

Subjectivity and Music in Early Modern English Drama

Andrew Loeb

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Department of English
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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ABSTRACT

Music in the early modern world was an art form fraught with tensions. Writers from a wide variety of backgrounds and disciplines engaged in a vibrant debate about the value of hearing and playing music, which could be seen as a useful tool for the refinement of the individual or a dangerous liability, capable of compelling inappropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.

This study analyzes music on the early modern stage and its relation to emerging ideas about subjectivity. Early modern philosophies of music, I demonstrate, are concerned with the stability of the body, the soul, and the humours and spirits that unite them, along with the individual's capacity for autonomy and agency. In the theatre, I argue, music is frequently deployed as a strategy for experimenting with ways of imagining and performing selfhood. On one hand, it can facilitate self-fashioning, acting as a marker for such characteristics as class and spiritual condition; on the other, it can be disruptive to identity and the capacity for agency and autonomy, since music was understood as both penetrative and transformative, facilitating the disruption of one self by an other.

Chapter 1, "Meanings of Music in Early Modern England," surveys a range of early modern texts on music to demonstrate their concerns with both the performance of the self and the threat of its dissolution. Chapter 2, "Many Sorts of Music in *Twelfth Night* and *The Roaring Girl*," examines music's role as an imaginative strategy for improvising an unstable, hybrid gender identity, an alternative subject-position from which to speak and act in ways ordinarily denied to women. Chapter 3, "Music, Magic,

and Community in Early Modern Witchcraft Plays,” explores witches’ uses of music to establish a sense of communal identity and to magically disrupt the communities from which they have been excluded. Finally, Chapter 4, “Noise, the City, and the Subject in *Epicoene*” makes a case for understanding Morose’s fear of noise in terms of early modern ideas about music, reading noise as a radical instability representative of new ways of fashioning selves in a rapidly expanding urban environment.

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CONVENTIONS

Quotations from early modern sources throughout the dissertation retain their original spelling and punctuation with the exception of i/j, u/v, vv/w, and long s usages, which have been silently modernized for readability. First mentions of plays in the text are followed by a parenthetical indication of the date of first performance, while the associated entries in the Works Cited give the publication information for the print source consulted in each case. All early modern printed documents were consulted through scans made available by Early English Books Online (EEBO).

INTRODUCTION

Near the end of Act 3, scene 2 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (c.1602), the young prince responds to questions from Guildenstern regarding his "antic disposition" with what seems at first like a *non sequitur*. Taking a recorder from a passing musician, Hamlet presents it to Guildenstern and asks, "Will you play upon this pipe?" (3.2.350-51).¹ When Guildenstern admits that he cannot, that he in fact has no skill in music at all, Hamlet reveals his conceit:

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! 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 my 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? Call me what instrument you will, though you fret me, [yet] you cannot play upon me. (3.2.364-72)

Hamlet's image of himself as a pipe that Guildenstern cannot play at first seems like a fairly straightforward metaphor for his recognition that his friend is trying to manipulate him into revealing the private motivations for his unpredictable behaviour. It suggests that if Guildenstern cannot play a simple recorder, he certainly cannot make Hamlet "discourse most eloquent music" (3.2.359). His manipulations are transparent, clumsy, and will reveal nothing. But why, exactly, is the truth of Hamlet—the "heart" of

¹ Unless otherwise noted, quotations from Shakespeare found throughout the dissertation refer to the editions of the plays contained in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, edited by G. Blakemore Evans. Emendations, enclosed in square brackets, are the editor's.

his “mystery,” what he elsewhere calls “that within which passes show” (1.2.85)—imagined as music? Why does Hamlet connect manipulation—an attempt to trick him into disclosing motivations not immediately obvious in his outward behaviour—with the skill required to produce musical harmony on a recorder? On the surface, the passage exploits the various meanings of the word “play,” but if the strongest of these is musical, is there a more fundamental reason for Hamlet to imagine himself and his hidden interior condition as a music that can only “sound” when “play’d”?

The exchange comes at the end of a pivotal scene in the play in which public appearances and performances are brought into tension with private, inward thoughts, feelings, and motivations. In it, Hamlet’s play-within-a-play publicly stages, in the guise of fiction, the very real murder that Claudius believes is his own private knowledge and sin. In turn, Claudius’s guilt is revealed in his public reaction to the play’s (performed) implications—he is literally “played” by Hamlet and his troupe of players. Earlier in the scene, Hamlet expresses an awe-struck admiration for Horatio, a man, he says, “Whose blood and judgment are so well co-meddled, / That they are not a pipe for Fortune’s finger / To sound as she pleases” (69-71). What Hamlet admires in Horatio is what he perceives as a capacity to remain coherent, stable, autonomous. Horatio’s passions (blood) and reason (judgment) are balanced and he is therefore not the passive object of forces outside himself, including the political and familial machinations that plague Hamlet and his loved ones and in which Hamlet himself participates. Horatio, at least in Hamlet’s eyes, is an active agent in his own destiny. It is also in this scene, in the lead-up to Hamlet’s musical metaphor, that we learn that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have been brought to court as agents of the King and Queen, charged to “bring [Hamlet]

on to some confession / Of his true state" (9-10). Claudius and Gertrude seem to recognize in Hamlet's behavior a secret, inner truth that can, they hope, be revealed through persuasion or manipulation by his old school friends. It is in this scene in particular, in other words, that the play's overall questions about how one comes to know a truth that is not immediately and publicly obvious appear most urgent. And Hamlet, haunted throughout the play by these very questions, articulates them here, curiously, through music.

The aim of this study is to examine the various ways in which the self is frequently imagined, articulated, explored, and problematized through music in a number of popular early modern plays. In the pages that follow, my aim is to demonstrate that music in the early modern world was a complex and often contested locus for a variety of anxieties about authenticity, agency, autonomy, identity, and the individual's relation to others, to the state, and to the cosmos. Music in this period, in both theory and practice, was connected to ideas about class and gender. It was implicated in an intense debate over morality. Musical ideas traversed historical epochs, as early modern English culture tried to reconcile a wealth of classical and medieval sources on music's perceived benefits and dangers with its own observations of its effects. Music raised concerns over the dangerous porousness and volatility of the humoral body, since it was unique among the arts in its capacity to physically transcend the borders between the outside environment and the corporeal interior. It was a potent cure for physiological imbalances as well as a potential instigator of affective disorders. Depending on whom in the period you ask, music could be an invaluable inspiration for religious piety or a sinful distraction from true devotion. It

was a metaphor for social order and a marker of national and communal identity, but in excess music could also be a sign of radical self-indulgence. Music was deeply personal but also fundamentally performative. Music, in the early modern world, was never just music.

Even a brief summary, like this, of the various interconnections between early modern ideas about music and its related discourses gives us a sense of the ways in which music might be a productive locus for imagining the self. English philosophies of music in the early modern period persistently place both the performer and the auditor of music into relation with various forms of otherness: other musicians, other listeners, a musically-organized cosmos in which the individual is situated, discourses of political hierarchy and religious morality that shape the place of that individual in the social world, the troubling otherness of the volatile and permeable humoral body. In the intersections between these kinds of binary structures and ideas about music in this period, I argue, can be found the traces of fantasies and anxieties about what the powerful effects of the performance and reception of music might mean for the self. Hamlet's recorder analogy is a useful starting point in part because of its familiarity and in part because it expresses relatively concisely the complexity of the relationship between music and the subject. The metaphor circulates generally within a number of competing discourses that position music as at once performative and persuasive, inspiring and infectious, divine and damning, medicinal and magical—all elements that have influence over, and consequences for, what Cynthia Marshall calls "the psychological correlates of the self—the emotions (or passions, in early modern usage) along with the general state of mind and intellectual function that they influence" (15).

But more specifically, it is through the invocation of music, even more so than his claim to “That within which passes show,” that Hamlet most clearly articulates an interiority that is withheld from public disclosure—a knowledge, an affective disposition, and a set of private motivations that resist scrutiny.² Or perhaps, to put it another way, what Hamlet describes is an interiority conceived negatively in relation to music—a self approaching articulation through what it is not. His private, personal truth is *not* merely a set of musical notes awaiting expression; he cannot be made to sound like some passive instrument in the hands of a clumsy player. Implicit in this formulation, however, is its opposite: the potential for that truth to be disclosed by a sufficiently skillful manipulator—a musician familiar enough with the instrument to make it “speak.” Though he denies that Guildenstern is such a musician, it is through the invocation of music that Hamlet most clearly imagines and articulates his anxieties about the threat of involuntary disclosure—the possibility that the interiority he imagines is not fully secure, coherent, private. It is through music, in other words, that Hamlet conceives of both the possibility of subjectivity and the possibility of its dissolution.

What is made visible then, in Hamlet’s analogy, is a mode of articulating a sense of self in the absence of an established vocabulary for the metaphysical experience of

² Anthony B. Dawson quotes Grigori Kozintsev, the Russian director of a 1964 film version of the play, who calls the recorder passage, “the most important passage in the tragedy” because, as Dawson goes on to explain, it “defines the individual against, even in defiance of, the operations of the state and its informers, suggesting a personal ‘mystery’ the heart of which Rozenkrantz and Guildenstern are unable to ‘pluck out’” (*Shakespeare in Performance* 187-8). It is worth noting, however, that Francis Barker cites Hamlet’s recorder speech as an example of the play’s *inability* to dramatize subjectivity (36-7). I address the debate over the status of the subject in the early modern world below.

subjectivity. Early moderns did not use terms like “subjectivity,” “identity,” or “self” (in its modern, philosophical sense) to discuss individual experience or to frame the anxieties that attend it.³ The terms, instead, were much more diffuse, their metaphysical underpinnings not yet rigorously interrogated or fully articulated. Music, then, with its deep connections to discourses of the body, the mind, the spirit, social organization, and cosmic order, is a powerful stand-in signifier, a kind of line-of-best-fit for an experience for which the early modern world lacks a thorough language, but one which is nonetheless vital and complex. The period’s ideas about music and the ways in which those ideas are deployed on the stage, I argue, can be understood as a kind of improvisational strategy for imagining and instantiating a sense of self. When Hamlet calls himself a recorder (or rather, *not* a recorder), and imagines his interiority as musical notes that will never sound to an other’s ears, he establishes a position from which to relate to the world and also to resist its scrutiny, even if that relation and that resistance is problematic.

Rather than expressing or representing a self that precedes articulation—a deep psychic structure outside of culture and history merely awaiting disclosure—music appears to function as a kind of conceptual foundation or framework upon which a set of potentialities for subjectivity and the tensions that attend them can be constructed and deconstructed, explored and played with.⁴ Music, I will show, is less a vehicle for the disclosure of the self than it is one form or resource through which selfhood is constituted—it functions as a kind of strategy of selfhood, one that is often temporary,

³ On early modern and modern vocabularies of selfhood, see Selleck 1-3.

⁴ For a salient critique of the idea of an absolute self that, despite attempts to do away with it, persists in some of the key New Historicist studies of early modern subjectivity—especially Greenblatt—see Levine 10-12.

imperfect, incomplete and problematic. Because the early modern period's ideas about music were a kind of nexus for a wide variety of other discourses that inform identity, those ideas become potent raw materials for exploring possible ways of positioning oneself in the world, and of speaking and acting within it. And just as ideas about music in this period are themselves precarious and conflicted, selves constituted through music are always attended by precariousness and conflict.

The Subject of the Subject

By attending to the ways that music functions as a kind of improvisational strategy for the constitution of a self, this study contributes to an ongoing critical move away from the legacy of New Historicist interrogations of subjectivity that see the early modern self as an emergent structure, a waypoint on a teleological journey toward the fully-realized and autonomous subject. Some of the arguments that follow, therefore, participate in recent efforts in the scholarship on the history of the subject to resist the tendency to fall back on binary models of the self that conceive it as either centred or decentred, either freely autonomous or discursively produced, that have dominated New Historicist criticism. The latter position, that the subject is essentially fragmentary, shaped by discursive forces outside the self, is a hallmark of several of New Historicism's inaugural texts. For example, Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare*, a text that still exerts its own shaping force on the intellectual debate over the self almost thirty-five years after its publication,⁵

⁵ The sheer persistence of Greenblatt's work as a starting point for discussions of early modern subjectivity, more than thirty years later, attests to its significance for understanding early modern culture's various articulations of the self. A 2010 volume

argues that self-fashioning—the artful production of the supposedly autonomous self—is always undercut by the ideologies that structure meaning in a given context, an effect of “the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment” (3). And because the self is always constructed in relation to an entity or context that both precedes it and exists outside of it, “any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss” (9). The fashioned self’s stability is always undermined, Greenblatt argues, by its construction in relation to an other. This fundamental contingency is articulated in slightly different terms by Catherine Belsey, who argues that “In so far as signifying practice always precedes the individual, is always learned, the subject is a subjected being, an effect of the meanings it seems to possess.

