

*The Transit of 'Small, Merry'
Anglo-American Culture: Sir John
Barley-Corne and Sir Richard Rum
(and Captain Whiskey)*

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I

As the ideas and feelings embodied in the old unwritten ballads brought over the sea grew dim and remote, these same ballads absorbed by degrees, and with no more change than was necessary, a flavor of America.

(Edward Eggleston, *The Transit of Civilization from England to America in the Seventeenth Century*)

HISTORIANS of books and their readers in early America have recently begun to sort out many of the complexities in the common stereotypes about colonial reading. They have focused on the role of mediators such as ministers, writers, and printers in creating, enforcing, and testing authority; they have quantified colonial literacy and book imports; and they have investigated imprints, inventories, and booksellers' stocks to find out what people actually read. Much recent scholarship has focused on the relative isolation of colonial American readers from

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all but a carefully defined, largely religious, body of print. Accordingly, this suggests that colonial readers—even in highly literate New England—lived in a culture of scarce print. In New England, from which the vast majority of early American imprints derive, these limitations are said to have reflected the religious dominance of Puritanism; in other colonies, they were the natural concomitants of social and economic underdevelopment. When taken together, the narrow range of surviving colonial imprints and the small number of printers producing books present a compelling picture of Americans ‘intensively’ reading a carefully limited variety of steady-selling tracts and sermons. Perhaps for this reason, recent studies of cheap, secular reading generally end on the other side of the Atlantic in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries or treat the late eighteenth-century rise in America of the imported novel—the authored, generally expensively-produced, fictional work of ‘literature.’ The study of cheap, secular American print usually begins with domestic imprints of the early nineteenth century.¹

As a result, it is difficult to find, much less characterize, a body

1. A good introduction to the literature on early American reading is David D. Hall, ‘The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600–1850,’ in William L. Joyce, David D. Hall, Richard D. Brown, and John B. Hench, eds., *Printing and Society in Early America* (Worcester, Mass., 1983), pp. 1–47, and the other essays in that volume. See also Hall, ‘The World of Print and Collective Mentality in Seventeenth-Century New England,’ in John Higham and Paul S. Conkin, eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore, 1979), pp. 66–81. Interesting reflections on these views are in Robert Gross, ‘The Authority of the Word: Print, Culture, and Society in America’ (three variously titled unpublished manuscripts, 1985–88). I am grateful to Professor Gross for allowing me to see them. The general transatlantic commerce in books is discussed in Stephen Botein, ‘The Anglo-American Book Trade before 1776,’ in Joyce, et al., eds., *Printing and Society*, pp. 48–82, and Giles Barber, ‘Books from the Old World and for the New: The British International Trade in Books in the Eighteenth Century,’ *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 151 (1976): 185–224. Robert B. Winans estimates that ‘less than half’ of the books distributed by colonial booksellers were of American production, and he cites Lawrence Wroth’s remark that the function of American booksellers was ‘largely the sale of the imported book’ (‘Bibliography and the Cultural Historian: Notes on the Eighteenth-Century Novel,’ Joyce, et al., eds., *Printing and Society*, p. 177). For a later period, Cathy Davidson discusses the rise of an American reading public simultaneously with the rise of the novel in *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (New York, 1986). See also the recent essay by Victor Neuburg, ‘Chapbooks in America: Reconstructing the Popular Reading of Early America,’ in Cathy Davidson, ed., *Reading in America: Literature & Social History* (Baltimore, 1989), pp. 81–112.

of colonial reading comparable to the secular literature that appealed to popular audiences in Europe—the ballads sung in streets and the ‘small, merry books’ distributed throughout England and the Continent by itinerant chapmen or *colporteurs*. Commenting on this cheap popular literature, the Elizabethan dramatist Thomas Nashe complained that ‘euery grosse braind Idiot is suffered to come into print, who if hee set foorth a Pamphlet of Pudding-pricks, or write a Treatise of *Tom Thumme*, or the exploits of *Untrusse* [=to take one’s breeches down]; it is brought up thicke and three-fold, when better things lie dead.’ The character of the cheap print that Nashe deplored contradicts virtually point by point the view of most historians of print in early America: it was widely diffused and cheap, and often humorous, sexually explicit, or morally unconventional. Nor was there anything remotely uplifting about most of these works, which were apparently read by all classes, and not necessarily read intensively. Samuel Pepys, to take another well-known example, recorded attending one dignitary’s funeral at which a mourner took ‘some ballets out of his pocket,’ for amusement while waiting: ‘Which I read and the rest came about me to hear; and there very merry we were all, they being new ballets. By and by the Corps went.’²

But did such cheap works reach the American colonies?³ The

2. Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Divell* (1592), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, 5 vols. (London, 1904–10), 1:159; *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols. (Berkeley, 1970–83), 9: 200. See especially, Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories* (Athens, Ga., 1981), esp. chap. 3; and the essays in Barry Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, 1985). An exceptional, nuanced view is Keith Thomas, ‘Literacy in Early Modern England,’ in Gerd Baumann, ed., *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 97–131.

3. Evidence supporting the inquiry into the colonial demand for cheap secular literature in the seventeenth century is slim but suggestive. It includes the fine levied in 1668 by the Massachusetts General Court on Cambridge printer Marmaduke Johnson for issuing, without authority, *The Isle of Pines; or, a Late Discovery of a Fourth Island in Terra Australis, Incognita*, a tall tale of a man marooned with four women on an island; the invoices of shipments sent by London booksellers Robert Boulter and Richard Chiswell to John Usher of Boston during the 1680s containing a miscellany of light reading—what the English book trade called ‘small merry’ books; and the continuing demand in Boston for books such as *The London Jilt, or the Politick Whore. Shewing All the Artifices and Stratagemes Which the Ladies of Pleasure Make Use of for the Intreaguing and Decoying of Men*, in which morality

present essay arose as a sidelight to a larger study of institutional responses to drinking in Anglo-American culture since the seventeenth century. It originally aimed to place into its social context an unusual work first printed in Boston in 1724 and subsequently reprinted in New England and other regions of the American colonies: *The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum*. The pamphlet has been known to bibliographers and literary scholars for many years, although its merit has been the subject of diverging evaluations, and it is usually given the misleading character of an early 'temperance' tract. Worthington Ford called it a 'labored skit' that illustrated the barren soil for humor in New England, while Thomas Goddard Wright termed it 'a clever temperance tract with literary merit.' In fact, *Sir Richard Rum* was a rationalistic parody of Puritan attitudes toward drinking that mocked strict morality in the name of economic prosperity. For that reason it is interesting as an early example of secular, printed opposition to religious moralizing in Massachusetts. While *Sir Richard Rum* is not the first extant example of a small, merry book printed in the colonies, it long survived most of its near contemporaries, and its over twenty reputed American editions attest to a continuing popularity during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴

What makes *The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum* of more general interest to historians of American culture is the discovery, unknown or at least undiscussed by previous writers, of the parody's genealogy—a direct lineage stretching backward at least a

was heavily tinctured with titillation. See Worthington C. Ford, *The Isle of Pines: An Essay in Bibliography* (Boston, 1920). The Usher invoices are printed and discussed in Ford, *The Boston Book Market, 1679-1700* (Boston, 1917), pp. 44-50, 88-152, and amended in Roger Thompson, 'Worthington Chauncey Ford's Boston Book Market, 1679-1700: Some Corrections and Additions,' *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 86 (1974): 67-78. On early New England reading, see Thomas Goddard Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England, 1620-1730* (New Haven, 1920); Jules Paul Seigel, 'Puritan Light Reading,' *The New England Quarterly* 37 (1964): 185-99; and Roger Thompson, 'The Puritans and Prurience,' in H. C. Allen and Roger Thompson, eds., *Contrast and Connection: Bicentennial Essays in Anglo-American History* (Athens, Ohio, 1976), pp. 36-65.

4. Ford, 'Franklin's New England *Courant*,' *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 57 (1923-24): 341; Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England*, p. 214. See also John W. Farwell, 'Sir Richard Rum, 1724-1835,' with comment by Albert Matthews, in *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 17 (1913-14): 234-44.

century across the Atlantic. What has seemed virtually unique in the context of the early history of printing in New England can now more accurately be seen as an adaptation, indeed, virtually a plagiarism with appropriate contextual changes, of an English chapbook version that was itself an adaptation of a broadside ballad first printed in the reign of James I, 'A Pleasant New Ballad to Sing both Even and Morne, / Of the Bloody Murther of Sir John Barley-Corne.' While a genetic history of the transmutation of the English Sir John Barley-Corne into the American Sir Richard Rum promises no dramatic revision of our estimate of the chronology or quantity of secular popular print in colonial America, it may provide something equally useful to historians of the book: a longitudinal study of the transformation of a (possibly) traditional ballad into print in England, of the adaptation of that printed form to the circumstances of colonial America, and of its eventual decline. These are treated in the following four sections of this paper. The final section offers more recent evidence of the original ballad's subsequent history and speculates about the effect of modern mechanical reproduction on the emergence of a popular Anglo-American culture.

II

'SIR JOHN BARLEY-CORNE': THE BALLAD

Sowe barlie in March, in April and Maie,
the latter in sand, and the sooner in claie.

(Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* [1573])

On December 14, 1624, 128 ballads were entered on the register of the Stationers' Company of London as the joint property of six booksellers—the 'Ballad Partners,' whose grant from the Company secured them a legal monopoly to print ballads. Among them was 'A Pleasant New Ballad to Sing Both Even and Morne, Of the Bloody Murther of Sir John Barley-Corne,' in thirty-four verses and 136 lines. Although many of the other entries were traditional (or lyrical) ballads long current among the peoples of England and

Scotland, the entry provides the earliest evidence for dating the 'New Ballad' of Sir John Barley-Corne. The name of its author (or adapter) is unknown, for like most other contemporary ballads, 'Sir John Barley-Corne' was printed without authorial attribution. Consequently, its various seventeenth-century editions bore only the names or initials of the original Ballad Partners and their successors, or the names of those whom they sublicensed to print new editions, attributions such as 'Printed in London for H[enry] G[osson]' or 'London, printed for John Wright, and to be sold at his shop in Guilt-spurre street, at the signe of the Bible.'⁵

Like other seventeenth-century ballads, 'Sir John Barley-Corne' was printed as a broadside, in 'black-letter' type. One or more woodcuts were placed at the top of the sheet above the text. In the earliest version of 'Sir John Barley-Corne,' the accompanying woodcut was a simple and uninformative depiction of a male figure. These ballad sheets were then sold in bundles by printers and booksellers from shops along London Bridge or immediately outside Newgate bearing signs such as the 'Three Bibles,' 'Seven Stars,' 'Sun and Bible,' 'Three Pigeons,' or 'Bible and Harp.' Their customers were usually proprietors of bookstalls set up in com-

5. A complete early (ca. 1630) text of 'Sir John' as well as minor variants found in later broadsides is in William Chappell and J. Woodfall Ebsworth, eds., *Roxburghe Ballads*, 9 vols. (Hertford, Eng., 1871-99), 2: 372-78. All references are to this version. Original broadside versions are found in the Roxburghe Collection (British Library; three copies, one printed ca. 1630 and the other two possibly eighteenth-century printings); Pepys Collection (Magdalene College Library, Cambridge; two copies, ca. 1625 and ca. 1684-86); and Euing Collection (Glasgow University Library; three copies, two ca. 1684-86, one probably from the eighteenth century). For these last, see John Holloway, ed., *The Euing Collection of English Broadside Ballads* (Glasgow, 1971), nos. 281, 282, 283. See A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, et al., comps., *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640*, 2d. rev. ed., 2 vols. (London, 1976-86), nos. 1433.5, 1433.7; Donald Wing, et al., comps., *Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and British America, and of English Books Printed in Other Countries, 1641-1700*, rev. ed., 3 vols. (New York, 1972-88), nos. P2556A, D-H, P2557 (hereafter, STC); *British Museum General Catalogue*, 263 vols. (London, 1965-66), 11: 610 (hereafter, *BMGC*).

The priority of an original oral ballad of John Barley-Corne from which the broadside version was derived is uncertain, although there is a Scots-dialect song of earlier date that bears loose similarities: 'Allan-A-Maut.' Two versions, the first in classical Scottish and the second in modern Scottish, are printed in Robert Jamieson, *Popular Ballads and Songs, from Tradition, Manuscripts, and Scarce Editions*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1806), 2: 233-39.

monly frequented locations such as St. Paul's Churchyard, itinerant chapmen who each spring packed ballads among their other odds and trifles to sell in the provinces, or ballad-mongers who intoned or sang them wherever a crowd could be gathered on street corners and at markets and fairs. Pasted on walls or cried in the streets like modern tabloid newspapers, ballads served as both diversion and as a means of communicating news, printing hot-off-the-presses accounts of heinous crimes, sad accidents, monstrous births, glorious military victories, and other noteworthy occurrences.⁶

The ballad's title announced the account of a 'bloody murder,' but it was in fact a parody, and it may not have been an entirely new one. Instead of describing a real murder, 'Sir John Barley-Corne' gave a mock-tragic account of the entire process of barley culture, malting, and brewing. Like numerous other popular ballads, 'Sir John Barley-Corne' may have been the work of one of the literary hacks whom Nashe deplored—impecunious 'pot poets' of varying talent who churned out ditties for a London audience and sold their work for a few shillings to the printers who monopolized the trade. One of the ballad's nineteenth-century editors claimed that its subject matter and use of Northern dialect do not suggest the usual hand of a London ballad-maker. It may therefore have been a reworking or reprinting of an oral version long current in Northern England and Scotland, although it may also have been composed in the city by an emigrant from the North.⁷

6. On ballads, see especially: Hyder E. Rollins, 'The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 34 (1919): 258-339; Cyprian Blagden, 'Notes on the Ballad Market in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century,' *Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia* 6 (1954): 161-80; Bernard Capp, 'Popular Literature,' in Reay, ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, pp. 198-243; Andrew Clark, ed. *Shirburn Ballads, 1585-1616* (Oxford, 1907), esp. pp. 1-9. The entries in the Stationers' Register are printed in Rollins, 'An Analytical Index to the Ballad-Entries in the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London,' *Studies in Philology* 21 (1924): 1-324. 'Sir John Barley-Corne' is listed on p. 213. For the ballad's woodcuts, see Chappell and Ebsworth, eds., *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2: 373, and Holloway, ed., *Euing Collection*, pp. xiii-xv (a general discussion), and nos. 281, 282.

