts. For Collinson, this separation of Puritanism from the mainstream of English culture ultimately led to an internal split within the Church of England, a split which reached its apotheosis in the events of the Civil War.<sup>12</sup>

In her influential study of cheap religious print, Tessa Watt has followed Collinson's narrative in arguing for a decline in the 'godly' religious ballad over the same period, once committed Protestant reformers and clergymen, who had been willing to author ballads in an earlier 'gospelling' period, withdrew from this popular

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<sup>11</sup> John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 48-49. Whether such officially sanctioned texts can strictly be defined as part of a 'popular culture' is of course problematic. The rejection of Latin in favour of vernacular literature suggests a desire for their works to be available to a wider audience.

<sup>12</sup> Collinson, *Birthpangs*, pp. 127-55; Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation*, The Steinton Lecture (Reading: University of Reading, 1986).

culture. In Watt's analysis, the decline of the 'godly' ballad coincided with the consolidation of the ballad trade, formalised in 1624 with the establishment of accumulated copyrights for the popular ballad stock, owned by the five ballad partners. In renewing their 'godly' ballad stock, the ballad partners tended to rely on the reprinting of 'old favourites', texts which were already familiar to, and presumably also the most popular with, a broad public. These were chiefly stories derived from the Old and New Testament, narratives which contained practical aphorisms for social morality and 'godly' living, and ballads concerned with death and salvation on a personal level. Explicitly polemical religious ballads, or those concerned with a more widespread call for social and religious reform, tended to be much more ephemeral, with the exception of a handful of ballads concerned with Protestant martyrs such as Anne Askew, or Catherine Willoughby, the Duchess of Suffolk and Marian exile.<sup>13</sup>

Watt's narrative has, in turn, been revised by Ian Green, who has used an alternative sample to show that, contrary to Watt's assertion about the decline of the 'godly' ballad, popular ballads were written on religious subjects, not only in an imagined 'heyday' of the mid-sixteenth century, but throughout the period to the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> Where both historians are largely in agreement, however, is that most of the religious ballads in their surveys lack doctrinal clarity, and show little evidence of disseminating anything that might be regarded as specifically 'Protestant' teaching. What little religious sentiment is expressed is predominantly concerned with either a call for repentance, as in 'The Clarke of Bodnam' with its vision of Judgement Day, or else with social morality, such as that expressed in 'A right Godly and Christian A.B.C.', which teaches singers and hearers the proper behaviour for an authentically 'godly' community and is discussed below. The scriptural stories that are transformed

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<sup>13</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 55-127.

<sup>14</sup> Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 448-72.

into ballads – such as the ballads of ‘Constant Susannah’ or ‘Tobias of Ninive’ – appear to have been chosen primarily because of an interest in the sensational or magical details of the stories they retell. In the Tobias ballad, for example, there is repeated emphasis on the magical fish which allows Tobias to win his bride and restore his father’s sight, but little about his relationship with God. Similarly, ballads which recount the stories of Protestant martyrs, such as Anne Askew, reduce their subjects to generic victims of popery, or else, as in the case of Thomas Deloney’s ballad of the Duchess of Suffolk, transform the narrative of her exile into an adventure story.

Watt is more charitable than Green in her treatment of religious ballads, seeing many of these religious stories as being assimilated into what she defines as a secular ‘popular folksong tradition’, and arguing that religious balladry of this period represents a ‘distinctively ‘post-Reformation’, if not thoroughly ‘Protestant’ world view.<sup>15</sup> This ‘post-Reformation...world view’ is similar to Christopher Haigh’s term ‘parish Anglican’, coined to encompass the beliefs and practices of the majority of the English population at the end of the sixteenth century. This communal Protestantism is contrasted with the militant and reforming godliness that came to be defined as Puritanism.<sup>16</sup> Patrick Collinson may be correct about Puritanism being the logical outcome of Protestantism, yet this was clearly not the majority experience, which was able to accommodate Protestant beliefs with vernacular and popular cultures.<sup>17</sup> Alexandra Walsham has identified a ‘corpus of Protestant legend and folklore’ which demonstrates not only that Protestantism was not inherently hostile to oral tradition, but that it could also draw on pre-Reformation culture.<sup>18</sup> As Thomas Betteridge has argued,

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<sup>15</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 126.

<sup>16</sup> Haigh, *English Reformations*, pp. 280-290.

<sup>17</sup> Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 95.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Walsham, ‘Reformed Folklore? Cautionary Tales and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England’ in *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1850*, ed. by Adam Fox and Daniel R. Woolf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 173-95.

in the context of a discussion of a pre-Reformation text, the assumption that some 'popular religious writing...was in some ways too materialistic or performative to be truly Christian...seems to rely entirely on the assumption that a particular form of Protestantism can be regarded as normative in terms of proper Christian practises'.<sup>19</sup>

Just as Protestantism should not be seen as exclusively opposed to the popular culture of the period, neither should it be imagined that its doctrinal emphasis on the scriptural word meant that it was exclusively focused on the inward faith of individuals. The arguments made for the reform of popular pastimes are inescapably social in origin. *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583) compiled by Phillip Stubbes, one of the best known polemical texts which argued against popular pastimes, is motivated by a concern for the whole of society. Individual sin is comprehended within the terms of what it means for the larger community and therefore becomes a public concern.<sup>20</sup> Ramie Targoff has shown how, contrary to the binary which would see Catholicism concerned with the collective and Protestantism solely concerned with individual worship, the practice of common prayer, represented most forcefully by *The Book of Common Prayer*, works to create a model of community based on uniform prayer.<sup>21</sup> This is aided by the fact that the liturgy was now in English and thus comprehensible to all.

The practice of psalm singing, brought back from the Continent by returning Marian exiles, is equally a part of this communal worship, with a number of sources attesting to its popularity, as it was enthusiastically taken up by many English congregations. Initially, there was continuity between ballads and psalms, with psalms

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<sup>19</sup> Thomas Betteridge, *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 2004), p. 37, n. 48.

<sup>20</sup> Collinson, *Birthpangs*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>21</sup> Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

being set to ballad tunes.<sup>22</sup> For some, this practice was driven by a desire to replace secular songs with more religious sentiments. The prefatory verses of Miles Coverdale's *Goostly psalmes and spirituall songes drawn out of the holy Scripture* (1535) with their attack on 'balettes of fylthynes' certainly attest to this early hope, a hope which was to be forcefully repeated by reformers in later generations.<sup>23</sup> A majority, however, whether consciously reformist or not, seem to have held the view that psalms and ballads could exist in parallel, both directed towards the same religious ends, as the lasting success of the Sternhold and Hopkins translation of the psalms into English ballad metre surely demonstrates.<sup>24</sup> In this chapter, I will explore different tonalities of religious ballads, arguing that they were crucial in the ongoing construction of a community of faith, and a key arena for a wide audience to reflect on, and insert themselves into, a national history and into wider providential narratives, derived from biblical histories.

### **'A Fort was made Gods truth to shield': Voicing the Protestant Nation**

The ballads which appropriate religious history do so for very specific ends. Whether they take the form of biblical narrative or polemic, the purpose of their use of religious histories is directed towards defining a religious community and to simultaneously both address and speak on behalf of that community. Thomas Betteridge has shown how history had an important role in the realisation of religious change, serving to justify the policies of each regime.<sup>25</sup> One of the most influential books of the period, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* was first printed in 1563, and subsequently revised and expanded

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<sup>22</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 55-57.

<sup>23</sup> Coverdale, *Goostly psalmes* in EEBO, sig.A1

<sup>24</sup> See Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 503-33.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformation, 1530-83* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).



in successive editions, and also made available in cheap abridgements. It opens with an account of the Primitive Church and its persecutions – an account which is dependent on the Bible for its authority – but devotes the bulk of its many pages to chronicling the Marian martyrs, deriving its apocalyptic vision of the ages of history from the Book of Revelation. For Foxe, the history of the world is understood explicitly in terms derived from the text of the Bible. The apocalyptic narrative structure he employs transforms the history of the Church into a predetermined plot, in which the triumph of God over the Antichrist follows persecution of the followers of the true Church of Christ. Exile and martyrdom, therefore, become a divinely appointed vocation, conferring on the martyr the membership of an ‘invisible’ community of faith. This true Church of Christ should ideally overlap with the visible Church and by extension the state, when they are governed by a ‘godly’ monarch. In times of persecution, such as under Queen Mary, loyalty to this invisible community of faith can only be maintained through martyrdom and exile.<sup>26</sup> Whilst the cost, even of an abridged text, would have severely restricted its readership, Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* still acquired considerable cultural authority by the end of Elizabeth’s reign. Many of Foxe’s sources were the individual accounts of the martyrs themselves and his text’s subsequent reception contributed to the construction of England’s status as an Elect nation.<sup>27</sup>

Many of the polemical ballads which appeared throughout the early decades of Elizabeth’s reign, such as Thomas Preston’s *A Lamentation from Rome, how the Pope doth bewayle, That the Rebelles in England can not preuayle* – another of the many ballads produced in response to the Northern Rebellion – are clearly inspired by

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<sup>26</sup> Collinson, *Birthpangs*, pp. 1-27; Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, pp. 253-68. See also John R. Knott, *Discourses of Martyrdom in English Literature, 1563-1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Jesse Launder, ‘Foxe’s *Books of Martyrs*: Printing and Popularizing the *Acts and Monuments*’, in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. by Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 69-92.

Protestant nationalism similar to that of John Foxe.<sup>28</sup> The Pope here is representative of the threatening Catholic ‘other’. As the ballad’s title makes clear, however, this was an enemy located within the English nation as well as without. An earlier sequence of ballads, all printed in the earliest years of Elizabeth’s reign, is more clearly engaged in the task of rhetorically constructing the image of an indivisible Protestant nation, able to withstand the Catholic threat, which is placed outside the English nation. Either because they were explicitly derived from Foxe, or more likely because they were the work of individuals who self-consciously defined themselves as members of the same invisible community of faith, these ballads deploy a similar rhetorical construction of the Protestant nation state to that found in *Acts and Monuments*. William Birche, author of *A Songe betwene the Quene’s Majestie and Englande*, was also a Puritan pastor.<sup>29</sup> Of the other three ballads, one, simply entitled *A Newe Ballade*, is credited only to ‘R.M.’, otherwise anonymous, whilst the other two ballads are both the work of the printer and author John Awdelay.<sup>30</sup> All four of these ballads are a direct response to the new monarch and, more specifically, to the religious settlement which she enacted, as well as the Catholicism of the recently concluded reign of Mary I. As the representative of the English nation as a whole, it is the new monarch who becomes the key figure around whom these ballads construct their narratives.

