

# Norwegian Broadside Ballads and the Collecting Practices of Thorvald Boeck

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Volume 13, numéro 1, printemps 2022

L'histoire du livre dans les pays nordiques  
Book History in the Nordic Countries

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1094127ar>  
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1094127ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Groupe de recherches et d'études sur le livre au Québec

ISSN

1920-602X (numérique)

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Citer cet article

Cowan, Y. (2022). Norwegian Broadside Ballads and the Collecting Practices of Thorvald Boeck. *Mémoires du livre / Studies in Book Culture*, 13(1), 1–28.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1094127ar>

## Résumé de l'article

Il y avait, dans la Norvège du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme cela avait été le cas en Grande-Bretagne, quelques collectionneurs visionnaires qui, alors même que la Norvège moderne en était à ses tout débuts, présentaient que les documents bon marché et éphémères formant la littérature populaire, dont les ballades, valaient la peine d'être préservés, car ils constitueraient dans l'avenir des témoins importants de l'histoire de l'imprimé, de l'histoire locale, des pratiques de lecture et de la culture populaire de leur époque. L'une des plus imposantes collections de ce qu'on appelle *skillingsviser* se trouvait dans la bibliothèque du juriste Thorvald Boeck (1835-1901). Cette bibliothèque, connue en outre pour sa collection très exhaustive de belles-lettres norvégiennes et de littérature générale, fut conservée en l'état après le décès de son propriétaire et constitue de nos jours une part importante de la bibliothèque Gunnerus de livres rares, à Trondheim.

Les ballades incarnaient en quelque sorte une histoire écrite par les classes populaires, puisque les annotations qu'elles y ont laissées perpétuent la mémoire de personnages ou d'incidents appartenant à l'histoire locale qui, autrement, seraient probablement tombés dans l'oubli. Elles représentaient également la manifestation d'une certaine culture de l'imprimé qui, tout aussi répandue fût-elle jadis, risquait de se perdre, car jetable. Il fallait néanmoins faire preuve de vision pour reconnaître la valeur de ces imprimés et pour choisir de les préserver. Le présent article vise à décrire les motifs et les pratiques de collectionneur qui menèrent à l'inclusion des ballades dans la remarquable bibliothèque privée de Boeck par une comparaison avec d'autres collectionneurs norvégiens, danois et anglais; une analyse de mémoires écrites par des commerçants et des écrivains de l'époque; et la prise en compte de témoins encore plus tangibles que sont les notes sur la provenance, les annotations et les ex-libris figurant dans les ballades elles-mêmes.



# NORWEGIAN BROADSIDE BALLADS AND THE COLLECTING PRACTICES OF THORVALD BOECK

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ABSTRACT

In nineteenth-century Norway there were, as there had been in Britain, a few forward-thinking collectors who even in the earliest days of the formation of the modern Norwegian nation recognized that cheap, ephemeral documents of street literature like broadside ballads would someday be worth preserving, as significant witnesses to the printing history, local history, everyday reading, and popular culture of their time. One of the largest such collections of so-called “skillingsviser” formed part of the library of the jurist Thorvald Boeck (1835-1901), whose large and inclusive collection of Norwegian *belles lettres* and general literature remained intact after his death and is now an important part of the Gunnerus rare book library in Trondheim.

The ballads represented a kind of history from below, since their annotations on these ballads preserve personages and small incidents from local history that might otherwise have been forgotten. They also represented a kind of print culture that was at once ubiquitous and, because disposable, in danger of being lost. And yet it took a certain kind of foresight to recognize the value of these printed objects, and to preserve them. Drawing on comparative study with Norwegian, Danish, and English collectors; on the memoirs of bookdealers and literary writers of the time; and on the still more material witness of provenance notes, marginalia, and bookplates on the extant ballads themselves, this article works to characterize the motives and collecting practices that led to the ballads’ inclusion in Boeck’s great private library.

Il y avait, dans la Norvège du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, comme cela avait été le cas en Grande-Bretagne, quelques collectionneurs visionnaires qui, alors même que la Norvège moderne en était à ses tout débuts, pressentaient que les documents bon marché et éphémères formant la littérature populaire, dont les ballades, valaient la peine d'être préservés, car ils constitueraient dans l'avenir des témoins importants de l'histoire de l'imprimé, de l'histoire locale, des pratiques de lecture et de la culture populaire de leur époque. L'une des plus imposantes collections de ce qu'on appelle *skillingsviser* se trouvait dans la bibliothèque du juriste Thorvald Boeck (1835-1901). Cette bibliothèque, connue en outre pour sa collection très exhaustive de belles-lettres norvégiennes et de littérature générale, fut conservée en l'état après le décès de son propriétaire et constitue de nos jours une part importante de la bibliothèque Gunnerus de livres rares, à Trondheim.

Les ballades incarnaient en quelque sorte une histoire écrite par les classes populaires, puisque les annotations qu'elles y ont laissées perpétuent la mémoire de personnages ou d'incidents appartenant à l'histoire locale qui, autrement, seraient probablement tombés dans l'oubli. Elles représentaient également la manifestation d'une certaine culture de l'imprimé qui, tout aussi répandue fût-elle jadis, risquait de se perdre, car jetable. Il fallait néanmoins faire preuve de vision pour reconnaître la valeur de ces imprimés et pour choisir de les préserver. Le présent article vise à décrire les motifs et les pratiques de collectionneur qui menèrent à l'inclusion des ballades dans la remarquable bibliothèque privée de Boeck par une comparaison avec d'autres collectionneurs norvégiens, danois et anglais; une analyse de mémoires écrites par des commerçants et des écrivains de l'époque; et la prise en compte de témoins encore plus tangibles que sont les notes sur la provenance, les annotations et les ex-libris figurant dans les ballades elles-mêmes.

### Keywords

Norwegian book collectors, broadside ballads, bibliophilia, marginalia, library history, book collecting

### Mots-clés

Collectionneurs de livres en Norvège, ballades populaires, bibliophilie, annotations, histoire des bibliothèques, collections de livres

In 2018, the Research Council of Norway-funded project *Skillingsvisene 1550–1950*, based at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), began the process of digitizing several thousand Norwegian broadside ballads (*skillingsviser* in the indefinite plural and *skillingsvisene* in the definite, so called after their price of one copper *skilling*, pronounced like its English cognate “shilling”).<sup>1</sup> This is the first-ever major research project on the subject of Norwegian broadside ballads and is an important contribution to the growing field of book history in Norway. The digitization project,

modelled after the English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA) at UCSB,<sup>2</sup> has faced some of the same challenges that EBBA did, including the fragile state of the materials, the question of what attributes and metadata should be included in the database, and the fact that the collections of these broadside ballads were to be found across various regions of Norway, from the Glomdal Museum in Elverum and the National Library in Oslo in the south to the Gunnerus Library in Trondheim in mid-Norway. It is with one such collection that this article concerns itself. Since these libraries based their archives of ballads on the acquisition of particular collections, many items in these archives come from the same source. Ballad collections of some size had been assembled by collectors, were then acquired and added to over time by these libraries, and are therefore now still in existence to be consulted. In the case of the first set digitized by the *Skillingsvisene 1550–1950* project, almost all the ballads conveniently came from a single collection in the Gunnerus Library that had been assembled by the Oslo-based jurist and collector Thorvald Boeck (1835–1901). Since Boeck’s collection is likely to become more widely visible with the eventual release of the digitization project, it is worth turning from the digital collection to the physical collection behind it to consider how that collection came to be formed and how its formation compares with the history of bibliophilic and popular collecting practices elsewhere. After all, without the painstaking acquisitions of the nineteenth-century collectors, we would not now have such a considerable body of printed material to share and examine.

