“Learn How To Mend Your Lives:” Repentance And Restraint In Early Modern English Broadside Ballads, 1570-1630

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In 1624, a popular ballad circulated throughout London, recounting the notorious exploits and downfalls of the "cripple of Cornwall." It recounts the life of a Cornwall man who feigns a physical disability in order to maximize his wealth while begging for money on the streets. He concocts an ensemble, complete with stilts and torn clothing, allowing him to swindle generous passersby during the day. At night, he assumes the role of a greedy highwayman, amassing a sum of nearly nine hundred pounds over the course of seven years. However, when local landowner Lord Courtney discovers the man's deceit, he gathers up a crew of servants to expose the "cripple of Cornwall." After a fierce battle in which many of Courtney's servants are wounded or killed, the man is condemned to a public hanging, a just punishment for "actions so lewd and ill."[1]

"The Cripple Of Cornwall" is just one of the eleven thousand ballads that survive from the seventeenth century.[2] This time period was rife with great political, social, and religious turmoil, and this unrest was conspicuous in popular broadside ballads. The contents of ballads differed greatly, though the "cripple of Cornwall's" tale falls into the common category of ballads that warned readers and listeners against a specific type of sin or crime--in this case, deceit and stealing. Ballads are often referred to as a sort of early modern version of social media,[3] an accessible and omnipresent force in society that offered people instruction, entertainment, and communal engagement. However, they were also a singular form of media in early modern England in that they transcended literacy levels and socioeconomic status, able to

[1] *A New Ballad Intituled, the Stout Cripple of Cornwall Wherein is Shewed His Dissolute Life and Deserued Death : To the Tune of the Blind Beggar* (London: 1624; British Library, Roxburghe 1.446; EBBA 30300, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/30300/transcription).
[2] Erica Nebeker, "The Heyday of the Broadside Ballad- UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive," 2007, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/page/heyday-of-the-broadside-ballad.
[3] Aedín Ní Bhróithe Clements, "Broadside Ballads: Social Media of Earlier Times- RBSC at Notre Dame," July 27, 2020, https://sites.nd.edu/rbsc/broadside-ballads-social-media-of-earlier-times/.

reach anyone from illiterate working class citizens to learned members of nobility. In the seventeenth century, "there were more copies of ballads in circulation than just about any other kind of printed work."[4] The ubiquity and pervasiveness of the ballad provides modern historians with the preoccupations, fears, and values of early modern English society.

Such ballads were printed on cheap single sheet paper in accessible language, comprehensible for everyone from illiterate listeners to educated readers. They were written in black-letter font and always set to a popular tune, indicated under the title of the ballad. Each ballad included a black-and-white illustration of the narrative contents. The printing press facilitated the production of ballads, but the oral tradition of performing ballads had prospered in England since the middle ages. In London, and throughout Britain, one could not escape ballads, which were sung in pubs, streets, and popular squares. Peddlers sang ballads throughout towns, attracting nearby passersby with their romantic, violent, or exciting content. Ballads were also posted on building exteriors and posts, making their reach highly encompassing of a broad populace.[5]

In a time of Catholic rebellions and post-Reformation upheaval that threatened English peace, these broadsides differed in literal content but often explored similar concepts of vice, sin, and divine punishment. Moreover, they often illustrated a highly narrow view of morality in the form of public warnings, which advised readers and listeners to stay away from certain social groups, such as sex workers or vagrant populations. However, ballads also served as a powerful conduit for releasing frustration about social conditions.[6] Such warnings preached the importance

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[4] Nebeker, "The Heyday of the Broadside Ballad."
[5] Paxton Hehmeyer, "The Social Function of the Broadside Ballad; or, a New Medley of Readers," UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive," 2007, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/page/social-function-of-the-ballad.
[6] Alice Tobriner, "Old Age in Tudor-Stuart Broadside Ballads," *Folklore* 102, no. 2 (1991): 149-174 at 150.

of repentance and restraint, predicting impending tragedy for England (usually in the form of war or a natural disaster) as godly punishment for "wanton" behavior. While some warnings were secular-- or at least, more implicit in their sermonizing-- many directly addressed "Papist" sects and individuals whose treason often resulted in state sanctioned executions.

English broadside ballads experienced their height during the seventeenth century with the formation of the Stationer's Company, but they continued to flourish up through the nineteenth century.[7] Before Queen Elizabeth's reign, the "Act for the Advancement of True Religion and for the Abolishment of the Contrary," implemented during Henry VIII's reign, effectively barred "balades, playes, rymes, songes and other fantasies," because they were responsible for perpetuating stories and messages to listeners/readers, "especially the youthe of this Realme," on material that contradicted the Scriptures.[8] Ultimately, these restrictions failed to retain any long standing consequences; in 1557, the Stationers' Company in London received a royal charter, and the number of popular broadside ballads proliferated.[9] Under this royal sanction, the ballad trade flourished, though it is difficult to detect a clear-cut system of ballad distribution and production. From the ballad titles, it is apparent that many balladeers were anonymous, and the balladeers who can be traced in records "did not tap into the system of patronage available to writers in other literary circles, and, were therefore predominantly poor unless they had another more lucrative source of income."[10] While playwrights of the time like

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[7] Nebeker, "The Heyday of the Broadside Ballad."
[8] *The Statutes of the Realm : Printed by Command of His Majesty King George the Third, in Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain. From ... v.3* (London: 1810-1828; Dawsons of Pall Mall, Penn State University, https://archive.org/details/pp63095168).
[9] Hyder E. Rollins, "The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad." *PMLA* 34, no. 2 (1919): 258–339 at 258.
[10] Kris McAbee and Jessica C, Murphy, "Ballad Creation and Circulation: Congers and Mongers, – UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive," 2007, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/page/ballad-creation--circulation.

Shakespeare or Kyd would have been generously commissioned by the crown or noble families, balladeers either wrote under the Stationer's Company or escaped registration altogether in some cases.[11]

English Politics and Religious Strife During the Tudor-Stuart Era

Elizabeth I and James I's reigns both supported Protestantism and failure to conform to the crown's religious preference throughout the Tudor-Stuart era often resulted in torture or death. Even after Elizabeth's death in 1603, more religious turmoil accompanied the inception of the Stuart monarchy. James I's reign was rife with uprising and treason, evident by the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, which triggered more intense anti-Catholic rhetoric, a series of interrogations, and social paranoia against non-Protestants.[12] Along with religious instability, various assassination attempts on the two monarchs of this time furthered political tensions. The Ridolfi Plot of the 1570s included a ring of conspirators who attempted to depose Queen Elizabeth I and place her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, on the throne.[13] After finding out about the plot, Queen Elizabeth I spared Mary, but the Babington Plot of 1586 was the limit for Elizabeth's Secretary of State Francis Walsingham and Lord Treasurer Robert Cecil. The Babington Plot implicated Mary, and she was executed in 1587.[14]

However, it was not just in England that political paranoia manifested in regicide or mass upheaval. Throughout Europe, the aftershocks of the Protestant Reformation motivated

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[11] McAbee and Murphy, "Ballad Creation and Circulation."
[12] Andrew Hadfield, "Shakespeare and Politics in the Time of the Gunpowder Plot," *The Review of Politics* 78, no. 4 (2016): 571–88 at 582.
[13] Robert Kent Tiernan, *The Walsingham Gambit: Deception, Entrapment, and Execution of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2022), 65.
[14] G.R. Batho, "The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots." *The Scottish Historical Review* 39, no. 127 (1960): 35–42 at 37.

pro-Catholic conspirators to depose and assassinate various monarchs. Perhaps the most fear-inducing event in the English political psyche- at least in terms of Church tensions- was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, sparked by the marriage between Protestant Henry of Navarre and Catholic Margaret of Valois. With a death count of nearly 4,000, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre was memorialized in literature of the time, such as Christopher Marlowe's "Massacre at Paris," reflecting the popular response and trepidation surrounding such events.[15] Just under twenty years later, William of Orange was murdered in the nearby Netherlands by a Catholic conspirator. These two violent religio-political events, with close ties to England, only exacerbated preexisting turmoil under Elizabeth I's reign.

The concern for Elizabeth I's life and possible upheaval was addressed early on in her reign, perhaps most greatly encapsulated by the Elizabethan Settlement. Implemented in the first year of her reign, the settlement restored the Church of England (after Mary I's return to Catholicism), introduced the English Book of Common Prayer, and required priests to agree to the Oath of Supremacy, which swore allegiance to Elizabeth I as the head of the Anglican Church.[16] While the various acts of the settlement covered many bases, they did not deter dissenters enough, as shown by the several plots mentioned above.

They also incited frustration amongst many different religious sects; while Catholics clearly disliked the terms on a fundamental level, Puritans also disagreed with the settlement because it did not seem to go far enough in its punishment of dissenting populations. On both sides, this frustration was voiced and even acted upon, sometimes in drastic measures. Priest Edmund Campion was trained at Douai and Rome to preach as a Catholic, returned to England to

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[15] Frank Ardolino, "'In Paris? Mass, and Well Remembered!': Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and the English Reaction to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 3 (1990): 401–9 at 403.

[16] John F. Hurst, "The Elizabethan Settlement of the Church of England," *The American Journal of Theology* 3, no. 4 (1899): 679–94 at 671.

reintroduce Catholicism, and was ultimately executed for refusing the Oath of Supremacy, becoming a martyr for Catholic dissenters. The settlement also exacerbated existing international tensions with Spain, resulting in the Armada of 1588 which sought to overthrow Elizabeth I for her Protestant policies and Spanish imperial desire.[17]

Religious tensions were not miraculously repaired after James I took the throne in 1603. Even in the first year of his reign, James I survived two Catholic conspiracies that sought to depose him in what are commonly referred to as the Bye Plot and Main Plot. As Mark Nicholls indicates, A "series of examinations and confessions laid bare a conspiracy by Catholic priests and laymen to kidnapJames, and to hold him hostage against a guarantee of religious toleration" shortly before his coronation.[18] Just two years later, the Gunpowder Plot sparked James I to adopt the Popish Recusants Act in Parliament, which introduced another oath of allegiance for priests and asserted that the Pope had no authority to depose monarchs, in response to growing concern for the stability of James I's reign. Moreover, it was not just Catholics whom James I had to worry about; Puritan numbers grew throughout his reign, "who sought to institute further reforms of the Anglican Church"[19] and disapproved of what they thought of as James I's lenient policy towards Catholics. More relevant to my research, Puritans were outspoken in their desire to rid society of that "damnable vice of idleness."[20] Puritan preachers administered sermons that addressed this sin, targeting alehouses, taverns, and brothels as locations of idleness. Despite their incessant calls for alehouse and brothel restriction, the "alehouse was—and remained for

[17] Hurst, "The Elizabethan Settlement," 690.
[18] Mark Nicholls, "Treason's Reward: The Punishment of Conspirators in the Bye Plot of 1603," *The Historical Journal* 38, no. 4 (1995): 821–42 at 821.
[19] Huston Diehl, "Disciplining Puritans and Players: Early Modern English Comedy and the Culture of Reform," *Religion & Literature* 32, no. 2 (2000): 81–104 at 82.
[20] *A mirrour of monsters wherein is plainely described the manifold vices, &c spotted enormities, that are caused by the infectious sight of playes, with the description of the subtile slights of Sathan, making them his instruments* (London: William Ranklins, 1624; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011).

the first half of the seventeenth century—a central space for community and culture… their association with serious crime was overstated both by Puritans and the elite."[21] Growing tensions between Anglicans, Puritans, and Catholics under James I's reign are manifest in ballads, and Puritan rhetoric regarding idleness and vice is highly visible in the ballads that I will analyze.

Historiography

The digitization of thousands of early modern broadside ballads has elicited an uptick in ballad-related research. Beginning in 2003, UCSB's Early Broadside Ballad Archive began the digitization process of ballads from Samuel Pepsys's collection, held at Magdalene College's library in Cambridge. Known mainly for his diaries that shed light on the Protectorate under Cromwell and the Restoration of the monarchy, Pepys was also an avid collector of ballads.[22] His collection consists of over one thousand ballads; Pepys probably began collecting ballads because he believed that "the putative shift from black- to white-letter ballads"[23] would endanger many ballads from the medieval and early modern era. EBBA's researchers then went on to digitize ballads from the British Library, University of Glasgow, the Huntington Library, and National Library of Scotland at Edinburgh. Currently, the archive holds 9,874 ballads that contain the original text, transcription, and an audio recording of the ballad. Additionally,

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[21] Vicki Hsueh, "Intoxicated Reasons, Rational Feelings: Rethinking the Early Modern English Public Sphere," *The Review of Politics* 78, no. 1 (2016): 27–57 at 36.
[22] Mark S. Dawson, "Histories and Texts: Refiguring the Diary of Samuel Pepys," *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 2 (2000): 407–31 at 407.
[23] John C. Hirsh, "Samuel Pepys as a Collector and Student of Ballads," *The Modern Language Review* 106, no. 1 (2011): 47–62 at 49.

