

Shakespeare's Sound Government: Sound Defects, Polyglot Sounds, and Sounding Out

Patricia Parker

a sound, but not in government.
—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

it cannot be sounded; my affection hath an unknown bottom
—*As You Like It*

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Quince's mispunctuated Prologue (which comically turns a potential compliment into an insult) is described by Hippolyta as "like a child on a recorder—a sound, but not in government" (5.1.122-24).¹ The line calls attention to the government of sound itself, by the "stops" of a recorder or the punctuating "points" of proper discursive "partition" (5.1.167). Far from yielding a simple joke at the artisans' expense, however, Quince's mispointing echoes that of other subjects of Theseus who put "periods in the midst of sentences" (5.1.96), subtly suggesting a connection between the government of sound and sound government of other kinds. In a Shakespeare canon that elsewhere evokes a "jesting spirit . . . govern'd by stops" (*Much Ado* 3.2.59-60), Hippolyta's "recorder" re-sounds in Hamlet's objection to attempts to "govern" his "stops" (3.2.357), in a tragedy whose potentially ungovernable instruments include players whose antic disposition Hamlet himself attempts to control or govern through a written script (3.2.38-45). *Sounding* in "you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to [the top of] my compass" (*Hamlet* 3.2.364-67) combines an instrument to be played upon ("a pipe for Fortune's finger / To sound what stop she please" [3.2.70-71]) with the sense of fathoming or sounding out, already exploited in Polonius's plan to "sound" out his son (2.1.42), in *Julius Caesar's* "shall we sound him" (2.1.141), and in *As You Like It* in Rosalind's "that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love! But it cannot be sounded; my affection hath an

¹ The edition used for all quotations from Shakespeare is the Riverside 1974. Through Line Numbers, where used, are cited throughout as *TLN*.

unknown bottom” and Celia’s “or rather, bottomless—that as fast as you pour affection in it, it runs out” (4.1.205-10).²

“Sound” in its multiple senses is repeatedly foregrounded in Shakespeare, including as the “whole,” undiseased, or opposite of “unsound,” as in the exchange on “diseases,” syphilitic “French crowns,” and “three thousand dolors” in *Measure for Measure* (1.2.53-56):

[*I. Gent.*] Thou art always figuring diseases in me, but thou art full of error: I am sound.

Lucio. Nay, not (as one would say) healthy; but so sound as things that are hollow.

Resounding with the “dollars” in “dolors” as well as the “hollow,” sound registers simultaneously here as unaffected by sexual disease,³ a claim to wholeness or soundness that ironically resonates in Berowne’s “my love to thee is sound, sans crack or flaw” (*Love’s Labor’s Lost* 5.2.415) together with the possibility of hollow or mere sound, not yet perhaps Macbeth’s “sound and fury, signifying nothing” (5.5.27) but potentially only “Idle words . . . / Unprofitable sounds” (*The Rape of Lucrece* 1017). In a period when “to fall into a sound” designated its own homophonic double *swoon(d)*, not even the semantic boundaries of sound itself could be wholly governed.⁴

Here’s no sound jest . . .
—*Titus Andronicus*

the eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen . . .
—*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*

Impossible as it is to fathom the bottom of sound, we might here at least foreground some sound jests that have escaped attention, perhaps because they are not easy for the eye to hear. In *Titus Andronicus*, a “written” message to Chiron and Demetrius, whose rape of Lavinia has been “deciphered” (4.2.8), involves verses from “Horace” familiar from Lyly’s Latin grammar (4.2.20-21): “*Integer vitae, scelerisque purus, / Non eget Mauri jaculis, nec arcu*” (“The man with integrity of life, pure of crime, needs not the arrows or bow of the Moor”). But Aaron the Moor not only comprehends that Titus has sounded out or “found their guilt” and “sends them weapons wrapp’d about with lines / That wound beyond their feeling to the quick” (4.2.26-28), but re-sounds the aural (or sound) jest within “Horace” itself (4.2.24-26):

² See also Folkerth 2002:*passim* and 25. I am very grateful to Neil Rhodes for comments that prompted the revision of this paper and to Lorna Hutson, who both shaped and delivered it to the original conference held at St. Andrews in 2006.

³ For this contemporary sense of sound, see also *A Mad World, My Masters* (4.2.12: “Recovered, well, and sound again”) in Middleton 1995:312.

⁴ See *OED* “sound,” noun 4. In *Henry VI Part 2*, the stage direction in the Folio for the swooning of the king reads “*King sounds*” (TLN 1729). See Dessen and Thomson 1999:223.

Ay, just—a verse in Horace, right, you have it.
 [Aside] Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!
 Here's no sound jest!

