Part IV

Shakespeare as Music Drama

From the late seventeenth century (Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen*, 1692), Shakespeare's plays have entered the realm of music theatre and opera, inspiring both composers and their librettists. Operas on Shakespearean themes have played a seminal role in the repertoire and continue to do so—just as Shakespeare's own plays have done in the spoken theatre. This chapter analyses examples of libretti that adapt and translate Shakespeare's plays into the operatic genre. Special attention is paid to dramatic situations, character construction, performative poetry and the role of music—the very making of musical theatre (or the melodramatic arts) that librettists and composers undertake in developing the potential and inspiration from Shakespeare. Rather than being exhaustive and extensive in mapping the wide field of Shakespearean opera, this chapter offers a detailed analysis of different types of dramaturgy and libretto, relating them to the cultural moments in which the works were created and revived, forming musical variants of the Shakespearean canon. The case studies of the libretti's melodramatic imagination are Henry Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen* (1692), Jiří Antonín Benda and Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter's *Romeo und Julie* (1779), Antonio Salieri and Carlo Prospero Defranceschi's *Falstaff, o le tre burle* (1799), Carl Maria von Weber and James Robinson Planché's *Oberon, or The Elf King's Oath* (1826), and Thomas Adès and Meredith Oakes' *The Tempest* (2004).

William Shakespeare; opera libretto; dramaturgy; adaptation; Henry Purcell; Antonio Salieri; Jiří Antonín Benda; Carl Maria von Weber; Thomas Adès

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Dramaturgy of the Shakespearean Libretto

Pavel Drábek

Shakespeare's plays have inspired a great number of operas and works of music theatre: from Restoration adaptations, most notably Henry Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen* (1692), through Romantic operas to musicals. While this treasure trove is immense, when considering the number and variety of adaptations compared to other genres such as dramas, fiction, graphic novels, instrumental music, songs, or visual arts, the corpus of Shakespearean operas and musical dramas is comparatively small.[1] As William Germano has observed, 'the works of Shakespeare have provided opera composers and librettists with the greatest and most frequent challenges [since] Shakespeare and opera may appear to stand at opposite ends of the theatrical spectrum'.[2] There are operas inspired by *The Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice*, or even *Coriolanus* and *Cymbeline*, but these represent exceptions rather than trends. There are probably only five thematic centres of the Shakespearean canon that have continued to inspire composers and librettists: *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, *Macbeth*, and the Falstaff plays. This chapter will discuss the opera libretti inspired by Shakespeare's works, deriving its examples primarily from these five sources of inspiration while theoretically addressing the opera libretto as a genre and its specific dramaturgies.

Why should an artist wish to adapt a Shakespeare play into an opera? There are multiple and different reasons. It may be for very private reasons, such as an attachment to or resonance with a particular text, for institutional or production reasons (a commission, capitalizing on a title’s popularity or topicality), or for more broadly cultural or political reasons: musical drama, being the summative moment of the cultural-industrial apparatus and its production is, in many ways, a display of society’s affluence; combining the cultural *Gesamtkunstwerk* of opera with the cultural icon of Shakespeare is a cardinal statement. Besides, Shakespeare offers supreme poetry, apparently universal themes, well-known characters, dramatic moments, and familiar, broadly known plots.

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[1] For a list of Shakespearean operas up to 1991, see <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Christopher R. Wilson, 'William Shakespeare', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (London: Macmillan, 1992), 338–347<<<REFC>>>.

[2] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>William Germano, 'Opera', in Bruce R. Smith (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 2:1813<<<REFC>>>.

What can Shakespeare offer to the opera libretto? The answer—most likely inconclusive—reverts to the principal questions of musical drama as an art form. If it were only the plots, the dramatic moments, the characters, or the poetry that the opera librettist can glean, what is the purpose of the singing and the score? And what can operatic or musical adaptations contribute? Unlike adaptations for film or TV, media which are much more democratic than the privileged genres of opera or musical theatre, musical drama is even more elaborate, stylized, and therefore seemingly less socially accessible than spoken theatre—although theatre history suggests that popularity and access may follow other patterns too. As for live performance, Shakespeare’s poetry, his dramatic plots, and even his characters have their maximal effect in stage plays—for which they were created. Musical drama has different strengths and unique expressive qualities, but which of them can find productive synergies with Shakespeare’s plays?

Another set of questions relates to audience reception and the horizon of expectations that spectators of opera inspired by Shakespeare’s plays might entertain. Once the title of the opera signals an allegiance to Shakespeare—be it to the established name of a play (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Tempest*, *Othello*), to a prominent character (Falstaff, Viola, Béatrice et Bénédict, Jessika, Lady Macbeth), or to a telling phrase derived from the plays (*At the Boar’s Head*, *Sir John in Love*, *Kiss Me Kate*)—the spectator is primed to a play of recognition, uncovering similarities to and variations from the original, and their dramaturgical purposes. Recent adaptation and appropriation theory operates with the notion of recognition and its ethics and politics.[3] However, I would argue that such a comparative consumption of adaptation necessarily undermines and demotes the work's creative autonomy, turning it into a mere secondary derivation of its source, an appropriation of Shakespearean material.[4] In other words, watching an opera based on (adapted from, inspired by, after) Shakespeare with a view to how it agrees with or counters 'the works' is uncomfortably close to a theological notion of orthodoxy and apostasy. I argue that Shakespearean operas (and translations and adaptations in general, for that matter) are consummate works as long as they stand as self-sufficient, autonomous works of art that are enriched by their relation to the Shakespearean precursor, rather than as derivative footnotes or votive offerings to the Shakespearean cult. Refocused in this way, the questions of audience reception are: What is the unique creative vision of the opera in question? What is its relationship to the Shakespearean material? How does it relate to the Shakespearean myth?

The Melodramatic Imagination

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[3] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Christy Desmet, 'Recognizing Shakespeare, Rethinking Fidelity: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Appropriation', Alexa Joubin [Huang] and Elizabeth Rivlin (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation* (London and New York: Palgrave, 2014), 41–57<<<REFC>>>; and <<<REFO:BK>>>Christy Desmet, Sujata Iyengar, and Miriam Jacobson (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Shakespeare and Global Appropriation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 30<<<REFC>>> and *passim*.

[4] See also <<<REFO:JART>>>Pavel Drábek, 'Shakespeare's Myriad-Minded Stage as a Transnational Forum: Openness and Plurality in Drama Translation', *Shakespeare Studies* 46 (2018): 35–47<<<REFC>>>.

Musical drama has its specific means and expressive idioms. Spoken drama can approximate real-life situations—behaviours, actions, dialogue, social interaction—and that can happen almost naturalistically, figuring forth convincing recreations of imaginary or historic events and personalities. Thomas Nashe famously celebrated the power of the stage to show the audience

> braue *Talbot* (the terror of the French) [. . .] after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, [. . .] triumphe againe on the Stage, and [. . .] in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.[5]

In spoken drama, this impression (or illusion) can be achieved by using the material of the same kind as the portrayed action: a person (actor) representing another person (Talbot) by means of their body, behaviours, actions, mimicry, and words, in interaction with other actors and the audience. The theatrical use of this material—one's body, the material that is most at hand, as Ivo Osolsobě theorized[6]—is often highly imaginative, ranging from a naturalistic portrayal to figurative, symbolic, and other highly stylized expressions; however, the building material remains cognate with what it portrays. Scenography—the creation of the space, ambience (including light, sound, and projection), costumes, and stage props—plays a crucial role in evoking the portrayed reality with actors at the very heart of the action. The point of departure and the core of drama is human interaction.[7] Let me refer to this creative logic as the dramatic imagination.

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[5] <<<REFO:BK>>>Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Diuell* (London, 1592), F3r<<<REFC>>>.

[6] <<<REFO:JART>>>Ivo Osolsobě, 'On Ostensive Communication', *Studia Semiotyczne* 8 (1979): 63–75<<<REFC>>>; and <<<REFO:BKCH>>>'Ostension', in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 2:656–660<<<REFC>>>.

In musical drama, the means of expression are different and so is the dramaturgical logic, which I will refer to as the melodramatic imagination. The term melodramatic combines the root *drama* (from the Greek δρᾶμα, action, deed; δράω, to do, to act) and *melos* (μέλος; song, melody, or more generally music). While dramatic action is still at the heart of the dramaturgy, the presence of music and singing as the primary modes of expression is the basis of the mimetic departure from the dramatic imagination (as defined previously). The core of the melodramatic imagination comes down to the perennial questions of musical drama: Why should the personae on stage sing? What role does the musical score have in the drama? And crucially: what kind of onstage presence—or, as it is termed, theatrical reality—arises from the combination of human interaction and music as its principal constituent?[8] And in an intentionally circular fashion: Having singing actors, an orchestra, and almost unlimited staging machinery, what is stageworthy?

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[7] <<<REFO:BK>>>Otakar Zich, *Estetika dramatického umění* (Prague: Melantrich, 1931), 46<<<REFC>>>. An English translation of this groundbreaking work, <<<REFO:BK>>>*The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art*, translated by Pavel Drábek and Tomáš P. Kačer, edited by David Drozd, is forthcoming (Karolinum: Charles University Press, 2022)<<<REFC>>>. Quotations from Zich are given here in this translation but referenced to the original Czech edition.

[8] Otakar Zich dedicates a great deal of attention to the concept of onstage reality, or theatrical reality, vehemently opposing the notion that there is any illusion on stage but rather a reality that is performed by the actors, and perceived and then reimagined differently by the viewers hand in hand with the intent of the play. For a recent study on the topic, independent of Zich, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Campbell Edinborough, *Theatrical Reality: Space, Embodiment and Empathy in Performance* (Bristol: Intellect, 2016)<<<REFC>>>.

Otakar Zich—the early twentieth-century theorist of art (musicology, aesthetics, psychology) and an opera composer, hailed as the pioneer of the scientific analysis of theatre and drama[9]—proposed a comprehensive theory of musical drama in his monumental study *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art: A Theoretical Dramaturgy*. Zich's theory is a summation of decades of his theoretical investigations into the psychology of music (*The Aesthetic Perception of Music*, 1910) as well as a variety of art forms, from literature to puppet theatre,[10] complemented by his practical experience as an accomplished composer of classical music.[11] Chapter VIII of his 1931 *Aesthetics* is dedicated to 'The Dramatic Music: The Creative Work of the Composer', analysing the picturing capacities of music, from onomatopoeia, through an imitation of real-life rhythms (such as heart beat, breathing, or natural phenomena), to imaginative associations that music can adumbrate, and leitmotifs that can signal very distinct ideas. The core of the chapter focuses on musical drama and the specific dramatic qualities of composing opera from a libretto, not to a text but to the situation, anticipating the singing actor in their expression, down to the functions that music plays in building the dramatic situations, characterization, and atmosphere.[12] My concept of the melodramatic imagination crucially derives from Zich's theory. It has also found inspiration in Osolsobě's semiotic theory of musical drama, though rather by way of polemic than direct agreement.[13]

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[9] <<<REFO:BK>>>Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980), 4<<<REFC>>>.

[10] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Otakar Zich, 'Loutkové divadlo' ('Puppet Theatre'), in *Theatralia* 18, no. 2 (2015): 505–513<<<REFC>>>.

[11] See <<<REFO:BK>>>Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006)<<<REFC>>>. Among Zich's compositions was the three-act opera *Vina* (*Guilt*), first performed in Prague in 1922.

By virtue of music as its principal coordinate, the melodramatic imagination operates on an altered portrayal and perception of dramatic time. While spoken drama can portray the dramatic action in a most immediate way, music opens dimensions that transcend this immediate reality. The musical score can suggestively evoke atmospheres and moods, as well as reminiscences through established motifs or musical allusions to dances, songs, or other musical works and genres.[14] Additionally, the vocal melodies can portray the affective expression of the singing persona—even to the point where the affective qualities achieve primacy over the action conveyed in the words. Given the transcendental quality of singing, the melodramatic can give vocal expression to entities that remain mostly ineffable in spoken drama—such as collective or supernatural identities (for example, a chorus of townspeople or country folk, attendants, spirits, natural elements, and so on). These specific melodramatic qualities are expressive of inner states, such as emotions and aspirations—what Zich refers to as psychopoeia.[15] In combination with the evocative qualities of the orchestral score, the melodramatic dramaturgy is most conducive to predominantly lyrical expression in a broad sense of the word, be it imaginative soundscapes or personae's affects. These affects, although uneventful (i.e., non-dramatic) in themselves, are often charged with foreboding of action and events to come—such as the generic arias of vengefulness or jealousy, which are capable of creating immense affective tension. Zich notes that to refer to such agitated expressions as ‘dramatic’ would be imprecise, as they do not comprise action (i.e., drama) in themselves. Such lyrical passages anticipate a future action, or reflect on the consequences of those past—that is, as long as they have what he calls a tie to dramatic action:

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[12] Zich, *Estetika*, 315, 319, 340ff, respectively.

[13] <<<REFO:BK>>>Ivo Osolsobě, *Divadlo, které mluví, zpívá a tančí* (Prague: Editio Supraphon, 1974)<<<REFC>>>.

[14] <IBT>Zich, *Estetika*</IBT>, 277.

[15] Ibid., 279.