The motivations of the Norwegian collectors of broadside ballads had much in common with those of their near-contemporary British collectors: a mixture of national and regional feeling, cognoscenti pride in collecting out-of-the-way documents, an interest in ordinary reading culture, and perhaps something of a hoarding impulse. The profiles of the collectors were similar as well: prosperous professional men with an interest in the print and manuscript artefacts of literature and history, local or national. But there were also some aspects that were specific to the Norwegian context: a national Romantic movement that had come later and lasted longer; a different and fresher sense of patriotism (Norway, after all, was just in the process of becoming independent again, having had its own constitution since the separation from Denmark in 1814, although it then found itself in another personal union under the Swedish crown which would last until 1905); a greater sense of distance and separation between regional

populations and printing centres; and a smaller community of collectors and sellers. To the list of well-known names of British ballad collectors such as Samuel Pepys, Sir Walter Scott, Joseph Ritson, Sir Frederic Madden, and Sabine Baring-Gould, this article adds the name of Thorvald Boeck, and considers why, how, and where Boeck assembled his collection of some 762 Norwegian broadside ballads. Inspired, like the British collectors, by a characteristic nineteenth-century interest in antiquarianism, social history, and history from below, Boeck scoured bookstores and fairs, promiscuously acquired piles of old paper, and made the acquaintance of seemingly every book dealer and street seller in Oslo to build his diverse collection of books, periodicals, and ephemera. Although Boeck had many irons in the fire, it is clear from the care with which the broadside ballads were maintained that they were not an incidental acquisition but rather of particular interest for the collector. It is fortunate that in nineteenth-century Scandinavia there were, as there had been in Britain, forward-thinking collectors who, even in the earliest days of the modern Norwegian nation, recognized that these cheap, ephemeral documents would someday be worth preserving as significant witnesses to the printing history, local history, everyday reading, and popular culture of their time.

Born in Kristiania (now Oslo), Boeck was educated in the law. His first few years after graduation in 1860 were spent as attorney in Trøndelag county in mid-Norway before he returned south to Kristiania, married in 1866, and built a villa “*med særlig hensyn til bøkene*”—that is to say, designed around his already extensive collection of books, according to his biographer Aagaard Daae.<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Munthe adds that for many years Boeck’s house was a meeting place for the bibliophiles and collectors of the capital.<sup>4</sup> By the end of his life, Boeck’s library numbered around 31,000 volumes, plus manuscripts and maps; it was, at the time, the largest private collection in the country. Many of these volumes were rare, like the editions of works by national literary figures such as Henrik Ibsen and Ludvig Holberg; some were unique, such as the manuscripts, which included Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson’s “*Ja, vi elsker*,” later to become the national anthem. Boeck began by collecting general *belles lettres* and fiction from the time of the Danish-Norwegian union,<sup>5</sup> but, as other collectors have found (notably Thomas Phillipps, who began with an interest in geography and ended up with a library of 100,000 volumes on a wide variety of subjects), such initial foci have slippery borders, and the parameters of Boeck’s collecting became

more generous, flexible, and expandable than when he began. The plan of his library (reproduced on page xx of Daae's biography) illustrates how Boeck's collection, rather like that of Phillipps, came to include works of topography, as well as local, biographical, and general histories. And so it happened that, as Daae notes, the house in Kristiania began as a spacious one, but after much bibliophilic accumulation and evolution of his collecting practice became—like Phillipps's country seat, Middle Hill—somewhat pressed for room among all the books.

Two years before Boeck's death, his library was sold to the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters (DKNVS), the oldest learned society in the country, based in Trondheim. By the terms of the sale agreement, the collection was to be kept together; it is now in the Gunnerus Library, NTNU's rare book library, named after the eighteenth-century bishop and naturalist Johan Ernst Gunnerus. The collection included the broadside ballads. Boeck's requirement that the collection be kept together was forward-thinking and, indeed, also rather unusual. Most private libraries of any size tend to be broken up, either through auction or private sale. For example, the great eighteenth-century Danish collector Bolle Willum Luxdorph's library was immediately sold off piecemeal by auction after his death (after being catalogued in two prestigious volumes in Latin of almost a thousand pages); the famous collection of manuscripts and incunabula assembled by William Morris was first sold to a private buyer who kept some key books and sold the rest in lots over three days; and the enormous library of Phillipps was dispersed over nearly a century, in a long series of auctions and private sales.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the books that belonged to these and many other key figures in the history of collecting can now only be consulted in trips to various widely dispersed research libraries. This is unfortunate, since, as Nicholas Basbanes reminds us throughout his now-classic study *A Gentle Madness*, every collection has a recognizable set of principles behind it, and the reconstruction of those principles can be every bit as instructive as the information contained in the works themselves. Such a collection can tell us a lot about the intellectual *bildung* and interests of the collector, as well as about the collector's cultural milieu, so that a collection kept together is a valuable window into history. Thus, although Boeck's collection was thought of at the time as important for its *belles lettres* and rarities, such as "300 volumes of [Ludvig] Holberg-literature,"<sup>7</sup> we might now find some of his more out-of-the-way acquisitions, like the

broadside ballads or the collections of newspapers, to be of equal historical value. Indeed, their historical value may be even greater, since such ephemeral literature, being of more fragile material quality and having been undervalued by other collectors in the past, was less likely to be preserved than more prestigious works.

In fact, ballads more generally already had a certain kind of prestige when Boeck began collecting. English publishers came out with dozens of different editions of ballad collections in the nineteenth century, from the literary anthology of William Allingham for the *Golden Treasury*, to regional collections like Sabine Baring-Gould's and others, to Samuel Carter Hall's landmark volume of 1842, lavishly illustrated by the most notable historical illustrators of the time. Ballads had been made respectable by the patriotic and passionate arguments for their importance by earlier editors such as Thomas Percy, Joseph Ritson, and Walter Scott. Ballads were also valued because they offered a window into popular folklore—what Mary Ellen Brown calls “the folk society of early antiquarian dreams”<sup>8</sup>—and were seen as having in some way stood the test of time. But such ballads were different from the broadside ballads that belonged so emphatically to the money-grubbing world of print; there was a kind of prestige in ballads collected from oral sources. For the great nineteenth-century classifiers of the ballad—Francis James Child in America and Svend Grundtvig in Denmark—the emphasis was on traditional ballads or heroic ballads, for which in Norwegian or in Danish the equivalent is “*folkeviser*.” Such formulations seem designed specifically to distance the genre from contemporary popular culture as represented by the broadside ballad or *skillingsviser*. This phenomenon represents a fascinating reversal of the conventional privilege of print over the oral.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the so-called “ballads of the people” had already been solidified into a kind of canon, represented by the traditional ballad or *folkeviser*. And yet it was not so far from there to the parallel tradition of the broadside ballad, however much less respectable it was.<sup>10</sup> The Norwegian clergyman and psalmist Magnus Brostrup Landstad (1802–1880) gathered together Norwegian traditional ballads in 1853 in two enormous volumes of *Norske Folkeviser*, stretching to more than 900 pages, including melodies and commentary. Landstad justified his effort in his introduction by remarking that since the rural communities of Norway were undergoing a material and

