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Introduction

This was supposed to be a different book. Intrigued by broadsheets that were reflections of early modern plays, such as the ballads of *King Lear*, *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Arden of Faversham*, I dreamed of gathering more such songs and then extracting 'lost' information from them about theatrical production. But while the book that follows does sometimes identify and assess such ballads – ballads written, that is to say, in the light of theatrical performance – the story of the relationship between early modern ballads and plays proved richer and more complicated than I had imagined. It swiftly became clear that not all ballads about plays were written afterwards; some were at least as likely to be play *sources*. So while the ballad of *Romeo and Juliett*, anonymous, lost, but recorded for publication in 1596, in some way advertised performance of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which was in production at that time but had not yet been printed, the ballad of *Doctor Faustus*, registered in 1589, *may* have preceded its play (thought to have been performed any time between 1587–9) and was, either way, intended too to advertise their mutual printed source, a lost chap-book translation of the German life of *Doctor Faustus.*[1] The ballad of *A good warning for all Maidens, By the Example of Gods judgment shew'd upon one Jermans wife of Clifton,* meanwhile, entered for publication in 1603, is definitely a source for William Sampson's play *The Vow Breaker* (1636) which relates not only the story told in the ballad, but, in a metatheatrical, or perhaps metaballadical, moment, depicts how the ballad itself came to be written.[2] Even ballads

[1] Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama, 1533–1642: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011–19), 3: 1590–7, s.v. 987: *Romeo and Juliet* [Extant]; Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London,* 5 vols (London: privately printed, 1875–84), 3.68; Wiggins and Richardson, *British Drama*, 2: 1567–89, s.v. 810: *Doctor Faustus* [Extant]; Arber, 2: 516.

[2] *A good warning for all Maidens* (1658–64), reproduced in UCSB, The English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA), ed. Patricia Fumerton (http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu): EBBA 31836.

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that were manifestly reflections of plays were sometimes based on *playbooks* rather than performances, and seem designed to advertise those printed texts, like the ballad of *The Spanish Tragedy*, which shares story inconsistencies, character names, and even a purpose-cut picture with the playbook. Then there is the group of ballads that tell the story of moments, characters or images, rather than whole plots, written after plays but not mirrors of them: these are 'fan fiction' ballads that might flirt with different events or prioritise different characterisations, destabilising the play in the process. The ballad of *Musidorus and Amadine*, for instance, while based on the hero and heroine of the play *Mucedorus,* tells 'only' the story of their love, neglecting what might be thought to have made the play distinctive, its bear and cannibal.[3] This book will consider all such instances and more in order to categorise types of about-play ballad – source, performance reflection, book advertisement, fan fiction – bearing in mind that the longer a ballad was in existence, the more it could rotate through the different classifications: what was once a source ballad could then become a performance advertisement and thence a book advertisement; if it bears an indirect relationship to the play, it might be a fan fiction ballad too.

What also emerged was that other kinds of ballad entirely were part of the wider story of theatre's relationship to song. Two chapters in this book will be on the 'in-play ballads' that Shakespeare and Jonson 'product placed' in their plays and sometimes seem to have released for separate sale as broadsheets too, including *A Caveat for Cut-purses*, sung onstage in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair,* but also available as a paper ballad; and *A Lovers complaint* (now often called *The Willow Song*) sung by Desdemona in *Othello*, which exists on a broadsheet with the gender of the singer reversed. Often, as with the *Othello* ballad, available in 1615 if not before, these ballad snippets of play reached the press in advance of the playbook (*Othello* was first published in 1622) and might in origin be separate works that became part of the drama, or alternatively (or as well) the first printed bits of performance that could be taken home, functioning as something between a souvenir and a memory of the production. Sometimes, as with the ballad called *The Man in the Moon Drinks Clarret* (see Chapter 2, 'Publishing and Writing Ballads'), they were the only bits of a play ever published, the dialogue itself, which did not reach print, being lost. Theatregoers who bought any of these on the way into the theatre on broadsheets will have been primed to join in, at least with the burdens or choruses, if encouraged, allowing productions to be

[3] *THE wandring PRINCE and PRINCESS Or, Musidorus and Amadine* (1680?), EBBA 31000.

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mediated by print songs in ways that also made porous the distinction between on and offstage performer.

