

## **Diana, Dido, and The Fair Maid of Dunsmore: Classical Precursors, Common Tunes, and the Question of Consent in Seventeenth-Century Balladry**

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As Roy Porter observes, rape “is a subject fiendishly difficult to research and interpret.”<sup>1</sup> It is all the more so when situated in historical contexts where ideas about sexual assent and violation differ significantly from our own. This is certainly true of seventeenth-century England, a milieu in which this crime’s very definition was undergoing conceptual and even legal transformation. Whereas, previously, rape had been considered a matter of theft, in this period “the law began to turn on consent,” and Miranda Chaytor elucidates that increasingly “at stake was not property, but sexuality, morality, not the criminal’s act but the victim’s resistance, her innocence, her will, her desires.”<sup>2</sup> However, this was also an environment in which it was commonly presumed that “women’s bodies obscure their wills, even from themselves,” thus necessitating what Cynthia E. Garrett has described as “[i]nterpretive skill...to determine women’s hidden consent.”<sup>3</sup> In this essay, I draw attention to the thorny issue of how women’s wills and presumed desires could be offered up for just such interpretation in seventeenth-century balladry. In so doing, I concentrate my analysis on a pair of little-remarked yet broadly representative songs featuring *The Fair Maid* (otherwise known as Isabel) of Dunsmore; I investigate, more particularly, how both textual and musical allusions to varying mythological precursors are used in these two ballads to guide and nuance audiences’ understandings of the tragic heroine’s consent (or lack thereof).

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<sup>1</sup> Porter, “Rape,” 216.

<sup>2</sup> Chaytor, “Husband(ry),” 396. The literature on rape and consent in early modern England is vast and notably includes: Bashar, “Rape in England”; Rudolph, “Rape and Resistance”; Walker, “Rereading Rape”; Baines, “Effacing Rape”; and Catty, *Writing Rape, Writing Women*.

<sup>3</sup> Garrett, “Sexual Consent,” 42.

## Isabel of Dunsmore

Who was Isabel of Dunsmore? Surviving evidence would suggest that her tragedy first appeared in print in 1612, when the earliest extant version of a ballad entitled “The Lamentable Song of the Lord Wigmoore Gouvernor of Warwicke Castle and the Fayre Maid of Dunsmoore” was published in *A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses Gathered out of Englands Royall Garden*, a collection of lyrics bearing Richard Johnson’s name.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that “The Lamentable Song” went on to be widely disseminated throughout the following century: it was reprinted in the numerous revised and expanded editions of *A Crowne Garland* that continued to be published at regular intervals until at least 1692, a close if abbreviated variant appeared in a songbook of 1674 entitled *Cupids Garland Set Round About With Gilded Roses*, and this ballad also found its way into Jacob Tonson’s *Poetical Miscellanies* in the early eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, as an exemplar held by the National Library of Scotland attests, during this era “The Lamentable Song” was issued independently of such collections in broadside format, as well.<sup>6</sup> Less clear, however, is whether the story of Isabel in this often-reprinted ballad originated with Johnson himself, particularly as he is known to have liberally reused materials authored by others throughout his career.<sup>7</sup>

Despite his relatively low profile in contemporary scholarship, Johnson has been hailed, along with the better-known Thomas Deloney, as one of the “chief...professional ballad-makers” of the early modern era, an author who habitually adapted into verse “the legendary history of England as...told by Tudor chroniclers, such as Hall or Grafton or Holinshed.”<sup>8</sup> Given Johnson’s known

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *A Crowne Garland* (1612), B1<sup>v</sup>-B5<sup>f</sup>. I cite the lyrics of “The Lamentable Song” as presented in this edition.

<sup>5</sup> Surviving copies show that *A Crowne Garland* was reprinted at least five times over the course of the seventeenth century (in 1631, 1659, 1662, 1683, and 1692). On this ballad’s inclusion in *Poetical Miscellanies*, see Wasserman, “Pre-Restoration Poetry,” 554. To date, while relatively little work has been done specifically on “garlands” such as Johnson’s, the literature on the broadside circulation of lyrics and music in the early modern era is extensive and includes, amongst many others: Rollins, “The Black-Letter Broadside,” Poulton, “The Black-Letter Broadside”; Sternfeld, “Music and Ballads”; Smith, *The Acoustic World*, 168-205; and Marsh, *Music and Society*, 225-327.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this essay, I frequently rely on digital images and transcriptions available via the University of California-Santa Barbara’s *English Broadside Ballad Archive*, ed. Patricia Fumerton [hereafter EBBA]. I here refer to EBBA 33342.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, “Richard Johnson’s Borrowed Tears”; Hirsch “The Source.”

<sup>8</sup> Firth, “The Ballad History,” 22.

proclivities and reputation as something of “a half penny Chronicler,” it comes as no surprise that *The Crowne Garland* of 1612—which has alternatively been praised in modern scholarship as “a book of ballads meriting more attention than it has received” and dismissed as “a collection of conventional and unremarkable” texts—is decidedly historical in focus.<sup>9</sup> Mingling instances of what has been dubbed the “Bourgeois Hero-Tale” with accounts of the more illustrious lives, deaths, and exploits of various English monarchs, *The Crowne Garland* contains the sorts of lyrics one imagines that John Aubrey had in mind when, later in the century, he recalled that his childhood “Nurse had the History from the Conquest down to Carl. I. in Ballad”: its pages are peopled with characters including Dick Whittington, Thomas Stukley, Jane Seymour, The Second Duke of Buckingham, King Henry VII, and Queen Elizabeth I, as well as The Fair Maid of Dunsmore.<sup>10</sup> If, like those other ballads featuring named characters that appear in *The Crowne Garland*, Isabel’s story was *also* based—however loosely—on an actual historical event, the details are now lost to us.

The murky origins of her character notwithstanding, in the early modern era Isabel of Dunsmore’s tragedy inspired the composition not only of “The Lamentable Song,” but also of a second, lyrically distinct English ballad. This anonymously written alternate version, known as “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation Occasioned by Lord Wigmore, Once Governour of Warwick-Castle,” is reproduced in numerous surviving seventeenth-century broadsides.<sup>11</sup> Despite their different sets of lyrics, each of these two-part ballads about Isabel and her ill-fated liaison with Lord Wigmore of Warwickshire follows the same basic narrative outline. In Part 1 of both ballads, Wigmore sees Isabel, a humble shepherd’s daughter, as she bathes alone in a stream; he then arranges a tryst at his castle, where he impregnates her. In Part 2 of both ballads, Isabel is sent home, but her swelling belly reveals what has transpired; distraught, Isabel laments her shameful plight and

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<sup>9</sup> Williams, “Richard Johnson’s Borrowed Tears,” 186; Liebler, “Elizabethan Pulp Fiction,” 75. I adopt the phrase “half penny Chronicler,” from a prefatory letter in *Martine Mar-Sixtus* of 1591, in which the author laments that “scarce a cat can looke out of a gutter, but out starts a half penny Chronicler, and presently *A propper new ballet of a strange sight* is endited” (A3<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>10</sup> O’Connell, “The Elizabethan Bourgeois Hero-Tale”; Aubrey, *Three Prose Works*, 287.

<sup>11</sup> I cite the lyrics of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” from EBBA 30646.

commits suicide by stabbing her own breast; and, finally, at the end of Wigmore's own lengthier life the two are reunited in a single grave.