The lines turn on “sound”: not only because what Aaron calls “no sound jest” could “not be sounder” (Bate 1995:220), because the scroll’s “written” message is not “sound,” or because “no sound” suggests the unsound or unhealthy, but also because of the familiar “sound jest” on “ass” and “whore” within the august Roman “Horace,” in a period when Aeneas, Midas, and other names ending in “ass” were routinely subjected to such confluations of high and low through their ungoverned sounds. In a play whose “sound” (or unsound) confluations include “goats” and “Goths” or “Jupiter” and “gibbet-maker,” and a translingual context where Latin *integer* itself ironically means whole or sound, “no sound jest” thus manages to sound out an action or “gest” that is anything but healthy or “sound,” through the coupling of “whore” and “ass” that appears nowhere to the eye within the “written” script, ferreting or sounding out as the other parties to this “crime” the Moor and Tamora, the “witty Empress” who would herself “applaud Andronicus’s conceit” (30).

Shakespearean sound effects (or sound defects) depend not only on hearing with the eye (as in Sonnet 23) but also on seeing with the ear, including through the vivid reports of the *nuntius* or messenger who produces not “ocular proof” but what might be called a (potentially unsound) “evidence effect,” turning the ear into a substitute *oculus* or eye (Erasmus 1978:577). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, where sound jests on “nothing” and “noting” are joined by the *nothus* or Latin for “bastard,” representing “reportingly” (3.1.116) generates a potentially tragic substitute for ocular proof that in *Othello* makes the messenger who puts hearers in “false gaze” (1.3.19) a forerunner of Iago (or Iachimo in *Cymbeline*), a dependence on “auricular assurance” (*King Lear* 1.2.92) that is strikingly foregrounded in *The Winter’s Tale*, in a Recognition Scene wholly dependent on seeing with the ear (“that which you hear you’ll swear you see” 5.2.32).

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which begins by invoking things momentary “as a sound” (1.1.143), seeing with the ear is part of the apparent nonsense of a Bottom whose “bottomless” dream cannot be sounded, including in “I see a voice! . . . / To spy and I can hear my Thisby’s face” (5.1.192-93).⁵ But soundings beyond the reach of the eye are underscored repeatedly in this as in other plays, including in Hermia’s “Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found; / Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound” (3.2.181-82), in a scene where Lysander’s defection realizes the earlier ungoverned sounds within his own name: “Lie further off yet; do not lie so near . . . / For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie. . . . / Lysander lied. . . .” (2.2.44-57). In a play where the Indian boy who is pivotal to the plot may never actually be seen on stage (Dessen 2002:75), his mother the Indian votaress is pure sound effect (2.1.123-35), like the vivid report of the death of Ophelia in *Hamlet* (4.7.166-83), whose “melodious lay” and “clothes spread wide” simultaneously resound with sounds not “in government,” yielding the aural ghost-effect of “close spread wide” as well as a different kind of lying or “lay” (Parker 1996:255).

⁵ I am indebted here as elsewhere to Folkerth 2002:91-98.

a non est woman
—Barnabe Riche

I haue seene a Ladies Nose
That ha's beene blew . . .
—*The Winter's Tale*

The sound defects produced by omitting stops that prevent sounds from running together have their counterpart in what might be called elision's "soundeffects." The "all ways" and "always" that sound within Titania's "Faeries be gon, and be alwaies away" (Q1, F3r; Dessen 1995:21) confound on the ear what is differentiated in print. The "all swell" that sounds within *All's Well That Ends Well*, a play preoccupied with dilation or swelling (Harris 2006), evades ocular proof like the "strumpet" within "The Moor! I know his trumpet" (*Othello* 2.1.178), in a tragedy whose re-soundings range from the "O" in *Othello* or "demon" in "Desdemon" to the "hideous" in the "hid," or "whore" within the "pliant hour" of *Othello*'s speech on his wooing of Brabantio's daughter, just after the evocation of her "greedy ear" (1.3.149-51), contributing to the forging of its "preposterous conclusions" (1.3.329; Parker 1996:48). In *Hamlet*—where poisoning through the ear and Claudius's abusing of the "ear" of Denmark with a "forged process" or report of Old Hamlet's death (1.5.37) anticipates Iago's plan to "abuse" the "ear" of the "Moor" (*Othello* 1.3.395)—such ungoverned sound effects include the "poison ingest" that sounds in "poison in jest" (3.2.234) or the "causeandefect" resounding ironically within the lines that culminate in Polonius's "effect defective comes by cause" (2.2.103), as he promises to ferret or sound out the "cause" of the madness of Denmark's son (or sun).