(to him) spiritual transformation, it was important to preserve old traces of language and popular culture:

*det gjelder nu at redde, hvad der kan reddes og fortjener at opbevares af det Gamle, der allerede for en stor Deel er fortrængt til de överste Fjeldklöfter.*

*Under disse Omstændigheder faldt den Tanke mig ind, at ogsaa jeg burde række min Haand til for om muligt at redde et gammelt Familiesmykke ud af det brændende Huus.<sup>11</sup>*

Landstad's sense of urgency, instability, and loss here is based at least in part on a sense of the fragility of oral preservation in a society that was becoming more print-oriented and finding new sources of entertainment. His sentiment has plenty of parallels in the anglophone sphere, where popular printed anthologies of the folk ballad, sometimes lavishly illustrated, entered the marketplace with great regularity throughout the nineteenth century, often with frontispieces evoking oral performance and introductions that emphasized the preservation of tradition.

There was, however, a particular circumstance in Norway that differed from the parallel moment in English literary history, and that was the late and fervent blossoming of Romantic nationalism. The 1840s and 1850s were the era of the *nasjonale gjennombrudd*, or national breakthrough. Ivar Aasen began editing and collecting texts for his grammar and dictionary of Norwegian dialects that would lead to the establishment of the Modern Norwegian, or *nynorsk*, written standard. Adolph Tideman and Hans Gude painted the *Bridal Procession on the Hardangerfjord* (1848). Landstad published his collection of folk ballads, while Peter Christen Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe followed in the footsteps of the Brothers Grimm to release their famous series of collections of Norwegian fairytales.<sup>12</sup> The literary critic Vilhelmine Ullmann recalled all these examples when reminiscing about this period of ferment in a piece for *Morganbladet* in 1903, adding, moreover, that it had been a time of legitimation for the ballad as well, when “*skjønne folkemelodier, mishandlet, gnaaet til kurvkonernes Skillingsviser var tat op og renset kunstnerisk.*”<sup>13</sup> Popular culture was thus being legitimized by its relationship to national culture, representing a rising form of history from below, and all classes took part. For instance, the most famous poet of his era, Henrik Wergeland (1808–1845), was spurred by the “coarse” ballads of stoneworkers to write his own in response, and many of his ballads ended up in popular print, so that they



too are now to be found in the digital archive of the *Skillingvisene* project. More remarkably, as Ullmann points out, the broadside ballad was part of a fluid process whereby the songs it preserved were capable of passing into oral culture and then back into print again. The middle and upper classes had begun stopping pedlar women with a renewed interest in the popular culture they offered. The same had happened with some of the ballads of Thomas Percy, and, famously, with some tales of the Brothers Grimm, which came from oral versions that could be traced directly back to print in the more elegant seventeenth-century French collection by Charles Perrault.

Just as Landstad and other writers in both Britain and Norway privileged the ballad form as a means of preserving popular knowledge through performance, Siv Gøril Brandtzæg has more recently argued that the Norwegian broadside ballads were characterized by oral delivery.<sup>14</sup> While there is probably truth to this observation, it may also be a romanticization. Its oral performativity is by no means the only or even the most important characteristic of the broadside ballad; the *skillingviser* may indeed often have been read and sung aloud, but it was also a silently expressive material object, one that could have been written, printed, and read quietly, after which it could, by turns, pass through various hands, rest on a table, hang on a wall, or be put to other humble uses. But the key here is that somehow the championing of the traditional ballad from (ostensibly pure) oral sources by editors such as Percy, Scott, Child, Grundtvig, and Landstad had now paved the way for another interest in the homelier printed broadside. Like the editors and poets, the collectors had turned their gaze from the folk society of antiquarian dreams to the street.

One way to explain this shift is to say that although the printed ballad was an ephemeral object with a short life cycle, it became an object of study because of its associations with the seemingly evergreen tradition of the folk ballad. Another way to put it is that the broadside ballad or *skillingviser*, an artefact neither ancient nor rare, had paradoxically achieved value for collectors based on its very ubiquity and everydayness: it too had become a potential heirloom to be snatched from the fire. Finally, it is useful to note that this shift in the perceived value of the broadside ballad occurred at the same time as a new interest in social history or, better, “history from below” was beginning to make itself felt.

This emphasis on history from below took many forms. In the English context, writers and editors such as J. R. Green (*History of the English People*), Frederick Furnivall (founder of the Early English Text Society), and later G. M. Trevelyan shifted their attention from landmark archives of feudal officialdom to out-of-the-way documents like wills, guild statutes, and recipe books, invoking a kind of history that conveyed a sense of the local and the everyday. In Norway, historians such as Edvard Bull the elder (1881–1932) and Boeck’s bibliographical collaborator Ole Andreas Øverland (1855–1911) were writing local histories, regional histories (such as Bull’s on the formerly Norwegian province and republic of Jämtland), and agricultural histories. Indeed, the antiquarians had from early on always had a sense of what Birgsveinn Birgisson has called the “topographical-historical,”<sup>15</sup> and this had been as true of seventeenth-century Scandinavian scholars like Thormod Torfaeus and Árni Magnússon as of English antiquarians like their contemporary William Dugdale. There was a nationalistic strain to this localized thinking, but also a sense of history from below, as Henrik Horstebøll traces with regard to the writing of the Romantic German writer Joseph Görres as far back as the late eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup> In the nineteenth-century Norwegian context, national Romanticism was most often tempered, or rather supplemented, by an always-strong sense of more local pride. As participant in and witness to this sense of local history and feeling, the broadside ballad turned out to be an invaluable document. Broadside ballads, along with religious books, almanacs, and collections of popular stories (so-called *folkebøker*, from the German *volksbücher*) were often the only kinds of literature available outside the major cities well into the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The broadside ballads thus were and are valuable documents of ordinary people’s everyday reading. More important, as Brandtzæg notes, they are still often the only surviving accounts of local events that were not deemed worthy of note in national histories—sometimes not even in the regional newspapers.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, broadside ballads can occasionally be useful records of both contemporary reading habits and of local historical events. We sometimes find this in the handwritten marginalia to many of the broadside ballads, where their owners were often careful to preserve relevant knowledge about the people and events mentioned in the text, including notes about the ballad’s authorship, disclosure of obscure pseudonyms, and allusions to particular local circumstances.