What is remarkable about "The Lamentable Song" and "The Fair Maid of Dunsmore's Lamentation" is that, for all their similarities in plot and pacing, they offer subtly yet crucially divergent interpretations of Isabel's consent in relation to this shared series of events. What is more, both pieces do so largely through allusions to mythological referents. This citation not only occurs explicitly when the ancient Roman (and Shakespearean) rape victim Lucretia, better known to English audiences as Lucrece, is mentioned within the lyrics of "The Lamentable Song," but also more implicitly through the medium of tune: while "The Lamentable Song" is meant to be sung to the melody of "Diana," "The Fair Maid of Dunsmore's Lamentation" is alternatively set to "Troy Town."<sup>12</sup> By yoking together considerations of their texts and melodies and treating the early modern songs here under consideration as "multi-media production[s]...pulsat[ing] with cross-references," the interpretations presented in this essay are thus attuned to what Christopher Marsh calls "the vast interconnectedness" of early modern printed ballads—an area of study that, as he remarks, "remains seriously under-explored" in current scholarship.<sup>13</sup>

### **Violation and Consent in Ballad Culture**

Considered in tandem, "The Lamentable Song" and "The Fair Maid of Dunsmore's Lamentation" provide a useful window into how the problematics—and gradations—of rape and consent could be depicted in seventeenth-century popular culture. These two ballads invite particular scrutiny both for their thematic typicality and also their somewhat atypical use of extended classical allusions to characterise Isabel's liaison with Wigmore. It is worth observing, first if all, that these two musical renditions of Isabel's story speak to a much longer tradition of English balladry featuring legendary

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<sup>12</sup> Though beyond the scope of this current study, it is worth noting that the variant, truncated version of "The Lamentable Song" which runs from B2<sup>r</sup>-B3<sup>v</sup> in *Cupids Garland Set Round About With Gilded Roses* is alternatively set to a third tune, "The Earl of Essex's Last Goodnight."

<sup>13</sup> Marsh, "The Blazing Torch," 95-96.

narratives of rape and sexual violation. One might reflect, for instance, that entries for ballads about Lucretia were twice recorded in the Stationers' Register in the early Elizabethan era: in 1568-69, John Alde registered "a ballet *the greivous complaynt of LUCRECE*," and 1569-70, James Roberts either re-registered the same song or else a new "ballet intituled *the Death of LUCRYSSIA*."<sup>14</sup> This song (or pair of songs) might well have been known to Johnson and his contemporaries, and seventeenth-century audiences would undoubtedly have been acquainted with the popular and frequently reprinted "Ballad of Constant Susanna," a work that draws upon the Book of Daniel to narrate how the biblical heroine's "chaste and constant life [is] tride / by...two Elders of Babylon" when they conspire—not unlike Wigmore in the ballads about Isabel of Dusmore—to view her "faire body" as she "alone her selfe...wash[es]."<sup>15</sup>

Alongside songs featuring such traditionally accepted exemplars of sexual propriety as Lucretia or Susanna, the so-called fallen woman is also a familiar archetype in early modern English balladry. Numerous cautionary songs circulating in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain tales of women hopelessly abandoned—and often simultaneously left pregnant—by unfaithful or dishonourable male lovers.<sup>16</sup> One might think of the shepherd's daughter in "The Dorset-shire Tragedy" who is promised marriage by a fellow servant and then, once she "prov[es] with Child," summarily murdered by him or of the unnamed lady in "A Lamentable Ballad of the Ladies Fall" who "Too soon alas...cons[e]nt[s]" to her lover's "will" only to be cruelly forsaken when she finds herself "conceived with child."<sup>17</sup> So too is the fourteen-year-old "Damsell faire and bright" of "The Westerne Knight and the Young Maid of Bristoll" promised marriage and then

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<sup>14</sup> Arber, *A Transcript*, 1:379, 416.

<sup>15</sup> I cite the lyrics of "The Ballad of Constant Susanna" from EBBA 32077. This ballad, which was in circulation from at least the early Elizabethan era, was also sometimes printed under the alternate title "An Excellent Ballad Intituled the Constancy of Susanna."

<sup>16</sup> For the place of such ballads about fallen or abandoned women within the broader landscape of early modern complaint literature, see Kerrigan, *Motives of Woe*, 14-23.

<sup>17</sup> I cite the lyrics of "The Dorset-shire Tragedy" from EBBA 22139 and "A Lamentable Ballad of the Ladies Fall" from EBBA 31953. For an insightful contextualisation of "The Ladies Fall" alongside other ballads sung to its same tune (a study that shares many common concerns with this essay), see Williams, "Witches, Lamenting Women."

brutally rejected by a “gallant young knight” when he discovers she is “fifteen weeks gone.”<sup>18</sup> The fallen women represented in such ballads are often subjected to social ostracisation and various forms of abuse. Having “yeelded foolishly, / Up her Virginitie,” the “Beautious” lady in “Love Without Lucke” is “forsaken” not only by the “young Captaine” who “vow’d earnestly hee would...marry” her, but also by her friends and family who brand her a “Lewd Strumpet,” and the “wondrous fair” Jenny in “Jenny, Jenny” is ultimately denied even her request for a “pair of Shoon” by the “Knight of high renown” who has his “will” with her only to declare: “Let him that rides thee next, shooe thee.”<sup>19</sup> It is little wonder, then, that such women are frequently portrayed as suicidal, like the titular heroine of “The Distressed Virgin,” the Shropshire maid separated from the Flintshire squire in “The Two Unfortunate Lovers,” the young woman misled and abandoned in “The Perjur’d Swain,” Betty betrayed by William in “The Young-Mans Hard Shift for a Maiden-head,” or the London merchant’s daughter pining away for a duplicitous linen draper in “The Lady’s Tragedy,” amongst many other similar examples.

Though these figures are typically presented as behavioural *exempla in malo* for young female audiences (attached to such morals as “of flattering words beware, / And of the honour of your name / have you a special care” or “keep fast your wicket and let none come in” or “let no such cogging mates, / Spot your virginitie”), it is not unusual to see the victimised and/or viciously deceived women of early modern English musical culture treated with a relative degree of empathy.<sup>20</sup> Such fallen women exemplify what Frederick O. Waage has called the “many ambivalent social types, caught in ambivalent dramatic situations, who flourished in London printed broadside ballads of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” They are, after all, compelling if technically errant characters who, as Waage notes, often “evoke the self-contradictoriness of traditional world

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<sup>18</sup> I cite the lyrics of “The Westerne Knight and the Young Maid of Bristoll” from EBBA 20148.

<sup>19</sup> I cite the lyrics of “Love Without Lucke” from EBBA 20162 and “Jenny, Jenny” from EBBA 30682.

