

**Collectors, Consumers, and the Making of 17th-Century English Ballad
Publics: From Networks to Spheres**
by Patricia Fumerton

[Slide 1] Title

[Slide 2] In 2005, when I joined Richard Helgerson as part of the UCSB branch of the Making Publics Project centered at McGill University I had a sneaking suspicion that the combined scope and necessary granularity of this project could drive one mad. In writing this essay, I felt that foreboding madness more closely creep upon me as I have tried to make sense of some five years of my own work on making publics while at the same time paying tribute to the lifetime making of Richard, a guiding genius for the MaPs project before his too early demise in 2008. Both are impossible tasks. Making Publics has been a great success, but the sign of its success—as we moved in our discussions from defining a public to defining publics in the making—is that we were always making ourselves making and unmaking publics being made and unmade. That is, just as one’s finger is placed on the pulse of a public in the making, it is in the process of being—*by virtue of its definition of being a public and not the public*—unmade. I recall George Wither’s emblem [Slide 2], which tellingly riddles, “As soone, as wee to bee, begunne; / We did beginne to be Vndone.”¹

I am here beginning or—I guess in the grander scheme of things—*continuing* my being undone.² Writing in this paper of the processes specifically of making a ballad public with a sidelong eye to the makings of the great Richard Helgerson, I by definition must embrace simultaneously their and my own unmaking, especially since I could never attain Richard’s uncanny breadth and depth of vision that can sweepingly take in all of history while remaining acutely attuned to the historical moments of both the then and the now. If Richard in this emblem is the all-encompassing Ouroboros that consumes its own tale in a representation of his eternity, I

am the enclosed babe lying within, propped on the skull of my mortal limits. Like that babe, I begin undone. I shall nevertheless strive to capture some of Richard's devotion to the larger historical picture and to the way he thought complexly about history, about generations of people talking together within historical moments of time, and also about how individuals involved in those discussions took unique positions, not necessarily sharing the same viewpoint even though they might be excitedly gathered around, and looking at, the same thing.

My undoing today arises out of my ongoing work on the English Broadside Ballad Archive, or EBBA. [Slide 4] EBBA is devoted to mounting online all surviving 17th century broadside ballads printed in English, with an emphasis on those black-letter ornamental ballads published in the ballad's "heyday." Since these constitute some 8,000 works, which need to be mounted in various forms reflective of their protean and multiple nature—art, history, song, literature—EBBA is an ambitious project that babe-like aspires to the grand ambitions of MaPs and the laureate career of Richard.

Most recently, I have been researching the networks of makers of primarily black-letter broadside ballad collections in 17th-century England. These networks include prominent and recognizable figures but also more historically obscure persons. Focusing on any one collector and his assemblages reveals an individual but also a maze of connections with other collectors. To the extent that this collecting network drew in strangers and had a scholarly and social agenda (as we shall more fully see), it could be argued to form a public. It certainly fits Leslie Cormack's thumbnail definition of publics as "a loose collection of people, not all of whom have personal knowledge of one another, connected by a common interest in a particular subject and with some social or political goal in mind" (9). As with Cormack's network of chorographers, the black-letter ballad collectors I shall trace formed a relatively small network. More important

than size, it would seem to me, is the level of engagement between participants of a network with their subject and with each other. By this gauge, if we might feel unsure about the “publicness” of a ballad collecting network, we can with confidence identify a ballad public actively at play in watching Pepys as he expands upon his collecting network. By focusing, as in google-maps, specifically on Pepys’s ballad collecting, and then further zooming in to look at his wider social interactions in circulating ballads, as told in his *Diary*, we can extend our vision beyond the relatively small but important assemblages of collectors to include a much larger and more engaged ballad public. As we shall see, this public may not share the same scholarly values as the serious ballad collectors of black-letter scriptural and printed ballads, and it may not be as “invested” in ballads per se, but its members reflexively used ballads to private, social, and political ends, relying on shared public expectations about what ballads are and can be. I conclude by proposing that such a ballad public, which includes collecting and consuming as well as ballad producing relationships, strangely resembles Clifford Geertz’s landmark model of the social spheres of the Balinese cockfight.

In honor of Richard’s focus on generational poetry-making formations in his career, I begin with generations of ballad collectors [**Slide 5; also handout**]. This chart is my effort to map out trends in ballad collecting from the late 16th to the late 19th century. Definitions of the color schemes are noted at the bottom of the page; solid lines mark strong connections (such as exchanges of individual ballads); two solid lines mark the passing on of an entire collection; dotted lines mark weaker connections (discussions about or consultations of ballads). The collectors marked in red focused on “heyday” broadside ballads: printed in black-letter type (what we know today as “gothic”), on large folio sheets in two-parts, with a named tune title, and multiple woodcuts and other ornaments [eg. **Slides 6 and 7**]. Such ballads marketed a dizzying

variety of topics—ranging from familiar “historical” stories, such as Chevy Chase, to eulogies or elegies, to romantic love or marriage or sex, to religion, to the latest news or wonder, to murders or other timely issues, to alehouse good fellowship, to politics, etc. There was no topic or stance that the ballad could not adopt. Ballads issued by the same author or publisher often presented within the very same ballad a dialogue debating two sides of an issue and/or produced whole ballads that adopted opposing stances. The idea was to market something for everyone, aiming at the widest group of consumers, especially the large market base of the middling and low (who could afford to pay a halfpenny or penny for a ballad and could appreciate its tunes and illustrations if not always, or fully, its printed words).

