

Proposal for Ballad Conference at Huntington Library, April 4-5, 2014

Conference Title:

“Living English Broadside Ballads, 1550-1750: Song, Art, Dance, Culture”

Date:

April 4-5, 2014

Principal Convener:

Patricia Fumerton: pfumer@english.ucsb.edu

Assistant Conveners:

Charlotte Becker (charlottebecker@umail.ucsb.edu)

and Shannon Meyer (meyer.shannon@gmail.com)

Rationale:

The proposed conference, “Living English Broadside Ballads, 1550-1750: Song, Art, Dance, Culture,” is foremost intended to celebrate the completed archiving by UCSB’s English Broadside Ballad Archive of the Huntington Library’s impressive collection of early broadside ballads printed in England up to 1700 (together with several dozen 18th century ballads in the Library’s holdings that extend the tradition of the earlier ballads). These broadside ballads include the Library’s precious 16th-century Britwell collection (90 out of the only c. 250 surviving 16th-century English broadside ballads in the entire world!) as well as all of its 17th-century Bindley and Bridgewater broadside ballads. Approximately 600 ballads in total, these early Huntington ballads together show the full scope of formal and thematic developments in the broadside ballad tradition from the 16th into the 18th century. In addition, this conference celebrates and intends to advance the major developments that have been occurring in the last decade in broadside ballad criticism, primarily in literary cultural studies but also in the fields of ethnomusicology, art history, history, and both print and popular culture.

Dianne Dugaw’s *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850* (1989) and Tessa Watt’s *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (1991) launched a renewed interest in early modern broadside ballads that had lain mostly dormant since the editing craze of the late 19th and early 20th centuries headed by such figures as William Chappell, Joseph Ebsworth, and Hyder Rollins. Following close upon Dugaw and Watt, several other important books emerged that included broadside ballads within their larger scope (by Joy Wiltenburg, Adam Fox, and Bruce Smith). But we are currently witnessing something of a vibrant renaissance of early modern broadside ballad criticism, in large part because cultural critics have renewed their investment generally in the literature and culture of the “low” and in even larger part because broadside ballads are much more easily accessible now via facsimile images in EEBO, the Bodleian Library Broadside database, and, most significantly for early broadside ballads, the English Broadside Ballad Archive, <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu>. Since its founding in 2003, EBBA has archived album and ballad facsimile images, facsimile transcriptions (which preserve the layout and ornament of the originals while replacing the often difficult-to-read typeface with modern print), and recordings of over 4,000 of the estimated 8,000 extant broadside ballads printed in England prior to 1700. The veritable surge of resulting scholarly interest in broadside ballads can

be seen in published books, book chapters, and articles by established scholars such as Frances Dolan, Bruce Smith, Angela McShane, Paula McDowell, Steven Newman, William St. Clair, and Patricia Fumerton, as well as—most significantly—in the many dissertations and articles just completed or in the works by graduate students and junior scholars such as Eric Nebeker, Megan Palmer Browne, Kelly Feinstein-Johnson, Theodore Barrow, Mark Hailwood, and Matthew Smith.

“Living English Broadside Ballads, 1550-1750: Song, Art, Dance, Culture” seeks to bring this scholarly excitement and productivity together in a two-day international conference comprised of both senior and junior scholars. In doing so, the conference will at the same time bring alive for its audience the multi-media experience of early modern broadside ballads that made its tradition a fully “lived experience” in its own time. The conference will feature sessions on ballad illustrations that captivated the public’s “eye” as well as on the performance aspect of ballads (both song and dance) that captivated its oral, aural, and tactile senses. It will also interrogate crucial questions surrounding ballad authorship, truth claims, and intended community or audience, concluding with the most pressing question of all for us moderns: how best to preserve broadside ballads for posterity in a way that makes them fully accessible to both scholars and the general public while remaining true to their nature as protean, multi-disciplinary, and “lived” forms?

As poetry, art, song, dance, and cultural records, early modern broadside ballads have mass appeal, and I am confident that this conference will be true to that tradition, bringing together not only scholars from many fields but also the general public in the appreciation of and elucidation about this most important early modern cultural phenomenon.

