

Darlana Renee Ciraulo

“The Strange Case of Joseph Cundall’s ‘*Shakespeare’s Songs and Sonnets*’”

Joseph Cundall’s *Shakspeare’s Songs and Sonnets*, published by Sampson Low in 1862, marked a watershed trend in printed editions of Shakespeare. It brought together, for the first time, a selection of Shakespearean dramatic lyric and fourteen-line rhymed poetry into one elegantly illustrated gift book. John Gilbert, who would later receive a knighthood in 1874 for artistic merit, supplied the folio with ten colored lithographs printed by Vincent Brooks, in addition to thirty-two celebrated wood designs engraved by Edmund Evans. According to the Victorian art critic Gleeson White, Gilbert’s contribution to this publication stands out as one of “his most superb achievements in book illustration.” *The Songs and Sonnets of Shakespeare* uniquely offered the reader select material from the “Immortal Bard” accompanied by celebrated pictures from one of the nation’s preeminent artistic talents. The success of the book influenced a series of offshoots and imitations well into the Edwardian era and beyond. It is my hope that by looking briefly at the production and marketing of this specific gift book, a better understanding of its role in the printed pairing and dissemination of Shakespearean songs and sonnets can occur.

William Germano

Shakespeare *cantabile*

I am writing on songs in Shakespeare as they are appropriated and deployed in Shakespeare operas. (I'm working on a book about operas based on William Shakespeare.) The essay is primarily about Rossini and Verdi, Berio di Salsa and Boito.

Anne Gossage

### Noisy Nature in *Love's Labor's Lost*

*Love's Labor's Lost* takes place outdoors, and the play contains more songs than any other play by Shakespeare. Most scholars have examined these two facts separately, but my paper puts them together, and expands the examination of song to include bird song. The play uses sound, music, diction, staging, and song (both human and bird) to place the characters in a natural context, one that emphasizes particular affinities between humans and their natural environment. Re-discovering these affinities between birds and people, and naming them, can give modern audiences a richer awareness of both the play and the abundant natural world that Shakespeare and his contemporaries took for granted, but which is increasingly lost to us. For instance, cuckoos and owls, two key birds mentioned in *Love's Labor's Lost*, were common in Shakespeare's world, but they are either endangered or seldom heard now. In re-historicizing *Love's Labor's Lost*, I put my reading in the context of historical studies of music and song; of recent scholarship on early modern attitudes towards animals and sound; and on studies of gender and ecocriticism.

My paper looks especially closely at the two closing songs, which some scholars have considered puzzling or out of place, at the end of the play. One song features a cuckoo call, and the other the call of an owl. These particular calls echo similar sounds and ideas from the entire play. For example, the staging and language used by and about the men in the play reveal how they behave like cuckoos, emphasizing their awkward behavior, their breaking of vows, and their inability to stop talking. The play's language also connects the women to the female-led mating calls and powerful, predatory behavior of owls. The bird calls in the songs, and the connected words and sounds that echo throughout the play, match that of the real birds they describe; the birds are not merely symbolic. I also argue that the songs show evidence for the probable use of hidden bird whistles in performance, and I discuss what effects such sounds would have produced for the audience. Seeing how these patterns in the final songs connect with the rest of the play makes it clear that the closing songs are not just afterthoughts or add-ons, but rather central to the play's meaning, and vital to its ending.

