Then Play On: Listening to the Shakespearean Soundscape

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Abstract

Shakespeare's plays articulate their author's understanding of sound at various registers of theatrical and linguistic representation. I have tried to make listening my own critical practice by attending to the ways Shakespeare is attuned to, and rebroadcasts throughout his work, the many interrelated valences sound has in the early modern period. "Shakespearience" is the term I use for a re-invigorated phenomenological approach to the study of Shakespeare's works, one which considers them the products of an embodied consciousness that is itself informed by cultural beliefs and attitudes. Shakespearience allows us to inquire not only into what Shakespeare thought *about* sound, but what he may have thought *through* it as well. Religious, philosophical, and anatomical discourses on sound and hearing in the early modern period all associate this perceptual domain with notions of obedience, receptivity, transformation, reproduction, and cognitive nourishment. In *Coriolanus* and other plays, he investigates the subjective and political consequences, as well as the ultimate impossibility, of refusing to hear. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he associates sound and hearing with notions of metamorphosis and grotesque continuity. Throughout his works, he represents sound as a privileged mode of access to the deep subjectivity of others. These ideas resonate strongly in our own culture, where references to sound and hearing increasingly figure in our estimations of his genius.

Résumé

Les pièces de Shakespeare articulent sa compréhension du son à registres divers de représentation théâtrale et linguistique. J'ai essayé moi-même d'employer l'écoute comme méthode critique en prêtant attention à la façon dont Shakespeare se met à l'écoute des maintes sens corrélatifs qu'avait le son à l'époque moderne, et les (re)transmet partout dans son œuvre. J'utilise le terme «Shakespearience» pour signaler une méthode phénoménologique revigorée à l'étude de l'œuvre de Shakespeare, une méthode qui considère ces textes comme produits d'une conscience incarnée qui est elle-même informée par les croyances et attitudes culturelles. La Shakespearience nous permet d'examiner non seulement ce que pensait Shakespeare au sujet du son, mais aussi ce qu'il aurait pu penser *par* le son. Les discours religieux, philosophique, et anatomique sur le son et l'ouïe à l'époque moderne associent ce domaine de perception aux idées d'obéissance, réceptivité, transformation, reproduction, et nourriture cognitif. Dans *Coriolan* et autres pièces Shakespeare examine les conséquences subjectives et politiques de refuser d'entendre…aussi bien que l'impossibilité fondamentale d'un tel refus. Dans *La Nuit d'une songe d'été* il associe le son et l'ouïe à la métamorphose et la continuité grotesque. Souvent dans ses pièces il représente le son comme un mode d'accès à la subjectivité insondable d'autrui. Ces idées résonnent profondément dans notre culture, où des reférences au son et à l'ouïe figurent de plus en plus dans nos estimations du génie de Shakespeare.

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Dedicated to Sue, Alex, Lenora, and Ted.

contents

Introduction

Let us inspect the Lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet… — John Keats, "On the Sonnet"

This dissertation is about the role of sound in Shakespeare's art, about how he heard the world around him, and what it means for us to listen to him, for us to listen, centuries later, to him listening. My exploration of the Shakespearean soundscape begins, naturally enough, in London—though you should not envisage the reigning queen as Elizabeth, but rather, Victoria. It is the end of August, 1888. Colonel George E. Gouraud, an American veteran of the Civil War, pays a visit to his friend, the legendary actor Henry Irving. The meeting is a significant moment in the history of the Shakespearean soundscape because it results in the creation of the earliest known sound recording of his work. Gouraud, who is Thomas Edison's representative in London, knows Irving through recently advising him on the use of electrical effects in his triumphant and exceedingly lucrative production of *Faust*. To the present meeting he brings with him Edison's latest invention, the phonograph, with which he plans to make a recording of Irving's voice.[1] The machine captures Irving's distinctive voice delivering the opening lines of *Richard III*, as well as passages from other roles he was famous for

playing, such as Matthias in *The Bells*. Colonel Gouraud would describe the scene of Irving's initial reaction to the sound recording machine a few months later:

> I was never so amazed as to see Mr Irving attack the phonograph. He walked up to it with that air of confidence which characterises Mr Irving when he walks. When he stopped walking, he found himself in front of the phonograph and began to talk into it, but it was not Irving in the least. Some of his old friends there said 'Why, my dear Irving, it was not you who spoke' and it was not Mr Irving himself: absolutely he was frightened out of his own voice. I had actually to put him through his paces to train him for it, to make him walk backwards and forwards a bit, and when he had got into the swing, he finally came up and said something which was truly delightful, both when it went into the phonograph and when it came out of it. (qtd. in Bebb 729)

What I find most interesting about Colonel Gouraud's narrative of the incident is the way he repeatedly refers to the phonograph's alienating effect on Irving's identity. Irving approaches the machine confidently, but his customary assurance is deflated once he begins to interact with it. The talking machine immediately distances him from his own voice, a personal attribute and professional tool intimately tied to his sense of identity.[2] As Gouraud remembers, the initial run-through "was not Irving in the least," an opinion shared by the assembled friends, who declare to the actor, "it was not you who spoke." Irving, who comes to the exercise with his usual self-assurance, surrounded as he is by old friends, is described as being "frightened out of his own voice." He has to be taught

how to speak into the machine, and upon hearing the result of the recording is said to have responded by exclaiming, "Is that my voice? My God!" (Bebb 727). Irving's reaction to the phonograph eventually modulated from a minor to a major key, from horrified fascination to wonder and admiration. He would later write to Ellen Terry (who eventually came into possession of the cylinder), and describe his impression of the unnerving, unprecedented mimetic fidelity of the new machine: "You speak into it," he wrote, "and everything is recorded, voice, tone, intonation, everything. You turn a little wheel, and forth it comes, and can be repeated tens of thousands of times" (qtd. in Bebb 727).

SPEAK THE SPEECH…

Irving is an important figure in the history of the Shakespearean soundscape, not solely because he made the earliest sound recording of the playwright's words, but perhaps even more because he altered the way Shakespeare's verse was spoken in the theatre. He changed the way we hear the plays. Just as the phonograph was a modern invention, Irving was a thoroughly modern actor, one who took a fresh look at time-honoured traditions affecting the theatrical production of Shakespeare's works, and presented contemporary audiences with what were at the time exciting new alternatives. Irving initiated, and has thereby come to represent, a significant development in the way Shakespeare's works were acted and his words sounded out in the theatre. His "naturalistic" way of speaking the verse would in turn be adopted in the following century by Laurence Olivier, whose style was commonly juxtaposed to that of John

Gielgud, the latter considered to embody a more traditionally classical, melodic approach to Shakespeare's language.

Irving was well-known, and in some circles infamous, for his slightly nasal vocal delivery. Critics often commented that he would lapse inadvertently into his native Cornish accent during onstage scenes of great emotion or physical exertion. The actor's self-consciousness about his accent is supported by the story that, as a young clerk named John Brodribb in London, he had organized a system of penalties with fellow clerks, who would fine him for instances of bad pronunciation and grammar (Bingham 1978: 25). Richard Bebb, an expert on early voice recordings, suggests that Irving later came to regard his vocal mannerisms as an asset, and that his choice of fellow actors at the Lyceum Theatre came to be motivated at least in part by the desire to set his own voice off acoustically from those of the others in the cast:

> …by surrounding himself with actors of the older traditional style, he was bound to highlight his own distinctive originality. The thought is, perhaps, unworthy, but I do believe that in any case Irving realised that, lacking a conventional beauty of voice, it was his own way of minimising the lack, and turning a weakness into a strength. (Bebb 730)

Probably the most familiar treatment of Irving's voice is found in Edward Gordon Craig's memoir of the actor. Craig devotes half of an entire chapter to the actor's voice in his book *Henry Irving* (Craig 1930: 62-69). What was most notable about Irving's voice, he finds (as did others), was his pronunciation. It has often been noted that Irving would pronounce the word *God* as *Gud*, the word *rich* as *ritz*, *sight* as *seyt*, *hand* as *hend*,

and so forth. Craig remembers that Irving's "tendency was to enrich the sounds of words—to make them expressive rather than refined" (62-63). In the spirit of homage that engenders his book, Craig chooses to situate Irving's peculiar pronunciation in an authoritative, romantic past rather than call attention to the influence of his provincial upbringing. He recalls reading an old sixteenth-century ballad of Robin Hood aloud to himself during a trip through Italy, and discovering that he sounded remarkably like Irving as he tried to pronounce the archaic words. Revisiting the ballad as he writes his present book, he finds himself transported from its original setting to Irving's theatre in London:

> On reading the whole ballad again, this time indoors, I am no longer in Nottinghamshire, I am at the Lyceum Theatre, and I become very aware of Irving, and I hear again as it were the old voice; and as I listen to this pure old English strain I think how strange it is that it is always for preserving the best that men lay themselves open to the attacks of their fellows.
>
> For this is the old English speech, and Irving brought back to us something of the ripe old sounds, and damme if we didn't object. (65)

Craig recollects the sound of Irving's voice, in which "all kinds of contortions were employed to bring out the full horror of the nobility of each vowel and the sweetness of each consonant," as a present event in which the sounds of the past were still embedded (66).[3] Irving, Craig claims, "came to speak English as I believe it should be spoken, and as this same good rich English was always spoken in the days of Robin Hood, and long

before and after." His voice embodies the vibrant history of the national language. It is itself a kind of recording, in which the sounds of the past are preserved to re-sound in the present.

As fortune would have it, Henry Irving's recording of the opening soliloquy of *Richard III* is not only the earliest known sound recording of Shakespeare, it is also the earliest known *surviving* sound recording of Shakespeare. You will find a copy of it on the compact disc which is attached to the inside of the back cover of this thesis, and I invite you to listen to it at this point.[4] Because the recording is extremely difficult to understand in places, I here provide the lines Irving speaks:

> Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this son of York;
> And all the clouds that low'r'd upon our house
> In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
> Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
> Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
> Our stern alarums chang'd to merry meetings,
> Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
> Grim-visag'd War hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
> And now, in stead of mounting barbed steeds
> To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
> He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
> To the lascivious… (1.1.1-13)[5]

The cylinder then runs out, and the rest of the speech bleeds out into oblivion. You have read about this event for several pages now, but through actually listening to it you get a heightened sense of the *reality* of that otherness, a sense of how the acoustic experience of the event insists on, and testifies to, the fact that *this actually happened.* Listening to the recording, it is easy to imagine the scene of the actor, fifty years old and at the height of his artistic and commercial success, weaving back and forth in front of the phonograph, surrounded by friends in a Victorian parlour, speaking the words by Shakespeare that he had, single-handedly, reintroduced to the English stage. Irving presented the play, not in the Colley Cibber version which had traditionally been presented since the beginning of the previous century, but in Shakespeare's original version. For the first time in over 30 years (Samuel Phelps had tried unsuccessfully to present the Shakespearean version in 1845), London audiences heard *Richard III* open with the title character's soliloquy, with the words *Now is the winter of our dis-con-tent*… (Hughes 1981: 151).

The recording you have just listened to is a deceptively complex historical artifact. While listening to it, you are not only listening *to* a particular historical event, you are listening *through* history as well. What sounds like obtrusive background noise is actually layer upon audible layer of acoustic technology. From the loud whirr of the original wax cylinder, to the hiss of the audiotape it was later transferred onto, to the crackling of the record LP which that tape was released on, to the faint graininess of resolution that occurred when the LP track was digitally transferred to 16-bit digital audio for the CD you now listen to, one's sense of the presence of Irving's voice is accompanied by the concomitant presences of a century of technological evolution.

Edison called his invention the *phonograph*, the "sound-writer"—a name that refers to the earlier communications technology upon which it was modelled.[6] That technology, writing, was the most sophisticated technology available for recording sound events in early modern England. Many contemporary authors, especially those who wrote as professionals, learned to push that technology to its representational and mimetic limits. Just as the wax cylinder of Henry Irving's voice speaking the opening lines of *Richard III* vividly records the presence of the past (whether it be the present of August 1888, or of Robin Hood's England), so too do Shakespeare's play-texts record past acoustic events, vivifying the past presences of different voices and intonations in the early modern theatre. They ask us to assent to the reality of their temporal and cultural otherness. At the same time, the play-texts also express, at various registers of theatrical and linguistic representation, their author's understanding of sound; they do so at least partially because sound is the communicative medium they were employed to notate in the first place. Uncovering and analysing the different kinds of æsthetic and ethical dispositions Shakespeare associates specifically with the perceptual domain of sound, finding new ways of hearing the sounds that are embedded in his play-texts, and tracking the implications of assenting to their historical, phenomeno-acoustical reality, are the primary goals of this dissertation.

Shakespeare created worlds with sound, worlds that in turn contain whole soundscapes within them. To illustrate this we need look no further than the very speech we have just listened to Henry Irving recite. To begin the play that bears his name, Richard Gloucester makes his way downstage to establish the scene by describing the sociopolitical changes that have recently transpired in his England. He consistently refers

to those changes in terms of sound, describing "stern alarums chang'd to merry meetings," and "dreadful marches" exchanged for "delightful measures." His personification of War now "capers nimbly in a lady's chamber / To the lascivious pleasing of a lute." England has entered into a "weak piping time of peace," in which Richard has no place, other than to stand by and "descant" upon, to improvise a counter-melody with, his own physical/moral "deformity." What Richard is describing is a *soundscape*: he not only catalogues the various sounds that make up the shifting acoustic environment of his country, but also expresses his attitude towards that environment, which has become a kind of desert to him. It is an environment, he wants us to believe, in which he lacks the physical qualifications for any sort of meaningful social interaction. We learn about that environment, and him, through his reponses to the sounds he hears in it.

Performance critics have long focused their attentions on the modalities of visual communication present in Shakespeare's plays. It is often noted, for example, that the play-texts contain implicit visual stage directions.[7] However, the surprising amount of evidence the play-texts, as well as the historical record, also contain relating to the acoustic environment of the early modern theatre is only beginning to receive adequate attention. To be sure, the most salient and durable elements of that acoustic environment are Shakespeare's "words, words, words," but as Hamlet himself seems to suggest they are by no means the only significant (in the sense of meaning-bearing) elements in it (2.2.192). The acoustic environment of the early modern theatre included not only words, but a whole range of other components never completely within the poet's control at any given time: the timbre of an actor's voice; the acoustic qualities of a particular

playing space and the sound effect equipment available therein; the audiences themselves noisily cracking nuts, heckling performers, laughing, or applauding at the close; the vocal capabilities and improvisational tendencies of certain actors; the musical pieces that were performed, which individual theatres were capable of transmitting with varying degrees of volume and/or subtlety—all of these parameters and more contributed to the collaborative creation of the acoustic environment in which Shakespeare's plays were first performed.

Bruce Smith has powerfully and comprehensively reconstructed the many and varied elements of the acoustic environment of early modern England in his recent, ground-breaking book on *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Smith 1999). Some of the sounds he includes in his analysis are (to name but a few): civic "soundmarks" such as bells and street criers; rural "keynote" sounds such as streams, birds, dogs, horses, and rustic musical instruments; festive practices such as the beating of the bounds at Rogation-tide; the sounds and speech protocols associated with aristocratic entertainments; and contemporary examples of regional and class-based linguistic variation. Smith's work on sound in early modern England proceeds from the assumption that,

> Since knowledge and intentions are shaped by culture, we need to attend also to cultural differences in the construction of aural experience. The multiple cultures of early modern England may have shared with us the biological materiality of hearing, but their protocols of listening could be remarkably different from ours. We need a *cultural poetics* of listening. We must take into account,

> finally, the subjective experience of sound. We need a *phenomenology* of listening, which we can expect to be an amalgam of biological constants and cultural variables. (8)

The chapters that follow are my own response to Smith's call for a more nuanced, experientially-based understanding of the role of sound in the expression and practice of culture. I have chosen to focus on Shakespeare because he is one of the most important and enduring links we have to our cultural past; if there is something "other" about him as an early modern subject, there is something about his work that we seem to continue to resonate with strongly, as well.

In the first chapter, after defining the term "soundscape" and giving a brief overview of the early modern theatrical soundscape, I delve into the phenomenological mechanics of early modern textuality, especially play-textuality. I argue that the physical play-texts we have inherited need to be understood less as a species of writing in which a single coherent semantic meaning or argument is advanced, than as something more akin to a variety of musical notation from which a protensive experience (one extending in time) is meant to be reproduced. The theoretical concepts I invoke as support for this point are from sociologist Alfred Schutz's work on musical communication, specifically his distinctions between monothetic and polythetic experience (Schutz 1962). I introduce these terms not because I plan to employ them throughout the remaining chapters, but because I want to frame those discussions with recognition of the existence of types of meaning that are experientially-based, which necessarily occur in time (the dimension of experience in which sound is most specifically situated). Establishment of the existence of polythetic meaning will prepare for and facilitate the kinds of second-order symbolic

readings of sound in Shakespeare that take shape in the succeeding chapters. My name for this hermeneutic approach is "Shakespearience."

It will be necessary to arrive at some understanding of what Shakespeare and his early modern audiences would have thought about sound and hearing. To that end, the second chapter addresses the cultural contexts of the Shakespearean soundscape, the kinds of associations sound and hearing would have preconsciously generated in the minds of Shakespeare and the average playgoer. Discourse directly concentrated on hearing is found in three main disciplinary contexts in the period: the religious, the philosophical, and the anatomical. Each comes at the topic from a slightly different perspective; taken as a whole they provide an adequately comprehensive overview of what early modern people thought about hearing, and what kinds of social activities and beliefs they typically associated with it.

The religious discourse of the era, represented in published sermons by Robert Wilkinson, William Harrison, and Stephen Egerton, consistently refers to the Biblical story of the parable of the sower, in which different types of hearers are categorized and morally evaluated. Francis Bacon, Richard Brathwaite, and Thomas Wright represent the philosophical approach to the subject, which depends heavily upon received knowledge from Classical authors such as Galen and Aristotle. The anatomical discourse of Shakespeare's day, represented by Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, introduces some of the latest anatomical research from Italy, but also continues to rely heavily on Classical medical knowledge. All of these accounts suggest that early modern people strongly associated hearing and sound with notions of obedience, duty, receptivity, penetrability, transformation, and reproduction. They also associated hearing with the

idea of community, with what Shakespeare was to describe in *Measure for Measure* and *Antony and Cleopatra* as "the public ear" (MM 4.2.99; Ant. 3.4.5).

In the third chapter I examine Shakespeare's treatment of the ethical implications which proceed from the early modern understanding of the ear as a feminized perceptual organ. Hearing is characterized as an opening up of the self, as a kind of receptivity and vulnerability. The value we continue to attribute to this disposition is observable in the metaphors we increasingly use to describe Shakespeare's own genius, in which references to his astonishing capaciousness and receptivity, what Keats called his "negative capability," are evident. The play that speaks most directly to these ideas is his final tragedy, *Coriolanus*, in which the title character's refusal to hear the plebeians, and then his own family and friends, results in his social ostracisim and eventually, by extension, his death.

The fourth chapter concentrates on Shakespeare's voicings of the pervasive interrelations between sound, transformation, and grotesque continuity. The character who most fully embodies these joined concepts is Nick Bottom, the weaver from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, whose fluid experience of conceptual categories (not to mention his radical physical transformation) makes him an exemplar of grotesque continuity. Bottom is associated throughout the play with his ass's ears, which are a figure for the idea that grotesque continuity, typically associated with what Bakhtin has famously denominated the "lower bodily stratum," is equally operative in the upper bodily stratum of the perceptual organs, especially the ears. In Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the "grotesque ear" is in fact prior to, and gives birth to, the grotesque body. The chapter ends with the suggestion that Shakespeare, described as a "black hole" by

Gary Taylor, exists at the limits of our ethical and æsthetic universes, where the laws of perceptual, representational, and moral economy begin to erode.

The final chapter sounds out the celebrated Shakespearean capacity to represent deep subjectivity, an ability that forms the basis of Harold Bloom's recent assessments that this practice contributes to Shakespeare's "invention of the human." The main way he accomplishes this, Bloom finds, is by representing robust fictional characters who realistically "overhear" themselves exteriorizing their deepest thoughts, and who then change as a result of that overhearing. Shakespeare often has characters use acoustic metaphors to describe the way others have access to their inmost thoughts and opinions, and the way they try to gain access to those of others.

notes to introduction

1 British actor Richard Bebb has compiled a magnificently detailed history of the recording, which he has published as " The Voice of Henry Irving: An Investigation," in *Recorded Sound: the Journal of the British Institute of Recorded Sound* , no. 68 (1977): 727-32. My own present discussion of the Irving recording is greatly indebted to the factual material collected in this work.

2 Vocal distinctiveness is an attribute of immense value and importance to successful male actors, especially those who would assume leading roles. In our own century, one need only think of Jimmy Stewart, Humphrey Bogart, James Cagney, Orson Welles, Cary Grant, James Earl Jones, Marlon Brando, Mel Gibson, Jack Nicholson, Al Pacino, or even Arnold Schwarzenegger, each of whom is immediately identifiable by sound alone.

3 I freely admit to being stumped by Craig's phrase " the full horror of the nobility," and suspect that there is perhaps a typographical error involved. Unless he is obliquely referring to some sublime effect of Irving's pronunciation, it

is quite possible that he meant " the full honour of the nobility" instead.

4 For those for whom this is not possible, the recording can found on two LPs released in the 1970s. See *Great Actors of the Past* (Argo Records LP SW 510, 1977), and *Authors and Actors* (Rococo Records LP 4002, 1970). The recording on the accompanying CD is from the Rococo record; all reasonable efforts have been made to contact the owners of this now-defunct label for reproduction permission. The original wax cylinder recording is of course in the public domain.

5 This and all succeeding references to the plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

6 The phonograph literally wrote sound, which was inscribed onto the wax cylinder.

7 Polonius's " Take this from this, if this be otherwise," where the actor presumably points to his head and neck, is one of the more famous examples (Ham. 2.2.156).

1 • Shakespearience

Are you Shakespearienced? — Trip Shakespeare

My God, I wish I'd met him, talked to him – but above all, heard and listened —

Laurence Olivier

The name "Pavlov" wouldn't have meant anything to Thomas Dekker or any of the audience members assembled to hear his play *The Shoemaker's Holiday* at what was probably the Rose theatre around 1597-1600.[1] In the second scene of the fifth act, however, the apprentice Firke is in the midst of inviting various characters to his master's feast when a sound effect causes what can only be described as a Pavlovian reaction among the characters onstage. Firke notes the sound first, because his "O brave, hearke, hearke" occurs just before the stage direction, "*Bell ringes*," in the text (5.2.184).[2] The order of these two elements in the play-text seems to indicate that the actor's words were aural signals to whoever was in charge of actually ringing the bell during the performance. There is a general excitement onstage once the sound is recognized: "ALL. The Panacake bell rings, the pancake bel, tri-lill my hearts" (5.2.185). For the apprentice characters onstage, the sound suggests at least two types of association. The first, as Firke tells us, is that it signals the start of a feast that has been promised by his master

Simon Eyre, the new Lord-Mayor. Indeed, the food is so central to Firke's experience of the holiday that he describes it ambulating up and down the city streets under its own power:

> O musical bel stil! O Hodge, O my brethren! theres cheere for the heavens, venson pasties walke up and down piping hote, like sergeants, beefe and brewesse comes marching in drie fattes, fritters and pancakes comes trowling in in wheele barrowes, hennes and orenges hopping in porters baskets, colloppes and egges in scuttles, and tartes and custardes comes quavering in in mault shovels. (5.2.197-203).

Notwithstanding its centrality to this apprentice's experience of the holiday, the pancake bell signifies more than a surfeit of food.

The second association the bell has for the characters onstage is that it signals the start of a period of festivity (the "Shoemaker's Holiday" of the play's title) that temporarily releases the workers from their routine obligations and responsibilities. The new Lord-Mayor had promised as much in the previous scene: "...upon every Shrovetuesday, at the sound of the pancake bell: my fine dapper Assyrian lads, shall clap up their shop windows, and away....Boyes, that day are you free, let masters care, And prentises shall pray for Simon Eyre" (5.1.48-53). Firke again makes this clear for the audience, and for posterity: "Nay more my hearts, every Shrovetuesday is our yeere of Jubile: and when the pancake bel rings, we are as free as my lord Maior, we may shut up our shops, and make holiday: Ile have it calld, Saint Hughes Holiday" (5.2.211-14). St. Hugh, the patron saint of shoemakers, had already been apportioned a holiday in the

English calendar, November 17—though by the time of Dekker's play it had become overshadowed by Elizabeth's "crownation," which had fallen on the same day, when it was customary for all the bells in the kingdom to be rung in dynastic celebration.[3] St. Hugh's holiday had been appropriated by the Elizabethan government. Firke, whether wittingly or no, repossesses it for the fellows of his trade by repositioning the date of St. Hugh's day to Shrove Tuesday, in speech licensed by the festive occasion, marked by the pancake bell.[4]

While Dekker portrays the jubilant reactions of the apprentice-characters, the sound of the pancake bell would have resonated quite differently with many members of the play's initial audiences, who may have associated the sound of the bell in the streets of London on Shrove Tuesdays with anarchy and mob rule. This third response to the effect of the pancake bell is left to us by John Taylor in 1617, who writes of that particular holiday that

> ...all the whole Kingdome is in quiet, but by that time the clocke strikes eleuen, which (by the helpe of a knavish Sexton) is commonly before nine, then there is a bell rung, cald *The Pancake Bell*, the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted, and forgetfull either of manner or humanitie.[5]

Dekker's benign characterization of the holiday masks Shrove Tuesday's reputation as a day when the London apprentices frequently ran riot, at times tearing down reputed brothels, carting prostitutes through the streets, freeing prisoners, and assaulting the theatres.[6] It is important to note that the apprentices who enter the scene I've been

describing do so armed, according to a stage direction, "*all with cudgels, or such weapons*."

The points I want to emphasize in this short reading are that 1) a temporary disruption of the normal patterns of social order is announced simultaneously to the entire community by means of a very simple acoustic signal, 2) that the responses prompted by that signal would have been extremely variegated across the social spectrum, and 3) that these responses would include not only conventional semantic meanings such as "the festival has started," but physiological and emotional components that will never be fully recoverable. This last point is, I believe, the most important. The pancake bell would have imparted a variety of extralinguistic meanings to the general public in attendance at a performance of *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. The sound of the actual pancake bell on Shrove Tuesdays would perform more than a simple sign-function, announcing the commencement of that day's festivities; it would also evoke diverse amplitudes of visceral emotional reponse ranging from excitement and exhilaration to aggravation, revulsion and outright fear, depending upon whether one was an apprentice, a Thames boatman such as John Taylor, a tavern keeper, a theatre owner, or a worker in the south bank's sex industry. Hearing the pancake bell in a theatrical performance would undoubtedly evoke or carry over trace elements of these kinds of reactions in individual playgoers, and these reactions would then become part of that audience member's experience of the play.[7]

While I have asserted that these types of responses will never be fully recoverable, I do believe that recent innovations in our understanding of the ways in which sound and culture interrelate provide us with the archæological tools to chip away at these

responses, and throw them into sharper relief. In the present work, I plan to use these tools to unearth and examine early modern meta-discourses about sound and hearing. The aim of this dissertation is to explore some of the ways sound "means" in the Shakespearean play-text—not simply to describe and catalogue which sounds are present in the environments represented by those texts, but to identify what sound itself means, and how it means, to the characters who inhabit those environments and, more importantly, to the authorial consciousness that brought them into being. "Shakespearience" is my name for a re-invigorated phenomenological approach to the study of Shakespeare's works, one which considers them the products of an embodied consciousness that is itself informed by cultural beliefs and attitudes. I should clearly point out that I'm referring to Shakespeare in the metonymic sense here, as the entity responsible for the works that bear his name: for the sake of the present work I consider him a phenomenological function in the same sense that Roland Barthes would consider him an author function (Barthes 1989). Shakespearience makes it possible to inquire not only into what Shakespeare thought *about* sound, but what he thought *through* it as well. Long after the sound of the pancake bell in *The Shoemaker's Holiday* has faded from our cultural memory, Shakespeare's works continue to resonate fully and deeply with our emotional life; they communicate a more than semantic meaning, which is why they seem so real to us.

CULTURE IN SOUND | COARTICULATIONS

In beginning to theorize sound's relationship to culture, the term *soundscape* was developed by communications theorists at Simon Fraser University in the late 1970s to

denote the function of sound in human perceptual ecology.[8] The word is closely related to, and of course derives from, the more familiar *landscape*—though there is also a significant difference between the two, a difference which owes to the distinctive experiential properties of visual and acoustic perception. While we generally experience and therefore regard landscapes as objective entities, as existing "out there," the soundscape is more specifically situated at the interface between the "out there" and the perceiving subject's involvement in its constitution. As Barry Truax defines it in *Acoustic Communication*, the soundscape is not altogether synonymous with the "acoustic environment," but "refers to how the individual and society as a whole *understand* the acoustic environment through listening" (xii emphasis in original). What Truax means by *listening* is not simply acoustic sensation, but the process by which acoustic information is processed and rendered useful to the brain, the process by which we derive meaning from sound. He prefers to describe the acoustic environment itself as a *context*, a term that emphasizes its role as a transmitter of information and not merely as a site of energy exchanges, which is how the physicist and acoustic engineer have traditionally conceptualized and investigated it (9-10).[9]

Penelope Gouk, a preeminent researcher in the history of acoustics, has remarked that four hundred years ago, sound was not studied in any systematic way. The phenomenon was addressed from a number of disciplinary viewpoints, including medical anatomy, religion, natural philosophy, magic, and cosmology, as well as musical, political and educational theory (Gouk 1991). There were various permutations and combinations of these approaches as well. Gouk accounts for the diffusion by reminding the reader that "seventeenth-century categories of thought are quite independent of

present-day ones, and we must not expect to find the kind of systematic treatment that would be adopted by a modern writer" (95). A systematic approach to sound and hearing, however, should not be seen as equivalent to a holistic or comprehensive approach to the subject; little has actually changed in four hundred years.