Finally, there were the ballads often performed at the end of plays and called jigs, from the Old French 'gigue', a fiddle, or 'ginguer', to leap or kick: they were dance ballads, often by or starring clowns. Because of the fact of jigs, a play that on the page appears to contain no ballads, is likely in performance to have included at least one; spectators, even for apparently balladless plays, can be imagined leaving the playhouse humming the tune of a jig ballad and ready therefore to make ballad purchases. Jig lyrics too were sometimes sold on broadsheets. They are hard to spot – jigs are seldom supplied at the end of playbooks, 'When that I was and a little tine [sic: tiny] boy' at the end of *Twelfth Night* being a rare exception – but broadsheets by company players, like *A prettie newe Ballad, intytuled: the Crowe sits upon the wall* (1592) by the clown Richard Tarlton, can be identified as probable jigs.[4] If printed jigs were acquired and bought by listeners on the way into the playhouse as well as on the way out, they will have been interactive texts that could be consulted, disputed and shared during performance; audiences with jig broadsheets in hand would also have been able and perhaps encouraged to sing along.

Collectively, this range of theatre ballads were not texts that came 'after' performance, as I had originally imagined, but during and beyond it: the purchasable interstices of plays that are also reflections on, and paratexts for them.

With the realisation of the range and variety of play-ballad connections came a revelation as disconcerting as it was fascinating: that the play was not always the central text attended upon by ballads. The ballads I had found were sometimes published before plays, and sometimes the only bit of plays ever published; they were generally sold all over the country while performances were geographically confined to one theatre at a time; and they were republished, reprinted and so reperformed over the centuries, often long after 'their' plays had rotated out of repertory, after, indeed, the original playhouses been plucked down. Early modern theatre ballads, individually ephemeral, had, through reprintings, a fixture and a permanence that plays, often only printed once, if at all, did not. So, this book, though framed as a story of plays and their accompanying ballads, is equally a story about the ballads that enlivened and led to and from plays and, in many ways and over many years, outshone them. Performed plays were just a manifestation of a narrative or a moment or an event that might

[4] Arber, 2: 283; *A prettie newe ballad, intytuled: the crowe sits upon the wall* (1592), EBBA 37060.

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have started in, or become, and certainly performed longer and more capaciously as, a popular song.

I.1 Theatre Ballads Defined

By 'ballads' this book means not the oral 'minstrel ballads' that were performed in grand houses by talented musicians, but the texts that largely replaced them: popular songs to well-known tunes, 'usually narrative', as *OED* notes, and, crucially, 'often printed as broadsheets' (ballad, *n*, 1.b). This book is on those purchasable broadsheets, which sometimes seem to have started life as print texts to be sold at the theatre, and sometimes, like jigs, seem to have been showcased in performance first but published and sold at the theatre thereafter; either way, once in print, they were pieces of paper that could be purchased, carried into the playhouse, consulted and perhaps even partially performed there, and then taken home and performed once again, well away from the stage, in drinking establishments, dairies and homes. Published theatre ballads have a unique relationship to performance and print, straddling the two, in ways that will have made them appealing to playing companies and stationers (publishers) from the start.

The paper stock used for ballads determined the way they were understood and used. Sold as large, flat sheets, they might be half folio in size (here called 'broadsides') or full folio in size (here called 'broadsheets'): they were clearly designed for communal singing, being wide enough for several people to cluster around; they were, equally, pictorial enough to hang up to decorate houses, taverns and other public spaces; and they were low-quality enough to be recycled as spills for pipes, covers for jam or mustard pots and paper for 'houses of office' as privies were formally known.

The type used for ballads also made statements about their content. Ballads tended to be in the Gothic or textura typeface known as 'black letter' or sometimes 'English letter', a form going out of fashion for books but retained on proclamations and hornbooks (the alphabet batons, covered in horn, from which children learned to read). That meant that they looked admonitory, 'nostalgic' in that they combined Englishness and pastness, and also childish; they resembled texts from which one might learn to read; indeed, teaching literacy was one of the purposes they served (see Chapter 2).[5] The ballad's chorus or 'burden', however, was usually in a different typeface, or set apart through indentation, a paper way of

[5] See Zachary Lesser, 'Typographic Nostalgia: Play-Reading, Popularity, and the Meanings of Black Letter', in *The Book of the Play: Playwrights, Stationers, and Readers in Early Modern England*, ed

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projecting and indicating the moment at which everyone could 'join in', so that ballads often had a visibly 'communal' section.