7. Chappell and Ebsworth, eds., *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2: 372.

'Sir John Barley-Corne' begins with a mock-heroic drinking contest between several gentlemen who personify different beverages—'Thomas Goodale,' 'Richard Beere,' 'Sir William White-wine' and Sir John Barley-Corne. Sir John wins the contest, and the others, in ill-humor, 'fume and swear / that Barly-corne should die' (ll. 1-28). In poetic and mock-tragic style, the succeeding verses recount the various forms of violence wreaked on hapless Sir John—each corresponding to the stages of the process of growing barley, making malt, and brewing ale. Sir John is 'plow'd . . . up,' 'buried . . . quick,' 'combed' with harrows, and 'burst' on the head with clods of earth. The rain falls, and he grows green branches ('which sore amazed them all'). By midsummer, his growth has 'made them all afeard,' for he has sprouted and 'got a goodly beard.' Into the fields men hasten with hooks and sickles to 'cut his legs off at the knees' and to 'make him (*sic*) wounds full wide.' They 'bloodily . . . cut him downe' and 'like a thiefe, for treachery' bind him up. They pack him in stacks, 'renting' him 'to the heart' with pitchforks, and 'like a theife, for treason vile' they tie him in a cart (ll. 29-68).

The harvest over, the process of threshing and malting begins. Sir John is taken to a barn and beaten with flails until the 'flesh' falls from his 'bones,' steeped in a vat, and then taken out and cast on a chamber floor. Next, he is given to the malt man who throws him into a kiln, dries him with 'fire hot,' and brings him to the mill, where the miller avers that he, too, will 'murther' Sir John 'betwixt a pair of stones.' After the processes of threshing and malting, brewing begins. Sir John is scalded with hot water, washed in a vat, left to ferment, and put into a barrel (ll. 69-112).

The brewing finished, the drinking begins—and so does Sir John's revenge. The barrel is tapped ('even thus his death begun'), and men come with drinking vessels, to draw 'every dram' of his 'blood.' But 'Sir John Good-ale' arrives, evidently Sir John Barley-Corne in his transformed state. And, in popular burlesque fashion, Barley-Corne / Goodale finally gets his own back, taking his tormentors' 'tongues away, / their legs, or else their sight':

And thus Sir John, in each respect,
so paid them all their hire,
That some lay sleeping by the way,
some tumbling in the mire.

Some lay groning by the wals,
some in the streets down right;
The best of them did scarcely know
what they had done ore-night.

(ll. 123-32)

The moral provided by the ballad is what one historian has termed 'the moral economy of production and sustenance.'⁸ The author/adapter gives a knowing wink, and a warning to obey the neighborly village economy of fair weight and measure:

All you good wives that brew good ale,
God turne from you all teene [sorrow];
But if you put too much water in,
The devill put out your eyne!

(ll. 133-36)

Like most one-penny broadside ballads, 'Sir John Barley-Corne' was actually a 'two-fer' that contained another ballad printed on its verso, usually 'A New Ballad for You to Looke On, How Mault Doth Deal with Every One.' The author (or adapter) of the two ballads was very likely the same person. Their juxtaposition was especially important, for later transmutations of one ballad often integrated changes from its partner ballad or from other ballads on the same subject. 'Master Mault He Is a Gentleman' (the title taken from its first line) spoke the same idiom as 'Sir John Barley-Corne,' only more crudely—parody become farce. According to this ballad, Master Mault is a 'gentleman,' but he is primarily a merry prankster whose antics the ballad elaborates as he deals reversals to the boastfulness and folly of an exhaustive list of petty tradespeople—a miller, a serving maid, a blacksmith, a carpenter, a shoemaker, and others—each of whom claims to be able to

8. See Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1978), p. 52, and chaps. 1-3, passim.

dominate (or threatens to abuse) him, yet none of whom succeeds. Mault gives the miller 'a copper nose' and knocks him off his horse because the miller lays 'his stones so close'; he gives the blacksmith 'a dash in the teeth' for calling him 'a theefe'; he makes the carpenter 'lame in both his hips' for challenging him to 'come out, if he dare.' The moral is, once again, humorous and celebratory:⁹

Thus of my song I will make an end,
And pray my hostess to be my friend,
To give me some drink now my money is spend,
Then Mault and I am quits, Sir.

(ll. 133-36)

Historians of early modern England have long put aside the belief that its inhabitants lived in immobile and unchanging communities. But for all its flux, this was still a world in which a majority of rural people remained illiterate, and where idealized, orally transmitted versions of rural fellowship and good cheer had as much appeal for the people displaced from the countryside to London, who bought ballads from ballad-mongers at Cheapside, as they did for those who remained in the provinces and bought them from chapmen. In its humorous description of activities and settings that were familiar to most people, the ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne united a real world of traditional work and pastimes with an idealized world in which social and personal conflicts were played out and then humorously resolved through a clever analogy. This was also the world of which Thomas Tusser wrote, in which proverbial wisdom and custom provided an adequate substitute for learning. Tusser's aphorisms in *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, like the one cited in the epigraph, aimed to preserve the practical lessons of that world in print, just as 'Sir John Barley-Corne' and 'Master Mault' aimed, if less self-consciously, to preserve its moral lessons. The author/adaptor of the two ballads invited his audience to celebrate the virtues of conviviality—not to censure human frailty but to mock it. In the ballads, shared

9. 'Master Mault' is also reprinted in Ebsworth and Chappell, eds., *Roxburghe Ballads*, 2: 378-82, and Holloway, ed., *The Euing Collection*, nos. 277-78. See also STC, P2556D-E.

laughter at the antics of mock gentlemen and village rustics acted as a social solvent in hierarchical communities and reaffirmed traditions that were already on the wane.¹⁰

III

SIR JOHN BARLEY-CORN: THE BOOK

What more learning have we need of, but that experience will teach us without booke? We can learne to plough and harrow, sow and reape, plant and prune, thresh and fanne, winnow and grinde, brue and bake, and all without booke; and these are our chiefe businesse in the Country, except we be Jury-men to hang a theefe or speake truth in a man's right, which conscience & experience wil teach us with a little learning.

(Nicholas Breton, *The Court and Country* [1618])

Intentionally or not, the contrast drawn between urban sophistication and rural simplicity in Nicholas Breton's early seventeenth-century dialogue between a courtier and a countryman was also a distinction between an older culture and an emerging one. The tradition of memorized and orally transmitted ballads flourished on strong emotions and simple conflicts involving archetypal subjects such as love and honor. Whether derived from oral tradition or not, broadsides and other cheap secular print still hewed closely to the instincts of a semiliterate popular audience, capitalizing upon the concrete and the physical, rather than on the more abstract ideals of politics or religion. What preoccupied this audience were the annual rhythms of rural life, the homely details of petty

10. See especially, Keith Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England,' *Times Literary Supplement* (January 27, 1977): 77-81. On the moral contours of that world, see Keith Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order: Justices, Constables, and Jurymen in Seventeenth-Century England,' in John Brewer and John Styles, eds., *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1980), pp. 21-46; Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), chap. 2, esp. pp. 61-65; and Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, chaps. 1, 7.

Among the many ballads contemporaneous with 'Sir John Barley-Corne' and 'Master Mault' that celebrate drinking are: 'The Little Barly-Corne,' 'A Health to All Good-Fellows,' 'A Song in Praise of the Leather Bottel,' 'Nick and Froth; or the Good-Fellows Complaint for Want of Full Measure,' and 'Joan's Ale Is New.' These, along with innumerable stories and jokes involving alehouses and drinking, are printed in John Ashton, comp., *Humour, Wit, & Satire of the Seventeenth Century* (1883; reprint, New York, 1968).

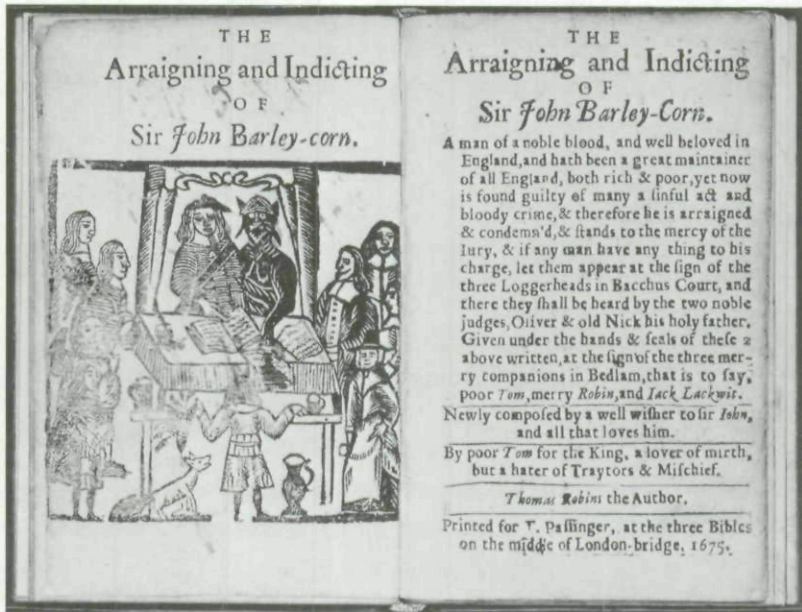


Fig. 1. Title page and woodcut from the 1675 chapbook version of the ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne, by Thomas Robins, printed for Thomas Passinger in London. The woodcut, a mock trial of Sir John before Oliver Cromwell, illustrates the chapbook's satiric, anti-Puritan tone. Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library.

trades, the attributes of simple neighborly virtues, and the recreation of peasant communities that drank convivially and spoke the low-humorous dialect of slapstick and pratfalls.¹¹

The emerging culture of print defined more abstract conflicts involving religious and political issues, requiring what Breton's 'Countryman' grudgingly acknowledged to be 'a little learning.' The court of justice, where principles of law were brought to bear on questions of guilt or innocence, was as natural a subject for

11. On the mental world of print, see, for example, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, 'Some Conjectures about the Impact of Printing on Western Society and Thought: A Preliminary Report,' *Journal of Modern History* 40 (1968): 1-56, especially her notion of 'unevenly phased social and psychological transformations during early modern times' (pp. 29ff.). On the associated social changes, see Wrightson, *English Society*, chap. 7, and Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700* (New York, 1979), esp. chap. 6.

print as the field of honor was for the oral ballad. In 1675, a greatly transformed chapbook version of the ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne, called *The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn*, was printed for Thomas Passinger, 'at the three Bibles on the middle of London-bridge' (fig. 1). Like the ballad, which Passinger had also reprinted, the twenty-one-page chapbook was largely, although not entirely, set in black-letter type. Its printer was one of the successor Ballad Partners who had acquired his sign, his shop, his stock—and his wife—from Charles Tias, whose apprentice Passinger had been until Tias's death in 1664. Until Passinger's own death twenty-four years later, he was one of London's main purveyors of 'Small Godly Books, Small Merry Books, Double Books, and Histories.' He and Tias's widow, Sarah, lived above their shop on the busy throughfare of London Bridge, every nook and cranny of which was crammed with bound volumes and unbound printed sheets—stored even in the hall, the garret, and over the stairs, as well as in a separate warehouse—totaling perhaps ten thousand volumes.¹²

Unlike the protagonists of his ballads, Passinger functioned in a bustling world of urban commerce under the auspices of a sign—'three Bibles'—that sanctified only a small fraction of his wares. If the inventory of Tias's stock, taken ten years before the printing of the chapbook of Sir John Barley-Corn, is any guide, Passinger's chapbooks (priced at two or three pennies each) were two or three times as numerous as his penny ballads. Trade lists of the 1670s

12. The original version of *The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn* (1675) is in the collection of the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California (HEH, no. 55585; *STC*, no. R1648). All references are to this copy. There is another roughly contemporary version in the Pepys Collection, an excerpt from which is reprinted in Roger Thompson, ed., *Penny Merriments* (New York 1977), pp. 138–40, and the title pages of two later editions are in John Ashton, comp., *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1882), pp. 314–15. On Passinger, Tias, and other distributors of chapbooks see Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, pp. 91–100. For informative discussions of the themes of chapbooks, see Spufford; Harry B. Weiss, *A Book about Chapbooks: The People's Literature of Bygone Times* (Trenton, N.J., 1942); and Victor E. Neuberg, *Chapbooks: A Bibliography of References to English and American Chapbook Literature of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London, 1964). My remarks about Passinger's shop and stock in 1675 are based on the inventory taken of them at Tias's death in 1664 which, given the intervening Great Fire of London, stretches a point.

and 1680s suggest that 'Small Godly' books were likely to compose only a little more than a quarter (28 percent) of Passinger's stock, and more expensive histories and 'double' books a little less than a quarter (23 percent) of his inventory. The remainder, almost half, were 'Small Merry' books, including his new version of *Sir John Barley-Corn*: steady-selling jestbooks, burlesques, satires, and romances such as *Robin Hood*, *Jack of Newbury*, and *Guy of Warwick*—as well as songbooks, almanacs, and a variety of manuals that advised on every aspect of life from the proper form of address to a social superior to the writing of a letter or the wooing of a widow.¹³

Unlike the ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne, the chapbook version had the name of an author on its title page: Thomas Robins. And like Passinger, Robins's pursuit of commercial success produced an oeuvre of sharply contrasting extremes—if, in fact, there was only *one* Thomas Robins, for there is conflicting evidence about his identity. The *British Museum General Catalogue* gives entries for two near contemporaries: 'Robins (Thomas) B.D.' and 'Robins (Thomas) Ballad-Writer.' The *Wing Short-Title Catalogue* lists only one. Neither entry gives his dates. If there *were* two Thomas Robinses, their careers overlapped, and they both published ballads and chapbooks at the sign of the three Bibles. The 'pious' Thomas Robins wrote several works in the 1650s and 1660s. Their titles suggest that they were 'Small Godly Books': *The Afflicted Souls Preparation, Man's Chief Guide* [in at least five editions], *Newes from Darby-shire; or, the Wonder of All Wonders; Being a Perfect and True Relation of . . . One Martha Taylor . . . She Hath Fasted Forty Weeks and More* (for T[homas] P[assinger]), and *The Sinner's Warning-Piece* [two editions, the first for Sarah Tias, the widow, the next for T. Passinger]. The 'profane' Thomas Robins was probably the author of at least two ballads about Robin Hood