Subjectivity is discursively produced by the discourses in which the concrete individual participates” (5). Belsey goes on to read early modern identity as an anticipation of the humanist subject that she sees as emerging properly after the Restoration, a pre-articulation of, or attempt at, unity that stands between the fragmented, discontinuous self manifested in the medieval morality plays and the fully autonomous self of the eighteenth century. “There are in the plays of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries,” she argues, “intimations of the construction of a place which notions of personal identity were later to come to fill” (40). Subjectivity in the early modern period, according to Belsey, is anachronistic and ultimately blank. So while Hamlet lays claim to “That within which passeth show,” that claim is disrupted by the multiplicity of

edited by Ute Berns, *Solo Performances: Staging the Early Modern Self in England*, for example, takes as its point of departure an “attempt to re-emphasize the performance quality and performative nature of Early Modern self-fashioning” (14), a testament to the critical value the idea still holds.

discourses that produce that sense in the prince:

Alternately mad, rational, vengeful, inert, determined, the Hamlet of the first four acts of the play is above all *not* an agent. It is as if the hero is traversed by the voices of a succession of morality fragments, wrath and reason, patience and resolution. In none of them is it possible to locate the true, the essential Hamlet.

In this sense Hamlet is precisely not a unified subject. (41-2)

This is a conclusion reached by different means by Barker, who argues—with reference to the recorder speech discussed above—that in Hamlet, “an interior subjectivity begins to speak” but that “this interiority remains . . . gestural . . . It perdures as a central obscurity which cannot be dramatized” (36). That is, while early modern drama may lay claim to an emergent subjectivity, while it may sketch or strive toward a unified self, if the “I” that speaks always recedes from our apprehension, it cannot be said to effect the agency or autonomy on which a unified, recognizably modern subjectivity depends.

A parallel line of inquiry, while heavily indebted to New Historicism, has attempted to ground the debate more carefully in the ways in which early moderns themselves articulated their own notions of identity and selfhood. Katharine Eisaman Maus, for example, attempts to recover a sense of the coherence of the early modern self by locating in early modern drama a trope of “inwardness,” a pervasive sense that “persons and things inwardly are . . . persons and things outwardly only seem” (*Inwardness* 5). According to Maus, social life in the early modern period “demands the constant practice of induction . . . reasoning from the superficial to the deep, from the effect to the cause, from seeming to being” (5). This idea of an inwardness that is

inaccessible to others and inexpressible in the public realm suggests not the total inaccessibility of a decentred subject, but an early mode of the self's articulation as a withheld interior disposition. Maus also offers a useful critique of New Historicist assumptions about the contingency of the subject, noting that "It may well be true that Renaissance notions of interior truth turn out to be philosophically defective . . . But lack of rigor neither limits the extent of, nor determines the nature of, the power such ideas can exert" (28). The self may be fundamentally produced by external social and historical forces, in other words, but that self does not wink out of existence for early moderns themselves just because its origins are revealed as contingent by modern critics. My approach to interrogating music's connection to early modern notions of subjectivity is influenced in important ways by Maus's project of attending to early modern inwardness as it is expressed in the culture's own artifacts (its drama, in this case), and as it appears to have been imagined by early moderns themselves.

Still other critics have looked to the early modern body and its relationship to the dominant Galenic humoral paradigm as a fruitful site for the interrogation of early modern notions of the self. Gail Kern Paster, for example, argues for "the role of physiological theory in determining . . . the social contours of the signifying body [and] the psychic contours of the signifying subject" (*The Body Embarrassed* 2). Paster perceptively points out that "Humoral physiology ascribes to the workings of the internal organs an aspect of agency, purposiveness, and plenitude to which the subject's own will is often decidedly irrelevant" (10) and goes on to suggest that "Bodily events that in the absence of disease we ordinarily regard as trivial . . . might in the humoral body be fraught with significance as unwilling alterations of the body's

internal state, as exceptional evacuations or perilous invasions of this porous and fragile envelope” (12). For Paster, then, humoralism is both productive of ways of thinking about the embodied self and the means by which the leaky, volatile subject is socially disciplined, especially through regimes of shame (19). Michael Schoenfeldt, on the other hand, building on Paster’s materialist readings of early modern literature, suggests a counter-reading: that because “the Galenic regime of the humoral self . . . demanded the invasion of social and psychological realms by biological and environmental processes” (8), self-discipline and the regulation of the body was a locus of agency and autonomy. The inherent volatility of the body—its susceptibility to outside influence—and the interiority that susceptibility implies, according to Schoenfeldt, led to “a vibrantly inconsistent but brilliantly supple discourse of selfhood and agency” which conceived of “all acts of ingestion and excretion as very literal acts of self-fashioning” (11). He aptly demonstrates, therefore, that “self-discipline not only entailed the forced assimilation of corporeal urges to societal pressure but also produced the parameters of individual subjectivity” (15). Key to my own investigations of early modern music’s capacity to construct, influence and compromise the self are two related claims that Schoenfeldt makes in his introduction. First, that “in the early modern regime, it is unfettered emotion that is most to be feared,” and second, that “the Renaissance seems to have imagined selves as differentiated not by their desires, which all more or less share, but by their capacity to control these desires” (17). In this sense, the self is constituted through the careful regulation of an inherently volatile bodily interior. The discourse of humoralism locates the self in the distribution of corporeal humours that in turn have affective and psychological ramifications that are

recognized as the foundations of personal identity. To put it another way, a person undisturbed by excess or unbalanced humours might be said to “feel himself.” The failure to regulate the body and the psychological ramifications of that failure might cause one, according to this line of thinking, to feel and behave in unaccustomed, unpleasant and unacceptable ways. Music, which as we will see was thought to be capable of entering and altering the bodily interior, was a source of serious anxiety for the autonomy and stability of a self grounded in a volatile humoral body.

While each of these critics finds productive ways of locating a recognizably stable iteration of selfhood in various aspects of early modern culture and the artifacts it produced, and while each has informed my own reading of subjectivity in early modern drama in important ways, each reproduces to varying degrees the New Historicist tendency to see the early modern subject as a precursor to an inevitable modern subject, one continuous with our own supposedly fully-realized sense of self-shaping agency. But more recently, a number of critics have attempted to complicate this narrative view of the emerging subject in various ways. Chief among these is Cynthia Marshall, whose psychoanalytic approach in *The Shattering of the Self* suggests a productive avenue for examining the seemingly contradictory discourses of the self in the early modern period by attending to the ways in which the self's coherence is produced in dynamic tension with the psychic relief offered by its dissolution. As she points out, it is indisputable that a new awareness of the self emerged in the early modern period. This was, in part, because

developments in several areas complicated and extended the ways in which people in early modern Europe thought about their own existence. The advent

of the printing press and the growth of literacy made it possible to read and internalize privately the words of other people; the Protestant Reformation emphasized the spiritual life of the individual; the growth of commerce presented a new array of items for personal consumption and display; the spread of the arts brought new images and perspectives on life before the populace. (13)

Marshall reads in early modern literature a set of competing impulses toward, on one hand, the assertion of the self-constituting, signifying subject and, on the other, its dissolution under the resistance it meets from “new forms of religious and state authority,” “a Christian ideology that encouraged selflessness and humility,” and “established patterns of cognition through which people were accustomed to thinking of themselves as unstable in some very fundamental ways.” She argues, in light of these inconsistencies, that dynamic conflicts between coherence and dissolution were a fundamental component of the “emerging subject” (14). Marshall’s attention to the interplay between self-affirming and self-shattering tendencies in early modern culture that “enabled [the self’s] continued growth by offering temporary respite from the accumulating pressures of individual selfhood” (4) suggests a useful course for investigating the production of the self—a self that is in the process of constituting itself, a subject that is competing with the threat of its subjection. While she retains a sense of the “emergence” of the self, Marshall’s argument is compelling in its careful attention to the fact that the development of a cohesive, unified subjectivity was not a smooth, linear transition from radical discontinuity to a fully integrated and autonomous selfhood. Early modern selves were rather engaged in a process of testing

of their own limits under competing discourses of humanist self-assertion as well as physiological, political, religious and textual tendencies toward fragmenting the individual self or denying its primacy.

Lynette McGrath, taking a different approach, acknowledges the need to attend to the ways in which subjectivity is fundamentally gendered—that when we speak of subjectivity in the early modern period, we are often speaking of male subjectivity. She notes that

when we acknowledge that the self is gendered, it becomes still more difficult to unearth a sense of self that might have been owned by early modern women and to discover the relation between that sense of self and the role of the writing subject. This is so particularly because the textual articulation of the self depends on the employment by a writing subject of a power-laden discourse which is established before the subject speaks. (10)

McGrath's careful attention to the important differences between constructions of male and female subjectivities in early modern writing leads her to argue that "subjectivity is, after all, not sacrosanct; it is only a dubiously positioned sense from which one may speak and sometimes act on the world, and there is no reason that speech may not effectively emanate from a recognizably unstable as well as from a problematically stable position" (17). That is, an unstable self does not always imply its total erasure. In essence, McGrath highlights the important ways in which women's writing appears to trouble the assumption that subjectivity must be either autonomous and unified or discursively-produced and discontinuous. Rather, it might lie in certain instances somewhere in between. In many ways my own interrogation of the subject that is

revealed through discourses of music, especially in Chapter 2 in which I discuss the imaginative production of alternative gendered subjectivities, is indebted to McGrath's attention to the ways in which subjectivity is possible even when it is not fully realized as the unified, autonomous, male humanist subject.

Finally, Nancy Selleck's *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* aims to rethink the self in terms of its relationship to others, arguing that "Renaissance language makes the other not merely the self's context but its source and its locus" (2). Rejecting the New Historicist insistence on positioning the self as always in relation to an other that is radically opposite or alien to the self, Selleck argues that "Moving beyond a Self/Other dichotomy means conceptualizing others with the same ontological status as the self—others with whom the self can be interchanged, who can penetrate and alter the self, whose perspectives can shape and constitute the self" (3). This suggests a particularly useful avenue for investigations into the anxieties surrounding music and the self in the early modern period, since musical performances always imply both a producer and receiver of that music. Music is the vehicle for an encounter between a producing and a receiving self, and the complex meanings and discourses that inhere in early modern perceptions of music have wide-ranging implications for both. Indeed, to a certain extent the chapters that follow respond to Selleck's call to "reject a linear model of epistemic change in favor of a focus on the live, push-and-pull interaction of specific utterances that engage with and shape each other—that are partly determined by, but also partly determine, the broader conventions of selfhood" (6-7). The present study is influenced, too, by Selleck's attention to "alternative language[s] of selfhood" (1), articulations of subjectivity that

exceed our modern assumptions about the nature of the self. And following Marshall, I read early modern drama's uses of music as a productive site for the working-out or exploration of the possibilities for selfhood, possibilities that are sometimes contradictory across different authors or texts and sometimes within individual works or even single utterances. But where Marshall sees selfhood emerging in the tensions between the poles of two competing tendencies—self-presence and self-shattering—my aim will be to demonstrate that we find, especially in moments that invoke music's wide-ranging availability to discourses that inform all sorts of ways of thinking about the self, moments of impulsive, improvised subjectivity that sit unstably, temporarily and problematically between stability and dissolution. In doing so, my hope is to carve out a critical space that will allow readers of early modern drama to better hear the different ways in which early moderns, especially those who are marginalized and excluded from the privilege of subjectivity, articulated their identities and improvised—provisionally, inconsistently, incompletely—various alternative forms of agency.