<sup>20</sup> The first of these morals can be found in “A Lamentable Ballad of the Ladies Fall”; the second derives from “The Young-Mans Hard Shift for a Maiden-head,” which I cite from EBBA 30842; and the third can be found in “A Love-sick Maids Song,” which I cite from EBBA 20020.

views.”<sup>21</sup> Occasionally, as in Martin Parker’s “Desperate Damsells Tragedy,” a “false Lover” satisfyingly ends up “of his wits bestraught” when faced with the dire consequences of his sexual actions, and the odd male perpetrator even proceeds to kill himself, like the unfaithful men in both “The Dorset-shire Tragedy” and “A Lamentable Ballad of the Ladies Fall.”<sup>22</sup> At other times, the audience’s sympathies are steered in favour of the fallen women by the internal cues within these ballads: we find ourselves rooting for the “grieved” yet resourceful mother in “A New Little Northern Song Called Under and Over, Over and Under” who desperately “seekes, / How to keepe her [pregnant] daughter / from shame”; the narrator’s in “Love Without Lucke” shares his own desire to somehow “right” the situation and “force” the forsaken woman’s lover to “marry [her] / If [she] desire it”; the “young man” who fortuitously overhears the lamentation of the pregnant milkmaid in “The Lovely Northern Lasse” promises to “ease...[her] wooes” himself; and even the natural world’s “bubbling brookes” and “harmelesse Lambs” mourn for the abandoned woman who dies of a broken heart in “The Diseased Maiden Lover.”<sup>23</sup>

Sandra Clark speculates that, “more than any other literary medium of the time, ballads had the potential to appeal to women, and in many areas...may well have reflected women’s interests quite directly.”<sup>24</sup> As my above examples would suggest, an issue that must have been of paramount interest to most seventeenth-century women—sexual consent—is frequently foregrounded in early modern balladry. In response to the Elders’ demand that Susanna “consent to them and turne,” “The Ballad of Constant Susanna,” for instance, gives significant attention to the biblical heroine’s deliberations as she internally weighs whether she ought to “consent and do this deed.” We find occasional exemplars of other women who, like Susanna, emphatically do *not* consent to sexual contact and recommend—with varying degrees of compassion for the already fallen—that other

<sup>21</sup> Waage, “Social Themes in Urban Broadsides,” 732.

<sup>22</sup> I cite the lyrics of “The Desperate Damsells Tragedy” from EBBA 30060.

<sup>23</sup> I cite the lyrics of “A New Little Northern Song Called Under and Over, Over and Under” from EBBA 20122, “The Lovely Northern Lasse” from EBBA 31921, and “The Diseased Maiden Lover” from EBBA 20168.

<sup>24</sup> Clark, “The Economics of Marriage,” 119. On fictive women’s voices represented within and real-life female audiences of early modern ballads, see also Clark, “The Broadside Ballad.”

maidens follow suit: lamenting “’Tis sad to see a Soul, / rob’d of Virginitie,” Silvia of “The Forsaken Lovers Resolution” describes how she was not, as so often happens, “fool’d” onto giving her own “consent”; the “Young Lass...courted by many” in “Trap” brashly declares “My thing is my own, and I’le keep it so still, / Until I be marry’d, say men what they will”; and the narrator in “The Faire Maid of Londons Answer to King Edwards Wanton Love” rather piously (and perhaps unrealistically) advises that, while “All men haue their freedome to shew their intent, / They win not a woman, except she consent.”<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, how their consent is likely to be retrospectively interpreted is as much a concern for the fallen as the righteous. The narrator of “The Maidens Complaint of Her Loves Inconstancie” worries “Theyl say twas I that let him in,” and the rejected woman in “A Warning for Maides” declares to her “false” lover “I am sorry that ere I consented to thee”—a sentiment shared by virtually all of the fallen women in the ballads mentioned above, most of which depict their presumable consent as having been obtained under false pretences.<sup>26</sup> It is against this hermeneutically and morally complex generic backdrop, then, that the two seventeenth-century ballads about Isabel of Dunsmore on which this essay more specifically focuses demand to be considered.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I cite the lyrics of “The Forsaken Lovers Resolution” from EBBA 21100, “Trap” from EBBA 21010, and “The Faire Maid of Londons Answer to King Edwards Wanton Love” from EBBA 30042.

<sup>26</sup> I cite the lyrics of “The Maidens Complaint of Her Loves Inconstancie” from EBBA 30172 and “A Warning for Maides” from EBBA 30302.

<sup>27</sup> The immediate context in which Isabel’s story first appeared in print—the 1612 edition of *A Crowne Garland*—juxtaposes the details of her own ambiguous tale with other ballads featuring both raped and fallen women. Elsewhere in this same volume, audiences are, on the one hand, treated to a ballad rendition of Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Tale, a narrative which runs from F1<sup>v</sup>-F3<sup>r</sup> in the volume and pointedly begins with the “heinous deed” of “a Uirgin faire and bright” having “her maiden head” forcibly taken “against her will” by a knight. On the other hand, *A Crowne Garland* also contains a “Lamentation of an Ale Wifes Daughter for the Losse of her Virginitie,” which runs from E4<sup>v</sup>-E6<sup>r</sup> and tells of a young woman “with gifts of beauty rare” who “disdain’d” the “many suters” (“most [her] betters”) who wooed her, yet eventually agreed to have sex with “an aged man” of significant wealth. Our first-person narrator in the latter regretfully remarks that her “mother yéelded her consent, / and causd [her] doe the same” with the result that now she “must liue in shame.” Later, expanded editions of *A Crowne Garland* would add additional ballads with lyrics that likewise have the potential to speak to the particulars of Isabel’s situation; this includes both the previously mentioned “The Faire Maid of Londons Answer to King Edwards Wanton Love,” in which a sovereign’s sexual advances are effectively rebuffed, and a ballad about Henry II’s mistress Rosamond who contrastingly receives her just desserts.



## Isabel and Lucretia

A number of ballads associated with Johnson have overt Shakespearean connections. As David R. Carlson has shown, for example, both “An Excellent Song Made on the Successors of King Henry the Fourth” (which appears along with “The Lamentable Song” in the expanded 1631 edition of *The Crowne Garland*) and “The Most Cruell Murther of Edward the Fift, and His Brother Duke of Yorke in the Towre by Their Vncle Richard Duke of Gloster” (found in *The Golden Garland of Princely Pleasures and Delicate Delights*, a collection of 1620 that similarly bears Johnson’s name) share unique details with Shakespeare’s *Richard III*.<sup>28</sup> As is well-known to Shakespeare scholars, Johnson’s *The Golden Garland* also features both a ballad of “Titus Andronicus Complaint” and “A Lamentable Song of the Death of King Leare and His Three Daighters,” both of which seem to function as “residuals,” to borrow Bruce R. Smith’s terminology, derived from Shakespeare’s corresponding tragedies.<sup>29</sup> Given the many other references to his works elsewhere apparent in Johnson’s ballad corpus, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that “The Lamentable Song” also shows signs of Shakespearean intertextuality. In Part 2 of this ballad, an explicit reference to Lucrece comes just at the moment when Isabel of Dunsmore, lying “prostrate at th[e] feete” of Lord Wigmore, ends her lengthy “wofull moane.” Indeed, she proceeds to commit suicide in the lord’s own presence using a symbolically resonant knife on which “Lucesse part was rightly showne.” Though Lucrece is only mentioned by name at this single point in the lyrics of “The Lamentable Song,” the ballad as a whole bears a more sustained relationship with Shakespeare’s Elizabethan rendition of this heroine’s tragedy in *The Rape of Lucrece*, a narrative poem which had already been reprinted at least four times between its first edition in 1594 and the appearance of *The Crowne Garland* in 1612.

Wigmore’s interest in Isabel at the start of “The Lamentable Song” seems directly modelled on Tarquin’s obsession with Collatine’s chaste spouse at the outset of *The Rape of Lucrece*. The ballad replicates the unusual and distinctive chronology of Shakespeare’s poem, wherein it is

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<sup>28</sup> Carlson, “The Princes’ Embrace.”

<sup>29</sup> Smith, “Shakespeare’s Residuals.”