> Due to the psychological relationship between emotions and efforts [. . .], there are many lyrical speeches that are undramatic in themselves, and yet are *dramatically tied* in that they either form an *introduction* to action, or conversely its *outcome*.[16]

In comparison to his forebears, Zich offers a more inclusive theory of musical drama. The seventeenth-century poet Pierre Perrin emphasized the prominent place of affects (‘passions’) in the opera even to the detriment of recitatives, arguing that there was in opera no place for intrigue whatsoever. Referring to his opera libretto *Pastorale d’Issy* of 1659, Perrin states:

> I have composed my pastoral entirely out of pathos and expressions of love, joy, sorrow, jealousy, despair; and I have banished all the serious reflections as well as all the intrigue.[17]

While Perrin’s assertion is extreme, it is significant as an expression of a key melodramatic feature: while the dramatic imagination centres around action of characters and a plot (‘intrigue’), the melodramatic follows a different structural logic. In the primacy of emotions and lyrical states—which can be well portrayed and expressed by music—the melodramatic logic follows an affective scenario, not a dramatic one. A full variety of affects is more important than coherence of plot or motivation. The opera virtuoso is more likely to put their expressive range on display than worry about the dramatic logic of the narrative. Similarly, the opera composer and librettist are less likely to be interested in dramatic incident but rather in the melodramatic situations. It is in this sense that Paul Kildea observes that Benjamin Britten, in writing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1960), was 'not much taken with the play's mortal couples, with their dreary problems and incessant whining; it was the woodland world that captured his imagination'.[18]

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[16] Ibid., 108. Italics in original.

[17] ‘[I]’ay composé ma Pastorale toute de Pathétique & d’expressions d’amour, de ioye, de tristesse, de ialousie, de désespoir; & i’en ay banny tous les raisonnemens graves & mesme toute l’intrigue’. Pierre Perrin, cited in <<<REFO:BK>>>Albert Gier, *Das Libretto* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1998), 95<<<REFC>>>.

This formulation of the melodramatic imagination may seem prescriptive and limiting. In no way is it intended to be taken as restrictive, let alone as an imposition of limits on the imagination. It is no more than a theoretical tool to handle a notoriously difficult challenge: a critical discussion of the transcendental—that which goes beyond the literal, the directly descriptive (the realistic), and the disenchanted, or even beyond the stylized, towards the imaginative and the creative. The melodramatic imagination constructs a special kind of stage reality, which is inherently metaphysical in that it goes beyond physical reality. The melodramatic stage tends towards a transcendence: whether towards human subjectivity, in expressing emotions, desires, or aspirations, or towards the intersubjective and social, such as the sublime, a sense of collective belonging (national, cultural, humanistic sentiments), or the supernatural. This has led some critics to assert that opera necessitated a different language from spoken drama.[19] However, others have convincingly shown that a supremely effective and successful opera can be based on Shakespeare's texts, as evidenced by Britten's *A*

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[18] <<<REFO:BK>>>Paul Kildea, *Benjamin Britten: A Life in the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 442<<<REFC>>>.

[19] <<<REFO:BK>>>Daniel Albright, *Musicking Shakespeare* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 258–259<<<REFC>>>.

Midsummer Night's Dream, which has been described as 'undoubtedly the most successful Shakespearean opera to employ Shakespeare's original text as the sole basis for its libretto'.[20] It follows then that the efficacy of the opera libretto does not solely reside in the text; librettistic dramaturgy needs to move beyond textuality and the literal, towards the metaphorical, the figurative, and the extraordinary.

On a very immediate level, it is already the singing opera-actor who signals that the onstage reality is out of the ordinary: it is not the everyday, disenchanted behaviour of the social self to be read literally but a figurative portrayal of an ulterior awareness or state. In other words, the singing opera-actor becomes a metaphor (from the Greek μεταφέρειν, carrying beyond) that directs our imagination and understanding beyond the immediate physicality of the stage. The melodramatic imagination envisions action that operates on this metaphorical, transcendental level, glancing the imaginary events from a viewpoint that is essentially unrealistic: it is rooted in the sublime realm of the subjective and/or the intersubjective (collective). Music (and singing) crucially shifts the mind to a heightened, excited state—the communal frenzy referred to in Euripides's *Bacchae* as 'enthusiasm' (ενθουσιασμός)*:* the sublime (divine) inspiration or possession that occurs in the heat of dance, song, and play.

Marvin Carlson famously refers to the theatre as a memory machine with its stage notoriously haunted by the cultural as well as subjective knowledge that the performance conjures up.[21] Using this concept, the opera stage is doubly haunted—psychologically dislocating us from the ordinary by means of song and music, and socially by our participation in the enchanted, liminoid experience of the theatre. In his chapter on 'The Haunted Body', Carlson reflects on the onstage presence of celebrity performers and actors known to their audiences and how it influences dramaturgy as well as the communal experience of performance. In opera, this is even more prominent: virtuoso singers, conductors, and recently also stage directors are the draw for audiences and often a fortuitous constellation of star creators is what dictates the dramaturgy. Composers often write for specific performers, Purcell and (probably) Betterton in *The Fairy-Queen*, Jiří Antonín Benda and Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter in *Romeo und Julie*, or Thomas Adès and Meredith Oakes in *The Tempest*. The dramaturgy of the opera is influenced by its exigencies: Mozart famously asked his librettist Gottlieb Stephanie to build up the character of Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Seraglio*, the composer commenting in his correspondence that

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[20] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Mervyn Cooke, 'Britten and Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', in Cooke (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 129<<<REFC>>> and *passim* for a detailed analysis of the libretto.

> We intend the part of Osmin to Herr Fischer, who certainly has a grand bass voice, [. . .] so we must take advantage of this, especially as he has the whole public in his favor here. In the original libretto Osmin has only one song, and nothing else to sing except in the terzetto and finale; so now he has an aria in the first act, and also one in the second.[22]

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[21] <<<REFO:BK>>>Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003)<<<REFC>>>.

[22] Mozart's letter to his father Leopold Mozart on 26 September 1781, in <<<REFO:BKCH>>>*The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1769–1791)*, trans. Lady Wallace (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866), 2:81, https://archive.org/details/lettersofwolfgan02moza/ (accessed 6 September 2019)<<<REFC>>>.

It is worth observing that Fischer’s popularity among the audience and his unique singing talents (probably two sides of the same coin) were an important consideration, and in the remainder of his letter Mozart explains the dramaturgy of Osmin’s powerful aria in F major in the first act of his opera.[23] Similarly, Carl Maria von Weber asks (in his imperfect English, for which he apologizes) his librettist James Robinson Planché for a textual addition to their *Oberon*: ‘Now I wish I yet [get?] a *mad Aria* for *Sherasmin* (when he discovers the horn) in which *Fatima*’s lamentations unite and close the scene with a beautiful contrast’.[24] These practical contexts for opera—in keeping with opera’s prominence within the culture industry—are indelible components of the theatrical experience as well as of the melodramatic imagination.

Opera’s predilection for the transcendental—the metaphysical, the psychological, and the supernatural—is a possible clue to the prominence of certain Shakespearean titles among melodramatic adaptations: the transcendental quality of love and hatred in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the supernatural in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Tempest*, and *Macbeth*. In these four plays, these transcendental features are more than mere themes but rather the pivotal organizing principles. In other words, given the centrality of love, hatred, and magic in these four plays, they are perhaps most adaptable for the melodramatic stage—as I will exemplify in case studies in this chapter. (The many operatic versions of Falstaff are, in great part, a different issue, as I argue subsequently.)

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[23] See also Zich, *Estetika*, 325 and *passim*, for a discussion of bespoke writing for known soloists. On Osmin, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Peter Kivy, *Osmin’s Rage: Philosophical Reflections on Opera, Drama, and Text* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988)<<<REFC>>>, who names his entire book after Mozart’s letter. I am not including Kivy’s arguments in this chapter as I find his approach mistaken in its eschewing of the metaphysical aspects of opera, interpreting it in the best tradition of English empiricism—which historically had only contempt for opera as the ‘irrational entertainment’. Using rationalist theories to write a philosophy of opera is a *contradictio in adjecto*.

[24] <<<REFO:BK>>>Carl Maria von Weber, *Oberon: King of the Fairies* (London: A Schloss, 1842), n.p<<<REFC>>>.

It is a moot point and perhaps specious to speculate why other Shakespearean romances or love comedies have not figured so prominently in the opera genre. Arguably, dramaturgies based on intrigue, deceptions, and complex plots—so central to *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, or *Pericles*—and the political and social interaction of the problem comedies, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbeline*, or *The Winter's Tale*, pose a major challenge for the melodramatic imagination. This challenge is not insuperable, as the operatic adaptations of some of these plays testify, but they seem to be the exception.

In regard to the dramatic Shakespearean source and the melodramatic adaptation, it is also worth observing that numerous operas combine spoken dialogue with sung numbers: this is not only the case of the English dramatick operas (Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen* among them), but also the German *Singspiel*, such as Benda's and Gotter's *Romeo und Julie* (1779), Nicolai's and Mosenthal's *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (1849; the spoken recitatives were later through-composed)—and of course the modern musical.

Libretto

The opera libretto is the strangest of literary creations. Strictly speaking, it is not literary at all and, apart from professional readers—composers, singers, scenographers, dramaturgs, and scholars—libretti are not made to be read. They are dramatic, or rather, melodramatic creations whose purpose is to notate onstage action that is to take place during the musical drama. Libretto scholarship has tried to negotiate this inherent paradox by downplaying the literary ambitions of libretti, apologizing for their thinness, or simply by reducing the form to a mere utilitarian, auxiliary function. Those who have taken the form seriously highlight its complexity and plural qualities, emphasizing the librettist's crucial role in shaping the opera. So Patrick J. Smith observes that

> The librettist therefore cannot be considered merely a wordsmith stringing out lines of mellifluous verse: he is at once a dramatist, a creator of word, verse, situation, scene, and character, and—this is of vital importance—an artist who, by dint of his professional training as a poet and/or dramatist, can often visualize the work *as a totality* more accurately than the composer.[25]

Smith is generous in acknowledging the multiple creative contributions of the librettist, but he overstates and arguably misrepresents the librettist's creation by essentializing it. This conception of the librettist would agree with only certain opera dramaturgies, probably those that Smith appreciates the most, such as the works of Pietro Metastasio, Carlo Goldoni, Lorenzo da Ponte, the grand narratives of mid- to late nineteenth-century opera (Meyerbeer, Bizet, Wagner, Verdi and Boito, Smetana, Dvořák, Tchaikovsky), or the early twentieth-century works (Puccini, Janáček, Strauss and Hofmannsthal). While operas on these types of libretti constitute the bulk of the classical opera repertoire, it would be myopic to restrict the operatic genre and the form of the libretto only to them. This classical opera type is, unsurprisingly, characterized by its literary qualities, with most of the works of this kind based on novels, short stories, or plays with a grand and novelistic narrative arc full of heightened and contrasting emotional states.

The history of opera and of musical drama offers a much greater range and variety of libretto types, starting with the early Florentine opera, the Spanish *zarzuela*, the German *Singspiel* and its early English variant, the jig, the court masque, the English dramatick opera and the ballad opera, the French *opéra-ballet*, the dramatic cantata or serenata (the earliest dating from the 1660s), or the eighteenth-century operatic *pasticcio*. The twentieth century brought with it the many variants of the American musical—including the modern counterpart of the *pasticcio*: the jukebox musical—and a plethora of experimental forms that combine onstage action and music, from radio and television operas (by Bohuslav Martinů, Gian Carlo Menotti, and others), through small formats, such as minioperas, and what Jiří Adámek, himself a practitioner, generically refers to as *théâtre musical*, comprising Georges Aperghis's musico-dramatic *Atelier Théâtre et Musique* (ATEM), Heiner Goebbels, Christopher Marthaler, or the earlier Czech avant-gardist E. F. Burian.[26]

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[25] <<<REFO:BK>>>Patrick J. Smith, *The Tenth Muse* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), xix<<<REFC>>>. Italics in original.

The music as well as the stage action of an opera or a musical drama is such a crucial component of the work that its libretto alone hardly ever conveys the resulting experience. It is an exception rather than a rule that the reader of a libretto can imagine the potential effect on stage. The prominence of scenography in Baroque opera as well as in modern grand opera (such as in the virtuosic stagings of Adès's *The Tempest*) makes it prohibitively difficult and methodologically debatable to study the libretto as a component commensurate with the opera. That would have some justification perhaps only in the case of the 'literary' libretti cited previously—and these are, unsurprisingly, the primary focus of the existing comprehensive libretto theories (such as those by Patrick J. Smith or Albert Gier). I would argue, conversely, that an adequate theory of the libretto needs to acknowledge this crucial hiatus between the libretto script and its eventual operatic realizations. The libretto should not be read as a kind of blueprint that conveys the metaphorical backbone of the opera—in the sense that a dramatic text provides at least an indicative structure of the dialogical action of spoken drama.[27] On the contrary, the libretto is a sequence of incentives—pretexts (in both senses of the word)—for the composer and the production team (dramaturg, scenographer, conductor, stage director) to create a new work of art with an autonomous integrity within its artistic discipline. There is no a priori isomorphism between the libretto and the eventual musical drama. So the brief stage directions in the 1693 version of *The Fairy-Queen*, such as ‘A DANCE of Hay-Makers’, ‘A Dance of the Four Seasons’, or ‘Six Monkeys come from between the Trees, and Dance’,[28] say little of the effect of Purcell’s opera or its original production (which may have differed significantly from what the printed text renders). The stage directions are even more cryptic than some of Shakespeare’s.

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[26] <<<REFO:BK>>>Jiří Adámek, *Théâtre musical* (Prague: NAMU, 2010)<<<REFC>>>.

Adès has subtitled his operatic *The Tempest* as ‘a symphonic opera’, explaining that

> The music has its own internal logic of relationships [. . .] Everything is related in the music and it does create a sort of whole. [. . .] The music is not just an accompaniment, I hope, more an embodiment.[29]

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[27] Cf. Zich, *Estetika*, 20. But see also <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Jiří Veltruský, ‘Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre’ (1967), in David Drozd, Tomáš Kačer, and Don Sparling (eds.), *Theatre Theory Reader* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2016), 247–267<<<REFC>>>.

[28] <<<REFO:BK>>>Henry Purcell, *The Fairy-Queen* (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1693)<<<REFC>>>, E4r, G1r, and H1r, respectively. I am working with the 1693 quarto version in this chapter. For a critical edition, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Bruce Wood and Andrew Pinnock, eds., *Henry Purcell: The Fairy Queen*, Purcell Society, volume 12 (London: Stainer and Bell, 2010)<<<REFC>>>.