Today we have many modern systematic approaches to sound, though as Truax has observed these approaches often work in effective isolation from one another in the physics, psychology, linguistic, medicine and engineering departments of academic institutions, wherein "each discipline concerns itself with only a particular aspect of the entire subject, and often no attempt is made to bridge the arbitrary gaps between them," each discipline developing "its own terminology and concepts through which it expresses its knowledge" (Truax 1984: 2).[10] Although Gouk is for the most part correct in her identification of systematicity, or scientific rigour, as the principal characteristic of acoustic and perceptual research which separates twentieth-century from early modern researchers (though I doubt anyone would accuse Francis Bacon of being unsystematic in his investigations, however uncharacteristic he is of the period's intellectual habits), the augmented systematicity that characterizes twentieth-century research into acoustic perception and its corollary phenomena have not brought us any closer to a unified understanding of sound's more global, "vernacular" role in the lived experience of human cognition, communication and culture.

In some ways, sound resists systematic analysis. Acoustic psychophysicist Stephen Handel has found that studies of sound as a communicative medium tend to digitize particular sound events into discrete entities, in the service of further analysing their syntactic relationships, a practice which is perversely antithetical to the object of study.

The problem with this way of approaching speech, for example, is that our apprehension of speech is context-dependent even at the level of the sentence. To make sense of an acoustic stream, we have to include the particular sound events that come before and those that will come afterwards into a total perception. Handel has argued against the tendency towards digitization in the study of spoken language, maintaining that

> we should not think of independent acoustic units that are butted together. Rather, in combining consonants and vowels to form syllables, the articulation forces the acoustic properties of each to invade the other so that both consonant and vowel come out physically different from what they would be as paired with a different vowel or consonant. (1989: 2)

I know there is no "r" in the phrase "India ink"—but when listening to some British people talk I have become accustomed to hearing them insert r's between two words when the first ends and the second begins with a vowel sound. Because of the speed at which verbal communication takes place, speech sounds are almost never independently articulated: "the sound pressure pattern is the result of what happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen" (Handel 134). The very physiology of vocal communication requires a kind of grotesque plasticity of identity among the members of the phonemic community, if they are to function together effectively in communication. As Handel puts it, speech sounds "invade" each other.

The idea that speech units overlap is known to phonologists as *coarticulation*. If I ask you the question "Djagoda school yet?" you know what I mean to communicate, even though all of the syllables of the sentence "Did you go to school yet?" have not been

completely and discretely enunciated. Coarticulation makes verbal communication a more efficient mode of communication, for "it allows us to miss parts of the signal and still retrieve the linguistic units from the surrounding sounds" (Handel 134-35). The concept of coarticulation has a narratological analogue which can be found in many of Shakespeare's plays, where a certain redundancy and repetition of information is frequent. Shakespeare, like any expert storyteller, seems to have been acutely aware of the human mind's tendency towards inattention and distraction, propensities which would only have been exacerbated by the shape of the typical playing spaces for which he wrote. As a result, he regularly repeats important plot information throughout his plays so that an average measure of inattention is not too heavily punished—so that, to paraphrase Handel, the audience could afford to "miss parts of the signal and still retrieve" the necessary story information "from the surrounding sounds."

The ways in which the soundscape is represented in early modern texts can tell us a great deal about early modern culture and what it was like to live in it—not only because theirs was still very much an oral culture, but because sound and culture are always involved in their own form of coarticulation, as Truax has noted: "the inseparability of every sound from its context makes it a valuable source of useable information about the current state of the environment. . . . in terms of community, sounds not only reflect its complete social and geographical context, but also reinforce community identity and cohesion" (10). Sounds are articulated within cultures, and cultures within sounds.

When considering the importance of hearing and sound in early modern culture, it is important to keep in mind that a variety of cultures are entailed under the umbrella term "early modern culture." Each of these subcultures has its own soundscape and acoustic

identity, from the rural hamlet and seaside village, to the royal court, to the metropolitan center of London with its markets and guild/plebeian components.[11] Each makes localized contributions to the total acoustic environment. Truax calls these types of subcultural elements *acoustic communities*, which he defines as

> …any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of the inhabitants (no matter how the commonality of such people is understood). Therefore, the boundary of the community is arbitrary and may be as small as a room of people, a home or building, or as large as an urban community, a broadcast area, or any other system of electroacoustic communication. In short, it is any system in which acoustic information is exchanged. (Truax 58)

Because transportation was neither fast nor affordable in Shakespeare's day, regional differences in the soundscape become apparent as well within acoustic communities. In addition to the soundscapes associated with specific localities, other more mobile acoustic communities were populated by shepherds, soldiers, merchant sailors, players, healers, soldiers, tinkers, and other itinerant tradespeople. Vagabonds, thieves, robbers, and rogues were all known to speak in their own cryptic jargon called "cant."

In acoustic communities, sound plays an important role in "defining the community spatially, temporally in terms of daily and seasonal cycles, as well as socially and culturally in terms of shared activities, rituals and dominant institutions" (Truax 58). The way early modern individuals record their sonic experiences can tell us a great deal about their relationship to the acoustic community, such as whether a sound is commonplace,

sporadic, or rare; whether it has positive or negative connotations for that particular listener; whether it is tied to specific seasonal or calendrical festivities or rituals, and whether it contains symbolic significance for specific individuals or for the community as a whole. The degree to which a listener is acquainted with the source of a particular sound, or to individual elements of the soundscape in general is often an index to that person's position in, or relation to, the larger community.

One such acoustic community is quite clearly the early modern theatre, the soundscape of which regularly reverberated out into the larger culture. In London during the indoor playing season, the theatre troupes would announce performances and call potential customers with drums and trumpets. This is demonstrated by a letter from Lord Hunsdon to the Lord Mayor of London in September 1594, in which Hunsdon requests that his players be allowed to play at the Cross Keys that season with the proviso that they "will nott use anie drumes or trumpettes att all for the callinge of peopell together" (qtd. in Thomson 1994: 114). It is evident that the same tools were used to "drum up" business when the troupes were on tour. Five years after Hunsdon's request, Philip Henslowe recorded in his diary that he lent some money to a member his company "for to buy a drum when to go into the country." Peter Thomson suspects that "two trumpets bought the following day by the actor Robert Shaw were for the same purpose" (1992: 20). The drum would also be used for creating sound effects such as thunder and military noises during performances. It is not certain whether audiences were also called with these instruments from the top of the theatres' tiring-houses over on the South Bank, or whether younger members of the troupes or technical assistants were used to parade through the streets to inform the populace about upcoming performances. There would

have been a bell at the top of the tiring-house which could have been used for the same purpose, the sound wafting over the river with much greater amplitude and clarity than a drum could produce (although a number of trumpets would be equally capable of sounding across the river). There is also some evidence to suggest that players would post notices about upcoming performances throughout the city (Rankins 1587).

The noise that tended to emanate from the city playhouses was included as one of the complaints levelled in a petition to the Privy Council by citizens of the Blackfriars district in 1596, in which they protest the presence of a playing house in their midst. Included in their list of objections is the complaint that "the same playhouse is so neere the Church that the noyse of the drummes and trumpetts will greatly disturbe and hinder both the ministers and parishioners in tyme of devine service and sermons" (qtd. in Thomson 1992: 178). Of course the argument produced by the plaintiffs, that it will hinder the work of the local clergy, is probably a roundabout way of legitimating their fears for their own peace and quiet. Nonetheless, the playhouse would undoubtedly introduce a great deal of unwanted noise to the area, and not all of it issuing directly from the theatre. The plaintiffs also express their concern that the introduction of regular playing will ruin the neighbourhood, "by reason of the great resort and gathering togeather of all manner of vagrant and lewde persons that, under cullor of resorting to the playes, will come thither and worke all manner of mischeefe."

Truax has noted that some sounds, in addition to being unwanted, may be considered taboo, and officially proscribed for that reason (25). A case of this happening in relation to the early modern theatrical soundscape is the prohibition of the use of the word "god" and related epithets on the stage. The *Act to Restraine Abuses of Players*

went into effect on 27 May 1606, and banned "the jesting or profane use in plays of the holy name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghoste or of the Trinitie."[12] These words were then replaced by the more archaic "Jove" and the like, which can be found throughout the texts of Shakespeare's later plays.

Sounds reinforce community identity and cohesion because, like communities, they express through their very existence the fact of copresence. As events in time, they also annunciate the continuous rhythm of renewal and decay operative at all registers of existence. In contrast to vision, which the early modern understanding relates to notions of activity, individualism, aggression, and technical innovation, hearing resonates throughout early modern culture as a sense characterized by passivity, community, obedience, and tradition. Without denying the obvious ascendancy of the visual in early modern England, it bears remembering that the sense of hearing occupies a significant place in that culture as well, that light in the King James Bible is brought into existence by a prior vocalization, that the first words to the gospel of John are "In the beginning was the word." Other examples of the importance of sound are to be found in contemporary cosmological metaphors such as the "music of the spheres," and the "cosmic dance" described by Tillyard in the final chapter of his *Elizabethan World Picture* (1946: 101-06). The aural imagery used to represent the physical universe was also commonly applied to portrayals of human social existence. There is an obsession in the Tudor period, one which is expressed throughout Shakespeare's history plays, with social harmony and concord, two words that indicate the obligation individuals have to accept their social roles and stations. The defence of social stratification, of one's necessary obedience to the greater harmony or concord of one's society, is expressed

most famously in the metaphor Ulysses employs in his speech on degree in *Troilus and Cressida*. Of degree, he says, "untune that string, / And, hark, what discord follows" (1.3.109-10).

Contemporary linkages between the concepts of aurality and obedience can be traced into the historical record, where they appear both as specific ideological legitimizing practices of the late Elizabethan/early Jacobean period, and in records of the contemporary judicial system. The Tudor monarchs, who ruled without the benefit of a standing army or police force, discovered that an effective preventative measure against civil disobedience was the dissemination of propaganda directly into their subject's ears on a weekly basis. Attendance at Sunday service was mandatory for all subjects of the realm. Throughout the year at these services, the assembled audience would hear a variety of state-sponsored sermons which were collected and distributed in 1559 as *The Book of Common Prayer* (Church of England 1844). Several of these sermons—"An exhortation to obedience," "Against strife and contention," "An homily against disobedience and wilfull rebellion"—emphasize the idea that (blind) obedience to one's social superiors is a natural and holy state, a sublunary echo of the perfect harmony of God's physical universe.

There were, of course, instances when disobedient subjects failed to "hear" the messages the government was transmitting; in such cases the contemporary judicial system was inclined to respond in kind. For example, several notices from the collected manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont covering a period from the 1570s to the early 1600s refer to punishments meted out in Ireland for the crime of jury perjury in cases concerning the prosecution of treasonous individuals or groups (Royal Commission on

Historical Manuscripts 1905). These records vividly illustrate the contemporary connections between ears, assent, and obedience. The entry for November 17, 1609 concerns a treason trial, in which the poet John Davies acted as prosecuting attorney. Four of the jurors were back in court on this day to face charges of jury perjury. The record reads that the guilty jurors were to

> pay fines of 100 l. apiece, to be pilloried at Dublin and the next assize town in co. Coleraine, and each of them to lose one of his ears, for acquitting the said traitors contrary to the clear evidence that they had been in open rebellion.

This is by no means an isolated instance; other entries in the manuscripts relate similar cases of jury perjury, with the like punishment. Reading through them one inevitably develops the sense that to hear "correctly" in this culture is a sign of assent and obeyance. The punishment for not hearing correctly, though obviously quite painful, resulted in a change in the individual that was, from the perceptual standpoint, largely visual. The loss of the auricle, or outer ear, typically results in a loss of amplification of only about 10 to 15 decibels. The change was mostly cosmetic, and would have primarily served as a visual warning to other citizens of what could happen to the person who was not an obedient, faithful subject, who refused to hear correctly.

Similar punishments involving the ear were often inflicted for lesser crimes. Robert Greene tells of a group of cony-catchers likely to have their ears burned when accused of stealing a horse in *The Second Part of Cony Catching* (1972: 209). John Bellamy, in *Crime and Public Order in England in the Later Middle Ages*, cites two laws from the late 14th-century which prescribe related punishments aimed at the ears of offenders:

> A law of Dover stated that any cut-purse captured with the mainour was to be led before the mayor and bailiff, and if he could not offer a reasonable excuse be set in the pillory 'and all the peple that will come ther may do hym vylonye; and after that they may cut off hys one ere'. A law of Portsmouth was of a similar brutality. A person convicted of taking goods worth less than a shilling was to have an ear nailed to the pillory, 'he to chese whether he woll kytt or tere it of'. (1973: 185)

The thief here is presented with quite a dilemma—I'm not sure which option I would "chese" myself. In many of these cases involving lesser crimes, however, it was possible to grease the wheels of justice by paying a fine and thereby avoiding the physical punishment altogether. The judicial system of the era, as Michael Weisser has observed, was typically more concerned with restitution for victims than with punishment of the guilty (Weisser 1979).

MEANING PHENOMENOLOGICALLY

As a critical practice, Shakespearience requires that the play-texts be approached less as a conventional species of writing in which a semantic meaning or argument is advanced, than as something more akin to a type of musical notation from which a protensive experience (one occurring in time) is meant to be reproduced. Austrian phenomenologist Alfred Schutz, who has worked extensively on the communicative structures of social interaction, argues that music, along with other similar forms of social intercourse such as dancing, wrestling, and playing chess, are modes of communication of a very different

order because they do not rely as heavily as does natural language upon the transfer of an idealizable, objectifiable semantic content (Schutz 1962).[13]

The key distinction Schutz makes between language and music is that language communicates *monothetic* meaning, music and other related forms, *polythetic* meaning.[14] Monothetic meaning is time-transcendent, sign-oriented, and conceptual. It is ideational, corresponding to the Platonic realm of pure forms, and is a function of the semantic component of *sign* systems such as natural language. Polythetic meaning, on the other hand, is a "time-immanent" mode of experiential meaning, meaning that is apperceived in the process of material experience, such as performance. Polythetic meaning is the product of embodied consciousness, of *symbol* systems that derive from forms of direct engagement with the world.

It is not uncommon to hear the term "symbol system" used to denote representational systems such as a natural languages or codes, wherein specific objects conventionally represent or stand for other objects. The relationship between sign and signified in such systems, though conventional, is completely arbitrary. The problem, of course, is that what I've just described is a *sign* system, not a *symbol* system. A symbol is based on motivated connections between image and meaning, connections which are based on material experience in the world. An example drawn from the early modern period is the image of the Wheel of Fortune, an image which is motivated by the way early modern individuals saw the motion of the wheel as analogous to the movement of Fortune in their lives, sometimes up, sometimes down. This type of motivated connection could not be made between Fortune and sheep or bowls—so it is not

surprising that we find no records of early modern references to the Sheep of Fortune, or the Bowl of Fortune.

The difference between sign meaning and symbolic meaning is one reason why truly understanding another culture involves so much more than simply having a working knowledge of its language, although that remains a very important place to start—and this of course holds true for the interpretation of plays as well. Linguistic knowledge can serve as an *index* to symbolic meanings experienced by a culture, but it cannot convey the full polythetic meanings of those symbol systems as they are experienced in that culture.

Like a play-text, musical notation is a special case of written language, one that does not have as its endpoint the transmission of a specific monothetic or semantic meaning. Rather, musical notation and play-texts are perhaps best understood as blueprints, as sets of instructions for actualization in alternate modes of expression that possess more robust dimensionality. Being presented with a given piece in musical notation is of course a poor substitute for experiencing that piece in performance, where so many other factors—the technical ability, charisma, and mood of the performer, the timbre of the particular instrument used, the acoustical qualities of the room, the makeup of the audience, to name only the first few that come to mind—contribute to the interpretation and meaning (what in monothetic terms we translate as the "effect") of the piece. The point is that no one writes music with the view that it will not be actualized in performance (with apologies to John Cage). Most of today's popular music is composed and played before it is ever written out; and when it is transcribed and published in the form of musical notation or tablature, the songbooks that result are notoriously imprecise and ineffective records.

The idea that Shakespeare's play-texts are monothetic translations of what were obviously intended to be polythetic communicative events contributes to what Norman Rabkin has referred to as Shakespeare's "complementarity," a mode of representation he considers "the basis of a mimesis which appeals to the common understanding because it recalls the unresolvable tensions that are the fundamental conditions of human life. It is a mode of awareness, an option for a certain and essential kind of openness to human experience" (Rabkin 1967; 27). While agreeing with Rabkin, I would add that this particular feature of Shakespeare's work is as much a side-effect of the plays' textualization as it is a function of their author's comprehensive genius. The meanings of specific play-texts cannot be definitively arrived at precisely because the plays themselves were not designed with the intention to "mean" in any specifically monothetic, textual manner. They were meant to be listened to, whether in the theatre, or through the sort of hermeneutic practice Harry Berger, Jr. has come to call "imaginary audition" (Berger 1989). Furthermore, the playing conditions of Shakespeare's era—which included a variety of public and private theatrical venues, as well as a roughly corresponding number of heterogeneous audience groups—would have made a certain amount of indeterminacy a virtue, if not a necessity, in what was often a volatile political climate.

At this point I would like to introduce my own definition of how the term *meaning* will be used throughout the rest of this dissertation, a definition that is informed by Schutz's distinction between monothetic and polythetic meaning. *Meaning*, as I will use the term, is the ratification of experience that takes place when the consciousness is impressed into recognition. This can occur either with a single very strong impression, or

when weaker impressions accrete serially over time. The main point I want to make about meaning is that it can and should be understood in polythetic terms as a *process that takes place in embodied consciousness*, and not simply as an *object* of consciousness.

Performance criticism has for the most part yet to take polythetic meaning into account. Those critics who have been careful about theorizing their approaches to performance have tended to work within the theoretical paradigm of semiotics, where in typical studies the experience of theatre is approached through an exclusively monothetic hermeneutic. At least one well-known semiotic critic, however, has gestured towards recognizing the polythetic parameters of theatrical experience. Allesandro Serpieri makes the case for a distinction between the literary text and the dramatic text based upon the phenomenological underdetermination of the latter, which he claims calls for "a new or supplementary form of semiotic attention" (1985: 121). His argument concerning the necessity for augmented approaches to the interpretation of dramatic texts is important enough to cite at length:

> if it still remains necessary to correlate the linguistic structures and semantic values of the dramatic text with its cultural context (a pragmatics of the construction of textual meaning), it is no less pressingly important to orient such structures towards a semiotic co-operation with non-verbal systems, those specific to the theatrical performance for which the drama is written: mimic, gestural, proxemic and kinesic systems, potentially or manifestly, in its own verbal semiosis (thus calling for a pragmatics of the

> theatrical destiny of textual meaning, in potential or mental form in a reading, and in actualized form within its various stage realizations). (122)

If, as stated earlier in his essay, culture in its totality is interpretable as a "global Text" [sic], then surely it is logical that all aspects of a dramatic performance should be amenable to interpretation using the tools of textual analysis (120). Though Serpieri proposes the inclusion of extralinguistic performance parameters in the analysis of Shakespearean plays (their "mimic, gestural, proxemic and kinesic systems"), he seems reticent to grapple with the elements of them that elude a textual hermeneutic. There are extralinguistic systems at play in the theatre, but apparently no corresponding hermeneutics through which one might understand them in kind. The above passage is representative of how semiotics has in some ways promised more than it has delivered to performance theorists. Serpieri calls for the inclusion of these performance parameters at the theoretical introduction to his paper, but the theory goes unimplemented; the remainder of his essay rests exlusively within the linguistic domain, turning to thorough and nonetheless rewarding analyses of illocutionary and perlocutionary utterances in *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*.

While semiotic theatre criticism is undeniably a fruitful approach to performance studies (what it does it does well), I disagree with the assumption, often associated with it, that the world or the theatre should or even can be reduced to something that can be comprehensively addressed by the tools of linguistic analysis. In theatre studies it is still perfectly natural for critics to refer to the audience "reading" a performance as a way of referring to their experience of it. The rise of New Historicism and its use of the

technique of "thick description," which was popularized by anthropologist Clifford Geertz in his famous "readings" of Balinese cock-fights, is another excellent example of how linguistic hermeneutics have become our dominant modes of access to cross-cultural and trans-historical experience.[15] One of the difficulties with assuming the primacy of textuality is of course deciding just which language the "global text" expresses itself in. Even when we back up from this argument and argue that there is no *specific* language to speak of, but rather that our experience of the world occurs through preconscious linguistic structures which are then locally manifested in different languages, the notion of the text's precedence still does a distinct disservice to the world, which always remains intractable, holding certain elements of experience in reserve from language and the structures of thought it supports. There would be no poetry if this weren't the case.

As a critical approach in English studies, phenomenology has been relegated to the margins for the past several decades. This has been especially true in Shakespeare studies. I suspect there are a number of reasons for why this has been the case, and will briefly present them here, in broad strokes. Perhaps the most important reason why phenomenological criticism lost ground in the larger academic culture during the era of post-structuralism is because it was associated with the notion of a unified, Cartesian subject. The post-structuralist emphasis on the decentred, constructed subject quickly made phenomenological studies that posited the "given" Cartesian subject out of step with the political directions theoretical discourse was taking. The enthusiasm for deconstruction that spread throughout the English departments of many North American universities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the subsequent coalescence of it and other related theoretical positions under the megalithic rubric of "post-structuralism,"

ensured that, along with structuralism, phenomenology was a thing of the past as far as literary criticism was concerned. There have remained places where phenomenology has continued to flourish, most notably in Denmark, where several journals and publishing concerns devoted to phenomenology are still active.

It should also be noted that phenomenology primarily took hold in critical studies of the literature of eras later than the early modern period. This in part explains its relative absence from Shakespeare studies. Literary theories that rise to some level of prominence commonly are associated with particular historical eras that are in some way amenable to them. New Historicism, for example, remained primarily influential in early modern literary and cultural studies before it came to be more widely recognized and used by medieval and Romantic scholars. On the other hand, Deconstruction never became as influential in Shakespeare studies as it did in studies of Romanticism or of the American Renaissance. In this case, the lack of interest may well have been because Shakespeareans had long been sensitive to the fact of radical textual indeterminacy—they were not being told anything in the 1970s that they weren't already aware of at the turn of the century with the "disintegration" of the text and the New Bibliography.

Phenomenological studies of theatrical experience typically delineate the perceptual and cognitive experience of the theatre, exploring how the theatre focuses the attention of the playgoer in different ways, how it manipulates its own reception (Garner 1989; States 1985). The emphasis is on the individual playgoer instead of the cultural context's contribution to the formation of theatrical experience, although in his latest book, *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*, Stanton Garner appears to make larger gestures in this direction when he declares his intention to attend

to "those moments when phenomenological perception encounters the culturally, historically, analytically constituted" (1994: 15). It is becoming possible to conceive of a phenomenologically-inflected Shakespeare criticism which does not assume the Cartesian subject, and which does not yoke itself to the assumption of the complete permeation of consciousness by language that has become such a problematic characteristic of post-structuralist approaches.[16] The play-texts can communicate quite a lot about the early modern culture that collaboratively produced them as material historical/æsthetic artifacts, even if they can't tell us everything we wish we could know about Shakespeare the man.

READING THE SOUNDSCAPE: EARLY MODERN PLAY-TEXTUALITY

While semiotic approaches look to interpret theatrical performance as an aggregate of signs, Shakespearience keeps an ear cocked for suggestions of polythetic experience encoded within the Shakespearean play-text. These are texts that ask to be heard, produced in an era when the representational limits of print technology were still very much uncharted. Just as we call our age "the technological age," or "the computer age," Thomas Dekker could refer to his own as "This Printing age of ours" in his dedication of *Lanthorne and Candle-light* (Dekker 1963). Because the transition from oral culture to print culture was by no means complete during this period, early modern writers and readers had different expectations with respect to what a printed text could do and be than we do today.

Nowhere are these different expectations about the potentialities of textual representation more readily apparent than in the various titles given to publications,

wherein books are metaphorically alluded to as having properties we no longer so freely attribute to them. Contemporary books are frequently called "schooles" (Gosson 1587), "mirrours" (Munday 1579; Rankins 1587), "looking glasses" (Lodge and Greene 1594), "jewels" (Dawson 1596; Fioravanti, et al. 1579; Gesner, et al. 1576) and even a "perfume against the noysome pestilence" (Fenton 1603). Moreover, books *do* things; they are "blaste[s] of retrait" (Munday and Salvian 1580), and "divine ecchoes" (Swift 1612). Titles such as these are not merely descriptive; they are metonymic invocations of the kind of power the printed text was considered to have as an increasingly accessible repository of knowledge and experience. It is probable that most people's introduction to print technology in the period was with two such textual repositories—the Bible, and the almanac.

Contemporary evidence suggests that play-texts were similarly regarded, and were sold as documentary representations of previous theatrical events. Michael Bristol has noticed that they were frequently marketed by printers and booksellers as recordings of particular performances or productions: "The title pages, blurbs, and other promotional materials that accompany the early printed editions suggest how the appeal of texts is referred back to and thus depends on the spectacles of which they are not so much a literary source as a mechanically produced record" (1996: 47). Title pages of numerous plays printed in the period note that the particular book on offer presents the play "as it was performed at" such-and-such a theatre.

While we have no substantial indication that Shakespeare participated in, let alone supervised, the publication of any of his plays, prefaces to printed editions of other contemporary plays do inform us about how some playwrights viewed the medium of

print as a replacement for encountering their work in the theatre. John Marston, for instance, was very clear on this subject, voicing his disdain for print in his preface to the printed edition of *The Malcontent*:

> I would fain leave the paper; only one thing afflicts me, to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken should be enforcively published to be read, and that the least hurt I can receive is to do myself the wrong. . . .but I shall entreat…that the unhandsome shape which this trifle in reading presents pardoned, for the pleasure it once afforded you when it was presented with the soul of lively action. (Marston 1967: 5-6)

In the preface to *The Fawn* he makes a similar statement, adding that the genre of comedy seems to have an even more unfortunate transition from the stage to the page: "If any shall wonder why I print a comedy, whose life rests much in the actor's voice, let such know that it cannot avoid publishing. . . .Comedies are writ to be spoken, not read. Remember the life of these things consists in action…" (Marston 1965: 3-5). Print is clearly not the medium through which he prefers his audience to receive his work; if they want the real thing they should go to the theatre, where he intended his plays to be experienced. One catches a subtle hint of trade protectionism in Marston's caveats as well; they point indirectly to the fact that the printed play was a potential market competitor with the theatres, one from which playing companies were not legally entitled to benefit (Bristol 1996: 43-44).[17] By publishing their works, playwrights risked alienating the very customers for whom their works were written in the first place: the players.

Surviving letters from the players themselves indicate that they instinctively thought of the play-text not as something to be read, but as something to be heard. Robert Shaw of the Admirals' Men wrote a letter on 8 November 1599 to Phillip Henslowe, about a new play-text the company was in the process of acquiring. In the letter he says, "Mr Henshlowe, we haue heard their booke and lyke yt." Samuel Rowley of the same company wrote to Henslowe on 4 April 1601, concerning a similar transaction: "Mr. Hinchloe, I haue harde fyue shetes of a playe of the Conqueste of the Indes & I dow not doute but it wyll be a verye good playe..."[18] Like A&R representatives from some early modern record company, these are the words of prospective buyers listening to the text with the ears of their audiences, imagining how the words will play, both in the theatre and in the theatrical marketplace.

Speaking of audiences, Andrew Gurr has written on the fact that there was not at the time an established term for referring to the group of people assembled to take in a play: "The concept of huge and regular urban gatherings of people was new enough to produce a sensitive and discriminating range of terms which only slowly narrowed down to the current usage" (1984: 32). The two main terms that survive to this day—*audience* and *spectators*—refer to specific modes of perceptual experience, the auditory and the visual. Moreover, each makes implicit assumptions about that experience: *spectators* connotes a group of separate individuals with different perspectives on an event, while an *audience* is a single community sharing a common experience. Playwrights such as Ben Jonson and John Marston evidently preferred to think of their works as something to be heard. Jonson, who wrote many masques, was particularly aware of the competition between his words and the elaborate visual settings of Inigo Jones (Gurr 1984: 31). Hamlet conveys a

similar disdain for those who come to the theatre primarily for the spectacle when he speaks of the groundlings, "who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise" (3.2.11-12).

Through the years, editing practices have caused us to lose touch with the aural nature of Shakespearean play-texts as blueprints for performance. The strong visual bias of our culture has influenced not only how we receive Shakespeare, but which Shakespeare we receive. Like the layers of sound reproduction technology discernable in the Henry Irving recording of *Richard III*, there are also many layers of "silent" emendations introduced to Shakespeare's texts by generations of editors.[19] Marshall McLuhan, in an article titled "The Effect of the Printed Book on Language in the 16th Century," discusses the changes Shakespeare's 19th century editors made to the texts. He observes that these editors

> …tidied up his text by providing him with grammatical punctuation. They thought to bring out, or hold down, his meaning by introducing a kind of punctuation that came into use more and more after printing. This was an ordering of commas and periods to set off clauses for the eye. But in Shakespeare's time, punctuation was mainly rhetorical and auditory rather than grammatical. (126)

These editing changes are still with us, and they have quietly grown to immense proportions over the centuries in our efforts to make Shakespeare *readable*. Patrick Tucker, founder of London's Original Shakespeare Company, discovered after comparing a First Folio edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* with the Arden edition, that in

the play's 3014 lines the Arden editors had made 1466 changes in punctuation—including the addition of 217 exclamation points, and the subtraction of one (Moston 1995: xiii). This is of course in addition to the numerous modernized spellings that are standard substitutions in most editions. My purpose is not to argue that these later editions are not "Shakespeare." I do think it is important, however, to call attention to the fact that these works were written at a time when the play-text was quite a different animal than it is today—and it was an an animal with pronounced ears.

notes to chapter one

1 The performance dates and location are suggested by the venerable Frederick Gard Fleay in his *A chronicle history of the life and work of William Shakespeare: player, poet, and playmaker* (London: J.C. Nimmo, 1886): page 154.