Despite their well-known attraction to grand fields of study like heraldry and coinage, antiquarians were also dedicated to preserving the memory of such events of local history, and so the broadside ballad was a natural sideline for a collector like Thorvald Boeck (although whether he first began his acquisition of the ballads by accident or deliberately is not easy to assess). We have at least one example of a large purchase made by Boeck, and possibly it prompted him to acquire more in particular areas. In 1865, building on his interest in topography, he purchased the library of the parish priest Ole Gaarder Rynning, consisting of 3,000 books, including works on “*norske topografi, teologi og dessuten en hel del likprækner fra det 17. og 18. århundret.*”<sup>19</sup> It seems as though, at that early stage of Boeck’s collecting career, the topographical works might particularly have caught his interest, but the *likprekener* are also intriguing. These were printed copies of funeral sermons, commissioned upon the death of a local notable. And although it is unlikely that this priest’s library contained anything so common as broadside ballads, the distance from these funeral sermons to the broadside ballads is not so far as might seem at first glance. After all, the *likprekener* included biographical detail in addition to the sermon, and thus were valuable both as local historical documents and as examples of popular printed material.<sup>20</sup> That is to say, the kind of acquisitions that Thorvald Boeck was making were likely to put him in the way of the broadside ballad sooner or later.

In 1921, the DKNVS published a catalogue of the books from Boeck’s collection (*Katalog over Thorvald Boecks Bibliotek*), including the biography written by the librarian and genealogist Aagaat Daae (daughter of Ludvig Daae, the jurist and book collector, another friend of Boeck’s). In addition to Daae’s illuminating biography, there are numerous details to be found in the catalogue regarding Boeck’s interests and methods. The first 16 pages, for example, list works of bibliography, the book arts, bookselling, and catalogues of private and public libraries, suggesting a person particularly sensitive to the systematic aspects of book-collecting. Unfortunately, there is nothing in the DKNVS catalogue about the portion of Boeck’s collection devoted to broadside ballads, and very little about songs or ballads in general.<sup>21</sup> However, there is a large section devoted to *skrifter om pressen* (writings about the press), and a fairly thorough list of Norwegian and Danish (along with a few Swedish and German) newspapers and periodicals. Boeck must have recognized the importance of ephemeral printing in

general; not many collectors are zealous enough to hang onto their newspapers.

Not only had Boeck read widely and deeply in the field of bibliography and reflected upon the practice of collecting, he also had substantial practical experience in the systematic examination of books, as indicated by his collaboration with the historian Ole Andreas Øverland on their bibliography of Norwegian books for the years 1848–1872 (*Register til Norsk Bog-Fortegnelse for 1848–1865 og 1866–1872*). Although the number of books published in Norway in those years is not comparable to those in larger markets, it was a sizeable project, and Boeck appears to have done much of the work himself. In his introduction, Boeck comments that, since Norway lacked a single academic library (like the so-called “copyright libraries” of the UK) where all books published over the period could be consulted, it had been necessary for him to go through the booksellers’ warehouses and inventory and to seek out information from various parties. Boeck’s task was carried out so conscientiously that even though he writes that “*De Bøger, som jeg ikke har havt i Hænde, ere mærkede med en Stjerne (\*)*” (“Those books which I have not held in my own hand are marked with an asterisk”), there are very few asterisks in his list.<sup>22</sup> It must have been an enormous task.

It is also clear from the circumstances Boeck describes in the *Register til Norsk Bog-Fortegnelse* and from the collaborative nature of his work on the bibliography that he was very well connected in the contemporary Norwegian book world among collectors, booksellers, and printers alike. His biographer Aagaat Daae describes how visitors would settle into Boeck’s library—“*hulen, some det kaldtes*” (“the cave, as it was called”)—for long evenings of conversation, and how like so many collectors Boeck was engaged in a great deal of exchange and gifting.<sup>23</sup> The social aspects of the trade and practice of book collecting should not be overlooked, especially when it comes to smaller items of print. In England, Sir Frederic Madden, Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Library from 1837 to 1866, employed agents over the whole of Great Britain to buy for his own collection: “Sir C. Sharpe is collecting for me in the north,” he writes, “and I have also engaged collectors at Oxford, Northampton, Portsmouth, Bristol, Exeter, and elsewhere.”<sup>24</sup> In 1837, Madden bought up a large part of the stock of John Pitts, the famous ballad printer of Seven Dials, directly from the printer himself. By the end of his career, Madden had collected some 16,354

“garlands, sheets, and slips” totalling over 30,000 English songs and ballads, now in the University Library in Cambridge. A hundred and fifty years earlier, Samuel Pepys had done the same, “sending forth his messengers to sweep every bookseller’s shop from the Tweed to Penzance, for the discovery of old and almost unknown ballads,” as Thomas Frognall Dibdin described.<sup>25</sup> But Dibdin was, with his typical enthusiasm, exaggerating: the ballads that Pepys looked for were not *only* the “old and almost unknown”—Pepys also collected many ballads from his own period, the 1680s and 1690s. Madden did likewise in his own time, and so did the forward-thinking Thorvald Boeck.

If Boeck employed any agents in this way, his biographer doesn’t say. From his thorough work on the *Register*, however, he appears to have been the sort of man who liked to do such things himself. He was obviously well known in the trade. In a memoir of the late-nineteenth-century Kristiania bookdealer Bertrand Jensen, for example, Olav Myre recalls that Boeck was a weekly visitor to Jensen’s shop, and that he “*fikk et eksemplar av alle viser og sanger Bertrand Jensen utgav.*”<sup>26</sup> Boeck, says Myre, well understood “*å erhverve bøker og småtrykk for bagateller av utgifter.*”<sup>27</sup> Myre’s inclusion of “*småtrykk*” among Boeck’s acquisitions is telling; it was obviously not only the folios and manuscripts and rarities that he was known for among the members of the Norwegian book-collecting community, but also for his accumulation of “minor printing,” the everyday products of Grub Street—a fact that classes Thorvald Boeck with wide-ranging, obsessive collectors like Phillipps and Madden rather than with prestige collectors like B. W. Luxdorph, Henry E. Huntington, or J. Pierpont Morgan.

It is to Olav Myre that we are indebted for one of the most intriguing and diverting anecdotes about Boeck’s collecting. Jensen, says Myre, owned at one point a certain number of boxes that had been purchased and had sat in his woodshed “*i mange herrens år*” (“for an untold number of years”). According to Jensen, the boxes contained

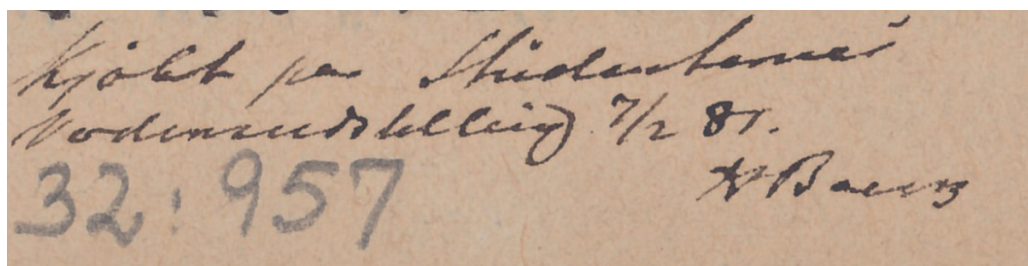
*blandt annet flere årganger av ‘Morgenbladet’ og dessuten to digre foliobind gamle håndskrifter. Hverken selger eller kjøper var i salgsoieblikket på det rene med, hvad ‘skraphaugen’ inneholdt, det gjaldt for selgerne bare å få den vekk. ... Boeck bad om å få låne dem hjem til gjennomsyn. Senere så jeg dem aldri mer.*<sup>28</sup>

Boeck thus showed himself willing to dig in the most unlikely of places. Jensen's "*skeraphaug*" or scrap pile is just the sort of place one might have expected to find odd pieces of ephemeral literature like broadside ballads. Although this pile is not said to have contained ballads, and although most of the ballads in the surviving collection are in rather better condition than documents that had been consigned to a woodpile for years, Myre's anecdote describes a representative case, and there were likely other such bundles of old paper in Boeck's scavenging experience.