[29] <<<REFO:PERD>>>Thomas Adès, ‘Takes On “The Tempest”’, *Jamaica WI Gleaner* (9 November 2012), n.p<<<REFC>>>.

The autonomy of the score, while crucially dependent on the libretto, reifies an integrity the libretto can never have. In this sense the libretto is less of a dramatic text and more of a production book coordinating the individual numbers or components that constitute the whole. Reflecting on the opera's relation to the staging and to the scenographer's contribution—namely to what Melissa Poll refers to as Robert Lepage's scenographic dramaturgy[30]—Adès expresses his fascination by its power. He frames Lepage's stage creation as adding a new 'dimension' to the opera's central metaphor:

> [T]he storm was only in the music, in the audience's minds. It's a metaphor for opera itself. That's the most exciting part for me—to see the physical characters doing what you've tried to compose into music. It adds a whole fourth dimension to the experience.[31]

The role of the libretto in a complex theatrical experience that operates in several 'dimensions' (to use Adès's term) is closely related to that of a theatre impresario or creative stage manager: providing incentives for other makers and creators to contribute their dimensions, coordinating them only by means of a metaphorical superstructure. In this sense the form has retained a remarkably close link to its origin—a booklet (the literal meaning of 'libretto'), a printed programme of the theatrical event, with an order of the individual numbers and a broad description here and there. (It is worth pointing out that the practice was inherited from early modern Jesuit, Piarist, or Lutheran school drama and its printed synopses and playbills, known as *periochae*.) Such an approach to the form seems appropriate not only for early and eighteenth-century opera, but also to the genre as a whole, with a view to the composite nature of its name (*opera* as plural of *opus*). As several scholars have observed, the ad hoc compiling of individual arias and pieces was an organizing logic of the genre well into the nineteenth century.[32] The same inherent principle informs the entire dramaturgy of opera, albeit in a less literal fashion.

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[30] <<<REFO:BK>>>Melissa Poll, *Robert Lepage's Scenographic Dramaturgy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 125<<<REFC>>>, 190.

[31] Adès, 'Takes On "The Tempest"'.

Kurt Honolka used Mozart's witticism for the title of his book on the opera libretto, referring to it as 'music's obedient daughter'[33] and arguing for its subordinate position in a metaphor whose hierarchical power dynamics do not invite a particularly generous creative frame. Similarly, the title of Salieri's and Casti's metatheatrical opera burlesque *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (1786), while in itself mocking the routine, has been used to reinforce the supremacy of music in the structure of opera as an art form. Richard Strauss and Clemens Krauss returned to the debate in their riposte to Salieri and Casti, the 1942 'conversation piece for music' entitled *Capriccio*, that frames the debate as a romantic battle of wits between a musician and a poet competing for the favour of their muse, the Countess, and in so doing reconciling which of the two disciplines is greater in opera. Theorists have, for the most part, followed this unhelpful analytical severing of music and libretto, reducing the latter to its lyrics and its poetry. This partial reading is flawed not only for the opera libretto but also for the dramatic text as such, as Zich has argued:

> The formula 'in the beginning is the *word*', fully valid for all literature, is correct when it comes to a theatrical activity that carries out a dramatic work as a performance. However, it is not true of the preceding creative work of the

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[32] See <<<REFO:BK>>>Hilary Poriss, *Changing the Score* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)<<<REFC>>>, and <<<REFO:JART>>>Jana Spáčilová, 'Das Pasticcio in den böhmischen Ländern in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Theatralia* 22, no. 2 (2019): 123–135<<<REFC>>>.

[33] <<<REFO:BK>>>Kurt Honolka, *Der Musik gehorsame Tochter* (Stuttgart: Cotta Verlag, 1962)<<<REFC>>>.

> playwright; that is dominated by a scenic vision, an imaginative visualization of a concrete dramatic situation where the characters of the play interact. The formula for a dramatic creative work [. . .] should be in brief: ‘in the beginning is the (dramatic) *situation*’.[34]

Zich’s assertion is particularly valid in the case of opera, and the predominant production practice of today supports it: honouring the creative integrity of the musical drama, operas are mostly performed in the original language, however incomprehensible it may be—from the Italian of Mozart, Verdi, and Puccini, to the Czech of Smetana or Janáček. The efficacy of opera as drama (to cite Joseph Kerman’s well-known phrase)[35] is more crucially dependent on the affective scenario, the melodramatic situations, and the integrity of the musical work than on comprehensible dialogue. Being acquainted with the synopsis of the story, a thorough enjoyment of an opera production does not derive from following the textual nuances and the exchanges in the dialogue, but rather in the figures and images—that is, in the less literal components of the work. The staging of opera enhances this figurative engagement with the onstage action, as can be seen in the prominence of stage metaphors in scenography.[36]

Reading an opera libretto calls for a different hermeneutic engagement. It should identify the potential for melodramatic situations, and these situations in turn constitute the structure of the resulting work. Given the extent and significance of additional creative input on the side of the composer (and potentially the production team), the libretto is a formula with its key components unknown. A critical reading of the libretto should extrapolate from these unknowns the lacunae filled in by the composer-as-opera-dramatist, and focus on (1) the kind of melodramatic situations offered by the libretto; (2) the scene changes, and their contrasts, relationships, and ratios; and (3) what may be termed an aesthetics of embodiment, that is, the qualities and stylization of the onstage action. Aesthetics of embodiment comprises the conception of stage personae (how abstract, symbolic, or realistic they are), the kind of onstage reality that is constructed (perceived by the audience as realistic, everyday, public, private, intimate, supernatural, visionary), and the stylization of the sung lyrics (which entails also the justification of why those words are sung rather than spoken).

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[34] Zich, *Estetika*, 83. Italics in original.

[35] <<<REFO:BK>>>Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952)<<<REFC>>>.

[36] See <<<REFO:JART>>>Šárka Havlíčková Kysová, ‘Stage Metaphors in Verdi’s *Otello*’, *Theatralia* 19, no. 2 (2016): 29–58<<<REFC>>>; Šárka Havlíčková Kysová, <<<REFO:BK>>>*Režisér jako koncept* (Prague: Karolinum, 2019)<<<REFC>>>; and her essay in this volume (Chapter 32).

Lyrics, as sung by singing stage personae, cover a variety of embodied styles. The most common types range from the formulaic commonplaces of Baroque opera, expressing affects in variations of stock expressions or in the comedic jargon of classicist comic operas (Haydn, Salieri, Mozart); through ruminations and effusions of the romantic ego throughout the long nineteenth century; to disenchanted lines borrowed from the everyday (as in *verismo* style, in Janáček, and some of Britten's works). The variety is infinitely rich, with experiments carried out almost as a rule since the early twentieth-century avant garde. One special type is recurrent in Shakespearean operas: the literal loan of the original Shakespeare, setting it to music irrespective of its librettistic qualities, which became a staple approach of twentieth-century operas based on the "Bard".[37] This textual fundamentalism, bordering on fetishism, leaves the opera composer hamstrung. Some of the works end up being variants of symphonic poems or oratorios—imaginative and evocative in the musical score, but inchoate in the melodramatic qualities and its potential for staging. I would argue that such is the case of Holst's *At the Boar's Head* (1924): musically remarkable, but dramatically dependent on Shakespeare's play, without a dramaturgical justification for its operatic form.[38] What such versions lack is a thought-through dramaturgical concept that determines the nature of the adaptation and its very *raison d'être*.

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[37] See <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Christopher R. Wilson, 'Shakespeare, William (opera)', *Grove Music*; and Adrian Streete, 'Shakespeare and Opera', in Mark Thornton Burnett, Adrian Streete, and Ramona Wray (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 142–168<<<REFC>>>.

Adaptation and Parody

Adaptation is a plural process far exceeding the singular direction leading from a source text to the new work. In the case of dramatic works, a source is likely to have inherent dramatic qualities such as a remarkable character, a masterful plot, powerful situations, effective interactions, action well suited to stage business, poetry, or topical themes. These by themselves are rarely sufficient reasons for an adaptation. If this were the case, for example, drama in translation would be much more central to theatre repertoires than it is nowadays. Given the amount of creative energy and the expense necessary to create and put on a stage adaptation, particularly an opera, the source text needs to warrant a public appeal. A canonical work ensures that it will have momentum, a cultural and broad context in place when it is adapted, whereas composing an opera on the basis of a little-known work is too risky an enterprise. In this way, opera becomes a two-fold recycling machine for cultural memory—not only as a summative moment of the cultural apparatus, but also as a reteller of works furnished with a cultural halo. Summoning the cultural capital of the Shakespearean halo and its public appeal may even be more significant than any affinity to the source. Such is the case of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1932), composed to a libretto written by Shostakovich and Alexandr Preis after Nikolai Leskov's eponymous story of 1865. The Shakespearean title gives Leskov's story and the opera an aura of sensationality and canonicity. Rather than to *Macbeth*, the plot is closer to the early Shakespearean apocryphal tragedy *Arden of Faversham*, but using that title would do little service to either Leskov or Shostakovich. (Interestingly, on revising his opera three decades later Shostakovich changed the name to *Katerina Izmailova*, probably in an attempt to extricate it from its own troubled cultural memory and possibly to give it a full authorial autonomy, independent of the perfunctory Shakespearean connection.)

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[38] For a detailed discussion of Holst's *At the Boar's Head*, see Chapter 34 of the present volume.

Zich reminds us that the 'artist thinks in the material that he or she has chosen'.[39] The singers, musicians, the occasion, the production circumstances, and the specific melodramatic genre for which the adaptation is made—in brief, the production affordances—are essential starting points. The number of available soloists, the size of the orchestra, the duration of the piece, or the horizon of cultural expectations for the genre are defining and decisive for the process.[40] So Gotter, adapting *Romeo and Juliet* for Benda, acknowledges the limited musical circumstances as well as the limits in the available singers' talents.[41] Ambroise Thomas's grand opera *Hamlet* (1868), on the libretto by Michel Carré and Jules Barbier, in turn based on Alexandre Dumas's and Paul Meurice's play *Hamlet* of 1847, may be theatrically weak, and even musically, as Germano observes, but it is 'occasionally revived for a coloratura soprano and a star baritone'.[42] As at the point of creation, so nowadays, Thomas's opera will stand and fall by its monumental melodramatic moments native to the late nineteenth-century metropolitan opera stages, and the two virtuoso singers performing Ophélie and Hamlet.

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[39] Zich, *Estetika*, 309.

[40] Streete, 'Shakespeare and Opera', 147.

[41] <<<REFO:BK>>>Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter, *Romeo und Julie* (Leipzig: Im Verlage der Dykischen Buchhandlung, 1779), 9<<<REFC>>>.

[42] Germano, 'Opera', 1817.

An adaptation can also realize the potential of certain aspects of its source that are only present there in rudimentary form. This may well have been the case in the earliest adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, even during his lifetime. Far from fixed in their final textual form, the plays are likely to have undergone constant revision and adaptation, from the moment of their completion as a 'book' to each staging, which of necessity had to omit up to a half the text in order to make it fit 'the two hours' traffic of our stage' (*RJ* Prologue.12). The quasi-scriptural, canonical closure of the texts would arrive only in the eighteenth century, with Shakespeare's apotheosis as national classic and cultural icon.[43] During his lifetime and for decades after, the plays would be revised and adapted to suit the occasion, the production exigencies, as well as changing tastes. So *King Lear* underwent authorial revisions, and *Othello* was revised to accommodate the new actor for Desdemona and his capacity to perform the willow song.[44] *Macbeth* is another case in point. The surviving text, as printed in F1, is in all likelihood Thomas Middleton's redaction of 1616. The play features the figure of Hecate, and two songs from Middleton's own play *The Witch* (c. 1616) in passages that are 'spectacular, dispensable, written in a different style [. . .] typical of new additions'.[45] Attributed to Middleton, these new passages are particularly relevant for subsequent adaptations on account of their melodramatic qualities. Hecate has no dramatic agency in the play; her function is affective and lyrical, symptomatically supported by two musical numbers. William Davenant's 1662 melodramatic adaptation of the play and his 1673 revision with Matthew Locke's music make use of the Middletonian additions. As Jowett has observed, 'the Davenant texts contain variants, some of which are attributable to an altered staging, others of which agree with the earlier music manuscripts'.[46] In this sense, the melodramatic potential of magic and the supernatural in the original *Macbeth* started to be explored by Middleton even during Shakespeare's lifetime, in the process setting a precedent for future reworkings.

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[43] <<<REFO:BK>>>Michael Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1600–1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)<<<REFC>>>; but see also <<<REFO:BK>>>Peter Kirwan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Apocrypha: Negotiating the Boundaries of the Dramatic Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)<<<REFC>>>.

[44] <<<REFO:JART>>>Clare McManus, '"Sing it Like Poor Barbary": *Othello* and Early Modern Women's Performance', *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33, no. 1 (2015): 99–120<<<REFC>>>; 103, 111. There is an ongoing debate about the status of *King Lear* as a text revised by Shakespeare. See the exchange of letters concerning Margreta de Grazia's review of Brian Vickers's *The One 'King Lear'* (2016), initially published in *The Times*

Literary Supplement on 3 February 2017. A deluge of letters followed in the subsequent weeks, authored by Vickers (17 February 2017), Peter W. M. Blayney, Stanley Wells, and Gabriel Egan (24 February 2017). See also Vickers's review of *The New Oxford Shakespeare* and *The Norton Shakespeare* in *The Times Literary Supplement* (21 April 2017).

[45] John Kerrigan, cited in <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, 'The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays', in Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan (eds.), *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 566<<<REFC>>>.

[46] John Jowett, introduction and textual editorship of *Macbeth*, in <<<REFO:BK>>>Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (eds.), *The New Oxford Shakespeare. The Complete Works. Critical Reference Edition, Volume 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 3000<<<REFC>>>.