The layout of ballads highlighted what about them was new and what was old. The title, usually to be found at the top left, introduced the new lyrics, but typically concluded with an indication of old content, the tune, which was conveyed by name alone: 'to the tune of Fortune my Foe'; 'to the tune of Packington's Pound' and so forth. As the phrase 'to the tune of' suggests, the tunes were to be recalled from earlier ballads, a process of musical recycling that has come to be called 'contrafactum'.[6] The tune often came with a primary meaning, inherited from the words of its first or 'foundation' ballad, that modified and contextualised any later words then sung to it. Or none! An extreme example is provided by the anonymous play of *Richard II*, where a tune that is merely whistled still carries the dangerous content of the foundation ballad's words:

NIM: oh villayne he whissells treason [. . .]
WHIS: whisselld treasone, alas S^r how can that be
BAYL: very easly S^r. thers a peece of treason that flyes up & downe the country in the liknes of a ballad, & this being the very tune of itt [. . .]
WHIS: alas Sir ye knowe I spake not a word.[7]

Because tunes were so often named from earlier ballads, they came, too, with memories of the 'feel' of the previous ballad, as well as whatever additional connotation, sorrowful or joyful, the tune itself conveyed. So we hear of ballads 'compos'd upon some dismall or dolefull accident as may be sung to the tune of welladay' that would be instantly recognisable as tragically mournful in content, while 'Ballads made on thee, to the tune of the inconstant Lover' would sonically relay a critical personal statement.[8]

Marta Straznicky (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 99–126 (107). That black letter's continued use on ballads and legal documents shows it represents simultaneously the historical past and immediate present (the 'passing present'), is argued by Patricia Fumerton in 'The Passing Present of Black Letter and Calligraphy', *The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 172–206 (186).

[6] See Jenni Hyde, *Singing the News: Ballads in Mid-Tudor England* (London: Routledge, 2018), 81; Una McIlvenna, 'The Power of Music: the Significance of Contrafactum in Execution Ballads', *Past and Present,* 229 (2015), 47–89 (48): 'Although the term 'contrafactum' tends to be used by musicologists to describe the substitution (after 1450) of a sacred text for a secular one [. . .] I am in agreement with Kate van Orden and Rebecca Wagner Oettinger who use "contrafactum" to denote the widespread and enduring tradition of using familiar tunes within new songs'.

[7] Anon, *The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second or Thomas of Woodstock*, ed Wilhelmina Paulina Frijlinck (Oxford: Malone Society, 1929), 59.

[8] Henry Parrot, *Cures for the itch. Characters. Epigrams. Epitaphs* (1626), A2v; Claude M. Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 747–8; William Sampson, *The vow breaker* (1636), C3v.

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That meant that a balladsinger could, with a bar of tune or even with the 'mere title' of one, activate 'the musical instincts of the potential consumer', as Christopher Marsh remarks.[9] And, as buying a new ballad was, usually, to get a fresh set of words to a tune one already knew, so ballad broadsheets offered a delightful combination of novelty and familiarity.

Those recognisable tunes also rendered ballads somewhere between the songs they certainly were, and the dances they might also represent. Thomas Morley, the composer, even thinks of them as a form of dance, writing of a kind of music 'which they tearme *Ballete* or daunces, and are songs, which being song to a dittie may likewise be daunced'.[10] Our word 'ballet', of course, descends from the dance meaning of the term: when Bruce R. Smith asks 'what do *ball*, *ballet*, and *ballad* have in common?' the answer is that the Latin 'ballare,' 'to dance', lies behind all three words.[11] With ballads, the tunes sometimes originated as dances in the first place: fifteen of the twenty-two tunes mentioned by Anthony Munday, of whom, more later, in his book of ballads, *A Banquet of Daintie Conceits* (1588) were, notes Diana Poulton, specifically dance tunes.[12] That said, there was no crisp distinction between a dance and a song, and one tune, and so one ballad, might be either depending on how the listener interacted with it.

The poetry of ballads was also simultaneously new and formulaic. The metrical form of ballads was dictated by the tunes, obviously: so *Greensleeves* and all ballads to its tune are in iambic tetrameter; while all ballads to *Fortune my Foe* are in iambic pentameter. The most common ballad meter was that used by the ballad *Chevy Chase* and was made up of alternating tetrameter and trimeter iambic lines in an a.b.c.b. rhyme scheme. So typical was this meter that it came to be called 'ballad meter', 'common meter', and even 'Chevy Chase meter'. When Francis Wortley wrote his 'loyal song of the royal feast' in 1648, he did so with '*Old Chevy Chase [. . .] in mind',* as a result of which he feared some people would by association think his work 'rhime dogrel'.[13] But in fact ballads, like poetry

[9] Christopher Marsh, 'The Sound of Print in Early Modern England: the Broadside Ballad as Song', in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*, eds Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 171–90 (171).
[10] Thomas Morley, *A plaine and easie introduction to practicall musicke* (1597), 180.
[11] Bruce R. Smith, 'Putting the "Ball" Back in Ballads', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 79 (2016), 323–38 (323).
[12] Diana Poulton, 'The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad and Its Music', *Early Music*, 9 (1981), 427–37 (435).
[13] Francis Wortley, *A loyal song of the royal feast, kept by the prisoners in the Tower, in August 1648. with the names, titles, and characters of every prisoner* (1648), EBBA 36465.