Aside from such "*skeraphauger*," it seems likely that Boeck acquired most of his broadside ballads singly: at first- or second-hand, or perhaps even on occasion from Vilhelmine Ullman's "basket-ladies." Besides the example of the Rynning sale (the only such example described by Daae) and the mention by Hanna-Sofie Molde of Boeck's presence at auctions and visits to scrap dealers,<sup>29</sup> we have little evidence that Boeck bought up very many established collections, as Samuel Pepys did in 1680 when he acquired, "somehow," a portion of John Selden's ballad collection, or as Phillipps did whenever he managed to scrape together some ready cash.<sup>30</sup> Certain of the ballads in the DKNVS collection contain previous ownership marks, some of them highly interesting.<sup>31</sup> But the only name that crops up more than once among these marks is Boeck's. It is therefore likely that, although Boeck may have picked up the occasional pile of old documents, he did not buy up entire existing ballad collections in the same way that Pepys, Phillipps, or Madden did. And the reason for this is straightforward: it was not possible, because there had been no one in Norway before Boeck who had so systematically collected the humble broadside ballad.

Along with provenance marks, there are other physical signs on the ballad copies in the DKNVS collection that can help us to piece together, in some representative cases, how Boeck acquired them. Some of the ballads in the collection are of very early date, including five from the sixteenth century and seven from the seventeenth (one of these is certainly from Boeck's collection, since it has his *ex libris*). There are 137 from the eighteenth century (again, not all will necessarily have belonged to Boeck), while the greatest number are from the nineteenth century and many of those are contemporary with Boeck. It is likely that he was, like Pepys, collecting the ballads of his own day. The subject matter is not restricted to certain themes, but is widely representative of the broadside ballad: religious matter,

sentimental and patriotic songs, topics of the day, local colour, and crime. Some of the ballads show signs of much handling and use; others seem practically fresh, possibly bought for the cover price of 10 or 15 øre directly from the seller or the publisher: “hos G. B. Strøm,” in Prinsens Gade in Kristiania, for example, or singly from Bertrand Jensen as Myre suggests. A couple have the collector’s name “Th. Boeck” written on the first page in pencil, while at least one (see fig. 1) contains the vital information that it was bought at “nordensudstilling 7/2 81”, which gives us a date and potential place of purchase.<sup>32</sup> Boeck must have found the ballads in various places from various sources, and we can, in any case, be fairly certain that he did not buy them in large bundles from the printers themselves (as Madden did from Pitt in 1837), because there are so many notes of earlier single provenance on the broadside ballads in the collection. Even some of the most contemporary ballads must have been bought second-hand, such as *Fadrelandssang* (“*Song of the Fatherland*”) from 1864, which has the previous owner’s signature, “J. Elholm Sahl.” Tracing the owners through such notes also suggests that the ballads in the DKNVS collection had been acquired from various parts of the country, and not just from Kristiania or Trondheim, the two places Boeck had lived. Finally, these notes (and my subsequent attempts to trace them in the nineteenth-century record) suggest that the people through whose hands such ballads had passed were a remarkably diverse group, from plumber and police officer to seaman and jurist. We can thus learn a lot from the physical traces on and around these pieces of ephemeral print, including marginal notes, ownership marks, and general signs of use.



**Figure 1:** Marginal note on *En ny og forskrækkelig Vise om det indbildte Mordforsøg, som blev gjort mod Søren Jaabæk dengang han skulde bringe sine Hædersgaver hjem til Listerland* (Trondheim: NTNU Gunnerusbiblioteket, V box 32:957).

I count 121 of the broadside ballads in the project’s developing database that can definitively be said to have belonged to Boeck. In 75 cases, we find his *ex libris* attached to the volumes in which the ballads are bound, generally

in marbled paper, with a red label giving the ballad's title on the cover. These bindings contain multiple ballads, accounting for a further 46 that can confidently be counted as Boeck's. A comparable label and binding can also be found on many more that do not have Boeck's *ex libris*, and we cannot be entirely sure whether it was Boeck himself or a later librarian who had them bound in this manner. Two further ballads have Boeck's signature, but no *ex libris*. However, this census accounts for only 16 per cent of the 762 ballads that were identified as Boeck's in the original catalogue. Some of the ballads in the catalogue by Molde have later dates than the Society's acquisition of the library in 1899 or the death of Boeck in 1901, and so they must have been added later to the library's collection but (unfortunately) not catalogued separately. In the Gunnerus library we also find ballads from the late date of 1906 stored in the same archival boxes as ballads that have Boeck's own *ex libris*, suggesting that they must have been acquired by the DKNVS at different times.

Although it is clear that the librarians cataloguing the ballads were not very concerned with noting their provenance, there are other indications that can be helpful. Besides dates and marginal notes, the most important one is Boeck's own *ex libris* or armorial (see fig. 2). According to Daae, the Boeck family coat of arms on it is an old one.<sup>33</sup> The books in the coat of arms are not, as one might expect, representative of Thorvald Boeck's own interests, but rather come from his family's Flemish origins—"Boek" is Dutch for "book." As Daae remarks, the figures in the coat of arms along with its motto *Quod verum tutum* ("That which is true is safe") were quite appropriate to Thorvald Boeck's interests. But the presence of the *ex libris* among the broadsides is, in fact, a bit of an oddity. We can easily understand Boeck's placing his armorial in an impressive or rare book, like his copy of the first edition of Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* from 1514, or in the many works of Danish and Norwegian *belles lettres* from the time of the union. But it is surprising to find the bookplates attached to 75 copies of such ephemeral printed works as these ballads were. It is true enough that bookplates of this kind would not have been all that expensive to acquire, printed as they were *en masse* with copper engraving, but that so many were used suggests that Boeck found these particular items in some way valuable. And since the bound volumes with the bookplates contain many that are neither the oldest nor the rarest of the broadside ballads in the collection,