Classical studies operate with the concept of *contaminatio* to refer to the complex mixture of sources and inspirations that came to form the surviving texts. So the plays of Plautus, many of which are acknowledged to be adaptations of earlier plays, cannot be understood only as literary derivatives of their sources, but as polyphonic interweavings (*textus* in Latin) of multiple influences and threads. Among those are not only prior texts but also material circumstances and practices that determine the resulting creation. However self-evident it may seem, an adaptation is first and foremost a product of its own culture and its authors: Purcell's and Betterton's *The Fairy-Queen* (1692), Salieri's and Defranceschi's *Falstaff* (1799), or Adès's and Oakes's *The Tempest* (2004) are built on the aesthetics and affordances of their theatrical and musical cultures, and on the signature styles of the authors. These operas have creatively (dramaturgically, musically, aesthetically) more in common with their authors' other works than with other adaptations of (respectively) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, or *The Tempest*. The Shakespearean ingredient is, as it were, the seasoning in their creation.

Another useful term that helps reframe the conceptual approach to adaptation, specifically an adaptation to musical drama, is parody. Originating not only in the ancient Greek burlesque song (παρῳδία) but also in the narrative parts of classical Greek drama sung by the chorus (πάροδος), parody refers to a sung alternative or imitative (*para-*) retelling (*ode*) of another work or story.[47] The conventional modern sense of parody involves a mocking, comical adaptation. However, several theorists (such as Osolsobě and Linda Hutcheon) have nuanced this singular reading with a view to the position of parody in the reception of a work and with the historic uses of parodies as tools for promotion and publicity.[48] These refined theories of parody derive from the fact that the target recipients of parodic works are those who know the parodied original and—very importantly—have an affectionate relationship to it; without this, they would either not understand the parody, or not be able to relate to it.

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[47] For a musicological discussion of parody versus contrafactum and its origins in classical rhetoric see <<<REFO:JART>>>Robert Falck, 'Parody and Contrafactum: A Terminological Clarification', *Musical Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (1979): 1–21<<<REFC>>>.

For the parodic work as such, it is a moot point what its recipient's attitude to the original work is. Genuine admirers arguably get more out of the parody than the opponents, and the new work allows them to enjoy the original in a novel way; the comic approach enables a critical distance from the affection. In this sense, a parody is existentially tied to the renown (the cult) of its model. Classical rhetoric defines parody in relation to the renown (or legacy) of the imitated work: 'What men call wisdom is a "legacy", where "legacy" replaces "faculty". Or again we may invent verses resembling well known lines, a trick called parody'.[49] This dialectic quality of parody cuts both ways. As Osolsobě observes, parody was both a sign of reputation and a tool with which to achieve it, with eighteenth-century French authors of operas often creating parodies of their own works (autoparodies): parodies not only promote the originals, but bring in guaranteed box-office income as audiences will need to see the original to enjoy the burlesque.[50] Since Shakespearean operas are banking on

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[48] Osolsobě, *Divadlo, které mluví*; <<<REFO:BK>>>Osolsobě, *Principia parodica* (Prague: AMU, 2007)<<<REFC>>>; and <<<REFO:BK>>>Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (New York: Methuen, 1985)<<<REFC>>>.

[49] Quintillian's *Institutio oratoria*, cited in Falck, 'Parody and Contrafactum', 3.

[50] Osolsobě, *Divadlo, které mluví*, 199. The twinning of parodies to their sources is also useful in theatre history. While there is no evidence of a performance of *Hamlet* in eighteenth-century Prague, in German or in Czech, Matěj Majober's play *Hamlet, princ z Liliputu* (*Hamlet, the Prince of Lilliput*), performed in November 1796, is a secure indication that the play (as well as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*) was well known to Prague audiences. See

Shakespeare’s cultural prominence and reputation, while retaining the idiosyncratic, autonomous creative approach of a parody, I will be referring to them as parodic works, without implying a mocking or comedic take. Parodies, in this inclusive sense of the word, are adaptations based on an alternative creative expression of a renowned work. The starting point for the creative work is in the work’s cult or famed status, its myth.

‘We’re not trying to replace the play’: A Myth Materialized in *The Tempest* (2004)

Andrew Clements, reviewing the London premiere of Adès’s and Oakes’s *The Tempest* at the Royal Opera House, comments that the libretto

> is not a reworking of Shakespeare’s play, not an exercise in filleting, and not a commentary upon it either. It is best described as a paraphrase, a condensation of its extraordinary poetry into a language that is still rich, but is much more grounded in modern demotic.[51]

(He seems unaware of the apparent oxymoron, ‘not a reworking [but] a paraphrase’.) Clements goes on to reflect on the audience’s engagement with this new work:

<<<REFO:BK>>>Pavel Drábek, *České pokusy o Shakespeara* (Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2012), 99<<<REFC>>>.

[51] <<<REFO:WBLN>>>Andrew Clements, ‘The Tempest’, *The Guardian*, 11 February 2004, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/feb/11/classicalmusicandopera (accessed 27 July 2020)<<<REFC>>>. Adès’s and Oakes’s *The Tempest* is also discussed in Chapter 35 of the present volume.

> The effect is to create a tension that depends upon some knowledge of the original, and though the persistent use of rhyming couplets is less intrusive in performance than when read, they still create awkwardness.[52]

Clements's point can be read as a different formulation of what I refer to as melodramatic parody, especially when he succinctly observes that 'Adès has not so much set these words as placed them in a dramatic framework'. This dramatic framework is the primary dimension that gives the structure its integrity, with the words being firmly contextualized within it.

Adès was himself aware of this creative principle behind the opera. Talking of his collaboration with Oakes, he pointed out:

> We're not trying to replace the play—that would be ridiculous. I want it to be *The Tempest*. I want it to be Shakespeare and to bring that vision into the opera house as faithfully as possible. In order to do that, in order to be faithful to the play, one has to be a little unfaithful, if you like, to the text.[53]

Adès's insistence on fidelity to Shakespeare is striking. The object of his and Oakes's fidelity is clearly not 'Shakespeare' as the text, but rather something beyond it—the cultural myth of *The Tempest* as a play, with its rich hermeneutic tradition and evocative characters and images. In a sense, Adès and Oakes have tried to be faithful to the received interpretation, to a metaphysical reality of *The Tempest* as a cultural icon. I would argue that this elusive entity was the opera's starting point. In creating the work, the authors engaged in an act of non-derisive parody—embodying, 'singing' this cultural icon in an alternative way. Paradoxically, this process is one of immense creative restrictions: the authors are bound by the vague notion of *The Tempest* as it is commonly interpreted, as it were—trying to materialize the cultural myth the play has come to represent. From another angle, the play's myth and its prominent position in Western culture has become a ghost writer—an invisible and intangible Ariel directing the authors' steps.

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[52] Clements, 'The Tempest'.

[53] <IBT>Adès, 'Takes On "The Tempest"'</IBT>.

The notion of intangibility was explicitly at play. In a 2012 interview, Adès starts to reflect on his initial inspirations by observing that 'the intangibility of some of its characters has always inspired music'.[54] Their writing of the opera was a haunted and almost deterministic activity, which attempted to work at a distance from the play, but eventually comes eerily close to it. The play's 'Ariel' was, however, always nigh:

> We actually started further away from the play than we ended up and found ourselves going back to Shakespeare's structure more and more. But truly to release the spirit of the play into music, one had to climb, as it were, a little way out of the original text.[55]

In this way, Oakes's libretto had to become a sufficiently indeterminate receptacle that would be able to contain the spirit—the imaginative power of the play, or the myth—as embodied in the virtuoso sounds of Adès's score. The emotions and aspirations of individual characters are not expressed in the words, but metaphorically in the music. One of the most powerful and touching moments of the opera occurs when Prospero realizes he has lost his daughter Miranda to her love for Ferdinand. In an intimate, Biblical moment ('Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife'),[56] the words in their simplicity and even inchoateness become almost a common denominator, resonating with this universally relatable moment:

> MIRANDA, FERDINAND. My lover smiling
> Blessed asylum

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Genesis 2:24.

Bountiful island
All I desire. (*off*)
PROSPERO. Miranda. I've lost her.
I cannot rule their minds
My child has conquered me—
A stronger power than mine
Has set the young man free.[57]

Prospero's words could not be simpler. Dramatically, their intentional hollowness allows the actor to embody the affect—and offer the audience a chance to empathize with him within the evocative flow of the score. It is such affective moments that come together to form the emotional scenario of the opera: a parodic reliving of *The Tempest*'s iconic riches.

The Shakespearean Myth and Musical Drama

'Shakespearean' is a loose concept. The rich history of the making of the national poet in the century following the reopening of the London theatres after the English Civil War has been critically documented, from the recognition of Shakespeare as a literary creator with his works coming to constitute the core of the national canon, through the continuing popularity of his plays in the theatre, to the romantic myth of this allegedly unschooled genius who came to capture the essence of the human soul in all its riches. This myth continues in the ongoing search for lost works or unacknowledged collaborations in dozens of plays.[58] The Shakespearean has become a popular (and therefore highly marketable) catch-all that encompasses not only Shakespeare's works and apocrypha but also, in a synecdoche, the entire era at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has also been used to whitewash hundreds of original works of art that took inspiration in his works, whether directly or by association. The Shakespearean works produced from 1660 onwards were not only adaptations but often a *contaminatio* of multiple origins, reflecting period tastes and fashions, rather than showcasing the treasures of the Shakespeare canon. This disconnect between the literary work and period theatrical practice hinged upon the uncritical myth of Shakespeare's name, a dual reality that has remained unchanged until today. The popularity of Shakespeare's plays globally has thrived on the creative energies of adaptation and translation.

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[57] <<<REFO:BK>>>Thomas Adès, *The Tempest* (vocal score; London; Faber Music, 2007), act 2, scene 4, 159–160<<<REFC>>>.

[58] See Kirwan, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Apocrypha*; and Taylor et al., *The New Oxford Shakespeare*.

The uncritical notion of the Shakespearean did not start with the printing of the plays or the first performances at the Theatre, the Globe, or the Blackfriars. Shakespeare was a notorious adaptor himself and his works derive from earlier versions of the plays (*King Richard III*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, the second Henriad), from popular tales and novellas (most of the comedies, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*), or chronicles (the histories). In some cases, the origins are even more complex—and it is perhaps unsurprising that this is especially the case with those plays that have been repeatedly adapted into operas. While there is no consensus about a singular source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,[59] the play brings together medieval romance, classical myth (Theseus and Hippolyta, Pyramus and Thisbe), Elizabethan court comedy (John Lyly's *Galathea*), and English folklore. The creative net was cast transnationally and the play quickly resonated with foreign theatres (in Andreas Gryphius's 1648 farce *Herr Peter Squentz* or the adaptation from the Premonstratensian Monastery in Prague from the late 1600s). The popularity of *Macbeth* in early revivals has resulted in the fact that the only surviving version of the play is already an adaptation. The other three titles that have repeatedly inspired opera are more complex cases.

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[59] For a suggested source, see <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Pavel Drábek 'Shakespeare's Gallatheas', in Martin Procházka and Jan Čermák (eds.), *Shakespeare: Between the Middle Ages and Modernism* (Prague: Charles University Press, 2008), 108–116<<<REFC>>>.

The Tempest is another play that has no singular source, despite that fact that it follows a subgenre of Italian scenarios of the *commedia dell'arte*. Flaminio Scala, of the prestigious troupe I gelosi, published in 1611 a remarkable collection of fifty scenarios entitled *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative*. Among them, *Rosalba the Enchantress* (*Rosalba incantatrice*, Day 44), generically labelled as a heroic drama, features the 'famous magician called Artano, Lord of the Fortunate Island, [who] had a daughter called Rosalba'.[60] Many other features of Shakespeare's play can be traced to the routines of the *commedia*, such as the disappearing banquet, the wild man, and the shipwreck. This is not to say that Shakespeare mined *commedia* for his play, but rather that *The Tempest* operates within a live early-modern transnational theatre culture.[61] When Shakespeare's collaborators John Fletcher and Philip Massinger wrote their two ripostes to *The Tempest*—the burlesque *The Sea Voyage* and *The Prophetess* (both 1622)—they introduced a number of other motifs from the Italian comedy, as if in tacit acknowledgement of that transnational dramaturgy. This repeated itself during the Restoration, in the early adaptations of Shakespeare's play: William Davenant and John Dryden's *The Tempest* (1667) and Thomas Shadwell's *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island* (1674) bring in further motifs from Scala and the *commedia*—a transnational aspiration that made sacrifice of the coherence of the plot and the play's integrity. Fletcherian tragicomedy—so popular on the Restoration and eighteenth-century stage—was the medium that conveyed the Shakespearean influences, and that genre, rather than Shakespeare's plays, provided the foundation for the English dramatick opera. The language and stylization of Fletcherian plays have a melodramatic quality directly conducive to opera.[62] This view on the beginnings of the English opera could go some way to account for the 'surprising' fact that Shakespeare 'did not lead to the sustained development of English opera'.[63] Restoration adaptations of *The Tempest* bridged the distance between Shakespeare's play, their Fletcherian reworkings, and the transnational comedic routines on one side, and on the other, the incumbent fashion of continental Baroque opera with its spectacular storms at sea, and onstage magic, such as disappearing banquets or the apparitions of classical gods and demons.

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[60] <<<REFO:BK>>>Richard Andrews, *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 300<<<REFC>>>.

[61] For the theatrical networks in early modern Europe, see <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Pavel Drábek, 'Circulation', in Robert Henke (ed.), *A Cultural History of Theatre, Volume 3* (London: Methuen, 2017)<<<REFC>>>.