13. The number of titles in each genre in seven publishers' tradelists of the 1670s and 1680s is given in Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, table 2, p. 134. The calculation is mine. Selections from the 'small merry' chapbooks collected by Samuel Pepys are in Thompson, ed., *Penny Merriments*; and numerous excerpts and summaries are provided in Ashton, comp., *Chap-Books of the Eighteenth Century*.

printed in the 1650s, and of at least three cynical and bawdy love ballads of the Restoration: 'The Merry Hoastess,' 'The Scornful Maid, and the Constant Young-Man,' and 'The Lovers Battle'—as well as *The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn*.¹⁴

Passinger the bookseller and pious/profane Robins the writer were joint participants in the Restoration contest of words that Thomas Babington Macaulay dubbed the 'war between wit and morality,' a literary aftershock to the English Civil War. And like the Civil War, the pamphlet wars between anti-Puritans and Puritans were grounded in a dramatic evolution of popular political consciousness. The Civil War and Restoration had generated a new popular awareness of public affairs and given definite moral overtones to the disputes over religious and political legitimacy. Thomas Robins was playing to this public mood when he chose the form of a trial for his satire, a format made familiar to his audience by the printing of the proceedings of great state trials such as *The Arraignment and Tryall with a Declaration of the Ranters* (1650) and *An Exact and Most Impartial Accompt of the Indictment, Arraignment, Tryal, and Judgement at Large of Nine and Twenty Regicides* (1660). It was a form, moreover, that had already demonstrated some anti-Puritan satirical potential in *The Arraignment, Conviction, and Imprisoning of Christmas* (1646)—a penny pamphlet whose title page announced that it had been printed 'by Simon Minc'd Pye for Cissely Plum-Porridge.'¹⁵

The long subtext on the title page of Robins's version of *Sir John Barley-Corn* left no doubt on which side of the divide between Royalist wit and Puritan moralism he stood:

14. The two Robinses are listed in *BMGC*, 204: 396–97. The works of a single Thomas Robins are listed in *STC*, nos. R1647–63. See also Rollins, 'Analytical Index to the Ballad-Entries,' nos. 2310, 2313, for the Robin Hood ballads. Copies of 'The Scornful Maid' and 'The Lovers Battle' are at the Houghton Library, Harvard University. 'The Merry Hoastess' is reprinted in Ebsworth and Chappell, *Roxburghe Ballads*, 3: 307–11.

15. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, 7 vols. (London, 1858), 1: 415. On the general tenor of Restoration satire, see C. W. Previtè-Orton, 'Political and Ecclesiastical Satire,' in A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, eds., *Cambridge History of English Literature*, 14 vols. (New York, 1907–17), 8: 80–100. For these examples of trial literature, see *STC*, nos. A3748, N1403, A3749, and, generally, nos. A3740–67.

THE
 Arraigning and Indicting
 OF
 Sir John Barley-Corn

A man of a noble blood, and well beloved in England, and hath been a great maintainer of all England, both rich & poor, yet now is found guilty of many a sinful act and bloody crime, & therefore he is arraigned & and condemn'd, & stands to the mercy of the Jury, & if any man have any thing to his charge, let them appear at the sign of the three Loggerheads at Bacchus Court, and there they shall be heard by the two noble judges, Oliver & old Nick his holy father. Given under the hands & seals of these 2 above written, at the sign of the three merry companions in Bedlam, this is to say, poor Tom, merry Robin, and Jack Lackwit.

Newly composed by a well wisher to Sir John,
 and all that loves him.

By poor Tom for the King, a lover of mirth,
 but a hater of Traytors & Mischief

Directly facing this title page was a woodcut far more elaborate and informative than any of the ballad woodcuts. It pictured Oliver Cromwell with his characteristic buff coat and shoulder sword-belt seated on a raised judicial bench next to the black, spectral figure of Old Nick, the Devil. On either side of the bench stood witnesses or spectators, and in front stood the diminutive Sir John, holding in one hand a hat, from which stalks of barley projected.

As the chapbook's woodcut and title page made explicit, *The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn* took the form of a mock trial in dialogue, with witnesses for and against the defendant, Sir John. Absent from the chapbook was the original ballad's poetic elaboration of the stages of barley culture, malting, and brewing. Instead, these were replaced by a partly-serious, partly-burlesque version of a moral drama, a drama that did not take place

in the fields, barns, malt and brew houses of the English countryside but in a court—a court held not in a hall of justice but in the common venue of a public house ('at the sign of the three Loggerheads in Bacchus Court'). And, as in a play, the drama was broken by the entrances and exits of its characters, and by their comic asides and songs.

The predominant use of already archaic black-letter type in the chapbook of Sir John Barley-Corn, rather than newer roman type, emphasizes the fact that, like the original ballad, the chapbook was intended for a popular audience. The book's satire played self-consciously to a popular anti-Puritanism that united Royalist political principles and Anglican religious beliefs with notions about the village economy and its recreations. Alehouses and drinking customs symbolically fused all of these. And while it was a polemical exaggeration for Robins to suggest that Puritans wanted to 'condemn' ale and beer, there was enough truth in the stereotype of Puritan hostility to alehouses for this popular audience to accurately perceive the parody's target.¹⁶ As a prefatory song made clear, Puritan moralism was an attack on the traditional village economy:

His Name is Sir John Barley-corn,
which makes both Ale and Bread:
What should all do which now are born,
if Barley-corn were dead?

(ll. 13-16)

While *The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn* took its name from the ballad of Sir John, it was more accurately a composite of at least three ballads, and perhaps more. It borrowed

16. Peter Clark, 'The Alehouse and the Alternative Society,' in D. Pennington and Keith Thomas, eds., *Puritans and Revolutionaries: Essays Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 47-72; Keith Wrightson, 'Alehouses, Order and Reformation in Rural England, 1590-1660,' in Eileen and Stephen Yeo, eds., *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* (Highlands, N. J., 1981), pp. 1-27. On the continuing popular audience for black-letter chapbooks, see Thomas, 'Literacy in Early Modern England,' p. 99, and Charles C. Mish, 'Black Letter as a Social Discriminant in the Seventeenth Century,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 68 (1953): 627-30. The use of black-letter type was almost entirely abandoned by the early eighteenth century.

from its namesake the main character and the vague notion of a death sentence, and mixed with it, very unevenly, the slapstick antics of the characters from 'Master Mault.' And the short song that appears twice in the book was a version of yet another ballad that celebrated ale and good fellowship, Robins's own 'The Merry Hoastess.' All these elements of pastiche gave the book the helter-skelter character of vaudeville. In the trial proper, a succession of popular figures familiar from the ballad of Master Mault appear against Sir John to offer complaints of mistreatment. The judges Old Noll and Old Nick are ready to condemn him without further ceremony. However, he pleads for benefit of the law, and they allow him time to prepare his defense. Sir John and Master Mault (who has entered the trial suddenly as co-defendant, and who soon disappears) march off together and, 'for joy that they got so fairly off,' sing another version of the opening song, unrepentant and thumbing their noses at their accusers ('All you that be good fellows, / come listen unto me, / If that you love the Ale-house, / and merry company'), promising prankish revenge. And their song concludes:

Therefore all honest Tradesmen,
a good word for me give,
And pray that Sir John Barley-corn,
may always with you live.

(pp. 14-15)

The trial reconvenes, and Sir John's humble defenders prove to be equally vehement, although much less risible than his accusers. 'The Plow-man' enters and indignantly berates any accuser of Sir John as 'no better than a Rogue, a Thief, a Vagabond, a Traytor to the Brown Loaf, a Thief to the Brass Pot, the Oven, and the Spit: nay, he is a Traytor to the whole World.' Few plowmen, he says, could live without Sir John to pay their landlord's rent. 'Bunch the Brewer' testifies that he maintains 'a great charge' and keeps 'a great many men at work, I pay Taxes, forty pound a year to the King, God bless him, and all this is maintained by the help of Sir John.' 'Mistris Hostiss' enters, scolding Sir John's accusers,

and calling them 'none that loveth the poor Commonality: surely they be none but some miserable Rogues that makes their Bags their God, heaping up their chests with Money to stop the Devils Mouth when he comes to fetch them away; such as these would have nobody to Live but themselves.' Finally, the 'Exciseman' testifies that if Sir John is put to death, he and his family will be ruined, for he pays a great rent for his farm and employs many servants, 'and therefore I pray let him live if you love the Commonwealth' (pp. 17-20).

Sir John's defense concluded, the trial (and the book) come to a swift conclusion. The hearts of even such unsympathetic judges as Old Noll and Old Nick soften, and they announce that there is no cause for a death sentence. They pardon Sir John, ordering him, 'Therefore down on thy knees and pray for King Charles the second.' Sir John then offers a prayer that the king and queen may continue their long and happy reigns, safe from 'Traytors':

And he or she, what ere you be, that will not
say Amen, sir John doth pray, both night and
day, you may never speak again.

(p. 21, verso)

The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn was primarily entertainment that poked fun at stock characters; it was not social criticism. Through the burlesques of Passinger the printer/bookseller and the pious/profane Robins, old and new stereotypes of varying political hues were marshaled in order to capture the fancies of an increasingly literate popular audience.¹⁷ But their

17. The explicit political slant of Robins's chapbook was apparently not typical of the genre. According to Margaret Spufford, 'the chapbook world is one in which the Restoration and the Civil War might never have happened,' and she observes that the sole exception to this rule is the characterization of Cromwell in *Sir John Barley-Corn* (*Small Books and Pleasant Histories*, p. 219). Commercial considerations and not political ideology may have dictated use of the readiest caricature at hand. Among the other small merry books Passinger sold, for example, was an anonymous one entitled *Fumbler's Hall, KEPT and Holden in Feeble-Court, at the Sign of the Labour-in-Vain, in Doe-Little-Lane*. This work also took the form of a burlesque trial, in which 'the females of Cornucopia' present their grievances to 'the Masters of the Corporation of Fumbler's Hall' and are answered by their husbands. In this version of the battle between the sexes, insatiable wives complain about their spouses, who are satirized as cuckolds and impotents. Although the chapbook treats its

burlesque of Puritanism was also an argument — an argument that was only implicit in the ballads: a defense of the economic benefits of drink, not merely a celebration of the neighborly economy of a rural society. According to the chapbook, drink was central to the livelihood of common people and, in the excise (an innovation of the 1640s), to the economic welfare of the state.

As English economic thought of the late seventeenth century began to subsume the consequences of individual economic choices into ever more abstract theoretical aggregates, printed arguments for the economic benefits of drink expanded upon earlier, popular moral intuitions. Almost forty years after the first appearance of *The Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn*, for example, Bernard Mandeville would offend conventional moral sensibilities by arguing for the necessity of taking an extended view of the benefits of gin. Like Robins, Mandeville catalogued the 'solid Blessings that accrue from, and are owing to the Evil': rents received, ground tilled, tools made, cattle employed, 'and above all, the Multitude of Poor that are maintain'd, by the Variety of Labour required in Husbandry, in Malting, in Carriage, and Distillation.' And like the political and religious principles that the chapbook of John Barley-Corn scanted in favor of slapstick, the elaboration of economic abstractions was better suited to the medium of print than to oral transmission. These more abstract representations — of religion, politics, and economics — were part and parcel of the imperatives of the commercial world in which Robins and Passinger lived.¹⁸

them broadly, a woodcut in *Fumbler's-Hall* depicts 'Sir Fardinando Fumbler, Clerk of the Company,' as a cavalier with a Van Dyke beard and wearing an enormous pair of horns, i.e., a cuckold. *STC*, no. F2527A ascribes to the book the same date, 1675, as the chapbook of Sir John Barley-Corn, and it was printed for Passinger, among others. An extract, including the woodcut, is found in Thompson, ed., *Penny Merriments*, pp. 260–63, and there is a brief discussion in Roger Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene, and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1979), pp. 106–7.

18. Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1924), 1: 91–92, and 86–100, 356–58 passim. See also Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*, chap. 3, esp. p. 53.

IV

SIR RICHARD RUM: THE BOOK

Intellectuals were falling not so much into opposing camps as into splintered fragments, not over theological or abstract issues . . . but because they were identified with diverging interests. In the process, language was becoming freer, more vivid, colloquial; wit was sharpened and the life of the people directly expressed in the vernacular.

(Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*)

I believe from my Heart, that the Reformation has scarce been more Instrumental in rend'ring the Kingdoms and States that have embraced it flourishing beyond other Nations, than the silly and capricious Invention of Hoop'd and Quilted Petticoats. . . . Religion is one thing and Trade is another. He that gives most Trouble to thousands of his Neighbours, and invents the most operose Manufactures is, right or wrong, the greatest Friend to the Society.

(Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* [1714])

In 1713, Cotton Mather, a prolific author of printed moralizing, worried about the appearance of some new competition in New England. He was informed, he wrote in his diary, that 'the Minds and Manners of many People about the Countrey are much corrupted, by foolish Songs and Ballads, which the Hawkers and Pedlars Carry into all parts of the Countrey.' To meet these challengers on their own turf, he contemplated procuring 'poetical Composures full of Piety,' which he proposed to scatter into every corner of the land. That same year, the Massachusetts provincial government passed a law banning itinerant 'hawkers, pedlars, and petty chapman.' As Ford remarked of the sale of ballads and chapbooks in the 1680s: 'The cheap shops of London Bridge could with impunity expose for sale what in Boston would have called down trouble upon the shopkeeper.'¹⁹

19. *The Diary of Cotton Mather*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, 2 vols. (1911-12; reprint, New York, [1957]), 2: 242; A. C. Goodell, et al., eds., *Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay*, 21 vols. (Boston, 1869-1922), 1: 720-21; Worthington C. Ford, *The Boston Book Market*, p. 49. For this literature, see Ford, comp., 'Broad-sides, Ballads, &c. Printed in Massachusetts, 1639-1800,' *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 75 (1922), and Ola Elizabeth Winslow, comp., *American Broadside Verse from Imprints of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (1930; reprint, New York, 1974); Charles Welsh

At the time Cotton Mather wrote, the output of New England presses was still dominated by religious works, provincial acts, and a few secular productions such as almanacs and primers. But other contemporary evidence confirms the growth of an indigenous light literature in the colonies during the first years of the eighteenth century—one influenced by popular English forms such as the occasional ballad and which found an audience on the streets of Boston and in the rural villages of New England. ‘My Brother,’ wrote Benjamin Franklin in the well-known reminiscences of his apprenticeship, ‘thinking it might turn to account encourag’d me, and put me on composing two occasional Ballads. . . . They were wretched Stuff, in the Grubstreet Ballad Stile, and when they were printed he sent me about the Town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the Event being recent, having made a great Noise.’²⁰ In 1724, scarcely five years after Franklin’s juvenile initiation into the world of Boston’s Grub Street, another sample of the ‘foolish’ literature that Mather deplored appeared in Boston. An advertisement in the *New England Courant* announced as ‘Just publish’d’: ‘The Indictment and Tryal of Sir Richard Rum, a Person of noble Birth and Extraction, well known to Rich and Poor throughout all America. Sold by T. Fleet at his Printing House in Pudding-Lane. Price, 6d. single and 4 s. per Dozen.’ The notice appeared in neither of Boston’s other two newspapers, but two weeks later another advertisement in the *Courant* announced a ‘third Edition’: ‘This day is publish’d, the third Edition of the famous Tryal of Sir Richard Rum. With a Preface, and a Song compos’d by him immediately after his Discharge, not in the former Editions. Sold by T. Fleet at his Printing House in Pudding Lane (see fig. 2).’²¹

and William H. Tillinghast, comps., *Catalogue of English and American Chapbooks and Broad-side Ballads in Harvard College Library* (1905; reprint, Detroit, 1968); and Harry B. Weiss, comp., *A Catalogue of the Chapbooks in the New York Public Library* (New York, 1936). The neglected subject of American chapbooks is addressed by Weiss, *A Book about Chapbooks*, pp. 123–40, and Neuburg, ‘Chapbooks in America.’

20. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, et al., (New Haven, 1964), p. 59.

21. All subsequent page numbers refer to the 1724 Boston third edition. For the advertisements, see *New England Courant*, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1724. On the pamphlet itself, see Farwell, ‘Sir Richard Rum,’ pp. 234–44, where it is introduced as ‘a curious temperance

*At a Court, held at Punch-Hall,
in the Colony of Bacchus.*

T H E
Indictment and Tryal
O F

Sr. **Richard Rum**

A Person of noble Birth and Extraction,
well known both to Rich and Poor
throughout all *America*.

Who was accused for several Misdemeanours
against his Majesty's Liege People, *viz.*
Killing some, *Wounding* others, bringing
Thousands to *Poverty*, and many good
Families to utter *R U I N*.

The Third Edition, with a *Preface*, and a *SONG*
 compos'd by *Sir Richard*, immediately after his
 Discharge, not in the former Editions.

Non per Jovem potum boni sed Demonis.

Printed in the Year 1724.

Fig. 2. Title page of the third American edition of the chapbook *The Indictment and Tryal of Sir Richard Rum* (1724), probably by Thomas Fleet of Boston. A satire against New England Puritanism, adapted to American popular audiences, this work was derived from Thomas Robins's original 1709 chapbook. Reproduced by permission of the Boston Public Library.

The Indictment and Tryal of Sir Richard Rum was one of several contemporary examples of the new vein of popular literature generated by colonial printers that were imitative of (and often plagiarized from) the genres of the English ballad and the 'small merry' chapbook. Although no copies of the first or second editions of *Sir Richard Rum* have survived—indeed, they may not have ever existed—the title page of the third edition revealed its author's debt to the English *Arraigning and Indicting of Sir John Barley-Corn*:

At a Court held at Punch-Hall,
in the Colony of Bacchus.

THE
Indictment and Tryal
OF

RICHARD RUM

A Person of noble Birth and Extraction
well known both to Rich and Poor
throughout all America.

Who was accused for several Misdemeanours
against his Majesty's Liege People, viz.
Killing some, Wounding others, bringing
Thousands to Poverty, and many good
Families to utter RUIN.

The Third Edition, with a Preface, and a SONG
compos'd by Sir Richard, immediately after his
Discharge, not in the former Editions.

Non per Jovem potum boni sed Demonis

Neither an author's nor a printer's name appeared on the title page of *Sir Richard Rum*, and the advertisements in the *Courant* supply the only clue to the book's immediate provenance. Thomas Fleet (1685–1758), who sold *Sir Richard Rum*, had arrived in Boston from England about 1712, only a year after the disastrous

tract.' The comment by Albert Matthews notes some interesting similarities between a portion of the parody and an anecdote attributed to Fleet's younger contemporary and correspondent, Benjamin Franklin. The meaning of the Latin motto on the third edition (see below) is obscure, and may possibly be rendered by the English epigraph of the 1750 edition: 'It is not the Use, but the Abuse, of any good Thing, that makes it hurtful.'

Boston fire that destroyed the shops of many of its booksellers. He is said to have been bred to the printing business in England and to have fled to New England because of his opposition to High Church Anglicanism. Fleet soon prospered as one of Boston's leading early printers of ballads, and his prosperity may not have been unrelated to the complaint from Cotton Mather in the following year. Shortly before advertising *Sir Richard Rum*, he described his shop in Pudding Lane, near the Town House, as one where 'all sorts of Printing may be had well done and cheap. Also Merchants, Shopkeepers and others may be supplied with Psalters, Psalm Books, Primers, Catechisms, Pocket-Books, and most other common and salable Books, as also Blanks of all sorts, and New Almanacks.' Fleet eventually moved to a larger shop in Cornhill and in 1733 took over publication of a Boston newspaper, *The Weekly Rehearsal* (later *The Boston Evening Post*). According to Isaiah Thomas, it was 'the best paper at that time published in New England.' After Fleet's death in 1758, the paper was continued by his sons until the Revolution.²²

Despite Fleet's original Low Church sympathies, his move to New England did not always find him in accord with the Puritan establishment. Described as 'free from superstition; and possessed of a fund of wit and humor,' his talents were soon turned against orthodoxy. Scarcely three years after his arrival, he was summoned before the authorities to explain his publication of a pamphlet taking the side of Governor Dudley against the Council, and the following year he was again in trouble for printing a broadside critical of the government. But Fleet's most precarious venture into public controversy came as printer of the theological polemics of John Checkley, a Boston-born, English-educated, sometime bookseller and apothecary. Although Fleet himself was baptized in Boston's Third (orthodox) Church in 1716, he printed

22. Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 2 vols. (1810; reprint, Albany, N.Y., 1874), 1: 98-104 (quotation, pp. 100-01). A biographical notice about Fleet is in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. Fleet's description of his business is on the title page of *The Veracity and Equity of the Members of the Council Held at Billingsgate in Eastham, 1720, Asserted and Maintained* (Boston, 1723).

Checkley's tracts, which assailed congregationalism and defended episcopal ordination. The tracts initiated a new round of theological controversy that eventually resulted in Checkley's trial and conviction for seditious libel in 1724, the year of the publication of *Sir Richard Rum*. Many years later, and doubtless as a result of other such encounters, Fleet offered the sour observation, in a dunning advertisement to the subscribers of his newspaper, that it was a 'great pity' that 'a Soil that will bear *Piety* so well, should not produce a tolerable Crop of Common Honesty.'²³

Fleet's choice of the *Courant* to run his advertisement for *Sir Richard Rum* situates the work quite precisely within the 'splintered fragments' of Perry Miller's post-orthodox Puritan mind, for Boston's third newspaper had enlisted the talents of a small group of free-thinking tradesmen and gentlemen who wrote essays mocking the pretensions and foibles of the clergy, the paper's journalistic competitors, and society at large. Their contributions established the voice of a secular opposition to the eclipsing world of New England orthodoxy. *Sir Richard Rum*'s popular satirical style makes it all but certain that it was written by one of the *Courant*'s contributors, and Fleet himself is the most likely candidate. His sale of the 1724 editions, his penchant for controversy and satire, and, not least of all, his other essays and letters in the *Courant* all suggest his hand in the affair.²⁴

The chapbook of Sir John Barley-Corn provided more than just the inspiration for Fleet's parody of New England Puritanism.

23. Thomas, *History of Printing*, 1: 104. On Fleet's difficulties with the authorities, see Ford, 'Broad-sides, Ballads, &c. Printed in Massachusetts,' pp. 57-58, and *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, 2 vols. (New York, 1973), 2: 787-88 and footnote, 820-21 and footnote. Sewall found Fleet's baptism worthy of note (*Ibid.*, 2: 828). In 1725, Checkley wrote to an English correspondent that Boston's printers had been 'so much menaced by the Teachers, that we have found it very difficult to get any thing printed in defense of the Church.' See Stephen Botein, "Meer Mechanics" and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers,' *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 170-71 and footnote. Checkley's biography is in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

24. See Ford, 'Franklin's New England *Courant*,' pp. 336-53. Ford's essay includes attributions, purportedly in Benjamin Franklin's handwriting, of the authors of articles in the first forty-three numbers, through May 1723. Fleet is listed as author of contributions by 'Tom Tram,' 'Ann Careful,' 'Sidrophel,' and 'To the Author.' On the *Courant*, see also Thomas, *History of Printing*, 2: 31-38; and *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 66-70.

The Indictment and Tryal of Sir Richard Rum was a generously plagiarized adaptation of a slightly revised English edition of Thomas Robins's original, titled *The Whole Tryal and Indictment of Sir John Barley-Corn, Knight* and printed in 1709 for 'J. Dutton, near Fleetstreet.' The Dutton version added some new material, replaced the original woodcut of Old Noll and Old Nick with another of four anonymous bewigged magistrates (with no defendants or witnesses), provided the judges and (new) jurymen with burlesque allegorical names (e.g., Timothy Toss-pot), and softened the satire's political overtones. In its new form, *Sir John Barley-Corn* became a lightly moralizing Augustan parody played even more exclusively for laughs.²⁵

The most immediate problem in adapting the English parody to American conditions was the differences between drinking in England and America—differences that transcended the names of particular beverages. Indeed, the real satirical possibilities of the American *Sir Richard Rum* depended upon the different roles played in their respective economies by sugar (and its derivatives, molasses and rum) and barley (and its derivatives, ale and bread). Barley resonated in English folklore and proverbial wisdom, and could persuasively be defended as an ancient staple that employed tens of thousands in its cultivation, malting, brewing, and baking. By contrast, rum was a beverage less than a century old, imported from the West Indies, that possessed none of the mythic seasonal and ritual connotations of grain and that still occupied a marginal role in the domestic economy of North America. Although Anglo-American moralists condemned ale and rum indifferently as agents of sin, only Americans could claim that rum was also an imported luxury that worsened the colonies' chronically imbalanced economies.²⁶

25. A copy of *The Whole Tryal and Indictment of Sir John Barley-Corn, Knight* (London, 1709) is in the British Library. See *BMGC*, 11:610. I am grateful to Patrick Brancaccio for transcribing it for me before I discovered a microform version in the *Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue* (London, 1978-).

26. On the growth of the American rum trade, see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), esp. pp. 290-91. On colonial fears of luxury, see J. E. Crowley, 'This Sheba, Self': *The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1974).

After 1715, as Perry Miller has shown, New England intellectuals engaged in their own war of wit, morality, and economics. The debates over the region's worsening trade balance and the consequences of imported luxuries provided the retreating Puritan establishment with further ammunition in its rearguard skirmish against moral heterodoxy and economic self-interest. Moralists like Increase Mather complained of a 'sort of Strong Drink, imported from the Sugar Islands, which has been of all other the most fatal . . . a sort of Strong Drink which does woefully besot men; weakening their memories & understandings, & shortening their lives.' Cotton Mather warned of the 'hazard' that 'a Flood of RUM, do Overwhelm all good Order among us.' The association between drink and New England's economic woes was quickly made. In Benjamin Wadsworth's *Vicious Courses Procuring Poverty Described and Condemned* (1719), 'intemperance' ceded preeminence only to 'sloth and laziness' as the main cause of personal poverty. That same year, the anonymous author of *The Present Melancholy Circumstances of the Province Considered* arrived at the same conclusion working from explicitly economic premises. In setting out the causes of Massachusetts's economic woes, he especially attacked imports of unnecessary luxuries such as wine, rum, brandy, tea, coffee, and chocolate—particularly the 'needless Expence of Imported Liquors.'²⁷

The complaint that piety in New England served as a smoke-screen for self-interest had long served as a cliché of anti-Puritanism. *The Whole Tryal and Indictment of Sir John Barley-Corn* evidently suggested to its Boston adapter a medium of satire on an issue close to the concerns of Massachusetts orthodoxy: the ambiguous link between moralism and mercantile profit. And it was particularly on the quasi-moral, quasi-economic implications

27. Increase Mather, *Wo to Drunkards* (1673; 2d ed., Boston, 1712); Cotton Mather, *Sober Considerations on a Growing Flood of Iniquity* (Boston, [1708]), p. 3; Benjamin Wadsworth, *Vicious Courses Procuring Poverty Described and Condemned* (Boston, 1719); Anon., *The Present Melancholy Circumstances of the Province Considered* (Boston, 1719), esp. pp. 4–6 (quotation, p. 6). For appraisals of the moral dimensions of New England's economic difficulties in the 1720s, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province* (Boston, 1953), chap. 19, and G. B. Warden, *Boston, 1689–1776* (Boston, 1970), chap. 5.

of 'luxury' that the Boston adapter of *Sir Richard Rum* set his satirical sights. A new tongue-in-cheek preface, 'To the Reader,' adopted an enlightened moral tone, gratifying to even the most orthodox readers:

It must be announced that excessive Rum Drinking is one of the Sins of the Times; and if so, it must be granted, that Rational Methods to check such a growing Vice, is both Lawful and Commendable.

Agreeable hereto, tho' the following Piece may pass for a Romance or Fiction with some, yet it will be found to have a direct Tendency to shame Sir Richard's most intimate Friends into an Estrangement from his Company. For it is not only innocent, Pleasant and Diverting in itself, but the MORAL is Excellent, Useful and Instructive.