2 All references are from Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

3 See David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989): pages 30; 50-51; and 136.

4 Marta Straznicky notes that " [t]he festival in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*...enacts an imaginary appropriation of civic authority and commercial wealth by a group of industrial laborers for whom both privileges were largely a matter of fantasy" in her recent article " The End(s) of Discord in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 36, no. 2 (1996): 357-68.

5 See John Taylor, *Iacke-A-Lent, His Beginning and Entertainment: with the Mad prankes of his Gentleman-Vsher* Shrove Tuesday *that goes before him, and his Footman* hunger *attending,* in *All the vvorkes of Iohn Taylor the water-poet. Beeing sixty and three in number. Collected into one volume by the author: vvith sundry new additions corrected, reuised, and newly imprinted, 1630* (At London: Printed by I[ohn] B[eale, Elizabeth Allde, Bernard Alsop, and Thomas Fawcet] for Iames Boler; at the signe of the Marigold in Pauls Churchyard, 1630): page 115. The reference to the date of the passage's composition also occurs on that page.

6 John Taylor remarks upon this violence in *Iacke-A-Lent*: " Then these youths arm'd with cudgels, stones, hammers, rules, trowels, and hand-sawes, put Play-houses to the sacke, and Bawdy-houses to the spoyle, in the quarrell breaking a thousand quarrels (of glasse I meane) making ambitious brickbats breake their neckes, tumbling from the tops of lofty chimnies, terribly vntyling houses, ripping vp the bowels of feather-beds, to the inriching of vpholsters, the profit of Plaisterers, and Dirtdawbers, the gaine of Glaisiers, Ioyners, Carpenters, Tylers and Bricklayers" (115).

7 Bells of course have a host of other associations for the early modern English; in Shakespeare's plays, for example, when referred to in the

singular, a bell commonly refers to the death knell. When referred to in the plural, bells usually allude to the time.

8 The larger group is called the World Soundscape Project. See R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1977); Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, *Communication and Information Science* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Pub. Corp., 1984); and Barry Truax and World Soundscape Project, eds., *The World Soundscape Project's Handbook for Acoustic Ecology*, 1st ed., *The Music of the environment series; no. 5* (Vancouver, B.C.: A.R.C. Publications, 1978).

9 Bruce Smith makes a similar distinction between listening and hearing in his book on sound in early modern England, noting that the latter " is a physiological constant," while the former is " a psychological variable" (1999: 7).

10 Researching the present dissertation, I found myself frequently shuttling back and forth between McGill's humanities, music, art history, history of medicine, religious studies, and engineering libraries.

11 For a more detailed description and analysis of the different soundscapes of early modern England, from the country to the city and the court, see Bruce Smith (1999): 49-95. Frances Shirley admirably chronicles Shakespeare's use of military

sounds in *Shakespeare's Use of Off-Stage Sounds* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963): 54-71.

12 Quoted in E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930): vol. 1, 98-99.

13 Schutz is best known for his work on intersubjective phenomenology, particularly for his deft syncretic fusions of the work of phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and sociologist Max Weber. Born in Austria, he fled to the U.S. in 1939, where he eventually came to teach at the New School for Social Research. See Helmut R. Wagner, *Alfred Schutz: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Because recent research into human consciousness in cognitive studies validates some of the fundamental intuitions of phenomenology, I imagine that Schutz's work will find a larger audience in literary studies in coming years.

14 When Schutz refers to " language" in this context, he undoubtedly means *langue* as opposed to *parole*. For Ferdinand de Saussure's famous distinction between the two, see his *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959).

15 See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

16 The possibility of a significant resurgence of interest in phenomenology by Shakespeare scholars was evidenced by a recent seminar at the 1999 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America meeting in San Francisco. The seminar, titled " Knowing Bodies: Towards an Historical Phenomenology," and led by Bruce Smith, was met with enough interest that it required two separate sessions to handle the number of participants.

17 The threat of competition posed by the appearance new technologies of communication and representation has become a familiar story in the twentieth century. When radio first appeared, musicians' unions expressed concern that audience attendance would decline for live performances, since they could hear them for free over the bandwaves. The movie theatre posed a similar threat to the live theatre; and when the VCR first came out, it in turn was seen to threaten the existence of movie theatres. Communications companies nowadays devote a significant amount of their resources to proactively monitoring and investing in future communicative technologies so that they will have a stake in them when they are introduced. What should also be noted is that audiences are keenly aware of the trade-offs new technologies exact; live music and theatre are as

popular now as they have ever been in this century.

18 Both quotations are from E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1923): vol. 3, page 161.

19 The one editor responsible for more auditory stage directions than any other was eighteenth-century editor Edward Capell, who read the plays with an exceptionally attentive ear. In his edition of the plays he also introduced new types of punctuation marks to indicate irony, mid-speech changes in address, etc. The punctuation marks never stuck, but the better part of his stage directions and other notes have. See his *Mr. William Shakespeare, His Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, ed. Edward Capell, 10 vols. (London: Printed by Dryden Leach for J. and R. Tonson in the Strand, 1767).

2 • Backing Tracks

Solæ aures sunt organa Christiani — Martin Luther

Hearing is the organ of vnderstanding; by it we conceiue — Richard Brathwaite

Our approach to the original Shakespearean soundscape is complicated by its ephemerality. Sounds, and our relations to them, are subject to time, of course. They die out, and fade from cultural memory over the *longue durée*. The point I wish to emphasize here is that physical re-creations of the sounds of Shakespeare's theatre, however well-researched and complete, wouldn't amount to a recreation of the Shakespearean soundscape, because those sounds would fail to resonate with twentieth-century listeners in the same way they did with individuals in their originating context. This is the most obvious reason why so few studies of sound in Shakespeare have been attempted: where is the object of study? Keeping that in mind, I won't be conjuring up a complete reconstruction of the various sound events that occurred on the stage of the Globe theatre or at Blackfriars during specific performances of specific plays. Such a task would be impossible, and is certainly not the intent of this study. Instead, I wish to pursue my intuition that Shakespeare and his contemporaries had at base (allowing for individual variation) a radically different relationship to sound than we do. My

investigation of the Shakespearean soundscape continues with a short tour through early modern attitudes towards, and beliefs concerning, the practice of hearing. As I maintained in the preceding chapter, the soundscape is not exclusively a physical phenomenon, but the intersection between *what we hear* and *how we react to and derive meaning from what we hear* (which includes whether we listen to certain things at all, or allow them to inform us). Similar æsthetic economies influence our perception of the visual landscape, as generations of landscape painters remind us, from Turner and Gainsborough to Manet and Van Gogh.

To arrive at a better understanding of what early moderns were capable of thinking about the sense of hearing and the subject of sound in general, I want to spend a little time listening to the cultural 'backing tracks' that are to be found in the historical archive.[1] The present chapter is divided into three parts, each one detailing a broad disciplinary avenue through which the subjects of sound and hearing were routinely approached by writers of the period. I begin with those who pursue the subject from the religious background and traditions of writing on the subject, follow with more philosophical writers, and finish with an exposition of the latest anatomical information available from the Continent, specifically, in the case of hearing, from Italy. I have chosen this sequence because it traces in descending order the degrees of familiarity we can reasonably expect Shakespeare and his earliest audiences would have had with the various approaches to understanding sound and hearing that were currently available. It is logical to assume that very few people at the time would have had access to the latest anatomical information, that more by virtue of an elementary education would be conversant in the references to the subject in Aristotle and other philosophers of the

Classical and medieval periods, and that many more would have derived most of their associations with the subject via religious discourse both in printed form and, more probably, through oral transmission in sermons. Contemporaries of Shakespeare who addressed the subjects of sound and hearing from one or a number of these disciplinary positions include Francis Bacon, Richard Braithwaite, the physician Helkiah Crooke, ministers Stephen Egerton and William Harrison, poet Sir John Davies, minister Robert Wilkinson, and Jesuit priest/philosopher of the passions Thomas Wright. This list is not intended to be regarded as comprehensive; it should, however, be construed as amply representative of the main streams of thought on the subject.

THE DOCTRINE IS SOUND

The most salient discourse on hearing and the role of sound in early modern English culture was conducted in the religious sphere, and concerned the proper use of the Christian ears. Within a span of 30 years, from early in Shakespeare's professional lifetime until the publication of the First Folio, no fewer than three extended sermons were published on the role of hearing and the use of the Christian organs in church. These sermons appear roughly every decade: Robert Wilkinson's *A Iewell for the Eare* first surfaced in 1593 and was republished six times in the following 32 years; William Harrison's *The Difference of Hearers* was published twice in 1614, then once again in 1625; and Stephen Egerton's *The Boring of the Eare* was brought into press posthumously in 1623 by Richard Crooke, the latter apparently lending the work its title. Little is known about any of these men apart from what can be gleaned from their works. Robert Wilkinson conducted a ministry at Horton in Kent for at least a time in the early

1590s. William Harrison preached at Hyton in Lancashire (he should not be confused with the famous Elizabethan topographer and historian of the same name; nor, judging from the anti-Catholic invective that permeates his contribution, should he be confused with the William Harrison who acted as England's last archpriest from 1615 to 1621). Stephen Egerton is credited on the title-page of his work as having preached at Blackfriars, probably during years when Shakespeare and the King's Men were performing at their private theatre in the same district.

The sermons of these men were written from the desire to promote a more active and obedient attention on the part of regular sermon audiences. The fact that the sermons appear in print form is evidence the topic they address resonated far afield from the individual parishes for which they were written. Because attendance at Sunday and holiday services had been legally compulsory for all subjects of the realm since the 1559 Act of Uniformity, the audience for sermons such as these would ostensibly have comprised the entire population (Prall 1993: 73-76, 83). The Act of Uniformity, combined with the newly-revised *Book of Common Prayer*, guaranteed the government broadcast access to the entire realm for regular ideological and spiritual prophylaxis of the body politic. Actual compliance with the statute probably varied, however, according to geographical factors that would have affected enforcement, combined with the measure of contemporary political interest in its implementation. The penalty for failing to attend services was not physical punishment or incarceration, but a simple fine per episode that those who were more well-off could easily rationalize as a tax on religious freedom. The statute and its increasingly expensive penalty are typical of a management style Elizabeth was to employ throughout her long reign; while avoiding direct

confrontation and provocation, an issue is ingeniously framed so that she wins either way, in this particular case receiving either obedience or financial tribute. If she couldn't have the ears of her subjects, she would graciously accept their money in substitution thereof. The tradeoff shows that the political establishment was very quick to pick up on the association between hearing and obedience, and placed a great deal of practical value upon that association. At other times, if Elizabeth couldn't metaphorically have the ears of her subjects, she would accept their literal ears in lieu thereof: as Richard Crooke notes in his introduction to Egerton's dialogue, "the next punishment vnto death by our Nationall law, is losing the eares."

I don't want to give the impression that Wilkinson, Harrison and Egerton were primarily interested in enforcing political obedience in their sermons, however. What these men were really after was a voluntary spiritual obedience from their audience, and this for them began with the ear. A single Biblical passage runs as a common thread throughout their sermons. This is the parable of the sower, in which Christ describes four types of hearers. The parable occurs with slight variations in each of the three synoptic gospels (Matthew 13:4-23, Mark 4:1-29, and Luke 8:4-21), and is basically as follows: A sower goes out to sow his seed. On the way to the field some of the seed falls on the road, some falls onto rocky ground, some among thistles, and finally some makes it into good earth. The seed that falls onto the road is eaten by birds; that which falls onto the rocky ground never develops adequate roots and is blasted by the sun; that which grows among the thistles is in turn choked by them; and the last, which falls into good soil, yields many fold in return. In each version of the parable even the apostles, those closest to Jesus, fail to grasp the meaning of his story, and are forced to request an explanation

(this is the first time in each of the gospel accounts that Jesus uses parables in his ministry). After allowing that they are sufficiently disposed to hear the meaning of the parable, Jesus obliges them with the following interpretation: the seed is the word of God, which falls into four different types of ears. There are those who hear the word without understanding it, so that it can never take root within them; those who allow it to take root but do not allow those roots to grow strong enough; those who hear the word but allow it to become choked off within them by greater attention to earthly considerations; and finally those who hear the word and welcome it, and hold it fast in their hearts. These latter individuals benefit from their perserverance, and reap a bountiful harvest. Their perceptual interest (their attention) is repaid with spiritual interest.

Each of the early modern authors we're concerned with draws upon the parable's central agricultural and physio-economic metaphor—that the ear makes possible a kind of spiritual fertilization. Believers will accrue benefits in accordance with their ability and willingness to receive the divine word into their hearts, where it will germinate and transform the hearer. The metaphor through which this parable is communicated exemplifies the very process described in its content; that is, if you can understand the extended metaphor that the parable describes, then you have indeed heard it with the right kind of ears. This is of course why it is reported to be Christ's first parable in each of the synoptic accounts; because it is the hermeneutic key that enables one to understand the following parables as well. One of the assumptions necessary for the central metaphor of the parable of the sower to obtain cogency is that the ear must be considered a privileged point of entry to the heart, and by extension to the soul. It shall become evident by the

end of the chapter that this was an assumption shared by many writers in early modern England.

What I want to note about this central metaphor is how in the parable's matrix of agricultural, reproductive and cognitive associations the ear becomes 'feminized'. When word is conceived of as seed, the ear is either the vaginal gateway through which the seed must travel on its way to the earth/heart/womb, or it is the womb itself. This notion of the feminized ear was undoubtedly current in Shakespeare's day because it is found to exist outside the strictly religious sphere as well, finding its way, among other places, into contemporary political iconography. Joel Fineman notes in passing during his reading of Elizabeth's "Rainbow Portrait" that "the painting places an exceptionally pornographic ear over [her] genitals," and that this ear has a "vulvalike quality" (1994: 121). Yet another scriptural link between ears, obedience and penetration occurs in the phrase "the boring of the ear" employed by Richard Crooke as the title for Egerton's work (Egerton 1623). The phrase comes from Exodus (21.6), in which God announces to Moses that the piercing or penetration of the servant's ear will be the sign of a life-long voluntary servitude and obedience. The notion of the feminized ear is also implicit in the contemporary observance of Lady Day (March 25th, the first day of the English calendar up until 1752), which celebrates the story of the Annunciation, wherein the Virgin Mary is said to have conceived her son through the ear.

From the Protestant viewpoint, the struggle for doctrinal legitimacy with respect to Catholicism centred upon positioning the movement in such a way that its members could regard and advertise themselves as the more obedient of God's children, or, in another metaphor then current, the more deserving brides-to-be of Christ. The condition

of possibility for spiritual fertilization—that the hearer be appropriately disposed or prepared to receive the word/seed into the ear (the reason why Christ chooses to interpret the parable for his apostles)—falls perfectly in line with the contemporary notions of spiritual election that formed such a defining and yet obscure part of Protestant doctrine. Martin Luther had written in his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* that "Solæ aures sunt organa Christiani" (only the ears are Christian organs), thereby laying the Protestant claim to one entire domain of the human perceptual apparatus. Luther's claim to the Christian soundscape was not quick to fade away in England, where Catholicism remained metaphorically on the horizon (if not literally, as it had in the summer of 1588).

Writing in Lancashire, William Harrison picks up on Luther's idea and intensifies it with reference to the parable of the sower, claiming that not only does the ear allow for spiritual fertilization to occur, but that salvation is made possible only through the ear. In the Epistle Dedicatorie to his *The Difference of Hearers*, he echoes Luther's Protestant claim to Christian ears, writing "it is well knowne that the papists make small account of hearing Gods word preached they hope to be saved, rather by sight then by hearing....it is not the sight of their abhominable idoll, but the reuerend hearing of Gods sacred word, that must make them fruitfull in all good workes" (Harrison 1614). A few pages further on Harrison continues with the same criticism, again reiterating the Protestant claim to the Christian soundscape: "yet the Romish prelates haue made it a precept of their Church, that euery one shall see a masse on each Sabboth, but will not make it a precept, to heare a sermon each Sabboth. As if the often sight of a masse were more necessarie and more profitable, then the hearing of a sermon."

Harrison further represents Catholics as misunderstanding the role of sound in religious observance by drawing attention to and ridiculing their superstitious practice of ringing church bells in an attempt to drive the devil away from their churches (35). It has yet to be sufficiently noted that the Reformation had an enormous impact on the acoustic environment of early modern England, simply through its effects on bellringing in the realm. Catholic bellringing practices were extremely curtailed, while the dissolution of the monasteries contributed to the selling off of many church bells. Some went to civic organizations; others were scrapped to make cannon, which was a popular use for leftover bells. Bells that had for centuries provided the entire population with information about religious celebrations and events were now used for more secular purposes, or were simply bells no more.

The importance of the ears as specifically Christian organs had been remarked upon eleven years earlier than Harrison's work, in greater detail and less overtly sectarian terms, by Robert Wilkinson in his *A Iewell for the Eare*:

> … God neuer commeth so neere a mans soule as when he entreth in by the doore of the eare, therefore the eare is a moste precious member if men knewe how to use it: and better were it to loose a better member then to want it, if a man loose an eie, an arme, or a legge, he iudgeth of himselfe as of a cripple, unworthy to liue among men, and fit for no place but for a spittle: and yet these are but maimes in the boddy: but if God take away the use of hearing, it is a signe he is angry indeede, and threatneth a famine to the

> soule, for the soule feedeth at the eare, as the body by the mouth: therefore better loose all then loose it. (Wilkinson 1610)

Implicit in Wilkinson's assertion that "the eare is a moste precious member, if men knewe how to use it," is that there is a right way to hear, and a wrong way. The right way to hear is to "lay up the word in our harts." Wilkinson also uses the term "hearken," by which he means that one should hear but also assume a welcoming and receptive mental disposition toward what is heard (think of Firke's enthusiastic "hearke!" at the sound of the pancake bell in *The Shoemaker's Holiday*). Otherwise, Wilkinson tells his congregation, they are just as well to bring their oxen to church, for beasts can hear the word of God as well as man. Those who come to church to hear the word, but do not bring with them the correct attitude towards what they are about to hear, are likened to beasts in church. Wilkinson also introduces another important notion in this passage, one that Shakespeare seems to take as a given in several of his plays, which is that "the soule feedeth at the eare," that the soul is nourished through sound. We will discuss Shakespeare's use of this idea more in the next chapter.

For now, we return to Harrison, who like Wilkinson attempts to teach his audience and readers how to become better hearers, more obedient to the word of God and His will revealed therein: "the doctrine is sound, and the manner of teaching profitable, but the people heare amisse, and so for want of good hearing, loose the fruite of many good sermons; because the profit of hearing, dependeth on the maner of hearing." To that end, Harrison states that the manner in which one hears for most profit involves a total interiorization of the word of God; not just into the ears, but into the heart (Wilkinson had referred to the ears as "the doore of the hart"). According to Harrison, there are six ways

in which churchgoers can become better hearers: 1) they must prepare themselves before coming to church (here he employs the metaphor of plowing the ground before planting it); 2) they must pray beforehand, as a way of focusing their attention for the sermon; 3) they must exercise themselves by daily reading of the sciptures; 4) they must listen attentively to the sermon; 5) they should ask questions if they don't understand; 6) and finally they should put into practice what they have heard (here he notes that obedience is the key of knowledge).

Each of these authors uses the parable of the sower to address a chronic problem that probably resulted from the state's position on mandatory attendance: their parishioners' ears seemed naturally to tend towards other things. Put in terms of the parable itself, the earth these men were expected to sow was oftentimes less than hospitable to their holy seed. Their complaints provide us with information about how people preferred to use their ears during their leisure time, so let's listen outside the church door where we can hear William Harrison protest against the practice of piping and dancing on the Sabbath. He laments that "for one person which we haue in the Church, to heare diuine service, sermons and catechisme, euery pyper (there being many in one parish) should at the same instant, haue many hundreds on the greenes." Over in Kent, Robert Wilkinson encourages those who see the Sabbath as "a day of holy rest, not of unholye ryot," and reproaches those who come to church "not to haue their liues reformed, but to haue theyr eares tickled euen as at a play." This is almost certainly an allusion to the contemporary debate over the rhetorically sophisticated, "metaphysical" preaching style that was then coming into prominence (Crockett 1993). Echoing Wilkinson, Egerton asks why it is that people find it difficult to sit quietly and attentively

through a sermon, but seem to have no trouble sitting through an entire play: "let hearers consider how easily without irkesomnesse they can be present at a play, or at some other prophane and idle exercise and discourse of greater length then those Sermons which they doe so much distaste in respect of the tediousnesse (as they esteeme it) of them…" (54). Egerton's objection strikes particularly close to home when one considers that we are probably hearing him preach at Blackfriars during the years when Shakespeare and his company were performing at their private theatre in the same district.

In this Protestant discourse there are, in addition to the many wrong sounds to listen to, many wrong ways to hear as well. Wilkinson concludes his sermon by identifying the five enemies to the attention that are to be found in church. They are "a straying thought," "a wandring eie," "a needelesse shiftinge, and stirringe of the bodie," "an unreuerent talking and unciuill laughinge in the Churche," and "a secure and senceles sleeping." In a fit of inspiration he then throws in a sixth enemy to the attention, which "of al the rest is most scandolous and offensiue, and that is a shameful departing out of the church, and violent breaking from the congregation, wherein a man doeth as it were openlye protest, that he is exceeding weary…" Egerton likewise comments, employing yet another agrarian metaphor, that one's duty after having heard the sermon is not to bolt from church afterwards, but to "sift" the information with one's heart for a while after. Richard Crooke does Jesus two better in his introductory section to Egerton's work, identifying not three, but "five sorts of eares that are not hearing eares": they are, 1) a dull eare, "when a man is either drousie, or carelesse, or ignorant"; 2) a stopped eare, characterized by recusants and such like persons; 3) a prejudiciall eare, which characterizes the man who "comes as the Pharisee to Christ, to tempt the Minister, to

catch him in his talke, turning all his speech to the worst; 4) the itching eare, one that must always have novelty; and 5) the adulterous eare, "that will heare any but the voice of their owne Shepherds."

The sermons of these three authors are quite explicit in asserting that for the early modern Protestant, the ear is the primary corporeal agent of spiritual transformation. The Protestant discourse pertaining to sound and hearing associates this entire perceptual domain with obedience, duty, receptivity and penetrability—all concepts which are gendered 'feminine' in the period, and officially codified as such with the state's sanction in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Wilkinson clearly associates the visual sense with mastery over the material world, the ears with the spiritual: "… for by the eie we come to the naturall mans diuinity in suruaying the creatures […] then our eie is our schoolemaister to bring us to the knowledge of the Creator: but that knowledge is unperfect as the glimmering of a lighte, but by our ears more specially and expresselye we attaine to the knowledge of Gods reuealed will…" The ear, Wilkinson reminds his audience, is where 'the soule feedeth'. For all the great changes that were beginning to take place in 'the naturall mans' relationship to the material world at this time, changes that were largely the result of innovations in the understanding of visual perception reflected in exciting new modes of visuality such as print, perspective, cartography and marine navigation, sound remained (especially for the Protestant but by no means exclusively) the most important sensory repository and refuge of the metaphysical mysteries one might contemplate in Shakespeare's England.

ONE OF THE SUBTILEST PIECES OF NATURE

The probable reason sound functioned as a repository for these mysteries is that of the two major perceptual domains, it was the lesser understood. Francis Bacon suggests as much in the second century of his *Sylva Sylvarum* when he writes "perspective hath been with some diligence inquired; and so hath the nature of sounds, in some sort, as far as concerneth music; but the nature of sounds in general hath been superficially observed. It is one of the subtilest pieces of nature" (Bacon 1824: 114).[2] In what follows I will consider Bacon, Richard Brathwaite and Thomas Wright as participants in a contemporary discourse which occupied a broad intellectual bandwidth between the religious discourse surveyed in the previous section, and the anatomical discourse taking place at this moment for the most part on the Continent. This philosophically-inflected approach is an important source of information about the contemporary soundscape because it reacts to and builds upon Greek and medieval traditions of understanding sensory perception that had become very heavily sedimented into early modern intellectual life by centuries of continuous transmission. I have chosen these three writers because they help us to understand contemporary attitudes towards and developments in this received tradition as it pertains to sound and hearing.

Francis Bacon is such an original and independent thinker that it might seem decidedly unsound to portray his ideas as representative of what early moderns thought about anything, let alone sound and hearing. Although admittedly an anomalous figure, in many ways remarkably ahead of his time, it is worth remembering that he was scientifically-speaking only a gifted amateur, "out of touch with the scientific discoveries

of his own day" (Vickers 1978: 18). The work of Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, Harvey, the anatomical discoveries concerning the ear taking place in Italy by Eustachius and Fallopius, all were unknown to him. As a legal professional and government official, he simply couldn't afford the time to keep up with these kinds of developments. Professional responsibilities, coupled with the extraordinary range of his interests, certainly prevented him from tracking developments specific to anatomy. His most notable writings on sound and hearing occur in one of his later works: in *Sylva Sylvarum*, better known as the *Natural History*. The *Sylva* was published posthumously in 1627 by Dr. William Rawley, Bacon's chaplain, secretary and literary executor.

The second and third centuries of *Sylva Sylvarum* provide the fullest description we have of Bacon's understanding of sound, but the account is not as logically arranged or as explicitly argued as one could wish.[3] This is because the *Sylva* was not organized to explain broad concepts in a linear fashion; rather, it is a compendium of observations of phenomena accompanied by explanations, or by suggestions for experiments that might provide explanations for those observations. As a thinker Bacon was more interested in confronting longstanding orthodoxies relative to intellectual systems, and instantiating programs for research and discovery, than he was in keeping up with contemporary developments taking place outside of what he considered the current dispensation (developments such as the above-mentioned which, ironically, were really quite revolutionary and radically thought-altering in themselves). Frederick Hunt barely touches on Bacon in his book *Origins in Acoustics* because he finds the work in this area so derivative: "His acoustical facts hardly went beyond those of Aristotle, from whom, indeed, he took most of them" (Hunt 1978: 77). Although Bacon's lack of innovation

may deny him a place in the history of acoustic theory, it does make him a useful informant about contemporary popular belief, and more generally the entire received tradition pertaining to sound and hearing that is brought into play whenever he discusses the subject.

I will here allow myself a brief excursus to describe that tradition, which had at its source a small group of Greek and early medieval authorities, most notably Pythagoras, Aristotle, Galen and Boethius. Like other elements of Classical culture, the tradition went through a period of Islamic custodianship during the medieval era, making its way with elaboration and refinement back into Europe during the Renaissance (Hunt 1978). Although the tradition is hardly uniform, it can be summarized as follows: sound is produced when a body's motion is transferred to the surrounding air, creating an "audible species" which then travels to the ear. The perceptual notion of the "species" figures in conjunction with the distance senses—vision, hearing and smell. The notion is that the corresponding organs of these senses are not acted upon directly by external objects, as are those of touch and taste (Crombie 1962: 94). Therefore, the objects which affect these three senses must do so through a medium. They do this by emitting or propagating what were called "species," "forms," or "images." In the case of the audible species, these forms or images are perhaps best described as representations of the motion of the sounding body. When the audible species reaches the ear it causes the ear drum (the *tympanus*) to vibrate, which in turn causes the internal air of the ear (sometimes called the auditory spirit) to vibrate and register the sound in the *sensus communis* which resides, depending on which theory you subscribe to, in the brain, the heart (Aristotle), or the liver (Plato).

Upon rereading the preceding paragraph, I am persuaded that the greatest obstacle to understanding early modern discourse on sound and hearing is the terminology it is inevitably couched in, which to the post-Enlightenment reader seems vague, obscure and uncritically relayed from generation to generation. For a similar example of this elusive terminology I reach back to *The House of Fame*, where Chaucer rehearses an acoustical theory that would survive into Bacon's day and beyond: "Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken; / And every speche that ys spoken, / Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair, / In his substaunce ys but air; / For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke, / Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke" (lines 765-70). Just what does it mean to "break" air? Without any contextualization, the 20th-century reader can easily be left with the impression that these people were quaintly misguided when it came to the physics of sound, and had no real idea themselves of what they were talking about. This is not the case, however. Working under the latter assumption, a search through the OED's various entries on the word "break" is rewarded with echoes of associations we found in the religious discourse of the period. When specifically applied to sound, the word "break" means simply "to penetrate" (def. 21), or "to come out or emerge by breaking barriers; to burst forth, rush out with sudden violence; (a) of words, laughter, sounds, etc. (def. 37a). The notion of obedience also occurs in another definition of the word: "to reduce to obedience or discipline, tame, train (horses or other animals, also human beings)" (def. 14). According to the OED each of these definitions was current in Bacon's day; moreover, the first and last are illustrated by quotations from Shakespeare.

Precise terminology is of the utmost importance to Bacon, which makes him wary of lexical innovations masquerading as intellectual improvements in the field. Writing

some 250 years after Chaucer, he criticizes those who propose that "the cause given of sound […] should be an elision of the air, whereby, if they mean anything, they mean a cutting or dividing, or else an attenuating of the air." I here note Bacon's agreement with the traditional account just given: a "cutting " or "dividing" or the air is much closer to a "breaking" of the air than is an "elision." He blames the newfangled notion on intellectual fashion, for "it is common with men, that if they have gotten a pretty expression by a word of art, that expression goeth current; though it be empty of matter" (124). He then proves the explanation false by noting that numerous sounds, such as the ringing of a bell or the sound of a plucked string, "continueth melting some time after the percussion; but ceaseth straitways if the bell, or string, be touched and stayed." He also adduces the phenomenon of echo, in which "there is no new elision, but a repercussion only." Finally, his most effective argument to the contrary is that "sounds are generated where there is no air at all."