Romeo and Juliet offers a different plethora of inspirations and transnational connections. While the play is now regarded as indelibly Shakespearean, early modern transnational theatre operated along different lines. The story of unfortunate lovers, however commonplace and widespread, was remarkably rendered in Matteo Bandello's popular *Novelle* (1554, 1573). The greatest playwright of the Spanish Siglo de Oro, Lope de Vega, wrote a tragicomedy based on the same story by Bandello: his play *Castelvins y Monteses* (c. 1615), was followed by at least another two Spanish adaptations in the following decades, most prominently Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla's *Los bandos de Verona* (*The Clans of Verona*, 1640), which was popular until the late eighteenth century.[64] When Italian operas featuring

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[62] <<<REFO:BK>>>Pavel Drábek, *Fletcherian Dramatic Achievement* (Brno: Masaryk University Press, 2010), 35–39<<<REFC>>>.

[63] Streete, 'Shakespeare and Opera', 147.

[64] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Rafael González Cañal, 'La fortuna editorial y escénica de "Los bandos de Verona" de Rojas Zorrilla', in Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos, Óscar Cornago Bernal, Abraham Madroñal Durán, and Carmen Menéndez Onrubia (eds.), *En buena compañía:*

Romeo and Juliet appeared, they were deriving not only from adaptations of Shakespeare, but also much more likely from the live tradition of plays and stories of Spanish or Italian provenance. Such is the case with Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (1830), cited by Christopher R. Wilson as an example of 'operas [that] contain Shakespearean characters but are arguably non-Shakespearean'.[65] As I will argue presently, Gotter's libretto for Benda's *Romeo und Julie* (1779) derives several of its idiosyncrasies from the Spanish tradition, rather than from Shakespeare.

Of particular interest and great complexity is the case of Falstaff. In addition to the two-part history play *King Henry IV* (1597–1599), the play of Shakespeare's that inspired most of the operas with Falstaff as their protagonist was the comedy first published in 1602 as *A Most Pleasant and Excellent Conceited Comedy of Sir John Falstaff and the Merry Wives of Windsor* (first performed in c. 1597). Apparently lacking a single source, the play's three episodes combine Italian novella commonplaces and elements from English folklore—particularly in the legend of Herne (or Horne) the Hunter. What needs to be taken into consideration is the episodic nature of the play, which gave the protagonist—originally portrayed by the clown Will Kempe, for whom the play was written—an opportunity to showcase his routines. Roger Clegg and Lucie Skeaping have argued convincingly that 'Kempe's Jig', a sung dialogical comedy entered in the London Stationers' Register on 21 October 1595 but apparently never published, was identical with—or an ancestor of—'The

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estudios en honor de Luciano García Lorenzo (Madrid, CSIC, 2009), 343–345<<<REFC>>>.

[65] Wilson, 'Shakespeare' (*Grove Opera*, 1992). See also Poriss, *Changing the Score*, chapter 4, for a discussion of Bellini's opera within the long Baroque opera tradition.

Singing Simpkin', which survives in Robert Cox's *Actaeon and Diana* (1655/1656).[66] The jig, based on Boccaccio's novella from *The Decameron* (Day 7, Novella 6), via Kempe's forebear and mentor Richard Tarlton, was highly popular throughout Continental Europe, being published in German in 1620, in Dutch in 1648 under the title 'Pekelharing in de Kist', and in Swedish (c. 1700) as 'Der Courtisan in der Kiste'.[67] Although Clegg and Skeaping observe that in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* a tune from another jig is used, they fail to notice that the titular piece, Kempe's 'The Singing Simpkin', is remarkably similar to the second episode of Falstaff's attempts at a rendezvous with Mistress Page and Mistress Ford. I have discussed this point in a study on the Czech variant printed in 1608.[68] Whether Kempe's jig served as a source for Shakespeare or not is a moot point. What is significant is the affinity of the play with the jig, an early-modern version of musical comedy. Additionally, the jig is significantly connected to the Boccaccian novellas, popular throughout late medieval and early modern Europe. The novella's plot gave rise to numerous stage adaptations, Tarlton's and Kempe's among them. I would argue that the popularity of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as an inspiration for many operatic versions is rooted in this profound transnational link with the Italianate novella and the bawdy musical comedy, which enjoyed great notoriety on the Continent.

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[66] <<<REFO:BK>>>Roger Clegg and Lucie Skeaping, *Singing Simpkin and Other Bawdy Jigs* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2014), 20–22<<<REFC>>>. For further on 'Singing Simpkin', see Chapter 11 of the present volume.

[67] Clegg and Skeaping, *Singing Simpkin*, 101–103.

[68] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Pavel Drábek, '"Samson Figuru nese": Biblical Plays between Czech Drama and English Comedy in Early Modern Central Europe', in Chanita Goodblatt and Eva von Contzen (eds.), *Enacting the Bible in Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 222–223<<<REFC>>>.

‘Per Falstaff dura impresa non è’: Antonio Salieri’s and Carlo Prospero Defranceschi’s *Falstaff, o le tre burle* (1799)

Salieri’s operas often drew on a transnational dramaturgy. The early *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamace* (1770), with a libretto by Giovanni Gastone Boccherini rooted in the pan-European craze of Don Quijotiads of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was one of the operas that established the twenty-year-old Salieri as a successful composer at the Imperial Court in Vienna. Among his other early successes was *Armida* (1771), to a libretto by Marco Coltellini, which reworks another perennial classic of early modern opera: Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*.

Salieri’s *dramma giocoso* based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, with a libretto by Defranceschi, premiered at the Kärntnertortheater in 1799. It is a remarkable adaptation of the play, integrally created within the genre of the Viennese Italian comic opera. The subtitle, ‘o le tre burle’ (‘or the three pranks’) hints not only at the episodic structure of the source play but also at the popular tradition of burlesque, erotic musical comedy—from which *The Merry Wives of Windsor* itself derived. In an act of inspired *contaminatio*, Salieri draws on other sources. His Sir John Falstaff is, somewhat surprisingly, composed for a baritone, perhaps a nod to another famous trickster-seducer from the *dramma giocoso* genre, Mozart’s and Da Ponte’s Don Giovanni (1786). There are several novel additions. One of them is a routine, mirroring Master Ford’s disguise as Master Brook (called Mr. Broch in Salieri’s opera): in act 1, scene 11, Mistress Ford comes to Falstaff pretending to be a German friend of Mistress Ford and Mistress Page (called Mrs. Slender in the Salieri). The comedy is apparently borrowed from Carlo Goldoni’s comedies with characters speaking in foreign languages.[69] In act 2, scene 17, the Mr. Slender (Shakespeare's Mr. Page) appears in the wood for a solo scene with an echo. This is a reflective scene on jealousy, which should logically have been sung by Mr. Ford, by this point cured of his envy. The authors probably assigned it to Slender to balance out the singing parts and give the bass Slender a showcase number. (Again, dramatic logic is secondary; a figurative, in this case vicarious, cohesion is sufficient.) More importantly, the scene with a magical echo was a commonplace of both early modern English drama and of Baroque opera. Here, the eerie echo becomes a supernatural voice of reason, providing a transcendental, magical dimension to an otherwise worldly plot. Slender welcomes the echo, saying 'L'eco stessa il conferma, e sopra un punto tale eco puo farvi ognun ch'abbia del sale' ('The echo itself confirms it, and anyone with a grain of salt in their head would say the same').[70] While seemingly tangential to the plot, the concluding words of the echo scene 'mai più' ('nevermore') will eventually become the lyrics of the finale, when—after the three carnivalesque *burle*—reason and order are safely restored.

Moving beyond textuality towards the notion of the Shakespearean as an intersection of transnational and transcultural influences, the dramaturgy of the Shakespearean libretto operates on a much more profound basis than the play texts—which survive solely in print. What may be identified in textual analysis as Shakespearean may well fall back on a live culture towards which textual analysis is somewhat myopic. A case in point are the Shakespearean echoes in Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805, 1814). The genesis of the libretto is too complex to recount here, but it is symptomatic of the present argument. Leonore adopts the name Fidelio for her disguise; this has been seen as an allusion to *Cymbeline*, while the disguise itself is a stock routine from Italianate novellas. Her infiltration into the prison where her beloved Florestan is kept may be seen as another Shakespearean inspiration, but may equally be traced back to Spanish *comedia*—such as Calderón's *La vida es sueño* (c. 1635), which in turn inspired Restoration adaptations of *The Tempest* and Aphra Behn's *The Young King, or The Mistake* (1679). There are echoes of *Macbeth* in *Fidelio*, such as Rocco the Gaoler's scenes bearing similarities to Macbeth's Porter—although that itself is a comedic routine with precursors in Plautine comedy. Similarly, Hector Berlioz's unfinished *Les Troyens* (1856–1858) 'was self-consciously constructed on what the composer called "the Shakespearean model"',[71] which does not identify a specific play by Shakespeare, but vaguely the genre of the early modern English play. Another Shakespearean echo is the miraculous conversion of Samiel at the end of Carl Maria von Weber's and Friedrich Kind's *Der Freischütz* (1821), which could be interpreted as a borrowing from *As You Like It*, where the evil Duke Frederick, 'meeting with an old religious man, / [. . .] was converted / Both from his enterprise and from the world' (5.4.151–153). But again, the hermit was a staple of early modern comedy, appearing in dozens of extant plays from numerous countries. With this perspective that treats the Shakespearean culture, its myth, and its synecdochic quality of being a stand-in for the early-modern transnational theatre culture, the Shakespearean libretto is not only a product of textual adaptation but a complex conduit for a rich variety of genres, stories, techniques, commonplaces, routines, and theatre traditions.

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[69] In act 2, scene 16, 'La tedesca' arrives again, this time present only offstage. In the final scene of the opera, it is Mrs. Ford's servant Betty who addresses Falstaff in German. This discrepancy seems to suggest that that it was initially Betty who was meant to impersonate 'La tedesca' in act 1, but the comedy of the disguised Mrs. Ford unrecognized by Falstaff probably brought about this revision.

[70] I am citing Audrey Sinclair's free translation in the booklet to Alberto Veronesi's and The Madrigalists of Milan's CD recording (Chandos Records 1998, CHAN 9613).

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[71] Streete, 'Shakespeare and Opera', 142.

‘Mark the wonders shall appear, / While I feast your eye and ear’: Henry Purcell’s *The Fairy-Queen* (1692, 1693)

Opera has always had a great allure for tourists who bring in cash, as the Preface to Henry Purcell’s (and probably William Davenant’s) *The Fairy-Queen* argues, referring to Venetian carnival and Parisian theatre. A regular opera house would bring London the commercial benefits as well as the added value of reputation, promises the Preface:

> If therefore an *Opera* were established here, by the Favour of the Nobility and Gentry of *England*; I may modestly conclude it would be some advantage to *London*, considering what a Sum we must Yearly lay out among Tradesmen for the fitting out so great a work.[72]

Harping on the nationalist string, the rivalry with France is used to drive the point home, listing the deficiencies of the English theatre in comparison to those abroad. However, with a little support and investment, England ‘might in a short time have as good Dancers [. . .] as they have in *France*, though I despair of ever having as good Voices among us, as they have in *Italy*’.[73] Apparently using the publication of the dialogue of *The Fairy-Queen* as an attempt at bringing the genre more prestige, the Preface (Purcell’s own words?) elaborates on the difference between tragedy (the genre held in the highest regard) and a true opera as well as on the musical qualities present in spoken drama:

> there being this difference between an *Opera* and a Tragedy; that the one is a Story sung with proper Action, the other spoken. And he must be a very

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[72] <IBT>Purcell, Preface to *The Fairy-Queen* (1693)</IBT>, A2r.

[73] Ibid., A2v.

> ignorant Player, who knows not there is a Musical Cadence in speaking; and that a Man may as well speak out of Tune, as sing out of Tune.[74]

This fluent transition from tragedy (or spoken drama) to opera is particularly significant not only for the argument the Preface is making but also, as I have suggested, for the development of the English dramatick opera—especially from the genre of Fletcherian tragicomedy. I would argue that *The Fairy-Queen* ostentatiously stages this transition from spoken drama to opera, and that principle is the dramaturgical logic that structures the play as a whole. The 1693 version goes even further in the direction of the Baroque melodramatic imagination.[75]

The Fairy-Queen's Prologue opens with a provocative, satirical question aimed at the implied sensation-seeking spectator:

> What have we left untry'd to please this Age,
> To bring it more in liking with the Stage?
> We sunk to Farce, and rose to Comedy;
> Gave you high Rants, and well-writ Tragedy.[76]

What is the next step to try to enliven the allegedly stale stage?

> Yet Poetry, of the Success afraid,
> Call'd in her Sister Musick to her aid.[77]

Interestingly, unlike Corneille's and Lully's, Shakespeare's name does not appear either in the Preface or the Prologue. Shakespeare's play serves almost a tangential role, providing the dialogue that connects individual musical and scenographic numbers—with the plot almost as inconsequential as the recitatives of Baroque opera, mere narrative bridges between the principal stage business of the work.

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[74] Ibid., A2r–v.

[75] For a more historical approach to *The Fairy*-Queen, see Chapter 13 of the present volume.

[76] <IBT>Purcell, *The Fairy-Queen*</IBT>, A3r.

[77] Ibid., A3r.

Shakespeare's dialogue in *The Fairy-Queen* is not only radically shortened, but also emasculated for conflict. The disobedient Hermia is not to be punished by death, but only 'Cage[d] in a Nunnery' and be made to 'Abjure / For ever the Society of Men'.[78] The reduced dramaticality signals that the greater affective engagement with this play will derive from other sources. One could even suggest that the dialogue is intentionally dreary and only moderately interesting—like a support act before the appearance of the billed celebrity. The 1693 version of *The Fairy-Queen* opens with the rude mechanicals' scene. Irrespective of the dramatic logic, this version omits the scene in which Egeus petitions the Duke to punish his disobedient daughter Hermia. Opening the opera with a scene in which the comical characters Quince, Bottom, and company cast those who are 'to play in our Enterlude before the Duke, on his Wedding-Day' was an inspired move. The metatheatrical quality of the scene prepares us for the artifice of the stagecraft that follows. The scene works as an induction of sorts. Just before they go off, Quince announces: 'in the mean time, I will get your Properties ready, and all your Habits, that every Man may Dress, to Act in Form'.[79] These preparations metatheatrically refer not only to the mechanicals' interlude but also to *The Fairy-Queen* as a whole. On departure, the clowns are replaced by Titania, who enters 'leading the Indian Boy, Fairies attending'. Her opening words cast a charm on the stage:

> TITANIA Now the Gloworm shews her Light,
> And twinkling Stars adorn the Night.
> [. . .]
> Now we glide from our abodes,

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[78] Ibid., B1r, v.