Such "soundeffects" as well as polyglot soundings were endemic in the period. A "non est" yields an "honest" open to suspicion in Barnabe Riche's "May not a non est woman lodge men and women all together in one chamber" (1606:10v), while Middleton's *It's a Mad World, My Masters* depends for its bawdy not only on the familiar sounding of the low within the apparently high (including "de-stink-shuns" in "distinctions") but on the "hole and skirt" within the apparently innocent "Holland skirt" (1.1.110, 2.2.29; Middleton 1995:301, 305). Exploiting what Day's *Isle of Gulls* called the "bawdry" of "an ell deepe, and a fathome broad" (Day 1980: Induction 65-71), Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* (3.2) elides the "kitchen wench" Nell with "an ell" (or span of 45 inches), potentially sounding to the ear as a "Nell" broad. In relation to the ear's notoriously open porches (*Hamlet* 1.5.63), the problem of governance or stops posed by such "soundeffects" includes whether there is any stop to potentially infinite jests (quite apart from the unfathomable issue of whether they are intended). Should we tell a student, for example, not to hear (as one recently did) another "Athenian eunuch" in "You Nick Bottom" (1.2.20; 5.1.45), in Shakespeare's comedy of a potentially "bottomless" sounding, when the line immediately preceding it is "Name what part I am for" (2.1.18-19)?

Yet another problem of "sounding out" involves not only regional inflections but also the impossibility of knowing how words in Shakespeare actually sounded, though we know now that it was not like Received Pronunciation or particular constructions of the Bard as an icon of Englishness from earlier colonial periods (projecting the "government" of "sound" across more imperial dominions). Personal histories of intimidation with regard to how Shakespeare "should" sound might be recounted by many of us from different geographies and generations. I remember

my embarrassment as a child when my Irish immigrant father taught me to pronounce “ache” the same way as the letter “H” and I was rebuked for my ignorance by a teacher, long before discovering that an entire exchange in *Antony and Cleopatra* (4.7.8) depends on the homophonic sounding of “ache” and “H.”

Such divergent early modern soundings extend not only to homophones such as “one” and “own” or “sea” and “say” but also to sound effects obscured by differentiated spellings. The “eye,” “ay,” and “I” rendered in modern editions of *Richard II* as “Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be” (4.1.200) appears in the Folio and other early texts as “I, no; no I” (Folio *TLN* 2122; Dessen 2002:21), just as “eye” and “I” (as well as “ay”) resound throughout *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from the opening scene's “Ay me! for aught that I could ever read” (1.1.132) to Hermia's “Methinks I see these things with parted eye” (4.1.189), in a plot where eyes, consent (or “ays”), and the problem of differentiating “I's” play such a major part.⁶ Even the letters whose “alphabetical position” Malvolio attempts to construe in the Folio text of *Twelfth Night* (“O shall end, I hope. . . I, or Ile cudgell him, and make him cry O. . . And then I comes behind. . . I, and you had any eye behinde you . . .”) may resound with a Chaucerian “nether eye” in a play filled with arsy-versy inversions and “backtricks” of all kinds.⁷

In ways that differently underscore what may be obscured by editorial emendation or modernization, other sound jests that might be more visible even to the eye in the earliest texts are effaced by more modern standardizations of spelling and grammar. In *The Winter's Tale*, as Leontes' jealousy builds on conjectures that lack “sight only” (2.1.177), his newly suspected “boy,” Mamillius, engages in an exchange that appears in modern editions as follows (2.1.13-15):

Mam. What color are your eyebrows?
 [1.] *Lady.* Blue, my lord.
Mam. Nay, that's a mock. I have seen a lady's nose
 That has beene blue, but not her eyebrows.

But what is here potentially obscured by the spelling of “blue” appears in the Folio as the double-meaning sound of “blew” (Folio: *TLN* 602-05):

Mam. . . . What colour are your eye-browes?
Lady. Blew (my Lord.)
Mam. Nay, that's a mock: I haue seene a Ladies Nose
 That ha's beene blew, but not her eye-browes.

⁶ Though there is not room here to cite all of the treatments of this pervasive homophonic network, its importance within and beyond the sonnets is treated in Fineman 1986, while its relation to ears as well as eyes is foregrounded in Baldo 1996, espec. chs. 5 and 6.

⁷ See the more detailed reading in Parker 2007b:46, with the 1623 Folio text quoted here from *TLN* 1139-43 of the Norton Facsimile of *The First Folio of Shakespeare* (1968:282).

Readers of modern editions may miss the “mock” (or confusion) entirely here, since it depends not only on the sound and early modern spelling of “blew” for the color we know as “blue” but on a construction that modern grammar would render as a nose that has been “blown” (not “blew”). But as with so many Shakespearean sound jests, what might seem only a marginal quibble has much larger resonances within the play as a whole. In the same scene as this sounding of things that can (or cannot) be “blew,” Leontes assumes the legitimacy of his own sounding out of what is lacking in “sight” or ocular proof, and Hermione tells Mamillius (of his “tale” best for “winter”) to “giv’t me in mine ear” (2.1.32), in a plot whose Recognition Scene will depend on what is seen by the ear and a play whose very title begs the question of the “credit” (5.1.179) or credibility to be given to reports or “tales.”