Oxford's Bodleian Ballad Archive, started in 1999, now contains around 20,000 ballads spanning from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries.[24]

The digitization of ballads has greatly facilitated research on the topic. Early scholarship on English broadside ballads was largely concerned with song and content. For instance, Hyder E. Rollins's article, published in 1919, traces the medieval history of ballads and then lists many of the prolific ballad writers during Elizabeth I's reign. His work goes through the various purposes of ballads, such as sensational news stories and tales of monstrous births. Throughout his research, he consistently likens balladeers to modern English journalists, calling their work "painfully modern"[25] because of its connections to yellow journalism. While he recognizes that broadside ballads are important as an historical artifact, he encourages a certain wariness when absorbing the contents of ballads. Because balladeers "perceived the psychological and commercial value of headlines,"[26] many accounts of events written in broadsides are exaggerated at best, and complete fabrications at worst. While Rollins's work is more interested in the actual contents of ballads from a sociological and literary standpoint, other research from the time shows the intersection of history and balladry. For instance, C.H. Firth's article on ballads of the seventeenth century clearly exhibits an interest in extrapolating information in ballads to explain historical phenomena, such as James I's ascension to the throne in 1603.[27]

As mentioned earlier, much of the early scholarship on ballads reflected an attentiveness to the songs and contents themselves. Roy Lamson Jr.'s "English Broadside Ballad Tunes of the 16th and 17th Centuries" is a prime example of this; he compiles a list of around 2,000 ballads

[24] "About Us- UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive," accessed February 25th, 2024, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/.
[25] Hyder E. Rollins, "The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad," *PMLA* 34, no. 2 (1919): 258–339 at 269.
[26] Rollins, "The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad," 269.
[27] C.H. Firth, "Ballads Illustrating the Relations of England and Scotland during the Seventeenth Century," *The Scottish Historical Review* 6, no. 22 (1909): 113–28 at 113.

and organizes them by the preexisting songs to which they were set.[28] He also notes the convergence between opera and classical music and balladry. Henry Purcell's various operas were often adopted by balladeers and "frequently served as the tune for 'answers' or sequels to the original lyric as well as for parodies, often political."[29] Therefore, Lamson's research on English broadside ballads suggests that the popular songs that were used signified the purpose of the ballads, from romantic to parodic.

Around the 1980s, scholarship on English broadside ballads became less interested in the musical, and focused more on specific thematic elements. Richard Harvey's "English Pre-Industrial Ballads on Poverty, 1500-1700" acknowledges that ballads provide a wealth of information that reveals quotidian experiences with poverty in the early modern period. He notes that most historians, up until his research, had been preoccupied with "local poor relief records, records of the central government related to poor relief, printed commentary on the problem of poverty" but neglected the plethora of ballads dating from the same time. Analyzing poverty from a ballad standpoint reveals the "advent of an aggressive private conception of wealth," as well as caricatured images of lazy and deceptive London beggars.[30] Like Harvey, J.A. Sharpe uses ballads to examine a specific aspect of Tudor-Stuart culture: plebeian marriages. His work draws from ballads, specifically "cupid ballads," to challenge the notion that all lower-class marriages were loveless economic transactions.[31] This emphasis on specificity coincides with a late-twentieth-century concentration on "history from below," popularized by the likes of E.P.

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[28] Roy Lamson, "English Broadside Ballad Tunes of the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Papers Read by Members of the American Musicological Society at the Annual Meeting*, 1939, 112–21 at 113.
[29] Lamson, "English Broadside Ballad Tunes," 148.
[30] Richard Harvey, "English Pre - Industrial Ballads on Poverty, 1500-1700," *The Historian* 46, no. 4 (1984): 539–61, at 540.
[31] J.A. Sharpe, "Plebeian Marriage in Stuart England: Some Evidence from Popular Literature," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 36 (1986): 69–90 at 70.

Thompson and Howard Zinn.[32] This historical philosophy prioritized the experiences of people who did not hold considerable power, such as the disenfranchised or the poor.[33] Specificity afforded to ballad scholarship in the 1980s reflects this trend and continues into twenty-first-century scholarship.

Recently, ballad digitization has allowed for greater scholarship on the Tudor-Stuart eras and on popular literature of the time. This scholarship not only uses ballad digitization to further explore niches of Tudor-Stuart society, but also analyzes how the proliferation of online databases affects current research, looking primarily at EBBA and Early English Books Online. The works of Patricia Fumerton, founder of EBBA, have recently explored the collection and performance practices of English broadside ballads. Fumerton's recent book, *The Broadside Ballad In Early Modern England: Moving Media, Tactical Publics*, explores where broadsides were performed, how they were illustrated, and their multimedia nature. However, her work differs from previous scholarship in that it focuses on "ballad-as-experience," examining the materiality, production techniques, and the "roles involved in such makings (author, printer, hawker, singer, auditor, reader, collector).[34] In this sense, Fumerton's scholarship looks at both the contents and music of ballads, but also the practices of distributing and listening to ballads. Similarly, Tessa Watt is also interested in how ballads disseminated common attitudes and belief systems throughout England in her book *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640.*[35] Here, she refutes the popular notion that ballads were looked down upon by the gentry and learned

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[32] Gerald W. McFarland, "Notes On The New Left Historians," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 53, no. 4 (1970): 440–49 at 440.
[33] Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, "'History from Below,'" *Social Scientist* 11, no. 4 (1983): 3–20, at 3.
[34] Patricia Fumerton, "Introduction," in *The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England: Moving Media, Tactical Publics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2020), 1–18 at 11.
[35] Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640 (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.)

populations. Instead, records show that ballads were accessible to large swaths of English citizenry and served as a form of social cohesion rather than division.

Roadmap and Thesis

While there has been an abundance of research on early modern England and ballad culture, I seek to address the relationship between ballads focusing on social degradation and their scapegoats. Considerable scholarship examines the portrayal of women and vagrants in ballads, but the connection between their ostracization and London as a place of sin remains unclear. Much of the current research also focuses on ballads as a multimedia source for a variety of social groups, but it does not reveal the ways in which ballads could encourage civic engagement in their audience. Throughout my analysis of "apocalypse," "preternatural," and vagrant ballads from 1570 to 1630, I seek to answer the following questions: How did ballads instruct people to live their lives, and how was fear used as a moralizing instrument in this process? What was the relationship between the "apocalypse" ballads of the late sixteenth century and the "preternatural" women and vagrant ballads of the early seventeenth century? What social prescriptions recurred in ballads? How was the late medieval/Tudor preoccupation with impending doom portrayed in ballads of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart eras?

The first portion of my thesis addresses what I will refer to as "apocalypse" ballads, narratives in which authors decry an uptick in sin, which will ultimately manifest in complete social decay for the city of London. These ballads often use natural disaster, plague, Biblical comparison, and harrowing accounts of foreign assassinations and massacres as a fear-mongering tactic. They argue that London is next in a long series of social downfalls that

have plagued Europe in the post-Reformation era. Publishing such ballads engendered widespread fear of "apocalyptic" symptoms of the Reformation and encouraged their readers and listeners to live virtuous, sin-free lives in order to combat the growing tidal wave of social decay.

If England was facing social upheaval, who was to blame? At the turn of the seventeenth century, ballads became less centered around London as a cesspool of sin, and more specifically focused on sinful groups to avoid, primarily "preternatural" women and vagrants. The next portion of my research will feature the caricature and ostracization of such "preternatural" women in ballads. I use this term to refer to women who were depicted as possessing qualities beyond what was considered normal or good, typically with connotations of Satanic influence. The targeted "preternatural" women who were often featured in ballads (and who will serve as a focal point of my research) were witches, sex workers, and murderesses. This trifecta of female groups was repeatedly presented in ballads as a root of societal sin, and ultimately, divine punishment.

The third and final section of my research concerns the scapegoating of vagrant populations, portrayed as violating Reformation themes of productivity and moral soundness. Specifically, the increase in alehouses and unemployment was illustrated as a major cause behind London's impending doom. Ballads popularized stereotypes of vagrants (usually deceitful, cunning beggars who preyed on the virtuous nature of morally upstanding Londoners) and implicitly concluded that the growing numbers of alehouses was a major reason behind heightened unemployment rates.

By analyzing the relationship between "preternatural" women, vagrants, and London as a city on the precipice of social degradation, I argue that ballad culture between 1570-1630 used catastrophic events to warn its readers and listeners of nationwide upheaval. Through repentance

and ostracization of "preternatural" women and vagrants, England could be redeemed and saved from the nearly apocalyptic happenings in France or the Netherlands. After the Spanish Armada of 1588, in which England emerged victorious over the Spanish threat, there was less of an emphasis on impending doom and more of an effort to explain why sin was increasing in society. The relationship between divine punishment and these two social groups reinforced Reformation values of moderation, repentance, restraint, and productivity. Ironically, this was done via engaging and digestible stories arranged for familiar popular songs. The combination of exciting narratives and music allowed for a mass appeal effect; learned elites could purchase and read ballads, whereas illiterate working-class subjects could simply listen to ballad singers in public spaces. I posit that ballads were a media form with potential to allow social participation from a variety of socioeconomic classes in a time when literacy rates were relatively low. Balladeers capitalized on this multifaceted audience in two ways. On the one hand, they made contemporary philosophy, politics, and theology applicable to a lower-class audience. Official reports containing news of foreign invasion, royal decrees surrounding alehouse regulation, and medical doctrines on the weakness of the female body would obviously not have been legible to the working class, and ballads filled the socioeconomic and educational gaps. They portrayed written material in a sung form to further spread this information. In this sense, they encouraged civic engagement through prescriptive measures of repentance and restraint, warning readers and listeners that their nation would soon be irreversibly punished by God for its sins.

Chapter 1: Lamentation of England: London As New Babylon

English broadside ballads during the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras warned of impending societal breakdown as divinely ordained retribution for London's sinful ways. The various plague outbreaks of the sixteenth century coupled with the Little Ice Age's devastating effects on farming and weather exacerbated these fears, and such events were perceived by the English people as God's wrath for their sins.[36] This contemporary philosophy, stemming from a deep fear of divine punishment, is especially ubiquitous in ballads from 1570-1600, especially those that illustrate an apocalyptic future for London. Such ballads were rooted in Biblical allegory and foreign news of invasion, war, and social upheaval as a result of religious strife. While ballads consisted of similar themes after 1600, they became less focused on general sin and more centered around its main instigators. By then, the threat of the Spanish had been vanquished after the armada of 1588 and a new generation of English politicians were coming into power, who had not experienced the direct aftermath of the Protestant Reformation.

In this sense, these ballads were multipurpose: in one song, they reported on the news for a lay audience, warned the audience of similar events arriving in London, and finally, offered a clear plan of action for prevention. Ballads portrayed London on the precipice of apocalyptic chaos and complete social subversion, only fixable via civic engagement down to the individual level. Balladeers offered their readers and listeners a direct solution- in the form of prayer, repentance, and restraint- directly after showcasing a potential future in which natural disasters, plagues, and social unrest arrived in London. Articulating this apocalyptic future via Biblical allegory allowed balladeers to access a wide audience, as both learned individuals and lay

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[36] Graham Hamill, "Miracles and Plagues: Plague Discourse as Political Thought," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (2010): 85–104, at 86.

citizens were familiar with the subject material. Using foreign news material as a warning both bolstered England's national image (at least they were not at the level of violent France and corrupt Antwerp) and served as an example of what happens when God's warnings are disobeyed. The incorporation of natural disasters, foreign news, and Biblical metaphor in ballads worked together to generate a conceptualization of London as a sinful- but not yet hopeless- city that could easily fall prey to absolute societal decay. Because of their "socially diverse readership,"[37] these "apocalypse" ballads offered everyone, from the educated nobility to the illiterate working class, a chance at societal engagement through Protestant values. Balladeers prescribed a refusal of "excess," prayer, and repentance to their audience as a means of reinforcing Protestant values and offering working-class illiterate citizens a chance at civic engagement through acceptable religious practice.