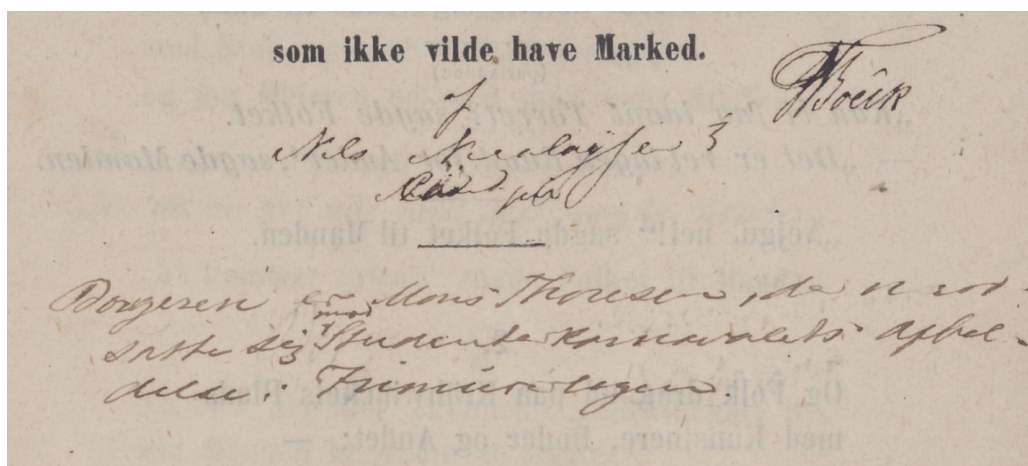
this tells us that Boeck respected these rough artefacts of the printer's trade, and that he wanted to take good care of them.



**Figure 2:** Boeck's *ex libris*.

We also have some evidence to suggest how Boeck saw these ballads and how he interacted with them, in the form of marginal notes that are likely his. Boeck's handwriting is not always easy to recognize, but we do find some notes that appear to be in his hand. These are often devoted to preserving the knowledge of individuals and events named in the ballads, or to revealing the pseudonyms and vague references in topical or satirical works. So for example, in *En gammel spekulativ Kæmners Afskedskvad* ("An old speculative Director's Farewell Song") there is a note, likely in Boeck's hand, identifying the character "Henning L." as "Kjøbmand [i.e., merchant] H. L. Thoresen." And under his own signature on another ballad, the satire *En Borger udi Krähwinckel, som ikke vilkede have Marked* ("A Burgher of Krähwinckel, who didn't want a Market"), Boeck identifies the "Burgher" as one Mons Thoresen, and adds that the event in the ballad was connected to the student carnivals held in the Freemasons' Lodge (now Gamle Logen, in Oslo), frequent occurrences during the 1850s. A similar note, this one by the jurist Håkon Løken, appears on the protest song *Vaagn op Arbeider, Tiden er nær!*, explaining that the song is based on the "first voting rights protest

parade” (“*første stemmeretts tog*”). Since Løken was based in Trøndelag county, it is quite possible that he knew Boeck on a professional or personal level from Boeck’s time there. This copy of the ballad may have made its way from Løken’s library into the DKNVS collection separately, or it may (like Jensen’s scrap pile) have been borrowed by Boeck and never returned. Either way, it is apparent that one of the key ways of understanding the ballads for Boeck and other collectors was as a kind of history from below. Their annotations on these ballads preserve personages and small incidents from local history that might otherwise have been forgotten.



**Figure 3:** [Nicolaysen, Niels Aars, suggested author], *En ny Vise om en Borger udi Krähwinkel, som ikke vilde have Marked*, n.p., n.d. (Trondheim: NTNU Gunnerusbiblioteket, V box 27:809).

As the example of Løken shows, Boeck was not the only educated Norwegian reader with an interest in the ballads. Myre writes that

*Boecks visesamlinger var blandt de største i landet; en av hans mest energiske medbeilere var 'Aftenpostens' eier og redaktør, Amandus Schibsted. Han [Schibsted] efterlot seg snesevis eller i hvert fall dusinvis av digre bind med innklebede viser og sanger av alle slags, private sanger under familiefester, officielle, halv-officielle sanger, gate-eller skillingsviser, menykort o. s. v.*<sup>34</sup>

It is worth noting from Myre’s reminiscence here that Boeck’s ballad collection was, in fact, remembered as one of the notable aspects of his library. It is also noteworthy that Schibsted, like Boeck, collected all kinds of ephemera, and not just ballads. Myre recalls that Schibsted “*engagerte en mann [...] til å passe på for sig i alle trykkerier*” (“engaged a man [...] to represent him

in all print shops”). Schibsted, a great newspaper proprietor (the largest media concern in Norway still bears his family’s name), could afford, like Frederic Madden, to employ agents to snap up all the latest printed matter. And since Myre doesn’t remark the same practice on the part of Boeck, it seems again to suggest that Boeck instead worked energetically on his own account, acquiring through his social connections with dealers and the like rather than spending money on commissions.

There were other collections of ballads assembled in Norway and Scandinavia. Myre notes that in Denmark, Frederik Vilhelm Hegel (of the Gyldendal publishing house) had earlier assembled an enormous collection of nearly 100,000 broadside ballads; this may have been an inspiration for Boeck.<sup>35</sup> The collection of music and song assembled by the Kristiania organist H. C. Albrechtson (1827–1911) is now to be found in the National Library in Oslo; it has been described by Reidar Christensen in a 1932 article that lays particular emphasis on ballads in that collection. Jacob Aaland (1865–1955), a local historian from Gloppen in western Norway, gathered together around 200 broadside ballads in three volumes. These ballads, now in the National Library, are fewer and older than those in Boeck’s collection, and they are generally in better condition. Aaland’s collection is presented more as a discriminating album of rarities than as an assemblage of street ballads. It is also worth noting that most of the ballads in Aaland’s collection have their origin in Bergen, where for some time Aaland had a teaching position and a stipend from the museum. Boeck, on the other hand, who lived in Trøndelag county for two years and the rest of his life in Kristiania, owned more ballads printed in Trondheim and Kristiania than ballads printed in Bergen. This is significant in two ways: First, it illustrates how location and circumstance can shape a collection. Second, this impact of circumstances on collection creation has consequences for how we understand today the printing and dissemination history of Norwegian broadside ballads. That is to say, if the corpus for a study (for example, only those ballads so far represented in the *Skillingvisene* 1550–1950 project’s digitized archive) is based entirely on Boeck’s Trondheim- and Kristiania/Oslo-oriented practice, then our impression of the centres of ballad production in Norway in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be skewed away from other important cities like Bergen simply by the extant material. Future versions of such a database, in order to be truly representative and to give a more accurate picture of the number of ballads

printed, sold, and read in various geographic areas of Norway, will need to digitize more broadly than just the DKNVS ballads from Boeck's collection, inclusive though his practice was.

The fate of the Boeck collection has been well documented by Aagaat Daae in her biography and catalogue, and that fate was, in many ways, a happier one than many other such large collections have met with. Daae writes that

*i sine senere aar tænkte Thorval Boeck ofte med frygt paa, hvorledes det vilde gaa med hans bibliotek efter hans dage. Det maatte vel under auktionshammeren og bli solgt bok for bok; for det var vel nærmest utænkelig at finde en privat-person, der eide forstaaelse, kultur, plads, og penge til at kjøpe det hele og bevare det samlet. Det var derfor en stor glæde, da der blev fremsat forslag om kjøp av biblioteket som helhed til Det kgl. norske videnskabers selskab for fru Caroline Jenssens gave.<sup>36</sup>*

The lot-by-lot sale was indeed the most common fate of the great private libraries, as described in the essays in *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century* or in Munby's classic five-volume study (1951–60) of the drawn-out dispersal of Phillipps's collection. Daae identifies perhaps the greatest challenge in keeping such a book collection together: while it might have been difficult to find someone who had “culture, space, *and* cash” to buy the most famous rare books in the collection, it would have been harder still to find a buyer who also had the “understanding” or “discrimination” to preserve the most vulnerable and ephemeral parts of the library, such as the broadside ballads. At any rate, the DKNVS was a rather fitting destination for Boeck's library: not only had Boeck himself lived in the 1860s near the collection's final resting place in Trondheim, but his father (Christian Boeck, 1798–1877) had been a trustee of the Society for many years.