Hermaphrodite phrases . . . halfe Latin and halfe English.
—Nashe, *Strange newes*

Tailler. To cut, slit, slice, hew, hacke, slash, gash; nicke . . . also, to geld.
—Cotgrave’s *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*

As with the Latin lines from “Horace” in *Titus Andronicus* or the macaronic sounding of English “honest” in Barnabe Riche’s “a non est woman,” polyglot soundings resonate throughout the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries in ways we need to hear for interpretive and not just more narrowly linguistic reasons. In *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, the Clown who abandons the “Jew” for the service of a “Christian” is named not Lancelot (the spelling in modern editions) but “Lancelet” or “Launcelet,” identifying him with the knife that Rabelais called “le lancelet qu’utilisent les chirurgiens” (1994:501), or the surgeons’ “lancelet” associated with the bloodletting, circumcision, and castration that are central within the entire play (Parker 2007a). In *Othello*, the “Signior Angelo” on whom so much critical ink has been spilled in attempts to locate a precise historical referent for the messenger who puts the Venetians in “false gaze” (1.2.16) bears (like “Angelo” in *Measure for Measure*) a name that identifies him not only with the devil disguised as an “angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14), but also with the familiar generic term for such a bearer of reports (from Greek *angelos* or messenger), exploited in Nashe’s description of Harvey as “no Angell but ANGELOS, id est, Nuntius, a Fawneguest Messenger” (Nashe 1592:sig. B4r).

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, whose transvestite staging is foregrounded when the Egyptian queen evokes the “boy” actor who plays her (5.2.220), “Salt Cleopatra” (2.1.21) resonates not only with Latin *sal* or “salt” but also with the *saltator* or dancer familiar from Plautus’s and other descriptions of seductive transvestite dancers (Parker 2004:233), a term Shakespeare repeats (with a different inflection) in the “Saltiers” or dancers of *The Winter’s Tale* (4.4.327). Antony’s wearing of Cleopatra’s “tires and mantles” (2.5.22) involves not just a gendered but a cultural cross-dressing, in a period where the “tyres of the head” (Geneva 1560: Isaiah 3.20) came (like the English *attire*) from “the Latine word *Tiara*, which is an ornament of the heads of the Persian Kings, Priests, and Women . . . such as the Turkes weare at this day” (Minsheu 1617; Parker 2004:244). And in this play where the “captainship” of Antony is described as emasculated or “nicked” (3.13.8), “tailors of the earth,” in a passage that includes “members” and “cut” (1.2.168-176), turns on the French sense of *tailleur* (cutter or gelder) as well as on the

familiar sexual sense of “tail” exploited in *Romeo and Juliet* (1.2.40) or the Tailor scene of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The Shakespeare who would later become an icon of “Englishness” but whose language reflects the more polyglot resonances of early modern London is thus frequently more easily heard by students or interpreters who may be less narrowly anglocentric. My Spanish-speaking students in California can hear not only the market sounding in the “Mercatio” of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, but, in contrast to my English-only students from San Diego, the Santiago or St. James in whose name the Moors were driven out of Spain, evoked by the name of Iago in *Othello*, in a period when Dekker in *The Whore of Babylon* could refer to St. James’s in London itself as “St. Iago’s” and a linguistic environment in which the related name of King James could be alternately sounded as Jacobus, Jacob, Jacques or Jaques (Parker 2001:43).

Such polyglot soundings also made it possible for Shakespeare and his contemporaries to exploit the ear’s ability to hear sounds simultaneously and macaronically in multiple linguistic registers. Nicholas Udall could play on the vernacular “rice pudding cake” sounding within the more august Latin *respublica* (Woodbridge 2001:141). Thomas Nashe could hear Latin *moechus* (fornicator or adulterer) as well as the “Mecca” where “Mahomet was hung up” sounding within the English “mechanicall” (G. Williams 1994:2:249). *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado* depend on the sound of the French “cinqupace” (or “five steps” dance) as the “sink-a-pace” (or “sink-a-piss”) of its vernacular resonance. A man’s “good foot” in *Much Ado* (2.1.14) and the wordplay in *Love’s Labor’s Lost* on “Loves her by the foot . . . He may not by the yard” (5.2.668-69) turn on the sounding of French *foutre* in English “foot,” while French *fautre* compounds this sound (or unsound) nexus with the sense of female (or sexual) “faults” crucial to *Hamlet*, *Merry Wives*, and other Shakespeare plays. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the comic rendering of “Ninus’s tomb” as “Ninny’s tomb” turns on yet another bilingual “sound jest”—since in the Ovidian Latin when Pyramus and Thisbe plan to meet “ad busta Nini,” the genitive *Nini* for this Babylonian ruler already sounds like “ninny” or fool. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare’s only “English” comedy), the genitive case itself famously sounds as “Jinny’s case” to the vernacular ear of Mistress Quickly or Quick-lie, in a scene of translation where “vocative” is heard as “focative,” Latin *horum* as English “whore’um,” *qui*’s, *quae*’s, and *quod*’s as sexually double-meaning “keys,” “case,” and “cods,” *pulcher* as “polecats” or prostitutes, *caret* (or “lacks”) as phallic “carrot,” and Latin *lapis* as English “pebble” or the ungoverned sound of “peeble” or testicle (4.1).