The ballads of John Awdelay describe England’s recent history through allegory. In its opening line, his first ballad *The Wonders of England* identifies 1553 as

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas Preston, *A Lamentation from Rome, how the Pope doth bewayle, That the Rebelles in England can not preuayle* (London: Wylliam Gryffith, 1570) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>29</sup> William Birche, *A Songe betwene the Quene’s Majestie and Englande* (London: William Pickering, 1564) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>. The ballad was originally entered in the Stationers’ Register, 1558-9. See *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640*, ed. by Edward Arber, 5 volumes (London: 1875), 1, p. 96.

<sup>30</sup> R. M., *A Newe Ballade* (London: [1560]) in Lilly, *Collection of Seventy-Nine Black-Letter Ballads*, p. 262-63. John Awdelay, *The Wonders of England* (London: John Awdelay, 1559); *The cruel assault of Gods Fort* (London: John Adelay, 1560) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

the point in history when the English nation became subject to the effects of ‘Gods wrath’ (1), which resulted in the death of Edward VI and the subsequent persecution of Protestants under the rule of his sister, Mary. God’s commands in the first stanza are clear:

...on England now I shall,  
 Plage Prince, Prophet, and People all,  
 For contemptes sake  
 Go Death inclose their Kyng in clay,  
 And Sunne withdraw the light of day,  
 And darkenes make. (5-10)

The reason given for this punishment – ‘contempte’ – echoes the complaint made in 1553 by the Protestant martyr and preacher Lawrence Saunders, that ‘popery would again be inflicted on the realm as punishment for its lukewarm response to the preaching of the gospel’.<sup>31</sup> The darkness invoked here, and subsequently, could be related to the ninth plague of Egypt from Exodus (10.21-29), and is described in terms which emphasise its unnatural state: ‘The sun thus quentch, & day made dark / And Cockes in coopes from croing kept’ (40-41). This homely detail, about the cocks being unable to crow because the sun no longer rises in England, relates the larger national history with which the ballad is concerned to the daily concerns of many in its audience.

This unnatural darkness is not only a punishment sent by God, but a metaphor for the spiritual darkness which Awdelay sees as a result of Mary’s re-imposition of Catholicism. The cover of darkness allows Catholics to ‘pour...their poison abroad’ (35)

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<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 202.

and to reverse the changes instituted during the reign of Edward VI. The Catholics are described in terms of an invasion by monstrous beasts:

The Bats & Owles from holes out came

Wolues and Beares, and cruel Caim,

Did England invade.

...And nightly Uermin rulde the rost (18-20, 22)

In contrast to this monstrous bestiary, England's Protestant martyrs are metamorphosed into 'Birds... / [which] straight were brought to firy post, / Or els to Lolers tower tost, / And kept in cage' (23, 25-7). Protestantism is 'Gods light' (63), which has forsaken England with the death of Edward, and which prompts the Catholic imposition of,

Mershial law forthwith in hand,

Against al such as would withstand,

Their wicked raygne and cruell band,

And Gods part take (64-67)

The reference to 'Lolers tower', site of the matrydom of Lollards, seeks to appropriate that earlier religious movement to the Protestant cause. It deploys a rhetorical strategy, also present in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, obscuring the facts of the doctrinal differences between the two sects.

In describing the Protestants' responses to the violence meted out by the Catholic state under Mary, Awdelay's ballad constructs a similar community of faith to that found in Foxe. The truth, which Protestantism is held to possess, is endorsed and vindicated by suffering, and it is the suffering of England's Protestants which effects the relief of the country. In the penultimate stanza, God himself acknowledges:

Oh England, England sore doest thou stray,

My Martirs bloud shed out thys day,

In wofull plyght.

The infantes yong that fatherles be.

Wyth wydowes poore crying to me,

Wythdrawes my spyte. (95-100)

Elizabeth embodies God's purpose in bringing about the restoration of Protestantism, but God has acted only because of the suffering of the Protestant martyrs.

This invisible community of faith is more forcibly realised in Awdelay's second ballad *The cruel assault of Gods Fort*, where the allegorical fort represents the foundation and presence of Protestantism within the English nation. Just as his earlier ballad does, the opening stanza situates the allegory within history: 'By Edward the sixt, of England kyng, / A Fort was made gods truth to shield' (1-2). The bulk of the ballad again allegorises the return to Catholicism under Mary, this time not as an invasion of monstrous beasts, but as an assault by military forces. The Catholic forces are led by the Bishops of Winchester and London, respectively 'generall Gardner' (17) and 'Captaine Boner' (18), with Bourne, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, as their standard bearer. In contrast, the fort's defenders are personified not only by a roll call of prominent martyrs, including, 'Rydley...Latimer...[and] Cranmer' (70, 73), but also by the ordinary soldiers: 'And al the captaines so cruelly slaine: / The soldiers therof with courage stout, / Kept yet the walles with might and maine' (98-100). The defence of the fort is explicitly reliant on the strength of this metaphorical community of faith, one which is predominantly made up of members of a lower social status. Where Protestants are transformed into figures with a military rank, they are explicitly contrasted with their higher status Catholic opponents: 'doctour Martin, as clark of army / With Doctour Story, the master Gonner: / ...were as trusty, / As Gardner, Bourne or byshop Bonner'

(25-29). The Protestants not only derive their authority from their suffering as martyrs, but also from their explicitly lower social status. This is yet another echo of Foxe, where the majority of the martyrs whose deaths are recorded in *Acts and Monuments* are individuals who came from below the ranks of the gentry.<sup>32</sup>

The lower-ranking soldiers even presume to speak on behalf of Elizabeth at the ballad's end, when they convey their demands to the defeated Catholic forces. Although it is framed as an offering from the newly crowned monarch, and as an assertion of her authority – 'Behold our Quene doth profer here, / To graunt ye peace to chaunge your moode' (159-60) – what is actually heard is the collective voice of the ordinary soldiers speaking on behalf of their community. As in *The Wonders of England*, it is the suffering of the Protestant defenders and their prayers to God which are shown to have prompted the deity to end the conflict:

Though thus the Fort, was almost gone,  
 By cruel assault of enmyes blode:  
 Yet some within the Fort alone,  
 To God did crye / as Lord keepe thy holde.  
 Then God did send his slaue Death down  
 Into the Papists host among (137-42)

Authority ultimately rests with God. Although Elizabeth is clearly identified with the Protestant community, described as 'our Quene' (163) and a 'godly captaine' (148), she is never named in the ballad, and possesses little agency of her own. Her only appearance in the ballad's narrative is as a miraculous manifestation on the tower's battlements, holding a flag of truce and demanding that the Catholic forces 'yelde to me

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<sup>32</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, pp. 264-265.

right heyre of England' (152). She has been explicitly sent by God, and is as much his servant as is Death. *The Wonders of England* makes the same point. Although Elizabeth is named in that ballad, she is again commanded by God: 'Elizabeth thys Realme nowe guyde, / My wyll in thee doo not thou hide' (104-5). Both ballads finish with the voice of the people of England calling on God to preserve the monarch: 'So God wil spare vs our Quene long, / So God will make our land encrease: / So God wyl builde our fort so strong' (181-83). As 'our Quene', Elizabeth is held to be both guide and subject to the Protestant community of faith; it is their suffering, and their prayers, which have allowed her to ascend the throne, through the agency of divine Providence.

That the allegorical Protestant victory depicted by Awdelay is shown to be divinely inspired has another parallel with Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. There, the violence visited on the persecutors of Protestant martyrs is shown to be dependent on God's actions, as the proper behaviour for martyrs is passive resistance.<sup>33</sup> So, too, in Awdelay's ballad, the violence which brings about victory, is carried out by God in defence of the inhabitants of the fort. Similarly, the choice of a fort for the metaphorical representation of Protestantism, which was probably derived from scripture, underlines how the community of faith represented in both Foxe and in Awdelay's ballads does not entirely coincide with the state.<sup>34</sup> Although the final lines of *The cruel assault of Gods fort* strive to conflate the images of the English land and the metaphorical fort, this indivisible nation has been undermined in the opening stanzas, when it is situated in recent English history. The fort, specifically attached to the preceding reign of Edward VI, is contingent on the reign of that monarch and metaphorically situated only *within* England, and so cannot be representative of the nation as a whole. The reference to

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<sup>33</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, pp. 256-60.

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 25-6: 'We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks'. However, Tessa Watt has suggested that Awdelay's more immediate inspiration was a ballad from *Tottel's miscellany* (1557), *Thassault of Cupide upon the fort where the louers hart lay wounded and how he was taken*, (Watt, *Cheap Print*, p.89).

‘Smithfield’ (90) being located within the fort even suggests that it is a metaphor for London. In the above quotation, it is the English nation which is addressed and reproved by God for its treatment of the Protestant martyrs, suggesting clearly that the Protestant community of faith is distinct from the state. This split is one which Awdelay more successfully avoids in his earlier ballad. The darkness depicted in *The Wonders of England* encompasses the nation as a whole and not just a beleaguered Protestant community of faith. This is made clear in the allusions to the harvest failures and political troubles which afflicted the final years of Mary’s reign: ‘Losses of townes and Holdes came on, / Ruine of people baganne eche where: / [and] Richmen [were] made beggers’ (81-83). The presence of Catholicism within the state is shown to have brought about a universal degradation of the whole of the English nation.

The reference to the final loss of Calais, in 1558, emphasises that this is a national indignity, combining nationalistic and religious discourses. The Catholics are, not only monstrous, but ‘Forayne’ (55) and ‘invade[rs]’ (20). Mary’s marriage to King Phillip of Spain is defined as an attempt to preserve Catholicism within England: ‘To match our Quene and Crowne royal / All for their Pope’ (56-57). A match that had been strongly desired by Mary, against the advice of many of her councillors, is here transformed and reduced to the status of a Catholic plot, threatening England’s national borders. The Pope is ‘*their*’ Pope because for Awdelay, Catholicism is a foreign, un-English import, antithetical to England’s national interests. Here, Awdelay elides the differences between the community of faith he constructs elsewhere in the ballad and the English nation as a whole, as though their interests are one and the same.