Now that it may be happily instrumental to reclaim Sots and Tipplers from their vicious Courses, and reduce their Feet into the paths of Vertue, it is heartily recommended to the Publick. (p. 2)

The trial of Sir Richard Rum follows the 1709 version of *Sir John Barley-Corn*, making topical and local additions. The judges and jurors are given virtually identical burlesque allegorical names, Sir Richard's indictment is read, he pleads not guilty, asks for a trial, and is confronted by a virtually identical list of accusers—Vulcan the Blacksmith, William Shuttle the Weaver, Thomas Snip the Taylor, and James Wheat the Baker—who make the same slapstick complaints about his mistreatment of them. However, *Sir Richard Rum* diverges from its model in elaborating the substantive complaints against rum. A new group of accusers come forward: 'New-England, New-York, New-Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Pensilvania, Carolina, &c.' As 'Colonies,' they speak the same collective idiom as the colonial opponents of luxury, complaining that Sir Richard '*is not only hurtful to some Men who keep him Company most, but also to all our Land*; for if we would send for other Goods instead of Sir Richard Rum, & and instead of Mr. *Exceeding fine Cloath* . . . we might have Silver Money plenty as in other Countries, which would revive Trade, prevent a multitude of Law-suits, relieve many a poor Family out of deep Distress, and keep many a Man from Prison' (p. 9). 'Connecticut' and 'New Hampshire' offer accusations that Sir Richard causes 'many of our

labouring Men to spend (or rather mispend and trifle away) much precious Time in his Company,' so that 'many have scarce where-withal to Support either Church or State.' 'B[osto]n' adds its complaint: 'We may say to our great Sorrow, (we of the middle or lower Sort) That he has been one of the greatest Causes of our present Distress. It hath been observed within less than Twenty Years, *That this was counted one of the most flourishing Towns in America;* but in a few Years more (we have reason to fear) it will be in as bad a Condition as any of its Neighbors; and we can blame no Person or Thing more than this Prisoner and one Mr. *Extravagance*' (pp. 11-12).

When Sir Richard's accusers have finished, Judge Sir Solomon Stiffump sternly admonishes the accused that unless he clears himself he deserves 'to suffer.' But the other judge, Sir Nathan Standfast, offers a more temperate judgment. The prisoner ought not to be condemned before being heard. Sir Richard then begins his defense:

I confess my name is *Rum*, and have been esteemed and valued by many Persons of great Worth, in many parts of the World; and I have done good Service to the Common Wealth, of which I am a good and loyal Member. In the first place, *Gentlemen*, besides making many an honest Mans Pot boil, I do service to the Common Wealth by raising the excise a third part; I am esteemed by all sober moderate People, for the good I do when seasonably consulted, and put to a right Use. I am one that never forceth any Body, but leave them to do as they please, either to keep me Company, or let it alone. (pp. 13-15)

Constructing an economic defense of rum required the American adapter of *Sir John Barley-Corn* to completely revise the original list of Sir John's defenders. Because of their irrelevance, the Ploughman, the Brewer, and the Exciseman were all unsuitable; and their New World analogues—the Slave and the Customs Official among them—would presumably have provided less than adequate character references before a New England jury. These were replaced by 'Barbadoes, with the Leeward Islands,' 'Newport on Rhode Island,' 'Friend John the Quaker,' and 'Mrs. Hostess'—

only the last drawn from the English original. The West Indies testify that without rum ('the best Branch of our Trade') they could not subsist. Great Britain would also suffer because Ireland could not dispose of its butter and beef. New England itself would lose buyers for its fish, lumber, and horses; the Middle Colonies would lose a market for their bread and beer: 'By this it is plain, and may be made to appear evidently, *That upon us depends the Prosperity of Trade in many other Countries.* And if our Trade should decay, how would the Merchants do to employ Builders in *New-England*? And then, what would they do with their Timber, Hemp, Tar and Iron, which they begin to make there in considerable Quantities? And how would the poor be employed?' (pp. 15-16). 'Newport,' too, is in Sir Richard's debt, 'for he hath done much good to many Men in this place; he hath raised many from almost nothing to a great Estate, in a very few years.' 'Friend John the Quaker,' in his turn, affirms that Sir Richard 'forceth no Body, but is a peaceful honest Neighbour, also profitable to such who have so much Prudence as to keep him safely, and to dispose of him seasonably.' The last witness, 'Mrs. Hostess,' in a version of her testimony from *Sir John Barley-Corn*, condemns the 'cruel Blood-sucking Men' who do not care if innkeepers and retailers 'starve' because Sir Richard suffers (pp. 15-18).

The American adapter then took a curious detour from the original, a detour that, although it is irrelevant to the larger argument, may provide the sharpest insight into Thomas Fleet's biographical motive for writing the tract. He begins with a virtual diatribe against the colonies outside New England. The individuals who complain that they are abused by him, and 'some in the more Southern Colonies' as well, are 'Vicious and Immoral.' For, the further south one travels, the more the inhabitants are 'busie Bodies' who have their own vices: 'Prodigality and Extravagance have had as deep a Hand in procuring their Poverty as I' (pp. 20-21). And having sounded this low note of regional chauvinism, Sir Richard shifts to a higher tone for his peroration, offering advice that may refer not only to Fleet's emigration to New Eng-

land twelve years before, but also to the contemporary trial of John Checkley:

(*first.*) That every Person, from the highest to the lowest, count their Expençe, and compare their out-going with their incoming. (*secondly.*) Beware of that Monster Covetousness. (*thirdly.*) Let each of you endeavour to be acquainted with his own self. For you will find, that as long as your old Inclinations continue with you, you will presently get acquainted with . . . my Brother Brandy, Couzen Wine and Mr. Syder. . . . And (*fourthly.*) I advise them to lay aside or put to Death that pernicious Rogue Mr. *Self-Conceit* and Mr. *Flattery*, which peep abroad now-a-days very much. And (*last of all.*) That they beware of abusing strangers as they have abused me; and let them also consider, that it is not long since they or their Fathers have been Strangers in these Parts of the World, as well as I; who, on account of some Difference between them and their Parent, removed into these remote Regions, (some of them) upon no other account, than to enjoy the Liberty of their Consciences; but now (as I am told) they are not so kind and charitable towards those who differ from them in Opinion, as might justly be expected from them: Wherefore some are ready to think, that if the present Age mend not their Manners, their Posterity will be under the necessity of looking out for some place to enjoy the Liberty of their body. (pp. 21–22)

With that indignant defense of toleration, *Sir Richard Rum* ends. The jury retires, and after a short deliberation returns with their verdict, 'Not Guilty,' to murmurs of general approval from the spectators.

According to the advertisements in the *Courant*, only the 'third' edition contained an afterpiece following the trial: a song composed by Sir Richard 'immediately after his discharge.' In fact, the song was yet another adaptation of Thomas Robins's 'Merry Hoastess.' Even more striking, however, in view of the 'new' preface and the pamphlet's principled defense of rum, was the finale's slapstick tone—a tone that undercut its professedly enlightened moralism. The song begins:

All you that are good Friends of mine,
 come listen unto me,
 And you that love a Pot of Drink,
 and merry Company,

and passes verse by verse through Sir Richard's (and Sir John's) accusers, promising the same settling of scores as the original song and concluding with a tavern-drinking finale:

There's scarce a Tradesman in the Land,
that when from Work is come,
But takes a touch, (sometimes too much),
of Brandy or of Rum.

Therefore all honest Tradesmen
a good Word for me give,
And pray that good Sir Richard Rum
may always with you live. (pp. 23-24)

And so the impish presence of the centuries-old, celebratory ballad tradition peeped out from under this eighteenth-century rationalist cum burlesque send-up of New England Puritan intolerance. Less urbanely delivered than Mandeville's morally problematic economic defenses of luxury and private vice, the message offered by the adapter of *Sir Richard Rum*, whoever he was, took greater account of the popular audience that he hoped to reach. He operated indifferently along twin lines of attack: a rationalist mode well suited to print when it would suffice, and a more traditional vein of ridicule when it would not. And if, in fact, Fleet was the author of the parody, then it seems plausible that its economic arguments were only stalking-horses for a political principle of religious and social toleration—one in which the analogies between the author's immigration, the 'imported' diversity of the beliefs of other immigrants to the New World, and imported rum played a determining role. This was one of the first times in American history, but hardly the last, that arguments for economic and political liberty would be normatively linked.

v

SIR RICHARD RUM AND ITS CONTEMPORARIES

The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum was only one example of an emergent, though derivative, colonial secular literature. As Boston's leading purveyors of this light literature at the beginning

of the eighteenth century, Fleet and James Franklin, printer of the *Courant*, issued other chapbooks and ballads that either imitated English models or reproduced them without alteration. Only a few contemporary examples of this transplanted tradition of low-priced popular print survive, and many of the early verses, ballads, and broadsides that were *Sir Richard Rum's* predecessors or contemporaries in Massachusetts are known only from newspaper advertisements or later reprints. The first surviving satires date from only a few years before *Sir Richard Rum*, and these usually mocked public fancies and fashions in ways that could hardly have been considered controversial. A decade before *Sir Richard Rum*, a coyly written, anonymous, eight-page verse parody entitled *The Origin of the Whale Bone-Petticoat. A Satyr* appeared in Boston, mocking feminine pride in the arch manner of Pope. In 1721, James Franklin printed *News from the Moon*—like *Sir Richard Rum*, a satirical trial—and the following year he also issued *Hoop Petticoats Arraigned and Condemned by the Light of Nature and Law of God*. Another verse broadside printed by Fleet about 1740, and said to have first been printed in 1718, satirized an institution closer to the hearts of Massachusetts Puritans. *A Satyrical Description of Commencement, Calculated to the Meridian of Cambridge in New-England*, printed at Fleet's new shop at the sign of the 'Heart and Crown' in Cornhill, played good-humoredly and suggestively with the extracurricular frolics that accompanied Harvard graduations.²⁸

28. The distinction between religious and secular popular literature is difficult to make, especially in New England. See particularly David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York, 1989), chap. 1. There is a good deal of miscellaneous popular verse, particularly elegies, printed on broadsides, as well as in volumes celebrating New England, historical narratives, almanacs, and poetry and prose celebrating nature. A number of examples, most of them from previously unpublished manuscripts, are printed in Harold S. Jantz, *The First Century of New England Verse* (Worcester, Mass., 1944). Perhaps the earliest colonial verse to have survived is one that was later dubbed 'Our Forefathers' Song.' It was reprinted (or perhaps printed for the first time) in *The Massachusetts Magazine, or Monthly Museum* 3 (1791): 52–53, and, reportedly, was 'taken memoriter, from the lips of an old Lady, at the advanced period of 92.' The song is dated from the 1630s in the magazine, although the gap between its reputed composition and first extant printing make this attribution uncertain. Its subject is best described by its prefatory lines: 'New England's annoyances, that you would know them, / Pray ponder

Often, however, and despite Cotton Mather's invidious characterization, cheap popular print was not satirical but celebratory. Colonial ballad and verse writers found in Indian warfare the same drama that European ballad writers or singers found in tales of chivalry. Only the titles of many of these, and the lyrics of even fewer of them, survive, and the tunes to which they were originally attached are lost or can only be recovered from other sources. Several years after printing the two ballads written by his brother, for example, James Franklin issued a 212-line ballad with a crude woodcut of a battle at the top: 'The Rebels Reward; or, English Courage Display'd. Being a Full and True Account of the Victory Obtain'd over the Indians at Norrighiwock.' It was advertised to be sung to the tune of 'All You That Love Good Fellows.' The next year, Franklin advertised in the *Courant* 'An excellent new Song' called 'The Voluntier's March,' another hot-off-the-presses account of the fight between Capt. John Lovewell's company and the Indians at Pigwacket in Maine. This was almost certainly the same song that, as 'Lovewell's Fight,' gained wide regional popularity in eighteenth-century New England. Like the enormously popular English border ballad 'Chevy Chase,' 'Lovewell's Fight' described a battle in which both chiefs, Lovewell and the Indian Paugus, lost their lives. By the early 1730s, ballads like these adorned with crude woodcuts appeared frequently in Boston.²⁹

these verses which briefly do show them.' The subsequent verses humorously chronicle the hardships of the earliest settlers, and the song concludes with an invocation to renewed faith in the holy experiment. It is reprinted in Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*, 2 vols. (New York, 1856), 1: 68. However, most of these printed or reprinted New England verses lack the fictional character or humorous tones of English 'small merry' works, which is more aptly captured by the irreverence of Fleet's broadside 'Satyrical Description of Commencement' (Boston, 1740). It is also noted in Ford, 'Broad-sides, Ballads, &c.,' pp. 68, 104.

29. See Ford, 'Broad-sides, Ballads, &c.,' pp. 62-63, 72, 73. Ford's volume includes an appendix (pp. 397-451) of American broadside ballads, most of which appear to date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An interesting collection of early ballads about America, including some by people who claim to have been there, is C. H. Firth, ed., *An American Garland, Being a Collection of Ballads Relating to America, 1563-1759* (Oxford, 1915). The first extant reprint of 'Lovewell's Fight' is in J. Farmer and J. B. Moore, eds., *Collections, Historical and Miscellaneous; and Monthly Literary Journal* (Concord, N.H., 1824), 3: 64-66, and it is also reprinted in Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*, 1: 427-29. Another earlier verse broadside (not a ballad) that deals with King Philip's War, dated 1675

Whatever their particular slant, these early American ballads and chapbooks shared the demotic dialect of English popular forms. Occasionally, they skated the same fine line as *Sir Richard Rum* between humor and disrespect, one in which the moral assurances offered by a preface could be stolen away by the ingenuity of an author attuned to the transatlantic echo of the small, merry culture of England. Fleet himself continued in the thick of this battle of wit and morality as one of Boston's leading ballad printers and as Benjamin Franklin's correspondent for the sale of *Poor Richard's Almanac*. And like Franklin, Fleet never missed an opportunity to join humor and profit. In 1748, he reissued an old English ballad, 'The Great Honor of a Valiant London Prentice,' which he printed on the backs of some Papal indulgences captured on a Spanish ship, advertising them for sale singly, by the quire, or by the ream 'at a much cheaper Rate than they can be purchased of the *French* or *Spanish* Priests, and yet will be warranted to be of the same Advantage to the Possessors.' In 1750, eight years before his death, Fleet printed a 'fourth' edition of *The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum*—still advertising its 'new' preface and song 'not in the former Editions.'³⁰

and reprinted in 1721, is 'Some Meditations Concerning Our Honourable Gentlemen and Fellow-Souldiers, in Pursuit of Those Barbarous Natives in the Narragansit-Country.' See Winslow, *American Broadside Verse*, no. 53. Benjamin Tompson's Homeric-inspired account of the same war in heroic couplets, *New England's Crisis* (Boston, 1676), includes a humorous afterpiece: 'On a Fortification at Boston Begun by Women.' See also, 'W. G.,' 'A Brief Narrative, or Poem, Giving an Account of the Hostile Actions of Some Pagan Indians towards Lieutenant Jacob Tilton, and his Brother Daniel Tilton . . . in the Year 1722,' in *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 2 (1848): 271-74, which is printed from an 1834 version of an Isaiah Thomas reprint. It is also printed in Winslow as no. 54. 'The Gallant Church,' 'Smith's Affair at Sidelong Hill,' and 'The Godless French Soldier' are titles of early ballads, now apparently lost, cited in Rufus W. Griswold, 'Curiosities of American Literature,' in I. C. D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature, and the Literary Character Illustrated* (New York, 1851), p. 27.