Collatine's verbal praise of Lucrece that sets Tarquin off from "Ardea all in post" to Collatium, so that this "false lord" might see the famed beauty for himself.<sup>30</sup> As Joel Fineman has noted in his influential reading of Shakespeare's epyllion, the appeal of persuasive verbal rhetoric plays a key role in propelling the events of the Shakespearean narrative: "Collatine's boasting leads on to Tarquin's posting, which in turn leads on to the rape of Lucrece."<sup>31</sup> "Rape," as Nancy J. Vickers alternatively puts it, is thus "the price Lucrece pays for having been *described*" by her own husband.<sup>32</sup> Notably, it is an initial verbal report about Isabel that similarly sparks Wigmore's interest and causes him to seek out this as-yet-unseen shepherd's daughter in "The Lamentable Song." As the ballad narrates, "To Wigmoores eare her fame did passe, / As he in Warwicke Castle lay," and "vpon her fame" he immediately, /...set his delight." Again, like Shakespeare's Tarquin, who is "Lust-breathèd" before ever meeting his sexual victim, Wigmore also is made "loue-sick" by the precipitating force of rumour alone; his journey to Dunsmore where he first encounters Isabel is described as an attempt "to recreate his sickly mind."<sup>33</sup> Other Shakespearean parallels abound. Amongst them, like his literary predecessor Tarquin—who freely admits "I have debated in my soul / What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall breed"—Wigmore, too, recognises that "his sin was great" before committing it, yet seems to concur with his Shakespearean model that "nothing can affection's course control, / Or stop the headlong fury of his speed."<sup>34</sup> Later in the ballad, Isabel's plea "Let not the sunne vpon [her shame] shine: / Let misty darknesse on it fall" recalls Lucrece's similar wish that she not be made "object to the tell-tale day" since "day...night's scapes doth open lay."<sup>35</sup> And, much like the characters of Shakespeare's poem—who persistently imagine their own unfolding tale as textual fodder to be quoted "in learnèd books," used by a future "orator to deck his

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<sup>30</sup> Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 1, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Fineman, "Shakespeare's Will," 31.

<sup>32</sup> Vickers, "This Heraldry," 176 (emphasis my own).

<sup>33</sup> Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 498-501.

<sup>35</sup> Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 806, 747.

oratory,” or “cited up in rhymes / And sung by children in succeeding times”<sup>36</sup>—the ballad’s heroine employs distinctively similar bookish metaphors and metatextual deliberations in her own discourse:

And quite vnclasp'd is the booke,  
Where my accounts are written in.

.....  
Bespotted with reproachfull shame,  
To ages following shall I bee:  
And in records be writ my blame

What is the effect of juxtaposing Isabel’s local Warwickian tragedy with that of what is arguably European tradition’s most frequently cited rape victim? This is a comparison that, at first blush, seems jarring due to Lucrece’s status (despite some Augustinian objections regarding her behaviour) as a recurring *exemplum in bono* of wifely virtue in medieval and early modern literature: the entry for “Lucretia” in Thomas Cooper’s 1565 *Thesaurus*, for example, characteristically glosses her as “a singuler paterne of chastit e, both to hir tyme, and to all ages folowinge.”<sup>37</sup> The presumably Christian shepherd’s daughter of “The Lamentable Song” is patently no Roman matron. Moreover, her interactions with Wigmore hardly conform to the definition of rape as narrowly defined by the legal authorities of the era. In the often-cited seventeenth-century *Lawes Resolutions of Womens Rights*, for example, the “two kindes of Rape” are delineated as either the “right rauishment” or forceful abduction of a woman or that other “hideous hatefull kinde of whoredome. . . when a woman is enforced violently to sustaine the furie of brutish concupiscence: but she is left where she is found, as in her owne house or bed, as *Lucrece* was.”<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, I propose that this suggestive equivocation of Wigmore’s victim with Tarquin’s in “The Lamentable Song” invites the ballad’s audience to ponder the likelihood that the English maiden’s sexual encounter with the lord was not wholly consensual, framing Isabel’s final act of auto-violence, like Lucrece’s, as an attempt to regain the honour that she has presumably lost via sexual coercion.

<sup>36</sup> Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 811, 815, 524-25.

<sup>37</sup> This “Lucretia” entry is found in the “Dictionarium historicum & po eticum propria locorum & personarum vocabula breuiter complectens” which concludes the *Thesaurus* (L2<sup>v</sup>). Despite her ubiquitous representation as a paragon of chastity in early modern literary culture, as is well known, Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* famously queried the response of Lucretia to her rape.

<sup>38</sup> Edgar, *Lawes Resolutions*, 378-79.

A noteworthy analogue is found in the 1597 “Epistle of Rosamond to King Henrie the Second,” the opening letter in Michael Drayton’s *Englands Heroicall Epistles*. This piece, written in the purported voice of the English king’s often-fictionalised royal mistress, Rosamond Clifford, relays a tale of gender and power inequities not dissimilar to Isabel and Wigmore’s—a lopsided relationship that has left Rosamond’s “leprous soule” feeling “stayned” with “black sinnes.”<sup>39</sup> Although, as Andrew Fleck observes, Drayton’s heroine “cannot quite bring herself to discuss her relationship with Henry as a rape,” she is nonetheless clear that “T’was not [her] minde consented to this ill.”<sup>40</sup> The fictive Rosamond elaborates that she was unable to resist Henry’s “kinglie power” and “what [her] body was enforst to doe, / (Heauen knowes) [her] soule did not consent vnto.”<sup>41</sup> As in “The Lamentable Song,” in Drayton’s pseudo-Ovidian epistle, the Shakespearean figure of Lucrece is used to help illustrate the asymmetrical distributions of power that have coalesced to fuel a woman’s quasi-compulsory sexual relationship with a figure of political authority. Describing how she recently “passe[d] the time away” ambling through a picture gallery with her “pratling” maid, Rosamond describes coming across “Chast Lucrece picture.” In response to her maid’s query about its subject, Rosamond’s letter narrates how she unsuccessfully tried to relate the tale of “that Romaine dame” who “herselfe...murdred so” in what Danielle Clarke has called “a nicely competitive reprise...of Lucrece’s reading of the tapestry of the fall of Troy” in Shakespeare’s earlier *Rape of Lucrece*. This is a reprise which not so subtly aligns Henry with Tarquin and “serves to place Rosamond in a long line of virtuous, but violated, heroines,” including Shakespeare’s own version of Lucrece, who is similarly quick to enumerate her own “offences,” however “forced.”<sup>42</sup>

Emily Detmer-Goebel’s speculation that “[e]arly modern culture’s endless fascination with the Lucrece legend, in part, might lie in the paradox that she defends her (husband’s) honor—not by saying ‘no’—but by yielding” may provide a key to understanding how Lucrece’s rape narrative

<sup>39</sup> Drayton, *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Fleck, “Exemplarity and Its Discontents,” 75; Drayton, *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Drayton, *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, B2<sup>r</sup>, B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Drayton, *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, B2<sup>v</sup>; Clarke, “Ovid’s *Heroides*,” 396; Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 749, 1071.

speaks to both Isabel's and Rosamond's circumstances; these English women seem similarly caught in situations where "yielding" to a male social superior becomes compulsory and "good wom[e]n 'consent' as a defensive act."<sup>43</sup> Following in this vein of interpretation, significant questions of Isabel's agency arise when we examine the lyrics' representation of her journey to and experiences within Warwick Castle in "The Lamentable Song." Having glimpsed the young woman bathing, Wigmore promptly calls upon "a seruant of great trust," commanding him "to my Castle straight [Isabel] bear." We hear that "Thus to Lord Wigmoore [Isabel] was brought / Who with delight his fancies fed." There is little suggestion that Isabel is acting of her own volition or had any choice in the matter. The ballad's language is telling: she is *borne* and *brought*. The later description that Wigmore "int'ic'd her to his bed" may be slightly more ambiguous, but the further phrasing "This being done incontinent, / She did returne from whence she came" has, again, an oddly passive sound to it, with Wigmore's burning passion figured as something that is being done *to* Isabel. Later, when "ere three months were fully passed" and "Her crime committed plaine appears," it is described as "receiued shame," precipitated by Wigmore. The ambiguity of the ballad's language is thus suggestive of compulsion. Isabel has "defild, / And spotted [her] pure Uirgins bed," yet she was "led"—perhaps forcibly—to this "vile folly" by Wigmore himself.