Singing in the Rain: Song and Dramatic Genre in *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*

As the storm howls about King Lear, his Fool gives voice to a snatch of song that regular theatergoers would have recognized from sunnier times: “He that has and a little tiny wit, / With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain, / Must make content with his fortunes fit, / Though the rain it raineth every day” (*KL* 3.2.74-77). Responding with arch irony to Lear’s pathetic declaration that “My wits begin to turn” (3.2.67), the Fool revises Feste’s famous closing song from *Twelfth Night*: “When that I was and a little tiny boy, / With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, / A foolish thing was but a toy, / For the rain it raineth every day” (*TN* 5.1.375-78). While one needn’t know the allusion to grasp the basic sense of the Fool’s banter—foolish folks have to endure hard knocks—the echo of *Twelfth Night* is highly suggestive. For one, Shakespeare’s audience would have known that the same actor, Robert Armin, played both Feste and the Fool, and the winking self-reference might well have elicited a knowing laugh to lighten the mood of this brutal play. But I want to argue that there is more at stake here than meta-theatrical comic relief—or, rather, that this “relief” deliberately sets up a far-reaching ontological distinction between the genres of comedy and tragedy. Feste’s song, an epilogue demarcating the end of the play, proposes that the nature of comedy is to transmute man’s imperfect striving for erotic connection into the pleasing, repeatable form of art: “our play is done, / And we’ll strive to please you every day” (*TN* 5.1.393-94). An aesthetically complete vision articulated in five strophic stanzas, Feste’s song anatomizes the play as a whole, suggesting that not only that comedy is assimilable into song, but that comedy itself *is* song. The Fool’s revision of Feste’s song starkly inverts these claims. A single stanza set in the heart of the play’s central scene, the Fool’s truncated song proposes that where comedy is metaphorical, tragedy is literal: Feste’s “wind and rain” is a figure for life’s vicissitudes, but the Fool’s “wind and rain” is terribly real. (Surely this was the brunt of the joke for anyone in Shakespeare’s audience who had seen *Twelfth Night*.) Comedy is metaphorical, pleasant, repeatable as a staged event; tragedy is real, painful, and singular, refusing the aesthetic coherence of form. Feste’s song brilliantly distills *Twelfth Night* into its lyrical essence; the Fool’s stanza throws its hands up at the brutal complexity of the tragic vision, offering a bromide to provoke a brief dose of the “laughter” that Edgar famously, and for Hopkins unconvincingly, proclaims tragedy “returns to” (*KL* 4.1.6; Hopkins, “No worst, there is none”). Song is a part of tragic action the way a dressing is part of a wound. No wonder that *Lear* ends not with song but with an invocation to “unaccommodated” speech, not aestheticizing song, as the “thing itself” (*KL* 3.4.97, 96-97): “The weight of this sad time we must obey,” Edgar declares, “Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say” (5.3.299-300). My paper will attend to the actual musical setting of Feste’s song as I explore the limits of song in comedy and tragedy. Can the worst return to song? *Lear* declares explicitly that it cannot. But if it is only in the late romances—*The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter’s Tale*—that song finally achieves the moral and aesthetic reversal of tragic loss, the comedic consolation of song is nonetheless heard, if fitfully, in the howling storm of *King Lear*. For convenience, all references are to Norton Shakespeare, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.

Marcus Höhne

### The Singing Fools: Clowns and the Music of Shakespearean Comedy

My paper will explore the integral role of comedy and music in three Shakespearean comedies—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*—to demonstrate how genre and soundscapes guided early modern audiences' understanding of dramatic action. It argues that music not only serves as an aesthetic and structural element in these plays but also reflects the distinctions between characters, social norms, and thematic contrasts such as dream versus reality and earthly versus divine.

Central to this exploration are the clowns and fools—Nick Bottom, Touchstone, and Feste—whose comedic and musical contributions shape the plays' tone and deepen their themes. The analysis examines how music contrasts settings, such as the refined sounds of the fairies versus the crude, rustic tunes associated with Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Similarly, in *As You Like It*, folk music underscores the pastoral simplicity of the Forest of Arden, while Touchstone's lack of musicality shifts focus to other characters like Amiens, who provide satirical commentary. In *Twelfth Night*, Feste's folk-inspired songs articulate themes of love, time, and identity, blurring the lines between reality and performance.

Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that Shakespeare's use of clowns and music extends beyond comic relief to provide audiences with narrative and emotional cues, while challenging boundaries between performer and observer, illusion and reality. This interweaving of music and comedy reveals the dynamic interplay between sound, genre, and dramatic action in Shakespearean theater.

Yujin Jang

Early English Broadside Ballads and Shakespeare's Audiences:  
Christianity, Englishness, and the Politics of Race-Making

This paper examines songs in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* alongside late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century broadside ballads that convey contemporary religious and nationalist discourses formed in early modern England. It suggests that Shakespeare's language in the play can make early modern audiences associate Ariel's songs with contemporary popular ballads, including "From Sluggish Sleep and Slumber" and "A-wake, A-wake O England." These popular songs define England as a sacred nation and emphasize that all English people should be "awakened" to become good Christians. While Ariel's songs make Shakespeare's audiences aware of religious and moralistic messages implied in contemporary ballads, Caliban is otherized as he does not respond appropriately to Ariel's music. This paper shows how music is related to early modern politics of race-making and contemporary politics of Western colonialism in the New World. Due to his failure to "shake off slumber," Caliban is identified as a pagan subject who cannot achieve Christian redemption.

Kevin Pask

### The Old, Weird England: The Longue Durée of Shakespearean Song

I am interested in exploring the temporality of song in a few Shakespearean plays and in particular the way in which song can seem to connect the plays to longer temporal rhythms. The association of song with the peasantry is a strong note throughout both Shakespearean comedy and tragedy, often recalling the temporality of the old peasant world, time out of mind. Feste, fool for Olivia's deceased father in *Twelfth Night*, belongs to an older generation even while he also seems to be the honorary patron of the erotic topsy-turvydom of a younger generation. One of his songs, says Orsino, "is old and plain" and was once sung by "the spinsters and the knitters in the sun....It is silly sooth, / And dallies with the innocence of love / Like the old age" (II.iv.44-48). The paper explores the various dramatic possibilities of the estranged familiarity of the old world of song—"the old, weird England" to alter a phrase from Greil Marcus—in a few of Shakespeare's plays.

Charlotte Potter

Philomel, Procne, Victimhood and Violence: *Dream* and *Macbeth* as Shakespeare's sister plays

Inside her flowery bower, Titania requests 'a roundel and a fairy song' (*MND* 2.2.1) to help her sleep. The fairies circle their queen, chanting to ward off malevolent creatures such as 'spotted snakes' and 'Newts and blindworms' (*MND* 2.2.9, 11), using song to counter harmful charms. Meanwhile, on a stormy heath, three witches chant as they move 'Round about the cauldron' (*Mac* 4.1.4), casting items such as 'a fenny snake', 'Adder's fork', 'Eye of newt' and 'blind-worm's sting' (*Mac* 4.1.12-16) into their cauldron. Although different in intention and written for plays written approximately a decade apart, these chants share thematic and structural resonances which bond the plays together. Most significant is the figure of Philomel at the heart of the fairies' song. I posit that, where the fairies' song signals *Dream* as a Philomel-inflected play invested in themes of sexual victimhood, the witches' chant correspondingly introduces the figure of Procne to *Macbeth* which colours the play's depiction of female violence. I suggest that, in an echo of the myth's preoccupation with dismemberment, Philomel and Procne were severed from each other in early modern appropriations of their myth which sought to present idealised forms of female victimhood. I further argue that *Macbeth* reveals Shakespeare's engagement with Procne's story, particularly the tension between female victimhood and female violence. Examining this myth in relation to both *Dream* and *Macbeth* not only offers new interpretations of both plays, but also deepens our understanding of Shakespeare's broader Ovidian strategy.