30. For 'The London Prentice,' see Ford, 'Broadside, Ballads, &c.,' pp. 121-22 (quotation), 419, 447. On the Fleet-Franklin correspondence, see C. William Miller, 'Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Printing, 1728-1766: A Descriptive Bibliography,' *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society* 102 (1974): 31. As a newly established printer in Philadelphia, Franklin very rarely printed diverting works. Among his first-known one hundred imprints (1728-35), only three (possibly four) could be classified as small, merry works: two (possibly three) American poems, and one English satire, *The Honour of the Gout*, reprinted in 1732, and also sent to Fleet for sale in Boston.

Unlike most of its other small, merry contemporaries, however, *Sir Richard Rum* was frequently revived, making it perhaps the single most often reprinted eighteenth-century American satire. One reason for its persistence was the spread of newspapers and printing establishments throughout the American colonies. Forty years after 1720, the number of master printers had grown from nine in four towns to forty-three in twelve towns; the number of newspapers had risen from three to twenty-two. The increasing availability of print fed the needs of a literate urban audience not only for news or spiritual guidance but also for novels and other printed diversion. Although *Sir Richard Rum*'s sales during the century could scarcely match those of many almanacs and school-books, it was reissued more often than any novel except *Robinson Crusoe*. And while it did not outsell the religious works of authors such as Isaac Watts, Joseph Alleine, and Robert Russel—many of which could also be purchased in imported editions—its varied imprints, and the newspaper advertisements announcing its sale, suggest a steady regional popularity in New England that eventually, although briefly, spread to other areas. By the end of the century, a (probably exaggerated) twentieth edition was advertised from Warren, Rhode Island, and the personification of 'Richard Rum' had become a catch-phrase in New England. In 1794, *A Dialogue between Sam. Sword and Richard Rum* appeared in Winsor, Vermont, and more than twenty years later *The Farmer's Almanack* for 1816, printed in Boston, offered this piece of wisdom to its readers: "Our good or bad fortune depends greatly on the choice we make of our friends." I never knew Sir Richard Rum's friendship worth preserving. He is warm and very cordial at first, but he is sure to lead you into difficulty in the end.³¹

31. On late eighteenth-century usage of the phrase 'Richard Rum,' see the comment by Albert Matthews in Farwell, 'Sir Richard Rum,' p. 241, and George Lyman Kittredge, *The Old Farmer and His Almanack* (Boston, 1904), p. 274 (quotation). On the sale of religious works and novels, see Hall, 'The Uses of Literacy in New England,' esp. pp. 28-31, and Winans, 'Bibliography and the Cultural Historian,' pp. 177-81; and for the expansion of colonial printing see Botein, "'Meer Mechanics" and an Open Press,' esp. pp. 150, 152. The late eighteenth-century expansion of the American reading public is discussed in Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, part 1.

However, the real reason for *Sir Richard Rum's* continuing success lay in the periodic relevance of the economic, and perhaps also the political, issues that it engaged. For although its subsequent printings were doubtless small ones, their chronology helps to explain why the satire continued to appeal to an American readership. After Fleet's editions of 1724 and 1750, the next surviving edition did not appear until 1765. During the 1770s, three further editions appeared; in the 1780s, a single edition; and in the 1790s, three more editions. Half a century after the original editions, the parody retained its point because debates over luxury (and perhaps also toleration) were rekindled during the years preceding the Revolution and in its aftermath, when patriotic ardor or economic difficulties provoked nationalistic calls for an end to the consumption of foreign luxuries. At such times, *Sir Richard Rum* became an argument for continuing economic ties with the British Empire, and perhaps also a challenge to patriotic intolerance. Yet independence initially affected the text of *Sir Richard Rum* scarcely at all—not even the arguments made by the 'West Indies' for the economic importance of rum. It sufficed merely to translate 'plantations' and 'provinces' in the text to 'states.' Nor did the republican disdain for honorifics affect the satire's title, which remained 'Sir' Richard Rum in the 1794 edition.³² However, the Whiskey Rebellion of that year evidently suggested to one traveling bookseller, Robert Stewart of Philadelphia, a profitable object of satire to suit the growing popularity of a new American beverage. Two years later, he printed *The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum and Captain Whiskey; with Additions and Improvements*. But Stewart was no Thomas Robins or Thomas Fleet. His

32. These later editions of *Sir Richard Rum* were: Portsmouth, N.H., 1765; Newport, R.I., 1770; Providence, R.I., 1774; New York, [1775]; New Haven, 1785; Portsmouth, N.H., 1791; Dover, N.H., 1793; Warren, R.I. ('20th'), 1794. Most references to these survive only as newspaper advertisements announcing them as 'just published' or 'printed by.' Thus, some may not have been new printings but previous editions exchanged and sold by other booksellers. See Winans, 'Bibliography and the Cultural Historian,' pp. 175-76. On the debates over luxury in the pre- and post-Revolutionary eras, see Crowley, 'This Sheba, Self' and Drew R. McCoy *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1980), esp. pp. 90-104.

additions were minimal (and scarcely improvements), consisting of a single topical interpolation in an already long speech by Sir Richard. The American tradition of *Sir Richard Rum* had effectively come to an end.³³

The endurance of the chapbook of Sir John Barley-Corn and its American offshoot for a century and a half had more to do with their low common denominator of burlesque than with their claims to art. And the demise of *Sir Richard Rum* was due to the growing incongruity between the world of English village life (and English judicial forms) and the American social world after 1815. Whiskey replaced rum as the American beverage of choice, and American commerce reoriented from the Atlantic to the West. The satire's arguments became irrelevant and its form antiquated. The formalities of the eighteenth-century English legal system, and the existence of social types whose burlesque humor depended upon an audience's familiarity with them, increasingly escaped the American reading public. Instead, by the nineteenth century an indigenous humor of native social types was arising—Hudson River Dutch, Yankee Jonathans, Kentucky backwoodsmen, Negro minstrels, and eventually a panoply of comic immigrant figures such as Paddy the Irishman. *Sir Richard Rum* appeared labored and arch—or merely quaint.³⁴

The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum (without Captain

33. (Philadelphia, 1796; 2d ed., 1805; 3d ed., Frederickton, Md., 1813). The added material follows: 'and one Capt. Whiskey has lately made a formidable appearance in the United States, particularly in Pennsylvania, as a fellow of great strength, who spurned at the proclamation of our worthy President, and was so obstinate, that it required an army of near thirty thousand men to subdue him—many of whom were so struck with his warlike appearance and heroic exploits, as well as with his hospitable treatment of strangers, that they frequently indulged themselves with a nap under his roof;—but at last he was overcome, and condemned to die; notwithstanding his interest was so great among all ranks, especially with the Rulers, that he obtained a pardon, on condition that he become tributary—so that the captain now lives very well again by his industry, and begins to gather strength, and cultivate friendship with his neighbors; and even the greater part of the ladies are so fond of him, that they pay him many a closet visit, as well as the men, notwithstanding of his course and robust manner of address' (1805 ed., p.21).

34. The decline of rum and the rise of whiskey culture is fully treated in William J. Rorabaugh *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York, 1979), esp. chap. 3. For the rise of American humor, see especially Constance Rourke, *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York, 1931).

Whiskey) achieved one final ironic apotheosis in an edition that bore the imprint 'Boston: Published by John Ford, Temperance Press, Wilson's Lane. 1835.' Temperance reformers such as Ford had no use for the moral frivolities of burlesque drunks, no patience with economic rationales for spirits, and no tolerance for the philosophy of moderate enjoyment of all things. Instead, Ford exhibited *Sir Richard Rum* as an amusing relic from the past, substituting for Fleet's preface an advertisement which noted that the tract had originally appeared 'sixty or seventy years ago, and contains frequent allusion to the colonial condition of the American States.' Sir Richard, it noted, had been 'well known among the people,' and still retained 'not a few' friends. He had been put on trial for his life, but acquitted, 'lest it should be said, *that they went too far*.' The editor pointed out the evident bias of the judges, since the court had been constituted by 'King *Bacchus*, whose interest it was to save the prisoner,' and he surmised that even in the nineteenth century there would be '*respectable* men who . . . would be loth to convict him.' This effort to construct an acceptable contemporary moral for *Sir Richard Rum* was followed by the entire text of the original, with the exception of Sir Richard's final, subversive song. Its last editor's whimsy evidently did not extend to incorporating into the temperance ethos: 'And pray that good Sir Richard Rum/may always with you live.'³⁵

VI

POSTSCRIPT: A BALLAD IN THE AGE OF
MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION

There was three men come out of the west
Their fortunes for to try,
And these three man made a solemn vow
John Barleycorn should die.

(Sung by Mr. Haden [a shepherd, aged eighty-three], Bampton, Oxfordshire, August 30, 1909, transcribed by Cecil J. Sharp)

35. *The Indictment and Trial of Sir Richard Rum* (Boston, 1835), pp. iii, iv, and passim. A copy of this edition is in the Boston Athenaeum.

John Barleycorn was a hero born
Of noble enterprise,
And if that you would taste his blood
It would make your courage rise.
To the rant nant nan da hee,
To the rant nant nan nah, doo ah doo ah dah,
John Barleycorn must die.

(Sung by T. E. Armstrong, Springfield, Vermont, February 16, 1935,
transcribed by Elizabeth F. Ballard)

Most recent accounts of the mental transformation from traditional to modern societies describe a parallel transition from predominantly 'oral' to predominantly 'literate' cultures. Scholars of the history of the book in America sometimes also portray a transitional 'verbal' stage during which a relatively few literate individuals mediate print to the majority of the illiterate population. They often point as well to a shift from an 'intensive' style of reading, characteristic of a print-scarce society, to an 'extensive' style of reading that is characteristic of a print-plentiful society. However modulated, all these dichotomous explanations ascribe mental and cultural differences at least in part to differences in access to, and ability to use, written texts.³⁶

The evolution of 'Sir John Barley-Corn(e)' and *Sir Richard Rum* from broadside (and, possibly, originally oral) ballad to book suggests more nuanced understandings of the historical continuum of the transmission of words — a continuum in which printing forms one, but only one, important stage. For the creation and

36. For a broad theoretical and chronological perspective, see, for example, Jack Goody and Ian P. Watts, 'The Consequences of Literacy,' in Jack Goody, ed. *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, Eng, 1968), pp. 27-68. Without making the explicit contrast with an oral society, Richard D. Brown calls literacy 'one of the hallmarks of modernity,' in *Modernization: The Transformation of American Life, 1600-1865* (New York, 1976), p. 40. A modified distinction between oral and literate societies is drawn by Rhys Isaac in 'Books and the Social Authority of Learning: The Case of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Virginia,' in Joyce et al., eds., *Printing and Society*, pp. 228-49. Emphasis on changes in the availability of print and the quality of the attention given by the reader to the text is found in Hall, 'The Uses of Literacy in New England'; Brown, 'From Cohesion to Competition,' in *ibid.*, pp. 300-09; and Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*, esp. pp. 72-73. In 'Authority of the Word' (ms., 1988), Robert Gross offers qualifications of these views and writes of 'constant rivalry of genres, competition for authority and status, and intermingling of all sorts of readings in the making of a text.'

eventual disappearance of chapbooks derived from the ballad of 'Sir John Barley-Corne' did not result in the disappearance of the ballad itself, as an invariable evolutionary theory of the transition from oral to print culture might suggest. Retracing the subroots of the extinct literary forms of *Sir John Barley-Corn* and *Sir Richard Rum* back to the taproot of the ballad—and then tracing the main root forward—provides a more complex view of the interaction between the several forms of the mechanical reproduction of words. In fact, the ballad of Sir John Barleycorn (its modern spelling) has long survived its purely literary derivatives—not as a pristine and pure 'oral' tradition, but as a sung tradition, in which oral versions and printed texts have reinforced each other. Both, in their turn, have been enormously energized by the twentieth-century technological innovations of aural reproduction by disc and tape recordings. This evolution emphasizes the role of printing as one way-station in the history of mechanical reproduction. It also suggests that the mental and cultural correlates of reading may be less important than the historical role of print (and other media) in expanding the production and distribution of words in all forms, as one medium supplements, rather than replaces, another.