[79] Ibid., B2v.

To Sing, and Revel in these Woods.[80]

The spell is one of enchantment, and the space conjured up by Titania is sacred, closed to ordinary mortals:

[. . .] if any Mortal dare
Approach this spot of Fairy-Ground,
Blind the Wretch, then turn him round.[81]

The symbolism of sight in Titania's enchanted woods is profoundly theatrical. The audience of *The Fairy-Queen* (as well as literally Titania the Fairy Queen's audience) are the choice initiates of this special rite. The spell is cast and Titania's festivity—with its joy ('Happiness'), its sublime serenity ('Peace of Mind'), and erotic titillation ('Lovers only in retirement')—may start. Titania's song is followed by a (sung?) dialogue between the Fairies and a Blind Poet, one of three poets led in by the Fairies, who punish him with pinching, turning him around 'till he confess his Sins', as Titania had instructed. The Blind Poet does confess: 'I'm Drunk, as I live Boys, Drunk'[82]—a sin very appropriate for the inebriating qualities of fairy enchantment. The Chorus of Fairies concludes, symbolically again in its invocation of stagecraft:

Drive 'em hence, away, away,
Let 'em sleep till break of Day.[83]

The three drunk poets are charmed to sleep till the morning; waking up they will think that all they saw had been no more than a drunken dream. This newly added scene, interweaving motifs from *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, prepares the following action well, in that Bottom is similarly afflicted in his transformation into an ass—not to mention the hint at Shakespeare's Bottom, who concludes that he 'will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called "Bottom's Dream"' (*MND* 4.1.210–211).

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[80] Ibid., B2v.

[81] Ibid., B3r.

[82] Ibid., B3v.

[83] Ibid., B4r.

In act 2 (of the 1693 version), Titania appears in a variant of Shakespeare's scene, confronted by the accusatory Oberon, who does not address her 'Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania' (*MND* 2.1.60), but 'Now proud *Titania* I shall find your Haunts'[84]—apparently a hint to Titania's secret realm, unknown even to Oberon. This realm, Fairy-Land, to which only her train (and we the spectators) have privileged access, is what Titania conjures up by the power of her word and music:

> TITANIA Take Hands, and trip it in a round,
> While I Consecrate the ground.
> All shall change at my Command,
> All shall turn to Fairy-Land.[85]

This spell introduces the first operatic number, a scenographic *coup de théâtre* the audience has been long waiting for. The departure from Shakespeare's text is also indicative of the transition from spoken drama to opera:

> *The Scene changes to a Prospect of Grotto's, Arbors, and delightful Walks: The Arbors are Adorn'd with all variety of Flowers, the Grotto's supported by Terms, these lead to two Arbors on either side of the Scene, of a great length, whose prospect runs toward the two Angles of the House. Between these two*

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[84] Ibid., C1v.

[85] Ibid., C3v.

> *Arbors is the great Grotto, which is continued by several Arches, to the farther end of the House.*[86]

Before the first musical number, Titania utters an incantation and with her train carries out a cleansing ritual:

> [TITANIA] Now Fairies search, search every where,
> Let no Unclean thing be near.
> Nothing Venomous, or Foul,
> [. . .]
> Have you search'd? is no ill near?
> ALL Nothing, nothing; all is clear.
> TITANIA Let your Revels now begin,
> Some shall Dance, and some shall Sing.[87]

The operatic numbers become increasingly more elaborate and complex—a tendency even more pronounced in the 1693 version of the piece, to the point of explicitly articulating the departure from the everyday (a new song in act 1 opens with the line 'Come, come, come, let us leave the Town').[88] Titania, the titular Fairy-Queen, is the operatic impresario who conjures up the enchanted stage visions that summon music, dance, singing, and ingenious stage machinery—in short, whatever is 'left untry'd to please this Age'. This metatheatrical and essentially Baroque reading of her role is in keeping with numerous dramatic forebears—be it the famous magician Alcandre in *L'Illusion comique* (1635) by Pierre Corneille (who is in the Preface to *The Fairy-Queen*), or the Conjurer Vechio in John Fletcher's *The Chances* (c. 1617).[89] Fletcher's comedy was a regular piece in the repertoire during the Restoration from 1660 onward. In 1682, George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, famously adapted it, interestingly eliminating the magic from the play's final act. This disenchanted version brought it closer in line with the aesthetic directives of the times, reflecting the work of French theorists.[90]

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[86] Ibid., C3v.

[87] Ibid., C4r.

[88] Ibid., B3r.

[89] The conjurer's name, Vechio, is borrowed from Italian comedy, but the play is based on Cervantes's Spanish novella. See also Drábek, *Fletcherian Dramatic Achievement*, 138–144.

The opening acts are a series of scenes and musical numbers of increasing complexity and elaboration. Towards the end of act 3, Titania enters again with Bottom and her train of Fairies, and gives impresario-like instructions for the first masque:

> TITANIA Away, my Elves; prepare a Fairy Mask
> To entertain my Love; and change this place
> To my Enchanted Lake.[91]

This is a prompt for a supreme Baroque change of scene, allowing the audience to enter deeper into Titania's Fairy-Land. Here the scenic change is accompanied with ballet and a duet, further enriched by elaborate stage business:

> *The Scene changes to a great Wood; a long row of large Trees on each side: A River in the middle: Two rows of lesser Trees of a different kind just on the side of the River, which meet in the middle, and make so many Arches: Two*

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[90] For a discussion of the appropriate amount of pretence on the stage, see François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac's *Pratique du théâtre* (1657), which was also published in English as <IBT>*The Whole Art of the Stage* (1684)</IBT>, for instance in Book III (40), where d'Aubignac observes 'which are the Passions fittest for the Stage, and how they are to be manag'd': 'I only intend to shew with what Art a Pathetick or Moving Discourse ought to be regulated so as to make it agreeable to the Spectators, by the impression it is to make on them'. In what follows, d'Aubignas is, coincidentally, critiquing a French version of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, rebuking its author for allowing Pyramus to soliloquize too long over the supposedly dead Thisbe: 'the Poet ought not to have deferr'd so long [. . .] three or four Lines had been enough to have explain'd his belief of her death, and then all the rest ought to have been pronounc'd, his Sword drawn, and in the nearest disposition to death, which would certainly have produc'd immediate horrour and compassion in the Audience.' (Ibid., 41.)

[91] <IBT>Purcell, *The Fairy-Queen*</IBT>, E3r.

> *great Dragons make a Bridge over the River; their Bodies form two Arches, through which two Swans are seen in the River at a great distance.*
>
> *Enter a Troop of Fawns, Dryades and Naides. [sic]*
>
> *A Song in two Parts. [. . .]*
>
> *While a Symphany's [sic] Playing, the two Swans come Swimming on through the Arches to the bank of the River, as if they would Land; there turn themselves into Fairies, and Dance; at the same time the Bridge vanishes, and the Trees that were Arch'd, raise themselves upright.*
>
> *Four Savages Enter, fright the Fairies away, and Dance an Entry.*[92]

What follows is a generic pastoral love duet for Coridon and Mopsa, who sing a short dialogue on love and kisses. This number adds dramatic qualities to the sung parts. While the first masque in act 2 only had solo songs, act 3 contains first a song in two parts and then this sung dialogue. It is further followed by 'A Song by a Nymph', which elaborates on Mopsa's comedic position, this time in a serious and more romantic variant, almost like a dramatic aria of resolution, and then a ballet ('A DANCE of Hay-Makers') and a chorus.

The 1693 version also adds a new song in act 3, to be inserted before the comical sung dialogue of Coridon and Mopsa. The song follows the enchanting-invocation strand that Titania induced in the opening act:

> Ye Gentle Spirits of the Air, appear;
> Prepare, and joyn your tender Voices here.
> Catch, and repeat the trembling Sounds anew,
> Soft as her Sighs, and sweet as Pearly Dew.
> Run new Division, and such Measures keep,
> As when you lull the God of Love asleep.[93]

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[92] Ibid., E3r–v.

This invocation is aimed at Music itself, impersonated by the ‘Gentle Spirits of the Air’ with their ‘trembling Sounds’. The ‘new Division [and] Measures’ to arrive are the new realms of music that follow in the play, namely, the comedic dialogue of two shepherds Coridon and Mopsa, the true inhabitants of that ‘lonely place, / Where Crouds and Noise were never known’. This Plaint has a function of an antimasque, which is designed to juxtapose the majestical celebratory numbers with contrasting pieces. The sad song being concluded, Oberon calls for ‘a new Transparent World [to] be seen’.

In act 4, dramatic incidents are counterbalanced with musical numbers again, culminating in the elaborate masque of Four Seasons:

> *The Scene changes to a Garden of Fountains. A Sonata plays while the Sun rises, it appears red through the Mist, as it ascends it dissipates the Vapours, and is seen in its full Lustre; then the Scene is perfectly discovered, the Fountains enrich'd with gilding, and adorn'd with Statues: The view is terminated by a Walk of Cypress Trees which lead to a delightful Bower. Before the Trees stand rows of Marble Columns, which support many Walks which rise by Stairs to the top of the House; the Stairs are adorn'd with Figures on Pedestals, and Rails and Balasters on each side of 'em. Near the top, vast Quantities of Water break out of the Hills, and fall in mighty Cascade's to the bottom of the Scene, to feed the Fountains which are on each side. In the middle of the Stage is a very large Fountain, where the Water rises about twelve Foot.*
>
> *Then the 4 Seasons enter, with their several Attendants.*
>
> [. . ...]

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[93] Ibid., E4r.

> *A Machine appears, the Clouds break from before it, and* Phœbus *appears in a Chariot drawn by four Horses; and Sings.*[94]

Act 5 opens with Theseus's speech from Shakespeare ('Go, one of you, find out the forester'; *MND* 4.1.101–106), but here the unnamed Duke enters with Egeus and train, expressing a 'long[ing] to hear the Musick of my Hounds', followed by '*A Composition in imitation of Hunting, at the end of it a Shout, the Lovers wake*'.[95] After the mechanicals reunite, the Duke, Egeus, the lovers, and attendants enter for a brief scene, in which the Duke expresses his famous scepticism to all things imaginary: 'I never could believe, / These Antick Fables, nor these Fairy toys'.[96] In a metatheatrical response, as it were, after his soliloquy, incidental music is heard and a masque-like entry of the supernaturals follows:

> *While a short Simphony Plays, Enter Oberon, Titania, Robin-Good-fellow, and all the Fayries.*[97]

The Duke's 'I hear strange Musick warbling in the Air' receives this reply from Oberon:

> 'Tis Fairy Music, sent by me;
> To cure your Incredulity.
> All was true the Lovers told,
> You shall stranger things behold.
> Mark the wonders shall appear,
> While I feast your eye and ear.[98]

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[94] Ibid., F4v.

[95] Ibid., G2r and G2v, respectively.

[96] Ibid., G3v.

[97] Ibid., G4r.

[98] Ibid., G4r.

The Duke marvels at this (‘Where am I? Does my sense inform me right?’), and Titania and Oberon announce the appearance of another masque:

> *Juno appears in a Machine drawn by Peacocks.* [. . .]
>
> *While a Symphony Plays, the Machine moves forward, and the Peacocks spread their Tails, and fill the middle of the Theater.*[99]

At this point, Titania’s Fairy-Land with its melodramatic magical powers has convinced the sceptical spectators and takes full possession of the stage in the final and most fantastical of the scene changes, ‘the Chinese Garden’, a culmination of the Fairy-Queen’s theatre of wonders.

> *While the Scene is darken’d, a single Entry is danced; Then a Symphony is play’d; after that the Scene is suddainly Illuminated, and discovers a transparent Prospect of a* Chinese *Garden, the Architecture, the Trees, the Plants, the Fruit, the Birds, the Beasts, quite different from what we have in this part of the World. It is terminated by an Arch, through which is seen other Arches with close Arbors, and a row of Trees to the end of the View. Over it is a hanging Garden, which rises by several ascents to the top of the House; it is bounded on either side with pleasant Bowers, variours [sic] Trees, and numbers of strange Birds flying in the Air, on the Top of a Platform is a Fountain, throwing up Water, which falls into a large Basin.*[100]

A series of musical numbers follows—solos, duets, songs in parts, chorus, a dance (‘*Six Monkeys come from between the Trees, and Dance*’).[101]

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[99] Ibid., G4r.

[100] Ibid., G4v–H1r.

[101] Ibid., H1v.

The Chinese masque is only seemingly illogical in the piece—especially if *The Fairy-Queen* is approached as an autonomous work, not as a derivation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Culturally, late seventeenth-century Europe enjoyed the fashion of decorative wallpapers made in China, and the fascination by the Orient was imbricated in social aspirations.[102] There is, however, an obvious textual incentive for both the pastoral antimasque and the Chinese Garden. In their first scene, Titania wonders (in a speech from Shakespeare, with only minor alterations):

Remember
When you did steal away from *Fairy-Land*,
And in the shape of *Corin* sat all day

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[102] For the early modern (and mostly Dutch) trade in Chinese wallpapers, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Emile de Bruijn's *Chinese Wallpaper in Britain and Ireland* (London: Philip Wilson, 2017)<<<REFC>>>. These cultural encounters with the East were ones of fascination with the wider enchanting world, before the attitude was replaced by Europe's imperial and disenchanted 'arrogance' (Osterhammel's term) towards Asia; see <<<REFO:BK>>>Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018)<<<REFC>>>. I am grateful to Peter W. Marx for drawing my attention to this important work. Roger Savage, in his edition of Purcell's opera in <<<REFO:BK>>>Michael Burden (ed.), *Henry Purcell's Operas: The Complete Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)<<<REFC>>>, refers to a plate of 'a Woman of the Province of Xansi' (399), printed in <<<REFO:BK>>>Johannes Nieuhoff's *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces to the Great Tartar Cham* (London, 1673)<<<REFC>>>. Allegedly, the chinoiserie alludes to Queen Mary's collection of Chinese porcelain.