The remaining ballads in this group of four take a different approach to the issue of depicting the monarch and the English nation. To start with, neither has any difficulty with naming either Elizabeth, or her sister Mary, who goes unnamed in both of Awdelay’s ballads: this, despite the fact that it is predominantly Mary’s reign which



they are allegorising. As the title implies, Birche's *A Songe betwene the Quene's Majestie and Englande*, takes the form of a dialogue between Elizabeth and a personification of the English nation. The dialogue in the ballad is chiefly a means for her to recount the treatment she endured under Mary, and the moral and spiritual lessons she has drawn from her imprisonment. Here, there is a direct link to Foxe in the exaggerated details of how Elizabeth was 'tombled and tost / From piller to post, / And prisoner in the tower' (34-36). Thomas S. Freeman and Helen Hackett have both noted that this brief account of Elizabeth's imprisonment constructs the event in terms which are almost identical to the way in which it is represented in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.<sup>35</sup> The reasons for the ballad's exaggeration are the same as they are for Foxe, to emphasise the similarity between Elizabeth's situation and that of the Protestant martyrs. However, unlike John Awdelay's ballads, William Birche makes no attempt to represent, metaphorically or otherwise, the horrors of martyrdom, save for a single brief reference to the 'stormes' (29) that are now past, and which were the cause of the separation of the lovers that are the monarch and the nation.

The reality of martyrdom is obscured by the sense of romance that the ballad constructs between monarch and nation. Throughout the ballad, Elizabeth is characterised as 'Bessy' which aids the impression that this is a romantic drama in which the English nation has authority over the monarch. Although the gender of the two protagonists is reversed, this use of a personification of the nation serves as an echo of the figure of 'Widowe England' who is persecuted by 'Papists' in John Bale's play *King Johan* (c.1538).<sup>36</sup> This gender reversal and the terms of the ballad's romantic

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas S. Freeman, 'Providence and Prescription: The Account of Elizabeth in Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'', in *The Myth of Elizabeth*, ed. by Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2003), pp. 27-55 (p.28); Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Saint Martin's Press) p.252, n. 49.

<sup>36</sup> John Bale, *King Johan*, in *Four Morality Plays*, ed. by Peter Happé (Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), pp. 317-430.

drama mean that this is a masculine nation which has authority over the female monarch. England addresses Elizabeth as ‘my dear Lady’ (5) and describes her as ‘mine heir’ (14), to which she offers her hand and replies, ‘I am thine both with mind and hart’ (21). Throughout, Elizabeth is characterised with the diminutive ‘Bessy’, creating the impression that she is in need of the patriarchal authority represented by the nation, and also figuratively placing her amongst the commons. England, in the role of a romantic figure who seduces Elizabeth, is also a version of ‘Merry Old England, that fabled utopia where men and women of different rank mix freely in the English countryside’.<sup>37</sup>

As already noted, Mary is mentioned by name in this ballad, but still has little agency. Her name appears only in the context of establishing the authority of Elizabeth’s royal lineage as both the daughter of Henry VIII and half-sister to the previous monarch. Mary has even less agency than the ordinary people under her rule, when England claims, somewhat improbably, about Elizabeth’s imprisonment: ‘...the commons did not know, / Nor no man wuld them shew, / The chief cause of your imprisonment’ (76-78). The implication is that, if only the commons had known the full truth, the Catholic state would have had to release the princess. As with John Awdelay’s ballads, what authority Elizabeth possesses is shown to derive from others: the nation, and the people who make up that nation, the authority of her birth, and, once more, the authority of God. Elizabeth entreats England to ‘be obedient / To God’s holy commaundement, / And my proceedinges embrace’ (103-5), and in the final stanza, the voices of both the nation and the monarch join together to call for, ‘All honor, laud, and praise, / Be to the Lord God alwaies’ (127-28).

The final ballad in this group of four, simply titled *A Newe Ballad*, is also the most clearly concerned with the nation’s past. It attempts to construct an explicitly Protestant history, in which the troubles of England, or more specifically of the

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<sup>37</sup> D. Palmer, ‘Secret Familiarities’, pp. 294-95.

monarchy, are shown to be exclusively caused by the malign influence of Rome and the Catholic priesthood. Whilst in John Awdelay's ballads, Elizabeth appears as a quasi-divine figure, both her reign and her person sanctified by God, in the ballads of William Birche and 'R.M.', she is accessible to her subjects, who both directly address her and appropriate her subjectivity in the voices of these ballads. It is another example of the 'politics of proximity' that Daryl Palmer has found in representations of Edward IV.<sup>38</sup> In *A Newe Ballad*, individual stanzas describe the supposed assassination of William II by Walter Tyrell, the mythical poisoning of King John by a monk, the forced starvation of Richard II, and the loss of the French lands won by Henry V during the reign of his son, which is claimed to be the fault of the influence of the Cardinal of Winchester on the 'good and simple man' Henry VI (32). William II was presumably chosen as an example because of his conflicts with the Catholic Church, although there is no direct mention of this in the stanza that treats his reign.

Directly addressed to '...dere Lady Elysaabeth' (1), the ballad takes its form from medieval advice literature, offering examples from history to the newly crowned monarch. It enables its singer to take up a subject position in a complex imaginative space in which they are able to address Elizabeth on behalf of their community. It provides a fantasy of mastery, in which an ordinary subject is able to imagine that they might be heard by their monarch. The history, which is presented to Elizabeth in this ballad, is one composed of borrowings from apocryphal or popular historical tales and rhetorical sleights of hand. The death by starvation of Richard II is described in terms which obscure the political realities of his reign: '...they handled him full hard, / And famished him till his lyfe was donne' (27-28). Implicitly the unnamed 'they' who are held responsible for Richard's death are members of the Catholic priesthood which is condemned throughout the rest of the ballad.

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<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 3.

In its second half, the ballad turns to more recent Tudor monarchs and Elizabeth is advised to follow the examples of her father and her brother Edward, ‘the good and worthy child’ (44). Henry VIII is described as the ‘prince of victory’ who ‘deposed them [the Catholic priesthood] all straight / When he had spyed their idolatry’ (38-40), transforming him into a Protestant champion. As in the ballads of Awdelay and Birche, the source of Elizabeth’s authority lies in God. The penultimate stanza begins with the line ‘Then God send us your noble grace’ (55) whereas the preceding stanzas have all begun with the formula ‘Then came...’. In a strategy similar to that of William Birche, the ballad does identify Mary by name, but refuses to identify her with the actual events which characterised her reign:

Then came your syster, Quene Mary;

And for five yeres that she did rayne,

All that was done [by] Edward and Hary,

Her wicked priestes made it but vaine:

They brought in agayne the Romyshe lore, Lady, Lady,

Which was banished long before, moste dere Lady. (49-54)

By placing the responsibility for, what it sees as the wickedness of her reign, on the priesthood, the ballad not only denies Mary any agency, but also absolves her of any responsibility for or guilt over the return to Catholicism. The presence of Mary clearly poses a problem for all three ballad authors. Whatever the opinions held by them or the audience they were writing for, she was still the half-sister of the recently-crowned monarch. In attempting to avoid offence, ballad authors choose different strategies. Either Mary is almost entirely elided from the depiction of her reign, as in the ballads produced by John Awdelay, or else care is taken to associate her with Elizabeth and to downplay her role in persecuting Protestantism.

In contrast to the other ballads discussed above, *A Newe Ballade* makes little direct reference to Elizabeth's subjects. Instead, it works to depict a Protestant nation through its voice. Unlike William Birche's ballad, where there are two speakers in dialogue, the narrator – or rather the voice which offers its advice to Elizabeth – is never explicitly named. At the beginning of the ballad, the speaker proclaims 'I counsayle thee', but by the ballad's end, it is 'us' to whom God has sent the providential Elizabeth, and 'we' who are 'all bound to praye' for the life of the monarch. The voice of the ballad, therefore, becomes the voice of the community which it represents: Elizabeth's subjects, the whole of the newly Protestant English nation. The singer of this ballad is explicitly appropriating a subject position which possesses the authority to proffer advice to the monarch. This close relationship between the singer and the monarch is even more explicit in William Birche's ballad, where the double subject position of the ballad's dialogue allows the ballad singer to appropriate the voice not only of the indivisible Protestant English nation, but also of the monarch herself.<sup>39</sup> Whilst John Awdelay's ballads make use of the third person, the voice which is most dominant is that of the Protestant community of faith represented by the soldiers in the final stanzas of *The cruel assault of Gods fort*.

The repeated references to John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* in my discussion of these four ballads are not meant to imply that these authors appropriated Foxe's work directly. Nor am I attempting to construct a model of 'top-down' cultural authority in the relationship between these more ephemeral texts and the larger, now canonical, work of Protestant historiography. Thomas Freeman makes just such an assumption when he suggests that William Birche must have been drawing on Foxe's account of Elizabeth's imprisonment in *A Songe betwene the Quene's Majestie and Englande*. The

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<sup>39</sup> As Bruce Smith has observed, this was an exception compared to other ballads produced later in her reign. The ballads examined in Chapter 2, which depict Elizabeth's review of the troops at Tilbury, are rather more circumspect about allowing the ballad singer to appropriate the Queen's subject position (B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, pp. 193-194).

ballad was entered into the Stationers' Register in 1558-59, but since the only surviving text dates from 1564, Freeman assumes that it must have been revised to incorporate Foxe's words. This, however, is to impose a later cultural assumption onto the period of the early 1560s. Foxe himself appears to have embraced the idea of ballads being used as vehicles for Protestant polemic. In *Acts and Monuments*, he recorded fifty stanzas of *The Fantasie of Idolatory*, an example of such polemics, and notes approvingly that such songs were 'common singers against the sacraments and ceremonies'.<sup>40</sup>

Conceivably, it was Foxe who appropriated a turn of phrase from Birche's text. Birche himself was a Puritan pastor, someone whom Foxe was likely to respect and may even have known. This is not to argue for lines of influence which are in any case difficult to prove, but rather to argue that all of the authors referred to in this discussion self-consciously identified with the same Protestant community of faith, the same community that they were attempting to construct in their works. Richard Helgerson has characterised this grouping as a textual community, entry into which was achieved through knowledge of the scriptural word and through writing: an 'imaginary community whose reality is conferred by the deferral of the sign to the signified'.<sup>41</sup> It would surely be more surprising if its members were not deploying many of the same tropes, than if they were. The use of the ballad form extends this notion of a purely textual community. These are shared tropes on the borders of orality, writing and print, relying as much on personal interaction and influence as on the authority of the printed word.

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Collinson, *Iconoclasm to Iconophobia*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 266.

