Drinking and Despair

O R,

How the Bad Husband Guzzles down his Fortune in the Ale-house and is forced to Reform his Ways

To the Tune of “Empty Bottles and Empty Purses in the 19th Century

About the Project:

UC Santa Barbara’s English Broadside Ballad Archive works on transcribing and digitally preserving collections of ballads from 17th century England’s popular culture and aims to make the ballads accessible for further research. The writers and printmakers of the ballads explore questions of ethics, morals, love, poverty, alcohol, and politics through their lyrics and illustrations. As a result, today we enjoy an entertaining first hand look into the lives of people who lived in the Early Modern period as we organize these artifacts.

Under the direction of faculty sponsor Dr. Patricia Fumerton, my contribution to the research project was focused in two areas: sorting the ballads thematically within the archive, and replacing the original fonts of the printmaker with our Times New Roman transcription, which preserves the ballad’s original appearance and makes the content more comprehensible to the reader.

Discussion:

One of the recurring voices I was most interested in was the figure of the apologetic and formerly alcoholic husband lamenting his past and offering counsel to future generations of men. A common theme was a man’s lamentations attributing his family’s economic ruin to his habit of heavy drinking in the ale-house. Many troubles we believe to be unique to the present day have already been dealt with throughout history. It is common for the reformed husband to offer advice to conclude the song to prevent future generations of men from engaging in such vices as he did.

“I wasted my money like a fool
Both in Wine and strong Beer”

(EBBA 30665)

“Tho their bellies did pinch & their backs did goe bare; / So I had but Liquor to fill up my skin/I never regarded what case they were in.”

(EBBA 20712)

“I sold and I morgaged it all away
And made myself so poor,
My Wife and my Friends could not rule me
I kept drinking on so sore” (EBBA 21921)

“But those that are careful/ their mony to save, / They doth maintain their/ Family gallant and brave.” (EBBA 34086)

Printed for: Andrea Maasz Fall 2015 in South Hall