Plague and Natural Disaster as Divine Punishment

One of the ways balladeers offered lay citizens opportunities for civic engagement through Protestant practice was through accounts of natural disaster and plague throughout England. These phenomena were almost always depicted as a result of God's wrath, an extension of his hand because of the population's sin, and they served as a warning to London that similar events could soon affect their populace. Additionally, these ballads often employed graphic, violent imagery that depicted a post-apocalyptic London in order to invoke fear in readers and listeners, and encourage them to repent for themselves and others. The visceral imagery of cities and villages consumed in fire, floods, and plague operated as a deterrent for sinful behavior with

[37] Paxton Hehmeyer, "The Social Function of the Broadside Ballad; or, a New Medley of Readers," UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive," 2007, http://ebba.ds.lib.ucdavis.edu/page/social-function-of-the-ballad.

a clear means of prevention. Common thought throughout the Elizabethan-Jacobean era dictated that "no matter what your social standing, you lived at the mercy of a God who was vengeful and ready to strike at communities that did not live up to his expectations."[38] Natural disasters engendered by the Little Ice Age, such as flooding in southern England and an earthquake in the English Channel during the latter portion of the sixteenth century, elicited trepidation that was commonly found in ballads. A fire at St. Paul's Cathedral in 1561 was viewed as a divinely targeted event.[39] The added social trauma of the various plagues that had swept through England during the sixteenth century contributed to this fear and was viewed as "God's punishment for new-fangled women's fashions, for swearing and drunkenness, for heresy and atheism, for Protestantism and Catholicism, depending on what side you were on."[40] Many ballads published in London depicted natural disasters in other parts of England, or the European continent, always ending with a final admonition: this could happen to you.

One such ballad, published in 1586, was titled "A briefe sonet declaring the lamentation of Beckles, a Market Towne in Suffolke." Accounts of this event have been immortalized in local town records and financial ledgers that indicate Beccles received relief funds from the parish pastor.[41] The end of the first stanza delves into the matter at hand, and the author laments "that God in his ire:/For sinne hath consumed, me Beckles with fire."[42] The author draws a direct

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[38] Sara Barker, "Translating Tempests and Tremblements: Natural Disasters, News, and the Nation in Early Modern England and France," *Renaissance and Reform* 43, no. 2 (2020): 183-212 at 184.
[39] Albert Frederick Pollard, *Tudor Tracts, 1532-1588* (New York, E.P. Dutton and co., 1903), 406.
[40] Paul Slack, "Responses to Plague in Early Modern Europe: The Implications of Public Health," *Social Research* 55, no. 3 (1988): 433–53 at 436.
[41] Alfred Suckling, *The History of the County of Suffolk: Volume 1* (Ipswich: W.S. Crowell, 1846), 12.
[42] D. Sterrie, *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles, a Market Towne in Suffolke Which Was in the Great Winde Vpon S. Andrewes Eue Pitifully Burned with Fire to the Value by Estimation of Tweentie Thousande Pounds And to the Number of Fourescore Dwelling Houses,*

connection between God's wrath and the fire that destroys the market town. Many of these ballads employed repetitive and graphic imagery; here, the author laments that:

> My temple is spoyled, and brought in decay
>
> My marketsted burned, my beautie defaced,
>
> My wealth overwhelmed[,] my people displaced,
>
> My musicke is wayling, my mirth it is moone,
>
> My joyes are departed, my comfort is gone.[43]

After recalling the destruction of Beckles, the author turns the narrative into a moralizing lesson on how to prevent such events from occurring amongst other populaces. In order to avoid God's wrath in the form of natural disasters, the author suggests political obedience, acceptance of Christ, and living in peace with one's neighbors, urging readers/listeners to "Liue louely together and not in discorde."[44] The author acknowledges village-wide discord that predated the fire, illustrating scheming neighbors as "watching, and pryeng at each others fall,/With hoving, and shoving, and striving in Lawe."[45] Here, the author recognizes a causal relationship between the rise in village hostility and the actual fire itself, revealing the early modern preoccupation with divine punishment and God's wrath via natural disaster. The above sins, revolving around similar themes of greed and disobedience, are all punished by the fire, presumably brought upon the town by God. Though not expressed in the ballad, records show the parts of Beccles that were hit the hardest by the fire: "the roof, seats, and wood-work of the church were consumed, though the walls and the stone-work of the windows escaped destruction" and "the lower part of the

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besides a Great Number of Other Houses (London: 1586; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A12966.0001.001).

[43] D. Sterrie, *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles.*

[44] D. Sterrie, *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles.*

[45] D. Sterrie, *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles.*

steeple remains blackened with smoke in a very remarkable degree to the present day."[46] Early modern historian Alexandra Walsham explains that English Protestants after the Reformation tended to " detect the hand of the Almighty behind floods, fires, storms, and other strange accidents and catastrophic events and to interpret these visitations as divine judgements for sin and impiety."[47] This direct connection between God and inexplicable earthly disasters is omnipresent in Elizabethan-Stuart ballads, especially in this particular author's repetition that "God haue pleased, for sinne to plague me,"[48] expecting God's punishing hand in the fire.

"Doe not like Jerusalem:" Biblical Parallels

Weaponizing local news of natural disasters to instill fear into their readership was further shared a close connection with ballads that compared London to Biblical cities, effectively bridging familiar narratives with contemporary issues. Many ballads, books, plays, and other popular literature during the late Elizabethan and early Stuart eras used Biblical villains to characterize the Catholic Church as the enemy--a wayward and corrupt entity that embodied sinful qualities. The common trend of comparing the whore of Babylon to the Catholic Church was established by Martin Luther in his work, "On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in which he invalidates four of the Catholic sacraments. He urges readers to remember that by practicing Catholicism, they are living in "Babylonian captivity, and despoiled of all our precious possessions."[49] In the Lutheran Bible, the "whore of Babylon," who presides over the city of

[46] Alfred Suckling, *The History of the County of Suffolk,"*12.
[47]Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528 at 508
[48] D. Sterrie, *A Briefe Sonet Declaring the Lamentation of Beckles.*
[49] Martin Luther, "A Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520" in *Works of Martin Luther with Introductions and Notes* (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1915), pp. 167-293 at 167.

Babylon itself, is depicted as a woman wearing the papal tiara, suggesting the connection between Babylon's ungodly extravagance and Catholicism.[50] This Protestant tradition had reverberations throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. For example, Thomas Dekker's "The Whore of Babylon," published shortly after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, uses this Biblical allegory to illustrate the assassination attempts on Queen Elizabeth's life by agents of the Catholic Church.[51] Dekker's title is certainly the most explicit in this comparison, but only one of the many Elizabethan-Jacobean literary works that capitalized on this connection. Many Jacobean plays, from *Othello* to *The Duchess of Malfi,* support the Reformation image of Italy as corrupt and wayward, relying on cardinals and priests as disreputable villains. [52]

If illiterate populations could not read Luther's treatise on the Babylonian captivity, they could certainly hear about it during the Elizabethan-Jacobean era, not only in popular plays, but also in ballads. It was not uncommon for "a classical legend… to illustrate [a] moral; the story would be made a vehicle for sustaining the reader's interest until the *sententia* could be driven home."[53] A similar practice emerged with religious allegory. Balladeers recognized the popular familiarity with religious references, and used their stories as frameworks to highlight certain morals for a wide range of readers and listeners. The correlation between religious allegory and balladry seems to have begun in the medieval era, in which precursors to the seventeenth century ballad were carols and religious songs.[54] Illiterate populations and the preexisting purpose of ballads created an advantageous market for ballads that employed Christian allusions. Published

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[50] Wikipedia contributors, "File:Whore-Babylon-Luther-Bible-1534.Jpg - Wikipedia," n.d., https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Whore-babylon-luther-bible-1534.jpg.
[51] Susan E. Krantz, "Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in The Whore of Babylon," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 35, no. 2 (1995): 271–291 at 271
[52] Barbara L. Parker, "The Whore of Babylon and Shakespeare's Julius Caesar," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 35, no. 2 (1995): 251–269 at 252
[53] Herschel C. Baker, "Classical Material in Broadside Ballads, 1550-1625," *PMLA* 54, no. 4 (1939): 981–89 at 984
[54] Louise Pound, "The English Ballads and the Church." *PMLA* 35, no. 2 (1920): 161–88 at 172.

sermons throughout this time also reflect a similar dismay at the growing parallels between London and fallen Biblical cities. In one particularly alarming sermon, preacher Robert Gray warns that "As therfore the torments of hell are unspeakable, and passe all other torments: so this vengeance which the Lord inflicted vpon Sodom and Gomorrha… for this cause ought we more duly and seriously to consider it."[55] Warnings of imminent punishment were common in sermon literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean era, and ballads often perpetuated such sentiments for a broader audience. Ballads reinforced many of the values omnipresent in sermons of the time, adapting their warnings for a wider working-class audience who perhaps could not attend church frequently or read the Bible. The comparison between London and fallen Biblical cities allowed balladeers to warn their readers/listeners of incoming doom in a familiar way that would heighten fear and trepidation.

An anonymous ballad published in the mid-seventeenth century, titled "Christs teares over Jerusalem. Or, a caveat for England, to call to God for mercy, lest we be plagued for our contempt and wickedness," compares London to Jerusalem. The balladeer points to two recent events in English history, including the series of plagues and the Spanish Armada, as "warnings" from God. He urges the audience to

> Remember how of late
> the Spaniard thee assayld
> And how of Gods especiall power
> they ne'ere a whit prevail'd.[56]

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[55]Robert Gray, *An Alarum to England Sounding the most Fearefull and Terrible Example of Gods Vengeance, that Euer was Inflicted in this World Vpon Mankind for Sinne: Seruing Generally as a Warning for all People to Eschew Sinne, Lest they Partake of the Like Vengeance. by Robert Gray, Preacher of the Word of God* (London: 1609; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A02058.0001.001).

[56] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem. Or, A Caveat for England, to Call to God for Mercy, Lest we be Plagued for our Contempt and Wickednesse to the Tune of the Merchants* (London: 1640, Early

Later, he alludes to the plagues that ravaged London during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writing:

> That then he plagued théewith pestilence and death,
>
> Whereby in Country and in Towne
>
> a number lost their breath.[57]

Foreign invasion and plagues are typified as warning signs from God, a punishment for London's current "sléep of sinne."[58] The balladeer, however, must have a justification for why God will further punish London, and turns to the Bible in order to provide it. He uses the history of Jerusalem as an example of what happens when God's "proffred grace" is shunned by its inhabitants.[59] Because Jerusalem "kil'd the Prophets of the Lord," Jesus Christ, this permitted God to send "the mighty Emperor of Rome… with courage bold."[60] He introduced a slew of disasters to Jerusalem, a holy intervention that punished the citizens for their denial of Christ, explaining that

> By Sword and Famine ere he went,
>
> he did them quite confound:
>
> Yea, Dogs and Cats they ate,
>
> Mice, Rats and everything:
>
> For want of food, their Infants young,
>
> unto the Pot they bring.[61]

English Books Online, 2003-2004, https://www.proquest.com/books/christs-teares-over-jerusalem-caveat-england-call/docview/2240896217/se-2).

[57] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*
[58] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*
[59] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*
[60] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*
[61] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*

The refusal to accept Christ as the Messiah directly leads to this complete breakdown of society. The balladeer grounds this assumption in a well-known and widely accepted (for an Elizabethan-Jacobean audience) Biblical narrative in order to reveal God's supposed plans for London to a wide audience, regardless of literacy. This comparison between London and Jerusalem reveals how balladry employed religious allegory as a means to "predict" and ground these predictions in what was widely accepted as truth. Furthermore, the tune's aural significance furthered this prediction; this ballad was set to a popular song entitled "The Rich Merchant Man," which was typically reserved for prescriptive ballads surrounding similar themes of sin and society. Nearly one hundred years later, this same tune was used for the ballad, "A Warning-Piece for all VVickd Livers or a Caviet for all People to remember their Latter End." In this ballad, the author recalls similar predictions of divine punishment and urges their audience to remember the limited time they have to "mend" their lives.[62] Harrowing rhetoric coupled with familiar songs with pre existing societal connotations helped balladeers propagate the image of London on the precipice of disaster.