In the linguistic borderland of Navarre that provides the setting for *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, the “feast of languages” repeatedly depends on such polyglot or translingual soundings, including not only the Latin *quis quis* heard as English “kiss kiss,” *haud credo* as “old grey doe,” and *ad unguem* as “ad dunghill” (already glossed by editors), but also polyglot sound jests that may be more difficult for us to hear, including the French “sign of she” (or *elle*) in the wordplay on “sorel” (4.2.58-60), or the *sorella* or sister that was the familiar *lingua franca* for a less than “honest” woman in the scene that also features a “pricket” (4.2.12-59; Parker 2001:51).

In *Henry V*, where the fiction of a defective Welsh sounding produces the comparison of the English king to “Alexander the Pig” and undermining faultlines, breaches, or “leaks” continue to sound even in ostensibly faithful (and successfully subordinated) Welsh “leeks,” macaronic soundings that are themselves compounds or hybrids (like the “compound . . . boy,” half

French, half English) undermine the very sense of secure boundaries or dominion that the play's rhetoric of mastery and containment labors to construct, simultaneously suggesting (in "Anglois" or "English") the angles or breaches that threaten the England described as a "nook-shotten isle" (Parker 2002a). Even the ungovernable, uncontainable, or incontinent sound of "leek" (or "leak") may be echoed in the play's bilingual rendering of the Salic Law as the "Law Salique" (1.2.11), or "Sal-leek," generating the curious scene of "salt" and "leek" inserted between the triumphant Chorus of Act V and the final "Wooing" scene (Rubinstein 1995:145), where (in a reminder of the past and future vulnerability of inheritance through a "female" line) Henry both marries the French king's daughter and insists that he be named son (or "fils") and heir or "Héritier de France" (5.2.339-40).

Together with the likelihood that Shakespeare read the narrative source for *Othello* in Italian (Neill 2006:22), the evidence of other sources accessed in French, and the echoes of Ovid's Latin (and not just Golding's Englishing) elsewhere in the canon, *Henry V* provides the most striking staging of a Shakespeare who was clearly not "English only." But not even this play's macaronic or polyglot soundings have been exhaustively sounded out. Deanne Williams has recently argued, for example, for even more interlingual connections within its famous Language Lesson, including its sounding in "arma" (for "arm") of the famous opening of the *Aeneid* (*Arma virumque cano*, "I sing of arms and the man"), appropriate for a play that repeatedly invokes the "Roman disciplines" of war (3.2.73) as well as the expansion of English empire or dominion (2004:218-19). At the same time, the language lesson of *Henry V* provides in its re-sounding of English "gown" as the sexually suggestive "count," a clue to its sounding elsewhere in Shakespeare, in the "loose-bodied gown" described as "quaint" (another homophone of "count") in *The Taming of the Shrew* (4.3), in the scene where Petruchio threatens to beat the tailor with his "yard" and Grumio concludes (of "Take up my mistress' gown to his master's use!") that "the conceit is deeper than you think" (4.3.86-162).

In relation to the translingual soundings of French and English, *Henry V* may also provide a useful language lesson. The French-English scenes of *Henry V* include the English Pistol and his French prisoner, whose very name ("Monsieur Le Fer" or "Master Fer") not only occasions bawdy sound jesting on English "fer and ferret and firk" (4.4.26-31) but macaronically sounds the *ferre* at the root of the play's insistent harping on ferrying, translating, or conveying (including the sense of "convey" as "steal"), together with the French "iron" (or *fer*) that makes this scene a comic declension not only from any sense of a "golden" age but even from the "brass" sounding just before it in the King's claim that the English victory will "live in brass" (4.3.97), ironically re-sounded when Pistol hears the prisoner's French "bras" (or arm) as "brass" ("Offer'st me brass?") and, expecting gold, contemptuously rejects it (4.4.16-20). Even within an apparently English-only range, sounds are difficult enough to govern, as Quince's misstopped Prologue makes clear. But in a linguistic environment that exploited the translative sounding of French "Dieu" in Pistol's English "Dew" (4.4.6-7) or, in a much higher register, could sound an "adieu" in Hamlet's "a dew" (1.2.130), putting a stop to the macaronic effects of sound or sounding a bottom is even more uncertain.