His point is that air is only the medium or "vehiculum casuæ" for sound, "and in that it resembleth the species visible," for after a sound has been made, "we cannot discern any perceptible motion at all in the air along as the sound goeth; but only at first" (125). That is, air is broken by "some local motion" only at the beginning of the production of sound. Since sounds continue to carry through the air and reverberate after the initial local motion, they cannot be defined *as* that local motion. Though he admits some sounds seem to radiate actual physical force, such as when "upon the noise of thunder, and great ordnance, glass windows will shake," he contends that "these effects are from the local motion of the air, which is a concomitant of the sound, as hath been said, and not from the sound" (126). He cites a related folk belief concerning the force of

loud sounds. "It hath been reported, and is still received, that extreme applauses and shouting of people assembled in great multitudes, have so rarified and broken the air, that birds flying over have fallen down, the air being not able to support them," and that "it is believed by some, that great ringing of bells in populous cities hath chased away thunder; and also dissipated pestilent air" (127). Bacon does not completely denounce the veracity of these accounts, though he attributes them not to the sound, but to the "concussion of the air." On the other hand, he notes that loud sounds near to the perceiver may cause deafness by the "breaking of a skin or parchment in their ear," giving as an example his own experience of someone shouting into his ear. He was left with a ringing in his ear "so as I feared some deafness," but "after some half quarter of an hour it vanished" (128). From this example he decides that "this effect may be truly referred unto the sound: for, as is commonly received, an over-potent object doth destroy the sense; and spiritual species, both visible and audible, will work upon the sensories, though they move not any other body." He notes that sounds seem to move better downwards than upwards, saying this is why pulpits are placed above the people, and why generals speak to their troops from the tops of hills: "it may be that spiritual species, both of things visible and sounds, do move better downwards than upwards" (205).

For Bacon, as for the Protestant ministers discussed in the preceding section, sound affords a privileged mode of access to the spiritual essence within human beings. From the early modern physiological perspective, hearing is the sense with the greatest and most immediate access to the body's internal spirits. Because of this, sound was also reputed to have, of all the sensory domains, the most immediate and visceral effect on the perceiver. As proof of this Bacon notes that our reactions to "harsh sounds, as of a saw

when it is sharpened; grinding of one stone against another; squeaking or shrieking noise; make a shivering or horror in the body, and set the teeth on edge" (700). Anyone who has experienced the sound of fingernails on a blackboard can corroborate this, though some are more sensitive to that particular form of torture than are others. His explanation for why "the objects of the ear do affect the spirits, immediately, most with pleasure and offence," is that "sight, taste, and feeling, have their organs not of so present and immediate access to the spirits, as the hearing hath" (114). Sound mingles with the internal spirits of the body in a way that makes it a more emotionally immediate sense. He alludes to the "anciently held and observed" notion that music can make men "warlike," "soft and effeminate," "grave," "light," "gentle and inclined to pity," etc. At the same time he is careful to note the importance of taking into account individual and cultural predispositions when contemplating these effects: "generally music feedeth that disposition of the spirits, which it findeth. We see also, that several airs and tunes do please several nations and persons, according to the sympathy they have with their spirits."

Bacon believes that not only human beings but all physical objects have some sort of spirit in them that can serve to propagate sound, much as air does: "the pneumatical part which is in all tangible bodies, and hath some affinity with the air, performeth, in some degree, the parts of the air; as when you knock upon an empty barrel, the sound is in part created by the air on the outside; and in part by the air in the inside." For not only does the amount of air inside the barrel help to produce sound, but "the sound participateth also with the spirit in the wood through which it passeth" (136). Later Bacon uses the example of a rod struck near the ear to reiterate his point that "sounds do

not only slide upon the surface of a smooth body, but do also communicate with the spirits, that are in the pores of the body" (150).

Because sound was thought to communicate with the spiritual essences of people and objects, it is easy to understand why it was so closely linked to ideas about identity and the representation of identity in the period. I have already cited Bacon's example concerning the effects of music on different individual and cultural dispositions. In that case, music is held to reinforce identity by encouraging "that disposition of the spirits, which it findeth." That is, sound contributes to the formation and reinforcement of identity. Moreover, early modern culture seems to also have been very aware of sound's important role in the *representation* of identity. One of the qualities of sound observed by Bacon is that it "admitteth much variety; as we see in the voices of several men, for we are capable to discern several men by their voices" (295). He also mentions the capacity some actors and people have of imitating the voices of other people: "there be certain pantomimi, that will represent the voices of players of interludes so to life, as if you see them not you would think they were those players themselves; and so the voices of other men that they hear" (337). It is evident that some contemporary actors were known by their voices, or for their ability to incorporate different kinds of voices in their work. In his next paragraph Bacon mentions the knack some people have for throwing their voices, but decides such talent is not of much use, except "for imposture, in counterfeiting ghosts or spirits" (337); that is, for assuming alternate identities.

Richard Brathwaite was born a barrister's son in Kendal, probably in 1588. Sent to Oxford in his sixteenth year, he later attended Cambridge to study law. His real calling

appears to have been writing, however, for he published widely and in a variety of genres during his long lifetime (he died in 1673, into his mid-80s). Although he is best-known as a poet, the subject at hand directs me to his *Essaies upon the five Senses*, first published in 1620.[4] On the whole, these essays on the senses offer the usual fare. The collection's main theme is that one should direct one's attention away from worldly matters, and use the sense organs instead to catch glimpses of the spiritual realm's eternal verities. As is common in discussions of the five senses, sight is given first place, though Brathwaite's comments on it are for the most part critical and admonitory: e.g., "as the eye of all other Sences is most needfull, so of all others it is most hurtfull" (3). Furthermore, the essay on sight seems perfunctory when compared to that of hearing; it is allotted less than a third of the space devoted to the latter, an essay to which I now wish to turn.

Brathwaite introduces the sense of hearing with language that has by this point become familiar. In fact, the essay's first five sentences quickly and compactly refer to many of the associations we have found in the previous discourses. For this reason I quote them here in full:

> Hearing is the organ of vnderstanding; by it we conceiue, by the memorie we conserue, and by our iudgment wee revolue; as maine [manie] riuers haue their confluence, by small streames, so knowledg her essence by the accent of the *eare*. As our *eare* can best iudge of sound, so hath it a distinct power to sound into the centre of the heart. It is open to receiue, ministring matter sufficient for the minde to digest; some things it relisheth

> pleasantly, apprehending them with a kinde of enforced delight: some things it distastes, and those it either egesteth, as friuolous, or as a subiect of merriment meerly ridiculous. In affaires conferring delight, the voluptuous man hath an excellent *eare*; in matters of profit, the worldly-minded man is attentiue; and in state-deportments the Politician is retentiue. The *eare* is best delighted, when any thing is treated on, which the minde fancieth: and it is soone cloyed, when the minde is not satisfied with the *subiect* whereof it treateth. (6-7)

We have heard many of these ideas before. Hearing provides the most immediate access to the internal spirits with its "distinct power to sound into the centre of the heart." Like Bacon, Brathwaite observes that people are attuned to various components of the soundscape according to personal disposition. The ear is described as "open" and penetrable. The transformative power of this feminized ear is announced in the first two phrases of the essay: "[h]earing is the organ of vnderstanding; by it we conceiue…" "Conceive" is a word physiological as well as cognitive valences. As was noted earlier, a conflation of these valences is entirely possible, as in the story of the Annunciation, in which physiological conception occurs via the principal avenue of cognitive conception. Like Robert Wilkinson, Brathwaite also conceives of sound as a kind of cognitive nourishment. The ear receives "ministring matter sufficient for the minde to digest," some of which it "relisheth," some of which it "distastes." For Brathwaite, "the *eare* is an edifying sence, conveying the fruit of either morall or diuine discourse to the imagination, and conferring with iudgment, whether that which it hath heard, seem to

deserue approbation" (8). We "revolue" this "ministring matter" with our faculty of judgment like ruminant beasts—which is of course from whence we derive the verb "to ruminate."

While sight presents only the veneer of the world, sound's affinity with the internal spirits provides access to interior truths and essences unavailable through other sensory avenues. Brathwaite is critical of "the common sort" who "haue their *eares* in their *eyes*: whatsoeuer they heare spoken, if they approue not of the *person*, it skils not; such a neere affinitie haue the *eare* and the *eye* in the vulgar" (9). A little over a decade earlier, Shakespeare had prompted Volumnia to counsel her son Coriolanus along very similar lines. She advises him to make a show of kneeling in supplication before the tribunes, "for in such business / Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th' ignorant / More learned than the ears" (3.2.75-77). We know that Brathwaite tried his hand at writing plays when he came to London (which was coincidentally at almost exactly the same time *Coriolanus* is believed to have been written), though none of these works are extant. It does seem that the example he provides on this point has its origin in the theatre. Further on he complains that "if *Herod* speake, hauing a garment glittering like the sunne, the light-headed multitude will reuerence *Herod*, and make him a deitie, not so much for his *speech*, for that is common, as for his apparell, to them an especiall motiue of admiration" (8-9). This complaint resonates powerfully with Hamlet, who twenty years previously had advised his players not to speak their lines too loudly lest they "spleet the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise" (3.2.10-14). Sheer volume will not force the speeches into the

ears of these audience members, who are there merely to watch the proceedings. Besides, Hamlet says, "it out-Herods Herod, pray you avoid it."

In the remainder of his essay Brathwaite reflects on how the ear should best be employed. He suggests listening to music, but rejects it on the grounds that it provides only a temporary pleasure. He then considers listening to histories, with the Sidneian rationale that they inspire admiration and imitation. But he again finds himself unsatisfied afterwards: "[w]here be those eminent and memorable Heroes, whose acts I haue heard recounted? where those victorious Princes, whose names yet remaine to posteritie recorded? and *hearing* no other answer, saue that they once *were*, and now are not, I wayned my *eare* from such a subiect" (13). From thence he devotes himself to the "discourse of the Lawes," but comes to the conclusion that the ear desires a way to eternity, not to the things of the world. Hearing, which he personifies with the feminine pronoun, is described as his "directing sense," directing him away from all these worldly sounds and discourses: "she is not for earth; her Musicke is mixt with too many discords. The worlds harmonie to a good Christian *eare*, may be compared to that of *Archabius* the trumpeter, who had more giuen him to cease than to sound: so harsh is the sound of this world in the eare of a diuinely affected soule" (16).

The last work we will concern ourselves with in this section was also the first to be published, by almost 20 years. Although Thomas Wright and Francis Bacon were exact contemporaries (both were born in 1561, and each lived into the mid-1620s), the first edition of Wright's *The Passions of the Minde* was published in 1601, 26 years before Bacon's Sylva, and almost 20 before Brathwaite's *Essais* saw print. Born into a

vigorously Catholic family in York, Wright was educated on the Continent. He attended the seminary at Douai for a couple of years before moving onward, from Rheims to Rome, where he and another English pupil were given special permission to join the Society of Jesuits.[5] After completing his novitiate in Rome he embarked on a peripatetic academic career with stops in Milan, Rome, Louvain, Genoa, and finally Valladolid in Spain. In the mid-1590s he came to believe Spain's interests in England had more to do with political imperialism than with religious liberation. He made these views public and soon after left the Jesuits, returning to England in 1595 under the political protection of the ill-fated Earl of Essex. He was given special permission to return to his native city of York in the summer of that year, and by the fall he was under house arrest at the Dean of Westminster's for publicly arguing with members of the clergy in York. He must have enjoyed considerable enlargement there in comparison to the sentences he would later serve at various prisons for the duration of Elizabeth's reign. As a Catholic, especially an ex-Jesuit, and friend of Essex, Wright was frequently interrogated about his suspected participation in a number of subversive disturbances.

William Webster Newbold suggests that Wright probably began and completed *The Passions of the Mind* during the two years of his house arrest with the Dean of Westminster (Wright 1986: 11). The work as a whole, divided into six books, is one of the earliest attempts to present a detailed anatomy of what the passions are, and how they influence us. Wright also suggests what may be done to control these influences, as well as how we may in turn influence others by taking note of their own passionate dispositions. The work is of relevance to the subject at hand because it shows that many of the ideas we have encountered so far in this chapter were current at the time

Shakespeare was writing; it furthermore shows that some of these ideas crossed religious borderlines. Most of the material specific to sound and hearing doesn't find its way into Wright's book until the second edition of 1604, in new sections which form that edition's fifth book.

By engaging in informal fieldwork, Wright finds that sound provides the best means of ascertaining the passionate dispositions of others. He begins the first chapter of his fourth book, "wherein is explained how Passions may be discovered," by noting the importance people place on conversation when assessing the characters of others in everyday situations. "Sometimes," he writes, "I have enquired of sundry persons what they thought of certain men's inclinations, and I found that almost whatsoever they had noted in others commonly to proceed from one sort of speech or other" (166). Noting that most people don't "blaze their imperfections to the eyes of the world," he decides to "sound out a little further, and wade something deeper into a secret survey of men's speeches to see if we may discover some more hidden passions; and this either in the manner or matter of speech." It is worth calling special attention to the rhetoric of this passage, in which the initial visual metaphor is employed in reference to obvious significations, while more subtle forms of knowledge become available to those attuned to sound. Wright devotes the remainder of the chapter to the various ways people communicate their inclinations in conversation. They do so first by the *manner* of their conversation—by talking too much, too little, very slowly, or rashly, or with affectation. They may tend to denigrate others too much. After discussing the manner of talk, he takes up what may be learned from the "matter" of talk. Here we are presented with another set of types, including those who tend to hold forth on things they know nothing

about, those who have "quarreling and contentious spirits" in conversation, those who gravitate towards specific subjects of conversation, those who are too secretive and those who are too open, those who pretend confidence in order to gain access, and those who do so in order to cause dissension.

Like Bacon and Brathwaite after him, Wright voices the contemporary belief that sound provides a privileged mode of access to the spiritual essences of things. The second chapter of the fifth book, "How Passions are moved with music and instruments," addresses and tries to explain this phenomenon, specifically with respect to the effects of music on the passions. Admitting the question is "as difficult as any whatsoever in all natural or moral philosophy," he rejects the temptation to offer an explanation out of "some learned discourse," preferring to "set down those forms or manners of motion which occur to my mind and seem likeliest" (208). To that effect, Wright proposes four possible theories for why music so affects the passions. The first of these theories is simply that there is "a certain sympathy, correspondence, or proportion betwixt our souls and music." This admittedly weak argument is supported with reference to other inexplicable physical mysteries, such as "who can give any other reason why the loadstone draweth iron but a sympathy of nature?" Wright's second theory is that music doesn't affect the soul directly, but affects the material body in such a way that it causes God to affect the spirit. Wright finds an analogy here in the presence of the soul in the body, "for men being able to produce that body but unable to create the soul; man prepareth the matter and God createth the form. So in music men sound and hear, God striketh upon and stirreth the heart" (209). The third theory, which Wright describes as "more sensible and palpable," deserves to be quoted at length:

> … the very sound itself, which according to the best philosophy is nothing else but a certain artificial shaking, crispling, or tickling of the air (like as we see in the water crispled, when it is calm and a sweet gale of wind ruffleth it a little; or when we cast a stone into a calm water we may perceive divers warbling natural circles) which passeth through the ears, and by them into the heart, and there beateth and tickleth it in such sort as it is moved with semblable passions. For as the heart is most delicate and sensitive, so it perceiveth the least motions and impressions that may be; and it seemeth that music in those cells playeth with the vital and animate spirits, the only instruments and spurs of passions. (209)

In juxtaposition to the pleasant sensations provided by music, Wright also refers to the unpleasant sensations that can follow when one hears other sounds. Here again we find the filing of iron and the scraping of trenchers referred to, each of which reportedly having a viscerally unpleasant effect on the auditor. These are sounds that people "abhor to hear, not only because they are ungrateful to the ear but also for that the air so carved punisheth and fretteth the heart" (209). The fourth and final explanation advanced by Wright is that just as other senses "have an admirable multiplicity of sounds which delight them," so does the ear. In elaboration, he notes that just as numerous kinds of dishes can bring delight to the sense of taste, so music has the power to "stir up in the heart divers sorts of sadness or pain, the which, as men are affected, may be diversely applied." Wright clearly thinks of sounds as disturbances of the heart:

> Let a good and Godly man hear music and he will lift up his heart to heaven; let a bad man hear the same and he will convert it to lust. Let a soldier hear a trumpet or a drum and his blood will boil and bend to battle; let a clown hear the same and he will fall a dancing; let the common people hear the like and they will fall a gazing or laughing, and many never regard them, especially if they be accustomed to hear them. […] the natural disposition of a man, his custom or exercise, his virtue or vice, for most part at these sounds diversificate passions…" (210)

People come to be affected by these disturbances in various ways, according to their passionate dispositions.

AN EXPLICATION OF CERTAINE HARD PROBLEMES ABOUT THE EARES

As noted in the preceding chapter, while the subject of hearing was important to early modern English intellectuals, it never commanded enough attention to become a topic of scientific inquiry in its own right (Gouk 1991: 95). More attention was understandably reserved for practical applications of the visual and optical sciences such as cartography and navigation, which were so necessary to an island nation commerically and militarily dependent upon the sea. Nevertheless, great advances in the physiological understanding of audition did occur during Shakespeare's lifetime. Most of this groundbreaking work took place on the Continent, and remained unavailable to the English in their own language until Helkiah Crooke's *Microcosmographia* was first printed in 1616.[6] Crooke, born in Suffolk in 1576, completed a B.A. at Cambridge in 1596, and then went to study

medicine at Leyden, pursuing his interest in anatomy.[7] At Leyden he received an M.D. and returned to Cambridge to continue his studies, taking an M.B. in 1599 and yet another M.D. degree in 1604. From Cambridge he relocated to London, and was assigned personal physician to James I, to whom *Microcosmographia* is dedicated.

Microcosmographia, published with "the Kings Maiesties especiall Direction and Warrant," is one of the earliest general treatises on human anatomy to appear in English. The work is a compilation of the major received traditions of anatomy, supplemented where possible with recent discoveries from more contemporary figures such as Avicenna, Vesalius, Fallopius, Eustachius and others. Crooke's two principal authorities are Bauhinus and Andreas Laurentius, either of whom he turns to when other authorities present conflicting, or just plain preposterous theories. Strangely, Crooke's volume contains no mention of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, which had been publicly presented in London somewhat earlier in the same year that *Microcosmographia* was first published. The second edition of 1631 perpetuates the omission.

The section we are interested in at present, on the ears and hearing, can be found in the volume's eighth book, which is devoted to the sense organs located in the head. Crooke's discourse on the ear begins with a reference to Aristotle, who is recorded as having called the organ of hearing "*Sensum discipline*, because it was created for the vnderstanding of Arts and Sciences: for Speach, because it is audible, becommeth the Cause of that we learne therby" (573). Crooke then proceeds to describe the parts of the outer ear. Although not entirely necessary to the act of hearing (he notes that "if the

Eares be cut off close by the heade, yet a man will heare notwithstanding"), the outer ear does assist in the preparation of sound for the inner ear:

> For in these breaches of the eare as it were in hollow bodyes, not onely the sound of the ayre that rusheth in is readyly and exactly drawne and fully receiuved: but also it is broken and boundeth or reboundeth as a ball against the sides of the inequalityes till the refraction get into the circular cauity and so the sound becomes more equall and harmonicall. It attayneth also better vnto the Tympane or drum of the eare without trouble or molestation, and is imprinted vppon or into the inward ayre more strongly and more distinctly… (575)

The outer ear is also described as helping to regulate the temperature of the outer air with respect to the ear: "another vse of this refraction of the aire is, least it should enter into the Eare too cold if it were not broken and beaten against the sides in the passage whereby it receiueth if not heate yet a mitigation of his coldnesse" (576). He refers to this function again later, in a specific type of instance: "we see often times that the noyse of great Ordinance or of Bels, if a man be in the steeple, yea an intollerable cold ayer doe affect the Eare with paine and dolour; somtimes also breake the Tympane from whence deafnesse followeth" (585). This understanding of the function of the outward ear was not new, and is found expressed in poetic form over fifteen years earlier in Sir John Davies's *Nosce Teipsum*, wherein the windings of the outer ear are described as protecting the inner ear: "Because all sounds doe lightly mount aloft; / And that they may not pierce too violently, / They are delaied with turnes and windings oft. / For should the

voice directly strike the braine, / It would astonish and confuse it much; / Therefore these plaits and folds the sound restraine, / That it the organ may more gently touch" (Davies 1975: 106).

Moving along in his description of the outer ear, Crooke refers to the lobe as the "Lap" of the ear, and notes that it is also called the "handle" of the ear "because we take hold of that when we would admonish a man, and thence haply it was that the eare is consecrated to Memory" (576). He notes that "young folkes of both Sexes […] vsually hang Iewels at it," and that his authority Laurentius considers it a "signe of modestye or shamefastnesse, because vpon such a passion this part will grow redde." The physiological purpose of the lap is "to conduct the excrements downward which yssue out of the eare."

He also describes other parts of the outer ear, such as the various muscles, and the "gristle" (material we now call "cartilage"), and then proceeds to describe the parts of the inward ear, which include various pathways, the tympanic membrane, the larger "stony" bone, the three small bones (still known in medicine as the Hammer, Anvil and Stirrup), the inner muscles, the labyrinth, the inner air and the auditory nerve. Crooke readily admits that the state of knowledge concerning the parts of the ear is not yet complete, especially when it comes to discovering the exact functions of the small bones:

> I am not ignorant that many men haue busied themselues to finde out the particular vse of each of these bones, wherein what satisfaction they haue giuen themselues, I know not; certainely to vs that reade their writings they giue but little. Their conceites being meere speculations, & so intricate for the most part as if they

> did vnderstand what they would haue saide, yet they haue not
> beene able to expresse themselues vnto others. (596)

At the end of his discourse Crooke offers another disclaimer, asking the reader to pardon him "if in some things I haue not so fully satisfied him, for there are some passages in my Author, wherein I haue bene intangled, partly by the difficultie of the matter, partly by the fault of the Printer […] but as neere as I could I haue followed their words, at least their meaning, if they vnderstood themselues, as some of them I make much doubt" (612).

One of the more interesting inconsistencies between the traditional authorites Crooke cites has to do with the nature of the inner air of the ear. He notes that Plato believed this inner air "is seated in the eares from the originall of our generation in the wombe of our mothers" (608). Archangelus is reported as being of the opinion that it "is made of the ayry part of the seede and that very pure, to which the purest ayry part of the mothers blood applyeth it selfe, as to a body most like vnto it selfe." This internal or "inbred" air is separated from the outer air by the tympanic membrane. From Crooke we learn that yet another controversy existed between ancient and more current understandings of hearing with respect to what exactly the specific organ of hearing was. Traditional authorities thought that the internal air was the very organ of hearing. Crooke quotes numerous traditional authorities on this point: Aristotle, Mundinus, Carpus, Varolius, Coiter, Archangelus, and others. Crooke, however, sides with his own authority Bauhinus on this point. Bauhinus rejects the received notion, and suggests that the real organ of hearing is the auditory nerve. According to this theory, the internal air is not the organ of hearing, but is rather a necessary medium through which sound passes

on its way to the proper organ of hearing. "We are of opinion." writes Crooke, "that not this ayre but the auditorie nerue is the principall instrument," because "not onely the alteration or Reception which is made by the in-bred ayre is the Sense of Hearing, but also the dignotion [discernment] or iudgement of that alteration" (609). Crooke cites an older authority, Galen, as being of this opinion as well.

To better understand the sense of hearing, Crooke proposes that it is necessary to "præmise somewhat concerning the production of a Sound in generall, for by that meanes our knowledge of this Action of the Soule, I meane the Sense of Hearing will bee better guided and perfected" (691). When it comes to the subject of hearing, Crooke yields to traditional explanations provided by philosophers: "Considering that to intreate of the manner of Hearing belongeth rather to a Phylosopher then to Anatomists, wee will be but briefe herein, yet somthing we thinke good to say because the structure of the eare was for the most part vnkowne to the Ancients" (609). The explanations Crooke offers for the production and distribution of sound are not much different from others previously discussed in this chapter, so I will only briefly rehearse his account here. According to Crooke, three actions are required for the production of sound:

> The first action is the affront which is betwixt the two bodies which offend one aginst another. The second is the fraction or breaking of the *Medium*. The third and last is the *sounding* of the *Medium*, for so you shall giue vs leaue to call it, because wee can deuise no other name. (693)

He defines sound as "a passiue and successiue quality produced from the interception and breaking of the Aire or Water which followeth vpon the collision or striking of two

bodyes, & so fit to moue the Sense of Hearing." Crooke gives his most concise account of sound and hearing in the later part of the book, where he deals with various questions that may be posed concerning sound and hearing:

> The manner therefore of Hearing is thus. The externall Ayre beeing strucken by two hard and solid bodyes, and affected with the qualitie of a sound doth alter that Ayre which adioyneth next vnto it, and this Ayre mooueth the next to that, vntill by this continuation and successiue motion it ariue at the Eare. For euen as if you cast a stone into a pond there will circles bubble vp one ouertaking and moouing another: so it is in the percussion of the Ayre, there are as it were certaine circles generated, vntil by succession they attaine vnto the Organ of Hearing. […] The Ayre endowed with the quality of a sound is through the auditory passage, which outwardly is alwayes open, first striken against the most drie and sounding membrane, which is therefore called Tympanum, or the Drumme. The mebrane being strucken doth mooue the three littel bones, and in a moment maketh impression of the character of the sound. This sound is presently receiued of the inbred Ayre, which it carryeth through the windowes of the stony bone before described, into the winding burroughs, and so into the Labyrinth, after into the Snail-shell, and lastly into the Auditory Nerue which conueyeth it thence vnto the common Sense

> as vnto his Censor and Iudge. And this is the true manner of hearing. (696)

Crooke, like Bacon, divides sounds into different categories. The first category concerns the duration of sounds. He notes that sounds of longer duration are described as "grave," "bass," and "obtuse," while sounds of shorter durations are described as "acute" or "treble." Of the latter type, he says that "[a]n acute sound hath his name from a sharpe or acute heate or cold, for as these qualities do easily penetrate any body, so this the Sense, which in a short time causeth much Sensation." He notes that "a manifest difference betwixt a Sound and the obiects of other Senses, for they all doe remaine in the sensible things when the Sensation is past, in which things they actually exist both before and after Sensation, but the Sound doeth vanish and goe to nothing, together with the perception thereof" (694-95). Sounds are also divided into Natural and Violent. Natural sounds occur in living bodies that have organs for the production of sound, some of which produce voice through the glottis, some of which are produced by other parts of the body. Other Natural sounds are those made "by the action action of the first qualities, as that of the Fire, of the Aire, of the Water, or the Earth or of these mixed" (695). Violent sounds are made by "bodies beaten one against another by an extrinsicall or outward principle."

In a following section, Crooke delivers "an explication of certaine hard Problemes about the Eares." The section is a "dilucidation of some difficult questions concerning the Eares, which knots we will vntye and explaine for a conclusion of these controuersies" (698). The first and most involved of the eight questions is "How it comes to passe that wee are more recreated with Hearing then with Reading: For we are

wonderfully delighted in the hearing of fables and playes acted vpon a Stage, much more then if wee learned them out of written bookes." Crooke, citing Scaliger, provides no less than six possible answers to this question. The first is that because it is less laborious to hear than to read, we prefer the former. The second reason is voice affect us more exactly through inflection and insinuation, "whereas reading is onely a dumbe Actor." Third, because things which are heard make a deeper impression in our minds. Fourth, because we prefer to share our experiences with others, and "there is a kinde of society in narration and acting, which is very agreeable to the nature of man, but reading is more solitary." Fifth, because we are compelled by shame to obedience to pay attention to those speaking to us, which obligation is not operative when we read the words of others. Crooke argues that we naturally prefer the pleasure of "a diligent and curious acting, then in a negligent and careless" mode of paying attention. The sixth and final reason he offers is that we prefer having the opportunity to respond to our interlocutors, and that we thereby derive more profit by asking questions. Here again Crooke refers to the contemporary stage in illustration of his point: "…because Bookes cannot digresse from their discourse for the better explication of a thing, as those may which teach by their voyce. For in changing of words or mutuall conference, many pleasant passages are brought in by accident, as the Interlocutors list to aduance themselues; as we see in Comedies it is very ordinary" (698).

Crooke, like Bacon and Wright, ends his discourse by posing several questions concerning sound and hearing, on topics such as why a man's singing voice is sweeter than a pipe, but not so sweet if he whistles in imitation of a pipe; why the human voice sounds better in consort with a pipe than with a harp; why children are pacified by music;

why false notes are sooner discovered in the singers of bass parts than those of treble parts; why we don't hear well when we yawn; why it is easier to hear outside voices from indoors, than indoor voices from outdoors; and finally, why it is that many people speaking at regular volume can be heard from farther away than a single person speaking at normal volume.

AND THIS IS THE TRUE MANNER OF HEARING

I conducted this survey of early modern English discourses on sound and hearing in the hope that what these writers say about sound would tell us something more about their relationship to it. In fact, we find that the language they use to communicate their conceptualization of sound is heavily intonated with a network of specific associations. As a conclusion to this chapter, I wish to reiterate some of these associations before we explore their various articulations in Shakespeare's works.

We find that the philosophical and anatomical discourses of the day are still heavily indebted to the traditional Classical and medieval authorities. We have heard many of these authors admit that the phenomena of sound and hearing are very difficult to understand and express. They intuit that the traditional accounts are not entirely accurate, but they don't have the intellectual tools to offer more robust theories with which to replace them. Because it is lesser understood than sight, hearing is the sense more closely aligned with tradition, whether philosophical or religious. All of the writers we encountered express a belief that hearing provides a privileged mode of access to the body's internal spirits, and from thence to the soul. Several of the writers also relate sound to notions of identity, whether personal or cultural—especially in the ways sounds

interact with and influence personal and cultural predispositions. Sound is also related to the notion of community, because as Crooke notes, "there is a kinde of society in narration and acting, which is very agreeable to the nature of man."