While the previous ballad uses one Biblical narrative to ground its predictions, "A godly Ballad declaring by the Scriptures the plagues that have insured whordome" draws from a wide repository of Biblical events. This anonymous ballad, published sometime in the mid sixteenth century, recalls Bible stories such as the plagues under Ramses, the fall of the Sodomite kingdom, and Sampson's death, as righteous punishment for the sin of lust. The balladeer uses Biblical allegory in order to depict the horrible fates sinners receive, specifically for the sin of lust. While individual punishments are distributed by God, the influx of sin is noticed by God,

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[62] *A Warning-Piece for all VVickd Livers, / OR, / A Caviet for all People to remember their Latter End. / Being very good instructions for Old and young, Rich and Poor, to a- / mend their Lives, and repent before it be too late* (1681-1684; National Library of Scotland Crawford Collection E.B. 1199, EBBA 24083, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/34083/transcription).

and the balladeer predicts a societal downfall. The ballad states that the "whole world by suche wicked waies,/by rage of Rain was overthrowne,"[63] alluding to Biblical cities that were ravaged by plagues, natural disasters, famine, and death because of the increase in sin amongst their citizens. The balladeer points to entire populations that had been erased because of their repeated sins and refusal to heed God's warnings, explaining that:

> Lust did destroy the Sodomites,
>
> as is in Scripture manifest:
>
> For lust were slain the Sichamites,
>
> when Sichem Dina had opprest.[64]

Multiple Biblical stories are conveyed in this ballad, all ending with divine punishment. The use of Sodom and Gomorrah as a warning of future punishment was a common trope in Elizabethan-Jacobean broadside ballads, also seen in William Birch's "A warnyng to England, let London begin: To repent their iniquitie, and flie from their sin." Like the other two ballads, Birch laments London's inability to recognize God's warning signs that precede a complete societal decay. For example, he states that

> Zodome and Gomorra also,
>
> were sunke in fyre ful hot,
>
> Burnyng all in Brimstone, vntyll they were destroyed:
>
> And yet they were fore warned long by the prophete Lot,
>
> With Repentance vnto them, continually he cryed.[65]

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[63] *A godly Ballad declaring by the Scriptures the plagues that haue insued whordome* (London: 1566; British Library Huth Collection Huth50.49, EBBA 37079, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/37079/transcription).

[64] *A godly Ballad declaring by the Scriptures the plagues that haue insued whordome*

[65] William Birch, *A Warning to England, Let London Begin: To Repent Their Iniquitie, & Flie from Their Sin [by] William Birch* (London: 1565; Huntington Library Britwell Collection HEH 18629, EBBA 32088, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/32088/transcription).

The fall of Jerusalem, just like the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah, would have been well-known in a time where failing to attend church services required one to pay a fee.[66] Leveraging such Biblical narratives allowed balladeers to not only reach a large audience, but also to invoke visceral fear of violent and fiery punishment. Ballads comparing London to fallen Biblical cities were not entirely devoid of hope, and usually consisted of a clear way to prevent such disasters from ever occurring. Action in the form of repentance, temperance, and prayer was advised for readers and listeners in order to "save" their city from a violent downfall. "Christs teares over Jerusalem" urges the audience to

> Provoke not God to wrath,
> with thy most loathsome sinne,
> But speedily t'amend thy life,
> by prayers now begin.[67]

Similarly, Birch's "A warnyng to England" reminds the audience that they "shall turne to dust" at the discretion of God, so they must "Pray England pray, and London leave thy wicked trade, Especiallye Couetousnes, Gluttony, and al fylthy lust."[68] These ballads blend violent and terrifying fates with a clear plan of action for their listeners: change their ways and repent their sins through prayer. While the familiar narrative elements appeal to a wide audience, and could be experienced aurally or visually depending on literacy, they were peppered with moral warnings and predictions for the future of London. A layperson could not read Luther's comparison of the Catholic Church to the whore of Babylon or watch a staged play in which

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[66] Clive D. Shilling, "A Shilling for Queen Elizabeth: The Era of State Regulation of Church Attendance in England, 1552-1969," *Journal of Church and State* 50, no. 2 (2008): 213–53 at 216.
[67] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*
[68] *Christs Teares Over Jerusalem.*

Rome is the epicenter of sin, but ballads served as an alternate way to spread information- and warnings- about what could happen if God's warnings were not heeded.

A "countreye spoyled in Ruth and feare:" Foreign Invasions

It was not just ancient stories of the Judeo-Christian past that balladeers employed to warn of divine wrath. They also used contemporary events on the European continent, portraying the plight of other countries as divine intervention. They warned Londoners that similar misfortunes were advancing over the English Channel in the form of rebellion, invasion, and massacres. In this sense, ballads served a multipurpose function; they dispersed information about current events abroad, but they also sought to "moralize" these affairs. The most notable country that was mentioned throughout the Elizabethan-Jacobean era was France, which was experiencing its own wars of religion throughout the sixteenth century. The fallout of the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre was deeply ingrained in the English memory, and ballads expressed a recognition that England could "turn" into France if it maintained a sinful population.

Thomas Bette's "A nevve ballade intituled, Agaynst rebellious and false rumours To the nevve tune of the Black Almaine, vpon Scissilia" was published shortly after a series of rebellions and Protestant-Catholic tensions. The French government had attempted to end civil wars and local rebellions through an array of edicts, but "from the Conspiracy of Amboise in 1560 onward, France's 'troubles of religion' gave rise to rival stories of victimisation, vindication and deliverance through divine protection on either side of the confessional rift."[69]

[69] Philip Benedict, "Shaping The Memory Of The French Wars Of Religion: The First Centuries." In *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe*, edited

This failure at pacification, ultimately resulting in the bloody St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, resulted in local and national conflicts that were reported on in ballads. While Bette's ballad does not explicitly mention an inciting incident, it alludes to the frequent killings of French nobles due to religious strife, and warns the English listeners of similar events coming to London. The year before, in 1569, the battle of Jarnac had eliminated several prominent French Protestant noble leaders, including the Prince of Condé and François de Coligny d'Andelot.[70] News of these battles may have inspired this ballad, in which Bette states, "We hauve heard in Fraunce the Rumur there…There countreye spoyled in Ruth and feare, Vnto there clean decaye."[71] Here, Bette portrays France as a location past the point of no return: embroiled in political corruption, religious turmoil, and moral degradation. The evidence he uses for this state are the recent uprisings in warfare, a political subversion that brought about God's wrath. He reports that

> "Many a Noble hath bene slayne,
>
> A Duke, and eake a Prince certayne.
>
> Which weare the chiefs states of that land,
>
> Wherfore in hazarde now they stande,
>
> For where the chiefe are taken awaye,
>
> The rest must nedes runne to decaye."[72]

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by Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollmann, Johannes Müller, and Jasper van der Steen (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 111–26.

[70]N.M. Sutherland, "The Role of Coligny in the French Civil Wars," *Bulletin de La Société de l'Histoire Du Protestantisme Français (1903-)*, 1974, 323–39 at 334.

[71]Thomas Bette, *A Nevve Ballade Intituled, Agaynst Rebellious and False Rumours to the Nevve Tune of the Blacke Almaine, Vpon Scissillia* (London: 1570; British Library Huth Collection Huth50.26, EBBA 37055, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/37055/transcription).

[72] Bette, *A Nevve Ballade Intituled, Agaynst Rebellious and False Rumours.*

The invocation of the word "decaye" shows a fear of a subversion of the natural political order, in which the rule of the nobility is not threatened. The ballad as a multipurpose form of media is highly apparent in this case because it reports on current events and warns the audience of a similar fate, acting as both journalistic report and prescriptive Protestant literature. A couple lines later, Bette alerts readers and listeners:

> And round about vs hath,
>
> Bene warre and cruell fayth,And all to cause vs to repent,
>
> For we desarue worsse punnishment,
>
> Then any of these Landes haue done.[73]

Not only have the "warning signs" for societal decay already arrived in England, Bete argues that their punishment should be worse than any other European nation. Assassination attempts on Queen Elizabeth's life coupled with the Northern Uprising, a coalition of nobles that attempted to dethrone Elizabeth in order to revive Catholicism in England, were depicted as direct parallels to events in France. The increase in wars, massacres, and rebellions in France was used as a warning of what was to come. Like the ballads rooted in Biblical allegory, foreign affairs ballads almost always offered a solution for how to prevent such events- and not end up like France, the enemy. After illustrating a prediction of fear and chaos, Bette encourages readers and viewers to "Fall all to fast and praye:/And Pardon craue now of the Lorde,/To kepe vs from decaye."[74] Bette offers a clear solution to readers and listeners, one of prayer and repentance that will prevent society from mirroring that of France.

Like France, the city of Antwerp also served as a cautionary tale for Londoners. Following the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, "the rebel armies in Holland and

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[73]Bette, *A Nevve Ballade Intituled, Agaynst Rebellious and False Rumours.*
[74] Bette, *A Nevve Ballade Intituled, Agaynst Rebellious and False Rumours.*

Zeeland killed priests, plundered convents and mocked the sacraments; church property was requisitioned, and from 1573 Catholic worship was outlawed there."[75] In 1576, the "Spanish Fury" occurred, in which multiple Catholic Spanish forces pillaged several Flemish towns, including the Protestant city of Antwerp. [76] This chaos was reported in English ballads, most notably in Ralph Norris's "A Warning to London by the Fall of Antwerp to the Tune of Rovv Vvel Ye Mariners," published in 1577. Norris repeatedly calls attention to the fate of Antwerp, and urges Londoners to remember to "Let Antvverp warning be,/thou stately London to beware:/Lest resting in thy glee,/thou wrapst thyself in wretched care."[77] Norris contrasts the religious chaos of Antwerp to "stately" London, a city that has the potential to unravel, "for Antwerp's plague approcheth neer."[78] This "plague," a metaphorical representation of divine punishment in the form of religious violence and urban strife, is seen as the result of "vain excesse" and "Devilish drunken trade."[79] It ends with a plea to God- "God sheeld this city from decaye-"[80] that emboldens readers and listeners to give up their drinking and excessive behavior in order to protect London from Antwerp's fate.

Both the French and Flemish populations served as a warning to England's populace, with a clear cause and plan of action. On the one hand, ballads elicited fear in their audience, warning them of potential for societal decay, a city plagued with violence, murder, and religious subversion. However, these ballads also encouraged repentance as a means to forestall foreign

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[75]Judith Pollman, "Countering the Reformation in France and the Netherlands: Clerical Leadership and Catholic Violence 1560-1585," *Past & Present*, no. 190 (2006): 83–120 at 83
[76]Parker, Geoffrey, "Mutiny and Discontent in the Spanish Army of Flanders 1572-1607," *Past & Present*, no. 58 (1973): 38–52 at 44.
[77]Ralph Norris, *A Warning to London by the Fall of Antwerp to the Tune of Rovv Vvel Ye Mariners (*London 1577; Ann Arbor Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A08324.0001.001).
[78] Norris, *A Warning to London.*
[79] Norris, *A Warning to London.*
[80] Norris, *A Warning to London.*

invasion or societal upheaval. It served as a pontificating model that reinforced Protestant values, offering lay people a chance at civic engagement through personal repentance and restraint. If illiterate, working-class Londoners could not directly engage with foreign or political affairs, but they could at least pray their sins away and shun sinful behavior as a way of staving off God's punishment. Balladeers portrayed London as a city hanging on by a thread, a metropolis that could easily tip the scale into complete societal destruction or redeem itself through Protestant values.

The threat of divinely ordained natural disasters and plagues was frequently depicted in broadside ballads of the late Elizabethan-early Stuart era. Comparisons to foreign cities, besieged by war and social turmoil, were often made in order to alert Londoners of similar events. Writers also incorporated Biblical allegory into "apocalyptic" ballads, drawing from stories and characters that would have been highly familiar to both a learned and lay audience. This trifecta of threats- natural disasters/plagues, "becoming" a decaying foreign city, and/or transforming into a Biblical city such as Babylon- incited fear in their audience because of their highly personal and imminent warnings. However, the solutions that the ballads offered were consistent, regardless of the specific warning the balladeers were attempting to make. Evading the highlighted sin in the ballad followed by repentance through prayer was the typical solution balladeers offered to readers/listeners if they wanted London to avoid mirroring a Biblical-level catastrophe. Historian Angela Mcshane's assertion that ballads "enabled people to build up a critical understanding of social, political, legal, and religious structures and principles, and provided literary examples and vehicles for expression that could be appropriated by those without authority or cultural capital"[81] is apparent in "apocalypse" ballads because they used

[81] Angela McShane, 'Ballads and Broadsides', in Joad Raymond (ed.), *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture: Volume One: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, The Oxford

popular and familiar storytelling tactics in order to engage anyone (no matter their literacy level) in social affairs. The added element of advice at the end of the ballads included this broad audience in a societal solution through prayer and repentance. As a modern audience, "this seems unnatural and morbid; to sing a 'lively' song about the destruction of a city would likely be perceived as not showing appropriate respect for the dead."[82] However, for an Elizabethan-Stuart audience, the tradition of ballad making and creation would have been a form of communal repentance that allowed for social engagement, despite education and literacy levels, seen as a way to prevent foreign invasion- or becoming like foreign neighbors.

History of Popular Print Culture (Oxford, 2011; online edn, Oxford Academic, 3 Mar. 2015): 339-362 at 339.