The Subject of Music

In addition to interrogating various aspects of early modern subjectivity, this project also joins with work that seeks to read with greater nuance early modern music's impact on English culture and its literature.⁶ Significant early examples of this kind of

⁶ It is perhaps, at this point, worth making explicit that this project is a literary and not a musicological one. While the research that informs the arguments that follow draws often from both musicological and literary studies, my concern is primarily with understanding how music functions as a complex web of ideas that informs the

criticism include Bruce Pattison's *Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* and John Hollander's landmark *Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700*. Pattison's book "demonstrate[s] that the relationship between [music and poetry] was not only intimate but such as could have existed at no other time," and suggests that music and poetry were deeply interdependent, that "environment and tradition kept poets and composers in close touch; that literary points of view helped to shape musical forms, and that the structure and content of lyric poetry owed much to music" (vii). Hollander's work is much more wide-ranging and remains a highly influential study of early modern literary uses of music more than half a century after its publication. *The Untuning of the Sky* takes a broad survey of early modern poetry (which includes some drama, especially Shakespeare) and situates it in an early modern world pervaded by a complex mixture of ancient and contemporary ideas about music. "In the treatment of music by Renaissance English poets," he argues, "there is a constant interplay of ideology and fact, of beliefs accumulated through intellectual habit and those thrust upon the consciousness by experience of a more direct kind" (vii-viii). The result of this constant interplay is a process of "de-mythologizing of musical esthetics," a move from a fundamental belief in the metaphysical power of music to influence the world and the people in it to a greater emphasis on mechanistic explanations of musical influence, especially over the body, and finally to the relegation of music to the stuff of poetic trope and cliché (viii). This broad movement, Hollander argues, had tangible impacts on the history of poetry that

imagining and the articulation of subjectivity in literary texts and the dramatic performances based on them.

are ascertainable by examining closely, as Pattison does, the interdependence between the two forms.

The 1960s, in which Hollander's work was published, also saw the appearance of a number of studies that attempted to interrogate the role of music in dramatic works in particular. John Long's three volume *Shakespeare's Use of Music* and his edited collection, *Music in English Renaissance Drama*, alongside Peter Seng's *The Vocal Songs in the Plays of Shakespeare*, all seek in various ways to read music as a dramatic device which

could be used by dramatists to suggest or to emphasize in characterization ethical, moral, and religious modes of thought or emotional states; it could be used to establish atmospheric (good or evil) settings and political and social contexts; it could be used as a rhetorical device to ornament or underscore set speeches by means of the emotional effects of the music on the audience; it could be used to make tangible various forces, both natural and supernatural.

(Long, *Music*, viii).

Mary Chan's 1980 study, *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson*, looks in similar ways at musical conventions and philosophies of music and their influence on Jonson's masques and plays. In it, she argues that "the influence of a more metaphysical mode of thought modifies and supplements a strictly classical approach to man and society in much of Jonson's work, and this influence becomes most apparent through a study of his use of music in the plays and the masques" (3). Jonson's uses of music, in other words, indicate that he was familiar with its philosophical import and exploited that import not only in the masques, where music is part of a larger symbolic, ritualized

process that “depict[s] an image or emblem of the macrocosm itself” (137), but also in his popular plays, where it is integrated as a “complex and dramatically integrated satiric weapon” (3).

Looking beyond music as a dramatic device, Linda Austern has explored thoroughly the complex cultural interplay between the early modern period’s ideas about music and its ideas of gender and sexuality. Her most influential essay, “‘Sing Again Syren’: The Female Musician and Sexual Enchantment in Elizabethan Life and Literature,” for example, argues that “feminine beauty and music offered parallel benefits and dangers that influenced prescriptions for the actual musical behavior of contemporary Englishwomen and also the development of stock literary situations in which female musicians either caused spiritual fulfillment or physical destruction” (420). Austern’s wide-ranging work includes articles on the subject of musical witches, on the effeminizing power of music for men, and on the general role that music played on the early modern stage; her criticism is concerned, broadly speaking, with exploring the give-and-take relationship between ideologies of gender and early modern musical imagery and performance conventions. I will draw extensively on Austern’s work, especially in Chapters 2 and 3, to explore the ways in which gendered musical conventions are reconfigured as tools for agency and for the troubling of the gender categories that structure subjectivity in marginalized women.

The last decade or so has seen a fruitful critical turn toward studies of the relationship between music and gender as a specifically embodied phenomenon. A salient example can be found in Bonnie Gordon’s *Monteverdi’s Unruly Women*, which examines how musical performances undertaken by female singers in Italy in the

seventeenth century functioned as complex expressive moments. While she acknowledges that “social mores in the decades around 1600 demanded tacit women whose quieted voices supposedly reflected their chastity and distanced them from inappropriate eroticism,” she goes on to suggest that actual musical performances by women “inflected musical productions with tantalizing contradictions that situated both women’s bodies and sonorous expression precariously between harmless pleasure and threatening excess. It also created a space in which women could, through singing, seize power” (2). Gordon’s work, though based in a slightly different cultural context, in which women actually appeared on stage rather than being represented by boy actors as they were in the English theatre, suggests a useful framework for looking for the ways in which women (or women characters) could achieve complex forms of resistance to dominant ideologies surrounding the dangerous volatility of the female voice.

In a more recent study, Katrine Wong has attempted to complicate a number of the established arguments about music and gender. Her survey, *Music and Gender in English Renaissance Drama*, identifies a number of instances from a broad range of sources, both canonical and obscure, that suggest that a binary construction that sees music as representative of either “heavenly order” or “demonic disorder” is inadequate for a thorough understanding of gendered performances of music. Instead, she “offers an alternative model of hybridity which explores how playwrights at the time both created their musical characters and scenarios according to the received cultural use and perception of music, and experimented with the multivalent meanings and significance embodied in theatrical music” (2-3). In particular, Wong is attentive to the

ways that both male and female characters participate in and subvert “contemporary social decorum,” adopting behaviors that “vary in degrees of conformity and subversion” (3). My own reading of gendered subjectivity through music in Chapter 2 is indebted to Wong’s attention to the musical moments that highlight the inadequacy of understanding gendered performances in either/or terms.

Taking a wider view, David Lindley’s *Shakespeare and Music* and Christopher Wilson’s recent *Shakespeare’s Musical Imagery* offer comprehensive surveys of what Shakespeare’s works can tell us about musical ideas and practices in the early modern period as well as how those ideas and practices shaped the form and content of Shakespeare’s theatre. Especially interesting in Lindley’s work is a careful attention to not only the philosophical underpinnings of early modern music, but also the ways in which practical music pervaded and shaped everyday life in early modern England.⁷ As such, his book is valuable both for its careful historicizing of early modern music and for its attention to the ways in which early modern audiences themselves might have experienced music in Shakespeare’s theatre as both a dramatic device and as a sonic experience. Taking *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* as representative examples, Lindley argues that Shakespeare’s plays “integrate the variety of their musical events into larger thematic and dramatic preoccupations” (199). Wilson, on the other hand, takes a more taxonomic approach, demonstrating the vast breadth of Shakespeare’s uses of musical theories, imagery, and terminology, from images of consonance and discord, to symbolic instrumental cues, popular songs, and the affective powers of music. Of

⁷ Another invaluable source in this regard is Christopher Marsh’s recent *Music and Society in Early Modern England*. Marsh’s work is a comprehensive survey of musical theory and practice in early modern England that is grounded in an impressive wealth of historical documents.

particular interest is Wilson's claim that he is not concerned with the words of a play, with the musical terms and references as they are in the text, but with "the impact made on the sensory imagination when we know what a musical phrase or expression means and intends. This is dependent on hearing a play either in the theatre or imaginatively on the page" (34). This, I think, is a useful line of inquiry, and one that I take up in a number of ways throughout the dissertation, exploring not only how dramatists are exploring subjectivity through musical images, but also how that exploration played out in the theatre for an audience imaginatively engaging with those images and one that is as invested in musical ideas and anxieties as the characters in the world of the play.

Lindley's book—and Wilson's to a lesser extent—is shaped, in part, by a recent critical turn toward interrogating not only the symbolic or dramatic function of music in early modern literature, but also the phenomenological experience of sound as it was heard by early moderns themselves. Two important books in this regard are Bruce Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* and Wes Folkerth's *The Sound of Shakespeare*, both of which have shaped in different ways my own thinking about early modern music. Smith's book begins from the premise that "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" (8). As such, he argues, "We need a 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). It is just such a phenomenology of listening that Smith's work provides. Essential to my own investigations of the ways in which early modern drama made use

of music and the ways in which dramatic audiences might have heard that music is Smith's suggestion that "Every act of speaking and listening is an *existential* moment that affirms (1) the selfhood of the speaker, (2) the selfhood of the listener, and (3) the culture that conjoins them" (21-22). Music-making, too, is just such an existential encounter, always involving both the producer of and receiver for a particular kind of sonic experience, and I endeavor throughout this project to remain attentive to the production and reception of music as an intersubjective process with important implications for both the involved subjects.

Folkerth's book is more explicitly concerned with the early modern theatre and the phenomenological experiences of sound that it stages. His reading of Shakespeare is attentive to what the various sounds in Shakespeare's plays "would have meant, and how their meanings would have been received by the people who heard and understood them in specific contexts, with early modern ears" (9). Shakespeare's depictions of the experience of sound, he argues, demonstrate "a perceptual domain" that was understood to provide "access to the deeply subjective or pre-articulated self . . . and related ethical dispositions such as obedience, receptivity, assent, and belief" (9). But for all his close attention to the auditory register in Shakespeare's theatre, Folkerth remains largely silent on the topic of music, seeing it only as one element of a wider Shakespearean "soundscape," and giving it comparatively little attention in relation to sonic experience more generally. My own approach to hearing early modern music and "sounding" early modern culture's notions of subjectivity are heavily indebted to Smith's and Folkerth's phenomenologies of sound and hearing, especially in terms of

situating the ways in which audiences might have heard music in the early modern theatre.

More than a decade has passed since Smith's and Folkerth's texts were published, and as Joseph Ortiz points out, literary criticism that engages with the dramatic function of music has been slow to adopt an attentive ear for the experience of music and how it might inform or complicate the use of musical imagery or ideas in the theatre.⁸ The dominant critical attitude toward music, especially in studies of Shakespeare, Ortiz argues, is that "the experience of musical sound was considered extraneous: Shakespeare's ideas about music were to be found in the play's poetry not in their musical performances, which could largely be explained away in terms of theatrical convention" (3). In response, Ortiz locates in Shakespeare a tendency to stage "contradictory versions of music that highlight its resistance to verbal and visual forms" (5). He finds in Shakespeare's uses of music an untranslatability, a resistance to stable, codified meanings. It is this "radical promiscuity of musical experience" (3) that I think gives musical imagery and musical performances their potency for exploring and problematizing the self. If, as Ortiz suggests, "music is nothing like language" (3) in its most radical instances on the early modern stage, it also resists language's power to structure meaning and subjectivity. If musical signification is open to a kind of free

⁸ In addition to Lindley's book, discussed above, a notable exception is Erin Minear's *Reverberating Song in Shakespeare and Milton*, which argues for the ways that music—heard, imagined, or remembered—pervades the language of these two authors (1). This focus on the musicality of language would seem to reproduce the critical tendency to see music as purely symbolic, but Minear is attentive to the ways in which musical ideas and musical performances interact with and inform one another and offers productive readings of the musical moments in a number of Shakespeare's plays. Her reading of *Twelfth Night*, in particular, informs my discussion of the play in Chapter 2.

play, subjectivities imagined through music are likewise open to new arrangements of power and meaning.

Performing Music

A scan of the titles listed in the above review of major works on music in early modern literature reveals the undeniable centrality of Shakespeare. This is not surprising, since Shakespeare's plays are some of the richest sources we have in the early modern period for musical images, musical philosophies, song performances and the complex interrelationships between them. But while there is no doubt that Shakespeare is one of the early modern period's most complex and varied wielders of musical ideas and performances, his is not a solo performance. One of the secondary aims of this project is to recover a sense of the richness and variety of dramatic uses of music in the period. If the nature of subjectivity and the anxieties, possibilities and consequences of its various manifestations in the early modern period are part of a larger cultural concern, and if music is one of the means by which questions of subjectivity can be effectively explored and played with, we will find these ideas playing out in ways that span authorship, genre, and time. The useful side effect of this broader view, in my opinion, is a contribution to a shift away from Shakespeare as the primary locus of musical investigations in early modern literary criticism. So while Shakespeare is invoked here and there throughout this introduction (in part, as I noted at the outset, because of his sheer familiarity) and in the survey of early modern ideas about music in Chapter 1, and while *Twelfth Night* features prominently in Chapter 2, I have focused on other well-known works by Jonson, Middleton, Dekker and others, as well as some less well-

known and less studied collaborative efforts by Dekker, Rowley and Ford and by Heywood and Brome. And while there are no doubt other works about which much could be said with respect to music and subjectivity, the texts I have chosen to examine in detail will at least sketch the contours of a trend, in this period, of exploring subjectivity through musical theories that are intimately bound up with questions of identity, self-presentation, authority, autonomy and agency. I have attempted, in other words, to be representative rather than comprehensive. I have striven for broad historical and thematic coverage rather than a focus on a particular author's uses of music in an effort to demonstrate that the possibilities for the self in this period that are articulated, in part, through music are a broad cultural concern rather than the innovation of any one particular dramatist.

