

# The Ballad, The Broadside, and the Broadside Ballad: A Biography of “The Berkshire Tragedy”

Tom Pettitt, University of Southern Denmark



Thursday, October 13: 3pm

South Hall 2635

The talk will offer a sustained meditation on the intersection of the ballad as a cultural product (a significant feature of the English-speaking world’s intangible heritage), with the broadside as a technology (central to England’s early-modern media ecology). Its commentary will be from the perspective of Tom Pettitt’s own endeavours to explore and appreciate the vernacular performance cultures of late-medieval and Renaissance England (songs, tales, customs, drama), including their interaction with commercial and elite cultures, and their survival as folklore. The topic will be made concrete by considering the ‘birth’ of a particular broadside ballad (“The Berkshire Tragedy”) in the conjunction of metalized text and pulped textiles, and its dual career thereafter as both perdurable artefact and performance tradition. The latter, persisting deep into the twentieth century (for example among English and Scottish Gypsies), supplementary to its independent interest, may offer viable retrospective avenues of approach to the broadside ballad from which it derived.

Tom Pettitt is an affiliate Research Professor with the Cultural Sciences Institute and the Centre for Medieval Literature at the University of Southern Denmark.

