

Dianne Mitchell

Title: "Anne Southwell's Hook".

Abstract: This paper investigates the way a seventeenth-century poet, Anne Southwell, remediates a sententious sonnet attributed to the Elizabethan poet Arthur Gorges. Southwell's lyric manuscript, now at the Folger, includes a copy of Gorges's poem beginning "Like to a lamp whose flaming light is dead." Southwell responds directly to this verse in at least three other lyrics, but most powerfully in her return to Gorges's image of an unbaited hook, which seems to symbolize the poet's sense of erotic loss. Tracing Southwell's use of the "unbaited hook" across a pair of elegies for female contemporaries, I propose that we read her reiterations of this hook as, well, a hook. What would it mean to think of a woman poet "sampling" a man's art in terms of the kind of "hook sampling" that is common in the music industry? How can Anne Southwell's hook open up new ways to think about the conversational nature of women's poetic form, and the way erotic energy shifts and is remade when women "sample" their contemporaries' art? And what might even an unbaited hook attract - across Renaissance reading and writing practices, or in our own critical moment?

Jennifer Wood

Title: "Earworm Phenomenology"

Abstract: "I received in recompense such joy, hearing the measured harmonies of such a multitude, and especially in the cadence and refrain of the song. ... I stood there transported with delight. Whenever I remember it, my heart trembles, and it seems their voices are still in my ears." [1] So claims the Huguenot traveler Jean de Léry in his *Histoire d'un voyage*, published in 1578 and chronicling his exploits as a missionary in Brazil some twenty years earlier, about hearing music sung by the Indigenous Tupinamba people. Léry's commentary indicates just how deeply the notes of the Tupinamba have somatically resonated within him through vibration; rather than an annoyance, as earworms are often described (at least, in modern discourse), Léry continues to experience pleasure at "remembering" Tupinamba "voices" resounding in his ears and heart alike. Suggestive of the polychronicity that characterizes sound in general, this foreign music continues to create the same physiological response in Léry: his "heart trembles" at each recollection—just as it had the first time he heard it—and the sound of the Tupinamba becomes as firmly a part of Léry as his own heartbeat. The music continues to impact him on sensory, affective, and physiological levels. He even can phenomenologically hear their voices in his ears, and feel the vibratory waves of his initial "ravishment" course through his body. The music uncannily vibrates within Léry, tuning him to a Tupinamba frequency even years after returning to his French homeland. This essay will explore the phenomenology of Léry's earworm alongside other examples of contemporary earworm experiences, like that of Twelfth Night's Duke Orsino or Othello's Desdemona, to argue that early modern earworms were conceptualized as having the capacity to infiltrate, as well as alter, the hearer from within.

Stephanie Pietros

Title: "Women's Song and Comedy in Shakespeare's Tragedies"

Abstract: While Shakespeare's plays irrespective of genre are rife with allusions to songs that originate outside of them, the tragedies seem to contain far fewer suggestions that actual songs are performed within the play than the comedies. Only half of the tragedies

contain songs that are actually sung, and, interestingly enough, those which are arguably the most dramatically significant are sung by female characters—Ophelia in *Hamlet*, the Witches in *Macbeth*, and Desdemona and Emilia in *Othello*.¹ Upon further examination, all of these songs occur in roughly the same part of the plays (act 4) and trace their origins to other sources, suggesting that Shakespeare is drawing on their intertextual networks when using them in these plays. Certainly, that is the case with *Othello*; the Willow Song in *Othello* would potentially play as comic to an early modern audience, an argument which I make through uncovering comic parodies of the song that were circulating at the time that *Othello* was first performed. As I expand this project to include *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, I seek to make connections among the songs in all three plays to see if I can argue that women's song serves a comedic function in all three.