The Protestant discourse on hearing is heavily sedimented by notions of penetration and obedience. We have seen that the government was aware of these associations as well. Taken on their own, these words can possess negative connotations for many post-Enlightenment readers; therefore it may be helpful to supplement them semantically with their more volitional counterparts, receptivity and duty. The parable of the sower serves as the nexus for another network of associations having to do with the transformative and generative possibilities of sound. The parable suggests a relation between agricultural/sexual reproduction and the perceptual/æsthetic valences of hearing. In a related metaphor, hearing is conceived of as a kind of cognitive nourishment. We have heard Robert Wilkinson describe the ear as "where the soul feedeth," and Helkiah Crooke quote Aristotle's belief that hearing was "created for the vnderstanding of Arts and Sciences." More recently, the relationship between learning and transformation has been brilliantly and succinctly expressed by the philosopher Charles Taylor, who has written that "in the sciences of man insofar as they are hermeneutical there can be a valid response to 'I don't understand' which takes the form, not only 'develop your intuitions,' but more radically, 'change yourself'" (Taylor 1985: 293). And this is the true manner of hearing.

notes to chapter two

1 For those unfamiliar with the phrase " backing tracks," it comes from the practice of multi-track sound recording, where each instrument or voice can be recorded on a separate track, to be " mixed" into stereo (two tracks) at a later date. Backing tracks typically contain the instrumental and background-vocal accompaniment for the singer or instrumental soloist. Backing tracks are typically recorded first, and provide the context within which the soloist creates a performance.

2 This and all succeeding references to the *Sylva* are to paragraph number, as these remain consistent from edition to edition.

3 The selections on sound in *Sylva Sylvarum* were evidently incorporated from an earlier work. James Spedding, editor of the 1963 edition of the *Works*, has found much of this material in an earlier, and somewhat better-organized Latin fragment entitled *Historia Soni et Auditus*.

4 Richard Brathwait, *Essaies vpon the fiue senses, with a pithie one vpon detraction. Continued vvith sundry Christian resolues, full of passion and deuotion, purposely composed for the zealously-disposed. By Rich: Brathwayt Esquire* (London: Printed by E: G[riffin]: for Richard Whittaker, and are to be sold at his shop at the Kings head in Paules Church-yard, 1620).

5 My main source for bibliographical information on Wright is the invaluable work of William Webster Newbold, who provides a detailed account in the general introduction to his critical edition of *The Passions of the Mind in General*, pages 3-16. The DNB's entry on Thomas Wright posits at least three individuals of that not uncommon name during the era, and divvies up the publications accordingly. Newbold's account, more recent and far more thoroughly investigated, is to me the more compelling.

6 Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia: a Description of the Body of Man* (London: William Jaggard, 1616).

7 A short biographical sketch of Crooke's life can be found in the DNB.

3 • Receptivity

When you're thin, and damp and shoddy, just remember that you're in a body.
Ooh baby, when that human music plays I don't know why… — The Soft Boys, "Human Music"

I'll let you be in my dream if I can be in yers, an' I said that — Bob Dylan, "Talking World War III Blues"

In the chapters that remain, I will chart the ways contemporary values and ethical notions linked to the practice of hearing in early modern England inform and underpin much of Shakespeare's work. Anthropologist Steven Feld has designated this approach to culture through exploration of the soundscape "acoustemology," a useful portmanteau word that marries acoustics and epistemology (Feld 1996; Smith 1999). Acoustemology is the study of the distinctive ways cultures derive knowledge through sound. How can an early modern acoustemology best be characterized? The most salient point in the era's discourse on sound and hearing, its strongest feature, is that it articulates certain ethical dispositions pertaining to social life and the proper cultivation of identity. In the present chapter I will trace the ethical implications that flow from the early modern understanding of the ear as a feminized perceptual organ. Hearing is represented as an opening up of the self, as a kind of surrender or submission, an openness. Sounds are

interiorized, where they have the potential to transform the hearer. A willingness to be penetrated, an openness to the authority of the other are related concepts that inform this disposition.

It is important to note that while this disposition is voiced elsewhere in early modern culture, it simply doesn't appear with equal prevalence in the work of any other poet of the period. I would argue that what we commonly refer to as Shakespeare's "universality," or his wisdom, is the effect of this receptive disposition upon him, and its continuing influence on the ways in which the works invite and allow us to enter into them. This invitation to dialogue is what makes Shakespeare a great writer. The characters and plays allows us to lay our own meanings over them. They have a certain (semantic) density that is caused by their ability to *receive* meanings, in addition to their evident capacity to express them. The argument of this chapter is that Shakespeare's works continue to attract so much meaning because they were written by a listening self, by an author who didn't see the kind of radical receptivity early modern English subjects associated with hearing as vulnerability, but rather as strength. Our recognition of this receptivity as an important component of his æsthetic stance is evidenced by its growing prominence in the metaphoric figurations we use to describe and analyze his genius. At the end of the twentieth century, Shakespeare, the foundational culture-hero of western modernity, is no longer a star, or even a superstar, but a black hole.

THE FUNDAMENT OF GENIUS

Gary Taylor is to my knowledge the first to advance the metaphor of Shakespeare as a cultural black hole, a notion he ventures at the close of his book *Reinventing Shakespeare*

(1989: 410-11). During his final chapter's treatment of the traditional notion that Shakespeare possessed a singular, unique genius, he notes that the effect of Shakespeare on our literary universe is like that of a black hole:

> Light, insight, intelligence, matter—all pour ceaselessly into him,
> as critics are drawn into the densening vortex of his reputation;
> they add their own weight to his increasing mass. The light from
> other stars—other poets, other dramatists—is wrenched and bent
> as it passes by him on its way to us. He warps cultural space-time;
> he distorts our view of the universe around him.

This is as far as Taylor takes this argument, which is perhaps less an argument in the service of analysing the apparent singularity of Shakespeare's genius and talent than yet another poetic way of describing that singularity, this time by comparing it to something immensely powerful, infinitely weighty, dimly understood, difficult to locate, and above all, threatening in its indiscriminate voracity. In the long history of bombastic critical praise for the bard's singular genius (a history Taylor both bemusedly depreciates and participates in here), this is a specifically 'twentieth-century' iteration of tribute to the god. Shakespeare becomes a black hole, the post-Einsteinian volcano into which whole throngs of alienated and anxiety-ridden critics sacrifice themselves, intentionally and otherwise. I myself am compelled to follow up on Taylor's metaphor, to further literalize it, sound it out more completely, because I find it rich and suggestive for reasons of my own, reasons which relate to my impressions about the importance of sound and hearing in the anatomy of Shakespeare's genius and talent, reasons which speak to the forms of

attendance and sacrifice that are generated or informed by the perceptual economy of sound. It is my own way of leaping into the volcano.

From the cultural standpoint, a black hole such as Shakespeare forms in the euhemeristic transition from fame into legend and myth, when a culture finds in the life or work of a figure the necessary capacity both to inscribe its ethical universe and to address therein the anxieties and challenges which confront that universe over the *longue durée*. Hercules seems to have been such a figure in the Classical world, judging from the number and variety of narratives that spring up about him. Although there are many stars in western culture, from political leaders to artists to scientists, there are only two black holes, two figures with the requisite *capacity* to be considered black holes; they are William Shakespeare, and Jesus Christ. Paradoxically, the boundless capacity of these figures is a function of their radical opacity, an opacity that takes on the characteristics of a reflective surface, like a sounding board. Taylor intuitively describes this phenomenon with respect to Shakespeare when he suggests that "we find in Shakespeare only what we bring to him or what others have left behind; he gives us back our own values" (411). Their capaciousness also derives from the lacunæ that exist in, and come to characterize, their personal narratives. For both figures we lack an enormous amount of definitive psychological and biographical documentation. We know next to nothing about either's early life, and little more objective information about what follows except for the sketchy details that can be gleaned from contemporary legal records. The main sources for our knowledge of both figures are the respective texts generated in the immediate wake of their living voices, texts which have come to be synonymous with each.[1] It is the capaciousness, finally and most importantly, of these texts themselves, the ways in which

the cultural conditions and ethical structures they describe seem already to *contain* us, that sets the gravitational momentum in motion and causes the black hole phenomenon to form around these figures.

Talk about holes in the space-time continuum inevitably leads some of us to ponder the significance of our own meagre orifices, and with that said I confess I am not the first to find Gary Taylor's metaphor a spur to the imagination. While I obviously focus on the ear in the present context of receptivity, Scott Wilson is led to an extended contemplation of another of our holes as part of his remarkable discussion of *The Merchant of Venice*, in which he poses the unforgettable question, "What lover could be as destined to be engulfed in the abyss of an impossible desire than [sic] the Shakespeare scholar faced with the blinding image of Shakespeare's intact yet devouring solar anus, the scholar's own narcissistic mirror-image?" (1996: 131).[2] Wilson is here playing off of a short article by Georges Bataille from 1927 titled "The Solar Anus," which ends, "The *solar annulus* is the intact anus of her body at eighteen years to which nothing sufficiently blinding can be compared except the sun, even though the *anus* is the *night*" (Bataille 1985: 9). This, the final sentence of Bataille's mercurial meditation on the prevalence and tremendous generativity of parody as a form of associative thinking and world-making, enacts its own argument (in the true French style) with an obvious parody of the opening line of Shakespeare's 130th sonnet: "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." Well, maybe her eyes are nothing like the sun, but her anus is another story!—Bataille seems to retort with an ardency of his own, as real as it is outrageous.

Wilson also relates his question to Michael Bristol's remarks on humanism's erotic, submissive empathy with the "intact body" of the Shakespearean text, and the practice of

"doing an edition" in *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (1990: 17; 91). Wilson reads Bristol as suggesting that such editorial work constitutes an "anally erotic or anally retentive activity" (130). While I'm fairly certain that Michael Bristol would not object to such a characterization of editorial work on Shakespeare, I'm more interested in the physical mechanics of Wilson's metaphor, because they serve to further illuminate Gary Taylor's. As Wilson coyly reminds us during his reading of Bristol on the erotics of editorial work, Taylor has "not merely done an edition of a particular play, but covered them all." He here suggests, if precise in his use of language, that editors do the penetrating and Shakespeare the receiving in this erotic relationship. My cue for this inference is his choice of the verb "cover," a word still used in equestrian settings for the stallion's role in copulation. Shakespeare himself uses it at the beginning of *Othello* when Iago taunts Gratiano with an image that intensifies Desdemona's disobedience by transforming her supposed perversion from miscegenation into bestiality: "you'll have your daughter cover'd with a Barbary horse" (1.1.111-2)

Wilson's image is an ingenious rhetorical manœuvre in part because it appeals to so many different contemporary critical positions simultaneously—queer critics get a queer Shakespeare, feminists a feminized one, and hetero males an old-fashioned locker-room ribbing of Gary Taylor. I find the image most significant, however, not for the various narcissistic gratifications it provides (which in its own way is very Shakespearean, as Taylor points out), but for the way it relates Shakespeare's genius to the notions of penetrability and capaciousness that were so directly associated with sound and hearing during the early modern period. The image of Shakespeare being covered by generation after generation of textual editors is funny, but it *works* because it also so vividly suggests

his phenomenal capaciousness. At bottom, his genius—described by Gary Taylor as a black hole, by Scott Wilson as a gigantic beckoning anus—is increasingly imaged not in terms of the ability to penetrate or dominate, but of the ability to receive and to be penetrated.

HEARING IN SHAKESPEAREAN COGNITION

In the recent film *Shakespeare in Love*, screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard poke fun at traditional Romantic conceptions of Shakespeare's divinely-inspired poetic genius by materializing his muse, and bringing her down to earth. The film's main plot line is in fact born of this strategy. Shakespeare is portrayed as a kind of literary antenna specially attuned to the poetic potentialities in the world of raw discourse around him. Bits of flotsam and jetsam in the immediate acoustic environment end up in whatever he's writing at the time—such as the curse "a plague a' both your houses" directed at the two competing playing companies during a public declamation by Philip Stubbes, which later finds its way into Mercutio's mouth. Norman and Stoppard's playful reconstructions of the links between Shakespeare's creative consciousness and his discursively-tuned ears resonate unmistakably with a recent spate of scholarly work that investigates various aspects of the bodily experience of early modern consciousness, via the ways in which those experiences are voiced and recorded in the discourse of the era (Hillman and Mazzio 1997; Laqueur 1990; Paster 1993; Sawday 1995).[3] The main premise these studies share, and collectively argue for, is that discourse actually influences the experience of corporality throughout history. If this is the case, if the discursive environment does shape our experience of ourselves as embodied subjects,

then certainly we need to recognize sound as an important, if not the most important, perceptual domain with respect to the creation and perpetuation of that experience, especially in considerably 'oral' cultures such as early modern England.

Furthermore, literary scholars are only just beginning to grasp the implications of the fact that one of those *bodily* experiences is consciousness itself. One critic working on the links between Shakespeare's language and what it may tell us about the deep structures of early modern consciousness is Mary Crane, whose "cognitive" reading of *Measure for Measure* recently appeared in *Shakespeare Quarterly* (Crane 1998).[4] Her approach to the play begins with the notion that we need to historicize the very idea of cognition. To that end, her reading starts from "an assumption shared with pre-Cartesian psychology of the early modern period, the assumption that the mind is inextricably part of the material body" (271). The aim of studying literary texts from the standpoint of cognitive theory is to search for

> traces of prediscursive spatial shapings of language, for example, in images and words that cluster, in radial categories, around spatial concepts, such as agency or containment. A cognitive reading might begin to suggest how discursive formations in a culture intersect with cognitive structures (at points where ideology is most powerful) but also conflict with them (at points where ideology is most likely to slip). (274)

Language provides access to the ways in which prediscursive experience is categorized, to the ways in which our brains are tuned to the world around us. Words are windows onto the structure of consciousness. The images they present offer "access not just to

meanings familiar from psychoanalysis but also to the underpinnings of thought itself, especially to the mechanisms that integrate disparate experiences" (274). These "mechanisms" are metonymic connections which operate at such low latency that they often appear metaphoric or even random, since we usually aren't consciously aware of the low-level categorical principles which motivate them.[5] One of the main goals of cognitive literary studies is to recognize these connections where they occur, which is frequently in the relationships between the different meanings of multivalent expressions, especially as these meanings come to rest and reside in diverse cultural practices and preoccupations.

I advance Crane's discussion of *Measure of Measure* because it relates closely to the discourse about sound, hearing, and receptivity that occurs in the early modern context. The very title of her article, "Male Pregnancy and Cognitive Permeability in *Measure for Measure*," suggests its relevance to the associations between sound, receptivity, and penetrability which are heavily embedded in the discourse of the period. Remember, for instance, the idea of the feminized ear that crops up in contemporary religious discourse, wherein the ear is held to be the site of spiritual fertilization. This notion is figured not only in such Biblical stories as the Annunciation, wherein Mary is impregnated through the ear, and the temptation of Eve, in which evil is engendered in the world through Eve's ear, but also in the Protestant idea of the true believer as bride-to-be of Christ. The image appears in contemporary political iconography as well.

The cornerstone of Crane's argument is her extended gloss on Shakespeare's use of the term "pregnant," a term which she shows didn't take on its more familiar, exclusively physiological meaning until some years after Shakespeare's death:

> In this play Shakespeare focuses on a lexical oddity—the strange etymology of the word *pregnant*—to explore the cognitive implications of the humoral body in culture, especially as it thinks and speaks. For Shakespeare *pregnant* was a word that named the multiple ways bodies are penetrated by the external world and produce something—offspring, ideas, language—as a result of that penetration. (275-76)

For Shakespeare, the term *pregnant* was itself pregnant with meaning; it suggested "interconnected concepts of plenitude, ability to make an impression, and vulnerability to penetration or impression." (277-78). He used the word primarily to describe things that *contain* significance or weight, and which do so typically as the result of some form of bodily or cognitive receptivity. Not infrequently, he conflates these two forms of receptivity. In *Twelfth Night*, for example, when Viola tells Olivia the discourse she brings is reserved for her "pregnant and vouchsafed ear" alone, she flatters her by implying that Olivia alone of the present company has the requisite moral, intellectual, and emotional capacity to receive her discourse (3.1.89). Olivia immediately asks for privacy and, though she has fallen less for the message than the messenger, prepares to take sole possession of Cesario's discourse: "Let the garden door be shut, and leave me to my hearing" (3.1.92-93).

That Shakespeare was easily familiar with the broader sense of the word is evident from its use and appearance in *Measure for Measure*. Crane remarks on the curious fact that "in a play that has as its central image a pregnant female body, the word is never used to describe a woman but is instead used exclusively to denote the mental processes

of men" (276). She cites examples in which the Duke uses the word to describe Escalus's considerable knowledge of the city's political and judicial structure (1.1.9-11), in which Angelo employs it to characterize an instance of his own rhetorical felicity (2.1.23), and where he later describes the mental and emotional effect of his designs on Isabella as making him "unpregnant / And dull to all proceedings" (4.4.20-21). Shakespeare's routine association of the word with the male sex is perhaps most evident in *2H4*, where Falstaff personifies it using the masculine pronoun: "virtue is of so little regard in these costermonger's times that true valor is turn'd berrord [bear-ward]; pregnancy is made a tapster, and his quick wit wasted in giving reckonings" (1.2.168-71).

The most fundamental way in which the characters in *Measure for Measure* are differentiated is through their degrees of sexual and cognitive receptivity. These attitudes, Crane proposes, are root sources for the different modellings of subjectivity articulated by the play:

> The language and imagery of pregnancy in the play represents the conception of children and ideas as analogous processes and the body as literally subject to impression or penetration by sexual organs, disease, and language. The self is imagined variously as stamped unalterably at conception and walled off from influence or as receptive to shaping by physical and cultural forces. (280)

It is easy to see Claudio, Juliet, Lucio, and the characters of the brothel world as more sexually receptive than Angelo, Isabella, and the Duke, who try to immur and immunize themselves (and their society) from the instability associated with this disposition by positioning themselves within larger institutions, in Angelo's case the political

infrastructure, in Isabella's case the religious infrastructure, in the Duke's case both. The unavoidable problem with this strategy, Crane suggests, is its complete failure to account for forms and sites of bodily vulnerability that are less obvious: "while these characters generally manage to wall themselves off from sexual penetration, they are penetrated by language, their own and that of other characters; and this linguistic permeability is shown to have implications related to, and perhaps even more troubling than, sexual permeability" (284).

The larger argument of Crane's penetrating analysis is that experience itself is fundamentally dialogic, the result of perceptual exchanges that are impossible to police with any degree of effectiveness. *Measure for Measure* is "largely about the terrifying permeability of the human body and the embodied brain and thus about the internal properties that made the early modern self both vulnerable and resistant to the workings of disciplinary power" (275). Just a few years after he writes *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare presents a character faced with the very same predicament— though in *Coriolanus* the nexus of the associative web is not the concept of pregnancy, but the related concept of *hearing* which serves as the operative figure for cognitive vulnerability, its inevitability and its impact on personal and political identity.

THE RECEPTIVE EAR IN *CORIOLANUS*

Among the associations ears have in the early modern period is that they are pregnable, and therefore potential targets of violent attack. This is especially apparent in Shakespeare's works. The ears are specified as sites of extreme vulnerability in almost every one of the major tragedies. No doubt the most famous instance occurs in *Hamlet*,

where the King is poisoned through the "porches" of his ears with a "leprous distillment" (1.5.63-64). The ears are uncontrolled orifices, dangerously exposed at all times to possible contamination by the introduction of an infectious or poisonous agent. R.R. Simpson has suggested in his book *Shakespeare and Medicine* that the precise method of Hamlet Senior's murder is based on contemporary reports of a similar homicide in the court of the Medicis by a physician, named Gonzago (Simpson 1959: 134V).[6] Although the agent that threatens the ear can be physical, as in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare is more likely to imagine the infection or poison as verbal. When Iago confides that he'll "pour this pestilence into his [Othello's] ear," when Lady MacBeth, reading her husband's letter, conjures him to return home swiftly, "that I may pour my spirits in thine ear," or when Pisanio reacts to the letter from Posthumous, exclaiming "Leonatus! / O master, what a strange infection / Is fall'n into thy ear! What false Italian / (As poisonous tongu'd as handed) hath prevail'd / On thy too ready hearing?," the pestilence, spirits, and infection are all figures for contaminating discourse (Oth. 2.3.356; Mac. 1.5.26; Cym. 3.2.2-6). A different type of example where the ear is figured as the victim of violent penetration occurs in *Julius Caesar*, when Messala finds the body of Cassius and tells Titinius he will "go to meet / The noble Brutus, thrusting this report / Into his ears; I may say 'thrusting' it; / For piercing steel, and darts envenomed, / Shall be as welcome to the ears of Brutus / As tidings of this sight"; another is when Hamlet apprises his mother of the truth about her first husband's murder, and she responds, "these words like daggers enter in my ears" (JC 5.3.73-78; Ham. 3.4.95).

Aural vulnerability is presented as more physical in the comedies, where it is common for characters to get a "box of the ear." Portia describes her Scottish suitor as

having "borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman" in *The Merchant of Venice* (1.2.80). Shakespeare and his audiences clearly enjoyed the joke of characters alluding to this sort of "rough music" as if it were also a type of discourse. In *Measure for Measure* Escalus proposes to Elbow that "if he took you a box o' the ear, you might have your action of slander too," while in *The Comedy of Errors* Dromio of Ephesus describes the beating he receives from his master in the same terms: "he told me his mind upon mine ear: / Beshrew his hand, I scarce could understand it" (MM 2.1.175; Err. 2.1.49-50). Falstaff consoles the Lord Chief-Justice after similar treatment: "For the box of the ear that the prince gave you, he gave it like a rude prince, and you took it like a sensible lord" (2H4 1.2.193). Morris Tilley notes that the proverb "to get a box of the ear" ironically meant "to be the recipient of a stroke of luck" (Tilley 1950; 61).

Violence and ears get mentioned in the same breath throughout *Coriolanus*, especially by the title character. Martius announces the great esteem in which he holds his rival Aufidius: "Were half to half the world by th'ears and he / Upon my party, I'd revolt, to make / Only my wars with him" (1.1.233-35). In the second scene of the third act Coriolanus explodes onto the stage, responding to the threat of exile with "Let them pull all about mine ears, present me / Death on the wheel or at wild horses' heels..." (3.2.1-2). Banished, Coriolanus appears in Antium at the house of Aufidius, where the Third Servant recounts his promise to go "and sowl [yank] the porter of / Rome gates by th' ears" (4.5.210-11). Upon hearing news Coriolanus has joined forces with Aufidius and is headed back to Rome, the general Cominius bitterly forewarns the tribunes "He'll shake / Your Rome about your ears" (4.6.97-98).

In addition to its association with vulnerability, aural receptivity is also recognized in the era as instrumental to the composition and maintenance of identity. Shakespeare employs sound and auditory imagery extensively in his explorations of the formation of personal and political identity in *Coriolanus*, a play in which these topics are foregrounded to a greater extent than anywhere else in his work. The ear is a sense organ that is also an orifice, a liminal site where bodily limits and personal identity are negotiated. Vulnerable mediators of the Other's claims on the self, the ears are constantly involved in the dialogical constitution of personal and social identity. In her cognitive reading of *Measure for Measure*, Mary Crane finds the Duke in that play "unable to maintain his fantasy of solitary completeness and inviolability […] unable at the same time to accept the inevitable vulnerability and contamination that are the conditions of human selfhood, productivity, and exchange" (292). The assessment closely resembles the central argument of more than one account of *Coriolanus*'s title character (see Adelman 1978; Weckermann 1987). Radical epistemic vulnerability is a fact inimical to the radical self-authentication and self-definition for which tragic heroes like Coriolanus so often strive.

Carol Sicherman has commented on the noise that accompanies Coriolanus throughout the play. She finds him "constantly associated with noise, both of acclaim and of disgrace." But the main thing to note about this noise, she suggests, is how befitting it is "to the inarticulate hero" because it is, "like him, volatile and ineffective" (199). Frank Kermode, in his introduction to the play for the Riverside edition, remarks

on the extent to which the soundscape of the play is dominated tonally by its main character:

> He himself hums like a battery, and so does his play. Against this noise Shakespeare counterpoints the brisk character-writer's patter of Menenius, the elegant conversation of the ladies, the lively unheroic prose of the good fellows in the crowd. But the dominant noise is the exasperated shout of the beast-god Coriolanus. (Kermode 1997: 1443)

Within the world of the play itself Martius is repeatedly identified by the sounds he makes, and those associated with his presence. For example, outside the gates of Corioles Lartius prematurely eulogizes his lost comrade, praising him as a complete soldier, "not fierce and terrible / Only in strokes, but, with thy grim looks and / The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds" (1.4.57-59). Even though he is cloaked in blood when he returns to camp, Cominius recognizes the hero the moment he opens his mouth: "The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabor / More than I know the sound of Martius' tongue / From every meaner man" (1.6.25-27).

It was contemporarily believed that unlike sight, which mainly gives knowledge about surfaces and exteriors, sound has the special capacity to provide knowledge about interiors. It is this special faculty of sound that gives Coriolanus away with the plebeians during his attempt to be elected consul. Menenius tries unsuccessfully to placate the crowd, telling them (against their intuitions as usual) that their ears have misled them all along and they haven't understood his man properly: "Do not take / His rougher accents for malicious sounds, / But, as I say, such as become a soldier" (3.3.54-56). Coriolanus is

banished and seeks exile in Antium, where Aufidius does not at first recognize him by sight, especially in a domestic context. Coriolanus resorts to describing the effect the sound of his name will have on him. It is, he says, "A name unmusical to the Volscians' ears, / And harsh in sound to thine" (4.5.63-64).

Fame is, in both the Rome of *Coriolanus* and Shakespeare's England, an extremely important index of social value. In both cultures "report" is a basic factor in the construction of identity. Jarrett Walker has shown how closely the main character's two names are tied to specific subjective dispositions. He writes, "'Martius' is an individual who is constituted or 'programmed' by his mother's language; 'Coriolanus' represents that same individual's retreat from language, his desire for a transcendent, deific identity that is the result of the reification of a single violent act […] into a stable, eternal condition" (Walker 1992; 171). In the play, Volumnia voices what appears to be the traditional Roman attitude toward the subject of fame and good report. If Martius had died in battle at Corioles, she claims "then his good report should have been my son; I therein would have found issue" (1.3.19-20). Her son shows the extent to which he has internalized this attitude when he tries to rally the Roman troops, commanding them to fight "...if any fear / Lesser his person than an ill report" (1.6.69-70). Valeria is keenly aware of her husband's good reputation, and lets slip this awareness with one of those marvellous mild oaths that acoustically locates her as the wife of a bourgeois citizen in Shakespeare's own day. "In troth," she says, "there's wondrous things spoke of him" (2.1.136-37).

As Walker maintains, the power of aural constructions of identity are such that they have made Martius who he is. Evidence of this appears throughout the play. Volumnia

recounts to him how her "praises made thee first a soldier," and then promises him more good words in the future if he agrees to apologize to the plebeians: "To have my praise for this, perform a part / Thou hast not done before" (3.2.109-12). She also threatens her son when he is about to destroy Rome by referring to the effect that act will have upon his reputation in posterity: "if thou conquer Rome, the benefit / Which thou shalt reap is such a name / Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses, / Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble, / But with his last attempt he wiped it out, / Destroy'd his country, and his name remains / To th' ensuing age abhorr'd'" (5.3.142-48). Seeking audience with Coriolanus before he destroys Rome, Menenius attempts to cash in on his own good name as a way of gaining access to his old friend. He tells the unimpressed guards, "If you have heard your general talk of Rome, / And of his friends there, it is lots to blanks / My name hath touch'd your ears," to which the first replies, "The virtue of your name / Is not here passable" (5.2.9-13).[7] Fame and report, it turns out, are locally-specific currencies; Menenius finds he is not for all markets.

Shakespeare's plays and the ears of their audiences open to each other in mutual receptivity, at which point cognition becomes recognition, and perception an inchoate political act. The manifest political aspects of *Coriolanus* have understandably attracted an enormous amount of attention over the years, at least since a clutch of studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Burke 1966; Hale 1971; Rabkin 1966; Vickers 1966), followed by a number of works in the late 1980s and early 1990s informed by ideological perspectives (Bristol 1987; Cook 1991; Dollimore 1993: 218-30; Williamson 1991; Wilson 1991). Special attention has been paid to the metaphor of the body politic in the

play as well (Gurr 1975; Jagendorf 1990; Motohashi 1994; Riss 1992; Sorge 1987). None of these studies have linked the play's illustration of political life to its representation of cognitive *im*permeability, however. Coriolanus's avoidance of listening to others means there will remain no chance for the discursive construction of any sort of shared communal life, at least of one in which he will participate. The body politic is inextricably intertwined with that of the politicized body. Personal and political survival are each predicated upon recognition of the Other. In *Measure for Measure* and *Coriolanus* Shakespeare presents such recognition not as a choice, but as an inevitability. Caius Martius only becomes Coriolanus, after all, by listening to his mother, giving credence and attributing authority to her discourse about him.