In a canon where the Folio's "Fortinbras" (which we might at first think should be pronounced as in modern French "bras" or "-BRA") appears in the Second Quarto as "Fortinbrasse" (Bertram and Kliman 1991:24), the fact that not only English but French could

sound differently from the way we have been trained to pronounce it may also affect other sound effects in Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as well as our ability to sound them out. Lines in *As You Like It* turn on a French-English pun on “boys” and “bois” (or woods) that is difficult to sound out because we do not hear “boys” in modern French “bois” (even though it is the sound still heard in the pronunciation, for example, of the name of the twentieth-century writer W. E. B. Du Bois). But the sounding of “boys” within “bois” may provide not only an instructive language lesson for *As You Like It* (a play that after all foregrounds both a “Ganymede” and the French-sounding “de Boys”), but also for the “boys” (or “damn boys”) sounding within Chapman’s *Bussy D’Ambois* (a name we are used to pronouncing instead as modern French “d’AmBWA”), a play whose “B” text exploits the “ambo” (or “both”) within Bussy’s last name “D’Amboys” and a plot that moves in both directions across the hetero-homo divide.⁸

At the same time, far from being mere verbal “quibbles,” such polyglot or homophonic soundings frequently forged larger cultural associations in the period. The pervasive discursive network that conflated Barbary and the “barbarous” with barbering or cutting of all kinds, including castration and circumcision, was compounded by translingual influences to which the best guides are the period’s own polyglot dictionaries, though they are still not widely used by cultural historians or critics. Minsheu’s *Guide unto the Tongues* (1617) observes that “Barbers shoppe” appears in other languages as “Barberie” or “Barberia,” while Cotgrave’s *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611) notes that French “Barbarie” simultaneously designated a “barbarisme,” “the trade of a Barber,” and “a port, or Province, of Affrike.” Florio’s Italian-English *World of Wordes* (1598) records that *Andar in barberia* meant “to go and be cured or laide of the pocks,” while *Barbiera* was not only a “shee-barber” but a “common harlot” (1598) or “strumpet” (1611), an important contributor to contemporary associations of “Barbary” with the loss of hair through syphilis. When Ben Jonson treats of “A half-witted Barbarism! which no Barber’s art, or his balls, will ever expunge out,” Sir John Harington combines “barbarous” Latin with “Mydas Barber,” or Joseph Swetnam compares a lascivious woman to “a Barbers chaire, that so soone as one knaue is out another is in”—a connection likewise evoked in the “barber’s chair” of *All’s Well That Ends Well* (2.2.17)—the nexus of associations is one that was enabled by such homophonic and macaronic crossings, in a period when “barbe” itself was used in English for the beard (as in Shakespeare’s variant sounding of Roman Enobarbus as “Enobarbe”), even though “barbe” and “beard” do not come from the same root.⁹

The sound (or unsound) conflation of “barbarous” and “barberous” or Barbary with “Barbery,” its contemporary variant spelling, may be heard not only in the “barberous” Moor of *Titus Andronicus* (5.1.97; 5.3.4; 1594 Quarto) who engineers Lavinia’s barbaric cutting or in Enobarbus’s description of Antony as “barber’d ten times o’er” at his first meeting with the Egyptian Queen (*Antony and Cleopatra* 2.2.224), but also in the “barbers of Barbary” identified with castrating or gelding in Heywood’s *Fair Maid of the West* (Pt. 2:1.1.49-53); in the “Barbor” named Nick in Beaumont’s *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (3.2.78), who by calling himself

⁸ For a more extended reading of these connections, see Parker 2001:45-46, with DiGangi 1997:55 and Parker 2007b:46-47.

⁹ For detailed citation and discussion of the texts and contexts here and in the next paragraph, see Parker 2004:201-44.

“Barbarossa” (3.3.28) echoes the famous Barbary corsair and the barber (or *barbero*) Nicolas from Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, and in Dekker’s *Gull’s Hornbook*, which glosses its extended discussion of hair and the shaving of captives by the “Mahumetan cruelty” of the “Turks,” in a new chapter that professes to be wearied by sailing along these “shores of *Barbaria*” (17). But the contemporary association also sounds within non-literary reports of the North African or Barbary coast, in descriptions of the shaving, circumcizing, or castrating of Christian captives by “barbarous” (or “barberous”) others, including the description in Hakluyt of the voyage in which Englishmen were forcibly “circumcised” as well as “most violently shaven, head and beard” by “infidels” in “Barbarie” (Hakluyt 1904:v, 301).

Such polyglot soundings traverse even the most famous Shakespearean tragedy, *Hamlet*, whose early texts bear the traces of a much less “English” production than its subsequent edited version might suggest. Spanish-sounding terms include the *malhecho* of the Folio’s “Miching Malicho” (140-41);¹⁰ “student” is spelled “studient” in both Q1 and Q2 (34-35), influenced by what we render into modern French as *étudiant*; the variations between the Folio’s “wee coated them on the way,” Q2’s “we coted them on the way” and Q1’s “We boarded them a the way” (100-101) depend on the French *aborder* and *à côté* that likewise sound within the passage of *Twelfth Night* on “Mistress Accost” (“Accost’ is front her, board her, woo her, assail her,” 1.3.52-59). The French-sounding “car(r)iage(s)” of all three texts of the speech of the figure known in conflated modernized editions as “Osric” (252-53) may take us back to the first scene’s “carriage of the article desseigne” (Q2; “Article designe” in F), a phrase that may bear the trace of French *desseigné* (18-19) in the lines (on a “Moity” or “moitie competent” and other French-inflected terms) whose spellings of “Fortinbras” (F), “Fortinbrasse” (Q2), and “Fortenbrasse” (Q1) summon the complex that Pistol had already evoked in his iteration of French *bras* as English “brass.”