### **‘O England be Vigilant’: Patrolling the Borders of the Protestant Nation**

Referring to the polemical ballads inspired by the Northern Rebellion in 1569, some of which were examined in Chapter 2, Bruce Smith observes that ‘Anti-Catholic ballads provide another occasion for declaring and patrolling borders’.<sup>42</sup> Yet for those reformers who came to be identified as Puritans, the borders they wished to patrol were steadily shrinking. Neither were these borders impervious, as the events of the Northern Rebellion clearly demonstrated. As was seen in the other ballads on the Rebellion, the source of the conflict came from within the English nation, thus indicating a split which both the ballads by Awdelay celebrating Elizabeth’s accession had attempted to obscure. John Awdelay himself published a ballad on the uprising in 1570, which makes this anxiety much clearer: *A godly ditty or Prayer to be song vnto God for the preseruacion of his Church, our Queene and Realme, against all Traytours, Rebels, and Papisticall Enemies*.<sup>43</sup> The title conflates the images of the monarch, nation and most importantly the Church as the epitome of the desired wholeness, which he celebrated at the climax of his two earlier ballads, and which is now threatened by ‘Rebels’ and ‘Traytours’. This conflation of royal and divine authority is reinforced by the visual and auditory elements of the ballad text. The first two stanzas are placed either side of an engraving of the royal coat of arms, and printed in a smaller type face than the remaining stanzas, in order that the text may accommodate this image of royal authority (Figure 6). Viewed as a single graphic visual, the royal coat of arms is the dominant element, echoing the way the royal coat of arms had displaced the crucifix from its place of honour in English churches following Elizabeth’s accession.

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<sup>42</sup> B. Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 189.

<sup>43</sup> John Awdelay, *A godly ditty or prayer to be song vnto God for the preseruacion of his Church, our Queene and realme, against all traytours, rebels, and papisticall enemies* (London: John Awdelay, 1569) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

Beneath this visual element appears the suggestion that the ballad should be sung ‘after the tune of the .cxxxvij. Psalme, which begins *When as we sat in Babilon. Or such lyke*’. Although the choice of tune is rather casually left to the discretion of the singer, if the direction is followed, then Awdelay’s polemic about the contemporary uprising is linked to the Godly and historical authority of the Bible. It also links it with a psalm text which speaks of the exile of a threatened holy minority from the holy city of Jerusalem and a hatred for its enemies. The conflation of Jerusalem and London was common in Protestant polemic, as can be seen below in William Birche’s text. Whilst Awdelay does not use this trope in his own text, it is still present in the tune he invokes, which also links the rebels to the enemies of the Holy Land. In calling upon God to preserve the nation and defend it against the threatening rebels, the ballad adopts a collective voice:

Our liuing God to thee we cry,

Now tend vnto our playnt:

Behold thy Church and family,

Which enmies seeke to faynt.

And though our syns haue moued thee

Iust plagues on vs to poure:

Yet let thy Christes death shortly

Thy wrath vp clenane deuour. (17-24)

Again, as in the earlier ballads, there is reference to an undefined sense of sin and collective responsibility which is the cause of the conflicts besetting the nation. As Patrick Collinson has observed, God’s threatening of his people is always conditional. The actions of a few could endanger the souls of the whole nation. By duly repenting



**A godly ditty or Prayer to be song**  
vnto God for the preseruacion of his Church, our Queene and  
Realme, against all Traytours, Rebels, and papisticall  
Enemies.

Preserue thy Seruaunt Lozd,  
Elizabeth our Quene:  
Be thou her shield and sword,  
Now let thy power be scene.  
That this our Quene annoynted,  
May vanquish al her foes:  
And as by thee appoynted,  
Let her lay sword on those.



Gene Lozd true saythful hartes,  
To vs her Subiectes al:  
That we play not ths partes,  
Of these Traytours that sal  
Both from their God and Prince,  
And from their lawful othes:  
All such O Lozd conuince,  
And geue them ouertrowes.

Syng this after the tune of the.cxxxvij. psalme, which begins V When as we sat in Babilon. O such lyke.

**O**ur kyng God to thee we cry,  
Now send vnto our playnt:  
Behold thy Church and family,  
Which ennies seeke to saynt.  
And though our syns haue moued thee  
Just plagues on vs to poure:  
Yet let thy Chyistes death mortly  
Thy wraoth by cleane deuour.

Correct vs Lozd by thine own hand,  
And leaue vs not to those:  
That do thee and thy truth withstand  
Like diulyd dradly foes.  
For better is it for vs Lozd  
Into thy handes to fall:  
Then vnto them for to accord,  
Which in hell perish shall.

Behold (O Lozd) thine ennies rage  
Against thee and thy Chyist:  
As our syns they seeke to awage,  
But thy truth to resist.  
And shall our syns then be a let  
For thee them to withstand:  
Seing against thee they be let:  
So Lozd, set to thy hand.

For thine the glozy is, not ours  
Which they seeke to suppress:  
Send therfore Lozd thine host of powrs  
And this thy cause redress.

Resist these Rebels and Traytours,  
With papistes euery one:  
Which thy pooze people so deuours  
In euery nacion.

Let not the wicked thus preyale,  
To vex thy Church and sayntes:  
Butstroy them from the head to taylor,  
Let none bewaile their playntes.  
Lozd hears the cry of fatherles,  
And wyddowes which do mone:  
The which these ennies do oppres  
With mischiefes many one.

Defend O God our gracious Quene,  
from Pope Rebel, and all:  
And as by her thy woorkes be scene,  
So let thy wraoth now fall  
Upon all those that vex thy truth,  
Our Quene, our Realme and state:  
And let their vicious pranks of ruty  
Light vpon their own pate.

So shall thy name be magnified,  
So shall thy powce be knowen:  
So shall our Chyist be sanctified,  
By them that be his owne.  
Wherefore O Lozd graunt our requestes  
Which here to thee we make:  
And make vs loue and lyue thy bestes,  
For thy Chyist Iesus sake.

FINIS. Quoth Ioh. Awdely.

Imprynted at London by Iohn Awdely.

Figure 6: John Awdelay, *A godly ditty or prayer to be song vnto God for the preseruacion of his Church, our Queene and realme, against all traytours, rebels, and papisticall enemies* (London: John Awdelay, 1569). © The British Library Board Huth 50[18].

and reforming both religious and moral behaviour, God's judgement can be appeased, just as the suffering of Protestant martyrs prompts God's forgiveness in times of persecution.<sup>44</sup>

A few years earlier William Birche, who was to write his own ballad in response to the Northern Rebellion, published *A warnyng to England, let London begin: To repent their iniquitie, & flie from their sin*,<sup>45</sup> a call for moral and religious repentance, which identifies London with the historical biblical examples of 'Zodome and Gomorra' (9), 'Niniuie' (13) and 'Jerusalem' (17). Biblical history is employed in support of a reforming argument. Instead of identifying with the Protestant nation, the ballad's voice lectures a nation which has failed to reform despite the work of 'earnest preachers' (31), a complaint which is identical to that made by Lawrence Saunders over a decade earlier.<sup>46</sup> In contrast with his ballad of only a few years before, the subject-position of Birche's ballad of 1565 is self-consciously separate from and outside the nation, addressing the country, 'O England be vigilant, and repent thee with spede' (1), and lamenting, 'If a man rebuke drunkenness, swearing or blasphemie, / [He] shall in this wyse be mocked of one [l]abel or an other' (33-34). The text is possibly too early to be certain that the label Birche protests against, but fails to identify, is that of 'Puritan', so perhaps he means 'Gospeller', an earlier label for what came to be known as Puritanism. It is a sign that the Protestant nation, which in Birche's earlier ballad was seen as indivisible, is now fragmented.

Unlike the authors of the polemical ballads discussed in Chapter 2, Birche and Awdelay are not able to represent a popular communal voice, but are self consciously

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<sup>44</sup> Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> William Birche, *A warnyng to England, let London begin: To repent their iniquitie, & flie from their sin* (London: Alexander Lacie, 1565) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>46</sup> See Haigh, *English Reformations*, p. 202.

speaking from a minority position. Both Birche and Awdelay are identified as the authors of their ballads by the textual marker 'quoth', contracted to 'q' on one of the texts, a sign which self-consciously appropriates the ballad text as an expression of a point of view belonging to the authority of the ballad author as opposed to that of the community on whose behalf they spoke in their earlier ballads. Awdely's use of the collective voice and the image of the royal coat of arms is an effort to appropriate an official voice. The emphatic visual and textual apparatus, which is designed to identify Awdelay's ballad with royal and divine authority, paradoxically serves as a sign of just how split the image of the Protestant nation had become by then.

By their very natures, polemical ballads of almost any type tended to be ephemeral, even if they were popular at the moment when they were first printed. If Birche's *A Songe betwene the Quene's Majestie and Englande* was still in print three years later in 1564, then that suggests a period of at least four or five years when there was sufficient demand to warrant it being reprinted. As Ian Green has noted, strongly anti-Catholic ballads tended to appear at times of heightened fear of Catholicism, such as 1570, the mid 1620s, or, later in the late 1680s, but had little lasting impact on the ballad trade.<sup>47</sup> As Tessa Watt argues, texts like these were not absorbed into the popular ballad stock. Thus, the fort invoked by John Awdelay had to withstand not only the armies of Catholicism, but also the eventual indifference of its own countrymen and the marketplace.

The few polemical ballads which did last in the popular ballad stock are those which depict Protestant martyrs. Watt suggests that the successful absorption of these ballads was down to their lacking any 'historical specificity of the martyrdoms, or in the martyrs' rational arguments about Protestant doctrine'.<sup>48</sup> Instead, these ballads

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<sup>47</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 460.

<sup>48</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 95.

transformed their narratives into secular adventure stories, as in Thomas Deloney's adaptation from Foxe of *The Duchesse of Suffolkes Calamatie*, or else reduced them to a 'disembodied representation of a meek and pure Protestant faith' as in the ballad about Anne Askew, *I am a Woman Poor and Blind*.<sup>49</sup> John King interprets both these ballads as late expressions of 'a legendary period of freedom and truth' that held sway in Edwardian England, partly because he misdates them to 1624.<sup>50</sup> This does not wholly invalidate his argument, as both ballads do partly function as popularisations of an earlier, radical Reformation, yet also had to appeal to an audience within the commercial marketplace. Whilst polemical ballads were a more ephemeral type of religious ballad, less explicitly propagandist texts still drew upon the same tropes and discourses, if not with the same rhetorical force. The 'success' of these ballads came not from the polemical force of new information, but instead from how successfully they interacted with what the audience and communities they were representing *already* knew. Whilst that community might lack the specificity of a self-consciously Puritan cultural identity, it was still being presented with fundamentally Protestant history.