The decision to examine music's reciprocal relationship to subjectivity in early modern England through its drama rather than its poetry or prose texts (though these latter will continue to bear, at times, upon the discussion throughout) is motivated in large part by drama's performative qualities. While prose and poetry are limited to treating only the theoretical and metaphorical aspects of music—the idea of music—drama is unique in its capacity to stage ideas about music alongside actual musical performances. In each of the plays I examine, real music—performed music—is pervasive. It is sometimes played by characters on the stage itself. At other times incidental music, played from a concealed position in the “tiring room,” is drawn upon for a variety of dramaturgic effects. In still other instances, visual embodiments of human responses to music are staged. In each case—and clearly, these often overlap and intertwine—the complex interplay between the theoretical, metaphorical, and

actual dimensions of music leads to fascinating and complex ways of interrogating the relationship between individual human beings, performance conventions, musical ideas, and musical sounds that simply are not possible in other media.

Performance is also fundamental to the theatre's ability to represent the nuances of often-conflicted explorations of early modern subjectivity. As Richard Hillman puts it, drama was “the most widely and variously practiced genre in England over the period, as well as the one most directly concerned with the fictional representation of human beings” (3). Stage actors represent selves other than their own and, as many of the plays I will be exploring demonstrate, those represented selves were often themselves sites of intra-subjective conflict where theatrical selves (characters) and metatheatrical selves (actors) are brought into tension. Exploring these tensions as they emerge in the period's drama has the advantage of highlighting not only how ideas of subjectivity played out representationally, within the world of a play and for the characters that inhabit it, but also how they manifest themselves on a physical stage, in the real space of the theatre, for a viewing audience that has a stake in the ideas being played out. And music problematizes the distinctions between these various aspects of theatrical experience. As I noted earlier, musical effect and influence were understood, in the early modern period, in terms of a relationship between musical performer and receptive auditor. This relationship, staged in the theatre, has a double life: one between a musician and his on-stage auditors inside the world of the play, and one between a real musician and a real audience within the space of the theatre. The ramifications of this doubleness for understanding the theatre as a site for the sustained exploration of cultural beliefs about music and that music's relationship

to ways of thinking about and experimenting with the self will significantly inform the analysis that follows. In other words, part of my aim in the analytical chapters will be to attend to the various ways that theoretical ideas about music, musical images and metaphors, and actual musical performances collide in the space of the theatre and what the dramatic effect of this collision might be for an audience itself coming to grips with new ways of thinking about individual identity and autonomy.

My exploration of the various interrelationships between music and ideas of the self begins with a general argument, in Chapter 1, for the pervasive connection between ideas about music, musical performance conventions and ways of thinking about the early modern self. Moving from the very general to the very particular, I survey early modern ideas about music from a wide variety of sources and examine its significance in the early modern world for everything from the workings of the cosmos down to its effects on the individual's passions. Beginning from classical precedent in the works of Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle and transmitted through medieval scholars like Boethius, early modern music theory was a complex pastiche of old and new ideas that led to a vibrant debate in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over the value and place of music in people's everyday lives. Music persisted as a structuring principle in early modern cosmology—most readily visible in the commonplace image of the music of the spheres—because of the ordered, mathematical proportions thought to inhere in musical harmony. This, in turn, produced a wealth of analogical ways of thinking about the individual human being, a microcosm of the world at large, in musical terms. The ordered, harmonious body, mind and soul of the individual

constituted a well-tuned instrument, in the early modern imagination, an idea that suggests ethical implications when placed in dialogue with other classical writings on the *ethos* that inheres in particular musical sounds and instruments. But classical writing about music was, by the sixteenth century, competing with more modern ideas and performance conventions, and basic musical training was coming to be seen as essential for the well-rounded gentleman and gentlewoman. This tension led to serious debates about the value of publicly performed music. Music could be seen either as an outward sign of an inner disposition—the visible and audible manifestation of *musica humana*, or the harmony of the human soul—or, if it was not strictly controlled, as a frivolous, unnecessary and even immoral. Surveying a wide variety of writers arguing for and against the value of music, this chapter suggests that part of what is articulated in these debates is an uncertainty about the individual's ability to fully control the public presentation of the self.

But music, in addition to its consequences for public self-fashioning and identity-formation, was implicated in discourses of interiority as well. Music that was not carefully controlled—performed, for example, in private or only in certain acceptable musical modes—ran the risk of exciting the passions and inciting inappropriate behaviour. This anxiety finds its most obvious articulation in the writings of antitheatrical polemicists like Stephen Gosson, Phillip Stubbes, and William Prynne where music is seen primarily as a trigger for lasciviousness, especially when performed in public. Key to the antitheatricalist position regarding music's danger is a belief in its transformative potential; Gosson is convinced of music's ability to “transnature” men into women and Prynne describes public gatherings that devolve

into nearly orgiastic sexual licentiousness spurred by music. In an effort to contextualize this belief and its attendant anxieties in terms of discourses of the self, Chapter 1 reads descriptions of music's transformative potential against early modern philosophies of the humoral body. Thomas Wright, Robert Burton, and Francis Bacon all discuss musical transformation in terms of its capacity to act on the spirits, humours, and passions that circulate within the Galenic body. Applying Michael Schoenfeldt's reading of Galenic theory as a site of an embodied self dependent on careful regulation, I argue that we can understand anxieties about music's capacity to transform the bodily interior by thinking of it as something that is ingested and excreted from the body just like the food and bodily fluids that are consumed by and purged from the body respectively in the healthy, ordered individual. If, as Schoenfeldt demonstrates, ingestion and excretion—as modes of regulating the body—are acts of self-fashioning grounded in a need to control rather than express volatile, inner passions, then anxieties about music and its potential to excite or ameliorate excessive feeling betray anxieties about the human capacity for self-control and therefore self-performance. And this anxiety is particularly powerful because music is often associated with a voice or instrumental skill located outside the self, in the agency of an other. In my inquiry into music and interiority, I suggest that anxieties about musical influence are, at least in part, grounded in the possibility of a loss of unity and autonomy when one self encounters, through music, other selves.

Chapter 1, then, is largely concerned with establishing a context of both early modern musical theory and nascent forms of interrogating the status of the self in the early modern world that will be essential groundwork for the three analytical chapters

that follow. These chapters examine specific cases where music and selfhood intertwine on the stage and represent the ways in which dramatists push the limits of thinking about the self—often subverting dominant discourses—in order to trace new possibilities for agency and autonomy, especially for characters otherwise denied access to subjectivity. Taken together, they chart two broad arcs. The first concerns kinds of musical experience. In the three main analyses that form the bulk of my argument, we will move from ideas about, and performances of, harmonious music, through disruptive, dissonant music, and finally to the ambiguous, meaningless noise that is music's radical opposite. The second arc concerns ways of thinking about the self. It begins with the location of an individual selfhood that is both conceptualized and articulated—unstably and temporarily—through images of music and in musical performances, then moves through the deliberate disruption of a social, communal identity by individuals excluded from group belonging, and finally considers the conflicts and competitions between selves and others that emerge in the radically new social context of urban London and the semiotic possibilities that follow from these conflicts.

In Chapter 2, I turn to questions of music and gender performance. As Linda Austern points out, female musicians were problematic figures in the early modern imagination because they combined alluring femininity with the affective powers of music, and “came to personify sensual intoxication, inspiring either pure spiritual ecstasy or destructive physical passion” (“Sing Againe” 420). The erotic power of the female body and the irrationally affective power of music are amplified by one another in the figure of the female musician, and anxiety about this power tends

overwhelmingly to manifest in the fear of effeminization for the listening subject, who is almost always, as Kirsten Gibson notes, assumed to be male (56). Indeed, women musicians explicitly threatened the male self, which depended on a careful vigilance against effeminacy. “Women and music both provided a discursive blank screen in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England onto which men could project the most feared and disruptive elements of the male self—primarily any elements that might be deemed effeminate—and that had to be purged in order to attain and maintain ‘normative’ adult masculine status and identity” (Gibson 65). The dominant attitude, then, positions women as the dangerous other against which the masculine self must be fortified and guarded. But two early seventeenth-century plays appear to play with possibilities for a counter-discourse. In Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* and Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl*, two women, both of whom appear dressed as men, use their musicality to adopt a subject-position that works outside the conventions of the chaste, silent and obedient woman that was the early modern ideal and offers the capacity to imagine a subjectivity that offers new possibilities for women as free, autonomous subjects—albeit in incomplete and provisional ways. In *Twelfth Night*, though she never actually performs herself, Viola imagines for herself an ability to “sing and speak in many sorts of music,” and in doing so, she improvises a hybrid subjectivity that allows her both to pass through the play disguised and therefore relatively uninhibited by the conventions of early modern femininity. By claiming the imaginative power of music, Viola becomes the instrument evoked both in her name and in her use of the term eunuch—signifying at once the ambivalently erotic castrato singer and the little-known and little-commented-upon musical instrument of the same

name—subtly charming and manipulating both Orsino and Olivia, and reharmonizing the dissonant erotics of Illyria. In *The Roaring Girl*, Moll performs songs that become the locus for her articulation of new ways of thinking about gender—ones in which she can speak and act outside normative gender conventions without compromising her sexual reputation. Early in the play, Moll is persistently compared to the dangerously erotic music of the Sirens, and her musicianship is frequently associated with sexual skill and promiscuity. But a careful reading of her actual musical performances reveals that it is primarily through song that Moll imagines an ideal world of deconstructed gender roles, one in which women who behave with the social freedom that is the default privilege of men in early modern London are not subject to assumptions about their chastity or sexuality. The songs, in other words, become the vehicle through which Moll idealizes an ambivalent gender role she can only incompletely enact through dress and speech. Chapter 2 argues that in both these plays, female musicians reconfigure assumptions about femininity and music to reimagine gender in ways that promote women's agency and autonomy (however temporary and incomplete) and allow for a greater capacity of self-fashioning than is ordinarily the province of women in the early modern world.

In Chapter 3, another marginalized group, witches, appropriates a number of the dominant resonances of musical ideas in the early modern world and flips them on their heads in order to lay claim to improvised forms of agency. Witches, in the early modern imagination and especially on the early modern stage, were explicitly musical beings. This is because, as Gary Tomlinson points out, "There can be no clear and precise boundary . . . between music conceived of as a magical and as a non-magical

force” since “all musical effect in the early-modern era was at the very least susceptible to magical interpretation” (xiii-xiv). Music, thought to be a fundamentally magical force, is adopted in representations of witches in a wide variety of dramatic works from this period, both as a powerful vehicle for magical influence and as a metonymy for their disordering effects on the human social worlds they threaten. This has led to a dominant critical position that asserts that “composers and playwrights consistently marked witches as disorderly by rendering them incapable of producing harmony, portraying them as rustic bumpkins bereft of graceful movement or music, or conflating sexual, political and spiritual transgression through the setting of treasonous lyrics to bawdy or sacred-sounding music” (Winkler 24-5). But while this convention is certainly always in play on one level or another in representations of witchcraft on the stage, my reading of a number of seventeenth-century witchcraft plays suggests a more complex use of music than has been previously acknowledged. In particular, plays that appear skeptical or critical of dominant attitudes toward witchcraft in early modern England seem especially concerned with reshaping perceptions of music and the functions that music can serve in witchcraft drama. In broad terms, this chapter argues that music, especially in Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch*, Dekker, Rowley and Ford’s *The Witch of Edmonton* and Heywood and Brome’s *The Late Lancashire Witches*, actually assists in complicating the audience’s perceptions of the witches in question and serves to engage the audience in a complex negotiation of skepticism and belief. In *The Witch*, the comically musical coven of witches perform songs that act as representations of a communal solidarity that is unmatched by the members of the court of Ravenna to which the coven is contrasted. The witches, while subversive and theoretically

dangerous, use their music to express their feelings of sisterhood even in their profoundly marginalized position and to articulate the freedom they acquire through magical flight. In both *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches*, on the other hand, music is persistently linked to village identity and community. And in both plays, the witches in question silence musical performances as a means of disrupting ritualized identity formation. Rather than merely “perpetuating the notion that witches lack harmony” (Winkler 26), these works play with musical signification as a means of exploring the tensions between a community and its other (the witch), and the implications this has for ideas about social cohesion, autonomy, agency, and identity. In these plays, music is not merely a marker for the witch’s otherness, but an appropriated signifier for a subjectivity from which marginalized others are ordinarily excluded.