Tony Perello

Title: "Pierced Through the Ear: Idea Pathogens in Othello"

Abstract: In an age inundated with viral transmission—be that of catchy tunes, celebrity rumors, YouTube videos, or an actual disease-causing virus (the ground for the viral metaphor)—earworms may be thought of as a physical archetype of memetic information transmission, apperception, and obsession. The passing phenomenon of a looping musical invader in one's mind provides a possible vector for an array of escalating influence through info-memes and strategies, one advertisers and propagandists know well. The intersection between the earworm, musical or otherwise, and meme theory suggests a useful approach for analyzing the interpersonal and obsessional dynamics seen in *Othello*, a play which has been called Shakespeare's most musical tragedy for its abundance of musical content ranging from Desdemona's "Song of Willow" to Iago's playlist of tavern drinking songs and his metaphorical references to music as a weapon of marriage destruction: "I'll set down the pegs that make this music" in the "well-tuned" union of Othello and Desdemona (2.1.193). Iago exploits the manipulative power of memetic obsessional transmission upon the susceptible Othello through the use of the quasi-musical earworms of insinuation and suspicion set within the swirl of self-replicating bits of gossip, rumor, and anxieties that circulate throughout the play. In doing so, Iago perhaps even passes along his own infection of the same parasitic worm of raging jealousy foisted upon him by an unidentified squire in Iago's past and still plaguing him even as he passes it to Othello. According to Richard Dawkins, who originated the term meme to describe bits of cultural information that spread through non-genetic pathways, such generational (or longitudinal) communicability partly characterizes the manner in which memes propagate through groups, both large and small as is the case in *Othello*. Under Shakespeare's hand, *Othello* could not have avoided his fate, but his mental and moral collapse from the force of Iago's cunning onslaught of disinformation would seem to be a trenchant warning for a modern culture intensely riven by an unending stream of focus-group tested info-memes and sociopolitical earworms.

¹ The other songs are a drinking song sung by a boy in 2.7 of *Antony and Cleopatra* and the Fool's songs in 1.4, 2.4, 3.2, and 3.6 of *King Lear*. Iago also sings snippets of two drinking songs in 2.3 of *Othello* when he gets Cassio drunk.

Philip Gilreath

Title: “‘By My Troth, a Good Song’: Nonsense Refrains and Much Ado About Nonny”

Abstract: Much Ado About Nothing is a play of “shallow fools” and silly love songs. My paper begins its investigations of ear-worms by considering Balthasar’s performance of “Sigh no more, ladies” in 2.3. This song, which urges the transformation of meaningless vows into musical tunes, features the line “Converting all your sounds of woe/ Into Hey nonny, nonny.” Peter Seng, in *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare*, notes that the “nonny” line, which might have sexual connotations in other contexts, is here “nothing but an innocent and meaningless burden” (58). References to “nonny nonny” appear in a range of Elizabethan plays including *Patient Grissel and Blurt, Master Constable*. The line also passes up into modernity: Frank Ocean, in his 2016 album *Blonde*, references the phrase in the lyrics to his hit song “Nights,” a song about recursions and broken relationships. A user on the social media platform Reddit posts the following: “Oooh nani nani”: what does this mean and why is it, like much of this album, such a sweet sounding thing that burrows itself into the brain and commands you to come back to hear it again? In my paper, I consider the way listeners are captured by musical nonsense. I think about how repetition and nonsensical transformation function in *Much Ado About Nothing*, while more broadly considering how repetition and nonsense function in the pleasures, productions, and appropriations of familiar musical units. My study will draw from Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis’ *On Repeat: How Music Plays in the Mind*, Bruce Richman’s writings on “nonsense vocable formulas,” as well as my own research in Shakespearean commonplaces and Early Modern copiousness, I consider how nonsense refrains allow singers and listeners to inhabit strange spaces of musical meaning.