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written to any other metrical form, were as good or as bad, as original or as imitative, as their (often anonymous) authors, with this exception: that new ballads sometimes consciously reflected their foundation predecessor, and that it was not unusual for them to inherit choruses and even rhymes from their forbears, their lyricism being thus, like their music, a kind of contrafactum.

Under the ballad's title was at least one woodcut; generally, there was a row of them topping the different columns of verse. There was on average one image for every seventy-seven lines of verse, calculates Marsh, a much higher ratio than for pamphlets or plays, making ballads, perversely for texts intended for performance, the most consistently pictorial print medium there was.[14] The images, printed usually from reused woodblocks made for other texts, were often also recognisable from earlier iterations, and tended to be 'stock' pictures with vague rather than specific relevance to the individual ballad that featured them – a poor man, a vain woman, a king, a devil, a group of people carousing and so forth.[15] That also allowed the pictures to be, within reason, what the observer wanted them to be: 'I like the Song well,' says Budget to the man selling ballads, 'but I would have a picture upon it like me'. 'Look you here,' replies the seller, 'Her's [sic: here's] one as like you as if it had been spit out of your mouth, your nose, eye, lip, chin, sure, they printed it with your face [. . .]'.[16] Many pictures were so memorable from earlier instantiations that they came with associations of their own, offering a kind of pictorial intertext.[17] William Cavendish has Gervas in his play *The Triumphant Widow* joyfully recognise a 'brave Ballet you and I use to sing,' because 'I know it by the Picture' (on this occasion he is right, though the same picture might decorate a different ballad entirely, of course).[18] So broadside ballads had a multi-media capaciousness that offered, as Patricia Fumerton put it, a 'cross class and fully experiential moment more extensively and intensively than [. . .] drama'.[19] They were recognisable and strange; old and new; excitingly

[14] Christopher Marsh, 'Best-Selling Ballads and their Pictures in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 233 (2016), 53–99 (53).
[15] For more on stock images and their repeated reuse, see Patricia Fumerton and Megan E. Palmer, 'Lasting Impressions of the Common Woodcut', in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2017), 383–400 (385).
[16] Anon, *The London chaunticleres* (1659), B2r-v.
[17] Explored by Christopher Marsh in 'A Woodcut and its Wanderings in Seventeenth-Century England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 79 (2016), 245–62 (259).
[18] William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, *The triumphant widow* (1677), 7.
[19] Patricia Fumerton, *The Broadside Ballad in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 320.

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multimedia, with their words, tunes, dances and picture; comfortably familiar as those tunes, pictures and sometimes choruses harked back to other, earlier ballad iterations.

It was the range of subjects on which ballads might be written that drew theatre close to the form, although ballads covered even more topics including, and not limited to, 'real' issues (floods, earthquakes, fires, battles, wars, plagues, crimes, executions, royal events); potentially real issues (monstrous births, libels, gossip, scandal); fictional stories (legends, classical tales, myths); historical stories (past monarchs, heroes and villains of yesteryear); international stories from other countries (news, politics, wars, historical heroes and villains, religious events); holy stories (from the Old and New Testaments and the apocrypha); 'wonders' (the supernatural, magic, monsters, fairies); advice (moralising, warnings, love and marriage guidance); jokes; lullabies; pornography; nonsense; celebrations of trade; celebrations of drinking; celebrations or renunciations of love. But they tended, within all of that, to be broadly comic or tragic (or historical) in approach, boasting the same essential range as plays even if they usually provided entire stories from one person's perspective. They shared, with plays, too, extravagant titles, so that N. Spackman boasts that his sermon will not be 'intituled like a ballat, or a play (the fond humor of some) but as it is'.[20] Like plays, ballads made what might be thought recondite knowledge available to everyone; indeed, a ballad often supplied classical or historical references enabling those who were without formal school education or who were illiterate, to recognise them when they were mentioned in plays. So John Aubrey explains how 'my Nurse had the History from the Conquest downe to Carl. I. [King Charles I] in Ballad'; Francisco de Quevedo writes of the man who 'would prate of the *Turks,* Gallies and Galligrosses, but it was only what he had read in Ballads, for he never had seen ship, the Sea, or any thing Sea-like'; in *Lady Alimony*, Tilly's knowledge of the story of the Trojan war is traced to having 'got by heart the Ballad of the Destruction of *Troy* to a syllable'.[21] Ballads and plays of course made their stories popular, accessible, compelling and understandable, no matter how elite and privileged their literary origins. For this reason, both were denigrated, often by writers who turned out also to be penning them.