While most other types of printed literature in England transitioned from black letter to white letter or roman font by the early 17th century, the broadside ballad held onto its black-letter roots well into the late 17th century. Eventually, however, ballad print was dominated by white letter or roman type (collections of which are marked on the chart in orange). Political ballads, which explode in the 1640s, 1660s and—among extant ballads—especially the 1680s, such as those collected by Narcissus Luttrell, especially favor roman type. Accompanying this transformation, we find fewer and fewer tune titles printed on the ballad sheet, or simply the phrase “to a new court tune” or “to a new playhouse tune,” though we also see some ballads printed with musical notation (the music is often meaningless) [Slide 8]. We also increasingly find less other ornamentation on the ballad page, and smaller and smaller sheets, until by the 18th century—with some notable exceptions, as in the productions of the Dicey press—ballads are typically printed on mere slips of paper called “slip songs” [Slide 9].

[Slide 10] To capture the wide arch of collecting and production history, and so place 17th-century black-letter broadside ballad collectors in full perspective, we must further note that

among the generations of ballad collectors and producers of the 18th century, there emerged a significant counter-collecting/producing group. They tellingly appear on the scene soon after the ballad lost the prominence of its eye-catching ornament, including its swirling, decorative black-letter type, and also its printed tune titles. As if in response to these losses, they become intent on redefining the ballad not as occasional print but as “traditional” oral history and—somewhat ironically—fold together the practice of ballad publication and collecting. They include the anonymous but influential author/editor of *A Collection of Old Ballads* (3 volumes, 1723-1725) and his older contemporary, Thomas Percy (1729-1811), who published *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (3 volumes, 1765). Their most influential generational successor was Francis James Child (1825-1896), author of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (8 vols, 1857-1859; 5 vols, 1882-1898). Both in alliance to and in counter to the broadside ballad’s loss of ornament and tune titles as well as its newly elevated *roman* type in its later formats of the 17th century, these collectors/scholars/editors stretched their gaze back to classical times to find authentication for their theory of the traditional oral ballad in Homer, newly identified as a ballad singer. At the same time, they asserted that oral ballads before the coming of print expressed the “true” “pure” and “ancient” history of England, history here being characterized as “popular” or “folk.”³ Child, who referred to the Pepys and Roxburghe collections of mostly black-letter ballads as “on the whole . . . *veritable dung-hills*,” printed instead scholarly editions of ballads which he declared to be derived from uncorrupted country singers and ancient manuscripts (such as the Percy Folio).⁴ But what about the 17th-century collectors of the “*veritable dung-hills*” of printed broadsides?

If we zoom in on the generation of 17th-century broadside ballad collectors who privileged rather than scorned black-letter “heyday” ballads [Slide 11]—Anthony Wood, 1632-1695, Samuel Pepys, 1633-1703, and John Bagford, 1650-1716—we find a network of exchange

that touches even the next generation, Robert Harley, 1661-1724. What these collectors share, unlike the later collector-scholar-editors, is an acute appreciation for print, especially for black-letter print and ornamental woodcuts. This appreciation extends to admiration for the interconnectedness of the hand-printed together with the machine-printed as marking a crucial if passing historical moment in print history, as well as an appreciation for actual history writ or printed small.

Pepys makes it clear on the title-page to his collection that the broadside ballad form is changing and that his collection is intended as a record of that change. [Slide 12]. Under “My Collection of Ballads,” he writes, “Begun by Mr. Selden (referring to John Selden); Improved by the additions of many pieces elder thereto in Time; and the whole continued to the year 1700. [Click] when the form, till then peculiar thereto, vizt of the Black Letter with Pictures seems (for cheapness sake) wholly laid aside, for that of the White Letter without Pictures.” Pepys’s “Table of Contents” to his collection [Slide 13] then divides the ballads into ten “Heads” or topics, such as “devotion and morality” and “marriage and cuckoldry,” and also by volume and form according to a rough chronology, beginning in vol. 1 with hand-written manuscript copies of a few 16th-century printed ballads (very few of which have survived), which he groups with “Long Ballads ancient”—by which he does not mean long narrative tales like Chevy Chase but big folio sheets of two-part ornamental broadsides, most of which he acquired in purchasing John Selden’s collection. He names his next, large section (vols. 2-4) “Common Ballads in Black Letter”—which were still ornamental with printed tune titles but of half-folio not folio size—and finally calls his last section, the 5th volume, “Verse Ballads in the White Letter.”

The fact that Pepys grouped together manuscript and long ancient ballads in black letter is telling and links him to other contemporaneous collectors of mostly black-letter ballads and

their intermediaries. At about the same time Pepys seriously began work on his ballad collection (in the 1680s) he as seriously started his collection of calligraphy to chronicle the history of handwriting before and after the introduction of printing “& the **Competition** for Mastery, between the Librarians [meaning masters of penmanship] & Printers, upon the first breaking-out of the Latter.” For Pepys, that is, expert penmanship and printing are actively engaged with each other at this point in history. The foundation of that engagement lies in black letter. Indeed, the first English printing presses imitated the scribal style of *textura* lettering (angular, close-together, thick strokes—giving the impression of “blackness” of the page) that was widely used for formal ecclesiastical documents and for less formal, commercial postings.⁵ As other styles of print type became available in England, black-letter continued to dominate broadside ballads and other forms intended for popular dissemination, such as proclamations. Charles Mish and Keith Thomas attribute this “hanging on” of black letter to its being used in elementary texts: hornbooks, primers, catechisms, and psalters. “Black letter was the type for the common people,” Thomas argues, and was a more basic skill than roman-type literacy.⁶ But Mark Bland, Zachary Lesser, and others see the hold-over of black letter as a culturally constructed “nostalgia for a traditional, communal English past.”⁷ Such a constructed print community anticipates the imagined oral community advanced by later antiquarians, but when combined with the ongoing actual practice of learning to read and write in black letter, the savoring of black-letter type appears to occupy a charged convergence of historical past and present. Pepys thus concludes his collection on calligraphy with examples of black-letter printing imitating black-letter handwriting imitating black-letter printing: [Slide 14]: “Conclusion; Being a Modern Proof, from the following Ballad, of the Imitableness of Printing by Hand-writing, / Equall to those of Hand-writing by Printing, exhibited at the Beginning of this Collection [11-15, vol. I].” One