The Elizabethan political establishment was acutely aware of the ties between hearing and the recognition of authority. We have seen the way the English government capitalized on that link by preaching political obedience in the religious setting. Attentive regulation of the playhouses is another example of that awareness. Playhouses and churches provided the sole early modern environments in which large numbers of people could share the same acoustic experience in simultaneity. Evan Eisenberg has indicated the political ramifications that result from this type of simultaneously shared acoustic experience, which puts listeners "under the spell of a shared event," and effects what he calls "ritual solidarity" (Eisenberg 1987: 31). Like their early modern counterparts, political leaders in the twentieth century have also been quick to mobilize the power of shared acoustic experience. One need look no farther than FDR's use of radio in his fireside chats, or Hitler, who reportedly disclosed that he "could not have conquered Germany without the loudspeaker" (Eisenberg 30). The association between

control of the soundscape and authority is made overt throughout *Coriolanus*. The juxtaposition is evident from the very beginning of the play, where the acoustic field is seized by the cacophony of an unruly mob, accompanied by first spoken words which are an individual appeal for political recognition.

Bruce Smith remarks that "all but a handful of Shakespeare's scripts display quite obvious devices for establishing the auditory field of the play within the first few moments" (Smith 1999: 276). Working without house lights to signal the start of his plays, Shakespeare employed a wide range of techniques to take command of the auditory field: there is the storm at the beginning of *The Tempest*, thunder in *Macbeth*, a musical introduction to *Twelfth Night*, the argument that brings *The Taming of the Shrew* crashing onto the stage, Richard Gloucester's sly charismatic confidences, and the more traditional Prologues of *Henry V*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Henry VIII*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Each of the *Henry VI* plays employs a different technique: for the first there is a dead march, for the second ceremonial trumpet and hautboy flourishes, for the third a fight scene. Anxious calls into the darkness at the outset of *Hamlet* establish not only the auditory field, but the tone of the entire play. The device is at its most crudely obvious at the beginning of 2H4, where Rumor walks onstage and orders the audience simply to "Open your ears; for which of you will stop / The vent of hearing when loud Rumor speaks?" French scholar J.P. Debax has observed that many plays from this period contain similar opening speeches, speeches he identifies as complex utterances: "cet ordre, de faire silence est également adressé par la pièce qui commence, par les acteurs que entrent en scène, aux spectateurs, et leur signale que le jeu démarre." These opening bids for attention, by virtue of their "double énonciation théâtrale" signal to the audience

that the play is starting, and concurrently function as speech acts that occur within the fictional world of the play (Debax 1984: 63).

Coriolanus assumes the stage with a clamorous "company of mutinous Citizens with staves, clubs, and other weapons." A nameless character implores the restive throng "Before we proceed any further, hear me speak" (1.1.1-2). As complex utterances go, the play's opening words turn out to be especially rich, as multivalent as the portentious "Who's there?" that rings in *Hamlet*. The demand for ears at the beginning of *Coriolanus* is of course a call for the audience's attention, as well as a request for the ears of the other characters onstage. It is also, however, closely related to the other demand made by the plebeians in this first scene, and another meaning of the term *ear* in the period. The reason for the plebeians' discontent is their conviction that the patricians are witholding corn from them. *Ear* in Shakespeare's day commonly meant corn or grain of any kind. The second substantive definition of the word in the OED is "a spike or head of corn; the part of a cereal plant which contains its flowers or seeds."

Shakespeare uses the word *ear* in its agricultural sense in a number of plays. For instance, begging clemency from Henry Bolingbroke for her traitorous son Aumerle, the Duchess of York manages a sarcastic jibe at her husband, who has just arrived to expose him: "in thy piteous heart plant thou thine ear" (R2 5.3.126). In Gertrude's chamber Hamlet shows his mother miniatures of her two husbands, and compares Claudius to a blighted crop: "Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear, / Blasting his wholesome brother" (3.4.64-65). The reference to an infected ear specifically recalls the manner in which Claudius has murdered the King. In *As You Like It*, Silvius agrees to help Phebe in her pursuit of Ganymede/Rosalind with nothing in return for his pains but the hope of

love's leavings: "I shall think it a most plenteous crop / To glean the broken ears after the man / That the main harvest reaps" (3.5.101-03). Upon Bertram's arrival at the French court, the King greets him and fondly remembers the wise conversation of the boy's father: "his plausive words / He scatter'd not in ears, but grafted them, / to grow there and to bear" (AWW 1.2.53-55). All of these examples, especially the last, hearken back to the relations between hearing, agriculture and incorporation that motivates the principal metaphor of the parable of the sower, so central to contemporary religious discourse on the soundscape.

The initial political dispute presented in *Coriolanus*, the plebeians' calls for agricultural ears, echoes and reinforces their desire for the political ears of the Patricians. Bodily, perceptual, and political senses of the word *ear* all speak to each other here in an aural palimpsest, formed from a radial category centred on what George Lakoff would call an "idealized cognitive model" of *ear* as a liminal site of receptivity (Lakoff 1987: 68-76, 91-114). The people's need for the ears of the patricians implies that political viability is predicated not only on the availability of food, but on recognition as well. Acceptance of diverse voices into the acoustic community is represented as necessary to the survival of the polity, just as eating is necessary to physical existence.

As the struggle for recognition reaches its climax late in the play, the conflation of corn/ears/people is made explicit when Cominius tells Menenius of Coriolanus's response to his own supplication on behalf of Rome:

> Cominius: He said 'twas folly,
> For one poor grain or two, to leave unburnt
> And still to nose th' offence.

Menenius: For one poor grain or two!
I am one of those! His mother, wife, his child,
And this brave fellow too, we are the grains.
You are the musty chaff, and you are smelt
Above the moon. We must be burnt for you. (5.1.26-33)

Menenius refers to the entire population of Rome as grain, as ears. The value Coriolanus places upon these ears has become so minimal that he refuses to hear even those closest to him. He refuses to give ear to them, in any sense of the term. Just as political enfranchisement is conceptualized in terms of being able to produce sound (to have and to be a "voice"), personhood is here conceptualized in terms of the ability to produce and receive sound, of the ability to be considered an ear.[8] A similar metaphor appears earlier in the play, where Coriolanus warns of the dangers of giving ear to the plebeians' request for ears:

In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
Which we ourselves have plough'd for, sow'd, and scatter'd,
By mingling them with us, the honour'd number,
Who lack not virtue, no, nor power, but that
Which they have given to beggars. (3.1.69-74)

Notable in this speech is the idea of contamination so frequently a concern with respect to bodily/cognitive receptivity. Here it is used in the context of the "body politic" rhetoric that suffuses the play. Coriolanus identifies political receptivity with social instability.

He is well aware of the mutability of the plebes, a group James Calderwood has dubbed "phonic chameleons" (79).

The request for people's ears does not stop at corn, nor do these requests all come from the plebeians. Throughout the play characters constantly demand each others' ears, appealing for recognition. The sheer preponderance of these appeals throughout the play is to my mind one of its most striking aspects. There are no fewer than 18 instances of this directing of auditory focus throughout the play, and they are uttered by characters of all classes, including the First Senator, Menenius (often), Sicinius, the Aedile, the First Lord, Aufidius, Volumnia, and of course Coriolanus himself.[9]

Agriculture is the practice of feeding something that will in turn feed us. Janet Adelman, Gail Kern Paster and Stanley Cavell have each written brilliant essays on the imagery of food and feeding in *Coriolanus* (Adelman 1978; Cavell 1987: 143-77; Paster 1981). Adelman and Cavell particularly focus on how the metaphor of starving works in the play, how Coriolanus's attempt to be entirely self-constituted and self-nourishing is what contributes to his status as god and beast. Adelman connects this theme to the idea of vulnerability, a "psychological fact" that she finds central to the play: "the taking in of food is the primary acknowledgement of one's dependence on the world, and as such, it is the primary token of one's vulnerability" (110). There is a circularity, a reciprocity central to the acknowledgment of mutual independence, that Coriolanus cannot abide. Rather than involve himself in a system of exchange, he wishes to remain singular, flat and linear like the sword he imagines his compatriots make of him (1.6.76).

What has yet to be discussed with reference to this play is the way its central character habitually and unconsciously starves himself through the ear, which, as Robert

Wilkinson declared, is "where the soule feedeth." Cavell comes closest to the mark—indeed, the idea is the lead melodic line of his essay, to my mind—when he names Martius and Volumnia "starvers," and then later notes the equation of words and food in the play (148; 162-63). He notes that the parable of the belly actually does seem to allay the hunger of the rebellious plebeains, when they accept Menenius's words for food. "The first mystery of the play," he observes, "is that this seems to work, that the words stop the citizens, that they stop to listen, as though these citizens are themselves willing, under certain circumstances, to take words for food, or equate them" (163). He finds the play ultimately "a tale about food, with competing interpretations requiring application, told by one man to a cluster, causing them to halt momentarily, to turn aside from their more practical or pressing concerns in order to listen" (163).

The equation of sound and food is not restricted to early modern religious discourse, or to metaphors identified and employed by literary critics. Cognitive philosopher Daniel Dennett has anchored a popular and persuasive theory of human consciousness on the assumption that the main function of the human brain is to "assuage epistemic hunger."[10] According to Dennett's theory, the purpose of the senses is to provide epistemic nutrition (information) to the brain. The senses feed the brain, providing us with information about the environment, our location and status in it. Shakespeare expresses a view strikingly similar to Dennett's, especially throughout the later plays, with particular reference to the ears. In *Pericles*, Simonides thanks Pericles for his music of the night before: "I do / Protest my ears were never better fed / With such delightful pleasing harmony" (2.5.26-28). Later in the play, reunited with his daughter Marina, Pericles compares her to his wife Thaisa: "in pace another Juno; / Who starves the ears she feeds,

and makes them hungry, / The more she gives them speech" (5.1.111-13). Hearing the battle between the Romans and Britains from the cave, Arviragus expresses his trepidation at being discovered by the Britons: "It is not likely / That when they hear their Roman horses neigh, / Behold their quarter'd fires, have both their eyes / And ears so cloy'd importantly as now, / That they will waste their time upon our note" (Cym. 4.4.16-20). In *The Tempest*, Alonzo breaks into the verbal badinage between Antonio, Sebastian and Gonzalo with an exasperated "You cram these words into mine ears against / The stomach of my sense" (2.1.107-08). Perhaps most famous is how Othello describes Desdemona during his narrative of their courtship: "She'ld come again, and with a greedy ear / Devour up my discourse" (1.3.149-50).

As notable as the number of times characters call for each others' ears in *Coriolanus* is the number of times they refuse to listen to each other. Coriolanus is of course the most conspicuous example of this in the play; his refusal to recognize the claims of others is the root cause of his inability to live in Roman society—or in Corioli or Antium, for that matter. Carol Sicherman perceptively notes how selective his hearing is: "Again and again he hears a single word in isolation rather than the sequential speech of which it is part, and he responds so hysterically to the word that he becomes its captive" (199). His belief in his heroic singularity inflects his perceptions and experience of language. Cominius speaks of Coriolanus as only being able to hear war, when he remarks that "Now all's his, / When by and by the din of war gan pierce / His ready sense" (2.2.114-16). "Ready sense" suggests that somehow Coriolanus is specially attuned to the sounds of war, that he identifies himself with that environment. He is not the only character in the play, however, to do so. The noise of war is the sound that gets recognized and

privileged in the entire culture of the play. Aufidius's First Servant expresses this sensory inclination very clearly:

> Let me have war, say I. It exceeds peace as far as day does night. It's spritely, waking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; mull'd, deaf, sleepy, insensible, a getter of more bastard children than war's a destroyer of men. (4.5.231-35)

Coriolanus, for his part, consistently refuses to "give ear" to others, to the point of recoiling at hearing his military "nothings monster'd" (2.2.75-77). His preference for action over words is expressed a few lines earlier, when he recollects that "oft, / When blows had made me stay, I fled from words" (2.2.70-71). Listening is an activity he finds more painful than battle. "I had rather have my wounds to heal again," he avows, "Than hear say how I got them" (2.2.69-70) He describes his wounds as having ears of their own: "I have some wounds upon me, and they smart / To hear themselves remember'd" (1.9.28-29). He would, it appears, rather lose his ears than have to listen to his achievements—an attitude that Menenius finds incredulous: "He had rather venture all his limbs for honor / Than one on's ears to hear it?" (2.2.80-81). Hans Blumenberg has commented that "the attitude of not wanting to hear is marked, even if only metaphorically, as more serious than not wanting to see, since the ear is, by nature, always open and cannot be shut." It is an attitude which "presupposes a greater degree of contrariness and of intervention in nature than does not seeing" (Blumenberg 1993: 48).

The crucial instance in which Coriolanus starves his ears is of course when he is on the threshold of destroying Rome. Several of the people closest to him appear before him in supplication, including the father-figure Menenius. Coriolanus repeats several times

how he will decline to hear suits from the land that has exiled him. "Mine ears against your suits are stronger than / Your gates against my force," he warns Menenius. "I will not hear thee speak" (5.2.89-90, 93). The idea of the senses, including the ears, as gateways to the soul was commonplace in the early modern era, turning up, among other places, in Spenser's House of Alma and Bartolomeo Delbene's *Civitas Veri* (Vinge 1975; Smith 1999: 101-02; Wilson 1995: 10-11). Aufidius is impressed with this refusal to hear, and commends Coriolanus for having "stopp'd your ears against / The general suit of Rome; never admitted / A private whisper, no, not with such friends / That thought them sure of you" (5.3.4-8). Coriolanus responds to this encouragement by renewing his vow of allegiance: "Fresh embassies and suits, / Nor from the state nor private friends, hereafter / Will I lend ear to" (5.3.17-19). Immediately upon this fresh promise of deafness a shout signals the arrival of Volumnia, Virgilia, and the young Martius. Volumnia's entreaty gets through to him; the disintegration of his former sense of self is brought about by an act of filial obedience and assent that is accompanied by the most famous silence in all Shakespeare.

The first chapter, "Opening," of Bruce Smith's *The Acoustic Culture of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor*, introduces the sound [o:] as the most basic human mode of entry into the soundscape. At this point I would like to invite you to read the following passage aloud. Listen to Coriolanus's first speech after relenting to his mother's pleas to save Rome:

> O mother, mother!
>
> What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
>
> The gods look down, and this unnatural scene

> They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!
> You have won a happy victory to Rome;
> But, for your son, believe it—O, believe it—
> Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
> If not most mortal to him. (5.3.183-89)

As you will have experienced in your own body, the sound of [o:] forms the refrain of the entire speech, from its groans of agonized resignation, to the long vowel sounds in "behold," "do," "ope," "mother," "Rome," and "mortal." The repetition of [o:] marks Coriolanus's entry back into the shared world of human speech, into an acoustic community in which he is merely a player, and not the sole figure. It is the sound of him opening up, becoming receptive to the claims of the Other.

Immediately after this invisible transformation, he casts an eye over to Aufidius and pleads for the kind of recognition he has for so long denied to others: "Were you in my stead, would you have heard / A mother less?" (5.3.191-93). His request that Aufidius put himself in his shoes—to hear, and thence understand, things from Coriolanus's own perspective ("were you in my stead"), to recognize the Other—is something Coriolanus himself has been unable to do for the entire play. Of course, Coriolanus is not the only character who refuses to listen. Another character who stops up his ears is Brutus, who, during the trial scene proclaims "We'll hear no more. / Pursue him to his house, and pluck him thence: / Lest his infection, being of catching nature, / Spread further" (3.1.308-11). We again have an expression of a link between the practice of hearing and the threat of contamination—only this time the sentiment comes from the opposite side of the political spectrum.

Cavell makes the link between physical and epistemic starvation during his essay, and muses on the ramifications it might have for the audience as well. The play's

> incorporation of the parable of the belly I understand to identify us, the audience, as starvers, and to identify the words of the play as food, for our incorporation. Then we have to ask of ourselves, as we have to ask of the citizens: Why have we stopped to listen? That is, what does it mean to be a member of this audience? Do we feel that these words have the power of redemption for us?" (Cavell 1987: 165)

The *way* a parable communicates is as important as *what* it communicates. The parable expects something from us before it divulges its true message. It expects recognition; it expects a willingness to realize that change proceeds from true understanding. Why do we subject ourselves to the discourses of others; why put ourselves in the vulnerable position of incorporating their thoughts? The first answer Shakespeare offers is that we don't really have a choice in the matter. The second, as anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff indicate, is that receptivity is not really a position of vulnerability at all, but rather one of immense potentiality—of power that has typically been characterized as feminine:

> …this weakness is also a source of strength. For a body that is unstable and penetrable may be the stuff of powerful transformations, or it may serve as a willing receptacle for superhuman forces. Spirit possession, in various societies, plays with tropes of physical permeability: with mounting, copulating,

> and, most dramatically, with the invasion of corporeal space that is frequently, if not invariably, feminized. (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 74)

An audience's willingness to hear is its willingness to be receptive and set its identity at stake. Caius Martius's dream of self-authorization, of a completely self-sustaining existence, is both initiated and destroyed by his necessary obedience to the claims of the Other, claims such as those of his mother Volumnia which bring into possibility his very existence as Coriolanus. The destruction of that self is not brought about by his final obedience to these claims, but by his sustained period of deafness to them, his denial of ears, his vulnerability to the idea of invulnerability.

Coriolanus illustrates how receptivity to sound contributes to the formation of personal identity, and how that identity in turn reaches out into the world and affects cultural and political practices, including the perpetuation and formation of further personal identities and political configurations. The dialogical relation of the individual to the outside world and culture is paramount in this play—especially how that relation is (mis)understood by specific characters such as Volumnia, and through her, Coriolanus himself. The ears, liminal spaces where the outside is let in, are tuned in this dialogue to shape our perceptions not only of *material* objects such as giraffes and bodies of water, but of *conceptual* entities such as culture, kinship, political structures, and personal identity itself.

Several critics have marked how Shakespeare, in what is purportedly his final tragedy, represents the insufficiency of language, expressing skepticism in the power of the tool he had become so proficient with by this point in his career (Calderwood 1995;

Riss 1992; Sicherman 1972). Kenneth Burke, troubled by the play's ambivalent portrayal of its hero, felt compelled to classify *Coriolanus* a "grotesque" tragedy (Burke 199). Burke's gesture points to the play's insistent, unrelenting acknowledgment of what I can only feebly describe as a carnivalesque, radical provisionality, a recognition that the institutions we build and orient ourselves in relation to—socio-political systems, ideologies of personal and bodily subjectivity, perceptual conventions, knowledge itself—exist in time as we do. Like ears, they remain continuously open, to time if nothing else, for the duration of their existence unfinished.

notes to chapter three

1 See the chapter titled " Editing the Text: the Deuteronomic Reconstruction of Authority" in Michael D. Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1990): 91-119. Although Bristol locates the scriptural component of his argument specifically in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy and its relation to the rest of the Pentateuch, the institutional practices outlined in that argument translate seamlessly into the sorts of practices that must have been involved in the textual arrangement and editing of Christ's life and work in the various gospel accounts that found their way into the New Testament.

2 A slightly more elaborated version of this discussion also appears in Wilson's book *Cultural Materialism: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995): 85-91.

3 One of the earliest researchers to take this approach was Caroline Spurgeon, who conducted a careful analysis of image clusters in her book

Shakespeare's Imagery, and What it Tells Us (Cambridge: The University Press, 1935). She found, among other things, that Shakespeare disliked dogs, greasy food, and noisy argument, and had extraordinary eyesight. While these types of claims are typically laughed away by scholars, Spurgeon's book has enjoyed a longevity that most current critical work on Shakespeare will simply never achieve. During a panel on academic book publishing at the 1999 Shakespeare Association of America meeting in San Francisco, Sarah Stanton of the Cambridge University Press informed an astonished audience that Spurgeon's book remains, over 60 years after its initial publication, one of the press's two perennially best-selling Shakespeare monographs, the other being John Dover Wilson's *What Happens in Hamlet*, which was first published in the same year. The continuing commercial viability of these studies is even more impressive when one takes into consideration the fact that Cambridge publishes more Shakespeare monographs than any other press.

4 The article is part of a larger work currently under consideration at Princeton University Press, entitled *Shakespeare's Brain*.

5 See, for example, George Lakoff's account of the classificatory system of the Dyirbal aboriginal people of Australia, in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 91-

114. Lakoff maintains in this book that " metonymy is one of the basic characteristics of cognition" (77).

6 It appears this technique of homicide was typically associated with Italy in the contemporary popular imagination, just as were most enormative forms of intrigue. The character Lightborn in Marlowe's *Edward II* speaks of his grisly apprenticeship in Naples, where he learned how to murder a man secretly in numerous ways, including " whilst one is asleep, to take a quill, / And blow a little powder in his ears" (5.4.33-34). Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Plays*, ed. J.B. Steane, *The Penguin English library* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969).

7 For additional references to the place of fame and report in the culture of the play, see 1.3.9-13, and 1.9.21-26.

8 Bruce Smith has commented on the acoustic etymology of the word *person*, which means " a 'through-sounding,' a 'per-*sona*'" (Smith 7).

9 See, for example, the following passages: 1.5.8; 2.2.52-54; 2.2.61-62; 3.1.89-90; 3.1.190-91; 3.1.213-14; 3.1.277-79; 3.1.282-85; 3.3.41-42; 3.3.110-13; 4.2.12-14; 4.2.37-42; 5.3.91; 5.3.92-93; 5.6.102; 5.6.114; 5.6.71; and 5.6.137.

10 See Daniel Clement Dennett, *Consciousness Explained*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1991): 16ff. Here is an example of what Dennett means: " The world provides an inexhaustible deluge of information bombarding our senses, and when we concentrate on how much is coming in, or continuously available, we often succumb to the illusion that it all must be used, all the time. But our capacities to use information, and our epistemic appetites, are limited. If our brains can satisfy all our particular epistemic hungers as they arise, we will never find grounds for complaint. We will never be able to tell, in fact, that our brains are provisioning us with less than everything that is available in the world" (16).

4 • Transformation and Continuity

I may have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so — Samuel Coleridge

Everybody's got a little Elvis in them — Mojo Nixon

Elvis ate America before America ate him — Passengers

In the pre-Cartesian experience of physicality, the ear is considered an unregulated bodily orifice, a site of vulnerability, which, like the mouth, is a portion of the upper bodily stratum characterized by its continuity with the outside world. We have seen that sound was considered the most direct perceptual avenue to the soul in the religious, philosophical, and anatomical discourses of the period. With the contemporary notion of the feminized ear we also have sound associated with physiological and agricultural forms of reproductive transformation. In this chapter I will further trace the interrelations between sound, transformation, and grotesque continuity that were widely recognized in Shakespeare's day, and follow these interrelations as they are articulated in some of his works. These ideas find their earliest expression, however, in the work of Ovid, arguably the most popular, influential, and beloved author of the Classical tradition in Shakespeare's day.

WOORDES WITHIN THE GROUND

Ovid begins the eleventh book of his *Metamorphoses* with an ending: the death of Orpheus. After losing Eurydice a second time, the legendary musician returns from the underworld to settle in Thrace, where he abjures the company of women and surrounds himself with the local men. As Arthur Golding translates from the tenth book, it is here that he "taught the Thracian folke a stewes of Males too make / And of the flowring pryme of boayes the pleasure for too take" (Ovid 1567: 123). While singing one day, Orpheus is attacked by a crowd of women he has doubly enraged: first by his complete lack of attention to them, and secondly by the way he has attracted the men's interest away from them. Sound turns out to be the decisive weapon in the astonishing scene of violence that follows. Orpheus apparently defends himself with his music, which functions like a science-fiction force field. The lances and stones the women hurl at the singer are strangely affected by his music, and fall harmlessly at his feet, "vanquisht with his sweete / And most melodius harmonye" (135). Their weapons prove completely ineffective against the music he produces, which has the capacity to charm all animal, vegetable and mineral forms of matter, not to mention the denizens the underworld. The tide of battle turns, however, once the women gain control over the soundscape with their own instruments and vocalizations, which mask and confuse the arresting power of his music:

> Yit had the sweetenesse of his song
> Appeasd all weapons, sauing that the noyse now growing strong
> With blowing shalmes, and beating drummes, & bedlem howling out,

And clapping hands on euery syde by Bacchus drunken rout,

Did drowne the sownd of Orphyes harp. (135)

With the sound of his music eclipsed by that of the women (described, significantly, as "noyse"), Orpheus loses his sole mode of defense against the attackers. They descend upon him and, with plowing implements found in nearby fields, kill and dismember him.

Ovid juxtaposes the death of Orpheus with the story of the judgment of Midas, a tale with obvious parallels. Cured of his addiction to the accumulation of gold and wealth, Midas elects to pursue a life in the countryside, where he becomes a devotee of the god Pan. One day on the mountain Tmolus, Pan challenges Apollo to a musical competition, which will be judged by the mountain itself. Each musician performs in turn; Pan plays upon his reed pipes, Apollo his lyre. As in the death of Orpheus, the narrative involves a contest or conflict between genres of musical instruments that operate as traditional acoustic indicators of high and low culture, that are freighted with ideological connotations. The harp, lyre, and other polyphonic stringed instruments are aligned here with harmonic rationality and civic culture, while drums and wind instruments such as the shalm (shawm), the bagpipe, and the reed flute are associated with simplicity, rural life, and unrestrained Bacchic festivity.[1] After the two musicians have performed, Tmolus pronounces judgment in favour of Apollo, a verdict "lyked well of all," and obvious to everyone present (137). Everyone, that is, except for Midas, who insists on his preference for the more rustic music of Pan. For this insult Apollo punishes Midas at the bodily site of his offence, transforming his ears into those of an ass.

When early modern writers allude to the judgment of Midas, they usually point to it as an object lesson in acute æsthetic impairment. There is no real disagreement as to

whether the punishment is actually deserved, or inquiry as to why Midas might prefer Pan's flute to the lyre of Apollo. This is an instance in which the ideological valences of the two instruments might well come into play: the king has left the corrupt high-culture environment of his court for a more pastoral existence; therefore, his preference for the rustic music of Pan might well be read as a logical, understandable reaffirmation of that choice. Early modern authors typically accept the tale at face-value, however, and with a commonsensical awareness of the king's track record they tend to side with Apollo in accounting Midas a fool worthy of his ass's ears. The point of the tale is that Midas has heard incorrectly, that there is a right and a wrong way to use one's ears. Geoffrey Whitney, for example, uses the story to illustrate *Perversa Judicia* (bad judgment) in his *Choice of Emblems* (Whitney 1586). John Lyly of course includes the entire story in his play, *Midas* (Lyly 1988). William Hopkins, in his commendatory verse contribution to William Davenant's *The Just Italian*, uses the myth to vigorously defend Davenant's play from its detractors, those "giddy fooles" who hear Davenant's "straynes, as the dull Asse the Lyre." Hopkins commands all such to simpler acoustic pleasures, such as "the noyse they make / At Paris-garden," "the learned layes / That make a din about the streets," or "the Iewes-trumpe," and the bells of morris dancers. "These," he opines sarcastically, "your great heads may manage" (Davenant 1630).

Contemporary English mythographer George Sandys likewise concedes in his *Ovid's Metamorphosis Englished* that the judgment of Midas is about "an ignorant Prince, unable to distinguish betweene that which is vile and excellent; and therefore preferrs the one before the other; for which he is iustly branded by the learned with the ensignes of folly." Sandys also, however, suggests an historical explanation of the myth,

in which the ass's ears refer to the dangers of wrong hearing in a political context: Midas is "a suspitious Prince; who heard whatsoeuer was done afarre off by his spies and intelligencers: who (by their false informations) becoming suspitious of his best deseruing seruants, and confident of his worst, might well be said to heare with such eares; ignorant of the true estate of his affaires" (Sandys 1976: 390).[2]

The Orpheus and Midas myths in the *Metamorphoses* represent sound as an important instrument of cultural domination; both rehearse musical ideologies that would persist into Shakespeare's era and beyond. In these narratives contending social groups are associated with specific conventions of musical production and consumption. Orpheus enraptures the world around him with his music, until he is himself subjugated by the sounds of the Thracian women. Midas is permanently disfigured as punishment for publicly declaring his preference for the music of Pan, an act Apollo evidently considers a serious threat to his cultural hegemony (perhaps it is the first sign of a crack in the veneer of objectivity that legitimates his apparent æsthetic superiority?). Midas has heard wrong, which is a radical act of disobedience, and he is severely punished for it. There is an etymological link between the concepts of hearing and obedience that goes back to the Latin *audire*, which means both to hear and to obey. Similar punishments were directed at the ears in early modern England for political dissidence and other forms of insubordination and transgression. The ears were simply cut off.

But that is not the end of the myth. The shame that results from Midas's disfigurement leads to the myth's most enigmatic scene. To hide his ass's ears, Midas wears a head covering. His secret is discovered by one of his servants, in a passage I here reproduce from the Golding translation in full:

But yit his Barber who

Was woont too notte him spyed it: and beeing eager too

Disclose it, when he neyther durst to vtter it, nor could

It keepe in secret still, hee went and digged vp the mowld,

And whispring softly in the pit, declaard what eares hee spyde

His mayster haue, and turning downe the clowre ageine, did hyde

His blabbed woordes within the ground, and closing vp the pit

Departed thence and neuer made mo woordes at all of it.

Soone after, there began a tuft of quiuering reedes too growe

Which beeing rype bewrayd theyr seede and him that did them sowe.

For when the gentle sowtherne wynd did lyghtly on them blowe,

The vttred foorth the woordes that had beene buried in the ground

And so reproude the Asses eares of Midas with theyr sound. (138)

This part of the myth was commonly interpreted by Renaissance mythographers as an allusion to the endurance and power of the written word, of the way it allows the dead to speak, and thereby influence the judgment of future generations. Abraham Fraunce probably ventures a pun on the word *reade* in his short moralization of the myth in *The Countesse of Pembrokes Yvychurch*: "a golden foole and a silken asse, may for the time be clad with purple, & delude the gazers on, but when the reades grow, that is, when after his death the learned begin to write, and lay him open to the world, then is his nakednes discouered" (Fraunce 1976: 11). George Sandys likewise interprets the speaking reeds as writing implements in his "Englished" reading: "the vices and defects of Princes are

likely palliated or obscured in their lifetime: but dead; these vocall Reedes arise, the pens of historians to divulge them to posterity" (390).