Similarly, toward the end of *Hamlet*, the “gentleman of Normandy” who is himself seen only through the ear is called in the Second Quarto “Lamord,” a French (or Norman) name that combines the sounds of both “amor” and “la mort”—anticipating the multiple corpses of the Graveyard and final dueling scenes. Q2’s “Vpon my life *Lamord*,” with the description of this figure in both Q2 and F as “incorps’t” in the compound senses of “embodied” and “corpse,” makes the sound jest even more pointed. At the same time, in a play that is filled with reminders of blackness, including the “Moor” that sounds within the Closet Scene’s contrast of the Queen’s two husbands, in Hamlet’s condemnation of his mother for battenning on “this moor” (3.4.67: Q2, Folio “Moore”), “Lamord” resonates with the familiar contemporary homophones of “Moors” and Latin “death” or *mors*, foregrounded in the description of death itself as a “black word” in *Romeo and Juliet* (3.3.27), in the death’s head of the casket chosen by “Morocco” in *The Merchant of Venice* (2.7.63), in the visualization of Black Death as a Moor, and in the skulls that appeared on maps of Africa in the period (Parker 2003:140-41).

Within the wider Shakespeare canon, the polyglot sounds of *amor* and *à mort* resonate not only in the “grove of sycamore” (Folio, “Sycamour”) identified with the love-sick Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* (1.1.121), but also in the “sycamore” (Folio “Sicamour”) of *Othello* (4.3.40-45), as part of a rich network of multilingual soundings that forged connections in the

¹⁰ All citations here are to page references in Bertram and Kliman 1991.

period between *amor*, the “more” or “Moor” tree, *Mors* or “black” death, and *Moria* or folly (Parker 2002b), resounding in this tragedy in which a Moor who describes himself as having “loved not wisely but too well” (5.2.344) is also, by the end, abjectly identified by Emilia with the moronic or “Dull Moor” (5.2.224) and the “coxcomb” of the fool (5.2.233). In the culture beyond the plays, the sound (or unsound) conflation of *amor* and “Moor” that can be heard as well in the overtones of “T’amo” and of *mora* or dark woman in the name of “Tamora,” paramour of the Moor in *Titus Andronicus*, influenced the representation of Moors in visual as well as in verbal contexts, from the demonizing description of “the great seducer Mahomet” as “a lustfull *Amoroso*” (Vitkus 2003:86) to the decorative artistry of the Gresley Jewel, where a “Mora” or female Moor is surrounded by “Amoretti” or figures of Amor that were originally colored black (Hall 1995:218-21).

In resonances that were so culturally charged—including the sounding of “wrath” as well as of “Amor” and “Moor” in the contemporary rendering of the Ottoman Amurath as “Amourath” or the conflating of “Muly” with “mules” in multiple texts of the period, including Middleton’s *Spanish Gypsy* (“is it a mule? send him to Muly Crag-a-whee in Barbary”)—sound forged connections beyond logic or even etymologic, producing conflations that re-sounded both within and beyond the literary or fictional.¹¹ Such soundeffects—far too pervasive and numerous to sound out here—likewise conflated “Moorian” with the “murren,” “murrain,” or “murrian” (the plague or pestilence associated with the biblical Egypt as the Land of Ham), assimilating blackness itself (described as an “infection”) to a contagion identified with Ham’s Moorish or black descendants. The threatened infection of “white” by such “murrion” contagion is evoked in a scene of Heywood’s *Fair Maid of the West*, for example, when a Moroccan ruler attempts to kiss a virginal English Bess: “Must your black face be smooching my mistress’s white lips with a Moorian?” (*IFM* 5.2.80-81: Heywood 1967:87). But it was, at the same time, part of a culturally much more pervasive nexus, conflating the blackness of “Moors” not only with the sound of a miscegenating or “murrian” contagion but with the polyglot overtones with which it was further compounded, reflected in Florio’s 1598 Italian “*Moria*, an infection, a pestilence, a murrian, a rot or mortalitie that comes among sheepe. Also used for follie and taken from the Greeke.” In such cases, unless we, as textual critics and editors or as historians of early modern culture, endeavor to hear the multiple soundings that contributed to such culturally overdetermined connections, we may not be able to see (with the eye or the ear) elisions of other kinds that were crucially important in the period.