### **Isabel, Diana, and Callisto**

The invocation of mythological precursors functions not only at a textual level in "The Lamentable Song." Indeed, the ballad's citation of Lucrece's rape as a model for understanding Isabel's tragedy is further enriched and complicated by the ballad's relationship with additional classically derived narratives. As was common practice in this period, "The Lamentable Song" was disseminated in print without accompanying musical notation, relying instead on the audience's presumed familiarity with a broad repertoire of common tunes. Though the ways in which, as F.W. Sternfeld has put it,

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<sup>43</sup> Detmer-Goebel, "What More," 143.

“well-known melodies...wandered from text to text” in ballad culture has long been recognised, the hermeneutic implications of this phenomenon have attracted ever-increasing levels of interest in the last decade.<sup>44</sup> In his 2010 *Poetry and the Police*, Robert Darnton—in the course of constructing a broader argument that recycled melodies surely “convey associations...attached to earlier versions” of a song—introduces the evocative phrase “aural palimpsest” to characterise the effect of singing “new words...to a familiar tune.”<sup>45</sup> Published in the same year, Marsh’s *Music and Society in Early Modern England* likewise draws attention to the broadside industry’s overwhelming reliance on common tunes, and his hypothesis that particular melodies must have been “capable of reinforcing, altering and destabilising textual messages” for early modern English audiences dovetails nicely with Darnton’s semantically rich image of the ballad as an intermedial palimpsest.<sup>46</sup> More recently, the work of Sarah F. Williams has explored “how specific melodies developed ‘reputations’ because of their repeated usage with certain subject material,” and Erin Minear—proposing that “remembered music never remains fully in the past: recollection stimulates repetition and return, breaking down the distinction between memory and experience”—has investigated the complementary concept of “reverberation,” which encompasses “the acoustic and affective properties of music, as infectious sounds that linger in the air *and* in the memory.”<sup>47</sup>

Bearing in mind recent scholarship’s forays into this area, it is worth pondering how the aural cues of “Diana” might serve as a palimpsestic form of commentary on the tale Isabel of Dunsmore’s demise, with the later ballad drawing on audiences’ presumed memory of an earlier set of lyrics associated with the same tune. In both *A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses* and the surviving seventeenth-century broadside that independently reproduces “The Lamentable Song,” audiences are instructed to sing this new ballad’s lyrics to the pre-existing tune of “Diana.” Reconstructing, four hundred years on, just what a seventeenth-century audience would have commonly understood the

<sup>44</sup> Sternfeld, “Music and Ballads,” 220.

<sup>45</sup> Darnton, *Poetry and the Police*, 80.

<sup>46</sup> Marsh, *Music and Society* 288-89. See also the further development of such arguments in Marsh, “The Blazing Torch.”

<sup>47</sup> Williams, “Witches, Lamenting Women,” 33; Minear, *Reverberating Song*, 10, 1.

tune of “Diana” to be is necessarily something of a speculative exercise.<sup>48</sup> However, it was likely an alternative name for the popular tune of “Rogero,” to which a contemporary ballad entitled “A New Sonnet Shewing How the Goddess Diana Transformed Acteon into the Shape of a Hart” was set.<sup>49</sup>

Assuming that early modern audiences were being instructed to interface their prior knowledge of “A New Sonnet” with “The Lamentable Song” has a number of interesting intertextual implications. After all, “A New Sonnet” retells the well-known tale of Actaeon’s disastrous encounter with the goddess of chastity from Book 3 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*—a tale aptly called by Joyce Green MacDonald “the master text behind the rich Renaissance history of the dangers and revelations of unsanctioned looking.”<sup>50</sup> Following the narrative outlines of Ovid’s ancient tale, Diana in this early modern ballad is depicted “daintily” bathing in private with “all her Virgins fair and pure” when the mortal hunter Actaeon appears “running through the Wood” and fatefully “cast[s] his Eye” on their “bodies bare.”<sup>51</sup> However accidental it may have been, the hunter in “A New Sonnet” is roundly punished for this visual trespass when he finds himself transformed by the wrathful goddess into “a huge wild Hart,” thereby becoming quarry for his own hunting dogs.

The shared melody of “A New Sonnet” and “The Lamentable Song” reinforces a number of palpable parallels between the stories of Diana and Actaeon and Isabel and Wigmore. When Wigmore first glimpses Isabel in “The Lamentable Song,” she is whiling away the “euening howers” by a river. Mistakenly believing herself to be alone and “not to be espied,” the English maiden, like Diana of classical legend, “lay[s] from her her Countrey tire” and “wash[es] her selfe in secret wise.” The ballad’s correlative emphasis on Wigmore’s visual transgression—or the “unsanctioned

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<sup>48</sup> EBBA, for instance, currently lists this tune of Diana as unknown.

<sup>49</sup> While some existing seventeenth-century broadsheets specify only that “A New Sonnet Shewing How the Goddess Diana Transformed Acteon” is meant to be sung to “a new tune,” at least two of the earliest exemplars specify that tune as “Rogero.” Information on this tune can be found in Simpson, *British Broadside Ballad*, 535 n 5 and 612-14; Duffin, *Shakespeare’s Songbook*, 122-24; Ward, “Apropos,” 70-71; and Ward, “Music for A Handefull,” 159. Somewhat confusingly, “A New Sonnet” begins with virtually the same opening lines an earlier ballad called “The Historie of Diana and Acteon” (printed in Clement Robinson’s sixteenth-century musical miscellany *A Handefull of Pleasant Delites*) with which it should not be confused; though obvious verbal echoes exist between these two ballads, their lyrics and melodies are ultimately distinct.

<sup>50</sup> MacDonald, “Ovid and Women’s Pastoral,” 449.

<sup>51</sup> I cite the lyrics of “A New Sonnet” from EBBA 30258.

looking” so closely associated with Actaeon’s mythological story—is difficult to miss. Writing of the tale of Actaeon in the *Metamorphoses*, Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell notes that “while the youth may have looked at the goddess unintentionally at the beginning, this does not prevent desire, and the imagery and metaphoric language of [Ovid’s] text imply such.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Isabel’s beautiful body in “The Lamentable Song” is represented as something-to-be-looked-on and accordingly blazoned with a distinctly scopophilic pleasure:

The tresses of her hair unty’d,  
Hung glistering like the golden wire,  
And as the flakes of winter snow,  
That lye unmelted on the plains,  
So white her body was in show,  
Like silver springs did run her veins

Wigmore’s “longing eyes” are “much delight[ed]” by this sight of the young woman’s nude figure, and we suggestively learn that:

He ravisht with this pleasant sight,  
Stood as a Man amazed still,  
Suffering his eyes to take delight  
that never thought they had their fill

This representation of Wigmore as an arguably willing *alter* Actaeon has far reaching implications for the rest of the ballad. Catherine Bates has called Actaeon the “iconic figure that stands behind every *blasonneur*,” and, like this mythological hunter, Wigmore is duly punished for the forbidden glimpse that he catches of the female body.<sup>53</sup> As Wigmore claims, this “sight hath wounded [him] full sore,” and his literal vision of Isabel’s unclothed figure directly precipitates a metaphorical loss of (in)sight and perspective for the lord: “She blinded his affection so, / That reasons rules were led awry.” Isabel of “The Lamentable Song” is clearly the victim of the nobleman’s unruly gaze, and Wigmore’s initial visual violation of her naked body by the river foreshadows his later violation of her physical person in his own home.