Valerie Fazel

Title: ““#Fckromeoandjuliet: I want what that bi*ch has”: TikTok Shakespeare Earworms and Gen Z Literacies”

Abstract: From the moment of its 2018 emergence, Chinese-owned social media platform TikTok magnetized U. S. Gen Z users. Current statistics report TikTok now has over 130 million active U.S. users who on average spend 52 minutes a day watching TikToks, and that over 60% of U.S. users are between the ages of 16–24 (wallaroomedia.com/blog/social-media/tiktok-statistics/). As the past decade of research on Shakespeare and social media use demonstrates, where student-age social media users go so, too, does Shakespeare. Users’ TikTok Shakespeares range from performing a character, responding to film clips, to analyzing snippets of the plays and much more with nearly all the one-minute limit videos set to one of TikTok’s ever-shifting sound trends, these often made up of spoken word performances or popular songs. Earworms are the driving principle of TikTok. Memes become earworms, and earworms become memes, relatively short shelf-life objects whose cultural meaning/popularity is dependent on their kairotic circulation. Popular or successful bite-size videos thrive on earworms and the memetic repetition of tropes and visual/sound fragments in celebration of the user and TikTok’s messy, campy, meta-aesthetics. Because of the platform’s immediacy, my paper plans to focus on several TikTok Shakespeare trends (like the above-mentioned hashtag) from November 2021 to January 2022. My thesis is

still under development, but one possible claim is for TikTok Shakespeare earworms and memes as a form of para-COVID pandemic Gen Z Shakespeare (reading) literacy.

Savannah Jensen

Title: "The Sound of a Haunted Heart"

Abstract: Among seventeenth century ballads featuring ghosts within the English Broadside Ballad Archive, 72% fall within the Haunted Lovers' tale type. This tale type begins with two lovers who are about to be married. One lover then rejects the other. The rejected lover then dies and haunts their former lover until the former lover's death or unending despair. Simultaneously addressing heartbreakers, the heartbroken, and parents, these ballads act as didactic narratives that try to prevent heartbreak between young lovers. In this paper I will investigate how these ballads use text, music, and woodblock prints to reinforce characterizations of former lovers as fickle and rejected lovers as victims by equivocating broken vows to murder. In doing so I will ask in what other contexts have the images and tunes for these ballads been used and how might they have created associations with other types of narratives.

Ursula Clayton

Title: "Worms and Words: Early Modern Ear Infections"

Abstract: 'Make a ripe well smelling Apple hollowe, and apply it to the eare', physician William Langham advises in 1597, 'and the worme will come into it'. 'The joyce of [calamintum] put in to a mānes eares, it kylleth the wormes therin', an anonymous tract published in 1543 alternatively suggests. While treatments for earworms vary in their prescribed methods – with some using sweetness to draw the worm out of the ear, and others applying the fatal bitterness of herbs to it – the simplicity of these procedures implies that earworms are an ailment easily cured. Yet, the early modern ear is not just vulnerable to the irritating itch of literal worms, but the ingratiating influence of parasitic flatterers also. Alive to the metaphorical richness of this conceptual overlap, early modern writers warn of the risks of worm-like words: 'O Adulation, Canker-worme of Truth; | The flattering Glasse of Pride, and Self-conceit', writes poet Richard Barnfield. This paper will explore Shakespeare's own considerations of flattery as vermiculation by turning to Hamlet. Populated by 'buzzers ... who infect ... ear[s] with pestilent speeches', the play describes the Danish court as stricken with 'the monarch's plague [:] ... flattery' (Ham. 4.3.30-1; Son., 114, 2). Tellingly, it is the image of indiscriminate vermiculation that is used to demonstrate 'how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar' (Ham. 4.5.89-92). Associated with a kind of viscousness (flattering language is often described as honey, oil, or as 'candied' by early modern writers), Shakespeare's Hamlet presents language as reduced to calculated response, as no longer referring to a signified, extra-linguistic, objective truth, but instead self-generating its own mimicked reality. By doing so, Shakespeare raises important questions about the sustainability of a social system in which hungrily ambitious parasites prioritise their own wants over the welfare of others.