Chapter 4 turns finally to music’s radical opposite: noise. If music is traversed by conflicting discourses about its rhetorical effectiveness and its emotional affectiveness—its implicit tensions between rational meaning and irrational feeling—then noise, the total absence of either, must have been especially troubling to early modern ears. This chapter therefore explores the representation of noise and how it might signify in a culture deeply concerned with the implications of hearing and producing meaningful sounds in music (and indeed the implications of their absence). Jonson’s *Epicoene* is a play that places noise front and centre as a site of conflict over selfhood. Noise, in the early modern imagination, is a marker for semantic instability, for social discord, for uncertainty. But it is also perhaps the most fundamental component of the soundscape in early modern London, a city undergoing a massive

population boom in this period. Jonson's Morose, the phonophobic old man determined to marry a silent woman, fortified in his own acoustically dampened home, becomes a figure of outmoded forms of selfhood. Morose, in his attempts to reconfigure the sonic field around him, seeks stability in an environment that increasingly privileges instability. He clings to the empty ideal of the centred self in an urban world that increasingly rewards those capable of wielding noise—the unstable signifier—as a way of fashioning the self. Morose fixates on the physical noises that pervade his immediate environment, therefore, because they function as an imaginative locus for the anxieties he feels about new ideas of the self he does not understand and in which he cannot participate.

Each of the characters I focus on in these plays is marginalized in one way or another: by gender and class conventions, by age and appearance, by changing social practices. But each finds, in music's wide availability as a signifier for a number of the competing discourses that structure the bodily, spiritual, and psychological experiences of identity, a potent imaginative strategy for articulating that marginalization and, to varying degrees of success, for resisting it.

CHAPTER 1

Meanings of Music in Early Modern England

Cosmic Music, Human Music

The anonymously authored *Praise of Music* (1586) begins its discussion of the art's many virtues by alluding to the early modern commonplace of the music of the spheres.

Inquiring into the origins of music, the author notes that

time cannot say that hee was before her, or nature that she wrought without her. To prove this looke upon the frame, & workmanship of the whole worlde, whether there be not above, an harmony between the spheares, beneath a simbolisme between the elements. Looke upon a man, whom the Philosophers termed a litle world, whether the parts accord not one to the other by consent and unity. And who can blame nature in any reason for using her owne invention? (2-3)

The idea of the music of the spheres, borrowed—like so much of the period's philosophy of music—from antiquity, was a powerfully representative image of English culture's ideas about how music functioned, and informed important ways of thinking about both the nature of the cosmos and music's place within it. In an attempt to defend music's high esteem among the other arts in a period marked by a pervasive ambivalence toward it, *The Praise of Music* reminds its reader that music is both metaphorically and literally structural to the world, to mankind, and to mankind's place within the world.

The image of a cosmos organized and governed by musical proportion comes to the early modern period—via medieval scholars like Boethius—in part from Plato’s *The Republic*. In it, Plato recounts the myth of Er, a man who journeys into the afterlife where he is allowed to see the working of the cosmos. In his description, Er notes that each of the spheres that make up the universe—the fixed stars, the orbit of Saturn, that of Jupiter, then Mars, then Mercury, then Venus, then the Sun, and finally the moon—is governed by “a Siren, who accompanied its revolution, uttering a single sound, one single note. And the concord of the eight notes produced a single harmony” (288). This image of a universe structured by music is itself derived from earlier Pythagorean notions that the whole of the natural world could be understood in terms of numbers and proportions that could best be represented by musical intervals, a mathematical underpinning to music that persists in the Western tradition to this day. Pythagoras was said to have discovered the ordered proportions of the world, and to have framed them in terms of natural musical harmonies, by observing blacksmiths hammering upon anvils. According to the legend, Pythagoras observed that an anvil struck with a hammer half the weight of another produced a tone exactly one octave higher.¹ This was followed by observations on the tones produced by a monochord, a simple instrument consisting of one string, on which divisions of string-length result in distinct musical intervals. Dividing the string in half, for example, results in a tone one octave higher than that produced by the undivided string. A ratio of 3:2 produces the

¹ While this is technically inaccurate, the key to the Pythagorean insight into musical harmony for both the classical and the early modern world was its ability to take abstract notions of pleasing musical intervals and ground them firmly in the observable proportions of the physical world. The monochord experiments that followed are a better actual demonstration of the same principle.

interval known as the fifth, and so on. Pythagoras, and other Greek philosophers following his lead, then extended these principles to describe the proportions inherent in the observed distances between the planetary orbits as well as their motions and velocities relative to one another, fundamentally embedding musical ideas—themselves underpinned by rational, mathematical principles—in the overall understanding of the operation of the cosmos.²

The Praise of Music's reference to the music of the spheres then, draws on a rich tradition that understood the universe itself as fundamentally structured by musical harmony. But in the same passage, the treatise's author also refers to man as a "little world," one whose parts harmonize to form a unified whole according to the same principles by which the planetary motions accord with the natural proportions of universal harmony. This too suggests something of the breadth of analogical potential that ideas about music held in the early modern world. Indeed, this fundamental analogy between the harmonious macrocosm and the human microcosm provided the raw materials for a debate about the value of music that would continue throughout the period, one that inspired intense speculation about how exactly music worked.

The musical ramifications of the "little world" correspondence between the individual and the cosmos came to early modern England, at least primarily, by way of Boethius' *Fundamentals of Music* (c. 500). Boethius's text was for the most part the primary source by which classical music theory was transmitted to early modern scholars and philosophers. Boethius advocated for music as part of the quadrivium,

² More detailed accounts of the nuances of Pythagorean ideas, their transmission through Greek philosophy, their assimilation into a Christian context and their eventual adoption by thinkers in the Renaissance can be found in Hollander, *Untuning*, 26-31; Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 13-21; Marsh 40-3; and Taruskin 29-30.

alongside arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, and *Fundamentals of Music* was required reading in many early modern schools and universities. One of the text's chief theoretical innovations was the division of music into *musica mundana* (the music of the cosmos), *musica humana* (human music) and *musica instrumentalis* (the actual playing of real musical instruments as well as singing).³ *Musica mundana* is macrocosmic, suggesting the organized set of correspondences between the disparate parts of the cosmos, such as the planetary revolutions, the ordering of the elements and the progression of the seasons (Boethius 9), and this is the music that echoes in the passage from *The Praise of Music* discussed above. *Musica humana*, on the other hand, is microcosmic. It "unites the incorporeal nature of reason with the body" (10) and governs the balance of the body, its humours, and the soul in ways that strongly correspond to the music of the universe.⁴ As John Long puts it, "Human music is that physical and mental harmony attained by a man when he acquires a proper balance of the four humours—body fluids. He is then in tune with his world and his universe" (vii). This fundamental correspondence between the microcosm of the human individual and the macrocosm of the divinely ordered universe had important

³ A summary of Boethius's influence on and importance for philosophies of music in the early modern period as well as his impact on medieval and Renaissance education can be found in Taruskin 69-71. See also Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 18-25.

⁴ While Boethius and later commentators channeling his ideas are unclear on the exact nature of *musica humana*, it appears to operate largely on metaphorical and analogical grounds. *Musica humana* describes the ordered, harmonious human being in terms that parallel the careful ordering of the universe. But where *musica mundana* is understood in terms of an actual, audible music (though not for human beings who are either acclimated to its pervasive sounding or unable to hear it due to their fallen state), there is no clear indication that *musica humana* involves actual music. *Musica instrumentalis*, the singing or playing of audible music, however, is understood as a distant reflection of both higher forms. A good explanation of *musica humana* can be found in Hollander, *Untuning*, 30-1.

ramifications for the ways in which music was understood and implemented in a variety of contexts in the early modern English world. As Hollander notes, “Up through the Renaissance, and even later, the harmony of the parts of the cosmos, on the one hand, and of the parts of the human psyche, on the other, were seen as the basic elements of the same universal order.” This analogical relationship, therefore, meant that the music of the spheres “could be reinterpreted as a metaphysical notion, characterizing not only the order of the universe but the relation of human lives to this cosmological order” (*Untuning* 28). That is, the harmonious ordering of the universe suggests that the proper state of the individual is itself ordered, balanced, unified, and reflective of that larger, divinely inspired cosmic harmony.

Two other classical concepts are worth exploring briefly before returning to English ideas about music. The first of these is also derived from Plato and concerns the ethical character of particular musical compositions. In a discussion of the music appropriate for the guardians of the ideal city in *The Republic*, Socrates turns to the question of the import of what he calls the “harmonic mode” of a particular piece of music.⁵ Having found dirges and lamentations inappropriate for soldiers, Socrates argues that the corresponding harmonic modes should likewise be eliminated. The lamenting modes are identified by Glaucon as “the mixo-Lydian, the syntono-Lydian,

⁵ This is the translation often given for the Greek word *harmonia*. A detailed analysis of the notions of *harmonia* and musical *ethos* can be found in Hollander, *Untuning*, 31-37, but it should be noted that the actual nature of both the Greek harmonic modes and the ethical character that attended each remain obscure. What is important is that English readers mapped these concepts, despite their obscurity, onto their own musical traditions and lived experiences in an effort to understand how music affected the individual. As Hollander puts it: “We might observe a general tendency in Western history in which ignorance of the musical practices of a past age leads to the enrichment rather than the impoverishment of the *musica speculativa* of a later one” (*Untuning* 37).

and some others of that sort” and are denounced as “useless even to decent women, let alone men” (75). Agreeing that “drunkenness, softness, and idleness are also most inappropriate for our guardians,” the Ionian and “those Lydian modes that are said to be relaxed” are also denounced. This leaves only the Dorian and Phrygian modes available to the republic’s warriors, since the former “imitate[s] the tone and rhythm of a courageous person who is active in battle or doing some other violent deeds, or who is failing and facing wounds, death, or some other misfortune, and who, in all these circumstances, is fighting off his fate steadily and with self-control,” and the latter is conducive to “acting with moderation and self-control, not with arrogance but with understanding” (75). These harmonic modes seem, from Plato’s examples, to have been understood to carry an inherent affective quality that was connected with particular ethical dispositions. The Dorian and Phrygian are singled out, here, because they are conducive to two of the qualities necessary for a citizen of the ideal republic: courage and moderation. Other modes were more unruly and risked exciting their hearers to inordinate passions or debauched conduct. As Aristotle explains,

In tunes by themselves there do exist imitations of characters, as is in fact manifest. For modes were divergent in nature from the very beginning, and the result is that hearers are put into a different state with respect to each of them and do not stay in the same condition. They are in a condition more of grief and apprehension with respect to some, as the so-called Mixed Lydian; they are in a softer condition of thought with respect to others, as the relaxed modes; they are in a middling and settled condition above all with respect to a different

one—I mean the Dorian, which alone among modes seems capable of having this effect; Phrygian makes them enthused. (163)

This idea of an ethical disposition that inheres in the particular harmonic character of a piece of music had parallels in the ways that the ancients perceived various instruments as well. In general, stringed instruments were preferred over wind instruments as ethically superior and conducive to the restraint and propriety that governed good music. This was in part due to mythical precedents: Plato cites the story of the satyr Marsyas' preference for the aulos, a small flute, and other wind instruments over the lyre and cithara favoured by Apollo (76). In the story, Athena, after inventing the flute, catches a glimpse of her distorted features as she blows upon it and renounces wind instruments entirely. Marsyas, finding the discarded flute, challenges Apollo to a contest and loses, a moment which Plato reads as a demonstration of the superiority of reason (strings) over emotion (wind) and which coloured ancient Greek ideas about music. Hollander elaborates on this, noting "There was, by and large, a suspicious attitude toward textless, purely instrumental music on the part of Greek thinkers," which meant that "rational music needed the infusion of the tone by the word for its effects" (*Untuning* 34). Wind instruments, because the musician cannot sing while playing them, were dangerously emotive since they lacked the tempering of reason through sung text. Stringed instruments, on the other hand, could accompany singing and this, coupled with their symbolic resonances as models for the ordered regularity of both cosmos and man, aligned them with reason, control and proportion. As Hollander suggests, "the polarity of string and wind, then, bore a long tradition of association with the antithesis of reason and uncontrolled passion" (*Untuning* 35).