It is certainly true that Deloney's ballad includes sensationalist themes of disguise and revelation, as well as the appeal of temporary social inversion, in its account of Catherine Willoughby's flight to Germany with her family, which would

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<sup>49</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 94.

<sup>50</sup> King, *English Reformation Literature*, p. 443. Whilst both ballads were only entered into the Stationers' Register in 1624, they were clearly in circulation at earlier dates. As noted in the previous chapter *The Duchesse of Suffolke's Calamitie* was included in the second edition of Deloney's *Strange Histories* (1602), and may conceivably be dated earlier to the period when Deloney was producing ballads, ca. 1586-97, whilst Thomas Nashe refers to 'the ballet of Anne Askew' and quotes the first line in *Have with You to Saffron Walden* (1596). Several editions of both texts appeared subsequent to 1624 throughout the seventeenth century, so it would be a mistake to restrict its meaning to a particular historical moment as King does when he claims that it 'popularizes the radical Reformation as it was dimly remembered by the Puritan opponents of Archbishop Laud and Charles I' (King, *English Reformation Literature*, p. 444).

appear to be, at least partly, intended to increase its commercial appeal.<sup>51</sup> Within that narrative however, the ballad text devotes significant space to evoking a sense of the hardship Willoughby endured during her exile. When the family arrives in Germany, they are immediately set upon by a gang of thieves. During the fight, the nurse who was accompanying them abandons the child for whom she is responsible and flees. With their money stolen and horse killed, the isolated family ‘far from friends did stand / all succourless in a strange land’ (71-72). The following stanzas are a description of their difficult journey and struggle to find shelter amidst weather that ‘hailde and rainde in pittious sort’ (74). This physically arduous journey, and the subsequent conflict with the sexton who tries to turn them out from the shelter they have acquired before being killed by the Duchess’ husband, are included not only for the colour that they add to the adventure narrative but also to emphasise the kinship between the Duchess and the Protestant martyrs she has left behind in her flight from England. It is the same strategy employed by Foxe and William Birche in depicting Elizabeth’s imprisonment under Mary, which Deloney also alludes to in his ballad (21-24).

Whilst Deloney may be taking the facts of Willoughby’s martyrdom and transforming them into an adventure narrative, there are still textual markers which place his ballad within a more explicitly Protestant polemical tradition. The opening lines of the ballad are a clear echo of the ballads from 1559-60 examined above:

When God had taken for our sinne,

that prudent Prince K. *Edward* away:

Then bloudie *Bonner* did begin

his raging malice to bewray:

Al those that did the Gospell professe,

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Deloney, *The Duchesse of Suffolkes Calamatie* in Mann, *Thomas Deloney*, pp. 389-93.

he persecuted more or lesse. (1-6)

Here again, we see the same vision of the Protestant nation, which has suffered God's punishment for its undefined sins by the death of Edward VI and the return to Catholicism under Mary. Similarly, the second stanza refers to the 'Torment[s]...[of] *Lollards* tower' (9), again aligning the Marian martyrs with that earlier tradition of religious radicalism.

In the third stanza, we are told: '*Smithfield* was then with faggots fyld, / and many places more beside: / At *Couentry* was *Sanders* kild, / At *Gloster* eke good *Hooper* dyed' (13-5). Further on, the Duchess and her companions meet at '*Billingsgate*' (40) and then depart from '*Grauesend*' (41), travelling through the familiar landscape of the city of London. Topographical references are used to confer verisimilitude on the historical events alluded to in these stanzas, as in the ballads about Jane Shore examined in Chapter 3. These geographical place names disappear after the family arrive in Germany. The landscape of their exile is an unnamed and therefore unknown place, unanchored from the place names which would render it recognisable. It becomes a fitting location for the adventures which befall them.

The 'Ballad of *Anne Askew*, Intituled, I am a Woman Poor and Blind'<sup>52</sup> takes place in a similarly unknown space, suggesting that martyrdom, the experience which makes the subject a member of a militantly Protestant community of faith, can also be represented as a spatial absence. It is devoid of any obvious topographical reference, except perhaps in the pun on the name of Bishop Gardiner and a garden:

With whole intent and one accord,

unto a Gardiner that I did know;

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<sup>52</sup> [Anonymous], *A ballad of Anne Askew, intituled: I am a woman poore and blind* (London: T.P., 1624) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

I went and desired him for the love of the Lord

true seeds in my garden for to grow' (13-16).

This garden is the body of the martyr, in need of 'the seed of Christs true verity' (8). The borders which the martyr is concerned with protecting in her confession are those of her own body and beliefs, to be maintained against those who are attempting to impose their own beliefs on her. The metaphor of the 'garden' is one which suggests the enclosure of the self within its protected borders, a more individualised and private version of the 'fort' from John Awdelay's ballad. However, instead of the collective voice represented in those earlier ballads, what is represented here is an individual's relationship with God and her resistance to those who would have her recant her beliefs: 'For such sinners as the Scripture saith, / that will gladly repent and follow thy word, / Which I will not deny whilst I have breath, / for prison, fire, faggot, nor fierce sword' (57-60). Whilst striving to protect her dutifully Protestant self, she simultaneously dismisses the body within which that self is contained as merely a 'simple carcass' (54), and implores God to 'Take therefore my sinful body from hence' (57). Part of her defence, in defiance not only of her interrogators but also, perhaps, of the ballad which presumes to appropriate her voice, is her silence: 'I might liken my self with a woful heart, / unto the dumb man in *Luke* the eleven' (49-50). Askew's silence is both appropriate in a cultural context which equated female silence with female virtue, but also serves to empower her in her confrontation with her interrogator.<sup>53</sup>

It is the very lack of much specific historical detail which enabled this ballad to last for as long as it did in the popular ballad stock. In performance, this 'scarcely humanised embodiment of faith', the body of the martyr which the ballad text simultaneously fetishises and dismisses, would be appropriated and 'embodied' by the

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<sup>53</sup> Michele Osherow, *Biblical Women's Voices in Early Modern England* (Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p. 2-3.

singer.<sup>54</sup> The personal pronoun ‘I’ that appears in almost every stanza of this ballad would strongly reinforce this identification with this imagined historical individual. The argument of King and Watt, that the voice in this ballad bears little resemblance to ‘the strong, intelligent woman revealed in her ‘examinacyions’, edited by John Bale in 1546-7’, is justified.<sup>55</sup> However, it also overlooks how the textual apparatus imposed by Bale’s editorial hand had already worked to quell the quarrelsome voice of Anne Askew’s own text and transform her into the image of a more conventional Protestant martyr.<sup>56</sup> The voice and persona, which is appropriated and disseminated by the ballad, is not that of the historical Askew, but rather of the Protestant discourse surrounding her and initiated by John Bale. Although the ballad claims her authorship in its title, it should instead be seen as a later construction of her narrative, which follows an established pattern. It is as much an expression and representation of a Protestant community of faith, as any of the other ballads examined in this chapter. The appropriation of Askew’s persona in the form of a ballad is a means of assimilating the singular experience of martyrdom within a communal Protestant identity.

#### **‘[L]earne thus to liue godly’: Appropriating Scripture and Everyday Godliness**

Robert Wisdom’s advice to his followers that they should ‘take the scripture in their hands’ is clearly a neat formulation of the emphasis Protestantism placed on the scriptural word. But taking something into one’s hands is also a means of taking ownership of it, of taking possession, even of something as ostensibly insubstantial as a song or a ballad. The opportunities that these ballads gave their singers and audiences, to occupy a range of subject positions, are crucial to the way in which they manipulated

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<sup>54</sup> King, *English Reformation Literature*, p. 444.

<sup>55</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 94.

<sup>56</sup> Betteridge, *Tudor Histories*, pp. 80-119; Theresa D. Kemp, ‘Translating (Anne) Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth-Century Heretic and Saint’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52:4 (1999), 1021-45; Patricia Pender, ‘Reading Bale Reading Anne Askew: Contested Collaboration in *The Examinations*’, *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 73:3 (2010), 507-22.



historical and scriptural discourses. In his discussion of the ways in which Protestant preachers manipulated types and figures from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, Patrick Collinson observes that ‘[t]hese people were living, in a sense, in the pages of the Bible. Theirs was a shared identity which was indirect’.<sup>57</sup> Scripture-derived ballads function in a similar manner, their communal nature giving a powerful expression of such a shared identity, and directed towards the importance of religious practice so crucial to popular religion. If the cultural capital attached to Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* was in the process of being constructed during the reign of Elizabeth and after, the authority of the Bible was already long established. Many of the ballads which adapt scripture date from what Tessa Watt describes as the ‘gospelling phase’ in the early part of Elizabeth’s reign.<sup>58</sup> Incorporated into the popular ballad stock in 1624, and then reprinted over subsequent decades, they can be seen as a genuinely ‘popular’ part of popular culture, their success guaranteed by the marketplace.

Although there is little that is specifically Protestant about them, these scriptural ballads do fulfil the same aim as the Protestant emphasis on the word, replacing Catholic saints with figures drawn from the Old Testament. Instead of a focus on issues such as justification by faith alone, they operate to bring their singers and audience closer to scripture by demonstrating its utility as a guide to everyday life. This is powerfully illustrated by *A Godly Ballad of the Just man JOB* in which the ballad voice begins as a personal confession: ‘Walking alone. / Not long agone, / I heard one waile and weepe’ (1-3).<sup>59</sup> The encounter with Job is framed as an access to knowledge that is hidden from the community which the ballad’s voice is addressing:

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<sup>57</sup> Collinson, *Birthpangs*, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 50-73.

<sup>59</sup> [Anonymous], *A godly ballad of the just man Job. Wherein his great patience he doth declare, his plagues and miseries, and yet did not despair* (London: F. Coles, J. Wright, Thomas Vere, & W. Gilbertson, c.1658) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

To hear him cry,

I did apply,

and privily abode,

There did I find

In secret mind.

the Iust and Patient *Job*. (7-12)

The 'historical' biblical figure is encountered in the present; hence, the lessons that can be drawn from this account of his sufferings are equally applicable to the present:

How patient men,

Should not suffer in vaine,

But shall be sure

To have pleasure,

Rewards for their paine. (92-96)

There is little in Job's narrative which locates him specifically in the world of the Bible. Even the reference to the death of his cattle (70-72) would be recognisable to an early modern rural audience. As in the ballad about Anne Askew, the lack of historical specificity aids the appropriation of the biblical persona. In its structure, representing Job's voice as overheard speech, the ballad demonstrates the appropriation of a persona, bringing the ballad singer into direct contact with the biblical figure of Job. What is reported to the ballad's audience is not an account of the past, but a voice that exists in the present, conveying advice which, in its lack of specificity, is applicable to the concerns of the early modern ballad audience.