In preparing this proposal, I felt it imperative to contact each of the scholars listed as potential speakers and moderators in order to properly shape the proposed event. Everyone I contacted has eagerly signed on board should the conference proposal be accepted. All the speakers have furthermore provided me with provisional titles for their talks. While such titles can only be provisional given that the planned event is scheduled for almost exactly two years away, the titles have allowed me to design a tightly integrated conference and set of panels. This includes participation by several of the speakers in what will likely be the highlight of the event, a lunchtime “Taste of Song.”

The following is a list of 12 proposed speakers (in alphabetical order) including 6 from the UK:

Roger Clegg (De Montfort University, Leicester)
Frances E. Dolan (UC-Davis)
Adam Fox (University of Edinburgh)
Mark Hailwood (University of Exeter)
Mike Heaney (Bodleian Library)
Christopher Marsh (Queen’s College, Belfast University)
Angela McShane (Victoria & Albert Museum)
Eric Nebeker (EBBA Assistant Director, UC-Santa Barbara)
Megan Palmer Browne (EBBA Image Specialist, UC-Santa Barbara)
Lucie Skeaping (BBC)
Bruce Smith (University of Southern California)
Carl Stahmer (EBBA Associate Director, UC-Santa Barbara)

The proposed moderators, also in alphabetical order, are:

Charlotte Becker (EBBA Project Co-Manager, UC-Santa Barbara)

Heidi Brayman Hackel (UC-Riverside)

Julia Reinhard Lupton (UC-Irvine)

Shannon Meyer (EBBA Project Co-Manager, UC-Santa Barbara)

Matthew Smith (USC)

Conference Schedule, with Proposed Panel Titles and Talk Titles:

“Living English Broadside Ballads, 1550-1750: Song, Art, Dance, Culture”

Day One:

8:30 **Registraton & Coffee**

9:30 **Welcome:** Steve Hindle (The Huntington)

Remarks: Patricia Fumerton (UC-Santa Barbara), “Coming Alive: Archiving the
Huntington Ballads”

10:00-12:00 **Panel 1: Anonymity and Truth**

Moderator: Charlotte Becker (UC-Santa Barbara)

Speakers:

Eric Nebeker (UC-Santa Barbara) "Common Truths: Poetic Authority and
Anonymous Voices"

Frances E. Dolan (UC-Davis), “Mopsa's Method: Truth Claims, Ballads,
and Print”

12:00-2:00 **Lunch, extended by “A Taste of Song”:**

Singers Bruce Smith, Lucie Skeaping, Roger Clegg, and Christopher Marsh
(singing and playing fiddle), together with EBBA performers

2:00-5:30 **Panel 2: Music and Performance**

Moderator: Matthew Smith (University of Southern California)

Speakers:

Angela McShane (Victoria & Albert Museum), ““How happy the State
where no discords are breeding’: Disharmony and 17th century
‘Politopop’”

Bruce Smith (University of Southern California), “Ball(ad)ing the Jack”

4:00 **Break**

4:15-5:30 Lucie Skeaping (BBC, London) and Roger Clegg (De Montfort

University, Leicester), “Getting Jiggy With It’: Recuperating the
Theatrical in Dialogue Ballads and Dramatic Jigs on the Early
Modern Stage”

Day Two:

9:30 Registration & Coffee

10:00-1200 Panel 3: Communities of Ballads

Moderator: Shannon Meyer (UC-Santa Barbara)

Speakers:

Mark Hailwood (University of Exeter), "The Honest Tradesman's Honour:
Occupational Identity in English Broadside Ballads"

Adam Fox (University of Edinburgh), "Jockey and Jenny: English
Broadside Ballads and the Invention of Scottishness"

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-3:00 Panel 4: Mobile Pictures

Moderator: Julia Reinhard Lupton (UC-Irvine)

Speakers:

Megan Palmer Browne (UC-Santa Barbara), "Fans of a Feather: Six
Woodblock Variants, 1612-1685"

Christopher Marsh (Queen's College, Belfast University), "Woodcuts and
their Wanderings in Early Modern England"

3:00 Break

3:15 -5:15 Panel 5: The Preservation of Ballads in a Digital Age

Moderator: Heidi Brayman Hackel (UC-Riverside)

Speakers:

Mike Heaney (Bodleian Library, Oxford University), "Ballading across
the Web"

Carl Stahmer (UC-Santa Barbara), "Manuscript Forensics and the
Problematics of Preservation"

5:15-5:30 Closing Discussion