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<sup>52</sup> Salzman-Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies*, 48.

<sup>53</sup> Bates, *Masculinity, Gender and Identity*, 90.



The musical evocation of Actaeon's mythological precedent in "The Lamentable Song" echoes, to some extent, the use of this same mythological tale elsewhere in early modern literature to describe the phenomenon of love at first sight. Consider, for example, the words of Orsino recounting the moment when his "eyes did see Olivia first" at the start of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "That instant was [he] turned into a hart, / And [his] desires, like fell and cruel hounds, / E'er since pursue" him.<sup>54</sup> Yet, as I have already remarked, the chronology of Wigmore's desire is at slight variance from what is here described by Orsino, stemming, as it does, from a pre-formed, verbally induced passion that seems to specifically recall Tarquin's in *The Rape of Lucrece*. As much as the lord's act of *looking* at Isabel's body in the river mimics that of the mythological Actaeon perceiving the bathing goddess Diana, Wigmore's significantly termed visual "ravish[ment]" of the bathing Isabel is also distinctly reminiscent of the ocular pre-rape of Lucrece in Shakespeare's poem. This encroachment—which arguably "prolongs the voyeuristic pleasure for the reader and anticipates the final deed of violation"—occurs as Tarquin at the heroine's bedchamber in *The Rape of Lucrece*.<sup>55</sup> Drawing back her bed curtains to reveal her "perfect white" form displayed like some "virtuous monument... / To be admired of lewd unhallowed eyes," Tarquin finds that his own "dazzle[d]" eyes react as if "blinded with a greater light" as he takes in, at length, the insentient woman's "hair like golden threads," "snow-white dimpled chin," and "breasts like ivory globes circled with blue."<sup>56</sup> It is in the distinct pattern of Shakespeare's *Lucrece*, then, that Isabel in "The Lamentable Song" is likewise rendered as "a thing to be visually consumed before she is sexually consumed."<sup>57</sup>

The melodic Diana and Actaeon subtext for Isabel's tragic tale in "The Lamentable Song" has further possible implications, as well. Audiences well-versed in the mythological content of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are likely to perceive that the physical revelation of Isabel's "reproachfull shame" via her pregnant body is reminiscent of the tale Diana's unfortunate nymph Callisto, who,

<sup>54</sup> Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, 1.1.19-22.

<sup>55</sup> Scholz, "Textualizing the Body Politic," 108.

<sup>56</sup> Shakespeare, *Rape of Lucrece*, 394, 391-92, 377, 375, 400, 420, 407.

<sup>57</sup> Phares, "The Stage is Down," 53.

despite her devotion to the goddess of chastity, incites the lust of Jupiter, is tricked by him, and, following her rape, gives birth to the god's son. Callisto's tale—also triggered by a chance sighting in the forest—is frequently seen as a “companion story” of sorts to Ovid's Actaeon and Diana episode in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>58</sup> Though connections between Isabel of “The Lamentable Song” and Callisto function only associatively, the “plaine appear[ance]” of Isabel's “crime” is distinctly reminiscent of the Ovidian moment wherein (to quote Arthur Golding's 1567 translation) Callisto's similarly ambiguous “crime was brought to light,” as the nymph's “fault” is betrayed to her chaste companions by the appearance of “hir naked body.”<sup>59</sup> As in the story of Callisto, who is cruelly shunned by Diana and bitterly resented by Juno upon the revelation of her divine pregnancy, Isabel's swelling belly also results in her social marginalisation when, much to the shame of her “wofull parents,” her compromised situation becomes “Throughout this country well...knowne.”

While sympathetically rendered, it is significant that Isabel's tragedy involves conception. This fact alone might have confirmed her sexual guilt for seventeenth-century interpreters, many—though certainly not all—of whom would have regarded pregnancy as a sign of sexual consent. It is not unrelated that Callisto's Ovidian violation by Jove, which eventually resulted in the birth of a child, presented related hermeneutic difficulties for early modern commentators. This is evinced by the translations produced both by Golding in the sixteenth and by George Sandys in the seventeenth century. Though, as Carolyn D. Williams has observed, on the one hand, Golding's “language seems to endorse her guilt,” his translation also carefully follows Ovid's original Latin text in stressing the extent to which Callisto “against [Jove] strove as much as any woman could,” fighting back against her attacker “with all hir might” though no “poore wench...alive could vanquish mighty Jove.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, as MacDonald notes, this sense of ambivalence in Golding's text is only further emphasised in George Sandys's later translation, which “indicates precisely the contradictory

<sup>58</sup> Silberman, *Transforming Desire*, 150 n 47.

<sup>59</sup> Golding, *Metemorphoses*, 2.563, 574.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, “Silence,” 98; Golding, *Metamorphoses*, 2.541-44.

position Callisto inhabits, biologically a victim but socially perceived to be a collaborator in her own ruin.”<sup>61</sup> Sandys, who argues in his accompanying commentary that the “devirginated” Callisto, like others “who abandon their chastities,” finds the “excuse of ravishment ...convinct’t [i.e. invalidated] by conception” thus describes her pregnancy-inducing violation by Jove, somewhat confusingly, as a “willing rape.”<sup>62</sup> One imagines that, if presented with the facts of Isabel’s case as relayed in “The Lamentable Song,” Sandys might well have used the same descriptor.

### Isabel and Dido

Generally speaking, the Wigmore of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation,” the second seventeenth-century ballad to relate Isabel’s tragedy, appears to be a slightly more sympathetic character than his earlier counterpart in “The Lamentable Song.” He is unambiguously presented at the ballad’s outset as a “renowned Lord” possessing “Glorious Fame,” and these early commendations of his character contribute to the ballad’s general sense that his later fall into lustful depravity has something of a *de casibus* flavour to it. It is telling that, whereas “The Lamentable Song” presents itself as “a warning to all maids to haue care how they yeeld to the wanton delights of young gallants,” “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” is instead positioned as an *exemplum in malo* for young *men*: at the close of Part 2, the repentant Wigmore pleads “Let all-young men that hear this song, / take care they ner commit” amatory crimes like his own. Following from this, in the opening lines of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” Wigmore does not exhibit the same Tarquin-esque sense of purpose as his counterpart in “The Lamentable Song,” who single-mindedly set off in search of the famed Isabel. Rather, though we are told that Wigmore of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” has previously “heard of her,” there is some ambiguity as to whether he has deliberately gone looking for Isabel when he comes upon her bathing. The lyrics of this second ballad describe a more hapless version of Wigmore ambling about “on a Summers day / with his own

<sup>61</sup> MacDonald, “Ovid and Women’s Pastoral,” 458.

<sup>62</sup> Sandys, *Metamorphoses*, II<sup>v</sup>, G2<sup>r</sup>.

Servant” and enjoying the bounty of the natural world. The two traipse through fields and along a riverbank, where they take particular “pleasure” in the “murmuring currant” of the water before spotting Isabel within this English *locus amoenus*. As the lyrics of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” make clear, Wigmore “fall[s] / in love with her at the first sight” rather than beforehand, and his “love-sick fancies” derive from this real-life—and perhaps chance—physical encounter, rather than being inspired by verbal report *à la* the Wigmore of “The Lamentable Song” (or his Shakespearean antecedent). What is more, Wigmore’s visual violation of Isabel is downplayed in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation,” whereon correspondingly little attention is paid to the image of “Fair Isabels body.” In fact, the nude woman’s physical appearance is not described beyond a solitary reference to “her milk-white skin.”