These major classical antecedents for early modern applications of, and variations on, musical theory underpin a wide variety of ways of thinking about music that are rooted in music's associations with unity, order, and regulation—both cosmological and personal—but which also carry with them the always-attendant threat of disorder and dissolution. Taruskin provides a helpful summary. He notes that from the ancient Greeks, via Boethius, the western cultures of the early modern world inherited two major notions: “first, that *Musica* mirrored the essential harmony of the cosmos . . . and, second, that owing to this divine reflection it had a decisive influence on human health and behaviour. This was known as the doctrine of *ethos*, from which the word ‘ethics’ is derived” (70). He then goes on to note the implications of the classical musical hierarchy:

Audible music (*musica instrumentalis*, “music such as instruments produce”) is thus only a gross metaphor for the two higher and ‘realer’ levels of *Musica*, perhaps best translated in this context as ‘harmony.’ At the top there was the harmony of the cosmos (*musica mundana*), and in the intermediate position there was the harmony of the human constitution (*musica humana*), which *musica instrumentalis*—depending on its relationship to *musica mundana*—could either uplift or put awry. (70)

In its ideal form, *musica instrumentalis*, actual performed music, mirrored the music of the cosmos and imparted a divine, spiritually and ethically pure influence to the mind, body, and soul of the listener. But this was always attended by the threat of its opposite: that music performed without the proper intention and restraint might

profane both its cosmic and human counterparts. It is to early modern English adaptations of a number of these ideas that I want to turn now.

Musical Self-Fashioning

Arguments about the value of music were ubiquitous throughout the early modern period, but the art form remained a fundamental component of the University curriculum in England. This was, in part, because it was considered a marker of proper breeding, of a well-rounded education, and of good courtly conduct. Thomas Morley's *Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* (1597)—a learned treatise in dialogue form dedicated to teaching the basics of singing, reading, and composing music—begins with the young gentleman Philomathes' troubling admission that he has no learning in music:

Supper being ended, and Musicke bookes, according to the custome being brought to the table: the mistresse of the house presented mee with a part, earnestly requesting mee to sing. But when after manie excuses, I protested unfainedly that I could not: everie one began to wonder. Yea, some whispered to others, demaunding how I was brought up: so that upon shame of mine ignorance I go nowe to seeke out mine olde frinde master *Gnorimus*, to make my selfe his scholler. (B2r)

Philomathes' admission that he is not educated in music—he cannot read it, and cannot perform it—is a source of serious embarrassment. It causes his acquaintances to

question his good breeding, his very identity as a member of the gentry.⁶ In short, he fails to perform socially in the way he is expected to as a man of good standing. In order to fashion an appropriately gentlemanly self, it seems, Philomathes *must* demonstrate a knowledge of music, just as he must dress and behave in certain ways. But there is a fine distinction here worth emphasizing: for the young gentleman, actual skill in music, an ability to really perform it before an audience, appears to be less important than the capacity to establish his class status through a performed knowledge of it. As Pattison puts it, “The complete gentleman of the courtesy books is not only a man of affairs, a soldier, and a courtier, but capable of intelligent criticism of literature and music.” In other words, “To be fashionable one had to be musical” (3). It is not music itself that is valuable, but its role as a marker for a particular social identity. Yet the impulse to self-fashion through music, later in the same text, runs up against English culture’s overall ambivalence toward the value of music and produces a tension. Master Gnorimus, upon hearing that Philomathes is interested in instruction in the basics of music, expresses his surprise: “I have heard you so much speak against that art as to term it a corrupter of good manners and an allurements to vices” (B2v). Until he needed it, it seems, Philomathes had renounced music as an inappropriate pastime for a refined gentleman like himself.

This ambivalent connection between music, social status and moral character is ubiquitous. Thomas Elyot’s *Book Named the Governour* (1537) commends music, provided it is performed with propriety, when he writes that “[music], whiche

⁶ Bruce Pattison makes use of an extended version of this passage to demonstrate the social expectations surrounding musical skill among the gentry (6). Lindely, too, discusses it as an example of “the place of music as a courtierly accomplishment” and the place of music more generally in the lives of the upper and middle classes (79-81).

moderately used, and without diminution of honour, that is to say; without wanton countenance and dissolute gesture, is not to be contemned" (20v-21r).⁷ Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545), a treatise on the educational value of archery, compares the sport to music and finds the latter lacking because of this very tension:

Muche musike marreth mennes maners, sayth Galen, although some man wil saye that it doth not so, but rather recreateth and maketh quycke a mannes mynde, yet me thinke by reason it doth as hony doth to a mannes stomacke, whiche at the first receyveth it well, but afterwarde it maketh it unfit, to abyde any good stronge norishynge meate, orels anye holsome sharp and quicke drinke. (10r)

For Ascham, music is useful in moderation—it must be carefully regulated to provide any benefit to the aspiring gentleman—and the danger of its misuse makes it largely unworthy of practice. Baldesar Castiglione's immensely influential treatise on courtly conduct, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), which was translated into English in 1561, echoes some of these concerns. In one description of the perfect courtier, Count Ludovico admits that "I am not satisfied . . . unless he be also a musician, and unless, besides understanding and being able to read music, he can play various instruments" (55) and explains that this is "not so much for the sake of that outward melody which is heard, but because of the power it has to induce a good new habit of mind and an inclination to virtue, rendering the soul more capable of happiness, just as corporal exercise makes the body more robust" (56). The argument sounds like Morley's,

⁷ A discussion of Elyot's defense of the value and benefit of music on both personal and political levels can be found in Hollander, *Untuning*, 114-5. See also Marsh, who notes that Elyot's insistence on moderation was conventional and that "In practice, this meant that certain instruments were preferable to others" (175).

advocating for the ways in which music might help to fashion the proper gentleman, but is tempered by the caution that “along with many other vanities, [music] is indeed well suited to women, and perhaps also to others who have the appearance of men, but not to real men; for the latter ought not to render their minds effeminate and afraid of death” (55). And because music could inspire both virtue and immorality, and because musical skill was associated with professional itinerant musicians, it should be practiced “as a pastime, and as though forced, and not in the presence of persons of low birth or where there is a crowd” (77).⁸ Key to musical self-fashioning is the need to carefully shape and regulate the conditions of performance. “On no account,” writes Seng, summarizing the conduct literature on the subject of music, “should gentlefolk be forward to display their skills—certainly not if to do so would taint them in the eyes of the commoners with the appearance of professionalism, or suggest that they were competing with ‘mechanicals’ such as hired musicians” (xii). The true gentleman must perform music correctly—as a reflection of learning and refinement rather than of inappropriate or unregulated emotion or pride—and for the right kind of audience, ensuring that his performance is received by those capable of enjoying it without drawing inappropriate conclusions and without being unduly excited or disturbed.

Appropriate musicality on the part of the courtier therefore struck a fine balance between being known to have skill in music and keeping that skill in reserve so as to appear moderate and well-governed in public conduct. Henry Peacham’s *Complete Gentleman* (1622) echoes Castiglione’s concern, assuring his potential students of good

⁸ On the status of professional public musicians in the early modern period, see Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 50-3 and Marsh 154-72. Both suggest that the actual perception of professional musicians in the period was a great deal more complicated than we get from the conduct literature that largely records the attitudes of the upper classes.

conduct that “I desire no more in you then to sing your part sure, and at the first sight, withall, to play the same upon your Violl, or the exercise of the Lute, privately to your selfe” (100).⁹ And it is this kind of thinking that leads Balthazar, in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), to respond to Don Pedro’s call for a song by saying “O good my lord, tax not so bad a voice / To slander music any more than once” (2.3.44-5). His refusal is conventional and required.¹⁰ It is important that Balthazar and other men of high standing like him, be known to be able to sing (to show good breeding and education, to show a refined and harmonious condition, to show a carefully cultivated judgment, and other markers of status) but it is likewise paramount that he not *actually* sing, since this would violate the carefully regulated performance of himself on which his social standing depends. Look carefully, too, at Philomathes language in the passage from the *Plain and Easy Introduction* quoted above. When asked to show skill in music, he says “But when after manie excuses, I protested *unfeignedly* that I could not” (emphasis mine). The practice is conventional enough that he has to explain that his claim to ignorance of music is not merely a performance.

The learning and appreciation of music, when conducted appropriately, offered real refinement of the character of the musician in an inward sense and also provided an outward—if usually reserved—marker of status. Music, as *The Praise of Music* tells

⁹ Indeed, Long includes this same passage in a discussion of the ways in which Shakespeare’s plays “reflected the customs and attitudes of the time” which excluded men of higher social stations from performing music publicly, since “to do so would have been as unmannerly as to sell one’s sonnets to a printer” (“Shakespeare’s Use of Music,” Vol. 1, 3 and n.12). Lindley, on the other hand, includes this and other passages from Peacham in his discussion of the musical knowledge that audiences likely brought to Shakespeare’s plays (*Shakespeare and Music* 86).

¹⁰ For more on the conventional modesty required of male singers, including further discussion of this passage, see Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 86-7 and Wong 59.

us, “hath a certaine divine influence into the soules of men, whereby our cogitations and thoughts . . . are brought into a celestially acknowledging of their natures” (C4v), suggesting that music could “attune” the soul to a more perfect state, aligned with a fundamental “nature” that appears to exceed a publicly constructed idea of the self.¹¹ But it is also “as the more delicate meates, and as the finer apparell: not in deede necessary simply, but profitablie necessary for the comlinessse of life” (E1v). That is, music is also one of the outward trappings of public identity—the clothes in which one dresses. Music could improve the immaterial soul, and also the material body. And of course, the two were not discrete. In the highly theatrical world of early modern self-fashioning, by putting on the clothes, by playing the music, you make the man.¹²

In a more concrete sense, however, music was also a means of demonstrating wealth and status. This is one of the reasons why Sir Bounteous Progress, in Thomas Middleton’s *A Mad World My Masters* (c. 1605), is at pains to show off the “consort of mine own household” (2.1.160) which “are in ordinary, yet no ordinary musicians” (2.1.162-30). Sir Bounteous also makes a great deal of fuss over having his guests hear the music of his expensive organs, which he lists among other pieces of finery in his possession (2.1.38-9, 116-21). Music as a marker of monetary wealth and of Sir

¹¹ Austern reads an extended version of this passage as an example of the pervasive idea that the soul and music shared a material affinity (“Art to Enchant” 195). Minear, on the other hand, reads it in connection with Lorenzo’s long speech on music in the *Merchant of Venice*, suggesting that Lorenzo is referring to a commonplace wherein “music awakens faint memories of something previously heard—something perhaps still lingering within” (28).

¹² Austern, however, notes, in her reading of an extended version of this passage from *The Praise of Music*, that music was thought to impart spiritual and material benefits to both sexes (“Sing Againe Syren” 428). I discuss music and femininity below.

Bounteous's good breeding and refined judgment of the arts coalesce into one aspect of a carefully presented public self.¹³

In part, this idea of music as a marker of status and character had to do with music's close associations with the persuasive art of rhetoric, the art of styling language to maximize its persuasive and affective powers. Peacham, for example, commenting on music's civilizing power, asserts that

no Rhetoricke more perswadeth, or hath greater power over the mind; nay, hath not Musicke her figures, the same which Rhetorique? What is a Revert but her Antistrophe? her reports, but sweete Anaphora's? her counterchange of points, Antimetabole's? her passionate Aires but Prosopopoe's? with infinite other of the same nature. (103)¹⁴

Music's capacity to affect one's inner disposition and refine one's soul was not limited only to the producer of music. The listener likewise stood to be affected by music, and this made music very much like rhetoric. Indeed, Hollander notes that this identification between music and rhetoric became a commonplace in the seventeenth century and was "a direct concomitant of the affective theories" of music's effects on listeners rather than directly related to the *musica speculativa* of classical precedent. That is, the analogy between music and rhetoric was a relatively modern addition to the network of ideas connected to music and derived specifically from the acknowledgement of the persuasive powers of both (*Untuning* 194-201). Music, like

¹³ It is also likely that the repeated references to organs are to be taken sexually, establishing a stock analogy between Sir Bounteous's wealth and status and his sexual virility and masculinity.

¹⁴ For further discussions of this passage in connection to music's perceived affinities with rhetoric in early modern thought, see Hollander, *Untuning*, 194-5 and Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 37-8.

powerful, persuasive speech, could inspire passionate feeling, alter behaviour, and motivate action.