[82]Jennifer Spinks, *Disaster, Death, and Emotions in the Shadow of Apocalypse, 1400-1700* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2016), 275-294 at 277

Chapter 2: "Lewd And Wicked Women"

The aforementioned apocalyptic ballads reached their heyday in the late sixteenth century but dwindled after the Spanish Armada and Queen Elizabeth I's death in 1603. When James I ascended the throne, ballads grew more specific in their scope and targeted two major societal groups: "preternatural" women and vagrants, as scapegoats behind social disorder, natural disasters, and plagues. The role of Reformation ideals propagated a clear set of boundaries for how women should behave according to Biblical standards. This notion of femininity had close ties to women's legal rights, and has gained considerable traction in social history. Stephen Ozment posits that "Protestantism elevated marriage and sexuality within it by denigrating the Catholic ideals of celibacy and sexual abstinence."[83] However, the Reformation was also responsible for a heightened religious and political control over the rights and behaviors of women. Post-Renaissance "'revival' of 'classical doctrine' facilitated a wide social movement to new standards of bodily control and social decorum,"[84] which targeted socially acceptable behaviors for women. Furthermore, Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries and convents in the mid-sixteenth century during the departure from Catholicism removed women from convents and encouraged marriage. Acts of religiosity, for women at least, were now strictly confined to the household.[85]

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[83]Mack P. Holt, "The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 133–44 at 135.
[84] Phil Withington, "Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England," *The Historical Journal* 54, no. 3 (2011): 631–57 at 632.
[85] Norman Jones, "Marriage and the English Reformation," *Journal of Law and Religion* 16, no. 2 (2001): 509–11 at 509.

Such control was expressed, facilitated, and reinforced in English broadside ballads in the early seventeenth century. The aural experience of ballads- always from a man's voice in a public setting- already reveals the gendered expectations of a woman's place in society: within the household. Before the Restoration, women did not sing publicly, so men were the only ones who delivered ballads. That being said, "there are many references in the seventeenth century to women in domestic situations singing ballads of all kinds,"[86] and women listened to or read ballads in public. Whether singing in the household or listening in a crowded marketplace, we know that women received ballads and the gendered messages that accompanied them. In ballads associated with gender, there is a clear distinction between the "natural" and "preternatural" when it comes to the acceptable behaviors and lifestyles of women. "Preternatural" women were sorted into three major categories in such ballads: witches, sex workers, and murderesses. These subgroups of women were repeatedly displayed in ballads as harbingers of sin and societal decay, eliciting punishment for disrupting the "natural" gendered order. If supernatural intervention, sexual expression, and uncontrolled rage were depicted as "preternatural" in ballads, the exclusion of women from actually singing the ballads themselves furthered the notion of what a "natural" social order looked like: one in which women were expected to be silent, submissive, and deferential. The women depicted in the ballads themselves, on the other hand, were disparaged for holding *too* much power over the male body, in the form of spirituality, sexuality, and physicality (respectively of witches, sex workers, and murderesses). The ballad-singing practices of the early seventeenth century coupled with the notional subdivision of women between natural and preternatural reveal ballads as a prescriptive form of literature that reinforced preexisting beliefs about women's physical and mental inferiority. In

[86] Sandra Clark, "The Broadside Ballad and the Woman's Voice," in: *Debating Gender in Early Modern England, 1500–1700*, ed. C. Malcolmson, M. Suzuki (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 103-120 at 103.

this sense, ballads adapted complex anatomical and theological texts that an illiterate lay person could not understand and made them accessible for an entire population.

"Cunning in their artes:" Depictions of witchcraft in the English broadside ballad

The societal fascination and fear of witches during Queen Elizabeth I and James I's reigns were the product of royal, medical, and theological doctrines that stemmed from a Reformation fear of anti-Christian forces. Though witchcraft was a valid societal belief prior to the Elizabethan-Jacobean era, Henry VIII's shift to Anglicanism cemented a trepidation amongst the English populace that credited religious turmoil with the increase in demonic force and possession.[87] In the royal sense, James I's ascension to the throne in 1603 only amplified this preexisting tension. Prior to his reign, James I's 1597 treatise, *Daemonologie,* propagated the idea that because women were naturally weaker, they were more likely to be "intrapped in these grosse snares of the Deuill, as was ouer well proued to be true, by the Serpents deceuing of Eua at the beginning, which makes him homelier than that sexe sensine."[88] James I frequently uses Biblical allegory throughout *Daemonologie* to explain why women are "easier" targets of the Devil, recalling the story of Eve's temptation by the Devil in Genesis. His obsession with and eventual war against witches culminated in the Witchcraft Act of 1604, which, "backed by new ecclesiastical canons, made war on the competing claims of puritan and Catholic activists by forbidding exorcism and so brought diabolism within the jurisdiction of the courts."[89] This

[87] Gaskill, "Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England," 38.
[88] William Ranklins, *A mirrour of monsters wherein is plainely described the manifold vices, &c spotted enormities, that are caused by the infectious sight of playes, with the description of the subtile slights of Sathan, making them his instruments* (London: 1624; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A10414.0001.001).
[89] Gaskill, "Witchcraft and Evidence in Early Modern England," 42.

change afforded royal courts considerable power in determining who counted as a witch and what actions were considered witchcraft, a decree that surpassed pre existing royal authority and highlighted the growing preoccupation with witchcraft.

Concurrent developments in medical scholarship during the Elizabethan-Jacobean era also perpetuated ideas that reinforced James I's treatise. The "iconology of women as leaky vessels must have seemed undeniable" in this era, a bodily flaw that explained their supposedly inherent excess of emotion and lack of self-control.[90] Contemporary medical theory on humors also dictated that women were a naturally "cooler" sex, and "lacked the necessary heat to evaporate excess humors and fluids- hence lactation and menstruation."[91] This medical reasoning "justified" the social and legal subordination of women and spurred an influx in writings related to the characteristic weakness of women. The combination of excessive fluids and natural "coolness" created the idea that women were easily susceptible to Satanic influence and possession. Because women's bodies were naturally inferior to men's, repeatedly attacked by menstruation and lactation, demonic influence could easily manipulate their minds into acting as earthly servants. In other words, women were viewed as mentally and physically weaker because of their body's natural lack of control (primarily evidenced by menstruation), and thus, more likely to be controlled by antichristian forces. The cultural echoes of Robert Burton's "The Anatomy of Melancholy" in relation to the argument for witchcraft reveals a logic that argues women's inherent physical coolness caused "excessive melancholic humors,"[92] a weakness on

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[90] Gail Kern Paster, "Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy," *Renaissance Drama* 18 (1987): 43–65 at 50.
[91] Sarah F. Williams, "'A Swearing and Blaspheming Wretch': Representations of Witchcraft and Excess in Early Modern English Broadside Balladry and Popular Song," *Journal of Musicological Research* 30 (4) (2011): 309–356 at 321.
[92] Williams, "'A Swearing and Blaspheming Wretch,'" 321.

which demonic influence capitalized. Unlike *Daeomonologie,* popular medical knowledge argued for female inferiority under the guise of scientific experimentation.

However, it was not just medical doctrine that argued for female susceptibility to Satanic influence. Medieval historian Eileen Powers notes the impactful preachings of St. Paul, who wrote that because the Church submits to Christ, "so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." This Early Church history tended to "link the social inferiority of women with a spiritual inferiority which rendered them especially susceptible to the allures of malevolent forces."[93] The royal, medical, and theological arguments for female inferiority heightened the belief in witchcraft and made the subject a popular one for balladeers. Ballads surrounding witchcraft use highly sensationalized language and stories of murder, spells, and bodily transformation. On the one hand, these created entertaining content, relying on exaggeration to provide entertainment to their readers and listeners. However, often under the surface was a sense of paranoia and warning to readers: that intermixing with groups such as witches would lead to bodily harm, social ostracization, or even death.

Perhaps the most popular ballad on witchcraft, entitled "Damnable Practises of Three Lincoln-shire Witches," was published in 1619 and was set to a popular tune- "The Ladies Fall." This popular tune was often reserved for ballads surrounding women convicted of murder or witchcraft. When listeners heard this song, the tune would probably have seemed familiar and have conjured for them stories of violent women and societal downfall. The anonymously published ballad recounts the sensational story of Joan Flower and her two daughters, Margaret and Philip, who were convicted of killing the children of a noble family under Satanic influence. The beginning of the ballad introduces popular "signs" of witchcraft: visually detectable

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[93]Alan Anderson and Raymond Gordon,"Witchcraft and the Status of Women -- The Case of England," *The British Journal of Sociology* 29, no. 2 (1978): 171–84 at 171.

indicators that audiences were encouraged to identify and report. In the case of Joan and her daughters, they disguised themselves as "pretty formes, of Dog, of Cat, or Rat."[94] This supposedly common practice of bodily transformation alerted readers and listeners of signs of witchcraft. The author later expands on this idea, writing:

> These Women thus being Divels growne most cunning in their Arts:
> With charmes and with inchanting spells, they plaid most damned parts:
> They did forespeake, and Cattle kild, that neighbours could not thrive,
> And oftentimes their Children young, of life they would deprive.[95]

While there is evidence for the Belvoir witches existing in Lincolnshire in local records,[96] it is clear that the ballad takes artistic liberty in these descriptions, using tropes of physical transformation and spells to construct an image of what a witch looked like. A series of odd coincidences occurs, including the death of the nobleman's children via sudden illnesses. The earl responds with patience, believing that "his childrens' punishments, right natures troubles were/Suspecting little, that such meanes, against them should be wrought." Here, the idea of divine wrath is introduced and bolsters the earl's reputation as an upstanding Protestant, who has enough faith in God to believe that his children's deaths are punishment for sin. Eventually, the earl dies suddenly as well, and the three Lincolnshire witches "dyed in shame, by strangling twist, and layd by shame in the ground."[97] Like the ballads expressing concern at London's

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[94] *"Damnable Practises/Of three Lincolne-shire Witches, Joane Flower, and her two Daughters, /Margret and Phillip Flower, against Henry Lord Rosse, with others the Children of the Right/ Honourable the Earle of Rutland, at Beauer Castle, who for the same were executed at Lincolne the 11. of/March last,"* (Christ Church, London: 1612; Magdalen College Pepys Collection 1.132-1.133, EBBA 20058, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20058/transcription).
[95] *Damnable Practises / Of three Lincolne-shire Witches.*
[96] Andrew Williams, *Bygone Leicestershire* (Leicestershire, England: Leicester : F. Murray; Hull, W. Andrews & co.; London, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, & co., limited, 1892), 126.
[97] *Damnable Practises / Of three Lincolne-shire Witches.*

growing sin, this ballad also includes a refrain at the end asking for God's forgiveness, as "Lord in vengeance strike."[98]

The emphasis in this ballad veers towards the sensational: stories of spells and shapeshifting had more commercial value than a ballad solely focusing on the moral concerns of witchcraft. While it depicts an event rooted in truth, the importance is placed on the macabre violence of their actions and eventual punishment, rampant with exaggeration and magical imagery. The first priority of balladeers would be driven by commercial enterprise, which was facilitated through sensational stories such as the Lincolnshire witches. However, balladeers were literate people writing for a (sometimes) illiterate audience. Balladeers would have been able to read contemporary doctrine surrounding witchcraft, and then used their creative status to both reinforce and transmit these ideals amongst illiterate, lower class subjects. Refrains at the end of such ballads, grounded in messages of divine punishment and demands for repentance, are echoes of theological scholarship at the time, adapted for ballads via entertaining narratives and moralizing stories.

"Trust Not A Whore:" Stereotypes of Sex Workers

While connotations of magic, possession, and the supernatural are associated with witchcraft, sex workers were also afforded similar characteristics, able to bewitch their customers. In this sense, sex workers portrayed in ballads often possess qualities that are seen as beyond what was normal or natural. Much of the legislation surrounding prostitution was codified during the late medieval era prior to Queen Elizabeth I's reign, though the enforcement success of these acts was limited based on contemporary accounts, including cultural artifacts

[98] *Damnable Practises / Of three Lincolne-shire Witches.*

such as broadsides. Various acts in the fourteenth century attempted to shut down all brothels within London, but even after these efforts, brothels still could legally exist in certain suburbs.[99] However, a clear solution presented itself for Londoners in desire of illegal entertainment, from bear-baiting to brothels: a short journey outside the city walls and across the river Thames to Southwark. Even Henry VIII's 1546 decree that shut down brothels in both London and Southwark ultimately failed in the long run; Londoners were quick to find workarounds, such as masking their storefronts as taverns or inns. Additionally, the act's attention to Southwark "scattered many of the resident prostitutes about London, making supervision of them more difficult."[100] The social prevalence of prostitution clashed with Reformation era attempts to "impose a model 'holy household' on the unruly desires of men and women alike."[101] Ambiguous legal precedents and the insurgence of moral policing during the Reformation made prostitution a frequent topic of debate in both the political and cultural domains, as exemplified by its constant presence in ballads.