There is also a far greater sense in this second ballad that Isabel and Wigmore’s relationship may well have been consensual, more akin to a what might be described as a seduction than a potential rape. Indeed, there is a good deal of attention given to the role that persuasive rhetoric seems to play in Isabel’s downfall. Whereas the means by which Isabel is “brought” to Wigmore in “The Lamentable Song” are never fully elucidated, we learn quite specifically in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” that she accedes to a polite invitation to engage in conversation with the lord: “The Servant told [Isabel] courteously, / his Lord desired her for to come / For he must speak with her.” Upon her subsequent arrival at Wigmore’s castle, Isabel is successfully “beguiled” by the lord’s rhetorical facility. The lyrics relate:

Lord Wigmore fell upon his knees,  
and begd to him she would be kind,  
Crying Isabel my dear, none sees,  
blush not my sweetest, love is blind.

This rhetorical duplicity to which Isabel tangibly falls prey in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” is a common feature of the early modern ballads featuring fallen women. Such songs are typically brimming with allegations against false and perjured males who have wooed their

lovers with sweet words only to break crucial vows of fidelity, protection, or marriage; their lyrics often resonate, broadly speaking, with Warren Boutcher has identified as the pervasive relationships between humanist rhetorical mastery and “the affective and sexual capture of women” so often in evidence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literary culture.<sup>63</sup> To take a representative example, we might consider the complaint of the forsaken female narrator in “The Lovely Northern Lasse,” who reports being enticed by the “Sugred words” and “tempting tongue” of her masterful wooer:

He joyed me with his pretty chat,  
 so well discourse could he,  
 Talking of this thing and that,  
 which greatly liked me:  
 I was sogreatly taken with his speech,  
 and with his comely making,  
 He used all the meanes could be,  
 To inchant me with his speaking.

In contrast with “The Lamentable Song,” “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation,” contains no explicit *textual* references linking Isabel to Lucrece—or, indeed, to any other literary exemplar. Yet, I would argue, this second ballad also relies on mythological allusion to shape our understanding of Isabel’s tale: again, it does so via the “aural palimpsests” of recycled music, gaining an accretion of meaning through the repetitions that inevitably occurred in a ballad culture wherein performers and consumers reiteratively fit multiple sets of lyrics to the same popular melodies. There is no question about the identity of “Troy Town,” to which the lyrics of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” are set. This popular early modern tune, which was also widely known by the alternative title “Queen Dido,” was closely identified with the sixteenth-century ballad “The Wandring Prince of Troy,” a song relaying the classical tale of Dido’s passion for Aeneas and her suicide after he abandons her to fulfil his epic destiny.<sup>64</sup> What might the palimpsestic relations

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<sup>63</sup> Boutcher, “Who Taught Thee Rhetoricke,” 27.

<sup>64</sup> I cite the lyrics of “The Wandring Prince of Troy” from EBBA 20276. Though no sixteenth-century imprints of this ballad now exist, it was first entered into the Stationers’ Register in the mid-1560s (Arber, *A Transcript*, 1:270).

between the lyrics of “The Wandering Prince of Troy” and the story of Isabel and Wigmore mean for our interpretation of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation”? And how do the different sets of lyrics in this ballad and the “The Lamentable Song” complement their varying mythological intertexts? As my above points make clear, the switch of tunes from “Diana” to “Troy Town” in this second version of Isabel of Dunsmore’s tragedy is accompanied by a corresponding shift within the ballad’s lyrics that de-emphasises the narrative’s intertextual affinities with the Ovidian-derived story of Diana and Actaeon.<sup>65</sup> Further to this, I would argue that a number of additional modifications to Isabel’s tale in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” encourage audiences to instead align this Warwickian tale with Dido’s abandonment.

Though “The Wandering Prince of Troy” is loosely modelled upon the events of Books 1-6 of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, its lyrics also clearly draw inspiration from Ovid’s *Heroides* 7 and *Fasti* 3, as well as Geoffrey Chaucer’s earlier vernacular reworkings of Dido’s story in *The Legend of Good Women* and *The House of Fame*. It opens with the arrival of Aeneas at “mighty Carthage walls.” Striking up an acquaintance with the city’s female ruler, the hero spends an evening with Dido and discourses on Troy’s “unhappy ten yeeres wars” over a shared banquet. Aeneas’ hostess quickly finds herself burning with desire for the mournful storyteller and is, predictably, crushed when he decides to continue on his Mediterranean quest the very next day. After hearing of her handsome guest’s departure, the queen dramatically employs a “bloody knife” to take her own life. The ballad’s account of the events following Dido’s suicide has some markedly non-classical dimensions. Now “in Grecia,” Aeneas receives an accusatory letter from Dido’s sister Anna informing him of the Carthaginian Queen’s fate and blaming the “False hearted” exile for her sibling’s untimely demise. When Dido’s “grisly Ghost” subsequently rises up to haunt Aeneas, she again admonishes him for the

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On this ballad, see Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad*, 587-90; Reid, *Ovidian Bibliofictions*, 129-35; and Reid “To the Tune” (which also succinctly considers its relationship to “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation”).

<sup>65</sup> Despite the generally reduced sense of affinity between the story of Isabel and Wigmore and the classical Diana and Actaeon in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation,” an interesting visual connection exists between these tales. A woodcut illustration that is used in numerous broadside imprints of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation,” including EBBA 30646, was also used in at least one broadside printing of “A New Sonnet” (EBBA 30258).

romantic wrong he has allegedly done to her. Though the Trojan prince ultimately repents, the amatory criminal is, nonetheless, swept off to an unknown, decisively un-Virgilian sounding punishment by “a multitude of ugly Fiends” at the ballad’s end.

To return to my earlier observation about the role that Wigmore’s persuasive rhetoric plays in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation,” it is worth noting that in both Virgil’s *Aeneid* and “The Wandering Prince of Troy” the burning passion that Dido conceives for her handsome houseguest is similarly inextricable from her bedazzled recognition of his talents as an epic storyteller. As Virgil’s seminal account makes clear, upon Aeneas’ conclusion of his autobiography, the Queen of Carthage finds herself equally impressed by his verbal prowess as well as his good looks: “*haerent infixi pectore vultus / verbaque*” [his looks and words cling fast to her bosom], and in “The Wandering Prince of Troy,” Dido is similarly taken by the “words demure” and “words so sweet” with which “this comely Knight” movingly “made them all to weepe.”<sup>66</sup> “The Wandering Prince of Troy” should also be situated within a long vernacular tradition of associating Aeneas with verbal deception—a tradition with roots in English poetry that stretch back into the medieval era. We might consider, for instance, Chaucer’s unflattering portrayal of this epic hero when he tells the tale of “How Eneas to Dido was forsworn” in *The Legend of Good Women*.<sup>67</sup> Here, Aeneas is unequivocally branded as “fals” while Dido is recast as explicitly “sely,” a term reinforcing her naiveté.<sup>68</sup> Like other such “sely wemen, ful of innocence,” her fault lies in the “truste” that she gullibly places in the empty words of an unworthy lover.<sup>69</sup> This sense that Aeneas has verbally deceived the Carthaginian queen is brought to the fore in Chaucer’s retelling of Virgil’s famously ambiguous cave scene (the point in the *Aeneid* where Dido and Aeneas first consummate their affair), in which the medieval poet places specific, non-Virgilian oaths in the tragically persuasive mouth of Aeneas:

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<sup>66</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.4-5.