Playing on Oaten-Pipes, and Singing Love
To Amorous *Philida*. Why are you here
Come from the farthest Verge of India?[103]

It seems plausible that both the pastoral intermezzo and the Chinese masque imaginatively explore Titania’s flowery figures in her opening speech. On a more immediate level, the reason for the Chinese masque is given by Oberon:

All Nature joyn to entertain our Queen.
[. . .] all things agree
To make an Universal Harmony.
SCENE Changes.[104]

In this sense, Titania’s theatrical magic has summoned all the arts (poetry, music, dance, theatre) and elements (including the Four Seasons) to create this ‘Universal Harmony’—an epiphany of the enchanted world of Fairy-Land—and of opera. The play concludes with an epilogue in dialogue, spoken by Oberon and Titania, ending with an enchanting couplet that appeals to the audience to be won over by the work’s charms and its ‘new Transparent World’:

OBERON We’ll try a Thousand charming Ways to win ye.
TITANIA If all this will not do, the Devil’s in ye.[105]

‘Der Stempel Shakespears unverkennbar ist’: Jiří Antonín Benda’s and Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter’s *Romeo und Julie* (1779)

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[103] <IBT>Purcell, *The Fairy-Queen*</IBT>, C1v; italics in the original.

[104] Ibid., G5r.

[105] Ibid., H2v.

Adhering to the conventional genre of late Baroque chamber operas, Benda's and Gotter's *Singspiel*, *Romeo und Julie*, interlaces spoken dialogue with musical numbers. Gotter wrote two libretti from Shakespeare; after the *Singspiel* for Benda, he created a successful opera libretto based on *The Tempest*. *Die Geisterinsel* (*The Island of Spirits*), avidly promoted after his premature death (in 1797) by his widow, was set to music five or six times around the turn of the century.[106] *Romeo und Julie* is an interesting case not only in its adherence to period tastes and aesthetics of propriety but also in its adjustment to the limitations and the economy of the production. At the same time, Gotter brought together a web of influences that reflected both the European popularity of plays about Romeo and Juliet, and the late eighteenth-century reception of Shakespeare in the German-language theatre culture.

The printed libretto of *Romeo und Julie* opens with a remarkable, though brief 'Nachricht' ('News'), which begins with a defence ('Schutzschrift') of Benda's music against anyone who would consider it a desecration ('Entweihung') to bring the tragic muse onto the opera stage. Clearly, this is a conventional trope of a humble *apologia*. Gotter writes within the eighteenth-century fashion of learned and enlightened intellectuals who use their humble forewords to promote their achievements and point to their ingenious creations. Writing a decade after the publication of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's era-defining *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767–1769), which placed Shakespeare at the very heart of the modern theatre repertoire, Gotter makes sure to partake of the genius's fame:

> Is it not the fate of the masterpiece in all arts to be copied and modified? The following *Singspiel* has almost nothing in common with the famous German

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[106] <<<REFO:BK>>>T. Sofie Taubert, *Die Szene des Wunderbaren: Die Shakespeare-Elfen im Wechselspiel von Musik und Maschine* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 2018), 74<<<REFC>>>.

> tragedy of the same name, apart from names and the storyline. The names and the storyline, however, belong to Shakespeare.[107]

In order not to seem too dependent on his models or lacking in originality, Gotter emphasizes that ‘Shakespeare’s stamp here is indiscernible’.[108] In this, he follows the standard approaches of German translators and adaptors of the 1760s and 1770s—who numbered among them the famous Christoph Martin Wieland (see subsequent discussion), Johann Christian Bock, and the Prague dramaturg Franz Joseph Fischer, whose versions of *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II*, and *Timon of Athens* demonstrate many adaptation strategies similar to Gotter’s, such as the heightened sentimentality of situations or the predilection for extended moments when time seems to come to a halt and the central love couple are poised in a dilemma between morality and sublime passions.

Gotter reduces the plot to three scenes and the cast to six personae (four singers, two speaking parts) and a chorus. He uses the paucity of personnel to his advantage, such as when Julie speaks to her confidante Laura (the *secunda donna*, without the Nurse’s comic edge):

> JULIE Who have I got apart from you? A father I shiver from and unfeeling,
> proud relatives.

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[107] ‘Und ist es nicht das Schicksal der Meisterstücke in jeder Kunst, kopiert und nachgeahmt zu werden? Das nachstehende Singspiel hat mit dem berühmten deutschen Trauerspiele dieses Namens fast nichts, als Namen und Fabel gemein. Namen und Fabel aber gehören Shakespear’. (<IBT>Gotter, *Romeo und Julie*</IBT>, 7.)

[108] ‘[D]er Stempel Shakespears unverkennbar ist’. (Ibid., 8.)

LAURA You are forgetting that your father's sister is a second mother to you.[109]

Father Capellet (Edler von Verona, a gentleman of Verona) and Lorenzo his chaplain (Hauskapellan, a speaking part) are the only others on Julie's side. Her detested aunt does not appear. On the Montecchis' side, Romeo is accompanied (at only one point) by servant Francesco (the second speaking part). The *Singspiel* rests on three moments: Julie taking leave of the banished Romeo (act 1); Julie's resolution to feign her death when she is compelled to marry a Graf (act 2); and the peaceful and death-free resolution in the tomb (act 3).

As the play's *prima donna*, Julie is torn by emotions—a useful pretext for musical numbers. However, Gotter inserts paternalistic gender dynamics. Romeo frames Julie as the weak and vulnerable one, while he is the more reliable and stable of the two. While tossed on the sea of fortune's whims, he remains steadfast:

> ROMEO (*aria*). Hope and love! Love and hoping
> in spite of every affliction.
> Watch with a free and stable heart
> my boat's departure.
> True love sits by the rudder,
> daring hope fills the sails;
> the wishes of warm friendship jest
> by my side and before me,
> and adjure the wind and sea.[110]

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[109] 'JULIE Wen hab' ich ausser dir? – Einen Vater, vor dem ich zittre, und fühllose, stolze Verwandte. / LAURA Sie vergessen, dass die Schwester Ihres Vaters Ihnen eine zweyte Mutter ist.' (Act 1, scene 2; ibid., 14.)

[110] 'Hoff und liebe! Lieb' und Hoffnung / Trotzen jedem Ungemach. / Sieh mit standhaft freyem Herzen / Meines Schiffes Fluge nach! / Treue Liebe sitzt am Ruder, / Kühne Hofnung

After this conventional Baroque aria (of the boat-on-a-stormy-sea type), Julie bursts into a passionate bout of despair—another operatic commonplace, which originated with the madness scenes (*La pazzia d'Isabella*) for which the early *commedia dell'arte* celebrity and diva Isabella Andreini was renowned.[111] Here, Julie suggests that they should jointly commit suicide while they are together; she produces a dagger, and offers to stab herself. Romeo disarms her, asking her to calm down, or he will punish the ultimate culprit: himself.

After this generic incident of sentimental tragedy, Romeo and Julie resolve to accept their fate and before taking leave of one another, they sing a duet 'Ja, der Lerche frühe Kehle / Meldet, dass der Tag erwacht' ('The lark's early throat announces the rising day'). The text of this libretto cleverly combines Shakespearean imagery ('It was the lark, the herald of the morn'; 3.5.6) with the lyrics of avian imagery commonplace in the Baroque.[112] The dramatic resolution in Julie's 'Nein, entflieh! Du sollst nicht sterben! / Nein, entflieh! Der Tag erwacht!' ('No, flee! You must not die! No, flee! The day has risen!') is echoed by the

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schwellt die Segel, / Warmer Freundschaft Wünsche scherzen / Mir zur Seite, vor mir her, / Und beschwören Wind und Meer.' (Ibid., 20.)

[111] For the early history of the diva in the *commedia*, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Rosalind Kerr, *The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2015)<<<REFC>>>. For a plausible influence of Isabella Andreini's mad scene on Ophelia, see <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Eric Nicholson, 'Ophelia Sings like a *Prima Donna Innamorata*: Ophelia's Mad Scene and the Italian Female Performer', in Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (eds.) *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Theater* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 81–98<<<REFC>>>.

[112] On the lark of the morn and bird-song imagery, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Christopher R. Wilson, *Shakespeare's Musical Imagery* (London: Continuum, 2011), 99–100<<<REFC>>>.

arriving confidante Laura, who urges Romeo to haste: ‘Heiss ihn fliehn, soll er nicht sterben. / Heiss ihn fliehn! Das Haus erwacht’ (‘Bid him flee, or he shall die. Bid him flee! The house has risen’).[113]

The second act starts with Laura’s recitative and coloratura aria ‘Lasst ihr, Nachtigallen, / Schlummerlieder fallen’ (‘Oh let, you nightingales, your slumber songs fall’). Laura’s song is meant as a prayer for the sleeping Julie, and is reminiscent of Cordelia’s soliloquy over the sleeping Lear (‘O my dear father, restoration hang [. . .] not concluded all’; *Lear* 4.7.24–37). Capellet, Julie’s father, decides to marry her to the Graf von Lodrona, which will help assuage her grief over Thebaldo’s death. Besides, as Julie learns from her father, the Earl of Lodrona, is seeking revenge on Thebaldo’s murderer—which is a motif drawn from Lope de Vega’s *Castelvins y Monteses*, while the name probably alludes to the Salzburg aristocratic family of Lodron, who were also musical patrons in the decades preceding Benda’s *Singspiel*. When Capellet leaves, Laura arrives with a letter from Julie’s Aunt Camilla (‘your second mother’), who summons her to get ready to depart to their country estate—another motif borrowed from Lope’s play or from its adaptations.

Lope’s *Castelvins y Monteses* could well have inspired the denouement too: Act 3 opens with Julie’s entombment, first sung by the remorseful and repentant Capellet and choir, followed by an antiphonal number (‘Wechselgesang’) by Laura, a female attendant, and choir. The tomb is shut, and the procession departs. Romeo meets his servant Francesco, who sent him word of Julie’s death. Romeo gives him a letter for his father and takes the tools to open the tomb. The helpless Francesco leaves in foreboding. After this spoken dialogue, Romeo opens the tomb, sees the murdered Thebaldo’s bier, then Julie’s, and bursts into a mournful aria. As Romeo is about to stab himself with a dagger, Julie awakes, and the lovers embrace. Lorenzo arrives, surprised that Romeo has not received his letter. At that point they hear voices approaching; Romeo and Julie retreat to another chamber, while Lorenzo is met by a deliriously despairing Capellet, who arrives in the tomb to lament over his dead daughter again. Lorenzo tries to appease his woes and the repenting Capellet suspects that Julie died out of love. He says he would do anything to have his daughter back and grant her wishes—'und wenn er meines Todfeindes Sohn, der Mörder des Thebaldo wäre!' ('even if he were the son of my arch-enemy, Thebaldo's murderer!'). The happy resolution comes when the lovers arrive; Capellet, overwhelmed with surprise, swoons in Lorenzo's arms, accepting both as his children, and willing to reconcile with the Montecchi. A crowd of followers arrives for the sung finale that exhorts everyone onward: 'To invoke peace, a peace concluded By Almighty Love.'[114]

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[113] <IBT>Gotter, *Romeo und Julie*</IBT>, 23–24.

Gotter's dramaturgy eliminates dramatic suspense and frontlines the moral and emotional dilemmas of the three protagonists (Julie, Romeo, and Capellet). The principal 'sufferer' in this piece is Julie, torn by allegiances and sentiments. The fashionably emotionally extreme Capellet presents himself first as the unforgiving tyrant, and then as his perfect opposite, emasculated by grief and sentimental for a daughter he had been willing to disown ruthlessly only hours before. Were it not for him, the entire *Singspiel* would fall into Catherine Clément's reading of opera as a genre centred around the undoing of women. In act 1, Romeo infantilizes Julie when he rebukes her for the excessive despair. That moment is uncannily echoed in act 3, when Julie's father Capellet returns to the tomb, spurning a follower who tries to calm his grief on his knees: 'Steht auf! Bin ich denn ein Kind, das man gängeln muss?' ('Stand up! Am I a child to be led by the hand?')[115] Only a moment ago, Romeo's servant Francesco tried in vain to prevent Romeo from entering the tomb.

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[114] 'Den Frieden zu beschwören, / Den Frieden, den die Allmacht / Der Liebe schloss.' (Ibid., 64.)

[115] Ibid., 57.

Such excess of short-lived but extreme sentiments would not warrant a tragic ending, as Gotter explains in his preface: ‘in part the musical economy of the arrangement seemed not to allow an entirely tragic catastrophe’.[116] Also, he adds, he was aware of his singers’ limitations. The ending of Gotter’s and Benda’s version is not only in line with the limited musical production (‘musikalische Ökonomie die Beibehaltung’), but also with the tragicomic logic of the romance. The similarities and the motifs common *Castelvins y Monteses*—perhaps arising from dramatic logic rather than from direct influence—are significant. They centre around the affects and the dramatic opportunities for lyrical and poetic rhetorics (in the case of Lope de Vega) and for pregnant operatic moments that lend themselves to autonomous operatic numbers, which Benda effectively sets to music. While Shakespeare as text is indeed all but indiscernible (‘unverkennbar’) here, Gotter’s and Benda’s adaptation extrapolates the melodramatic moments of the story—that is, its myth, rather than the script—and parodies them in the means available to them, in their immediate circumstances, and in line with aesthetics and sensibilities of their theatre culture.