What was new during the seventeenth century were heightened religious tensions amongst both Catholics and Protestants that "meant to impose a model "holy household" on the unruly desires of men and women alike" and "demanded and encouraged the active participation of ordinary neighbors, women as well as men."[102] The solidification of England as an early modern state also brought about new decrees surrounding poverty that sought to punish illegitimacy. Such efforts to enforce a "holy household" model and avoid illegitimacy as a means to prevent cycles of poverty manifested in ballads, which portrayed sex workers in a formulaic

[99] Ruth Mazo Karras, "The Regulation of Brothels in Later Medieval England," *Signs* 14, no. 2 (1989): 399–433 at 410.
[100] Wallace Shugg, "Prostitution in Shakespeare's London," *Shakespeare Studies* 10, (1977): 291-313 at 291.
[101] Laura Gowing, "Women's Bodies and the Making of Sex in Seventeenth-Century England," *Signs* 37, no. 4 (2012): 813-822 at 814.
[102] Gowing, "Women's Bodies and the Making of Sex in Seventeenth-Century England," 814.

manner, rarely straying from the same narrative structure. In these ballads, a young and respectable man was portrayed, and he often traveled to London in pursuit of economic prosperity. London, or any other major city for that matter, was typically shown as a cesspool of sin and debauchery- with sex workers acting as a main culprit. These ballads almost always relied on lush descriptions of physical appearance in order to show prositutes's tempting nature, and they usually resulted in the man's social downfall. Ruined by economic failure and obsession, the men faced punishments such as jail and social ostracization due to their preoccupation with sex workers. The focus on the physical appearance of sex workers coupled with the descriptions of punishments for their customers operated concurrently in order to convey the anti christian, socially destructive powers of sex workers.

Published in 1620, "A Caveat or warning for all sortes of men both young and olde to avoid the company of lewd and wicked women" is clear in its message even from the title. The ballad follows a young man whose prosperity and relationships are entirely ruined after he spends all of his inherited fortune buying gifts for his favorite sex workers. The body is used to foreground the immense pleasure, and by default, guaranteed pain that repeatedly accompanies sin in the form of later punishment. In the first stanza, the unnamed narrator begins with an explicit warning that reappears throughout the ballad:

> The fairest apple to the eye
>
> May haue a rotten core
>
> And young men all now by my fall
>
> Take héed trust not a whore.[103]

[103] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men both Young and Olde to Auoid the Company of Lewd and Wicked Women to the Tune of Virginia,* (London: 1620; Magdalen College Pepys Collection 1.46-1.47, EBBA 20217, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20217/transcription).

This phrase, “take heed trust not a whore,” is repeated at the end of each stanza, a rhythmic reinforcement of Protestant ideals of the “holy household” model, a definitive assemblage of moral and social boundaries for women. Sex workers and their customers were excluded from this model, serving as a reminder of what happens when physical desire is heeded.

A common practice in ballads about sex workers was physical depictions, using flowery and sensuous imagery to summon feelings of desire, only to quickly eradicate them with illustrations of social or physical punishment. The author in this ballad calls his lover “the fairest apple to the eye” and later states that:

> Shee’l stroke your cheeks shee’l stroke your chin,
>
> Shee’le fling her armes about you,
>
> And shee’le protest with vowes and oaths,
>
> She cannot live without you[104]

The displays of attraction that the author describes ultimately serve to mask the true manipulative nature of the sex worker. Choosing to begin the ballad with rather optimistic stories immediately instructs readers/listeners that physical appearance and unrestrained affection are not only deceiving, but a path to social downfall.

Like witches, there is also a common linkage between women and the supernatural in ballads surrounding sex workers. For instance, this author discusses the various gifts that the sex worker gives to her customer: “Sheele make you bracelets of her hayre/for to bewitch you to her.”[105] Amongst all the “unnatural women” ballads, the women (regardless of their crime) almost always possess preternatural abilities to seduce or “force” someone into attraction. Such an ability is associated with Satanic influence, while the male customers are usually portrayed as

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[104] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men.*
[105] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men.*

innocent agents caught up in supernaturally orchestrated situations. Finally, the end of this ballad depicts the customer as bankrupt and friendless due to the sex worker:

When she hath had her whole desire

And all your quoyne is spent

If you entreat her company

shéele say she' shal be shente

Then will she leaue you to your selfe

Your fortones to deplore

Thus, the sex worker shares equal blame in the man's downfall. The paying customer- the narrator- has been repeatedly beguiled and bewitched by the sex worker and is not the only culprit in his lost fortune. Because the woman's abilities are "unnatural," the man is not fully culpable in his downfall, and his eventual time in debtor's prison is the result of the sex worker's "unnatural" disposition as well as his own sinful choices. The author mentions that "your quoine, your states, your health and friends"[106] will all vanish if you "trust a whore."[107] Using this repetitive refrain fortifies Protestant ideals of restraint and repentance.

Even ballads that were less outwardly pontificating in their content still reinforced Protestant values of moderation. One such ballad, titled "Dice, wine, and women or the unfortunate gallant gull'd at London," tells a similar story of a young man emigrating to London from the rural countryside. He is immediately drawn to the many pleasures London has to offer, including the widespread brothels throughout the city:

Two lovely lasses faire and bright,

Whom I do guesse were painted white:

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[106] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men.*
[107] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men.*

These did I court, and they gave leave,

But they at least did me deceive.

Like the previous ballad, it is not entirely the man's fault that his fortunes and wellbeing are diminished. Instead, the sex workers share equal culpability in his downfall, because of their "deceitful" ways. There is also an emphasis on the physicality of the sex workers themselves- "faire and bright-" to show the lure and temptation of brothels. They are "painted white," wearing excessive makeup that further illustrates the facade of beauty, masking a darker reality. Throughout the rest of the ballad, the speaker denounces alehouses, taverns, and gambling dens in London, referring to street names and districts known for their iniquity. His eventual poverty requires him to get a job at a mill, where he works alone, filled with regrets. Eventually, a friend bails him out of the situation after two weeks of lying in "griefe and woe"[108] at his situation. His declaration at the end, while not as disparaging as some of the other ballads about sex work, is still strategic in its messaging:

Now to my country do I hie,

London and fashions I defie:

Farewell damd dice, and strong waters cleere

Farewell all punkes and double beere."

It is only after repeated instances of debt, isolation, and failure that the author bids goodbye to his previous vices. His ballad, while more entertaining than explicitly moralizing, still relies on many common motifs that stereotyped sex workers as "preternatural," deceitful, and beguiling. The refrain at the end of each stanza serves as a reinforcing message to refuse idleness and excess, as the author repeatedly mentions "The causes why I am so poore,/Are Dice,

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[108] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men.*

Strong-waters, and whore."[109] Ultimately, the author identifies these three activities as reasons behind his debt, loss of friends, and loneliness. This ballad is not outwardly imploring readers and listeners to pray or repent, but it shows that even in more secular ballads, there was still a direct effort to stereotype sex workers as deceitful and blame the proliferation of brothels, alehouses, and gambling dens for a lack of productivity.

Ballads surrounding sex workers and brothels adhere to a formula in which a respectable and relatable man is corrupted- fiscally and socially- by a woman with an "unnatural" disposition. Authors typically juxtapose the sensuous nature of sex workers at the beginning against harsh physical punishment and social ostracization at the end, elucidating a clear message to avoid giving into base desires. Furthermore, the repetition of moralizing messages, often paired with familiar tunes, served to reinforce pre existing notions of the "holy household." While these ideals were probably already held- at least in theory- by their readers and listeners, the ballads served to fortify such beliefs and revealed the importance of resisting temptation in order to avoid punishment.

"Women that in blood delight:" Murderesses and their punishments

Like witches and sex workers, female murderers were viewed as "preternatural" women whose violent actions were beyond the bounds of "traditional" femininity. The consequences for murdering a husband were more severe than murdering a wife because women were legally subservient to their husbands. Thus, reports regarding murderesses were more sensational and often depicted in ballads for a popular audience. They focused on the grisly, physical details of the murder, and the judicial process through which the wives were tried and executed. These

[109] *A Caueat Or Vvarning for all Sortes of Men.*

women were depicted as “unnatural” and a subversion of their “natural” societal place; focusing on the violent nature of the crime, often by dissecting the decaying body parts limb by limb, achieved this effect. In the 1630s, lawyer Thomas Edgar compiled a list of laws pertaining to the rights of women under English law. One of the guiding principles was that men who killed their wives were charged with capital murder, but wives who killed their husbands were charged with two crimes: capital murder *and* petty treason. Because wives were legal subjects of their husbands, murder was considered treasonous because it violated marital authority. In his work, Edgar states that “petty treason is rather described by examples than anywhere logically defined; as when a servant killeth his master, or a wife her husband, or when a secular or religious man killeth his prelate to whom he oweth faith had obedience.”[110] Therefore, by killing her husband, the wife disrupts the “political technology”[111] which privileges the husband’s sovereignty in marriage.

Along these lines, “A Warning for Wives,” published in 1629 by balladeer Martin Parker, depicts an unhappily married couple. The wife ultimately kills the husband in a heated argument and is burned at the stake for her crime. This ballad reflects many parallels with witchcraft ballads, using Satanic possession as an explanation for a crime that was not only lawfully treasonous, but a reversal of gendered expectations. The author writes that:

> Those women that in blood delight
>
> Are ruled by the Devill,
>
> Else how can th' wife her husband kill,
>
> Or th' Mother her owne childs blood spill.[112]

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[110] Quoted in Stuart A. Kane, “Wives with Knives: Early Modern Murder Ballads and the Transgressive Commodity,” *Criticism* 38, no. 2 (1996): 219–237 at 224.
[111] Kane, “Wives with Knives,” 224.
[112] *A warning for wiues, By the example of one Katherine Francis, alias Stoke, who for killing her husband, Robert Francis with a paire of Sizers, on the 8. of Aprill at night, was burned on*

Such an unnatural act from a woman can only be described as the work of the devil here. The inherent physical and spiritual weakness of women could not be associated with a crime like murder, so the balladeer portrays the act as an extended hand from Satan. Much like the refrain of the previous ballads on sex workers, "A Warning For Wives" consists of an equally haunting one: "Murderous wives, whereon are your minds?"[113] Framing the refrain as a repetitive question directly addressed to perpetrators of the crime reinforces the incredulity of the balladeer, and urges readers and listeners to reflect on their own sinful behaviors.

There are far more ballads surrounding wives who murdered husbands than the reverse, suggesting the "preternatural" quality of female violence and aggression in the first balance. The heightened legal protection men received in cases of spousal murder not only reinforced the belief that wives were more socially expendable, but also spiritually "preternatural" if they harbored feelings of violence towards their husbands. Ballads reflected this concern through rhetorical refrains and gory imagery that placed an emphasis on the mutilated male body. Here, the balladeer notes that "The manner of's death most strange appeares/Being struck ith' neck with a pair of sheeres" in order to describe the wife's chosen choice of weaponry.[114] Like almost warning ballads, the infliction of pain must receive an equal or worse punishment. Ultimately, the wife is arraigned and executed

> Where she condemned was by Law, in Clarkenwell to be burned,
>
> Unto which place they did her draw, where she to ashes turned,
>
> A death, though cruell, yet too milde

Clarkenwell-greene, on Tuesday, the 21 of the same moneth, (London: 1629; Magdalene College Pepys Collection 1.118-119; EBBA 20049, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20049/transcription).

[113] *A warning for wiues.*

[114] *A warning for wiues*

For one that hath a heart so vlide.[115]

This equal action-reaction method of crime and punishment was highlighted in ballads of "preternatural" women in order to show the aftermath of uninhibited rage. There is also an emphasis on the legal proceedings that followed an instance of husband-murder; in this case, the woman was first sent to "New Prison" and then to "Newgate," where she awaited the news of her punishment. The end to her story, a burning at Clerkenwell, is typical of crime and execution ballads of the early seventeenth century, which usually end in a public spectacle of torture and death. In this sense, women are warned about the fickle boundary separating private turmoil and public humiliation. The gendered association between the household and women may have afforded women privacy, but such ballads of punishment are clear in their messaging: acts of "preternatural" violence that transgress gendered social orders ultimately become public entertainment and moral precepts.