A brief look at a Shakespearean example, this time from *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), will prove illustrative at this juncture. After Lorenzo's famous invocation of the music of the spheres in Act 5, scene 1, Jessica admits "I am never merry when I hear sweet music" (69). Lorenzo's explanation of this phenomenon touches on music's benefits and the ways in which it can offer insight into one's character, but it also warns against a number of music's potential dangers:

The reason is, your spirits are attentive;
 For do but note a wild and wanton herd
 Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
 Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
 Which is the hot condition of their blood,
 If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
 Or any air of music touch their ears,
 Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze,
 By the sweet power of music; therefore the poet
 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;
 Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
 But music for the time doth change his nature.
 The man that hath no music in himself,
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;

The motions of his spirit are dull as night,

And his affections dark as Erberus:

Let no such man be trusted. (70-88)

While earlier in the scene Lorenzo has invoked both *musica mundana*, in his appeal to the image of the music of the spheres, and *musica humana* in his assertion that “Such harmony is in immortal souls” (49-65), his explanation of Jessica’s response to the actual sound of the music that she hears being played in Belmont is specifically grounded in physiology. Jessica responds emotionally to music because her spirits, the airy mediators between the corporeal body and the incorporeal soul, are attuned to it; her soul is sufficiently refined and it resonates with the emotional character of the music (and, by extension, the universal harmony it represents). In short, music in this sense can tell Lorenzo something about Jessica’s nature. He can infer the state of her interior from her response to music as an external stimulus. But this cuts both ways, it seems, since sufficiently powerful music can change a listener’s fundamental nature, “Since nought so stockish hard, and full of rage, / But music for the time doth change his nature.” Even animals can be calmed and in a sense civilized by the affective powers of music. And Lorenzo also offers a warning: there is something unnatural, inhuman, even diabolic about a person who is not affected by music.¹⁵

Already we can begin to sketch a number of the ways that ideas about music intersect with various ways of thinking about identity in the early modern period.

Music plays a role in the fashioning of a public self, connoting a certain degree of

¹⁵ This is only a brief summary of the passage. For a thorough analysis of the passage and its connection to a full range of ideas about music circulating in the early modern period, see Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 13-49. Lindley uses Lorenzo’s speech as an organizing principle for his chapter on early modern music theory.

refinement and judgment, and serving as a marker for wealth and class. It is also capable of eliciting affective responses from its listeners that offer insights into their interior condition. In very basic terms, for example, we know that Jessica, who has responded appropriately to music, is good and that Shylock, who has earlier offered a wholesale denunciation of music (2.5.29-36) and who may be the person Lorenzo is thinking of in his caution against the men who have no music in them, is bad. Music is also, in a related sense, capable of changing its listener's nature through its affective power. And because it is this capacity to alter one's interior state that provoke the greatest anxieties about music in the early modern world, it is to this idea and its implications that I now turn.

Sound Affects

Music was understood to be capable of improving, refining and attuning both musician and listener to the virtuous, rational and devout ideal that is fitting for man as the natural analogue to the harmonious universe, but this correspondence was always attended by its dangerous opposite. Music could excite its player, its audience, or both, to inordinate and inappropriate passion. It could inspire improper behavior and it could distract otherwise righteous men and women and compel them to indulge in worldly sensuality. Nowhere was this more vehemently expressed than in the writings of Protestant and Puritan antitheatricalists throughout the early modern period. Indeed, for writers like Stephen Gosson, Phillip Stubbes, and William Prynne, the very elements that make music an art form worthy of praise and reverence are those that

make music most dangerous in a theatrical context.¹⁶ Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579) condemns "bringing sweete consortes into Theaters, which rather effeminate the minde, as pricks unto vice, then procure amendement of manners, as spurres to virtue" (11r). He musters classical precedent (Plutarch, in this case) to demonstrate that the kinds of music played in the theatres are at best the fallen, mundane shadows of the heavenly music that Plato and Aristotle thought could inspire virtue. Phillip Stubbes, in *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), accepts music as a divine gift from God, but cautions that music

beeing used in publike assemblies and private conventicles as directories to filthie dauncing, thorow the sweet harmonie & smoothe melodie therof, it estraungeth the mind stireth up filthie lust, womannisheth the minde, ravisheth the hart, enflameth concupisence, and bringeth in uncleanness. (O4v)

Here, Stubbes expresses a common counter-discourse to the idea that music could refine the mind and soul: performed publicly and without proper restraint and decorum, music could have the opposite effect. Its strong affinity with the passions makes it particularly dangerous if not carefully controlled. Stubbes' primary concerns seem to be that music suppresses the controlling force of reason (it "estraungeth the mind") and overwhelms with feeling (it "ravisheth the hart"). Hollander comments on

¹⁶ Antitheatricalist attitudes toward music have been discussed extensively in the criticism on music's role in early modern literature. Interested readers can find thorough discussions of Gosson, Stubbes, and Prynne's thoughts on the morality of music, including many of the passages quoted here and elsewhere in this dissertation, in Hollander, *Untuning*, 105-7 and 257-60; Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 47, 67-9; Gibson 58-66; Marsh 62-3 and 172; Ortiz 20-8; Wong 6. These attitudes are given more sustained focus in a number of Linda Austern's essays, especially "Sing Againe Syren," and "Alluring the Auditorie to Effeminacie." I discuss a few of these sources in detail below.

the frequent use of “ravish” in musical discourses in this period, noting that ideas of ravishment as “violent sexual possession, bewilderment, ecstatic separation of soul from body . . . tend to cluster more about the erotic sense when applied to music” and notes the close etymological connections between “ravish,” “rapture” and “rape” (*Untuning* 200). Gosson’s and Stubbes’ anxiety about the ability of music to overwhelm reason and excite the passions is essentially a fear that music can effect a violent overthrow of the mind and body, and loss of control over the self. Music is to be avoided because it can supersede reason’s careful regulation of the body’s humours and provoke responses that run contrary to the listener’s righteous, rational self-control.

Stubbes takes his ideas about music one step further, however. In a revealing caution to his readers, he asserts that young men that indulge inappropriately in music risk becoming “softe, womannish, uncleane, smoth mouthed, affected to bawdrie, scurrilitie, filthie rimes, and unsemely talking” (O5r). Here, Stubbes assigns to music the power not only to induce effeminate behavior in men, but to make their very nature more feminine. He invokes the early modern commonplace of the incontinent and pliable female body to describe the effects of the wrong kind of music (ie. any music not directly linked to strict devotional practice) to suggest that music’s danger is in its physically transformative power. The son will not become *like* a woman, he will become, in some fundamental sense, a woman: soft, unclean, overtly sexual, etc. His masculine capacity for reason and careful self-regulation will be compromised and replaced by unstable and irrational femininity. Stubbes suggests, essentially, that music can compromise the self on the level of gender.

This anxiety is not itself unique to antitheatricalism. Austern has written extensively on the effeminizing power of music as a parallel to the ways in which femininity itself was constructed in the early modern period. She notes that pervasive correspondences existed between ideas about music's power to ravish and effeminize and the capacity for beautiful women to do the same. She argues that "Women, who possessed the natures of both Mary and Eve, were regarded as agents alternately of salvation and destruction even as music was perceived as an inspiration to both heavenly rapture and carnal lust" ("Sing Again Syren" 420). Both women and music, in the early modern period, were capable of overwhelming reason and inspiring inordinate passion in a way that threatened to elide the distinctions between masculine and feminine. In part, this has to do with the performative quality of masculinity in the early modern period. Laura Levine's *Men in Women's Clothing* examines the antitheatrical tradition's attitudes toward representations of gender in the theatre (particularly in connection with costume and the practice of staging women's parts using male actors) and concludes that antitheatricalists like Gosson, Stubbes, and Prynne reject theatrical practice as dangerous because it stages "a model of the self that is profoundly contradictory . . . both inherently monstrous and inherently nothing at all" (12). The implications of this kind of thinking for the period's ideas about gender manifest themselves in a sense that "men are only men in the performance of their masculinity" (7) and that "femaleness [is] the default position, the thing one [is] always in danger of slipping into" (8). Music, it would seem, both confirms and complicates Levine's arguments about the self. While music feeds the same cultural anxieties about the mutability of gender roles by demonstrating, to paraphrase Levine, that listening

leads to doing and therefore being,¹⁷ it opens new avenues for exploring early modern concepts of the self because music is connected not only with public presentation and representation but also with the interior of the humoral body and the sense of a private, withheld inwardness that attends it, even if it is not always fully coherent.

Music is dangerous to the stability of gender, therefore, because it can compromise the performance of masculinity, but it also has important ramifications for women themselves. If masculinity is a matter of performance in the early modern period, femininity is, in a sense, the opposite: proper conduct for women was constructed through a series of restrictions *against* performance. That is, those characteristics of behaviour most strongly associated with femininity—excessive emotion, unchecked speech, expressions of sexual desire—become conceived as a set of limits within which proper conduct must be contained. Women were expected to be demure, silent and chaste, to restrict the various expressions, in other words, of the quality that was thought to make women dangerous: their unrestrained sexuality. And this, in turn, had consequences for musical practice among women. While education in music was encouraged for young women for many of the same reasons that apply to well-born men, *The Book of the Courtier* implores us to “Consider what an ungainly thing it would be to see a woman playing drums, fifes, trumpets, or other like instruments; and this because their harshness hides and removes that suave gentleness which so adorns a woman in her every act” (154). Wind instruments and those, like the viol da gamba, that were set between the legs, discomposed the carefully managed

¹⁷ Levine’s original is a visual version of this same idea, that “watching leads inevitably to doing,” as well as “the more radical idea that watching leads inevitably to being” (13).

female body and conveyed sounds that were dangerously sensual. Austern, commenting on this same passage, notes that women in early modern England were therefore permitted to learn only the stringed and keyboard instruments befitting of feminine modesty (“Sing Againe Syren” 430). But these were also the instruments associated with the musical characteristics that suggested or led to effeminization (as opposed, for example, to the militaristic quality of drums and horns), a dichotomy illustrated in *Much Ado About Nothing*, when Benedick says of the love-struck Claudio, “I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife, and now had he rather hear the tabor and the pipe” (3.2.12-15). Claudio’s love for Hero has, in Benedick’s opinion, effeminized him, taking away his manly, militaristic qualities and replacing them with feminine emotions, an opinion he makes clear through musical conventions. Claudio, smitten, is no longer himself. The associations between music and virtue that applied to men were also applicable to women, but they were always attended by the threat of music’s ravishing erotic power when wielded by an inappropriately unrestrained woman.

As the early modern period in England progressed and attitudes in general shifted away from the quasi-magical cosmology that described the world in terms of analogical correspondences and toward a more empirical understanding of the world and man’s place within it, music’s dangerous, transformative powers, originally rooted in ideas of mystical relationships between cosmic and human music became grounded in more

concrete terms related to music's effects on the humoral body.¹⁸ This turn toward the interior to explain musical effects deserves some scrutiny in light of Galenic humoralism's potential as one way to interrogate early modern subjectivity.

That Within Which Passes Show

In the second chapter of the posthumously published *Sylva Sylvarum, or a Natural History in Ten Centuries* (1627), Francis Bacon turns to questions of music. His specific aim, in exploring the characteristics of musical sound, is to account for those elements of speculative music that have been "reduced into certaine Mysticall Subtilties, of no use, and not much Truth" (35). He wants, therefore, to "joyne the Contemplative and Active Part together" (37), to bridge ideas about music with its practice, by finding natural, physical explanations for many of the characteristics of musical sound inspired by classical notions of music's affective powers. Two related conclusions emerge from this effort. Attempting to explain the inherently pleasing character of harmonious sounds, Bacon equates visual and auditory pleasure, suggesting that "the Pleasing of [visual] Order doth symbolize with Harmony . . . And both these Pleasures, that of the Eye, and that of the Eare, are but the Effects of Equality; Good Proportion, or Correspondence: So that (out of Question) Equality, and Correspondence, are the Causes of Harmony" (37). Bacon then attempts to account for music's spiritual,

¹⁸ This gradual change in ideas about music, from belief in its quasi-magical status as a structuring principle for the universe and the concomitant analogical potential this held for human beings, toward increasingly empirical investigations into its perceived effects on listeners, and eventually into the stuff of pure metaphor, is the arc of Hollander's argument in *The Untuning of the Sky*. It is worth noting that while the overall progression Hollander identifies holds true, in the period covered by this study the move from belief in *musica mundana* to the total assimilation of those ideas into poetic trope is far from linear.

emotional, and psychological power. He notes, in this respect, that “It hath been anciently held, and observed, that the Sense of Hearing, and the Kinds of Musick, have most Operation upon Manners; As to Incourage Men, and make them warlike; To make them Soft and Effeminate; To make them Grave; To make them Light; To make them Gentle and inclined to Pitty” (38).¹⁹ Bacon’s explanation is a rehearsal of poetic and philosophical convention, but one that focuses specifically on its relation to the sense of hearing—the physical means of taking in and processing auditory experience. Bacon’s project both in the *Sylva Sylvarum* and in much of his earlier work is to challenge received wisdom and offer explanations for phenomena according to experimental evidence and observation. So rather than resorting to conventional appeals to divine harmony, the music of the spheres, and magical-musical correspondences between the wider cosmos and the individual (the “certaine Mystically Subtilties” he alludes to and which, despite the inroads made by the New Science, still held tremendous sway in 1627), Bacon offers an altogether more nuanced and interesting explanation for musical effect. He suggests, rather, that “The Cause is, for that the Sense of Hearing striketh the Spirits more immediatly, than the other Senses; And more incorporeally than the Smelling: For the Sight, Taste, and Feeling, have their Organs, not of so present