It is of course only natural for early modern humanists to moralize this part of the myth as an example of the power of literacy and the written word. When the tale is transmitted in a more oral early modern context, however, it must surely communicate something very different. It speaks more of the living word, of sound as having the characteristics of a living organism.[3] The reeds that grow are also Pan's musical instruments in their raw, natural, living form, transmitters of meaning through the sound. And when we speak of the living word we return to the religious context, to the most unexpectedly direct connection of all. The barber, with an irrepressible, almost sexual need to "express" his secret, plants his words/seeds into the ground. They are then born out of the same ear they are entered into, born as reeds which sound his secret in the wind. The myth of Midas is an exact (p)re-articulation of the sound/agriculture/reproduction matrix found in the parable of the sower. The ground receives the barber's words and yields them up again as sound/wind/spirit with a multifold increase. Hearing is the perceptual domain aligned with grotesque continuity through transformation and reproduction. Shakespeare's ear is an agent of such processes, where predecessor narratives, including those of Ovid (and specifically that of Midas), enter and are transformed.

A REASONABLE GOOD EAR IN *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

While Scott Wilson sees Shakespeare the black hole as a radiating, beckoning solar anus, it should be clear by now that I move to the upper bodily stratum to construe that orifice

as an ear. The template for this transition, as so often happens, already exists in Shakespeare. He is Bottom, the weaver from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, known, like Midas, for his ass's ears.

Long a favourite with audiences in the theatre, Bottom has received an increasing amount of sympathetic and serious attention from critics in recent years. He has been read as an embodiment of festivity in the play (Kott 1987; Patterson 1989), as a figure for the relationship between comedy and contemporary social unrest (McDonald 1994), even as a profound metaphor for love (Zukofsky and Zukofsky 1963). He has also been identified with Shakespeare himself since at least the nineteenth-century. Twenty-three years after Emerson counted Shakespeare one of his seven *Representative Men*, Canadian professor Daniel Wilson echoed the phrase by praising Bottom himself as a "representative man," and a "natural genius" (Emerson 1850; Wilson 1873: 264). Annabel Patterson has drawn attention to the connection more recently, noting that both author and character share an artisanal class background which affords them a certain æsthetic and social mobility, particularly with respect to the range and extent of their opportunities in the contemporary theatre:

> Shakespeare's own situation as a member of the Chamberlain's company would situate him somewhere *between* the court and amateur popular theatricals, with the occasional 'command performance' bringing him closer to Bottom and his colleagues than to those, frequently themselves aristocrats, who created the royal entertainments. (Patterson 58)

When asked which of Shakespeare's characters is most like the author, the traditional choice is of course just such an aristocrat, Prospero, who scripts and directs almost all of the action of *The Tempest*, and whose renunciation of his art at the end of the play, breaking his staff/pen and drowning his book/paper, has for many years been figured as Shakespeare's own farewell to a professional life devoted to creating illusions.[4] Prospero is a fine choice, but he's a writer/director, mainly, and fails to come anywhere near representing the full spectrum of professional activities Shakespeare would have participated in as a primary shareholder in his company. Bottom, with his immense receptivity, demonstrated by his capacity for making others' narratives his own, and making his own narratives others', is as good a choice, to my mind. His participation in the theatre is based on sheer enthusiasm, an ecstatic love of play, and the hope of steady patronage—certainly not, as in the case of Prospero, on the desire to exert power and exact revenge.

Like Shakespeare, Bottom is characterized by his receptivity. Bottom's bottomless receptivity takes the form of a radical openness, an indiscriminate enthusiasm both taxing and infectious to those around him. From the mechanicals' very first rehearsal, he cannot restrain himself from eagerly swallowing up the project, artistically and procedurally. His first four speeches in the play direct Peter Quince, the play's ostensible organizer and director, as to how to proceed with their meeting. He tells Quince "You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip," to "say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point," to "call forth your actors by the scroll," and then to "Name what part I am for, and proceed." Bottom is also a voracious

consumer of theatrical roles. He wants to play any and every part in the play—even though he has absolutley no idea what the mains ones are: "What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?" He wishes to play not only Pyramus, but Thisby as well, and even the lion.

Sound is the chief tool he uses for throwing himself into these different characters; it is apparently the most important parameter of his theatrical experience. He bids for each part on the strength of his vocal ability. His first choice is a role with a lot of good bombast, "a part to tear a cat in, to make all split," though he assures the others that as a lover he promises to sound more "condoling." As Thisby he will speak in "a monstrous little voice," and as the lion he plans to "roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me." When his comrades become apprehensive that the roar could well frighten the female playgoers, he answers their reticence by suggesting that he could control his voice, and "aggravate" it to "roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale."[5]

The lion that sounds like a dove or a nightingale is an example of the fluidity that characterizes Bottom's experience of the world, an experience unregimented by the kinds of phenomenological categories those around him, like us, have become inculturated into. He seems to have an intuitive understanding that, like the character Wall he suggests they incorporate into their play, such divisions are human constructs. *Continuity* is the operative term for Bottom's perceptual assimilation of the world, a form of experience ruled by a kind of synæsthesia. I borrow the term *continuity* from Georges Bataille, who employs it in his work on eroticism to indicate the ontological category of undifferentiated Being, as opposed to the experience of individual consciousness, which he refers to as *discontinuity* (Bataille 1986).[6] Bottom is a figure for the recognition that

grotesque continuity, commonly associated with the guts and what Bakhtin called the "lower bodily stratum," can also be sublimated to the intellectual or perceptual realm, from the lower bodily stratum to the upper bodily stratum.

The continuity of Bottom's sensorium is most evident from the remarks he makes upon waking from his dream, when he declares in amazement "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was" (4.1.209-12). The perceptual confusion indicated in the speech is an unintentional effect of the confusion his memory makes of a passage from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (2:6-10), an intertextual link that has been glossed by numerous commentators.[7] Bottom's synæsthetic experience of the world is also registered during the performance of the Pyramus and Thisby play, in which Bottom-as-Pyramus says "I see a voice. Now will I to the chink, / To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face" (5.1.191-92).

Bottom's phenomenological experience of continuity extends from base levels of perception into higher-order conceptual categories with more readily-identifiable ideological ramifications. An example of this is his inability to recognize the boundaries that describe proprietary rights. His exuberant appropriation of the mechanicals' play is one side of that coin; his willingness to share the narrative of his own experience with the faeries, to have Quince commit it to paper for him, is the other: "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be call'd 'Bottom's Dream,' because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the Duke" (4.1.212-15). He calls the proposed epilogue "Bottom's Dream" not because he wants to stake an authorial

claim over it, but because it is, like him, more than a little confused.[8] It is his dream not because he *created* it, but because it *contains* him.

Bottom's continuity is also apparent in the range of social interaction of which he is capable, from his mechanical peers to performance at court, and most importantly his "translation" into the world of the faeries. He is the only mortal in the *Dream* who actually perceives the faeries and interacts with them, in a metaphysical region where he moves with the same easy familiarity and sense of entitlement as Prospero. This sense of entitlement extends to erotic relations as well. Like a certain aristocrat from one of Shakespeare's other festive comedies, Bottom is pleasantly surprised to find himself the object of the erotic attentions of a beautiful, powerful woman whom he has never met previously in his life. Both men accept the situation with little or no hesitation. Titania's liaison with Bottom is presented and recognized as the more grotesque, however, and I would argue that this is not *wholly* due to their phylogenetic incommensurability (the man/ass embodies that grotesque condition well enough on his own), but also because the relationship is not sanctioned by equal social rank, as is the love of Olivia and Sebastian. As David Wiles puts it, "It is in the figure of Bottom the clown, the lower-class male locked in the arms of a queen, that we must seek the elusive Bakhtinian grotesque" (Wiles 1998: 78). The kind of radical continuity Bottom represents is a potential threat to social order and the distinctions that maintain hierarchy.

□

With Bottom, we again come across the ears associated with transformation, or what Peter Quince calls "translation." While the flower juice is administered through the eyes, which links the eyes with the many transformations that occur in the play, all of these

transformations are preceded and triggered by aural stimuli which wake the characters out of their sleep. It should be remembered that the play is literally a *dark* comedy: most of it takes place in the woods at night, where, as Hermia notes, the sense of hearing is all the more relied upon:

> Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
> The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
> Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
> It pays the hearing double recompense.
> Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
> Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound. (3.2.177-82)

As Oberon and Puck correct the latter's pardonable mistake in applying the love potion to the wrong young good-looking Athenian, Oberon remarks that Lysander and Helena will finish the job for them, occasioning the desired result with their sound: "Stand aside. The noise they make / Will cause Demetrius to awake" (3.2.116-17). His instructions to Puck as to how to deal with Lysander and Demetrius also focus on the creation of acoustic decoys in the dark night: "Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, / Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong; / and sometime rail thou like Demetrius" (3.2.360-62). Such ventriloquism is a skill Puck is evidently practiced in; he has boasted before of how he can beguile "a fat and bean-fed horse" by "neighing in likeness of a filly foal" (2.1.45-46).

While the flower juice compels Titania fall in love with whatever she first sees upon awakening, it is evident that she is first alerted to Bottom by the noise he makes. After his companions have abandoned him in fright, Bottom begins to sing, so that "they shall

hear I am not afraid" (3.1.119). It is this "angelic" noise which wakes Titania from her "flow'ry bed," and which first introduces her to her new love (124). Entranced, she requests he keep singing: "Mine ear," she says, "is much enamored of thy note" (133). The incongruity of Titania falling in love with such a monstrous creature is linked with her inclination toward the song he sings, which is surely punctuated with a kind of braying noise that she takes for the sweetest music. Titania is also Midas after all, punished for her own disobedience, for her failure to "hear" Oberon correctly. In her last words of the scene, she orders the attendant faeries to transport Bottom, and in the process to "Tie up my lover's tongue, bring him silently" (3.1.196). The remark suggests she is not entirely under the spell of the flower juice, that she has momentarily relapsed into a modicum of normal consciousness, and is in some sense enamoured of this creature in spite of herself. There is a rent, an opening, a continuity in her affection for him, through which her altered and unaltered states of consciousness intermingle and uneasily coexist as an emotional monstrosity.

References to sound are used throughout the *Dream* to chart physical and emotional proximity. Hermia's growing emotional distance from Lysander is figured in her speech as she sounds out into the darkness: "Lysander! What, remov'd? Lysander! Lord! / What, out of hearing? Gone? No sound, no word? / Alack, where are you? Speak, an if you hear" (2.2.151-53). The play in fact begins with reference to love in acoustic terms, when Theseus assures Hippolyta that although he won her in battle, he will wed her "in another key" (1.1.18). Lysander's wooing of Hermia is described as having been conducted in a similarly musical manner, when Egeus accuses him of having "by moonlight at her window sung / With feigning voice verses of feigning love" (1.1.30-31).

Lysander in turns describes the fragile "course of true love" in acoustic terms when he calls it "momentany as a sound" (1.1.143). In the same scene, Helena refers to Hermia's voice as an important component of her beauty: her "tongue's sweet air" is "More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear" (1.1.183-84). Later in the play, when Helena reminisces over the affection she and Hermia once shared, she recalls them knitting together, "Both warbling of one song, both in one key, / As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds / Had been incorporate" (3.2.206-8).

The one aspect of Bottom's changed physiognomy that is remarked upon repeatedly in the play is the set of ass's ears on his head. His ears are the most recognizable visual image of the play, identifiable even in silhouette. After a skinny guy in black tights conversing with a skull, or a young girl leaning out over a balcony, the image of a man with ass's ears is the most iconic in all of Shakespeare. The ears are the signature of his translation. For years costume designers have called special attention to the ears by creating ways for actors to move them independently. The First Folio stage direction, "*Enter Piramus with the Asse head*," seems to indicate that a special prop head was used for Bottom's translation in Shakespeare's day (Shakespeare 1995: TLN 927). Actors playing Bottom in the nineteenth century often found themselves swimming around in huge realistic ass heads which made them unable to communicate to the audience with facial expressions, and cut down a great deal on the clarity of their voices. Directors and costume designers in our own century have often done away with the realistic ass head, and substituted more evocative suggestions of his translation.[9] Trevor Griffiths, in his

stage history of the play, notes that director Harcourt Williams was among the first to take this route in 1931:

> The traditional fully built-up head, even if it had moving ears and jaws, tended to muffle the actor's voice, and encouraged broad playing in the translation scenes. Williams 'substituted a light mask of my own devising' which left [Ralph] Richardson's eyes visible and 'added greatly to his powers of expression as the donkey'. (1996: 53)

As designers continue to distill the costume down to its most essential elements, what remains are the ears. No matter how far these designs are pared down, a Bottom *always* has some sort of ass's ears. In Robert Lepage's "mudsummer" production, for example, Bottom's translation was accomplished by the actor playing Puck using her feet to represent the ass's ears (Griffiths 146).

The ass's ears are an erotic focal point for Titania, who makes a point of kissing Bottom's "fair large ears" in the scene in which they are lovers (4.1.4). Bottom himself refers to them a few lines later. When asked, "wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?," he replies "I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones" (4.1.27-29). Allusion to the judgment of Midas is easily recognizable here, with Bottom presented as the bigger fool—his musical preferences do not even extend to instruments capable of melody. When Bottom awakes from his dream, the actor playing him usually feels the air above his head for the ass's ears that have vanished as inexplicably as they arrived: "Methought I was—and methought I had—but man is but a patch'd fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had" (4.1.206-09).

Bottom, himself a "patch'd" fusion of man and ass, is likewise a grotesque admixture of legends and myths. In his book on the character, Jan Kott notes that the ass "appears both in ancient tradition, in Apuleius, and in the Old and New Testaments as Balaam's she-ass, and as the ass on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem for the last time." He also points to graffiti from third century Rome which depicts an ass's head on the crucified Christ as an example of how "the bodily meets with the spiritual in the *figura* and the masque of the ass" (Kott 1987: 43-44).

Kott also remarks on the prevalence of the ass in festive practice: "From Saturnalia to medieval *ludi* the ass is one of the main actors in processions, comic rituals, and holiday revels" (43). Bakhtin specifically describes the Feast of the Ass, which celebrated the ass that carried Mary and the infant Jesus to Egypt. Sound was an important part of this ritual, in which the priest and congregation would engage in call-and-response braying. "The ass," Bakhtin observes, "is one of the most ancient and lasting symbols of the lower bodily stratum, which at the same time degrades and regenerates" (Bakhtin 78). Annabel Patterson has noticed the connections to festive inversion in the Dream, in which "the ass's head distinguishes itself from comic props and masks in general, and becomes part of a complex structural pun" in which Bottom is "not only the bottom of the social hierarchy as the play represents it, but also the 'bottom' of the body when seated, literally the social ass or arse" (Patterson 66). François Laroque also sees the scenes with Titania and Bottom as examples of festive inversion, inversion which has, however, overstepped boundaries of festive conduct and entered into the grotesque (Laroque 1991: 246).

THE GROTESQUE EAR

In this section I want to lean on Annabel Patterson's claim that Bottom's ass head is a "complex structural pun," and investigate the way that pun works self-referentially, theorizing the very grotesque æsthetic out of which it is generated. The pun co-locates the ass, the most durable symbol of the lower bodily stratum, with the ear, which is the primary site of upper bodily grotesque continuity. In current criticism, the grotesque is referred to almost exclusively in connection with the lower bodily stratum. Shakespeare's image of the ass with ears is an emblem for the idea that grotesque continuity must be understood to obtain at the level of the *upper* bodily stratum, as well. While this point is implicit in several critical accounts of the early modern grotesque, it has never, to my amazement, explicitly been stated, let alone adequately explored or analysed.

The continuity of bodily strata is recognized persistently in theories of the grotesque in early modern England. Neil Rhodes makes this idea the central thesis of his work on the Elizabethan grotesque, which he sees primarily as a linguistic and literary phenomenon. Elizabethan writers were preoccupied with what he calls "the physicality of language," an æsthetic which "could almost be called a non-verbal experience of language," in which the implications of language as "incarnadine" are played out (Rhodes 1980: 104-05).[10] Willard Farnham, in his book on the Shakespearean grotesque, speaks of the pun itself as a grotesque form of language, as a "monstrous union of incompatible things" (Farnham 1971: 61).

The most important theorist of the early modern grotesque is undoubtedly Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work on the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and His World* is a classic of

literary and cultural criticism. At different points in that work he provides short catalogues of important sites of the grotesque body, places where the body opens up to the world outside. Ears are notable by their absence from these catalogues. During an initial discussion about the openness of the grotesque body, for example, he says: "the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose" (1984: 26). There is no mention of the ear. He likewise seems to suggest that the ear is absent from slang in the period, though it is full of reference to other parts of the grotesque body: "In all languages there is a great number of expressions related to the genital organs, the anus and buttocks, the belly, the mouth and nose. But there are few expressions for the other parts of the body: arms and legs, face, and eyes" (319). In this list the ears are not even included as alternate possibilities. As far as early modern England is concerned, however, Bakhtin is only partially correct. While it is true that early modern English does not include many slang *synonyms* for them, the ears are extremely prevalent in other types of slang expressions. In his dictionary of proverbs for the period, Tilley collects no fewer than six proverbial sayings that include references to the ear (Tilley 1950). Shakespeare himself seems to have been particularly fond of the ear, employing it in numerous expressions, such as the "ear of grief," the "married ear," the "shepherd's ear," the "open ear of youth," the "treacherous ear," "the public ear," the "dull ear of a drowsy man," the "welkin's ear," the "knowing ear," the "credent ear," "Night's dull ear"—the list literally goes on and on.[11]

I would argue that the reason Bakhtin appears to overlook the ear in his theory of the grotesque body is not that he considers it peripheral, but that he takes its centrality so

completely for granted that he neglects to even mention it. In fact, the hermeneutic approach of his most important work is premised on the act of *listening* to the texts of early modern culture. The text for Bakhtin is an acoustic event. Accordingly, he often describes reading as "listening." In his critique of the work of Lucien Febvre, he applauds Febvre's insistence on understanding the past in its fullest contemporary context, which includes checking one's own ears at the door, and listening imaginatively with ears conditioned by contemporary cultural experience: "the historian's main task is to discover how the men of 1532…listened to Pantagruel speaking, how these men (not we) could understand him" (131). He takes Febvre to task, however, for not being attuned enough to the laughter in Rabelais, for not hearing that essential element of the book's soundscape. Since "Febvre considers anachronism, modernization, as the historian's most grievous sin," he maintains, it is unfortunate that "he himself commits this sin in relation to laughter. He hears Rabelais' laughter with the ears of the twentieth century, rather than with those of the sixteenth" (133). When he speaks of Johann Fischart's German translation of *Gargantua*, he describes it as one in which "the triumphal tones of birth and renewal can still be heard" (64). During his discussion of Janotus's oration at the Sorbonne, he invites his reader to imagine hearing that oration in its performative fullness: "A tape recording of this speech would show how full it is of sounds imitating all forms and degrees of coughing, spitting, short breath, and wheezing" (217).

Bakhtin is particularly sensitive to different tonalities of discourse. He hears an especially wide spectrum of linguistic tonalities in the language of "praise-abuse" in *Garagntua and Pantagruel*, "either polite, laudatory, flattering, coridal words, or

contemptuous, debasing, abusive ones" (420). This is apparent when he writes about the difficulties of our attempts to understand early modern irony, a trope that hinges on inflections caught by the ear: "In the world culture of the past there is much more irony, a form of reduced laughter, than our ear can catch. . . .We often lose the sense of parody and would doubtless have to reread many a text of world literature to hear its tone in another key" (135-6). Listening to texts imaginatively is so important to his critical method that he returns to the idea in the final paragraphs of *Rabelais and His World*, arguing that the approach has not only æsthetic, but important political implications as well:

> While analyzing past ages we are too often obliged to 'take each epoch at its word,' that is, to believe its official ideologists. We do not hear the voice of the people and cannot find and decipher its pure unmixed expression. . . . All the acts of the drama of world history were performed before a chorus of laughing people. Without hearing this chorus we cannot understand the drama as a whole. (474)

Bakhtin was surely encouraged to begin listening to texts by Rabelais himself. In the third book of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, Panurge becomes anxious over whether to take a wife. He and his friends decide that he should consult a well-known sibyl about the dilemma. During this section of the book, Pantagruel makes a comment about the ears that is well worth noting in the context of our discussion. He says,

> I don't believe nature didn't know what she was up to when she provided us with wide open ears, ears that can't be closed or shut in any way, though our eyes, and our tongues, and all the other openings in our body can be. And I think the reason was so that we'd always—day and night—be able to hear, and by hearing always be able to learn, for of all our senses that is the most appropriate for learning. (Rabelais 1990: 286)

The ear, permanently open to receive sound, is a constant agent of perceptual continuity. The grotesque body, Bakhtin observes, "is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines" (316). This notion of the "body's confines" is closely related to Bataille's ideas on discontinuity and continuity—so close, in fact, that Bataille is probably the premiere post-modern theorist of the carnivalesque. Bataille notes the grotesque character of the body as well in his *Erotism*: "Bodies open out to a state of continuity through secret channels that give us a feeling of obscenity. Obscenity is our name for the uneasiness which upsets the physical states associated with self-possession, with the possession of a recognised and stable individuality" (1986: 17-18). It is just such a fluid, unstable sense of individuality that Michael Bristol identifies with Bottom, during his reading of the *Dream* in his book on carnival and plebeian culture in the period.[12] That Bataille and Bakhtin are in fundamental consonance is also indicated by their choice of illustrative examples: each employs the example of the division of the single-cell organism to problematize notions of identity as a stable condition (Bakhtin 1984: 52-3; Bataille 1986: 13-15).

□

In yet another contemporary reference to the feminized ear, Gargantua, the archetypal grotesque body is given birth through his mother's left ear.[13] During the birth, his mother's entire colon and intestine prolapse (she gives birth to herself, to her own gut). To counteract this, she is given a powerful astringent by an attending midwife, which causes her whole body to close up in a complete inversion of the grotesque openness one would expect from a Gargantuan birth. The astringent is described as so strong that "every sphincter in her body was locked up tight, snapped so fiercely shut that you couldn't have pulled the open with your teeth, which is pretty awful to think about" (21). As a result, Gargantua has to take the only open route of egress available to him. The astringent inverts the normal physiological characteristics of the mother's body, so that

> it made her womb stretch loose at the top, instead of the bottom,
> which squeezed out the child, right into a hollow vein, by means of
> which he ascended through the diaphragm up to her shoulders,
> where that vein is divided in two. Taking the left-hand route, he
> finally came out the ear on that same side. (21)

Another story that has its birth at the ear is *Hamlet*, of course. The very event that brings the play into being is Claudius poisoning his brother through the ear. The two episodes, Gargantua's birth and the Danish king's death, each portray the ear as an important conduit of continuity between being and non-being. The ear is at the limits of life itself, letting birth out in Rabelais's narrative, and death in, in Shakespeare's.

SOUND ECONOMICS: EXCESS, SURFEIT, STEALING, GIVING

When Gary Taylor suggests that Shakespeare "warps cultural space time; he distorts our view of the universe around him," what he means by the phrase "the universe around him" is the literary universe—the other poets, dramatists, and critics he refers to in the immediate context of that passage. I think more can be made from this statement, however, and I want to bring this chapter to a close by asserting that, just as black holes exist at the limits of the physical universe, where the laws of physics as we understand them break down, so Shakespeare articulates, and has thereby come himself to designate, the limits of our ethical and æsthetic universes, where the laws of perceptual, representational and moral economy begin to break down and become radically unstable. The grotesque, which recognizes the fundamental provisionality of all boundaries, whether corporeal, epistemic, or ethical, is the primary æsthetic Shakespeare employs in the representation of these ambivalent economies.[14]

Scott Wilson is attracted to the idea of Shakespeare as a kind of sun because, after Bataille, he finds the sun to be "*the* example of pure expenditure without profit or return" (127). Nick Bottom's boundless, energetic enthusiasm is one instance of an economy that verges on potlatch; Shakespeare's linguistic exuberance, in its sublime excess, is another. As Stephen Orgel has persuasively argued in an essay titled "The Poetics of Incomprehensibility," the very *sound* of Shakespeare's verbal plethora would have been a large part of the attraction his plays held for contemporary audiences (Orgel 1991).

When Shakespeare describes love and other related forms of interpersonal experience, he frequently describes them as open, ambivalent economies, characterized by excess, fluidity and free-flow. In *All's Well that Ends Well*, Helena describes her love for Bertram in just these terms:

> I know I love in vain, strive against hope,
> Yet in this captious and intenible sieve
> I still pour in the waters of my love
> And lack not to lose still. (1.3.201-04)

She believes her love is like the sun of which Scott Wilson speaks, "pure expenditure without profit or return." It is the continuous outpouring of an unending supply that she will "lack not to lose still." Bertram is presented as a "captious and intenible sieve," a gigantic receptacle in which nothing is saved and everything is wasted. Shakespeare repeatedly uses the metaphor of the sieve (or strainer) in relation to this kind of total expenditure. When Portia proclaims to Shylock that "The quality of mercy is not strain'd," she is speaking of a similar kind of expenditure, in which nothing is held back. Mercy is not run through a sieve; it is free-flowing, like "the gentle rain from heaven / Upon the place beneath."[15] As an ethical act it is grotesque, transforming the boundaries of reciprocity that describe a particular negative act as deserving response in kind.

Each of these examples ultimately points to the fundamentally ambivalent nature of such total expenditure, however. The sun may be pure expenditure (outflow), but in so being it is also pure consumption (influx). Scott Wilson's Shakespeare-as-sun is the other side of Gary Taylor's Shakespeare-as-black hole. Helena may believe she gives her love to Bertram without any hope of return, but she ends up with him anyway. Mercy opens up the closed economy of revenge with pure expenditure, and in the process it generates a multifold increase: it is "twice blest: / It blesseth him that gives and him that takes" (Mer. 4.1.184-87).

I introduce the idea of the grotesque economy because sound is the main perceptual domain Shakespeare imagines in conjunction with it. When Antonio tries to help his brother get over his grief over the plight of Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*, Leonato answers by comparing his own ears to a sieve: "I pray thee cease thy counsel, / Which falls into mine ears as profitless / As water in a sieve" (5.1.3-5). The sieve is employed here as a metaphor for aural perception, for the ear catching or straining what is valuable out of the soup of raw data in the acoustic environment. Undoubtedly, the most famous expression of this sound economy is the opening speech of *Twelfth Night*:

> If music be the food of love play on,
> Give me excess of it; that surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken and so die.
> That strain again, it had a dying fall;
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odor. Enough, no more,
> 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
> O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
> That notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
> Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
> But falls into abatement and low price
> Even in a minute. (1.1.1-14)

Orsino begins by quickly associating sound, nourishment, and love (an emotion characterized by transformation, as in Ovid). The emotional economy he describes is radically ambivalent: he wishes to "surfeit" on this musical food, to have "excess" of it so that his appetite will eat itself to death. The "sweet sound / That breathes upon the bank of violets" is also notably ambivalent, in that it both steals *and* gives. In a synæsthetic image worthy of Bottom himself, it steals and gives not waves of sound, but odors. The "spirit of love," which feeds on sound, is represented as having a capacity as great as the sea, a capacity which transforms the value of all that enters, levelling all to "abatement and low price."

It is at this point that the speech develops a grotesque circularity, one in which sound, transformation, and continuity all appear as interrelated components. Orsino's reference to "pitch," linked to the concept of "validity," is of course a musical term he uses to indicate his advanced position in the hierarchy of Illyrian society. In using this term he translates himself metaphorically *into* sound; he makes himself a pitch, one which will "fall" because it loves. Orsino hears the sound, and then becomes transformed into the sound he hears, turning into that strain, again, the one that had the dying fall.

notes to chapter four

1 In Geoffrey Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* (1586) the engraving for emblem 218a, *Perversa Judicia* (below left), pictures the choice of Midas, in which Pan is shown playing a bagpipe. A detail from the illustration accompanying the eleventh book in George Sandys's *Ovid's Metamorphoses Englished* (below right) depicts the same scene with Pan playing the more traditional reed pipes.

2 Eighteenth-century French mythographer Antoine Banier is similarly open to various interpretations of the myth. " Midas's Stupidity," he writes, " or possibly his exquisite Sense of Hearing, made him be complimented with the Ears of an Ass." He is endowed by Apollo with ass's ears either because " he was very dull and stupid," or because the act " was designed to intimate that he had a very fine Ear like that Animal; or because he kept Spies thro' all his Dominions; or, in fine, because he commonly dwelt in a Place named […] *the Asses Ears.*" Antoine Banier, *The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients Explain'd from History: London, 1739-40*, ed. Stephen Orgel, trans. Anonymous, 4 vols., *The Renaissance and the Gods; no. 40* (New York: Garland, 1976): vol. 1, 77; vol. 2, 403.

3 The only reference to this part of the myth I have found in contemporary popular literature occurs in Thomas Tomkis's *Lingua*, when the title character shares her plans for revenge on the other senses with her partner Mendacio: " I dare not trust these secrets to the Earth, ere since she brought forth Reedes, whose babling noise tolde all the world of Midas Asses eares." See Thomas Tomkis, " Lingua: or, The Combat of the Tongue, and the Five Senses, for Superiority. A Pleasant Comedy," in *A Select Collection of Old English Plays*, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874), 335-463.

4 The earliest mention of this popular nineteenth-century interpretation I have found is by Thomas Campbell, who noted in 1838 that Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* " as if conscious that it would be his last, and as if inspired to typify himself." " Here Shakespeare himself is Prospero, or rather the superior genius who commands both Prospero and Ariel. But the time was approaching when the potent sorcerer was to break his staff, and to bury it fathoms in the ocean— 'deeper than did ever plummet sound.' That staff has never been, and never will be, recovered."