Before the sale, the collection was evaluated by an expert committee that included professor Ludvig Ludvigsen Daae (not to be confused with Ludvig Daae the father of Aagaat Daae), national archivist Henrik Jørgen Huitfeldt Kaas, and chief librarian Axel Charlot Drolsum. The report is included in its entirety by Daae, along with the contract of sale, and the report is knowledgeable, clear, and insightful. The committee not only writes that the collection is “undoubtedly the most important private collection of its kind

here in Norway,” but also recognizes the enormous amount of work and knowledge that had been required to assemble it:

*Bogskatte komme ikke av sig selv; den, der vil have dem, maa stadig have Øinene med sig, tilbringe mangen Dag ved Auktionsborde og møisommelig gjennemgaa Kataloger og Avertissementer for, naar Anledningen tilbyder sig, at skaffe sig saa den ene, saa den anden litterære Sjeldenhet.*<sup>37</sup>

This committee well understood the amount of labour and time in bookstores, in print shops, and even among scrap piles that Boeck had painstakingly put in to assemble such a library. Indeed, it was a sign of the great importance of Boeck’s collection for the study of Norwegian literary culture that such a committee of historians and archivists so enthusiastically supported its acquisition. At the same time, it is notable that the committee recognized the great diversity of non-literary categories that Boeck’s broad interests covered: “*Kirkehistorie, Kulturhistorie, Personalhistorie, Lokalhistorie*” (“Church history, cultural history, personal histories, local histories”), and finally “*Almindelighet*,” which is to say “the general,” or perhaps “the ordinary.” These were all among the aspects of history, and especially history from below, that *skillingsviser*—the common people’s entertainment, an otherwise ephemeral kind of literature—could speak to and could illumine.

The *Skillingsvisene 1550–1950* project is subtitled “*Den forsømte kulturarv*” (“The neglected cultural heritage”). To say that this cultural heritage was “neglected” is also perhaps debateable. Broadside ballads were undoubtedly often disposable pieces of entertainment, cheap literature scattered with abandon in the streets. Many cultured readers, as we have seen, followed them only in passing, even if, like Ullmann and Wergeland, they sometimes recognized how intertwined the grubby ballad could become with *belles lettres*. And yet there was a substantial set of collectors like Boeck, Hegel, Schibsted, Albrechtson, and Aaland who did *not* neglect these ephemeral bits of printing at all, but rather held onto them with great relish and care, while there was also an academic and library community that welcomed the opportunity to preserve them. Without these individuals and networks, we would not have the Norwegian broadside ballads to study and to digitize today—or else we would have to scour the scrap piles ourselves for the very last deteriorating remnants of what they had the foresight to preserve, and

that is an archive that has turned out to be a significant body of print culture for local history, for literary history, and for the history of popular reading in Norway.<sup>38</sup>

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Skillingsvisene 1550–1950: Den forsømte kulturarven*, accessed May 30, 2021, <https://skillingsviser.no/>.

<sup>2</sup> English Broadside Ballad Archive, accessed May 30, 2021, <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/>.

<sup>3</sup> A. Daae, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck: 1831–1901: Biografi* (Trondheim: Det kgl. norske videnskabers selskab, 1921), xx.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Munthe, “*De norske Bibliotekers Historie*” In *Haandbog i Bibliotekskundskab*, published by Svend Dahl, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Vol. II, (København: Hagerups Forlag, 1927), 177.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen Alm, “1899: *Thorvald Boecks bok- og manuskriptsamling*,” (Trondheim: NTNU Biblioteket, 2012), 2.

<sup>6</sup> See *Biblioteca Luxdorphiana, sive index librorum quos reliquit vir excellentissimus Bolle Wilhelmus Luxdorph*, 2 vols., (Havniæ: J. F. Schultzii, 1789); Cowan, “Morris’s Book Collecting”; Paul Needham, “William Morris’s ‘Ancient Books’ at Sale,” in *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century*, eds. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll, 2001), 173–208; A. N. L. Munby, *Phillipps Studies*, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951–60).

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<sup>7</sup> Daac, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck*, xxxvii.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Ellen Brown, "Placed, Replaced, or Misplaced?: The Ballads' Progress," *The Eighteenth Century* 47 (2006): 120.

<sup>9</sup> See Yuri Cowan, "Orality, Authenticity, and the Historiography of the Everyday: The Ballad in Victorian Scholarship and Print Culture," in *Orality and Print Culture*, eds. Pertti Anttonen, Cecilia af Forselles and Kirsti Salmi-Niklander (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2018), 74–91; and Paul McDowell, *The Invention of the Oral: Print Commerce and Fugitive Voices in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, while the first of the Danish printed ballad collections (Anders Sørensen Vedel's *Hundrevisebogen*, 1591) was from oral and manuscript sources adapted and written out by the editor himself, the most famous of the English ballad collections, Percy's 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, drew quietly on printed broadside sources. See Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), esp. 98. For the use that the nineteenth-century editor Francis James Child also made of the broadside ballads, and for the complex relationship between broadsides and folk ballads, see Mary Ellen Brown, "Child's Ballads and the Broadside Conundrum," in *Ballads and Broadsides in Britain, 1500–1800*, eds. Patricia Fumerton and Anita Guerrini (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 57–74. A thorough history of the important collaboration and correspondence between Child and Grundtvig (the latter also more concerned with manuscript than with oral or print sources) remains to be written, but see Sigrid Rieuwaarts, "The Folk-Ballad: The Illegitimate Child of the Popular Ballad," *Journal of Folklore Research* 33, no. 3 (September–December 1996): 221–26.

<sup>11</sup> "It is up to us now to save what can and ought to be saved of the old [folkways], where already much is only to be found in the remotest valleys. Under these circumstances it seemed to me that I too should put in an effort to preserve them, like one rescuing family heirlooms from a burning house." (Here and elsewhere, the translations are mine.) M. B. Landstad, *Norske Folkeviser* (Christiania: Chr. Tönsbergs Forlag, 1853), iv.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Christen Asbjørnsen, *Norske Huldreeventyr og Folkesagn*, (Christiania: W. C. Fabritius, 1845). These stories are best known in English in their later nineteenth-century translations by George Webbe Dasent (*Popular Tales from the Norse*, 1859).