Various forms of the story of John Barleycorn, as well as individual variations within the same form, have overlapped and coexisted since the appearance of the original broadside. The ballad appeared on the 1685 tradelist of London bookseller William Thackeray, almost a decade after the appearance of Robins's chapbook, and broadside versions printed in London were issued perhaps as late as 1730. The two printed English chapbook versions of Sir John Barley-Corn—Robins's original *Arraigning and Indicting*, and the 1709 *Whole Tryal and Indictment*—were reprinted with various minor changes throughout the eighteenth century. In mid-century reeditions of the *Arraigning and Indicting*, the original woodcut of Old Nick and Old Noll at the bench was replaced by caricatures of rural husbandry: an old man with barley stalks in his hat and a goodwife holding a rake. Many editions of this version

were printed by the London firm of William and Cluer Dicey, the most important eighteenth-century English printer of chapbooks, located in Aldermay Churchyard. The number of slightly varying imprints and woodcuts on surviving copies of *Sir John Barley-Corn* issued by the Cluer firm testify to the book's continuing popularity during the late eighteenth century—a popularity that endured in the provinces at least until an edition of 1810. Then, as happened with *Sir Richard Rum*, the printing of the chapbook of Sir John Barley-Corn apparently ended.³⁷

The decline of the broadside and chapbook versions of Sir John Barley-Corn(e) by the early nineteenth century by no means signaled the end of its popular ballad tradition. Many abbreviated editions of the ballad were subsequently printed, and these unquestionably aided the survival of the popular versions of the song. During the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, numerous cheap collections or 'garlands' of songs reprinted shortened versions of the ballad. Usually eight pages long, with a table of contents on the title page, garlands were illustrated like broadsides and other chapbooks with simple woodcuts. They also bore picturesque or humorous names such as *The Garland of Mirth and Delight*, *The Careless Batchelor's Garland*, or *The Caledonia Garland*, or simple descriptive titles such as *Five* (or four or six) *Excellent* (or new or favourite or popular) *Songs*. Instead of the more elaborate opening of the broadside ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne, and despite much variation among garlands, these versions often began with what eventually became (or had always been) the characteristic opening verse, which announced the story of three men (like the biblical wise men) who came from a distance. One of the

37. For the ballad, see *STC*, nos. P2556A, F-H, P2557; *BMGC*, 11: 610; The Earl of Crawford, *Bibliotheca Lindesiana, Catalogue of a Collection of English Ballads of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries* ([Aberdeen], 1890), p. 652 (Thackeray's list). For the two versions of the chapbook, see: Welsh and Tillinghast, comps., *Catalogue of English and American Chapbooks and Broadside Ballads in Harvard College Library*, nos. 1728–32; *BMGC*, 11: 610; and National Library of Scotland, *Catalogue of the Lauriston Castle Chapbooks* (Boston, 1964), p. 213. Provincial chapbook versions were printed in Belfast (1761), Newcastle (1760?, 1780?), and Sterling (1810). On the Dicey firm and other chapbook printers, see Ashton, *Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century*, p. ix; Weiss, *A Book about Chapbooks*, pp. 18–20; Neuberger, *Chapbooks*, pp. 9–30.

earliest of these garlands, *The Merry Batchelor's Medley; Being a Choic[e] Collection of Songs*, printed in London about 1755, began:

There was three knights came from the North,
And strove for a Victory,
And they made a solemn Vow,
That Barleycorn should die.

Like the broadside, cheap collections containing the ballad were printed in London, but following the eighteenth-century dispersion of English printing they also were issued in provincial centers such as Newcastle, Sheffield, and Newton-Stewart in Scotland—in the last as late as 1830.³⁸

Although garlands disseminated the words of 'Sir John Barleycorn' throughout the British Isles, they also widened the existing separation between its words and music. Few seventeenth- and

38. The latest surviving example of the long version (thirty-four verses and 136 lines) of 'Sir John Barley-Corne' in broadside format apparently dates from the early eighteenth century, ca. 1730, as noted in *BMGC*, 11: 610. Later reprints of the original broadside appear to have been confined to more expensive and less popularly accessible collections designed for a learned audience, for example: Jamieson, *Popular Ballads and Songs*, 2: 251-60, and Thomas Evans, *Old Ballads*, 4 vols. (London, 1810), 4: 214-20. These antiquarian works were superseded by the late nineteenth-century multivolume collections printed for the Ballad Society, e.g., the *Roxburghe Ballads*.

Garlands containing 'Sir John Barleycorn' include: *The Merry Batchelor's Medley* (London, 1755?); *Mountain of Hair's Garland* (Newcastle, 1775? and 1780?); *Jolly Sailor's; or, The Lady of Greenwich Garland* (Sheffield, 1752) [Harvard no. 1392]; and *John of Badenyon; or, A Man in Search of a Friend* (n.p., n.d.), [Harvard no. 1387], which is almost identical to the 1755 version, and is given the hypothetical date of 1800 in *BMCG*, 117: 460. See also: *Three Favourite Songs* (Newton-Stewart, n.d.) [Harvard no. 1611], which is given the hypothetical date of 1830 in *BMGC*, 225: 993, and in Weiss, comp., *A Catalogue of the Chapbooks in the New York Public Library*, no. 735. Harvard numbers refer to the listings in Welsh and Tillinghast, comps., *Catalogue of English and American Chapbooks and Broad-sides*. Original English versions of the first two, located in the British Library, are printed in Otto Ritter, 'Zwei Unbekannte Fassungen Des Sir John Barleycorn,' *Anglia: Zeitschrift für Englische Philologie* 27 (1904): 450-52. I am grateful to James Lewis, curator of the Houghton Reading Room at Harvard, for bringing this article to my attention, and to Margrit Lichterfeld for the translation. Discussions of song garlands are in Weiss, *A Book about Chapbooks*, pp. 75-80, and Frank Kidson, 'The Ballad Sheet and Garland,' *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 2 (1905): 70-78. The garlands cited above only scratch the surface of a vast ephemeral genre that undoubtedly included numerous other reprintings of 'Sir John Barleycorn.' David Laing, for example, took his version in *Early Metrical Tales* (Edinburgh, 1826) from 'a common stall-copy, printed in the year 1781,' corrected from two later editions (p. lx), including one version by Robert Jamieson (b. ca. 1780), who learned it 'in Morayshire when he was a boy' (*Popular Ballads and Songs*, 2: 240). The reemergence of provincial printing at the end of the seventeenth century is discussed in Blagden, 'Notes on the Ballad Market,' p. 176, and Neuberger, *Chapbooks*, p. 2.

eighteenth-century broadsides or garlands contained musical notation; but, unlike broadsides, most garlands did not even name a tune to sing the ballad by. Many different lyrics could be fitted to the same ballad tune, and several different ballad tunes might be popularly adapted to one set of lyrics. Consequently, the original tune for the broadside version of Sir John Barley-Corne, 'Shall I Lye Beyond Thee' ('Lull Me Beyond Thee'), does not appear to have stuck to its popular renditions. Nor was the ballad fortunate enough during the seventeenth century, and possibly during the eighteenth century as well, to have its words printed together with the musical notation of any tune. Consequently, the link between printed versions of its lyrics and its sung tradition progressively diverged until well into the nineteenth century, resulting in a chaotic variety of lyrics and tunes for ballads with the name of Sir John Barleycorn.³⁹

By the early twentieth century, two largely separate traditions of the ballad of Sir John Barleycorn coexisted: the first was a learned one that reproduced the original broadside and a few popular versions without music, and that was found in books of collected folk ballads; the other was a popular one providing both lyrics (orally transmitted or printed in garlands) and music (with few exceptions, orally transmitted). The first line of transmission reflected the new engagement of eighteenth-century European intellectuals with the 'little' cultural tradition of the masses, what

39. The most common form of ballad meter was alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter ('There was' three Knights' came from' the North' / And strove' for vic' to ry''), rhyming only the second and fourth lines. William Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, 2 vols. (London, [1855-59]), is the old authority on ballad tunes; this work is now corrected and supplemented by Claude M. Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad and Its Music* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1966). For the tune of 'Shall I Lie Beyond Thee,' see Chappell, 1: 259-60, and Simpson, p. 445. 'Sir John Barleycorn' is not among the ballads whose tunes are given in the comprehensive volume of Cyrus Lawrence Day and Eleanore Boswell Murrie, *English Song-Books, 1651-1702* (London, 1940). Simpson, however, notes (pp. 240, 720) that one version of the ballad of John Barleycorn (beginning, 'There was four Men came out of the North') was sung to the tunes of two other ballads: 'The Friar and the Nun' and 'Twas When the Seas Were Roaring.' He bases this upon an evidently uncatalogued late eighteenth-century song sheet in the Houghton Library. The existence of such ephemeral sheets cannot be discounted, but the earliest printing of the words and music together that I have found is in William Christie, *Traditional Ballad Airs*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1876-81), 2: 134-35.

Peter Burke has aptly termed 'the discovery of the people.' Recollections or direct transcriptions of folktales and the lyrics of popularly sung ballads such as 'Sir John Barleycorn' were printed without music as representative folk poems or 'metrical tales' by collectors such as Robert Jamieson, David Laing, and James Dixon. By far the most influential of these collectors of the ballad of Sir John Barleycorn—and one of the earliest—was Robert Burns, because the transcriber/adaptor was himself a well-known poet of the people. Burns made tours to collect folk songs, and in 1785 he transcribed from memory the first three verses of a version of 'Sir John Barleycorn,' dropping the honorific and further interweaving 'some scraps' among twelve additional verses that were largely of his own composing. The resulting 'song' was printed among Burns's collected poems in 1787, 1793, and 1794—and in later editions reprinted throughout Europe and America. As a result of his subsequent renown, the words of this composite version of 'John Barleycorn' entered the 'great' Anglo-American literary tradition—so much so that Burns was often mistakenly credited with originating the song.⁴⁰

As part of the expansive great cultural tradition, 'John Barleycorn' was, for most purposes, a poem without music, although in England and Scotland, where an oral tradition also existed, the personification figured as popular caricature in the title of a few late eighteenth-century satirical pamphlets relating to drink—and

40. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978), chaps. 1–2. Burke modifies the distinction made by anthropologist Robert Redfield between the 'great' cultural tradition of the elite and the 'little' cultural tradition of the common people. For the early nineteenth century collections of lyrics, see Jamieson, *Popular Ballads and Songs*; Laing, *Early Metrical Tales*; and James Dixon, ed., *Ancient Poems, Ballads, and Songs of the Peasantry of England* ([1846]; reprint, East Ardsley, Eng., 1973), pp. 120–22. Dixon calls 'Sir John Barleycorn' a 'very ancient' West-country ballad 'which has ever been sung at English merry-makings and country feasts' (p. 120). For the Burns version, see *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1968), 1: 29–31. Burns's biography is in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Burns's text, including his additions, is reprinted verbatim in at least one garland, *Three Favorite Songs* (Newton Stewart, [1830?]), and it is likely that it influenced the 'oral' versions subsequently printed in Norman Buchan and Peter Hall, eds., *The Scottish Folksinger* (London, 1973), pp. 151–52, and in Helen Hartness Flanders, Elizabeth Ballard, George Brown, and Phillips Barry, *The New Green Mountain Songster* (New Haven, 1939), pp. 259–60 (the first verse of which is printed as the epigraph above).

even as a John Bull-like figure in a colorful engraved advertisement for a commercial brewer's porter. But in the absence of any music for the ballad outside England, the term 'John Barleycorn' first gained currency through Burns's poetry. In America, where it usually personified hard liquor, the range of iconography was correspondingly limited. The twentieth-century American prohibitionist *Standard Encyclopedia of the Alcohol Problem*, for example, defined 'John Barleycorn' as 'a personification of barley, used particularly with reference to alcoholic beverages' and followed by quoting, verbatim, all fifteen verses of Burns's ballad (including its final stanza: 'Then let us toast John Barleycorn, / Each man a glass in Hand; / And may his great posterity / Ne'er fail in Old Scotland!')—praising Burns for describing 'in humorous fashion and with considerable ingenuity of expression the cultivation and harvesting of barley and its subsequent transformation into malt.' Entering the great tradition through Burns, the personification of alcoholic beverages became part of standard English and American usage—found, for example, in such authorities as *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1961) and the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1982).⁴¹

The second, little tradition endured in its popular oral and cheaply printed forms, keeping alive the music of the ballad, although in many different tunes. Then, in the early twentieth century, a new generation of ballad collectors began to seek out folk singers (as Burns and others had done) and transcribe both the words *and* music of ballads from actual performances (as earlier collectors had not done). Dozens of versions of the ballad of John

41. *The Dying Groans of Sir John Barleycorn . . . To Which Is Added Donal Drouth's Reply, with a Large Description of his Drunken Wife* [London, 1790?, BMGC, 11: 610; Glasgow?, 1789?: Harvard no. 1733]. See also the engraving 'John Barleycorn—Miss Hop—(and their only child) Master Porter. Dedicated to the Publicans of London' (1812), in the Houghton Library. This appears to be an advertisement for the Whitbread brewery. Ernest Hurst Cherrington, et al., *Standard Encyclopedia of the Alcohol Problem*, 6 vols. (Westerville, Ohio, 1925–30), 1: 276. See also, for example, H. M. Chalfant, *Father Penn and John Barleycorn* (Harrisburg, Pa., [1920]). Jack London published an account of his alcoholism as *John Barleycorn* (New York, 1913). Translations of Burns's work gave rise to a German 'Hans Gerstenkorns' and perhaps also to a nineteenth-century French version, 'Jean Grain d'Orge.' See Ritter, 'Zwei Unbekannte Fassungen Des Sir John Barleycorn,' p. 452.

Barleycorn can be found among the published works and in the unpublished papers of these collectors, foremost among whom was Cecil Sharp, founder of the English Folk Dance (later, English Folk Dance and Song) Society and the leading interpreter and propagandist for English folk music of the early twentieth century. Sharp alone noted sixteen variants of 'John Barleycorn,' most from Somerset; seven variants from Hampshire exist in the manuscripts of George Gardiner; the manuscripts of H.E.D. and R.F.F. Hammond contain four variants from Dorset. Other collectors gathered versions from Devon, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, Bedfordshire, Shropshire, and Lincolnshire in England; and from Perthshire, Banffshire, and Morayshire in Scotland. Still other versions were transcribed from Northern Ireland and Dublin. Because their objective was to recapture an original, oral folk tradition untainted by print, these collectors duly recorded that their informants learned the song in the apparently timeless modes of oral transmission: 'from some street-singers as they passed through his village when he was a child' (Somerset), 'as a small boy when listening outside a pub window' (Bedfordshire), 'from a ballad singer in Balbriggan, 1921' (Ireland), or simply as it had been 'sung by his father, the old thatcher' (Wiltshire). But this apparently pristine and pure oral tradition is qualified by the similarities of many of these transcribed versions to Burns's song or to those of earlier garlands. Many of these transcriptions, in turn, were printed with musical notation in specialized journals of folksong, folkdance, and folklore societies—and, ultimately, in collections of songs.⁴²

42. Sharp's biography is in the *DNB*, and his ideas are expounded in his *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions*, ed. Maud Karpeles, ([1907]; 4th ed., Belmont, Calif., 1965). For the printed and manuscript versions of the ballad of John Barleycorn, see the bibliography in Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, p. 627. The versions collected by Sharp are in Maud Karpeles, ed., *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, 2 vols. (New York, 1974), 2: 171-79, 617. Several versions of 'John Barleycorn' have been printed in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 1 (1901): 81-82; 3 (1909): 255-57; 6 (1918): 27-28; 8 (1927): 41-42. On the 'oral' transmission of these versions, see Maud Karpeles, ed., *The Crystal Spring* (Oxford, 1987), p. 96; Fred Hamer, *Garner's Gay* (London, 1970), p. 8; Colm O'Lochlainn, *Irish Street Ballads* (New York, 1960), p. 229; Alfred Williams, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames* (London, 1923), p. 246.