Stanford University

References

- Baldo 1996 Jonathan Baldo. *The Unmasking of Drama: Contested Representation in Shakespeare’s Tragedies*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

¹¹ See Middleton 1985:6:184 for *The Spanish Gypsy* (4.1.22-23), with Parker 2004:226 (on the *mula* or “mule” and *Muley* also sounded in *Don Quijote*).

- Bate 1995 William Shakespeare. *Titus Andronicus*. Ed. by Jonathan Bate. London: Thomson Learning.
- Bertram and Kliman 1991 Paul Bertram and Bernice W. Kliman, eds. *The Three-Text Hamlet: Parallel Texts of the First and Second Quartos and First Folio*. New York: AMS Press.
- Cotgrave 1611 Randall Cotgrave. *A Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*. London.
- Day 1980 John Day. *The Isle of Guls: A Critical Edition*. Ed. by Raymond S. Burns. New York: Garland.
- Dessen 1995 Alan Dessen. *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dessen 2002 _____. *Rescripting Shakespeare: The Text, the Director, and Modern Productions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dessen and Thomson 1999 _____ and Leslie Thomson. *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DiGangi 1997 Mario DiGangi. *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Erasmus 1978 Desiderius Erasmus. *De Copia*. In *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 24. Ed. by Craig R. Thompson. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- Fineman 1986 Joel Fineman. *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Florio 1598 John Florio. *A Worlde of Wordes*. London.
- Folio 1623/1968 The Norton Facsimile of *The First Folio of Shakespeare*. Ed. by Charlton Hinman. New York: Norton.
- Folkerth 2002 Wes Folkerth. *The Sound of Shakespeare*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hakluyt 1904 Richard Hakluyt. *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*. 12 vols. New York: Macmillan.
- Hall 1995 Kim F. Hall. *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Harris 2006 Jonathan Gil Harris. "All Swell That End Swell: Dropsy, Phantom Pregnancy, and the Sound of Deception in *All's Well That Ends Well*." *Renaissance Drama*, 35:169-89.
- Heywood 1967 Thomas Heywood. *The Fair Maid of the West Parts I and II*. Ed. by Robert K. Turner, Jr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Middleton 1985 Thomas Middleton. *The Works of Thomas Middleton*. Ed. by A. H. Bullen. 8 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Middleton 1995 _____. *A Mad World, My Masters, and Other Plays*. Ed. by Michael Taylor. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Minsheu 1617 John Minsheu. *Hegemon eis tas glossas. id est, Ductor in linguas, The guide into tongues bound with Vocabularium Hispanicolatinvm et Anglicum. . . . A Most Copious Spanish Dictionarie*. London.

- Nashe 1592 Thomas Nashe. *Strange Newes*. London.
- Neill 2006 William Shakespeare. *Othello, the Moor of Venice*. Ed. by Michael Neill. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parker 1996 Patricia Parker. *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Parker 2001 _____. "The Novelty of Different Tongues: Polyglot Punning in Shakespeare and Others." In *Esthétiques de la Nouveauté à la Renaissance*. Ed. by François Laroque and Franck Lessay. Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle. pp. 41-58.
- Parker 2002a _____. "Uncertain Unions: Welsh Leeks in *Henry V*." In *An Uncertain Union: British Identities*. Ed. by David Baker and Willy Maley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 81-100.
- Parker 2002b _____. "What's In a Name: and More." In *SEDERI II, Revista de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Renacentistas Ingleses*. Ed. by Pilar Cuder Dominguez. pp. 101-50.
- Parker 2003 _____. "Black *Hamlet*: Battening on the Moor." *Shakespeare Studies*, 31:127-64.
- Parker 2004 _____. "Barbers and Barbary: Early Modern Cultural Semantics." *Renaissance Drama*, 33:201-44.
- Parker 2007a _____. "Cutting Both Ways: Bloodletting, Castration / Circumcision, and the 'Lancelet' of *The Merchant of Venice*." In *Alternative Shakespeares 3*. Ed. by Diana E. Henderson. London: Routledge. pp. 95-118.
- Parker 2007b _____. "Spelling Backwards." In *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England*. Ed. by Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne. London: Routledge. pp. 25-50.
- Rabelais 1994 François Rabelais. *Oeuvres complètes*. Ed. by Mireille Huchon and François Moreau. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade.
- Riche 1606 Barnabe Riche. *Faultes faults, and nothing else but faultes*. London.
- Riverside 1974 G. Blakemore Evans et al., eds. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Rubinstein 1995 Frankie Rubinstein. *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sexual Puns and their Significance*. 2nd ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Vitkus 2003 Daniel Vitkus. *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- D. Williams 2004 Deanne Williams. *The French Fetish from Chaucer to Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- G. Williams 1994 Gordon Williams. *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*. 3 vols. London: Athlone.
- Woodbridge 2001 Linda Woodbridge. *Vagrancy, Homelessness, and English Renaissance Literature*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

This page is intentionally left blank.