This sentiment is rampant in another husband-murder ballad of the time, titled *A Warning for all Desparate Women.* Published only one year before, this ballad recounts the story of Alice Davis, who murdered her husband and was burned at the stake in Smithfield. Like "The Damnable Practices of the Three Lincolnshire Witches," "A Warning for all Desperate Women," is also set to the tune of "The Ladies Fall," revealing the reusable set of tunes that balladeers deliberately chose in order to reinforce certain messaging. This ballad warns women against societal ostracization and scandal through narrative and a familiar song that would have reminded readers and listeners of similar stories with almost identical moral prescriptiveness. The ballad, written from Alice Davis's point of view, is regretful and urges "hasty hairebrained wives"[116] to regard her story as a warning that could result in a similarly violent death. Unlike the

[115] *A warning for wiues*

[116] *A warning for all desperate VVomen. By the example of Alice Dauis who for killing of her husband was burned in Smithfield the 12 of July 1628. to the terror of all the beholders*,

previous ballad, the murder is founded upon Alice's refusal to loan her husband money. Alice admits:

> And then I took my little knife,
>
> And stab'd him in the heart.
>
> Whose Soule from Body instantly,
>
> My bloody hand did part.[117]

Again, there is an emphasis on recounting the mutilated body within these ballads. Though this one is perhaps less explicit than "A Warning for Wives," it still relies on a similar explanation of the criminal's public execution itself. The balladeer, still from Alice's perspective, attempts to relay the image of her death and correlating reflections:

> From thence, unto a stake be bound
>
> To be burne in fiers flame,
>
> Untill my flesh and bones consum'd,
>
> To ashes in that place.[118]

The similar narrative structure of these husband-murder ballads reflects "a great fascination which the woman who had broken out of bounds held for a society with a rigidly ordered hierarchy in which women's subordination to men and their inferiority were axiomatic."[119] Legal records show that instances of husbands killing their wives were far greater than the opposite. However, if one were to simply examine ballads as a historical source, it would appear that

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(London: 1628; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A69183.0001.001).

[117] *A warning for all desperate VVomen*

[118] *A warning for all desperate VVomen.*

[119] Betty S. Travitsky, "Husband-Murder and Petty Treason in English Renaissance Tragedy," *Renaissance Drama* 21 (1990): 171–98 at 176.

husband-murder was an epidemic, a frequent occurrence that plagued early modern English society.

Taken together, the portrayal of "preternatural" women shows a fascination with sensational stories of women that surpass the natural gendered order of the time. Even within the context of balladry, it becomes clear that women were expected to occupy the domestic sphere, shown by their exclusion from singing in crowded public spaces. The lives of women that were described in ballads were laden with deceitful sorcery and violent outbursts, acting as both a refusal of societal regulations and a source of exciting narrative content. The "apocalypse" ballads of Chapter 1 serve to show the portrayal of incoming doom, and when that failed to materialize, balladeers turned their attentions to scapegoats behind increases in sinful behavior, such as "preternatural" women. Singing about their lives and gruesome executions- always from the public male voice- warned readers and listeners against intermixing with or becoming one of these women. The pithy refrains and familiar ballads furthered the meaning of the warnings and reinforced pre existing conceptions of natural and good femininity.

Chapter 3: "Rogues, Vagabonds, And Sturdie Beggers"

In 1566, *A Caveat or Warning for Common Cursitors* was published by Thomas Harman, an Elizabethan writer and nobleman whose treatises on vagrancy influenced public consciousness and royal legislation. His study and classification of vagrants was a feat that he thought "good, necessary, and my bounden duty to acquayne your goodness with the abominable, wicked, and deteftable behavioour of all these rowdey, ragged rabbleement of rakehells."[120] Harman proceeds to provide an in-depth classification system of vagrants- twenty three in all- and common indicators that demarcate their status as a vagrant. For instance, Harman describes an "Abraham-man" as someone who "fayn themselues to haue bene mad, and haue bene kept either in Bethelem, or in some other pryson a good time."[121] Using illness or physical impediments is described by Harman as a common way for vagrants to swindle people for money. While Harman's treatise was by no means official doctrine, it did sway public opinion and encouraged "upstanding" upper class citizens to be wary of seemingly innocent beggars.

In the late medieval period and throughout Elizabeth I's reign, unemployment rates augmented as a result of "the inflation of the Price Revolution in which agricultural prices rose faster than industrial products and wages, putting urban workers who did not produce food at a special disadvantage in the marketplace."[122] Environmental, political, and economic factors that contributed to growing unemployment rates facilitated public attention to the vagrant class, who

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[120] *A Caueat Or Warening, for Common Cursetors Vulgarely Called Vagabones, Set Forth by Thomas Harman, Esquier, for the Vtilitie and Profit of His Naturall Countrey. Newly Augmented and Enlarged by the First Author,"*(London: 1567; Ann Arbor Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A02657.0001.001).
[121] *A Caueat Or Warening, for Common Cursetors.*
[122] A. L. Beier, "Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England," *Past & Present*, no. 64 (1974): 3–29 at 23.

at their most basic definition, were unemployed migrant workers whose "movements in time and place were not random but guided by identifiable economic force."[123] At the same time, an increase in alehouses and alcohol consumption (alehouses increased from 19,000 in 1577 to 40,000 by 1680),[124] were also a target of scathing critique amongst the educated classes, especially because they were a common space of gathering for working class citizens. While treatises- such as Harman's- were published for literate citizens as a way to provide classifications and opinions on the vagrant classes, ballads could be experienced by everyone, regardless of literacy. Along with "lewd and wicked women," frequenters of alehouses and vagrants (which often went hand in hand), remained a scapegoat for the societal issues outlined in Chapter 1, such as natural disasters and plagues.

Ballads express a relationship between the rise of alehouses and the dwindling societal value of productivity, restraint, and a lack of excess, resulting in an increase of vagrancy and unemployment. They do not express "shrewd assessments of the causes of poverty, nor does one find statistical treatments of the incidence of poverty,"[125] but they do convey how people perceived and identified signs of vagrancy. Ballads operate as a vehicle to tell employed classes what to watch out for, relying on stereotypical caricatures of beggars, and were often placed within alehouses, asking moralizing questions of its inhabitants. In this sense, soaring unemployment and vagrancy led balladeers to reinforce (via narrative structure and location) societal values of productivity and restraint that emerged as an outgrowth of the Reformation and Renaissance.

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[123]A.L. Beier, "Vagrants and the Social Order in Elizabethan England," 26.
[124] Peter Clark, *The Alehouse and Alternative Society, in Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays in Honour of Christopher Hill* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 51-52.
[125] Richard Harvey, "English Pre - Industrial Ballads on Poverty, 1500-1700," *The Historian* 46, no. 4 (1984): 539–561 at 561.

"Sottishly drunk and such fools:" Unemployment And Alcoholism

There was often a direct connection between unemployment, vagabonds, and alcohol abuse in ballads. With the demand for new resources due to colonial expansion, tobacco and ale became more commonplace. At the same time, general population and agricultural change led to higher rates of unemployment during the time period. Common warnings of lost fortunes and physical ailments were dispersed throughout ballads that centered around tavern/alehouse settings. Ballads attempted to impose an "civilizing" evangelical statement around drinking/tobacco in order to instill values of productivity and temperance into readers/listeners.

Despite the influx in tobacco and ale consumption, a reformation of social graces developed as "social elites increasingly drew on biblical and classical learning to refine their manners and to segregate and punish inferiors' behaviour."[126] The rise of unemployment rates coupled with the increase in tobacco/ale allowed for a theory to emerge: that growing rates of alcohol consumption were leading to societal apathy, and thus, a decreased desire and ability to work. James I's "Proclamation Concerning Alehouses," a decree passed in 1618, legally required the licensing of all alehouses in order to suppress "the great diforders daily vfed in Alehouses and Victual houses, many good and wholesome Lawes and Diver."[127] The association between disorder, unemployment, alcohol abuse, and alehouse attendance was connected frequently in ballads as a way to encourage values of productivity and hard work into readers and listeners.

One anonymous ballad, titled "A Looking Glass for Drunkards," most likely published in the 1640s, is a detailed observation of the various sinful behaviors observed in alehouses and acts

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[126]Phil Withington, "Intoxicants and Society in Early Modern England," 633.
[127] James I, King of England, *By the King, a Proclamation Concerning Ale-houses,* (London: 1618; Ann Arbor Text Creation Partnership 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A22174.0001.001).

as an admonishment to heavy drinkers. Like ballads surrounding witches or murderesses, ballads about frequent consumers of ale also heavily depended on descriptive bodily imagery that displayed the harms of excessive drinking. This ballad is one of the most explicit in its warning- it does not revolve around an entertaining story but is rather addressed directly to heavy drinkers in order to prevent them from engaging in such behavior again. The refrain of each stanza is an indignant reproach towards heavy drinkers: "Fie, drunkards, fie!"[128] The beginning of the ballad delves into the narrator's experience at an alehouse, expressing disgust for the plethora of disgusting sights he sees:

> Some were caroussing, while others were singing,
>
> Others like sotts lay dead drunk on the floor,
>
> Some at their fellow Glasses were slinging,
>
> Another vomiting behind a door.[129]

The visual imagery which the author uses paints a clear and vivid picture of a typical seventeenth century alehouse. The beginning of this ballad is relatively objective, serving more as an urban description than a sociological critique, but the moral judgment appears with force in the refrains. One stanza, shortly after this description, describes the alehouse customers as "Men in their shape but like beasts they did lye."[130] The scathing critique of alehouse customers heightens later, when the author states:

> When with Canary their heads were enflamed,
>
> Then down they tumble o're Chairs and o're stools,

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[128] *Looking-Glass for Drunkards. Or,The Good-Fellows Folly. Moderately Deproving all such as practice the Beastly Sin of Inordinate and Excessive Tippling: With an Admonition for the future to forbear the same. To the Tune of, Fye, Dutchmen, fye!* (London: 1641; Ann Arbor Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/B09436.0001.001).

[129] *Looking-Glass for Drunkards*.

[130] *Looking-Glass for Drunkards. Or,The Good-Fellows Folly.*

Yet never felt how their bodies were maimed.

They were so sottishly drunk and such fools.

Here, the oblivious customers, numbed by alcohol, cannot even physically feel the repercussions of their sin. This lack of physical punishment- an integral part of most "warning" ballads- comes later in the ballad, when the author outlines a list of potential harms that follow excessive drinking, often in the form of fiscal loss and social isolation. While the subjects lack a physical punishment for their sin (which is actualized in many of the other ballads), they receive retribution later, when their "pockets are drained,/and all your coyn is consumed in drink."[131] Like "A Warning For Wives," this ballad also centers around a rhetorical-question refrain, probing readers and listeners to consider:

What will you do when your pockets are drained,

And all your coyn is consumed in drink;

How shall your family be maintained?

Who shall provide for you then do you think?[132]

The narrator serves a multifunctional purpose, acting as both omnipresent observer and social critic, adopting a paternalistic tone that questions society's lack of regard for their wellbeing. In terms of location, it is important to recognize that "ballads were sung in groups in the alehouse."[133] Pasting or singing a ballad such as this within the alehouse would, at the very least, bring communal entertainment. However, the rhetorical questioning that the author engages in also shows a function of the broadside ballad that goes beyond entertainment, and instead, acts as a form of social control and instillation of Reformation values. The increase in alehouses and relative ineffectiveness of James I's decree posed a threat to the ideals of temperance and restraint prescribed by Elizabethan and Jacobean theologians. While ballads could not serve as legal

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[131] *Looking-Glass for Drunkards*

[132] *Looking-Glass for Drunkards*

[133] Erica Nebeker, "The Heyday of the Broadside Ballad."

enforcement, they still probed their audience to consider their actions in relation to the familiar tunes and narratives expressed in ballads.

Similar to "A Looking Glass for Drunkards," a 1624 ballad entitled "A Statute for Swearers and Drunkards" adopts a disparaging tone in describing alehouses and their occupants. The anonymous author uses the threat of legal punishment in order to dissuade heavy drinkers or against indulging. The balladeer writes that:

> You that sweate out your life in beastly drinking;
>
> Untill your bodies And breaths be stinking…
>
> If you sweare and be drunk, the stockes will have you.[134]

The vivid portrait of debauchery that the balladeer illustrates results in a public punishment- the stocks- that followed excessive drinking. Like "A Looking Glass," it also relies on physical indicators of decay and rot. This emphasis on bodily malfunction and misuse is a common thread through all of the aforementioned ballads, regardless of the crime. The combination of physical harm coupled with corporal or legal punishment was used as a deterrent to locations of excess, such as alehouses or brothels. In this ballad, "dregs of drinke/so drowne your reason,"[135] preventing husbands from caring for their wives or children at home. Not only are they facing the punishment of the stocks, the ballad also introduces a punishment in the form of loss of companionship within the family unit, as "your poor children eke/likely to perish"[136] due to a lack of substantial income, and therefore, food and proper shelter. Towards the end of the ballad, the author introduces a third and final punishment- a holy penalization that eradicates any hope

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[134] *A Statute for Swearers and Drunkards, / OR / Forsake now your follies, your booke cannot saue you, / For if you sweare and be drunke, the Stockes will haue you* (London: 1624; Magdalen College Pepys Collection 1.214, 1.215, EBBA 20096, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20096/transcription).
[135] *A Statute for Swearers and Drunkards.*
[136] *A Statute for Swearers and Drunkards.*

of salvation. Ultimately, the author concludes that excessive drinking and alehouses in general are so damaging that

> You that desire to dwell
>
> In heaven hereafter,
>
> Must not of this device
>
> Make jest or laughter.[137]

The incorporation of three punishments- legal, familial, and religious- reflect the attitudes and values that balladeers were attempting to impose. Examining this ballad alongside "A Looking Glass for Drunkards" suggests that post-Renaissance England valued social obedience, restraint, and regular prayer and repentance, all of which would ultimately allow citizens to achieve salvation.