Other ballads which adapt scripture are more commonly narrated in the third person, with very little direct speech. Several make direct reference to the fact that they are derived from the Bible. *A Proper new Ballad, intituled when Jepha Judge of Israell* begins with ‘I read that, many years ago’ (1), whilst *An excellent Ballad Intituled, The Constancy of Susanna* informs its audience that its narrative derives from ‘the story you may read’ (11).<sup>60</sup> The voice that these scriptural ballads identify with is that of the community of faith, one which is implicitly already familiar with scripture. As Kevin Killeen has argued, in the context of his analysis of early modern sermons, biblical literacy appears to have been both impressive and widespread in this period.<sup>61</sup> Ballads which provide biblical narratives supplement knowledge which is already widely known. The personae of the biblical characters are contained by the ballad narratives, held up as exemplars, and refuse to allow the ballad singer to identify with them. In *The Constancy of Sussana*, Susannah is clearly presented as an exemplar for the audience and community who are addressed in its opening stanzas: ‘Why should wee not of her learne thus / to liue godly[?]’ (7-8), informing its audience that, ‘she feared God, she stood in awe, / ...Why should we not then sing and talke / of this Lady.’ (10, 15-6). The pronoun ‘we’ encompasses the whole community here, so that the ballad is effectively telling the community something it already knows, both in terms of the story, and in terms of the cultural norms about ‘godly’ living which it is reinforcing.

Instead of describing the punishment of Susannah’s persecutors at the end of the narrative, the final stanza merely states that it happened ‘according as the Scripture saith’ (146), returning its audience to the scriptural word, which is both beyond the

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<sup>60</sup> [Anonymous], *A Proper new Ballad, intituled when Jepha Judge of Israell* (London: F. Coles, T. Vere, and W. Gilbertson, 1664); [Anonymous], *An excellent Ballad Intituled, The Constancy of Susanna* (London: John Wright, 1640) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin Killeen, ‘Veiled Speech: Preaching, Politics and Scriptural Typology’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. by Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 387-403 (p. 396).

ballad text and the ultimate authority for the community it is addressing. It suggests a comfortable coexistence between popular and official discourses. Far from opposing the authority represented by scripture, the ballad adapts it to the perceived needs of its audience. The penultimate stanza of *The Story of David and Berseba* performs a similar function.<sup>62</sup> As Ian Green complains, it avoids describing the penalty David received for the act of adultery that its text performs, saying only that ‘God did greatly plague his sinne, / as in the Bible you may read’ (123-4).<sup>63</sup> Again the implication is that the narrative which the ballad disseminates is one that is or should already be known to its community, further clarified by the moralistic sentiment with which the ballad finishes: ‘Lord grant that we may warned be, / such crying sinnes to shun and hie’ (127-8). The punishment David received is already known and narrated and is present in the history of the Bible. Of far greater importance to the ballad is the community which is directed to respond to, and therefore act upon, the correct message about ‘godly’ behaviour in avoiding adultery. Biblical history is appropriated as an exemplary source of moral guidance, deployed as a spur to present action.

Ian Green and Tessa Watt have both argued that the most popular ballads adapting scripture include tropes derived from secular balladry, which are usually quite loose in their paraphrase of the biblical originals. The figure of a beautiful young woman dominates many of the most popular ballads, either as the persona who is at the centre of the narrative, or as an object of desire, whether this is the already mentioned ‘Constant’ Susannah, ‘Berseba’, Delilah, the ‘yong Damsel’ Sara whom Tobias of Ninive marries, or the numerous ‘Proper fine women of beauty’ amongst whom the Prodigal Child wastes his fortune. Referring specifically to the ballad of *David and Berseba*, Ian Green dismisses it and presumably other scriptural ballads too, as having

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<sup>62</sup> [Anonymous], *The Story of David and Berseba* (London: I. Wright, 1635) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>63</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 458.

been ‘written by someone who holds the *verba ipsissima* of the Bible in low regard’.<sup>64</sup> Certainly, *David and Berseba* is rather loose in its paraphrase and adds extraneous detail. More generously, Tessa Watt suggests that ‘[s]ixteenth century audiences were used to biblical characters being treated with humour in the mystery plays’.<sup>65</sup> As Thomas Betteridge has observed, bawdy innuendo and a moralising surface can coexist in texts which are essentially Christian and orthodox. If some of these ballads were still in print in middle of the eighteenth century, then they must have had widespread and lasting appeal in a popular religious culture which did not consider them to be ‘ungodly’.<sup>66</sup>

A simple way of creating connections between the lives of their audiences and the historical and religious truth these ballads were disseminating was through a repeated refrain at the end of each stanza. *The historie of the Prophet Ionas* ends each stanza with the homily: ‘Sinne is the cause of great sorrow and care, / But God through repentance his vengeance doth spare’ (7-8).<sup>67</sup> Although the refrain is modified in the middle of the ballad for two stanzas, addressing the warning to the city of Niniveh to better fit the narrative, the lack of specificity otherwise means that it can simply be applied to present concerns. Whilst no direct comparison is drawn with London, it echoes the complaint which was addressed to that city found in other polemical ballads.<sup>68</sup> *A New Ballad; declaring the Excellent Parable of the Prodigal Child* addresses itself to a subset within the ballad audience: ‘Young men remember delights

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<sup>64</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, p. 458.

<sup>65</sup> Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 116.

<sup>66</sup> For example, the ‘pleasant new Ballad of *Tobias*’ was entered into the Stationers’ Register in 1624 and still in print in 1754 (Watt, *Cheap Print*, p. 119). It may have been circulating earlier: ‘[A] godly ballet taken out of Tobeas’ was registered in 1568-69 (Rollins, *Ballad-Entries in the Stationers Register*, p. 224). This one text could have been in circulation for a span of nearly 200 years.

<sup>67</sup> [Anonymous], *The historie of the Prophet Ionas* (London: E. Allde, 1620) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, *A Warning to London by the fall of Antwerp* examined in Chapter 1.

are but vain / And after sweet pleasure comes sorrow and pain' (7-8).<sup>69</sup> The insistent repetition of these refrains, the same words fitted to familiar tunes, serves to make them memorable for their audience. Finishing each stanza in this fashion forges more strongly what would otherwise be a tenuous link between the ballad narrative and the ballad's moral 'tag'. Despite the refrain of the 'Prodigal Child' ballad possessing a more specific attachment to its theme, it could still be argued that both examples lack specificity if we are examining them for something expressive of anything 'authentically' Protestant. Watt and Green are correct in their argument that there is nothing specifically Protestant about their sentiments, but this is to overlook the use of the authority of scripture, embodied in the use of narratives derived from the Bible, to enforce present day communal values.

It is the authority of scripture which is celebrated in *A most excellent new Dittie, wherein is shewed the sage sayings, and wise sentences of Salomon: wherein each estate is taught his duetie, with singular counsel to his comfort and consolation*.<sup>70</sup> The text alludes to this scriptural authority in the second stanza, where the audience is informed that: 'Then feare the Lord that rules the skies / for so the scripture telleth thee plaine. / Imbrace his word, and him obay' (11-3). Where most scriptural ballads adapt biblical narratives, here Solomon appears only as an authority to endorse the social message of the ballad. In substance, there is little difference between this and polemical ballads which offer a convenient list of appropriate social and Christian virtues. *A right Godly and Christian A.B.C shewing the duty of every degree* for example, also mentions biblical exemplars, such as David and Solomon, as authorities to enhance its

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<sup>69</sup> [Anonymous], *A New Ballad; declaring the Excellent Parable of the Prodigal Child* (London: F. Coles, T. Vere and F. Wright, 1663) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

<sup>70</sup> [Anonymous], *A most excellent new Dittie, wherein is shewed the sage sayings, and wise sentences of Salomon: wherein each estate is taught his duetie, with singular counsel to his comfort and consolation* (London: William White for Thomas Pavier, 1615) in *Early English Books Online*<<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

argument.<sup>71</sup> Advice is divided between being directed towards both the community as a whole and at specific groups within the ballad audience. Advice such as ‘Deale with thy neighbour mercifully, / deceive no man by guile’ (13-4) or ‘Powre out your prayers with reverence / before the living Lord’ (59-60) in the *Christian A.B.C.* are easily applicable to all social classes. Instructions to ‘Keep not thy hyre lings wages backe’ (37) and to ‘Give plenteously to the poore’ (55), which might well be appreciated by any ‘hirelings’ in the ballad audience, are clearly directed at those who belong to a more privileged class.

Equally, performance could bring out the polemical force of this sentiment, especially if it were performed by one of these ‘hirelings’, empowered by the ballad to give voice to this instruction to the more privileged members of their community. As the title makes clear, the ballad is purposely addressed to ‘every degree’, a patchwork of advice directed at different parts of the community. Thus, one part of the audience is directed to ‘Give alms unto thy children deare’ (25), whilst a later stanza advises those children, ‘Yong folke be sober and chast of minde’ (89), and the whole community is reminded of its relationship with God:

Sanctifie the Sabbath, serve the Lord,

From labour see thou lest

Then God will have regard on thee,

And make thy labour blest. (69-72)

The ballad attributed to Solomon offers very similar advice in lines such as ‘Keepe not the Labourers wages backe / but comfort such as comfort lacke’ (103-4), and is similarly addressed to all parts of the religious community it advises:

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<sup>71</sup> [Anonymous], *A right Godly and Christian A.B.C shewing the duty of every degree* (London: Henry Gosson, 1625) in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.

Three things there are which God doth hate

as holy Scripture do declare:

A man too proud in beggars state,

a Rich man for to lye and swaere:

To see an Old-man giuen in lust:

And those of God are sure acurst. (113-20)

As in the polemical ballads, what is being expressed here is a sense of sin which is conditional. An advice ballad of this type functions on the assumption that it is expressing the values of a community, that where necessary, an audience can and will act on the proffered advice. Thus, a ballad which is ostensibly Protestant comes close to advocating a religious faith which is justified by good works. The presence of historical biblical figures in ballads such as these is only to authenticate the present concerns of the community to which the ballad is addressed.