Most versions of the ballad transcribed from singers begin in the short form first printed in garlands (and by Burns) and sung by the Oxfordshire shepherd, Mr. Haden: 'There was (were) three men come out of the West / Their fortunes for to try'—not as in the 1624 broadside: 'As I went through the north country, / I heard a merry meeting (*sic*).'⁴³ But there is almost as much variation among these modern versions as the rhyme of the second and fourth lines allows. The protagonists differ: three 'farmers' (O'Lochlainn), two 'hired men' (Purslow), three 'kings' (Burns), or three 'merry men' (Christie); they come from (or out of) every point of the compass: 'East' (Christie), 'North' (Purslow), 'West' (Buchan and Hall), 'South' (Sharp E), or go 'to Deroughata' (Fowke). Sometimes they have come to 'sell three loads of rye' (Fowke), 'mow both hay and corn' (MacColl and Seeger), 'plough for wheat and rye' (Kennedy), their 'frolics for to try' (Sharp B), or their 'victory to try' (Sharp D). Sometimes they 'fought for victory' (Williams), 'swore and say,' (Sharp A), were 'proper, stout and tall' (Sharp I), were 'both great and high' (Buchan and Hall), or were 'passing by' (O'Lochlainn). But they almost all agree at line four that '[John] Barleycorn must [should] die.'⁴³

The ballad tradition of John Barleycorn eventually reached Ireland, and crossed the Atlantic to Canada and the United States, although the few, highly incomplete versions collected in North America suggest that it never achieved popularity there. Strong evidence of the ballad's slight importance in North America is its absence from the 290 ballads treated in G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *American Balladry from British Broadside: A Guide for Students and Collectors of Traditional Song* (Philadelphia, 1957). There are, however, at least three versions collected in North America: one in Ontario and two in Vermont. The first, called 'The Barley Grain for Me,' is evidently derived from an Irish version of 'John Barleycorn,' although it never mentions his name. One of the two Vermont variants has only four verses and is derived from Robert Burns's version; the other version contains only one verse of four staves of music, and bears neither the name nor the characteristic metaphors of the original ballad—although its single stanza is similar to one occasionally found in other versions. See, respectively, Edith Fowke, *Traditional Singers and Songs from Ontario* (Don Mills, Ontario, 1965), pp. 14–15; Flanders, et al., *The New Green Mountain Songster*, pp. 259–60; and Helen Hartness Flanders and George Brown, eds., *Vermont Folksongs and Ballads* (Brattleboro, 1931), p. 46.

43. Karpeles, *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, 2: 171–79, including nine versions, A–I, with my corrections on the Haden version (H) as originally printed in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 8 (1927): 41–42; O'Lochlainn, *Irish Street Ballads*, pp. 176–77; Frank Purslow, comp., *The Constant Lovers* (London, 1972), pp. 48–49; James C. Dick, *The Songs of Robert Burns* (London, 1903), pp. 314–15; Christie, *Traditional Ballad Airs*, 2:

The range of variation of these modern species of 'John Barleycorn' is so wide that it presses the limits of the definition of their common genus. Most elaborate the death and rebirth of barley through its planting, growth, harvesting, malting, brewing, and consuming. And the virtually universal reappearance of certain tropes such as the men with scythes who 'cut him off at the knee' or the miller who 'ground him between two stones' provides continuing testimony of the dominant appeal of the poetry of the original broadside (or oral) ballad. But most versions that retain the personified title have dropped the honorific 'sir,' and occasionally the ballad has taken a new name such as 'The Barley Corn' or 'The Barley Grain for Me.' Not infrequently, the vicissitudes of oral transmission have led to the substitution of meaningless verbal fillers for missing lines in order to maintain the meter: 'fol i dol i day,' 'whack fal de rol lal diddle al the dee,' 'fal la la the dee, Toor a lay,' and so on. Although Master Mault is nowhere present in these versions, many of them conclude with verses from at least one other seventeenth-century broadside ballad, 'The Little Barly-Corne,' which similarly describes the humorous effects of drinking.⁴⁴

Like many folklorists, although with different intentions, historians of print have often aimed to clarify the distinctive character of their subject by contrasting it with an earlier era of oral culture. And as with the purity sought by folklorists, such a quest would appear to be doomed by the long prehistory of the written word in Western culture. For this reason, it seems unlikely that we will ever know whether the original version of the ballad of John Barleycorn was written or whether it was handed down immemorially

134-35; Buchan and Hall, *The Scottish Folksinger*, pp. 151-52; Fowke, *Traditional Singers and Songs from Ontario*, pp. 14-15; Ewen MacColl and Peggy Seeger, eds., *Travelers' Songs from England and Scotland* (London, 1977), pp. 305-7; Peter Kennedy, ed., *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (New York, 1975), pp. 608-9; Williams, *Folk-Songs of the Upper Thames*, pp. 246-47. The volumes by MacColl and Seeger and by Kennedy (pp. 627-28) have exceptionally useful bibliographies of versions of the ballad.

44. The words to 'The Little Barly-Corne,' ('To the tune of "Stingo"') are in Ashton, ed., *Humour, Wit, & Satire of the Seventeenth Century*, pp. 124-28. The tune is printed in Chappell, *Popular Music of the Olden Time*, 1: 305-9, and it, too, may have served as music for 'John Barleycorn.'

by oral tradition. However, in view of the modern evidence gathered by folklorists, the most plausible alternatives can be set forth. The first alternative is that the 1624 broadside version, 'Sir John Barley-Corne,' was an adaptation of a traditional song that began, 'There were three men.' After the broadside disappeared, the original version continued to be printed in various garlands that reinforced the oral tradition until its modern rediscovery. The second alternative is that the broadside ballad was itself the original version and was abbreviated sometime in the eighteenth century, probably in a garland. The wide distribution of this garland (and its imitators) initiated a folk tradition that was later rediscovered. There is no evidence, however, that offers definitive proof of either alternative.

Thus, the process of Anglo-American cultural renewal has continued, alternating recoveries and losses of historical memory like the periodic upthrust and constant erosion that creates and destroys geological formations, quickened in some eras and slowed in others. Since the late eighteenth century, England and America have experienced not one but several revivals of folk culture that have brought to popular consciousness artifacts of the little tradition. Advances in mechanical reproduction have enormously enhanced both the backward historical reach and the contemporary dispersion of these successive discoveries of the people. Some of the traditional ballads collected by the nineteenth-century scholar Francis Child have become popular again since the folk revival of the 1960s and have been added to the stock of contemporary ballads written by Bob Dylan and the Beatles; the folk tales of glass slippers, witches, and magic beanstalks that were old in the seventeenth century when they were printed in chapbooks have become contemporary children's books, movies, and videos—joined in the mythology of childhood by tales of wooden boy-puppets and magical looking-glasses that were originally created in print. Many of the rediscoveries have created seemingly permanent additions to an increasingly homogeneous popular consciousness, although the timelessness of any artifact is relative to collective memory.



Fig. 3. Cover illustration of the 1970 recording John Barleycorn Must Die, by the group Traffic. Although the title song of the album is derived from a 1909 version of the ballad sung by an English shepherd, it is recognizably similar to the 1624 ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne. Reproduced by permission of Island Records.

Since the invention of phonograph records and tape recorders, versions of 'John Barleycorn,' too, may be heard in mechanical recordings by professional and nonprofessional singers. These wholly eliminate manuscript transcription, and permit the life-like reproduction of inflection and other verbal nuances that print is ill-equipped to convey. In these, its most advanced mechanically reproduced forms, the ballad—words and music—has achieved perhaps its greatest success. In 1970, an English rock group called

Traffic released a record album entitled *John Barleycorn Must Die* (fig. 3). The title song is one of six on the album and, as noted on the cover, derives from a version of the 'little' tradition transcribed by Cecil Sharp—in fact, the Oxfordshire version sung in 1909 by the shepherd Mr. Haden. The song has five verses of eight lines each, the final four of which resemble lines in 'The Little Barley-Corne.' Although much shorter than the 1624 broadside ballad, the Haden/Sharp/Traffic version is recognizably similar to it, and even more so to the thirty-two-line garland version in the 1755 *Merry Batchelor's Medley* and to one printed in 1846 by J. H. Dixon. During the first year of its release, this version of 'John Barleycorn' sold over half a million copies in America. Counting as well the newest forms of mechanical reproduction, tape and compact disc, to date, this recording has probably sold several million copies worldwide. Because of Traffic's great success, it is probable that more Americans and Englishmen have heard this version of 'John Barleycorn' in concert, on the radio, and on record or tape than have heard and read all the other versions of 'Sir John Barley-Corne,' *Sir John Barley-Corn* and *Sir Richard Rum* throughout their histories. Thus, 350 years after its beginning, the English ballad of John Barleycorn has become a truly Anglo-American tradition of both words and music, readily accessible to disparate members of both populations.⁴⁵ The dominant contemporary version of the ballad of John Barleycorn recorded by Traffic follows:

There were three men came out of the West
 Their fortunes for to try,
 And these three men made a solemn vow
 John Barleycorn must die.
 They've ploughed, they've sown, they've harrowed him in,
 Threw clods upon his head,

45. Traffic, *John Barleycorn Must Die*, Island Records, Inc., 7 90058-4, (1970). On the group Traffic, see Brock Helander, *The Rock Who's Who* (New York, 1982), pp. 592-95, and Ed Naha, comp., *Lillian Roxon's Rock Encyclopedia* (New York, 1978), pp. 509-11. Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, p. 627, notes five earlier recorded versions between 1943 and 1955, and there are certainly others. The sales figures for the Traffic album are reported by the distributor to the Record Industry Association of America, Washington, D.C., and only account for sales during the first year of its release.

And these three men made a solemn vow
 John Barleycorn was dead
 They've let him lie for a very long time
 Till the rains from heaven did fall,
 And little Sir John sprung up his head
 And so amazed them all.
 They've let him stand till midsummer's day
 Till he looked both pale and wan
 And little Sir John's grown a long, long beard
 And so become a man.
 They've hired men with the scythes so sharp
 To cut him off at the knee,
 They've rolled him and tied him by the way
 Serving him most barbarously.
 They've hired men with the sharp pitch forks
 Who pricked him to the heart,
 And the loader he has served him worse than that
 For he bound him to the cart.
 They've wheeled him around and around the field
 Till they came unto a barn
 And there they made a solemn mow
 On poor John Barleycorn.
 They've hired men with the crabtree sticks
 To cut him skin from bone
 And the miller he has served him worse than that
 For he's ground him between two stones.
 And little Sir John and the nut brown bowl
 And he's brandy in the glass,
 And little Sir John and the nut brown bowl
 Proved the strongest man at last.
 The huntsman he can't hurt the fox
 Nor so loudly to blow his horn,
 And the tinker he can't mend kettle nor pots
 Without a little Barleycorn.⁴⁶

46. I have transcribed the text from the Traffic cassette recording, which contains a few minor variations from Haden's version printed by Sharp. I am particularly indebted to Jonathan Hallstrom for programming a number of the tunes of versions of 'John Barleycorn' onto a computer and then recording them through an electronic synthesizer for me to listen to.

Although even in this modern, abbreviated version, the ballad of John Barleycorn suggests a familiar seasonal agricultural cycle, it lacks obvious reference to the lives and experiences of a contemporary audience; for the ballad's modern popularity has occurred in a transatlantic culture very different from the rural village society in which it originated. The music of the Traffic rendition is arranged for five instruments, and the lyrics are sung by Steve Winwood, accompanied instrumentally by the two other members of the group. The casual listener may find him or herself charmed by the music, while scarcely cognizant of the lyrics. Not surprisingly, most people who know the ballad of John Barleycorn today cannot repeat the words or sing the music, but they can recognize the title and perhaps identify the lyrics and music as belonging to the ballad. In this, they may be no different from English villagers of the seventeenth century. But a performance of the ballad is immediately available to a contemporary listener, who can secure a copy of the Traffic record, listen to it virtually at will, and pass it on to someone else. The modern diffusion of the ballad is, therefore, infinitely greater.

Scholars whose professional lives are devoted to studying printed texts are beginning to appreciate the complementary histories of different media. Without the invention of print, the ballad of Sir John Barley-Corne might not have survived the seventeenth century, and without the invention of mechanical aural reproduction, it is unlikely that the ballad would have achieved widespread popularity in the twentieth. Despite the ballad's apparent irrelevance to the daily experiences of a modern Anglo-American audience, the strings of its varied musical syntaxes have continued to resonate for more than three and a half centuries, although the specific arguments contained in the ballad's printed offshoots have disappeared into scholarly oblivion. Printed texts depend for their efficacy upon *meaning*, and meaning depends most immediately upon *context*. As the social context of the ballad's purely literary derivatives changed, they expired. It may be sobering for historians of print to realize that it is the *music*, not the meaning of the lyrics,

that has insured the survival of the ballad. And they may be correspondingly heartened that it is print—words and musical notation—that has insured the survival of the ballad's dominant contemporary aural version by bridging the vast gulf between an Oxfordshire shepherd born in the 1820s and modern audiophiles. Oral, print, and aural modes of transmitting culture do not necessarily replace but overlies and often reinforce one another in complex ways that the study of one particular ballad can only begin to suggest.

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