experiences a moment of confusion here—isn't this a printed ballad? where lies the imitating hand-writing within?—until flipping the page [**Slide 15**], one sees on the verso a hand-written and drawn imitation of the same printed ballad with two colored playing cards superimposed in trompe l'oeil fashion: The page is titled “The Performance of Mr. Samuel Moore, One of the Surveyors of the Customs, / Being no Professor of penmanship” (implying most anyone can do this). For better comparison, here are the back-to-back pages placed side-by-side [**Slide 16**].⁸

Pepys is not alone in his evident perception that he is at a cross-roads in the history of both handwriting and printing—a competition per se—and that ballads, with their black-letter print that derives from scribal printing practices exemplify that historical moment. It is a moment where the trace of the personal “hand” can be seen in printing, even when machine made. Other collectors of primarily black-letter broadside ballads think along the same lines, forming a collecting network that promoted the appreciation of ballad-printing-handwriting. [**Slide 17**]

The first 19 manuscript fragments in Pepys's calligraphy collection were supplied to him by the same bookseller who frequently provided him with ballads, John Bagford. Humphrey Wanley was also drawn into this network via Pepys's friend Dr. Arthur Charlett (Master of University College, Oxford). Pepys wrote to Charlett in 1695 for help identifying the manuscript fragments and Charlett referred him to the young Wanley, who at 23 was already a renowned paleographer.⁹ Wanley had himself planned a calligraphy collection, which was never realized. Wanley was also a good friend of Bagford and supported Bagford's long-in-the-works plan to write a history of print (the two of them promoted that plan in letters addressed to Sir Hans Sloane and published in the 1706-07 issue of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*).¹⁰ Pepys's nephew, and helper in assembling his library and bringing to conclusion his collections of calligraphy and ballads, John Jackson, subscribed to Bagford's project, as did Charlett, but it

never got off the ground. Still Bagford was assembling huge volumes of fragments of manuscripts and print, including title-pages, in preparation for his history, which was to focus on England and English printers. He also supplied not only Pepys but also Robert Harley with ballads for Harley's personal collection. Bagford's own 3 volume collection of ballads begins with 27 pages of snippets of manuscript and print fragments before becoming solely focused on printed broadside ballads, moving from black-letter to white-letter as did Pepys's. Wanley also provided Pepys with ballads that were hand-written. In 1701 he secured one from his friend Michael Bull at Bennet College, Cambridge,¹¹ who also subscribed to Bagford's projected history of printing (Pepys includes this hand-written ballad in his collection, along with the note from Bull, affirming to Pepys he copied the original "with all the exactness I could" [**Slide 18**]). For Pepys, a handwritten ballad was as good as a printed ballad, if it were written exactly.

[**Slide 19**] Pepys often had ballads copied out—by Bull, by William Hower (who ended up housing both Pepys and his library at Clapham by 1701), by a Captain Allen, and by others. He was discriminating, though, as instanced when a servant, Swan, offers him a ballad to the tune of Mardike (a tune by John Playford, whose music store Pepys often visited). Pepys praises the ballad as "incomparably writ in a printed hand," and so borrows it, but on returning it, he declares "the song proved but silly and so I did not write it out."¹² Meanwhile, by 1701 Wanley was also working part-time for Robert Harley, becoming his full-time librarian by 1708, and was a major spur to Harley's interest in manuscripts, early printed books, and black-letter ballads. Wanley acted as Harley's intermediary in purchasing Bagford's collections on Bagford's death, including his collection of ballads (though these were kept separate from Harley's own growing ballad collection).¹³

Anthony Wood, living in Oxford and devoted to recording its history, might appear here the odd man out.¹⁴ But Wood gathered “heaps” (his own word) of fresh-off-the press pamphlets, advertisements, and anything else he could snatch up in town, including many black-letter broadside ballads. And here again we see the interconnection between writing and print, for Wood also freely annotated the printed ballads he collected, hand-writing on them information foremost about the printer and the date and the place of printing, and then about persons or incidents referenced therein. Wood’s ballad collection, in sum, embodies the hand as much as the printed word. Dr. Charlett, who advised Pepys on his calligraphy collection, was also a good friend of Wood and acted as intermediary between Pepys, Wood and Wanley when in 1701 Pepys wrote asking him to obtain the titles of Scotch ballads from Wood’s collection.¹⁵ There is a network of ballad collecting at play here that ties together in a relatively small but expandable company Pepys, Wanley, Charlett, Wood, and Harley (extending to include figures like Bull, Hewer, Jackson, and even lesser persons such as Mr. Moore, a workman who retrieved and returned “Ballads, old” for Pepys).¹⁶

So does this rhizomatic network of collectors, many of whom are working together on the historical documentation of the timely intersection between scriptural and black-letter print, especially as exemplified in ballads, form *just* “a loose network of scholars,” to quote Cormack? Or could it also rise to the status of what Cormack and other members of the Making Publics project would call a public? Certainly, as with publics, this network was organic, it was open to strangers (Wanley, for example, was at first a stranger to Pepys), and it had a scholarly agenda that it tried to disseminate to a larger public, as in the projected and advertized history of print promoted by Bagford and his supporters.