‘But lo! I wave my lily wand [. . .] And Bagdad is before thee’: Weber’s and Planché’s *Oberon, or The Elf King’s Oath* (1826)

James Robinson Planché’s libretto for Carl Maria von Weber’s English-language opera *Oberon, or The Elf King’s Oath* acknowledges that it is based on Christoph Martin Wieland’s poem *Oberon* (1780) in ottava rima and the thirteenth-century French romance *Huon de Bordeaux*. Weber’s and Planché’s opera is usually not seen as a Shakespearean adaptation. However, Shakespeare’s influence is decisive, even if only in the cultural significance and popularity of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Weber’s and Planché’s was not the first opera based on Wieland’s *Oberon*. Only two weeks before Weber’s and Planché’s opera opened at Covent Garden on 12 April 1826 and clearly competing with them, *Oberon, or The Charmed Horn*, a romantic fairy tale in two acts with a libretto by George Macfarren libretto and music arranged and adapted by Thomas Cooke, opened at the Drury Lane theatre on 27 March.[117] There had been other versions: ‘the subject has been frequently dramatized, twice at least in Germany, and twice in England, not counting the masque by Mr. Sotheby himself, which I believe was never acted’, says Planché in the preface to his printed libretto.[118] In 1789, F. L. A. Kunzen premiered his Danish opera *Holger Danske* in Copenhagen to I. Baggesen’s libretto, which replaces Huon with the local myth of Ogier the Dane, who gave the opera his name.[119]

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[116] ‘Theils schien mir die musikalische Ökonomie die Beibehaltung der allzu tragischen Katastrophe nicht zu erlauben’. (Ibid., 8.)

In the German-speaking world, Wieland (1733–1813) is not only a major literary figure of the eighteenth century—poet, playwright, librettist, and translator—but his translation of Shakespeare also played a key role in the cult popularity of the works in Germany, before being superseded by the collective Schlegel–Tieck translation.[120] In his preface to the reader, Wieland explains that his Oberon derives not only from the romance tradition—'a peculiar sort of spectre, halfway between human and goblin, the son of Julius Caesar and a fairy, turned by a special spell into a dwarf'[121]—but even more from a different sort: 'mine is one and the same with the Oberon that appears in Chaucer's 'The Merchant's Tale' and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as the king of fairies or elves'.[122] Wieland was a popular literary figure in Britain at the turn of the century and had a significant influence on British Romanticism, as Farese has argued.[123] When writing his libretto, Planché would have worked with the English version, 'tastefully translated into English by Mr. [William] Sotheby',[124] and published in London in 1798. As Farese observes, Wieland's inspirations were much wider, including the Arthurian legend and *The Arabian Nights*, in the inclusion of Harun al Raschid, the Caliph of Baghdad, who also appears in Weber's opera.[125]

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[117] <<<REFO:BK>>>Margaret Ross Griffel, *Operas in English: A Dictionary* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 351<<<REFC>>>.

[118] <<<REFO:BK>>>James Robinson Planché, *Oberon: A Romantic and Fairy Opera in Three Acts* (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1827), 7<<<REFC>>>.

[119] <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Mieke J. Lens, ‘Huon de Bordeaux’, in Willem P. Gerritsen and Anthony G. van Melle (eds.), *A Dictionary of Medieval Heroes*, trans. Tanis Guest (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1993), 151<<<REFC>>>.

[120] <<<REFO:BK>>>Peter W. Marx, *Hamlets Reise nach Deutschland* (Berlin: Alexander Verlag, 2018), 25–26<<<REFC>>>.

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[121] '[E]ine seltsame Art von Spuk, ein Mittelding von Mensch und Kobold, der Sohn Julius Cäsars und einer Fee, der durch eine sonderbare Bezauberung in einen Zwerg verwandelt ist'. <IBT>Christoph Martin Wieland, *Oberon: Ein romantisches Heldengedicht in zwölf Gesängen* (1780), Project Gutenberg, n.p.; http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2187 (accessed on 15 November 2019)</IBT>.

[122] '[D]er meinige ist mit dem Oberon, welcher in Chaucers 'Merchant's-Tale' und Shakspeares *Midsummer-Night's-Dream* als ein Feen—oder Elfenkönig (King of Fayries) erscheint, eine und eben dieselbe Person.' Ibid., 'An den Leser'.

[123] <<<REFO:JART>>>Carlotta Farese, 'The Translator and the Fairies: Christoph Martin Wieland's *Oberon* and the British Romantics', *European Romantic Review* 20, no. 5 (2009): 629–636<<<REFC>>>.

[124] Planché, *Oberon*, 7.

[125] For a detailed discussion of Planché's textual work, which gives the sources used in writing his libretto and an analysis of the plot, see <<<REFO:BK>>>Joseph E. Morgan, *Carl*

Notwithstanding the wealth of sources, the first plot incident of both Wieland's poem and Planché's libretto is a quarrel between Oberon and Titania, Shakespeare's addition to the mythology of Oberon. In this, Weber's opera signals a clear allegiance with the Shakespearean myth. Unlike Wieland's poem, which opens with a Homeric invocation of the Muses saddled on hippogryphs and painting the romance landscape of his imagination, before moving on to the quarrel, the libretto starts in a Shakespearean fashion. After the opening Chorus of Fairies softly singing and chasing away all 'too loud' noises that could disturb their slumbering King Oberon, reminiscent not only of the lullabies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* but also the Second Song from act 2 of Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen*, Puck enters rebuking the fairies and spirits, in a situation that recalls the opening of *Julius Caesar*:

> How now? How now? Why do you loiter here?
> Are there not tasks to do? The sinking sun
> Is not an hour's journey from the sea.[126]

In a blank-verse soliloquy, he provides the exposition to the audience, describing the conflict between Oberon and Titania:

> Mere wife and husband could not well have wrangled
> On slighter grounds,—which was most inconstant,
> Woman or man? Ha! ha! The queen of course
> Champion'd her sex,—debate rose high,—in anger,
> One east, one west,—they speeded as of yore,
> Swearing by all that fairies reverence,

Maria von Weber: Oberon and Cosmopolitanism in the Early German Romantic (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 143–166<<<REFC>>>.

[126] <IBT>Planché, *Oberon*</IBT>, 11.

Never to meet in love, till some fond pair,
Through weal and woe, 'mid flood, and chains, and fire,
Should keep their plighted faith inviolate,
Unmoved by pleasure, and unbent by pain![127]

When Oberon awakes, he discharges his troubled mind in an aria before Puck, like the play's impresario, induces the first scene change, showing the romantic hero Sir Huon and his comedic companion Sherasmin. This dramatic ploy is similar to that of Shakespeare's Puck leading the Athenian lovers through the woods. Here it is Huon and his comedic Papageno-like sidekick who enter, and when Sherasmin falls asleep, the romantic tenor Huon has a magical vision:

> *The clouds open, and discover the interior of a Persian kiosk. Reiza is seen seated on a couch in a melancholy attitude, with a lute in her hand.*[128]

This vision, apparently inspired by the operatic staple *Armida*, is the next of the magical scene changes in Weber's and Planché's opera. Oberon approaches Huon and his 'merry fellow' (as he is called in a later version), and before magically transposing them to Baghdad, Oberon gives to Huon an enchanted horn:

Therefore receive, sir duke, this iv'ry horn,
Whatever danger may thy path beset,
Its slightest sound will bring thee sudden aid;
Need'st thou the presence of the fairy king,
A bolder blast will bring me to thy side,
Tho' planets roll'd between us.[129]

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[127] Ibid., 12.

[128] Ibid., 14.

[129] Ibid., 15.

To Sherasmin, Oberon gives a bottomless golden cup: ‘Drink, and drown thy fears in Gascon wine.’ In a fascinating instance of *contaminatio*, Planché combines Shakespeare’s magic flower with Schikaneder’s magic flute—itself a specimen of the magic-instrument *Singspiel*. The stage visions and magic scene changes are incurred by the same power as in *The Fairy-Queen*: by stagecraft, which follows Oberon’s command, to the two knight-errants’ as well as our amazement:

> [OBERON] But lo! I wave my lily wand, Once, twice, three times o’er thee,
> On the banks of the Tigris thou dost stand,
> And Bagdad is before thee.
> *The scene changes to the banks of the Tigris, with the city of Bagdad in the distance.*
> SHERASMIN By St. Denis, but he’s right!
> SIR HUON Can I trust my startled sight?[130]

Weber’s and Planché’s original version of *Oberon* was created in the English stage genre of the dramatick opera, strikingly similar in structure and melodramatic aesthetics to *The Fairy-Queen*.[131] As such, it also inherited many of the commonplaces of the genre—from Shakespearean motifs and Fletcherian dramaturgical routines to the metatheatrical framing of the fairies as fictionalized theatre impresarios. *Oberon*, a ‘romantic and fairy opera’ (as

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[130] Ibid., 16.

[131] It is striking that Sir John Eliot Gardiner’s wonderful recording with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique (DECCA 2005), sung in the original English and played on historic instruments, adopts a narrator, who disrupts the dramaturgical structure of the piece. The narration eliminates the metatheatrical, Baroque dimension of Oberon’s two servants, the singing soprano Puck, and the spoken male Droll, who invoke individual scene changes as the play’s impresarios. In this way, Gardiner’s recording receives a very modern dramaturgical coherence—which is paradoxical, given that the music tries to recreate the historic practices.

Planché titled it) continued the tradition of the magic tale, which started in Elizabethan drama, whether with Robert Greene's *The Scottish History of James IV* (c. 1590, featuring Aster Oberon, King of Fairies, as the impresario of the framing device),[132] George Peele's *The Old Wives Tale* (c. 1590), or Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Tempest*. However, this is not how Weber's *Oberon* is known nowadays.

Planché's libretto underwent numerous changes and adaptations, as was standard in order to accommodate different theatrical tastes and genres. In Weber's correspondence with Planché, written (in early 1825) over a year before their work's London premiere, Weber alerts his librettist that changes will be necessary: 'The cut of an English Opera is certainly very different from a German one—the English is more a Drama with songs'.[133] And again, several weeks later:

> I must repeat that the cut of the whole is very foreign to all my ideas and maxims. The intermixing of so many principal actors who do not sing, the omission of the music in the most important moments—all these things deprive our *Oberon* the title of an Opera, and will make him unfit for all other Theatres in Europe; which is a very bad thing for me, but—*passons la dessus*.[134]

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[132] For a discussion of these metatheatrical frames with demonic characters, see <<<REFO:BKCH>>>Pavel Drábek, '"Why, sir, are there other heauens in other countries?": The English Comedy as a Transnational Style', in M. A. Katritzky and Pavel Drábek (eds.), *Transnational Connections in Early Modern Theatre* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 147<<<REFC>>>.

[133] Weber's letter to Planché, 6 January 1825; in <IBT>Weber, *Oberon*, n.p.</IBT>

[134] Weber's letter to Planché, 19 February 1825; in ibid.

The German version, by Theodore Hell (Carl Gottfried Theodor Winkler), brings the opera closer to the tradition of the German *Singspiel*, complementing the soprano Puck with another (speaking) servant Droll. A later version reduces the spoken parts even more to a farcical exchange between Droll and Puck as a double act. The once English dramatick opera has been adapted to the Continental genre of the German magical *Singspiel* with fast-paced spoken recitatives and dazzling musical numbers. This shift seemed to fulfil, posthumously, Weber's creative intention:

> Still I beg leave to observe that the composer looks more for the expression of feelings than the figurative; the former he may repeat and develope [*sic*] in all their graduations; but verses like
> 'Like the spot the tulip weareth'
> 'Deep within its dewy urn;'
> Or, in *Huon's* song
> 'Like hopes that deceive us'
> 'Or false friends who leave us'
> 'Soon as descendeth Prosperity's sun.'
> must be said only *once*.[135]

It may seem, then, that Weber himself was creatively urged to move from the dramatic genre of the English opera to the melodramatic imagination of the German one. Negotiating the differences between the English and German traditions—the dramatick opera and the *Singspiel* respectively—and the revisions of *Oberon* are also indicative of the changing prominence of the two genres, the dramatick opera in decline and the *Singspiel* still incumbent. What the revisions edited out was the metatheatrical framing of the genre and its *pasticcio*-like qualities, reminiscent of Purcell's *The Fairy-Queen*. While still firmly rooted in the broad Shakespearean cultural substratum, Weber's and Planché's *Oberon, or The Elf*

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[135] Ibid.

King's Oath—in the versions known nowadays—has lost its more explicit links to the early modern English melodramatic genre.

This chapter has discussed a few of the many varieties of genres, styles, and modes of the melodramatic imagination. All of my examples of opera libretti have been European and from dominant cultures. That awareness is a corrective to any assumptions of a comprehensive take on the subject. There are, of course, dozens of melodramatic types and hundreds of Shakespearean libretti from other cultures—stemming from them and their live theatre practices, their predilections for a unique mixture of melodramatic tastes, with Shakespearean inspirations interweaving the textures of the works as literary, dramatic, thematic, emblematic, or narrative representatives of a transnational community. The various and diverse libretti are instances of an imaginative *contaminatio* of manifold creative incentives: their theatre culture as the living bedrock; the production exigencies as their pragmatic ground plans; the Shakespearean myth with its stories, characters, dramatic routines, and specific, local traditions of reception; and the creators' own ambitions and talents. Whenever a libretto directly purports to adapt Shakespeare, it inevitably partakes in the Shakespearean myth. Inflecting it, reimaging it, and always creating an autonomous work of art, these libretti are parodies that—enriched by the dimensions of music and scenography—allow their audiences to enjoy the cult in a new way. In this sense, the dramaturgy of the Shakespearean libretto goes hand in hand with Gower's opening lines in *Pericles*: they summon Shakespeare and his stories from our shared cultural foundation, as it were, 'To sing a song that old was sung' (*Per* 1.0.1).

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