The *[W]ise sentences of Salomon* is also rather more exclusive in terms of the audience to which its advice is directed. The address to 'My Sonne' (9) makes clear that this is advice meant solely for the men in the community, specifically for the young men who are expected to be guided by this patriarchal biblical persona. There are repeated injunctions on the need to control the other sex, whether it is, '...on thy Daughter neuer smile: / Their wanton ways do farre excel / ...with due correction loue them still' (50-51, 53) or:

Be neuer ieolous of thy Wife,

least she thereby do mischief learne,

For so thou shalt soone purchase strife:

then wisely do each thing discern' (81-84)



The ballad is predominantly aimed at the young men who are expected to become the responsible heads of a dutifully Christian household. In addressing itself solely to contemporary social reality, the persona of Solomon is effectively brought into the present. Just as happens in the ballad of the ‘just man JOB’, the gap between the biblical history and the ballad present is narrowed.

Another way of bridging the past and the present is through the ballad illustration. One methodological problem with using the ballad picture in this way is that the surviving copy may date from some considerable time after it was first entered into the Stationers’ Register. The surviving printing of *David and Berseba* (ca. 1635) is illustrated with a picture in which figures clearly meant to represent David and Bathsheba are dressed in contemporary clothing (Figure 7). The biblical story has been transposed into an Elizabethan setting. The clichés of secular balladry, such as the lines that have David ‘[going] forth to take the ayre, / All in the pleasant moneth of may’ (10-11), that Ian Green identifies as flaws in this ballad’s presentation of the scriptural story, rather function as textual markers which serve to locate the narrative in the present for



Figure 7: [Anonymous], *The story of David and Berseba* (London: [1635?]). © The British Library Board C.20.f.7[88].

its contemporary audience.<sup>72</sup> Representing the two figures that are at the centre of the ballad narrative, it would appear that the illustration provides the ballad singer with a visual cue that assists the ballad singer in identifying with the ballad persona, a body with which he can identify in transforming the ballad text into a performance.<sup>73</sup> Since, like the majority of scripture-based ballads, this ballad is narrated in the third person, the illustration is here performing the visual function of the text, transforming the ballad personae into something which is reported as ‘seen’ by the narrative, rather than a persona purely for the singer to identify with.

Another scriptural adaptation containing similar elements is *A New ballad; declaring the Excellent Parable of the Prodigal Child*.<sup>74</sup> Again, the characters are depicted in Elizabethan dress, and the picture functions as an abridgement of the ballad’s opening in two images. In the first, his parents are seen bidding farewell to the departing Child, whilst the second depicts, in the same frame, the dissolution that he falls into, seated at a grand table surrounded by young women in the foreground, and behind this the results of his dissipation as he is driven away by those same women once his money has run out (Figure 8).

Again, there is no body for the singer to identify with, but rather a scene to be witnessed. The several stanzas devoted to describing the beautiful young women amongst whom the Child enjoys himself is the material most obviously interpolated in the ballad’s adaptation from scripture. It is clearly intended to be salacious, with its extended focus on both their ‘wantonly play’ (44) and ‘their allurements, their winks and their smiles’ (57). The terms used to describe the Child’s behaviour are entirely contemporary:

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<sup>72</sup> Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 456-58.

<sup>73</sup> Smith, *Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, p. 204.

<sup>74</sup> [Anonymous], *A New ballad; declaring the Excellent Parable of the Prodigal Child* (London: F. Coles, T. Vere and F. Wright, [1663?]), in *Early English Books Online* <<http://eebo.chadwyck.com>>.



Figure 8: [Anonymous], *A new ballad; declaring The excellent parable of the prodigal child* (London: F. Coles, T. Vere, and J. Wright, [1663?]). By permission of the University of Glasgow Library Special Collections.

He buys with gold angles their kisses and smiles,

And stores them with every new fangle and toy,

he buys them new Gowns,

and many fair pounds,

In white-wine and sugar amongst them he drowns,

...[and then] he had upon them thus wasted his wealth,

Consumed his substance, his treasure and store,

Yea, crackt all his credit with hazard of health (59-62, 68-70)

The references are all to Elizabethan signs of wealth and extravagance: explicitly contemporary luxuries such as the gowns, white wine and sugar, which are being purchased with golden angels, an English coin of a value beyond what most in the ballad audience would be likely to ever encounter. Where, in the Tilbury ballads examined in Chapter 2, these coins represented the extravagant rewards the soldiers

would receive, here there is the ironic play on the meaning of ‘angels’ which are being wasted in such a manner.

Similarly, the reference to ‘substance’ and ‘credit’ relating to a person’s financial standing are contemporary with the 1570s, when the ballad was first published.<sup>75</sup> That the Child’s substance should be consumed is related to contemporary anxieties over appearances, and is contrasted with an earlier stanza where ‘in his apparel most sumptuous and brave, / To view this brave gallant much people did throng, / Where he like a Prince himself did behave’ (34-36). His reduction to poverty is again signalled through the state of his clothing: ‘His garments all ragged and torn you might see / ...His cloathes out at elbows, his hose broke at knee’ (77, 79). The Child’s return home and welcome back into his family is likewise related to clothing, when his father dresses him in ‘garments full gay’ (117). Where before his clothes had signified either an unfounded wealth or fall into poverty, now they are resonant of happiness and contentment, as the Child is restored to his correct station. What is presented to the ballad audience is not a historicised figure from the Bible, but a wholly contemporary one who, in a similar manner to the advice given by Solomon, is to serve as an exemplar for young Elizabethan men, as the refrain claims.

As has been seen throughout this thesis, this is yet another ballad producing an image of something which is seen. This sense of ‘sight’ has obvious relevance to the female figures in the ballads, whether that is the young women of the Prodigal Child ballad who are described purely in terms of their appearance before an admiring male gaze, or the figure of Bathsheba, whom the narrative makes visible, ‘...within a pleasant Bower, / all naked for to wash her there, / Her body like a Lilly Flower’ (17-19). In both these examples, the more salacious elements of the ballad are confined to the first half

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<sup>75</sup> The earliest usage listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of ‘credit’ being used in such a context is from 1573. ‘credit, n/v.’, in *OED Online*, June 2013. Oxford University Press <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44113?result=1&rskey=MAhfwF&>> [accessed 24 April 2013].

of the ballad text, replaced in the second half with far more earnest and religious content, which brings the community back to the correct or mandated response to the narrative depicted by the ballad. In a performance situation, the moments where speech is heard, rather than merely reported, would have greater resonance than they do on the page.

In the ballad of *David and Berseba*, David ‘speaks’ at only two points in the ballad, firstly to Bathsheba’s husband Uriah (59-60), attempting to persuade his general to re-consummate his marriage in order to obscure the king’s sin. On the second occasion, towards the end of the ballad, he is confronted with his guilt by the Prophet Nathan and cries out in repentance, ‘sore have I sinned against the Lord, / Have mercy God therefore on me, / let not my prayers be abhor’d.’ (78-80). The most prominent voice heard in the ballad is Nathan’s, his speech extending over nine stanzas. David’s repentance, then, is in response to the *words* of the prophet, the singer taking on the persona which forces this confession of guilt from the biblical king. At this point in the ballad, the ballad singer and audience are brought closer to the protagonist King David than they are in the earlier section dominated by the third person. Similarly, with the ballad of the Prodigal Child, whereas in the first half of the text he speaks only in the opening stanza to ask for his inheritance, in the second half, the Child narrates his own repentance, acknowledging in his poverty: ‘Now I am brought to a pittiful case, / Alack that my parents I did disobey’ (99-100). When he returns home, it is the ballad singer in the voice of the Child, when he acknowledges ‘dear father forgive what is done, / For I have offended Christ Jesus and thee’ (114-15). Again, it is when the ballad turns to repentance and the acknowledgement of Christian authority that it creates this intimacy between singer and persona, enabling the singer to appropriate the emotions of the ballad personae within the context of a ‘godly’ society.

In folding the concerns of ordinary society and ‘godly’ behaviour into scriptural history, the gap between the biblical narrative and ballad audience narrows so that ‘history’ disappears. The use of biblical exemplars is not an aspect of living in the past, but instead a means to guide living in a continuous present. This is in marked contrast to the polemical ballads, where the singer and audience are able to occupy the position of the Protestant nation, positioning themselves both as historians of and as participants in their nation’s recent history. All the ballads examined in this chapter serve to define and construct the religious communities on whose behalf they presume to speak. The importance of history to the polemical ballads is to underscore and justify the force of their argument with both the past and the present. In contrast, in the scriptural ballads, the religious history which found the most lasting favour within early modern popular culture, history becomes a mode of present living, concerned with everyday godliness and the proper function of community life.

## CONCLUSION

The roots of this thesis lie in my love of English folk music. Specifically, it was inspired by the sleeve notes to June Tabor's, album *At the Wood's Heart* (2005). Amongst an eclectic selection of material which includes not only 'traditional' songs, but also more recent compositions by twentieth century musicians such as Duke Ellington and Anna McGarrigle, Tabor includes a composition from a manuscript dated to the reign of Henry VIII and another found in the Roxburghe collection.<sup>1</sup> It was this selection which alerted me to the existence of material which has subsequently been defined as 'folksong' as far back as the early modern period. In the event, my time frame has precluded consideration of the text of any ballad produced before the reign of Elizabeth I. Equally, my somewhat romanticised notions about the possibility of songs surviving in oral transmission over the centuries were swiftly dispatched following my initial researches into oral and print cultures. Undoubtedly, texts did circulate through oral transmission both in the early modern period and in later centuries. Equally, it is clear that print and writing were a significant part of the processes of dissemination and preservation. There is no 'uncontaminated' oral culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries waiting to be rediscovered, even assuming that such a thing once existed.

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the various histories available to the popular ballad audience in the early modern period. Whilst it includes texts from later in the seventeenth century, it has concentrated on texts first published between 1559 and 1624, when the trade was formalised with the establishment of the ballad partners. My particular focus has been on ballads produced during the last decade of the reign of Elizabeth I. The reason for this is at least partly down to the simple fact that this was when Thomas Deloney – author of many of the most explicitly 'historical' ballads produced during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – was writing. As stated at the

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<sup>1</sup> Tabor, *At the Wood's Heart* (London: Topic Records, 2005), sleeve notes, pp. 4, 7.

outset, part of the aim of this thesis has been to reposition Deloney as a figure somewhat closer to that perceived by his contemporaries, primarily as an author of ballads, rather than a proto-novelist, and to give attention to at least some of his texts which have received little attention from scholars to date. More broadly, this thesis pays close attention to a variety of texts which have so far received little, if any, scholarly attention. As the recent publication of Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini's *Ballads and Broadsides in Britain, 1500-1800* (2010) attests, the field of early modern broadside ballads is gradually becoming a burgeoning one, part of a broader and, by now, well established scholarly interest in the popular culture of the period.