5 See lines 1.2.1-84.

6 Bataille's theory of eroticism is a striking, elegant synthesis of Plato and Freud: " We are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity. We find the state of affairs that binds us to our random and ephemeral individuality hard to bear. Along with our tormenting desire that this evanescent thing should last, there stands our obsession with a primal continuity linking us with everything that is." (*Erotism* 15).

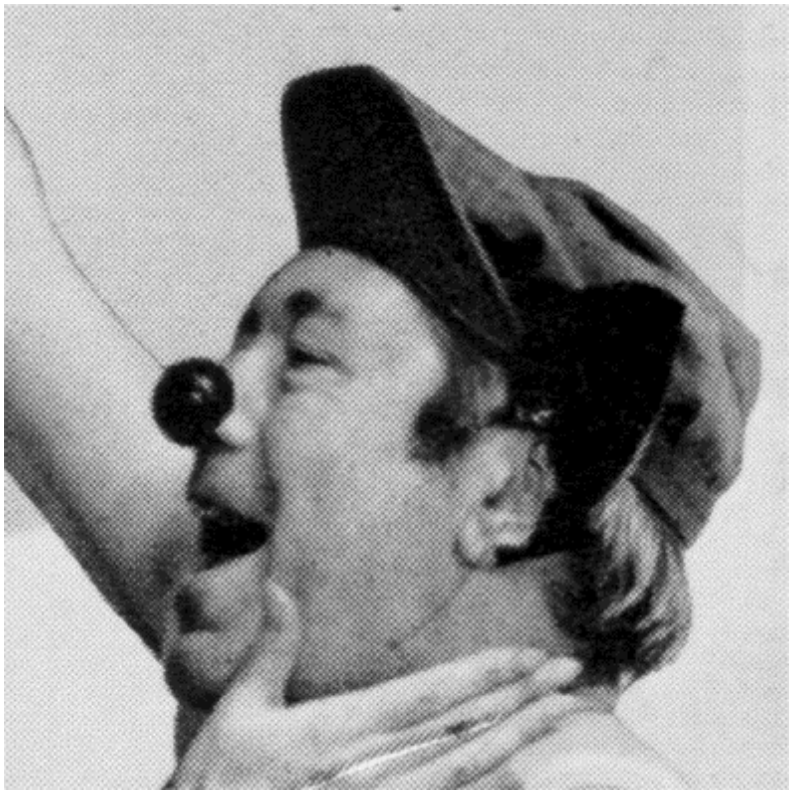
7 See, for example, Ronald F. Miller, " *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: The Faeries, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26 (1975): 254-68; R. Chris Hassel Jr, " Saint Paul and Shakespeare's Early Comedies," *Thought* 46

(1971): 371-88; Thomas B. Stroup, " Bottom's Name and His Epiphany," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29 (1978): 79-81; and Helen Peters, " Bottom: Making Sense of Sense and Scripture," *Notes & Queries* 35, no. 1 (1988): 45-47.

8 The idea of " confusion" (con-fusion) is extremely important in *A Midusmmer Night's Dream*; almost every character in the play spends at least some time being confused in one sense of the word or another. Confusion is the precise word for articulating, from the perspective of the grotesque aesthetic, what Patricia Parker has brilliantly identified as the pervasive discourse about " joinery" in the play. See her *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996): 83-115.

9 Shown below are four costumes from twentieth-century productions. In Max Reinhardt's 1935 film of the play (top left), James Cagney wears the realistic ass's head that was popular in the previous century. The ears moved independently, and the voice-over capability of film allowed his lines to be heard clearly. By mid-century the costume was regularly being pared down to its most essential elements, as seen in three productions at Stratford-upon-Avon: Charles Laughton in 1959 (top right) wears just ears and hooves, as does Paul Hardwick (bottom left) three years later. David Waller wears a simple clown nose and

understated ears in the celebrated Peter Brook production of 1970 (bottom right).



10 The most complete and comprehensive account of this literary trope remains Maggie Kilgour's pun-filled *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), which tracks the idea as it occurs throughout the Western tradition, providing much food for thought along the way.

11 See LLL 5.2.738, 5.2.890; MND 1.1.184; R2 2.1.20, 4.1.54; Ant. 3.4.5; John 3.4.109, 5.2.172; Ham. 4.7.3, 1.3.30; and H5 4.Chorus.10.

12 Bristol suggests that " Bottom is not an individual subject or character at all, but a temporary name assumed by a public figure whose willingness to play all parts is a comic uncrowning of limited identity and social discrimination." See *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985): 174.

13 For a consideration of the grotesque from a feminist standpoint, see Mary Russo, " Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*, ed. Nadia Medina Katie Conboy, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 318-36.

14 Bakhtin argues for the fundamental ambivalence of the grotesque throughout *Rabelais and His World*.

For example, he refers to the ambivalence of the performance/real life distinction (7-8); to the ambivalence which characterizes the scene of Gargantua's birth (407); and to the duality of tone in language as ambivalent (432).

15 All three of the most popular teaching editions of the complete works (Riverside, Norton, and Bevington) gloss the word " strain'd" in this speech as either " forced," " compelled," or " constrained" — obviously taking their cue from Shylock's question, " On what compulsion must I?" which the speech purportedly answers. I'm not arguing *against* this reading, but am merely supplementing it with further semantic shadings.

5 • Sounding Out and Overhearing

Dive, thoughts, down to my soul, here Clarence comes! — Richard III (1.1.41)

Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you? — Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind and Celia talk about love in terms we now hear with a familiar ear:

> Rosalind: O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love! But it cannot be sounded; my affection hath an unknown bottom, like the bay of Portugal.
>
> Celia: Or rather, bottomless—that as fast as you pour affection in, it runs out. (4.3.205-10).

When Shakespeare uses the word *sound*, it is almost always as a verb or an adjective, less often as a noun.[1] To *sound* is to measure the depth of something, to establish its boundaries, to define it spatially. The early modern practice of "beating the bounds" at Rogation-tide is representative of the way sound was employed to *sound*, to establish space and define the boundaries of rural communities in early modern England (Smith 1999: 31-32). Shakespeare picks up on this resonance of the word, and employs it

frequently in references to deep subjectivity in his plays. The exchange between Rosalind and Celia expresses his awareness of the relations between sound and our emotional life, something which we experience as profound, below the surface, on the lower frequencies, as the part of us "which passes show" (Ham. 1.2.85). Rosalind professes that she is "deep" in love, a phrase which expresses her emotional capacity. Her love is a depth that "cannot be sounded," because it has no limit. Her best friend turns the metaphor on its ear, comparing Rosalind's love to a sieve, which too is "bottomless."

In the previous chapter we heard Helena use the same notion of limitless expenditure to describe her love for Bertram. Juliet Capulet does likewise when she hears of Romeo's banishment: "There is no end, no limit, measure, bound, / In that word's death, no words can that woe sound" (3.2.125-26). Juliet's is a grief that "no words can sound" not only because it resists being articulated in sound, but because the emotion is so great words cannot *describe* it; they cannot circumscribe it, limit it, or sound it out. The association of sounding with strong emotion also occurs in *Cymbeline*: "O melancholy," cries out Belarius, "Who ever could sound thy bottom?" (4.2.203-04). On the lighter side, Petruchio flatters Kate by proclaiming that her reputation for beauty precedes her in the conversation of every town, that her beauty is "sounded"…"Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs" (2.1.193). Shakespeare seldom misses an opportunity to quibble with *sound'*s polysemy.

SOUNDING OUT DEEP SUBJECTIVITY

There is an awareness, throughout Shakespeare's works, that we have access to each other's deep subjectivity primarily through sound. By "deep subjectivity" I basically mean the unarticulated, or prearticulated self.[2] While the comedies focus on sound's relation to depth of feeling, the tragedies and histories figure it as the most reliable way of penetrating through the opacity of the other. I find it noteworthy that Shakespeare's plays so often represent this type of intelligence-gathering as an acoustic enterprise, because we tend to think of this activity in visual terms, as "surveillance." His characters often ask for others to be "sounded" with respect to their feelings, opinions, affiliations, and "deeply" held convictions.

Richard Gloucester's ascent to the throne is accompanied by many such soundings. Buckingham is particuarly adept at auscultating the body politic, and is shown on more than one occasion commissioning targeted, impromptu opinion polls.[3] He presses Catesby to sound Hastings about the prospect of Richard on the throne: "sound thou Lord Hastings / How he doth stand affected to our purpose" (3.1.170-71). Then, in an effort to ascertain what people know during the council scene, he sounds out the entire room with a question: "Who is most inward with the noble Duke?" The question is directed primarily toward Hastings, who answers that with respect to the date and planning of the coronation, "I have not sounded him [Richard], nor he deliver'd / His gracious pleasure any way therein" (3.4.8, 16-17). A few lines later Richard returns and informs Buckingham in private conference that "Catesby hath sounded Hastings in our business" (36). Once they have withdrawn again for further conference, Shakespeare exploits the opportunity to juxtapose the differing strengths of auditory and visual means of knowing the other. Hastings looks encouragingly around the table, and in a classic example of

dramatic irony delivers the punch line: "For by his face straight shall you know his heart" (53).

After Richard has assumed the throne, Buckingham reaches the limit of his moral tether with the proposed murder of the princes. He attempts to extricate himself and square accounts, starting off the difficult conversation with reference to the fact that the sounder has now become the sounded: "My lord, I have consider'd in my mind / The late request you did sound me in" (4.2.84-85).

Sound is also considered crucial in Denmark's world of intrigue, especially by those who would try to diagnose the cause of Hamlet's recent, apparently unsound, behaviour. Guildenstern and Rosencrantz report back to Polonius and Claudius after not finding the prince "forward to be sounded" (3.1.7). In the next scene, Hamlet confides in Horatio that he considers blessed those who "are not a pipe for Fortune's finger / To sound what stop she pleases" (3.2.70-71). Later in that same scene he accuses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of spying on him, using the same metaphor:

> You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from the lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be play'd on than a pipe? (3.2.364-70)

Sounding is a practice mentioned routinely in Shakespeare's plays, always in instances where characters need reliable information about the deeper convictions and motives of others. In *I Henry VI*, Charles directs the Reignier to personate the Dauphin

during his interview with Joan, for "By this means shall we sound what skill she hath." In the next installment of that tetralogy, Suffolk describes Gloucester as "a man / Unsounded yet and full of deep deceit." The opening scene of *Richard II* has the king, anxious about Mowbray's potential response to Bolingbroke's accusations, nervously probing Gaunt about whether or not he has "sounded him." Cassius asks his fellow conspirators, "But what of Cicero? Shall we sound him?" *Lear's* Gloucester too credulously asks Edmund if Edgar has "never before sounded you in this business?" in reference to the supposed plot on his life. In *Merry Wives*, Ford announces that he has "a disguise to sound Falstaff." In Padua, Baptista promises, upon learning of Bianca's marriage to Lucentio, to "sound the depth of this knavery." Like many the father of a teenager, Montague feels he lacks emotional access to his son, Romeo, who is "to himself so secret and so close, / So far from sounding and discovery."[4]

While an absence of sound characterizes Montague's lack of access to his son, Juliet's intimacy with him is typified by its presence, and her immediate recognition of his voice: "My ears have yet not drunk a hundred words / Of thy tongue's uttering, yet I know the sound" (2.2.58-59). Characters in other plays commonly refer to the establishment and maintenance of emotional proximity in this way, through sound. We do the same today when we speak of being "on the same wavelength" with someone else. Berowne maintains that "A lover's ear will hear the lowest sound" (4.3.332). When Hal bursts into the Boar's Head Tavern and proclaims to Poins, "I have sounded the very base-string of humility," he means that he has achieved a kind of sympathy with the tapsters, the lowest rung on the social ladder at the tavern (2.4.5-6). In *As You Like It*, Orlando bursts into the banished Duke's encampment ready to steal food from them, and

is quickly taken aback by their generosity. The fact that they speak so "gently" positions them for Orlando at a different, somehow more comfortable, social register (2.7.106). In *Lear*, the blinded Gloucester is represented as quickly having developed a keener sense of hearing, with which he correctly suspects Edgar of some kind of fraud as they make their way to the "cliff": "Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st / In better phrase and matter than thou did'st" (4.6.7-8).[5] Edgar has temporarily fallen out of character, forgetting that his visual disguise as Tom O'Bedlam is of no use in the present situation. The relation between hearing and emotional proximity is even more pronounced at the beginning of that play, where Lear's main desire, which drives the ensuing events, is to hear how much he is loved. Kent tries to get Lear to listen to reason about Cordelia, to educate his sense of hearing: "Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least, / Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds / Reverb no hollowness" (1.1.152-54). Cordelia, like Brutus and Hal before her, is an unsounded self.

ARTISTS OF SOUND

In the third chapter I suggested that sound and hearing are increasingly evident in the metaphoric figurations we use to describe Shakespeare's genius to each other. There are instances where his genius is more expressly associated with these concepts than in the metaphors of Gary Taylor and Scott Wilson, however, and I would like to close this chapter by noting a few of them. The first, and most direct, occurs in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, where Bruce Smith challenges traditional accounts that attribute Shakespeare's genius to his representations of character:

> …character in early modern theatre happens through sound, through spoken language. In the circumstances of early modern performance—circumstances in the literal, physical sense of the word—"character" is an achievement of actors, not of scriptwriters. Among allusions to Shakespeare during and just after his career "character" is conspicuous by its absence . . . . What makes Shakespeare "not of an age, but for all time" is his genius as an artist of sounds, not his ability to create memorable characters. (278)

Smith repositions the emphasis from Shakespeare as a creator of characters to his genius as "an artist of sounds." Shakespeare is a musician, really. Smith maintains that one of the reasons the early modern theatre was popular was because it allowed for the representation of more robust subjectitivies than were offered in other contemporary performance venues: "Audiences liked it because it engendered, through sound, a subjectivity that was far more exciting—and far more liberating—than those created by oratory, conversation, and liturgy by themselves" (1999: 270).

Terence Hawkes cocks an ear to the music of the Shakespearean text in an essay titled "That Shakespeherian Rag" (1986: 73-91). Writing on Hamlet's final "O's" in the First Folio version of the play, he notes that

> their range of signification extends beyond the frontiers of language, and so of experience as we know it. However ingeniuosly explained, those 'ah's and 'O's and 'thus's continue to subvert order, to distrupt sequence, to impede the linear flow of

> meaning because that is what their final referents—orgasm, disintegration, despair and death—finally do. (88-89)

Hawkes here excellently describes what I call the "Shakespearience" embedded in the Shakespearean play-text—the representation of experience which goes beyond the linguistic. In his essay, Hawkes characterizes this style of representation as a fusion of two modes of communication, writing and improvisational jazz, and argues that we must read the play-texts accordingly (89-90).

Four months to the day before John Wayne's death, noted culture critic and historian Greil Marcus published a piece on the actor in the *Los Angeles Times*, in which he tried to get past the "legend…encrusted with the myths he has acted out," past the "statue-in-waiting," and onward to an appreciation of the real actor (1995: 210). "Very few actors enter such desperate, psychologically catastrophic crises," Marcus notes, "and when they do they protect themselves," either by overacting, underacting, or by completely losing themselves in their roles (214). What makes John Wayne such a special actor is that he does none of the above. In films like *The Searchers* and *Red River*, "you understand that Wayne is judging the motives and actions of his characters and finding them correct, necessary—satisfying." He assents to these characters, in their fullness. The main argument of the essay is that Wayne's particular ability results from the way he *listens* to the characters as he acts them out: "When Ethan Edwards speaks in *The Searchers*, or Tom Dunson in *Red River*—when their vows are made, and then they are taken back—John Wayne is listening to what they say" (215).

I introduce Greil Marcus's description of John Wayne's acting style and method because it is the exact representational modality which Harold Bloom credits another actor, William Shakespeare (whom he calls "keenest of ears"), with inventing (1998: 634). According to Bloom, Shakespeare's most important and enduring contribution to the Western literary tradition is his represention of subjectivity as a process of continual transition.[6] Moreover, what makes Shakespeare's characters so real, he finds, is not only that they are represented changing over time, but also the *way* in which they are represented changing over time.[7] This is accomplished through instances in which characters are represented overhearing themselves, in which they exteriorize their thoughts and emotions, and subsequently change as a result of listening to themselves.[8]

One of the places Bloom broaches the subject more overtly is in *The Western Canon* (1995), when he explains why Shakespeare occupies the center of the canon. The earliest he encounters the representation of overhearing in literature is in Chaucer's portrayals of the Pardoner and the Wife of Bath. Shakespeare tunes into this "burgeoning secret of representation," and soon

> surpasses all others in evidencing a psychology of mutability. That is only part of the Shakespearean splendor; he not only betters all rivals but originates the depiction of self-change on the basis of self-overhearing, with nothing but the hint from Chaucer to provoke him to this most remarkable of all literary innovations. (48)

Working with a phrase from Hegel, Bloom suggests that in Shakespeare's plays, characters such as Hamlet, Iago, and Edmund become "free artists of themselves."

Through overhearing themselves, these characters are able to "change and go on to contemplate an otherness in the self, or the possibility of such otherness" (70). The idea of overhearing is given further treatment in Bloom's most recent book, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, where it makes its initial appearance in the context of his discussion of *Richard II* (1998: 268).

For all his railing in the recent book against the New Historicism and the "French Shakespeare" it produces, Bloom's variations on Hegel's phrase about Shakespeare representing characters as free artists of themselves sound a lot like the sort of self-fashioning Stephen Greenblatt was writing about almost two decades ago (Greenblatt 1980). Bloom is well aware of this, though his attempt to free himself from that association nevertheless produces a deflation of Falstaffian proportions:

> Shakespeare's term for our "self" is "selfsame," and *Hamlet*, whatever its first version was like, is very much the drama in which the tragic protagonist revises his sense of the selfsame. Not self-fashioning but self-revision; for Foucault the self is fashioned, but for Shakespeare it is given, subject to subsequent mutabilities. (1998: 411).

In finessing the similarity, he has to jettison the concept of agency he so carefully nurtures throughout the entire book. The spite is evident; he cannot even bring himself to name Greenblatt so he instead summons the spectre of Michel Foucault, who appears only once in the body of Greenblatt's book, on page 80, and from thenceforth only in endnotes. Bloom admits that he sees himself as a "parody of Falstaff" (725), and it is easy to recognize the lovable knight in the way he fights this particular critical battle.

Although he may prefer to think he's hurling thunderbolts from on high, one senses discretion as the better part of valour here. The sabre cuts a wide defensive swath, but actual hand-to-hand combat just isn't in the cards. This and other periodic references to the whole School of Resentment conspiracy may take a toll on his dignity, especially within the academic community (*Seven? why, there were but four even now*), but that sacrifice is also the greatest proof of his larger argument: that *Shakespeare has invented him*, that he indeed is Falstaff. For that very sacrifice he remains larger than life in the same way Falstaff does—and as eminently readable.

Greil Marcus would argue that the sense in which John Wayne *listens* to the characters he plays, in which he assents to their reality in a thorough and fundamental way, is exactly how history should be confronted. The alternative might be safe, but you really don't get to go anywhere:

> Perhaps the most pernicious strain of contemporary criticism says one thing before it says anything else, says it to whatever historical event or cultural happenstance is supposedly at issue: *You can't fool me*. I think criticism, or a critical engagement with history, has a good deal to do with a willingness to be fooled: to take an idea too far, to bet too much on too small an object or occasion, to be caught up and even swept away. (6-7)

This is obviously how Bloom thinks we should read Shakespeare too—and he ought to know. After having been swept away for over 700 pages he washes ashore, sputtering, clearing his ears, and clutching a pearl of a sentence: "Shakespeare's plays are the wheel

of all our lives, and teach us whether we are fools of time, or of love, or of fortune, or of our parents, or of ourselves" (735).

More than one reviewer of *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* found the repetition in the book annoying.[9] Perhaps they failed to appreciate that Bloom, as a Shakespeare critic, is also a jazz artist. The repetitions are actually melodic lines, or refrains. In the book, he riffs on a small core of ideas—Hegel on Shakespeare's characters as free artists of themselves, Nietzsche on language as the graveyard of meaning—and returns to them, listening to how they play in different contexts, with different subtleties of phrasing. They are part of his repertoire, and like every jazz artist he always keeps a few of them close to hand in case he wants, or needs, to revisit them during his explorations. He finds that these ideas, like melodies, have a fascinating dimensionality to them. Because he is convinced of their resonance they bear repetition, and pearls. Shakespeare invents his readers, as artists of sound.

notes to chapter five

1 Although I want to focus in this section on Shakespeare's use of sound as a verb, the word is of course also an adjective, connoting good health. Orlando protests to Rosaline that his love is " sound, sans crack or flaw" (5.2.415). *Measure for Measure*, too, presents several clear examples of sound as an index to one's internal state. The First Gentleman and Lucio trade senses of the word, the former complaining that " Thou art always figuring diseases in me; but thou art full of error, I am sound," — to which Lucio replies, " Nay, not (as one would say) healthy; but so sound as things that are hollow. Thy bones are hollow; impiety has made a feast of thee" (1.2.53-57). In a later scene, the Duke uses the word to describe Juliet's spiritual state: " I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience, / And try your penitence, if it be sound, / Or hollowly put on" (2.3.21-23). The metaphorical and the literal senses of the word fuse in *The Merchant of Venice* when Shylock, in an effort to keep poisonous outside influences from entering his house, orders Jessica to " stop my house's ears, I mean my casements; / Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter / My sober house" (2.5.34-36). In *Much Ado*

About Nothing, Don Pedro describes Benedick's candor as the true index of his inner self: " He hath a heart as sound as a bell, and his tongue is the clapper, for what his heart thinks, his tongue speaks" (3.2.12-14).

2 In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Brutus describes himself as an " unsounded self" (line 1819).

3 Could Buckingham be an early modern Dick Morris? The French word for opinion poll is *sondage*, a more direct reference to it as a sounding.

4 See 1H6 (1.2.63); 2H6 (2.4.56-57); R2 (1.1.8); JC (2.1.141); Lear (1.2.70); MWW (2.1.237.38); Shrew (5.2.137); and Rom. (1.1.149-50).

5 Marshall McLuhan begins *The Gutenberg Galaxy* by suggesting that Shakespeare " seems to have missed due recognition for having in *King Lear* made the first, and so far as I know, the only piece of verbal three-dimensional perspective in any literature" in the scene with Edgar and Gloucester on the " cliff." See *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962): 15.

6 Peter Cummings has noted that it is not only Shakespeare's characters that change, but us as well, and those changes are reflected and registered in sound: " We hear other things in texts as we grow older with them, as their lines

and voices speak to us, just as we hear more subtle nuances in the human voices we know over time." See his " Hearing in *Hamlet*: Poisoned Ears and the Psychopathology of Flawed Audition," *Shakespeare Yearbook* 1, no. Spring (1990): 83.

7 Sound is by far the most important sensory domain for the perception of change in time. Our ears are amazingly sensitive instruments in this respect. Think about watching a movie. The frames race by at 24 frames per second (if you're watching a VHS videocassette, make that a little over 29 fps), and you get realistic representations of people walking out of a factory, chasing each other in cars, and so on. The world races before your eyes at 24 frames per second. Now imagine listening to your favourite compact disc. To achieve a similar level of realism, the digitized signal goes by at a rate of over *44,000* samples per second. As I write this, the sound recording industry is gearing up prototypes of consumer machines that will run at 96,000 samples per second; they will initially be targeted to the audiophile market.

8 The idea appears in *Ruin the Sacred Truths* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), in which he notes that Shakespeare introduces " the representation of change by showing people pondering their own speeches and being altered through that consideration" (54).

9 See William W. Kerrigan, " The Case for Bardolatry: Harold Bloom Rescues Shakespeare from the Critics," *Lingua Franca*, November 1998, page 37; and Anthony Lane, " Infinite Exercise: Harold Bloom takes on all of Shakespeare, and humanity, too," *New Yorker*, 19 October 1998, page 86.

The Rest is Silence

That strain again, it had a dying fall — Twelfth Night (1.1.4)

No one can both know and not be destroyed — Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*

The rest is silence. Hamlet dies, and with a shaman's knowedge of the hereafter provides us not with a visual *glimpse* of that realm, but with a brief description of what it *sounds* like there. His last words clearly cannot pertain to the play itself, wherein people continue on, discoursing and making sounds after his death. There are governments to form, state funerals to plan, death marches to play, stories to relate. Every time he dies, the world fills up again with sound. Hamlet leaves sound, and leaves us in sound. To hear, Hamlet tells us with his final breath, is what it is to be alive. The rest is silence.

In the theatre at Epidaurus it is morning. A philosopher, Michel Serres, sits alone in the calm, and finds to his regret that no matter how he tries he cannot escape sound, the constant vibration of being. As he sits he even becomes aware of the noises made by his own body through the proprioceptive faculty of hearing. A group of tourists enters the ruin, disturbing the tranquillity even further with their incessant jabbering, their addiction to language. They leave. The theatre itself transforms into a giant ear pointed towards the gods: "I listen. My ear grows to the dimensions of the amphitheatre, porch of marble.

Hearing laid out on the earth, along a vertical axis, which listens for the harmony of the world."[1]

For Serres, hearing is all about involvements, and transformations. His is a difficult relationship to sound, because he so closely associates it with the prison of language, straightjacket of experience. He wants to be able to listen and hear nothing except the stillness at the limits of being. But sound will not allow him his desire to think apart, to be apart; it keeps calling him back, involving him in the world. He prefers the theatre at Pinara, with its silent audience of the dead. The chapter of *Les Cinq Sens* in which this scene occurs is titled "Boîtes," a word that refers to Serre's conception of hearing. Of all senses it most perfectly demonstrates the mysterious transformations whereby raw data becomes metamorphosed into meaning, through means of processes he can only locate in "black boxes," the contents of which are inaccessible to us. Ears take the hard data of the environment, which includes ourselves, and transform it into the soft data of consciousness. The precise mechanisms through which they achieve this we really don't understand much better now than we did in Shakespeare's day.

I can't help thinking of Shakespeare as a listening self, a *will*-ing ear, one who had developed an acute awareness of the way in which sounds create worlds. The prologue to *Henry V* famously exhorts the audience to "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them / Printing their proud hoofs I' th' receiving earth" (26-27). The surrounding speech is often produced as proof of the power of Shakespeare's imagination, of his ability to conjure up images through language. But that isn't what the speech is about at all: it is, rather, an expression of the extreme vulnerability that is always associated with the project of trying to get people to really *listen*, which is the necessary precondition for the

creation of situations people will believe in. An actor stands alone, on an empty stage, in front of two thousand people who have paid money to be entertained. The speech is an admission that the contract is not finished, that if this thing, this presentation, is going to work, we are going to have to participate.[2] Something more is being asked of us in this speech: we must listen, to it, with a careful and imaginative ear. It is the best we can do.

Listening is essential not only in the theatre; it is also an important element in the imaginative engagement with texts. Thousands of people now hear the work of François Rabelais in a new way, through the ears of Mikhail Bakhtin, who was the first in many years to tune into and reclaim the laughter in Rabelais's book as an expression of the durable wisdom of the common people. Another extremely influential critic, Stephen Greenblatt, has more dramatically described his own impulse to read early modern literature as the result of a shamanistic "desire to speak with the dead," to listen to the stories they have to tell:

> Even when I came to understand that in my most intense moments of straining to listen all I could hear was my own voice, even then I did not abandon my desire. It was true that I could hear only my own voice, but my own voice was the voice of the dead, for the dead had contrived to leave textual traces of themselves, and those traces make themselves heard in the voices of the living. (1988: 1)

The early modern text is represented here as a storehouse of sound, though Greenblatt seems to mean not so much literal sound, as sound's insistence on the fullness of experience, the sense of immersion and involvement that we associate with it most closely of all the modes of perception.[3] Hearing the voices in these texts radically

destabilizes Greenblatt's own sense of identity, which begins to oscillate back and forth between himself and the other, vibrating like a plucked string. At first he hears only his own voice, but that voice transforms into the voice of the dead, which then becomes the sound of the dead in the texts pronounced by his voice. It is a dialogue that is a dialectic. Like the Duke of Orsino, he hears a sound, and then turns into the sound he hears.

In this dissertation I have tried to make listening my own critical practice by attending to the ways Shakespeare is attuned to, and rebroadcasts throughout his work, the many interrelated valences sound has in the early modern period, including notions of transformation, generativity, vulnerability, nourishment, grotesque continuity, community, expenditure, radical provisionality, the dialogical construction of subjectivity, as well as related ethical dispositions such as obedience, receptivity, assent, and belief. These fundamental notions of what it means to have ears, to be alive, play on in his works, and in us as well. Pick up a play, lend a willing ear, and listen for your self.

notes to conclusion

1 " J'écoute. L'oreille s'agrandit aux dimensions de l'amphithéâtre, pavillon de marbre. Ouïe couchée sur la terre, dans une axe vertical, qui tente d'entendre l'harmonie du monde." In Michel Serres, *Les Cinq Sens* (Paris: Éditions Grasset et Fasquelle, 1985): 109. The English translation is my own. The very name of the amphitheatre suggests a pun: in Greek, *epi* = upon or at, and in Latin, *auris* = the ear. At the amphitheatre, Serres sits " epi d'aure," positioned upon the ear.

2 Peter Brook's universally lauded production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, arguably the most important production of Shakespeare in our century, was based on this admission; as a result, it presented audiences not only with the power of Shakespeare's imagination, but astonished them with that of their own.

3 He writes, " It is paradoxical, of course, to seek the living will of the dead in fictions, in places where there was no live bodily being to begin

with. But those who love literature tend to find more intensity in simulations— in the formal, self-conscious miming of life— than in any of the other textual traces left by the dead, for simulations are undertaken in full awareness of the absence of life they contrive to represent, and hence they may skillfully anticipate and compensate for the vanishing of the actual life that has empowered them" (Greenblatt 1988: 1).

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