Andy Reilly

‘A sings in grave-making’: Adaptation, Metric Characterisation, and the Sonnet in the  
Gravedigger’s Song in *Hamlet*

Embedded within one of the most celebrated passages in English-language drama, the Gravedigger’s Song in Act 5 Scene 1 of *Hamlet* is well-known for contributing to the scene’s *memento mori* theme. The song, an adaptation of sections from Thomas Lord Vaux’s ‘The Aged Lover Renounceth Love’, adds to this theme with its reflections on the passing of time and the inevitability of old age and death, dramatically represented by the ‘pit of clay’ the Gravedigger digs for Ophelia’s funeral as he sings. While acknowledging the song’s importance to *Hamlet*, this paper will seek to use the Gravedigger’s Song to explore Shakespeare’s use of song more broadly, using it as a focal point from which to explore three significant aspects: (1) Shakespeare’s dramatic adaptation of pre-existing ballads and songs; (2) his use of meter in songs, particularly three-syllable anapaestic and amphibrachic feet, as part of the characterisation of lower-status characters; and (3) his creative engagement with songs and sonnets in the plays, with the Gravedigger’s Song potentially offering an example of a text that straddles these poetic genres. Not only does it draw directly on a poem that was first published as one of Richard Tottel’s *Songes and Sonettes* (1557), but both its form (a fourteen-line text which, when extracted from the surrounding dialogue, comprises three quatrains and a concluding two-line refrain) and its serious theme of mortality invite comparison with more conventional sonnets, such as Shakespeare’s Sonnet 81. In contrast, its use of the ballad form and its prominent inclusion of rhythms elsewhere associated with the depiction of lower-status characters pulls the song in the direction of popular ballad culture. Therefore, as this paper will seek to explore, the song can perhaps be fruitfully read not only as a kind of ‘working man’s sonnet’, but also as a key text in understanding Shakespeare’s creative use of song in his plays.

Aidan Selmer

*Pericles* and the Resurrection of Medieval Dramatic Music

*Pericles, Prince of Tyre* (c. 1607-1609) provides the first instance in Shakespeare's plays of music accomplishing something like a miracle. In act three of the play, princess Thaisa appears to die in childbirth during a storm at sea. Buried in a chest and cast overboard by her husband, Pericles, she washes ashore at Ephesus and is found by the apothecary, Cerimon. Noting that "Death may usurp on nature many hours" without fully extinguishing life, Cerimon requests that his attendants play "rough and woeful music," which revives Thaisa (3.2.80, 86). Scholars such as Elizabeth Hart have argued that Cerimon's use of music fuses classical accounts of the healing powers of mystery cults at Ephesus with Jacobean associations between medicine and music performance. This paper argues that Cerimon's music also resurrects tropes and systems of feeling associated with the music of medieval cycle drama. *Pericles* adapts the "Apollonius of Tyre" narrative depicted in John Gower's Catholic confessional epic, *Confessio Amantis* (c. 1390), with Gower himself featuring as the play's chorus. Thaisa's restorative music augments the play's neo-medievalism by alluding to the use of music during the resurrection of Jesus in pre-Reformation mystery plays such as *York 38* "The Resurrection." The music of *Pericles* thus represents a meeting point between pre-Reformation religious plays and post-Reformation attitudes about the role of music in tempering minds, healing bodies, and making audiences feel a sense of wonder.

Alyse K. Sweeney

### Sublime Sensations in Shakespearean Song

In recent years, literary scholars have been recovering the early modern sublime. Though the concept is often believed to be a uniquely Romantic ideal, John Hall's translation of Longinus' *Peri Hypsous (On the Sublime)* appeared in 1652, and even before that, there is evidence that an original Greek version printed in 1554 was already circulating and influencing early modern writers and thinkers.<sup>1</sup> And while many still move to relegate the Longinian sublime to stylistic or rhetorical choices—separating it from Burke's or Kant's sublime—the sixteenth century was when modern ideas of the sublime were already emerging. Patrick Cheney recognizes this earlier emergence of the modern sublime alongside modern authorship and claims that “Shakespeare's sublimity is the most renowned in English. Yet it has never been mapped.”<sup>2</sup> Extending this recent scholarship, I argue that many songs in Shakespeare are deeply invested in producing sublime sensations. In this paper, I will pay particular attention to Desdemona's “Willow Song” and how it forces audiences to dwell on the cusp of violence with an awful solemnity, thereby heightening the greatness of the tragedy, but I will also examine works across Shakespeare's oeuvre to show how his theatrical songs are often meant to inspire the sublime.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Shaw, *The Sublime: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: 2017), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Cheney, *English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime: Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Olga Tsygankova

