Abstract

**Creative Project:** “Dozens of Whores, but not one single Wife”: Policing Gender in Seventeenth Century

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This digital scholarly interpretive work, “Dozens of Whores, but not one single Wife”: Policing Gender in Seventeenth Century, examines the gendered nature of English Broadside Ballads during the seventeenth century. An analysis of one hundred and thirty printed ballads illustrates that traditional gender ideals, stereotypes about women, and concerns over religion permeate this form of public discourse. The centrality of these themes reflects the concerns with social order and religion that came to dominate the turbulent seventeenth century, a period that saw tremendous political and social upheaval. This project utilizes primary sources from several online and printed collections including ballads from the University of California Santa Barbra English Broadside Ballads Archive, A Pepysian Garland: Black – Letter Broadside Ballads of the Years 1595 – 1639, and Early Ballads: Illustrative of History, Traditions, and Customs: also Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England. The analysis of these ballads is grounded in a careful study of the work of various historians on early modern women and family, as well as the study of broadside ballads and print history. The textual analysis tool, Voyant helped provide a better understanding of the common words and themes found in the ballads. Voyant visualizations allow viewers to “see” these concepts and provided important clues to conclusions reached in this analysis. This project offers important insights into how broadside ballads and the popular press, generally, reflected the concerns of early modern English people by increasingly producing broadsides that policed the boundaries of gender, gender relations, and religion.