<sup>13</sup> "Beautiful folk melodies that had been abused and reduced to printed songs in the baskets of pedlar women were now cleaned up and made highbrow [lit. 'art-washed']." Vilhelmine Ullman, "Fra firtiaarene og lidt længer frem," *Morgenbladet* 85, no. 174 (29 March 1903), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Siv Gøril Brandtzæg, "Skillingsvisene i Norge 1550–1950: Historien om et forsømt forskningsfelt," *EDDA: Nordisk tidsskrift for litteraturforskning* 105, no. 2 (2018), 97.

<sup>15</sup> In, for example, *Mannen fra Middelalderen* 147.

<sup>16</sup> Henrik Horstbøll, *Menigmands Medie: Det folkelige bogtryk i Danmark 1500–1840* (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Bibliotek og Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 1999), 191.

<sup>17</sup> See Elizabeth Eide, *Bøker i Norge: Boksamlinger, leseselskap, og bibliotek på 1800-tallet* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2013).

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<sup>18</sup> Brandtzæg, “Skillingsvisene i Norge 1550–1950,” 94.

<sup>19</sup> “Norwegian topography, theology, and a large number of funeral sermons from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (Daae, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck*, xix).

<sup>20</sup> See Elizabeth Eide, “Livprekener og liv i Norge på 16-tallet,” *Kirke og kultur* 116 (April 2011), 314–27.

<sup>21</sup> Some decades later, in 1979 and 1981, the Gunnerus Library rectified this in part by publishing catalogues of particular parts of the collection, such as Monica Aase’s catalogue of Boeck’s collection of letters and autographs, and finally Hanna-Sofie Molde’s catalogue of broadside ballads. However, Molde’s 1981 catalogue covered the entire collection of broadside ballads then belonging to the DKNVS, and many of them are of later date than Boeck’s death, so it is often too difficult to identify those ballads that belonged to Boeck’s collection.

<sup>22</sup> Thorvald Boeck og O. A. Øverland, *Register til Norske Bog-Fortegnelse for 1848–1865 og 1866–1872* (Christiania: Den Norske Boghandlerforeningens Forlag, 1880), n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Daae, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck*, xxv, xxi.

<sup>24</sup> A. N. L. Munby, *Portrait of an Obsession: The life of Sir Thomas Phillipps, the World’s Greatest Book Collector* (London: Constable, 1967), 88.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *Bibliomania, or Book-Madness*, new ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1876), 321.

<sup>26</sup> “Acquired a copy of every ballad and song published by Jensen” (Olav Myre, *En antikevarbokhandler fra nitti-årene: Bertrand Jensen 80 år* (Oslo: Utg. Damm, 1943), 19–20).

<sup>27</sup> “How to acquire books and printed material for small sums” (Myre, *En antikevarbokhandler*, 19–20).

<sup>28</sup> “[...] among other things many years’ worth of [the conservative daily] *Morgenbladet*, along with two enormous folios of old manuscript. Neither seller nor buyer at the time of acquisition had been entirely clear about what this “scrap pile” contained—the seller had just wanted to get rid of it. Boeck asked to borrow it for inspection. I never saw it again” (quoted in Myre, *En antikevarbokhandler*, 18).

<sup>29</sup> Hanna-Sofie Molde, *Skillingsviser 1558–1951 i Det Kgl. Norske Videnskabers Selskabs bibliotek*, Spesialsamlingene kat. 6 (Trondheim: Universitetsbiblioteket, 1981), xiv.

<sup>30</sup> John C. Hirsch, “Pepys as a Collector and Student of Ballads,” *The Modern Language Review* 106, no. 1 (January 2011), 50.

<sup>31</sup> For example, in a copy of *Den forladte Pige* (“The Deserted Girl,” undated, printed in Trondheim: Gunnerusbiblioteket, V box 30:894) there is a note from one “John Theodor Dahl” (probably the ship captain born in 1833, according to the 1885 census): “1860 / 27 juli, kl. 1 1/2 om morgenen!” (“1860 / 27 July at one thirty in the morning!”). And whether that exclamation marks a late-night performance of this ballad, or a drunken



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after-hours purchase, or another happy moment in the life of this young seaman, we have no way of telling.

<sup>32</sup> *En ny og forskrækkelig Vise om det indbildte Mordforsøg, som blev gjort mod Søren Jaabæk dengang han skulde bringe sine Hædersgaver hjem til Listerland* (Trondheim: NTNU Gunnerusbiblioteket, V box 32:957). “Nordensudstilling” (Nordic exhibition) could possibly be “Verdensudstilling” (world exhibition). Such world fairs took place in 1881 in Melbourne and Budapest. It seems unlikely that Boeck journeyed so far afield, and doubly unlikely that Norwegian broadside ballads were for sale at those fairs. But a comparable “Nordic exhibition” that took place in Copenhagen in 1888 had a number of booksellers and printers in attendance (*Den Nordiske Udstilling*), and many comparable art and industry exhibitions took place in Kristiania and in the Nordic countries throughout the 1880s. On the other hand, we also have evidence from another ballad that he (or perhaps another collector) had been at such an exhibition that same year: on *En frygtelig fæl Vise om en tapper Løitnant* (Kristiania, 1881, Trondheim: Gunnerusbiblioteket, V box 9:264) there is a very clear note that it was in fact performed at the international world exhibition in 1881 (“Sunget af [unreadable name] paa den internationale verdensutstilling 1881”).

<sup>33</sup> Daae, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck*, xxiv.

<sup>34</sup> “Boeck’s ballad collection was among the largest in the land. One of his most energetic book-hunting companions was the owner and editor of [the conservative daily] *Aftenposten*, Amandus Schibsted, who left behind scores or at least dozens of thick volumes inlaid with ballads and songs of all kinds: private songs for family gatherings, official and half-official songs, street ballads, menu cards, etc.” (Myre, *En antikvarbokhandler*, 20).

<sup>35</sup> Myre, *En antikvarbokhandler*, 20–21. There is also a sizeable collection of some 30,000 Danish broadside ballads in the Royal Library, Copenhagen, acquired over many years, that is named after Torben Palsbo, who arranged and catalogued it in the years 1948–84. I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer of this article for information about the Palsbo Collection.

<sup>36</sup> “In his later years Thorvald Boeck thought often with some trepidation on what would happen to his library after him. The likeliest fate was that it would go under the auction hammer and be sold book by book, because it was practically unthinkable that a private citizen could be found with the discrimination, culture, space, and money to buy up the whole and keep it together. It was therefore a great joy when there came an offer for the purchase of the entire collection by the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, through the gift of Caroline Jenssen” (Daae, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck*, xxxiii).

<sup>37</sup> “Books do not just appear on one’s doorstep; who wants them must have vision, must spend days at the auction tables and must pore laboriously over catalogues and advertisements, until the opportunity arises to acquire, first the one, then the next literary rarity” (quoted in Daae, *Thorvald Olaf Boeck*, xxxv).

<sup>38</sup> This article is a revised version of an article I originally wrote in Norwegian (“En samler av guds nåde: Thorvald Boeck og skillingsvisene på 1800-tallet”) for the volume *Skillingsvisene i Norge, 1550–1950: Studier i en forsømt kulturarv*, eds. Siv Gøril Brandtzæg and Karin Strand (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2021). I would like to thank the editors for their help with that article, and for permission to reuse the material here.

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