[20] N. Spackman, *A sermon before His Majestie at White-hall the first of May 1614* (1614), A6v.
[21] Quoted in Kelsey Jackson Williams, *The Antiquary: John Aubrey's Historical Scholarship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 130; Francisco de Quevedo, *The life and adventures of Buscon the witty Spaniard* (1657), 196; Anon, *Lady Alimony* (1659), D1r.

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I.2 Selling Theatre Ballads

The subset of ballads that are here called 'theatre ballads' because they are about-play, in-play or after-play songs, had a further relationship to plays because of place of sale. As this book will explore in detail, printed ballads, which could be put to sale wherever crowds were to be found, were available for purchase at playhouses. At, though, not in. Robert Greene describes the 'unsufferable loytring qualitie' of the people 'singing of Ballets and songs at the doors of such houses where plaies are used'.[22] Ballads were sold by the playhouse's external doors, to the queue waiting for entrance into the playhouse or, later, exiting from it. Ballads thus geographically framed theatre performances, and, as they were to be met with before the play started and after it had ended, they framed performances in temporal terms as well. That means that the relationship of ballad to play depends on what 'play' is taken to be, while the link between ballad and 'playhouse' depends likewise on how a 'playhouse' is defined. If a play is said to be a staged dialogue that happens within a playhouse's doors, then paper ballads sold outside are therefore not part of it. But go back a step geographically, and reel back the minutes temporally, and the ballads sold around the theatre provide a context that shapes performance, introducing or reprising songs that will feature in or interpret the play itself. Ballads were something between paratext and premiere, or conclusory, text.

Balladmongers as they were called ('monger' meaning 'trader'), who sung and sold the ballads, were also part of that broadly conceived performance paratext, for they were the first and last performers that audience members might encounter as they arrived at and left the theatre. Themselves, it will be seen, 'threshold' types, balladmongers were just one up from beggars, and often chose their job not because they were good at singing, but because they were destined to be stared at: they might be physically impaired, hail from overseas, or simply be women in a world where performers were generally men. That combination of 'threshold' characters performing on the threshold of a location, will have made their actual texts, as sung and sold, seem themselves 'thresholdy', both outside and beyond the play. And yet in surrounding the theatre, the balladmongers gave a powerful, even threatening, performative context for what happened within. Inside, on the stage, a group of white men desperately performed the range and diversity that naturally surrounded their buildings.

[22] Robert Greene, *The third and last part of conny-catching* (1592), B1v.

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All of this will have had its effect on the would-be audience who were the purchasers of ballads outside a theatre. Those people bought texts that would affect their understanding of the performance beforehand, experience of it while it was happening (holders of relevant ballads were particularly likely to interact, in their heads or out loud, with the play songs) and memory of it afterwards. Ballads were entirely different from other ancillary bits of plays like prologues and epilogues, which were not participatory paratexts, and were not designed for separate sale or regular reperformance later at home. They were also entirely different from playbooks, for they might be purchased, owned and performed later by people for whom the dialogue had not been, and was sometimes never, made available. The one bit of play that a theatregoer was likely to own was a ballad.

It was, then, outside the theatre that the play/ballad link was forged. Ballads were performed (ballad seller/singers sold texts by performing them) as were plays; ballads were usually, and plays sometimes, printed; ballads were taken home to be reperformed later, as were moments and commonplaced passages from plays. Theatre ballads might, from the first, be seen as comments upon, modifications of, or even fulfilments of the play-ness of a play, that also recontextualised it somewhere else and as something else; they were metatheatrically referential but at one remove. Hence this book.

I.3 Why Now?

Given the number, range and importance of ballads to plays already touched upon here, it may seem odd that a book characterising them, categorising them, and comparing them has not been written before. There have, of course, been highly important books on particular ballad categories, like Ross W. Duffin's brilliant work identifying, and trying to trace the tunes to, in-play ballads; and Roger Clegg and Lucie Skeaping's tremendous study of after-play ballads, the jigs.[23] And there have, too, been wonderful studies of individual theatrical ballads by Bruce R. Smith, Macdonald P. Jackson, Christopher Marsh and Angela McShane amongst others, which will be addressed, with gratitude, later in this book. But no book has been written on all forms of theatre ballads because the

[23] Ross W. Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2004); Ross W. Duffin, *Some Other Note: The Lost Songs of English Renaissance Comedy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Roger Clegg and Lucie Skeaping, *Singing Simpkin and Other Bawdy Jigs* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2014).

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