Nor should we underestimate the extent to which their networked scholarly cause was perceived as socially relevant and thus available to others. Like Wood, all of those interconnected through black-letter ballad collecting, however antiquarian their interests, also valued ballads as products and records of lived history, what Pepys, quoting Selden, referred to as showing “which way the Wind blows”—that is of history in the making. They clearly relished ballads as records of a nostalgic old-style English print and of age-old English tales, but they also relished the ballad’s printed words as words in the making (whether by hand or by press) recording the passing here and now—historical straws blowing in the wind. They thus amassed popular ballads that addressed topical domestic debates and gender disputes, recent wonders, in-the-talk news, current politics, the latest fashion, etc.—all topics for mass consumption.

By my own gauge—admittedly flawed by the distance of time and available evidence—what gives me some pause in definitively calling this network a public is what appears to be their, for the most part, relatively weak interactions with each other. Though interested in collecting socially relevant ballads, they also for the most part—again, so far as I have found—appear relatively uninterested in participating socially or politically within the larger forum of mass-market ballad consumerism of which they will-nilly were a part. Pepys is the noticeable exception.

If we zoom further in on Pepys and the way he weaves ballads into his day-to-day social relations, based on his Diary of 1660-69, we gain a better sense of how a ballad public could be made [**Slide 23**]. The potential for ballads to serve individuals and groups depended on the way they were made by authors, printers, etc. but also on a common understanding of how the manufactured product could be variously used. I recall, in its simplest interpretation of such interplay, Michael Warner’s discussion in *Publics and Counterpublics* of the “talk value” built

up around multifarious vocalizations of the widely popular catchphrase “whassup,” marketed in 2001 by Budweiser. “Talk value allows a structured but mobile interplay between the reflexivity of publics (the talk) and the reflexivity of capital (the value) . . . In contemporary mass culture.” Warner adds, “the play between these different ways of rendering the field of circulation reflexive has created countless nuances for the performance of subjectivity.”¹⁷ Mass produced ballads created their own market reflexivity and complex inter-articulation with public reflexivity that made for myriad nuances of what was—by virtue of the social circulation of ballads—a collective performativity.

[Slide 21] On April 11 and April 17, 1661, as an instance, Pepys sang the same bawdy ballad in taverns with Captain John Allen (Clerk of the Ropeyard in Chatham). The song took the form of a medley—one of the forms mass marketed by ballad makers in the 17th century—consisting of proverbs and catchphrases often taken from other ballads. Significantly, the first time Pepys refers to the ballad it is by the last line of the 4th stanza: “Go and be hanged; that’s twice god b’w’y.” The second time, however, he calls the ballad by the 3rd line of the 3rd stanza: “Shitten come Shits the beginning of love.”¹⁸ That the title to this ballad keeps changing in Pepys’s mind is not a sign of early dementia but rather that the ballad itself is a composite of “Whassup”-like catchphrases, each of which, at any moment, depending on the context of the singing or recollecting, might be the one Pepys most recalls.¹⁹ In each case, Pepys and Allen “took great pleasure” in turning the ballad market in popular consumer phrases into a self-reflexive moment of male middle-class bonding, in which clearly a larger male public (familiar with such catchphrases) could also take part.²⁰

Pepys, like his contemporaries, knew not only how to use mass-marketed ballad topics but also their typical formats to his own purposes, sometimes to create a private-public, so to

speak. [Slide 22] At a dinner party on January 2, 1666, he meets the actress Elizabeth Knepp, who sings for the group the ballad “Barbara Allen.” Pepys experiences “perfect pleasure . . . to hear her sing, and especially her little Scotch song.”²¹ And so begins an infatuation that becomes a flirtation and sexual dalliance facilitated through performing ballad characters. When three days later Pepys travels to Greenwich to another dinner party, he went hoping to “get” Mrs. Knepp, but she was busy. Her substitute?: [Slide 23] she sent Pepys “a pleasant letter, writing her [meaning signed by her] *Barbary Allen*.” The next day at a “great dinner” at Greenwich “with much company,” Pepys again missed getting Knepp, and was especially frustrated because he had “wrote a letter to her in the morning, calling myself *Dapper Dicky* in answer to hers of *Barb. Allen*.”²² “Dapper Dicky” is the title of another Scottish ballad in which a girl laments her lover’s absence. What are Pepys and Knepp doing? They are self-consciously inhabiting a ballad public that allows one to voice roles in songs and play with them to their own personal but still public ends, since anyone seeing these letters or the composers talking about themselves by these titles would know exactly what Pepys and Knepp were about. They made a ballad public of lamentable love turned to sexual courting.

Pepys participates with self-reflective resistance in the making of an even broader ballad public, this time with serious political stakes: [Slide 24] On March 5, 1667, Pepys travels alone by water reading “a ridiculous ballad made in praise of the Duke of Albemarle, to the tune of St. George.” He notes that “the tune is printed too,” so this is likely a white-letter ballad with printed musical notation. An extant version of the ballad is titled “A heroical song on . . . George Duke of Albemarle . . . made in August 1666.” The refrain runs: “Lord George was born in England, restored his Country’s Joy, / Come let us sing *Vive le Roy*.”²³ The date of August 1666 is most telling. George Monck, 1st Duke of Albemarle (1608-1670), had been commander of England’s