<sup>67</sup> Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, 927. Aeneas gets similar treatment in Chaucer’s *House of Fame*, 239-432.

<sup>68</sup> Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, 1157, 1236, 1237, 1254, 1301, 1336.

<sup>69</sup> Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, 1254-56

Eneas ykneled so,  
 And told hire al his herte and al his wo,  
 And swore so depe to hire to be trewe,  
 For wel or wo and change hire for no newe;  
 And as a fals love-re so wel can pleyne,  
 That sely Dido rewede on his peyne,  
 And tok hym for husbonde, and becom his wyf<sup>70</sup>

Similar (and perhaps derivative) portraits of Aeneas-as-amourous-liar abound in early modern literature, which is full of references to “false Eneas” leaving Dido “at Carthage in her bed, / whiles he the falsest man a liue, / the towne and citie fled,” and the like.<sup>71</sup> In Christopher Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, for instance, just before throwing herself upon the pyre the queen declares, “Live, false Æneas! Truest Dido dies,” and Shakespeare’s Hermia’s refers in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to “that fire which burned the Carthage queen / When the false Trojan under sail was seen.”<sup>72</sup> So too does Isabella Whitney in *The Copy of a Letter* render up Aeneas as the consummate example of “one whose falshood now is playne,” a hero who “for...vnfaithfulnes, / did get perpetuall Fame”—a claim that is saliently juxtaposed with her narrator’s warnings that women should “Beware of fayre and painted talke” and “flattering tonges” lest deceptive male rhetoric bring them to ruin.<sup>73</sup> Such unfavourable depictions of this legendary Trojan hero can also be found in balladry beyond “The Wandring Prince of Troy”: Aeneas and misleading amatory rhetoric are likewise constellated, for instance, in Parker’s “Desperate Damsells Tragedy.” As the first-person narrator in this song “Mak[es] piteous exclamation, / Upon a false Young man for bringing / Her into this great vexation,” she describes being “Seduced by [his] speeches faire.” Now that her “honours dead” and “credits fled” along with her erstwhile lover, the suicidal woman pertinently suggests he has left her “quite forsaken” just as “false Aeneas fled, / from Dido true”—a suggestive parallelism that is further stressed when the heroine “Dido-like / her heart...strike[s]” with a knife.

<sup>70</sup> Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, 1232-38.

<sup>71</sup> Garter, *Tragicall and True Historie*, F8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> Marlowe, *Dido*, 5.1.12; Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 1.1.174.

<sup>73</sup> Whitney, *Copy of a Letter*, A2<sup>v</sup>, B3<sup>v</sup>, B6<sup>f</sup>.



Bearing such literary analogues in mind helps to highlight the intertextual connections between “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” and “The Wandring Prince of Troy” that latently serve to colour our sense of Isabel’s lonely death and Wigmore’s later remorse. Like Dido pining for Aeneas after his speedy departure from Carthage, Isabel directly responds to her own romantic abandonment by killing herself. Gone from this second version of the tale is the direct comparison of Isabel’s suicide to Lucrece’s, and musical cues instead encourage audiences to understand Isabel’s fatal act of auto-violence, like Dido’s, as having been motivated by an unfortunate love affair in which, it is implied, she played a technically consenting role. In a striking departure from Part 2 of “The Lamentable Song,” where the pregnant Isabel directly appeals to Wigmore’s sense of justice and delivers her long complaint while lying “prostrate at th[e] feete” of her former lover (or perhaps rapist), the shepherd’s daughter in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” never encounters Wigmore again after their fateful assignation at his castle. Delivering her complaint of Part 2 as a monologue reminiscent of Dido’s solitary outpourings in Chaucer’s medieval poetry or Ovid’s *Heroides* 7 rather than as a personal appeal to Wigmore, Isabel “Resolves to find a speedy cure,” for her lonely predicament “in some convenient private place.” As Isabel clandestinely “takes a Dagger in her hand,” she thus—in the same vein as the heroine of “The Desperate Damsells Tragedy”—restages the suicidal actions of the abandoned Queen of Carthage, who likewise uses a “bloody knife” to “end the smart” of her unpalatable separation from Aeneas (as this scene is phrased in the lyrics of “The Wandring Prince of Troy”).

Furthermore, in the non-classical vein of Aeneas in “The Wandring Prince of Troy”—whose amatory guilt is expansively detailed after he learns of his former lover’s death and who, by the ballad’s end, admits he “left unpaid what [he] did owe Dido”—Wigmore’s own admissions of culpability and sense of repentance are greatly amplified in the final lines of “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation.” “His guilty heart did in him bleed,” and Wigmore “never more had quiet rest” after hearing the news of Isabel’s tragic death. Swearing he will “pine with sorrow” for the

remainder of his life, the aggrieved lord resolves to “openly” acknowledge the tragic consequences of his lustful seduction. Whereas “The Lamentable Song” had ended with a succinct note that “now in Isabels graue [Wigmore] lyes, / Till iudgment comes them both to raise,” Wigmore in “The Fair Maid of Dunsmore’s Lamentation” is instead made the explicit architect of his own future enhartombment with Isabel, a conciliatory gesture that seems to be part of his self-imposed programme of public penance for his seduction of the shepherd’s daughter:

And when I am dead, and blood is cold,  
to shew my dear I lovd thee well;  
One Tomb shall both our bodies hold,  
such is my love for Isabel.

## Conclusion

In a 2011 article on Thomas Middleton and William Rowley’s Jacobean-era *The Changeling*, Frances E. Dolan made the claim that “rape was and remains a debate, a definitional contest, a much greyer area than either statute law or the most familiar narratives, such as the rape of Lucrece, might suggest.”<sup>74</sup> Dolan’s interest in probing the uncomfortable greyscale of early modern literary rape is one that speaks to the central issues under investigation throughout this essay. My readings of Isabel of Dunsmore and her range of classically inspired intertexts illustrate not only how seventeenth-century ballads are capable of portraying “coercion and consent in socially and morally complex ways,” but also how narratives depicting what Dolan would call “something *other* than rape, as statutes defined it”—narratives that might also include the multifaceted representation of Beatrice-Joanna’s sexuality in *The Changeling*, or of Rosamond’s in *Englands Heroicall Epistles*, or of that of the many duped and fallen women portrayed in early modern balladry, more generally—might nonetheless be located “in a history of debating rape’s meaning.”<sup>75</sup> I do not think it coincidental that two distinct early modern ballads about Isabel of Dunsmore’s tragedy, pieces that narrate a shared

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<sup>74</sup> Dolan, “Re-reading Rape,” 12.

<sup>75</sup> Dolan, “Re-reading Rape,” 5-6 (emphasis my own).

series of events yet seem to encourage distinct interpretations of Isabel's sexual complicity, emerged at a historical juncture when questions of consent were becoming increasingly visible in legal discourse about rape. In a culture increasingly preoccupied with detecting and evaluating women's apparent wills and desires, questions of whether (and how and when) a woman might have assented to a particular sexual encounter become paramount. I would thus argue that incongruities between Isabel's tale as presented in "The Lamentable Song" and "The Fair Maid of Dunsmore's Lamentation" bring to the fore that troubled question of consent by requiring audiences to exercise what Garrett would call their own "interpretative skills," interfacing the relatively static series of events associated with Isabel's tragedy with varying semiotic rubrics. By literally changing Isabel's tune and realigning her character with distinct mythological precursors, these two ballads—particularly when taken in conjunction—demonstrate the hermeneutic fluidity with which the character of a single sexual encounter might be understood, its dynamics subject to continual renegotiation and revision.

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