The opening chapter is offered as a corrective to recent work, which has tended to privilege the oral qualities of ballads, arguing that the printed text is not simply a container for the oral text, but a significant object in its own right, containing textual and paratextual markers that contribute significantly to the text's meaning. In forging what I have defined as a 'rhetoric of truthfulness', broadside texts were as intent on asserting the claim to authority and truth of the medium of print, as was any more elite text. Despite the abundance of evidence for the complex interplay of orality and print, scholars have largely failed to move beyond the oral-print binary. Print is nearly always conceptualised as a threatening, 'colonising' other. The figure of 'Anthony Now-now' encapsulates some of the ways in which early modern subjects attempted to conceptualise the same divide, suggesting that it is a dilemma which is far from new. As Chapter 1 demonstrates, ballads were self-conscious multi-media texts, ever ready to utilise and respond to the forms of credit inherent in printed texts.

Building on Angela McShane's arguments, the second chapter redefines the anachronistic category of 'news ballad' as 'modern history', and examines ballad representations of two major historical events from the reign of Elizabeth I – the attempted invasion by the Spanish Armada and the Northern Uprising of 1569. Both



events were interpreted as national crises, threatening a secure sense of Protestant nationhood. Whilst the Armada represented a threat from outside national borders, the Uprising was a threat coming from within the nation. The Armada ballads were able to use narrative and description to bolster their image of a triumphant Protestant nation; lacking events to describe, the ballads on the Uprising instead resort to allegory and invective in their polemical arguments against the rebels. In attempting to uphold an image of national unity, their argument enacts the division of the nation. Considerably more sympathy for the rebels is found in three ‘traditional’ ballads, surviving in the manuscript found by Bishop Percy, which place the historical figures associated with the Northern Uprising within highly romanticised narratives. This chapter also finds an unidealised sympathy for the nameless common victims of aristocratic conflicts in these manuscript texts, in contrast to the ballads produced by the London print trade, where the commons of England appear only as soldiers or as the spectators of aristocratic display.

The third chapter addresses more explicitly the role of the monarch in English history, as well as the monarch’s relationship with his or her subjects. The ‘chronicle’ histories produced by authors such as Richard Johnson and Thomas Deloney use the monarch, both as a principle to organise the history of the English nation, and as the subject whose actions are the chief concern of that history. In the service of constructing an image of a coherent nation, the voices and concerns of the commons are largely ignored, except for where they appear as the demands of rebels. Other ballads, which represent the victims of royal power, or which stage mythical encounters between ordinary subjects and the monarch found in the ‘King-Commoner’ tradition, produce an idealised past in which commoners both have agency and can engage in dialogue with their monarch. The chapter argues that where these ballads represent royal authority as a power which can be negotiated with, the ‘chronicle’ histories of Deloney represent it as

an all-encompassing authority based on the nation to which all are subject, even the person of the monarch.

Finally, the last chapter returns to the notion of the Protestant nation, opening with a consideration of four ballads produced in the early years of Elizabeth's reign, which self-consciously construct versions of recent and more distant history to argue for an indivisible Protestant English nation. This 'godly' image of a unified Protestant nation is metaphorically split in response to the disappointments of the nation's failure to properly reform itself and to the internal Catholic threat of the Northern Uprising. The most successful religious history ballads were those concerned with Protestant martyrs and narratives derived from the Bible. Chapter 4 argues that it is these last which address their histories most explicitly to the concerns of ordinary society and the contemporary present. As a mode of present living, history largely 'disappears'.

If, in arguing for a re-evaluation of the achievements of Thomas Deloney, this thesis refutes a critical teleology by refusing to see him purely as a proto-novelist, in another respect it inadvertently capitulates to another teleological argument as it relates to the definition of history. In suggesting that history 'disappears' in some of these ballads, or that others represent an indeterminate 'times past', I implicitly, if unwillingly, make the argument that there is some form of history writing which is 'correct'. From a modern perspective, after several centuries of the development of the discipline, it is difficult not to find oneself slipping into such an unconscious assumption. There is, of course, no reason to suppose that early modern subjects, the original audience for these ballads, would have made such a clear distinction. Equally, it is clear that any 'people's history' that could be derived from the ballads considered in this thesis is one that is largely composed of fragments. To reiterate a point made in the third chapter, any such history is largely the construct of print culture, or else, like so

many terms associated with ballad scholarship, the subsequent construction of later scholars.

Encompassing both individual and communal voices, as well as radical and conservative points of view, it is dangerous to make generalised comments about a ballad culture which encompassed such a large period of historical time. Nonetheless, the history ballads which have been examined in this thesis are evidence of a broadly 'conservative' popular culture. What is most frequently found in these texts is the shared sense of belonging to a coherent, hierarchical nation. Even ballads such as those from the 'King-Commoner' tradition, which represent the temporary elision of boundaries between monarch and subject, are concerned with upholding the notion of royal authority and, by extension, the authorising identity of the nation of which the monarch is representative. As the 'traditional' ballads about the Northern Uprising show, a sympathetic representation of the rebels entails a wholesale romanticising of the actual facts of the rebellion, obscuring the fact that Northumberland and Westmoreland opposed the authority of their monarch.

One consequence of my focus on Protestant nationhood is that Catholic ballads have been left out of consideration in the final chapter. Owing to the realities of censorship, such ballads were inevitably excluded from print circulation in early modern England. Catholic ballads undoubtedly circulated in manuscript and oral cultures, however. The very first use of the term 'oral tradition' occurred in the context of an anti-Catholic polemic, which suggests a strong pre-existing association between Catholicism and orality.<sup>2</sup> In her account of post-Reformation Catholic oral culture, Alison Shell has argued that the Catholic faith was partly defined by its relationship with the past, 'anxious that the old faith should not be forgotten' and powerfully

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Hall, in *The Old Religion* (1628), is the earliest usage of the term cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary*; quoted in Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 170-171.

conscious of ‘the rallying powers of nostalgia’.<sup>3</sup> Given this connection between historical culture and Catholicism, it might be expected that the Catholic ballads which survive in manuscript would naturally have a historical focus. However, the example of the ballads preserved in the British Library MS Cotton Vespasian A-25 at least casts some doubt on such an assumption. Its contents contain few references to the past, suggesting that present living was of much greater concern.<sup>4</sup> Further research, however, may well discover more relevant material.

Potentially more promising is the notion of nostalgia, a term which is almost entirely absent from this thesis, despite its obvious use in a work that is focused on the writing of histories. A longing for the past which is not quite the past, it would appear to be most relevant in the consideration of the idealised ‘times past’ within which some ballads place their narratives. Yet this would be a mistake, since these ballads contain no sense of longing for a vanished past. The past that they present to their audience is one which recognises no distinction between the past of the narrative and the present in which it is received. This blurring of chronological progression raises the possibility that the politics of proximity which some of these ballads articulate was one that an early modern ballad audience might have taken seriously enough to use as a means of understanding contemporary political events. Certainly, this would help to account for Thomas Deloney’s disappointment with a monarch who was failing to live up to her own proclamation, when he appropriated Elizabeth’s voice in the lost ballad about the ‘dearth of corn’.

A term coined in a medical treatise in 1688 by the Swiss physician Johannes Hofer, ‘nostalgia’ was originally conceived of in medical terms as a physical

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<sup>3</sup> Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism*, pp. 20, 22.

<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Seng, ed., *Tudor Songs and Ballads from MS Cotton Vespasian A-25* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978).

homesickness, and only gradually became defined as an emotional response relating to temporal as opposed to physical loss.<sup>5</sup> A brief examination of the bulk of scholarly work available on the subject would appear to suggest that nostalgia is conceived of predominantly as a problem of modernity. Nostalgia occurs in societies which have developed a sense of historical differences. As Margaret Aston has argued, the dissolution of the monasteries provided evidence of just such an historical change for early modern society, a sense of loss which was perceived by subjects across the social scale.<sup>6</sup> The early seventeenth century also saw nostalgia for the recently deceased Elizabeth.<sup>7</sup> Justine Rydzaski defines ‘radical’ nostalgia as a ‘backwards glance that disguises itself as a vision of the future’.<sup>8</sup> Her desire to prefix the object of her study with the term ‘radical’ clearly stems from a concern that nostalgia is often seen as a reactionary, conservative discourse.<sup>9</sup> Yet as Tamara Wagner has observed, there is arguably always something inherently ‘radical’ in the utopian aspects of nostalgia since ‘it is emphatically not the *Status quo* that is desirable’.<sup>10</sup> The narrative of ‘The Map of Mock-beggar hall’ contains little reference to the future, yet its lament for a lost social hierarchy and coherent society is clearly profoundly dissatisfied with the present.

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<sup>5</sup> Tamara S. Wagner, *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel, 1740-1890* (Lewisbury: Bucknell University Press, 2004), pp. 14-20.

<sup>6</sup> Margaret Aston, ‘English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past’ *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973) 231-55 (pp. 232-38).

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Robert L. Entzminger, ‘Jonson, the Myth of Sidney, and Nostalgia for Elizabeth’, in *Reinventing the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Constructions of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. by William F. Gentrup (Turnhout: Brepolis, 1998), pp. 89-106; Curtis Perry, ‘The Citizen Politics of Nostalgia: Queen Elizabeth in early Jacobean London’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 23:1 (1993) 89-111.

<sup>8</sup> Justine Rydzaski, *Radical Nostalgia in the Age of Piers Plowman: Economics, Apocalypticism and Discontent* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw, ‘The Dimensions of Nostalgia’, *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, ed. by Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 1-17.

<sup>10</sup> Wagner, *Narratives of Nostalgia*, p. 21.

That the historical culture found within early modern ballads is inherently fragmentary is reflective not only of the way in which much of it survives as individual broadsides. It also reflects the way in which the broadsides functioned as part of a culture that was both oral and print. Whether news or history, much of the information they contained was already widely known. Ballads were concerned with commenting upon and defining how their histories should be comprehended, and above all, how they could be made relevant to a range of voices. This thesis has endeavoured to recover the fragments of the historical culture available to an early modern audience, providing evidence of the communal, national and religious identities which they were negotiating and concerned to foster. In defining much of this history as broadly 'conservative' in intent, this is not to suggest that other kinds of history were not available in the period, but simply to argue that this was the overwhelming kind of historical culture available in the developing broadside ballad culture. In addition, a 'conservative' popular culture is surprisingly flexible. History in the early modern period was more than just a humanist endeavour, but a mode of appropriation which was available to a broad and inclusive audience.

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