fleet at precisely that time during the long drawn-out Four Days naval battle, or more properly “melee,” with the Dutch, in which both sides claimed victory, though in fact the English lost many more ships than the Dutch. Accusations spread widely of “great bad management” on the part of both Albemarle and Prince Rupert.²⁴ The subsequent two-day engagement known as St. James’s Day Battle, July 25-26, 1666 was also commanded by Monck.²⁵ It ended more clearly in English victory;²⁶ however, the English failed decisively to annihilate the Dutch navy. Certainly Pepys does not buy into the ballad. Not only does he call it “ridiculous,” but he suspects political machinations in its making: “I observe that people have some great encouragement to make ballads of him [Albemarle] of this kind; there are so many, that hereafter will sound like *Guy of Warwicke*.” Who exactly are “the people” making and encouraging these ballads remains unclear, but likely the Crown and Albemarle himself were behind them. Pepys is fully aware that the broadside ballad—as a single “libel” sheet easily printed off for mass distribution—could be turned to political purposes with ease. He is also more than aware that the public can be persuaded to think about Albemarle as a hero by exploiting the form and content of previous popular ballad texts—in this case the beloved song of the English hero, Guy of Warwick (even the tune is politically chosen: “St. George”). Indeed, though Pepys later calls Albemarle a “blockhead,” he expresses admiration that he “hath strange luck to be beloved.”²⁷ Ballads likely played a significant part in such “luck.”

With this instance of large-scale marketing intended to make a ballad public that will “buy into” Albemarle’s heroism—as into the Whassup marketing by Budweiser—I propose we think of ballad publics in terms of Clifford Geertz’s groundbreaking vision of the Balinese cockfight.²⁸ Geertz essentially envisions the cockfight of Bali in terms of encircling spheres of a culture-making public that affirms social status. At the center of the cockfight ring are the leaders

of Bali who lovingly nurture their cocks as if they were an extension of themselves, as well as their allies, who together form coalitions of bettors. Occupying the ring just outside these fighters are individuals who occasionally fight their own cocks in small matches, and might make bets on the big ones, and are still very much invested in the outcome of the “battle.” Beyond these are the petty bettors who do not fight cocks themselves but still publicly take sides at the fight. Encircled further out, on the fringe of the cockfight, are the socially marginal and poor, who are far less invested in the specific fights but take part in assorted sheer-chance gambling (roulette, dice throw, coin-spin, pea-under-the-shell) at encircling concession booths, as in a small fair.²⁹

So too with the making of ballad publics, we can image a Balinese nesting of public spheres. [Slide 25] At the center are the important “makers”—not the Albemarle but rather the printers, publishers, and booksellers of ballads; next invested are the collectors who don’t make but nevertheless value and promote ballads (Selden, Wood, Pepys, Bagford, Harley, and their allies, Wanley and Charlett). Then come those who only dabble in printing or publishing/selling or in owning ballads. And on the outskirts of the ballad public are the very occasional listeners/viewers/readers/singers/owners (many of them too poor to be able to afford a ballad), the occasional hawkers (who might peddle other wares as well as ballads), and those who passingly reference ballads in historical or fictional texts (such as Shakespeare in *The Winter’s Tale* or Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair*).

In this vision of the making of ballad publics, any public has a core of strength and an outside that is weaker. But, as we have seen in Pepys’s diary, in fact hot spots can flare up at any moment at any position in this spheric model. [click] Certain printers or booksellers can become very influential, [click] a coalition of sorts might form between collectors of ballads (as happens when ballad printing and print history become the double-pronged focus of Pepys, Bagford,

Harley, and Wanley), and [click] occasional makers might suddenly produce lots of ballads on a single subject, as in the mobilizing of ballads in praise of Albemarle.³⁰ [click] We see similar dramatic hot spots form in *The Winter's Tale* around Autolycus at the sheep-sheering feast, and even more intensely in *Bartholomew Fair*, where again layers of an onion of intensity of investment circle around the ballad-singer, Nightingale, and his cutpurse partner, Edgworth.³¹

But we might reimagine the place of ballad collectors within a larger ballad public, as Eric Nebeker has suggested to me, to the extent that they have a somewhat “eccentric” agenda (documentation and preservation of black-letter script/print) that is relatively small-based and outside the mass-market consumerism of a ballad public. [Slide 26] Of course, by this logic, any “group” within a ballad public might go “askew” of that public if its interests become too specialized.

And on that idea of interest, I here end where I began, with my own undoing, “As soone, as wee to bee, begunne; / We did beginne, to be Vndone.” I end with yet one more hot spot out on the fringe of the Balinese sphere of early modern English ballad publics [Slide 27], where the naval pride in Pepys’s diary have come out en masse on May 15, 1668 for the funeral of Sir Thomas Teddimen (another naval officer criticized in the Four Days Battle). Pepys is impressed by the turnout: “But Lord, to see among the young commanders and Thomas Killigrew and others that came.” This comment could have led to a critique by Pepys of those very young commanders, as there was general dissent, shared by Pepys, that the navy was being stocked by James and York with inexperienced courtiers rather than sea-worthy commanders. But instead, Pepys’s attention is diverted: “how unlike a burial this was, Obrien taking out some ballets out of his pocket, which I read and the rest came about me to hear; and there very merry we were all, they being new ballets. By and by the Corpse went” (9.200). The new youthful commanders, in

violation of the decorum of somberness at funerals, bring ballads in their pockets, but instead of criticizing them, Pepys cannot help but be drawn into their circle, reading the ballads out loud for the rest to gather round and hear, and “very merry we were all, they being new ballets.” As if an afterthought, the corpse passes by.

One might judge this moment severely, as a violation of ceremony, indeed, but one might also appreciate the power of the ballad here to make a public and a merry one at that out of a group of divergently interested persons; they come together in a moment of merry making that is a moment of forgetting—forgetting the death that punctuates so many of the diaries of the 17th century, as of all time. And they ironically remind us of the life in the making of a public. I remember at Richard Helgerson’s memorial service, how a young graduate student spontaneously offered as commemoration a hand-drawn portrait he had made of Richard, and how an emeritus faculty member composed two sonnets in Richard’s honor—one a translation of Garcilaso de la Vega’s “Sonnet from Carthage”—the focus of Richard’s last book—and the other a Sonnet upon Richard Helgerson himself, spoken in echoing form across the centuries. People gathered round and admired both in a momentary making of a Helgersonian public. And ballads do just that by seizing on the passing historical moment and the power of the little paper in print to circulate and draw.