Singing or posting these ballads within alehouses themselves would clearly elicit mixed reactions. On the one hand, it could serve as a source of ridicule. Sometimes "these moralizing codas were nothing more than a perfunctory bow to a well established convention"[138] in ballad-making, but here, such ballads revolve entirely around a moral lesson and a direct attack on the character of alehouse customers. Placing ballads with such content in close proximity to alehouses reveals the shrewd agendas of balladeers in reinforcing Protestant norms.

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[137] *A Statute for Swearers and Drunkards.*
[138] Herschel C. Baker, "Classical Material in Broadside Ballads, 1550-1625," *PMLA* 54, no. 4 (1939): 981–989 at 985.

"The false theefe:" Vagrancy in English ballads

There exists a close connection between attitudes towards vagrancy and heavy drinkers in alehouses, and the two groups are often described interchangeably in ballads. Vagrants are by far the most elusive social group that ballads portrayed. Typically, vagrants were defined as members of the population who did not hold a steady job or a consistent home, traveling around the country to make money, but "wandering pedlars and minstrels whom M.P.s on occasion wished to protect, or those able-bodied professional beggars of the criminal underworld."[139] The primary document for understanding who constituted a vagrant is through examination of the Vagabonds Act of 1597, a statute passed by Elizabeth I that was famous for replacing execution with penal transportation as punishment for vagrants. Instead of facing public punishment or execution, vagrants were now set to England's colony in America as punishment. A definition from a previous act outlined who was legally included in the definition of a vagabond: "all persons, being mighty in body, and able to work, having not land, or using any lawful employment and can give no reckoning how they lawfully get their living …and all common laborers, able in body, loitering, and refusing to work for reasonable shall be deemed rogues, vagabonds, and sturdie beggars."[140] While this is a broad definition that essentially defines vagrants as people who can work but choose not to, a closer analysis into a specific English parish shows the diversity of vagrants during Elizabeth I and James I's reigns. The space in which ballads were performed and posted- public squares and on public buildings- would have been frequented by vagrants, who did not hold a steady home or job. In ballads, vagrants are frequently connoted with deceit, "tricking" morally upstanding citizens into precarious positions.

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[139] Slack, "Vagrants and Vagrancy in England, 1598-1664," 362.
[140] John Lisle, "Vagrancy Law; Its Faults and Their Remedy," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology* 5, no. 4 (1914): 498–513 at 503.

Ballads reflected royal doctrine that imposed corporal punishment on vagabonds and beggars. They furthered stereotypes of vagrants and caricatured them as lazy, mischievous, and at their most dramatic, the root of England's financial, social, and political troubles. The public nature of ballads directly addressed vagrants, who would doubtlessly pass through crowded marketplaces in their day-to-day lives. Such public locations were leveraged in order to further ostracize vagrants and warn against intermingling with them. It also provided non-vagrant readers and listeners with "warning signs" of vagrancy, reinforcing a social order that relied on common people to report and ostracize capable- but unemployed- workers.

Perhaps one of the most famous ballads on vagrancy in the first half of the seventeenth century is "Ragged, Torne, and True. Or, the poor mans Resolution," a ballad published during the 1620s that illustrates the story of an honest and upstanding person facing poverty. In the ballad, he admits to lacking a job or proper housing, but admonishes other members of his class that rely on cheating and deceitfulness in order to steal money. Overall, the ballad bolsters Elizabethan and Jacobean conceptions of the poor as "swarms of deceptive, bawling, physically horrific, cheeky beggars in the streets, in the roads, and at church and coach door."[141]

At the beginning, the narrator admits "I am a poore man, God knowes" but also that "I have a contented mind,/and a heart to beare out well."[142] After the narrator acknowledges his poverty, he goes on to diminish the reputations of other impoverished people he knows for their deceitful tactics. He notes "The Pick-pockets in a throng, at a Market or a Faire/Will try whose purse is strong" [143] and scorns cheaters who "hang up sorrow and care."[144] In this sense, the

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[141] Richard Harvey, "English Pre - Industrial Ballads on Poverty, 1500-1700," *The Historian* 46, no. 4 (1984): 539–61 at 561.
[142] *Ragged, and Torne, and True. Or. the poore mans Resoltion, To the tune of Old Simon the King,* (London: 1628/9; Ann Arbor Text Creation Partnership 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/B00594.0001.001).
[143] *Ragged, and Torne, and True.*
[144] *Ragged, and Torne, and True.*

ballad sets a clear boundary between the "good" and "bad" poor. The author adopts a tone of incredulity: if he can be both honest and poor, why must others rely on cheating, violence, and deceit in order to swindle others? The author also provides a clear distinction between the innocence of the countryside and the corruption of London, its place of publication. In one stanza, the author writes that:

> They coozen poore Countrey-men,
>
> with their delusions vilde,
>
> Yet it happens now and then,
>
> That they are themselues beguilde.[145]

People traveling from the countryside to London are portrayed as victims of swindling and stealing, reinforcing the idea of London as a city of sin able to corrupt all those who enter. Not only does this ballad encourage values of humility and moderation, it also provides the audience with common demarcations of vagrants, urging them to be wary of busy marketplaces or fairs that vagrants target.

"The Cripple of Cornwall," mentioned at the beginning, is exactly the type of vagrant that the aforementioned speaker deprecates. The author narrates his ruse, constructing a story in which the "cripple of Cornwall" uses his charm and good humor to cheat people:

> Thus all the day long he begd for reliefe,
>
> And late in the night he plaid the false theefe:
>
> And seven yeares together this custome kept he
>
> And no man thought him such a person to be.[146]

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[145] *Ragged, and Torne, and True.*
[146] *A New Ballad Intituled, the Stout Cripple of Cornwall.*

A study from Salisbury records show that some of the documented vagrants were fortune-tellers, conjurers, and minstrels, while others "used the role of a guide for cripples as a pretext for begging and migration."[147] Feigning sickness or physical impediments were common grounds for vagrant punishment, and ballads like "The Cripple of Cornwall" warned people to be on guard against such disguises. After all, even a local nobleman and his servants are unable to detect the "cripple of Cornwall's" lie; they "little suspected these thieves in their den."[148] Whether or not this tale is rooted in truth, the account exhibits the moral prescriptions that accompanied ballads about vagrancy. The exciting narrative of the "cripple of Cornwall," bedecked with double identities and swordfights, entices readers/listeners with its theatricality, but eventually ends with a moralizing agenda which reveals the price of sin in the form of a gruesome- and public-execution.

Between "The Ragged, Torn, and True and The Cripple of Cornwall," a good versus bad binary of poverty emerges. The narrative content within ballads reveals how to distinguish between the two, more interested in sensational entertainment than broader social commentary on poverty. Ballads reinforce many of the sentiments echoed in the works on vagrancy by learned people of the time, such as Harman's treatise. Such caricatures and depictions were incorporated as easily digestible stories- usually with a moral warning- that were disseminated amidst large swaths of the population, regardless of education level, personal wealth, or literacy. Values of honesty and productivity were prominent throughout any ballad that revolved around cases of vagrancy or narratives occurring at alehouses. Growing unemployment rates coupled with increasing vagrancy rates (and multiple attempts to control such populations) were addressed in these ballads, usually with an unfortunate ending and short comment about

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[147] Slack, Paul, "Vagrants and Vagrancy in England, 1598-1664," 364.
[148] *A New Ballad Intituled, the Stout Cripple of Cornwall.*

repenting for personal sin. In this sense, balladeers seem to use their work as a way to address societal problems in an understandable way, all while reinforcing notions that vagrants and the unemployed were at the root of society's recent increase in sin.

Conclusion

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a post-Reformation Protestant God was a vengeful deity who often weaponized disease, natural disaster, and plague as punishment for humanity's sin. This depiction seeped into broadside ballads from 1570-1630, especially in the era before the Spanish Armada, which transformed "English apocalypticism into a patriotic historicism."[149] At the turn of the seventeenth century, ballads surrounding London's eventual downfall pivoted, shifting their focus to specific social subsets who were used as scapegoats, namely "preternatural" women and vagrants. Their messaging was clear: do not interact or worse- become one of these groups- and you will be spared from God's wrath. Not only this, audience members were encouraged to repent their sins and refrain from excess of any kind. These sorts of ballads that attempted to socially ostracize "preternatural" women and vagrants made contemporary philosophy, medical doctrine, and theology accessible to large numbers of readers and listeners, regardless of their ability to read. Doctrine, foreign news, and current events that were once privy only to educated elites were made more accessible through small, bite-sized narratives set to familiar tunes in ballads; they also encouraged a civic engagement via repentance, prayer, churchgoing, and restraint. While they were not necessarily spreading any "new" beliefs, they reinforced Reformation-era values.

After completing this research, I think there is much to be explored in the lives of actual balladeers themselves. Compared to playwrights and other writers of the time, balladeers were often seen as base and talentless, more focused on providing mass entertainment than thoughtfully constructed works. Anglo-Irish translator Richard Stanyhurst was particularly

[149]Arthur H. Williamson, "Reviewed Work: Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation: From John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman," *The Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 2 (1981): 334–36 at 334.

disparaging of balladeers, and in his translation of Virgil, he states that "wooden rythmours doth swarm in Stationers shops… The readiest way therefore to slap these drones from the sweet scenting hives of Poetry, is for the learned to apply themselves wholly."[150] Stanyhurst's statements provide an obvious distinction between balladeers and "learned" poets. There are more records and remaining works about writers who operated under noble patronage, but records of writers operating under the Stationer's Company are still accessible. While many ballads were anonymous, the legacies of famous balladeers such as William Elderton and Thomas Churchyard have survived the test of time and could serve as fascinating subjects for further research on ballad creation and distribution.[151] "Preternatural" women and vagrant populations were highlighted the most in the ballads I found in my research, though there are more avenues for research surrounding a third group that was frequently slandered in ballads: Catholic sects that operated covertly in England. Many of these ballads were execution narratives of famous "Papist" insurrectionists who faced treason charges, used as an example to obey the state religion at the risk of death.

The visual aesthetics, Renaissance-era verse, and old folk tunes make it somewhat easy to dismiss ballads as a distant relic of the past that bears no contemporary resonance. The case of murderesses proves this sentiment wrong; charging women who killed their husbands with murder *and* treason was the norm until three hundred years later, when this policy was overturned in 1858. Up until 1790, the punishment for husband-murder was burning at the stake.[152] The punishments for witchcraft did not cease after this period as well, and it is estimated

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[150] Richard Stanyhurst, *The First Foure Bookes of Virgils Aeneis, Translated into English Heroicall Verse, by Richard Stanyhurst*, (Leiden: Holland; Ann Arbor Text Creation Partnership, 2011, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A14485.0001.001).
[151] Rollins, "The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad," 260.
[152] S.A.M. Gavigan, "Petit Treason in Eighteenth Century England: Women's Inequality Before the Law Office of Justice Programs," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 3, no. 2 (1990): 335-374 at 335.

that "around 500 people had been convicted and executed for practicing sorcery in England, and perhaps as many as 2,500 in Scotland."[153] While the witchcraft acts were repealed shortly after the 1570-1630 period, variations of such legislation materialized up until the twentieth century. Legislation that banned activities such as spiritualism, fortune-telling, and astrology were common in Britain, and up until 2008, "persons… with intent to deceive, pretend to be in touch with dead relatives by spiritualistic methods" were charged with crime.[154]

The reinforcement of ideals that ostracized "preternatural" women and vagrants had deep connections to legislation and social hierarchies that existed for years after 1630. Ballads themselves existed throughout the nineteenth century, and the tunes to which they were often set, such as "Greensleeves," are familiar today.[155] Despite the end of their production, the broadside ballad set precedents for journalism we encounter today. Its larger-than-life stories, moralizing, and editorializing are reminiscent of sensationalized news that prioritizes entertainment- and the potential to acquire a large audience- rather than truth or objectivity.

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[153] Thomas Waters, "Two Blood The Witch, Swim The Wizard: 1800–30," In *Cursed Britain: A History of Witchcraft and Black Magic in Modern Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 9-36.
[154] Hugh Collins, "Harmonisation by Example: European Laws against Unfair Commercial Practices," *The Modern Law Review* 73, no. 1 (2010): 89–118 at 92.
[155] Gerlad Egan, "Black Letter and the Broadside Ballad- UCSB English Broadside Ballad Archive," 2007, https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/page/black-letter.

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