### The Chronotope of *Hamlet* and the Song of Madness

The scene of Ophelia's madness conveyed through a virtuosic performance of the fragmented song is one of the most arresting and impactful elements of Shakespeare's version of *Hamlet*. The technique that Shakespeare uses to depict the emotional and political depth of the scene is rooted in the popular tradition of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* – the mad lament of *Innamorata*, which was barely scripted and often relied on the professional actress' improvisation skills. Emily Wilbourne, writing on 17<sup>th</sup> Century Opera, investigates the lasting continuity of these connections, claiming that Ophelia was “so closely aligned with Italian *commedia dell'arte* prototypes that English performers could utilize music as shorthand for ‘the Italian *innamorata forsennata*’ or frenzied woman in love” (82). Eric Nicholson argues that Ophelia's song, while remaining tragic, also invokes the carnivalesque laughter of the dead *ex-buffone* Yorick. He writes, “as for doubling up, with both laughter and figurative substitutions, her spirit could be seen to live on as the Clown/Gravedigger himself, who during his jowling of various skulls ... not only sings a song of love, but also challenges the cover-up maneuvers of Claudius's and Gertrude's regime” (Nicholson 97). The tradition of fragmented song elements, with its animalistic and bodily references, transitions into the novelistic discourse by resurfacing in Samuel Richardson's depiction of Clarissa's “mad papers” as a lament of a woman whose life narrative has been irredeemably interrupted by her lover's betrayal. I propose that the fragmented song lament, adopted from the improvisational theatrical tradition, introduces a different chronotope into the previously stable development of the text by enacting a formal deviation that challenges the epistemological validity of the text itself.

Nicholson, Eric. “Ophelia Sings like a Prima Donna *Innamorata*,” *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater*, edited by Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson. Burlington, VT :

Ashgate, 2008, pp. 81-98.

Wilbourne, Emily. *Seventeenth-Century Opera and the Sound of the Commedia Dell'arte*.

The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Daniel Yabut

Textual settings: exploring the relationship between early modern musical notation and punctuation

In *The English Grammar* (1640), Ben Jonson assigns relative time values to punctuation marks, such as a 'somewhat longer breath' to the comma and a 'more full stay' to the period. A look at authorial manuscripts by contemporaries such as Thomas Middleton and Thomas Heywood reveals that playwrights did not necessarily adhere to Jonson's rules, often deploying points in places that appear to make little sense, even rhetorically. In response, editors of early modern drama often 'clean up' and modernise the punctuation in their editions. When one examines holograph manuscripts and compares the pointing preferences of one playwright to another, however, certain patterns seem to emerge that suggest that rhythm and metre were sometimes set aside in favour of dramatic interpretation, even if the meaning behind the distribution of points remains elusive in the absence of any defined system of usage.

At the same time, early settings of songs that feature in Shakespearean drama do not always follow particular time signatures, with ornamentation and seemingly unnecessary rests that are often deemed expendable in modernised musical notations. Nevertheless, a comparison between early musical settings and the playtexts written to fit them tends to show that it may be the case that dramatic interpretation of the text, rather than of the music, is often privileged, at the expense of coherent metre. This paper looks at musical settings such as 'Get You Hence' from *The Winter's Tale* and the 'Hand D' section of *The Book of Sir Thomas Moore*, in posing the question of whether playwrights, in accenting their texts, may have in fact been employing tactics perhaps not dissimilar to those used in the composition of musical settings.