If I were to draw a ballad out of my pocket now [**do so**], at this sober scholarly function, and call upon a few to gather round to view and read it, I would momentarily create a ballad public even if only in passing. For it is in the very moment of flashing into existence and undoing of a public that is one way ballad publics are made—in lasting memory. [**Slide 27**].

NOTES

¹ In this scene, gravedigger pointedly dates the start of his career from the birth of prince Hamlet: “how long hast thou been a grave-maker?,” asks Hamlet. The gravedigger’s response?: since “that very day that young Hamlet was born—he that is mad, and sent into England” (5.1.144-145; 150-151).

² In speaking today of the processes of making ballad publics in honor of the makings of the great Richard Helgerson, I by definition must embrace simultaneously their and my own unmaking, especially since I shrink before Richard’s breadth and depth of vision that can sweepingly take in all of history while remaining acutely attuned to the complex historical moment of both the there and then and the here and now. If Richard in this emblem is the Ouroboros snake that consumes its own tale enacting immortality, I am the babe with skull resting within. Like that babe, I begin undone.

So I apologize in advance for failing at this task, even as I forge ahead trying to make sense of clusters of publics that I and many of the “UCSB gang”—as we have sometimes called ourselves—have been studying in pursuing the making publics project, first under Richard’s mature guidance and then under my more undone babe-like hand. I hope in this talk to capture some of Richard’s devotion to the larger historical picture, to thinking complexly about history (especially of how the private and public necessarily fold in upon themselves), to thinking of generations of people talking together within historical moments of time—both then and now—and to thinking also of how individuals involved in those discussions took unique positions, not necessarily sharing the same viewpoint even though they might be excitedly gathered around, and looking at, the same thing.

As example in brief of Richard’s multiple and multi-valenced talents, consider his chapter in *Adulterous Alliances* devoted to the anonymous play *Arden of Faversham*, focused on the domestic crime of husband murder.² Casting his eye over the long durée of history, Richard observes that, though the play was first staged in 1592, it had fallen into relative oblivion for 400 years (appearing only in marginal forms like puppet plays, the Newgate Calendar, or Opera). In answering why?, he attributes the play’s disappearance to an aggressive campaign on the part of humanist historiographers of the 17th century (Francis Bacon, William Camden, John Speed, John Selden, and the like) to promote an idea of history that privileged public events over private ones (private being defined as the domestic, the trivial, the female; public being defined as History spelled with a capital “H,” that is, war, politics, state—all great deeds, all male). But if the new historiography deliberately excluded the story of the Arden murder from proper history as trivial, Richard notes, Holinshed in his 1577 *Chronicles* did not; he felt compelled to include it “for the horribleness thereof, although otherwise it may seem to be a but a private matter and therefore, as it were, impertinent to this history.”² Even more inclusively, the playwright who reworked Holinshed’s story for the stage in 1592 dramatized precisely the political events that were intertwined with Alice’s crime. “The effect of the dramatist’s choice,” notes Richard, “was to keep alive, if only barely, a sense of the early modern interpenetration of the public and private” (p. 26). The play offers an alternative history “focused on the household and the local community . . . but not indifferent to the court and the great affairs of state. On the contrary,” Richard concludes, “it engages them at every point . . . To know Arden’s story is, in short, to know a significant bit of politic history—though official historiography has not always let that fact be known (p. 31).

I would add, as would Richard, that to know this enacted domestic tragedy with political ramifications is to set the stage for the play’s recovery 400 years later in the cultural studies of the 1980s and ‘90s, when scholars took pride precisely in recovering the momentousness in the local and marginal and in the very folding in upon themselves of public and private, which is one of the places where telling histories, if not the History, of the early modern period lie.

³ A *Collection of Old Ballads*, vol. 1 (London, 1623), iii. On the not-uncontroversial rise of oral versus printed ballad editors/authors/collectors, see 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 Broad-sides in Britain, 1500-1800*, ed. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini, with the assistance of Kris McAbee (Burlington, VT: Ahsgate, 2010), 35-56.

⁴ All the while, as Mary Ellen Brown points out, Child suppressed the fact that printed broadsides were necessarily consulted and scattered throughout his edition; “Child’s Ballads and the Broadside Conundrum,” in *Ballads and Broad-sides*, ed. Fumerton and Guerrini, 57-72; quote, with emphasis, 67.

⁵ Indeed, as Daniele Updike has noted, English black letter and roman type are both descendents of the Carolingian miniscule, the style of writing that Charlemagne decreed by used in all church books in 780. This was a spacious, rounded style of calligraphy, similar in appearance to modern roman font, which became the dominant handwriting of western Europe” (Daniel Berkely Updike, *Printing Types, Their History, Forms, and Use: A Study in Survivals* (Cambridge: Harvrd University Press, 1962), 50; quoted in Gerald Egan, “Black Letter and the Broadside Ballad”).⁵ But over time, scribal styles began to diverge regionally, and in England, France, and Germany—because of the need to write quickly and conserve parchment—the letters become more angular and closer together, the pen strokes thicker, and the page looks literally “blacker.” This “deepening blackness” is the scribal antecedent to black-letter print, which was eventually formalized in styles like *textus quadratus* and *textus precissus*. Johannes Gutenberg in Germany cut his first letters in 1450 in *textus quadratus* and William Caxton in England in 1476 followed suit.

⁶ Charles C. Mish, “Black Letter as a Social Discriminant in the Seventeenth Century,” *PMLA* 68 (1953): 630; Keith Thomas, “The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England,” *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd. Baumann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 99.

As Gerald Egan summarizes, “For English audiences of early print—for upper-, middle-, and lower-order readers at varying levels of literacy—black letter would have had legitimacy. Due to the universality of *textura* script in manuscripts and signs, due also to its ecclesiastical associations and its legacy in England for centuries before print as the “English” scribal style, it would have seemed the appropriate style of lettering for the first printed documents.

⁶ Bland, “The Appearance of the Text,” 95.

⁷ Mark Bland, “The Appearance of the Text in Early Modern England,” *TEXT: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies* 95 (1998): 94-99; Lesser, Zachary, “Typographic Nostalgia: Playreading, Popularity and the Meanings of Black Letter,” *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England*. ed. Marta Straznicky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 107.

⁸ The lower playing card has on it the initial “R. [ichard] W. [right], who was a well-known printer of ballads. The top playing card is a king; the bottom a jack. What follows this page is a list of masters of penmanship alive in England and especially in Westminster and the City of London in the year 1595.

⁹ Wanley at this time was also deputy librarian at the Bodleian. Wanley assumed, in his answering letter to Pepys, that the fragments came from Bagford (“I suppose, Sir, you had them of Mr. Bagford; from whom likewise I have received some hundreds of such pieces and leaves,” Catalogue, vi). There are letters from Pepys to Bagford 1698-99 asking for more writing and printing samples, Catalogue. Wanley to John Jackson, 7 April 1701, in *Catalogue of the Pepys Library, IV: Music, Maps, and Calligraphy*, Introduction to Calligraphy, p. v; also mentions Bagford’s plan. Includes section on copy-books. Letter to Charlett 13 Sept 1702 (Tanner 2.269-73), re: two pieces of micrography. Sub-titles, titles, headings, etc. are in Paul Lorrain’s hand, a gifted paleographer. Vol 1, pp. 3-10, the first 19 of the medieval fragments are glossed by paleographical notes contributed by Wanley, to whom, at Oxford, Pepys had sent them for examination (via Charlett); Wanley then deputy librarian at the Bodleian. Pepys added his own notes to the copy-book section (in Lorrain’s hand). Wanley also supplied Pepys with at least one medieval ms sample (vi); John Jackson another supplier.

-likely Pepys did not start collecting it seriously until the 1690s.

-on May 11, 1699, Pepys wrote to Bagford that he was “Just now making up and finally putting together” his calligraphical collection.” (vii)

-but, like the ballads, not fully finished before 1702 (micrography egs. date), and likely Jackson brought the collection to full completion as he did with the ballads.

-Pepys determined not only to acquire copy books of principal English writing masters but also foreign ones as well (ix)

-see Pepys’s Header – he saw himself as recording handwriting from the last 1000 years “& the Competition for Maistry, between the Librarians & Printers, upon the first breaking-out of the Latter”; 1st section – Humphrey given credit

-part of copy-books printed or transcribed

-micrography

-ends with “Masters Head” – portraits of master pen-men

-“An Alphabetical List of Surviving Master-Pen-Men of England, & more particularly in and about Citys of London & Westminster, in the year 1699”

¹⁰ Wanley’s collection now untraced was to be of specimens of the writings “of every Countrey & Age, digested Regularly according to their respective Antiquities. McGatch, p. 158

¹¹ Later more commonly referred to as Corpus Christ college.

¹² 4 March 1660, 1.41. Swan was a servant of Lord Widdington.

¹³ C. E. Wright and Ruth C. Wright, eds., *Humphrey Wanley and the History of the Harleian Library: A Reprint of the Introduction to “The Diary of Humphrey Wanley, 1715-1726,”* 2 vols. (London: Bibliographical Society, 1966), 1.xv. The editors attribute Wanley’s interest in printing largely to his early friendship with Bagford, xvii, xxv. See also Luckett, “Collection,” xvii-xviii.

¹⁴ Wood was enough of an antiquarian of “the past” that he bequeathed his library to the Ashmolean not the Bodleian Library (though his collection ended up in the latter).

¹⁵ Luckett. Interesting, precisely Scotch ballads from Wood’s collection mysteriously ended up in the Harley collection soon after Wood’s death; scholars have suspected Bagford or Wanley in the theft.

¹⁶ Luckett, “Collection,” xvi; *Private Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Samuel Pepys, 1679-1803*, ed. J. R. Tanner, 2 vols. (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company), 1.167.

¹⁷ Warner, *Publics and Counter Publics*, p. 72.

¹⁸ 11 April and 17 April 1661, Pepys Diary, 2.71-72 and 77-78. Though the ballad never made it into Pepys’s collection, it did make it into a British Library one. The second time Pepys “did get of him [Allen] that song that pleased me so well there the other day.”

¹⁹ The song begins “I pritee sweet heart grant me my desire, as printed in *Wit and drollery* (1656, pp. 123-124; 1661, pp. 198-200; and in D’Urfey’s *Wit and Mirth* (1700, pp. 112-113). The broadside ballad version in BL, C.22.f.6, f.211r, begins “down in an Arbour devoted to Venus” and is “To the Tune of Mars and Venus.”

²⁰ In a similar way, on February 28th, 1669, Pepys goes to visit his cousins and their father, a poor man feeling great pain for his servant Arthur “who he fears is now dead, having been desperately sick, and speaks much of him”; *Diary*, 28 Feb 1669, 9:460. Thomas Pepys (1595-1676). Pepys’s uncle; elder brother of Pepys’s father; described in his will as of St Alphage’s parish. Possibly the Thomas Pepis who was admitted to the freedom of the Mercers’ Company in 1615 after apprenticeship to Ricahrd Craicrofte. He quarrelled with Pepys over his brother Robert’s will and was by then clearly a poor man. In 1660 he had enquired about a place in the order of Poor Knights of Windsor, and at his death was living as an almsman in Sion College. His wife was Mary Syvret or Chiveret of Jersey. They had three children: Tom the Turner, Charles the joiner and Mary, who married a weaver, Samuel de Santhune.

Instead of sympathy, or in a telling expression of sympathy, Pepys and his cousin Roger’s new wife, Esther, form their own male-female bond (as if welcoming her into the family) and make mirth of the uncle, calling him “Arthur of Bradley.” This was the title hero of a very popular ballad of the time, who was a rather silly but good-intentioned lower-order character. Arthur’s plain wooing of his love, including his proud list of simple household possessions to her mother, as well as his communal marriage celebration and bedding is told to the refrain, “With oh, brave Arthur O’Bradley! O, rare, Arthur O’Bradley! Arthur O’Bradley, oh!”). Like the bawdy ballad above, the “Arthur of Bradley” ballad did not make it into Pepys’s own collection but we find it in the Roxburghe ballad collection begun by Robert Harley (in 3.283) and in many songbooks of the day.

The ballad is in the Roxburghe printed collection, 7.312ff – many versions over 3 centuries; also in *Wit’s Merriment* (1656), pp. 81, 87; and is the 5th song in *An Antidote against Melancholy* (1661) (Ebs believed by N.D. Henry Playford, son of John Playford, music publisher and elder brother of another John Playford).

-Roxburghe, 3.283

--Ebsworth calls Arthur "the "swaggering royster" and Joseph Ritson refers to the ballad in Rox. as "a miserable composition"

-referenced in

1) Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore* (1604)

2) long ref. to judge Overdo in *Bart Fair* (1614) as mad Arthur of Bradley (by Mooncalf at Ursula's booth)

3) ref. in "A new Ballad of Robin Hood, his Birth, Breeding" etc. (c. 1650-80)

4) Richard Brathwaite's *A Strappado for the Diuell*, 1614, has a poem to it to the Cottoners, that references him, p. 225

5) Edward Gayton's *Festivous Notes to Don Quixote*, 1654, p. 141

6) William Wycherley's *Gentleman Dancing Master*, 1673, 1.2

-earliest extant version is 1656; attributed by Ebsworth to John Phillips

NOTE: of many Bradleys, Arthur's was probably Great Bradley, near Newmarket, Suffolk; his bride Winifred being of Madingley, **beside Cambridge**

First: "The Wedding of Arthur O'Bradley" -dialogue ballad -1656

-simple characters; when he goes to girl's mother to ask for her hand, she doesn't know for sure her age, and he lists household items his father left him and the mother lists household items he will get when she dies

-wedding feast; folks with simple names bringing simple parts of the feast; fumbled dancing, and a good time had by all

Second: "The Ballad of Arthur of Bradley," from Antidote Against Melancholy version, 1661)

-focus on dancing at the wedding and putting the couple to bed

Third: "Arthur o' Bradley" (Rox 3.283)

-includes wooing; more mockery of the ugliness of the bride

-printed on one long slip, white-letter without woodcut.

²¹ Diary, 2 January 1666, in 7.1.

²² Diary, 5 and 6 January 1666, in 7:4 and 7:5.

²³ Diary 8.99 note 2.

²⁴ Pepys brings two seamen to the king, who give him a relatively English-favored account of the battle (7.146-47), but Pepys questions to himself the behavior of Albemarle, writing "it seems the Duke did give way again and again" (7.147). It is Sir George Carteret who declared "there hath been great bad management in all this" (7.143). See also J. Richard (12 December 2000), *Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667)*, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/wars_anglodutch2.html, accessed August 19, 2010.

²⁵ August 4-5 on the Dutch Gregorian calendar.

²⁶ Diary 7.143.

²⁷ Diary, 24 October, 1667, 8.499.

²⁸ Geertz draws on Erving Goffman for his term: "focused gathering." Such a focused gathering means a set of persons engrossed in a common flow of activity and relating to one another in terms of that flow. Such gatherings, Geertz further explains still drawing on Goffman, meet and disperse; the participants in them fluctuate; the activity that focuses them is discrete—a particulate process that reoccurs rather than a continuous one that endures. They take their form from the situation that evokes them, the floor on which they are placed, as Goffman puts it; but it is a form, and an articulate one, nonetheless"; Clifford Geertz, Chapter 15, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," from *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 412-53.

²⁹ Geertz, p. 432, note 18; see also p. 435. Interestingly most of the fights are in fact organized and sponsored by small combines of petty rural merchants.

³⁰ Or an occasional semi-private event might become a spark of public making, as when Pepys sings songs with William Howe onboard the *Naseby*, and Montague happens upon them, and they all join in singing a ballad about the Rump to the tune of “The Blacksmith” (clearly, given their mission to pick up the soon-to-be-crowned Charles II, this would be an anti-Rump tune); and Montague was “pleased well”; *Diary* 1660.

³¹ Cokes is fully drawn into the song—remembering the ballads pasted up above the chimney in his nursery—to the extent that he can’t take in the words that warn against cutpurses, and Justice Overdo himself drawn into its artistry even as he plots to spy out fairing enormities, with more judgmental reserve and weakening of the ballad public as we pass out to Quarlous and Winwife watching the event and to the other collaborators in making it who know it’s trickery, such as the pig lady and her servant Mooncalf (who significantly earlier mistook Overdue for mad Arthur o’ Bradley—our popular, though silly, ballad hero).