¹⁹ Austern cites this passage from Bacon (which is completed below) in a discussion of early modern ideas about the sense of hearing (“Sing Againe Syren” 425) and elsewhere in a discussion of early modern ideas of music and effeminacy (“Alluring the Auditorie” 351). Smith cites it in a discussion of early modern attitudes about the differences between sight and hearing (103). Folkerth includes a lengthy discussion of a number of Bacon’s scientific observations on hearing in his phenomenological reading of early modern sound (51-7) and discusses this passage in particular in connection with the notion that sound and hearing were closely linked to ideas of identity (56-7). Gibson, too, discusses it as an example of music’s capacity to overthrow the will (57). Minear reads it in connection with the seventeenth century move away from metaphysical explanations of musical effect (37).

and immediate Accesses to the Spirits, as the Hearing hath.” This, in turn, leads him to conclude that “Harmony entring easily, and Mingling not at all, and Comming with a manifest Motion; doth by Custome of often Affecting the Spirits, and Putting them into one kinde of Posture, alter not a little the Nature of the Spirits, even when the Object is removed” (39). The spirits to which Bacon refers are the airy mediators between the body and soul. Robert Burton explains spirit as “a most subtle vapour, which is expressed from the blood, and the instrument of the soul, to perform all his actions” (I.148). Spirit, connecting the incorporeal soul with the corporeal humoral body, was the vehicle by which reason, associated with the higher functions of the soul, could exert control over the passions, located in the physical interiority of the body. And conversely, it was also the means by which the volatility of the humoral body could disrupt and corrupt the rational function of the incorporeal soul.²⁰

Some of the further potential that ideas about music held for expressing and exploring early modern culture’s emerging and conflicted sense of selfhood can be inferred from Bacon’s analysis. Bacon acknowledges, first of all, that pleasure in music is related to a larger sense of pleasure derived from order, proportion and correspondence. These ideas map nicely onto the Galenic body whose ideal condition is balanced and regulated and for which the proper state was a correspondence between inward conditions and outward behavior. But music could also have potent effects on the “manners” of its listeners—their ways of being and of conducting themselves. Music of a particular harmonic character could make a person aggressive or violent, while

²⁰ A good summary of the role the spirits played in both the Galenic tradition and the development of musical ideas in the early modern period can be found in D.P. Walker, “Ficino’s Spiritus and Music.” Walker’s focus is on Marsilio Ficino, an Italian neo-Platonist whose ideas heavily influenced both Burton and Bacon.

that of another could make that same person soft and idle. Thus music could convey a particular intention or affective disposition from performer to listener; it could, in a very real way, convey the will of the musician or the commander of particular musical performances (Bacon cites military music, a theoretical example in which, apparently, a general concerned that his men were unready for war might call for or play a “warlike” tune, most likely involving heavy use of drums, to put those men in the proper state for war). And according to Bacon, music is uniquely suited to inducing this kind of affective persuasion because it could penetrate the boundaries of the embodied self, entering and affecting the volatile psychophysiology of the humoral interior. Music could access interiority in ways that complicate distinctions between self and other because hearing, unlike all the other senses, has direct access to the spirits that connect the humoral body and its attendant passions with the incorporeal soul—the site of reason. Michael Witmore, commenting on Bacon’s framework, explains it this way:

The “manifest Motion” of the affective force of sound is imparted more immediately and more corporeally than that of the other senses, for example that of vision or smell. These latter senses do not strike the body quite the same way, mingling as they do with the organs of sense themselves. The formal qualities of harmony, on the other hand, its ability to structure differences of pitch in elegant proportions, allows music to pass along the sensory conduits to the animal spirits with ease. In essence, Bacon is describing a world in which individuals are surrounded by a continuous envelope of air, stretching like a tympanum between possible sources of sound and their eventual receptors deep within. (72)

The interior body, site of personal inwardness and of the volatile humours whose regulation, as Schoenfeldt argues, is constitutive of selfhood, was uniquely susceptible to musical influence. As such, music had unprecedented access to both the corporeal and incorporeal aspects of the self and could bring about changes in both that affected the constitutives of both interior identity and outward behavior (by influencing public displays of bravery, effeminacy, gravity, frivolity, etc). By conveying particular dispositions to the spirits, music could inspire overwhelming emotional responses as easily as it could inspire careful contemplation and reasoned self-mastery.

In what sounds like a reiteration of old assumptions about music's divine origins and magical correspondence to man, Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1601) argues that music has the particular power to stir up strong emotions because "music hath a certain secret passage into men's souls, and worketh so divinely in the mind that it elevateth the heart miraculously, and resembleth in a certain manner the voices and harmony of heaven" (206). But while it was published some twenty-six years before Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum*, Wright approaches the topic from a similarly empirical standpoint, interrogating the precise nature of that effect on the body itself. After reciting ancient precedents for the correspondence between music and the soul, Wright goes on to argue that

the very sound itself, which according to the best philosophy is nothing else but a certain artificial shaking, cispling, or tickling of the air . . . which passeth through the ears, and by them into the heart, and there beateth and tickelth 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. (208-209)²¹

Wright's explanation for music's ability to move the passions is significant because, like Bacon's, it is unmistakably grounded in the workings of the physical world and of the physical body.

The mechanistic explanations for music's effects on its listener proposed, in different but comparable terms, by both Bacon and Wright have interesting consequences for a nuanced understanding of many of the ideas and anxieties touched upon up to this point. In a model of musical influence grounded in the humoral body, music can establish a direct connection between otherwise discrete and inaccessible interiors. The key, here, is that any musical transaction (music produced by one person and received by another) implies two selves. It is, in a number of important respects, an exchange. The musician, because of music's affective dimension, is capable of expressing profoundly personal ideas and feelings through his or her art, in a manner either carefully controlled or dangerously unregulated. The resultant musical sound produces a movement of the air that penetrates the boundaries of the listener's physical body and transfers that motion to the heart, spirits, passions, and soul. Music, in this sense, is literally disruptive to the body of the individual, violating both

²¹ A longer explanation of Wright's observations on sound and its capacity to influence the material body, including this particular passage, can be found in Folkerth 60-2. Lindley quotes the passage as an example of the trend away from analogical explanations of musical effect (*Shakespeare and Music* 28-9). A slightly truncated version is cited in Gibson, in conjunction with her discussion of the penetrative powers of music (56). Minear cites Wright's account of sound as a rippling of the air as one example of an early modern notion about sound and music that Shakespeare channels in many of his works (8) and includes the remainder of the passage in a fuller description of the early modern theories of music that Shakespeare may have been aware of (35-6).

interiority and the capacity to distinguish between autonomous control over that interiority and the will of an other.

Elaborating on the increasingly mechanistic ideas of music's affective powers that emerge in the early seventeenth century, Hollander notes that music becomes "a vehicle for a piercing of the hearer with that which will agitate the passions within him and cause him to 'imitate' or 'represent' within himself the desired feeling" (*Untuning* 201). This informs ideas about the erotic power of music. Hollander points his readers to a salient example in Thomas Campion's "When To Her Lute Corrina Sings," which depicts a lover's ravishment at the hands of a lute played by a female musician. Unable to resist her musical strains, the speaker admits,

And as her lute doth live or die,
 Led by her passion, so must I,
 For when of pleasure she doth sing,
 My thoughts enjoy a sodaine spring,
 But if she doth of sorrow speake,

Ev'n from my hart the strings doe breake. (qtd. in Hollander, *Untuning*, 204)

Corrina's expressions of passion are musical and the speaker's response is framed in involuntary terms. Corrina's feelings become the speaker's feelings because they are transferred to him directly through musical sound. This is an idea likewise invoked in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* (1613), when Queen Katherine asks a serving woman to "Take thy lute, wench, my soul grows sad with troubles. / Sing, and disperse 'em if thou

canst" (3.1.1-2).²² Here the musical transformation is requested and so does not carry the same implications of another's power over the individual will, but the effect is the same: music can alter the condition of the body, mind, and soul. If the Queen's serving woman is sufficiently skilled a musician, she will fundamentally alter her sovereign's emotional state. John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (c. 1613) employs a more sinister example of the same idea. Ferdinand, wishing to torment his sister to madness for the shame she has brought to their family, resolves "To remove forth the common hospital / All the mad folk, and place them near her lodging; / There [to] let them practice together, sing, and dance" (4.1.129-31). The madmen's disorders, in other words, are to be transferred to the Duchess—Ferdinand says "she'll needs be mad" (4.1.128)—through their music.

Hollander's commentary on the *Campion* poem above suggests that "the ravished hearer is like the instrument in that the adored performer is master of them both" (*Untuning* 205) and notes the invocation of "the figure of the self as instrument" which is borrowed from traditional Christian symbolism.²³ In the Shakespeare example, the Queen's inability to regulate her own passions leads her to call on a servant to effect that change on her behalf through music—she becomes, in a sense,

²² The singer goes on to sing a song about Orpheus's musical power over the natural world and even inanimate objects, heightening our awareness of the art's power here and in general.

²³ Hollander does not elaborate on what the "self as instrument" might mean for the actual experience of subjectivity, but does connect *Campion's* imagery with that invoked by Hamlet in the recorder metaphor quoted at the beginning of my introduction. His assessment of both is simply that situations in which "the active performer plays upon the passive auditor in a way which is likened to that in which the performer's instrument is controlled, is characteristic of the doctrine of affective music" (*Untuning* 206). Part of the aim of this project, as I have noted, is to explore in greater detail the ramifications of this idea of the self as instrument.

subject to her serving woman's musical skill. In Webster, music will be the vehicle for psychological disorder, transferred from the madmen to the Duchess. In each case, music acts on and alters the listener in ways that have consequences for Marshall's "correlates of the self": the emotions, the state of mind and the spiritual character of the individual. In a physiological paradigm that sees selves located in the humours, passions and spirits of the bodily interior, music's relatively unimpeded passage from one bodily interior to another offers simultaneously the possibility of restoring psychic unity and the threat of the overthrow of the will. And each possibility, in equal but opposite ways, calls into question the stability and autonomy of the self.

At the heart of English culture's uncertainty about the value of music and its anxieties about its potential for influence over the self is a discomfort with the passivity of the sense of hearing. A lengthy passage from John Donne's "Sermon 27" is illustrative in this respect. "Take heed that you hear them whom God hath appointed to speake to you," Donne implores his audience. But he qualifies his statement with a warning:

But, when you come abroad, take heed *what* you hear; for, certainly, the Devill doth not cast in more snares at the eye of man, then at the eare. Our Saviour Christ proposes it as some remedy against a mischief, That if the eye offend thee, thou mayst pull it out, and if thy hand or foot offend thee, thou mayst cut it off, and thou art safe from that offence. But he does not name nor mention the ear: for, if the ear betray thee, though thou doe cut it off, yet thou art open to that way of treason still, still thou canst heare. (234-5)²⁴

²⁴ Bloom cites the first sentence of this passage from Donne in her discussion of Protestant discourses of hearing in early modern England (113).

Donne's gruesome passage gives us some insight into the way that musical influence was thought to work on a physiological level in this period by reminding us that hearing is an entirely passive sense. The ears are always open to the world and to the sounds (good and bad) that fill it and provide a direct link between outer and inner spaces. Donne is therefore concerned with teaching his audience to be careful what kinds of sounds they expose themselves to, since once heard they are already incorporated into the body. Not even the removal of the physical ears can mitigate their essential openness. As Mark Robson puts it,

The ear, unlike the eye, is always open, always ready to receive, and can only be "closed" with difficulty . . . Thus there is always the possibility of the call, but this call cannot be "screened"; to decide whether or not to "listen" to a speech, one must already have heard it. One can only reserve the right not to answer the call; any pestilent content will already have been incorporated. (147)

This is essentially an alternative articulation of the danger Donne describes: that the sense of hearing allows heard sounds to fundamentally alter the condition of the bodily interior (and therefore the soul to which it is connected via the spirits) and that this carries at the very least a potential for deleterious influence. And this basic notion underpins, in indirect ways, much of the ambivalence about music I have described so far.

But the consequences of hearing's capacity to convey external influences into the bodily interior were not always damaging. Music's capacity to induce fundamental alterations in the physical and psychological makeup of an individual—what Gail Kern Paster calls the "psychophysiology" of the embodied self under the Galenic regime

(*Humoring the Body* 12)—also led to a number of positive offshoots of this sort of thinking for early modern musical practice. Timothy Bright, in his 1586 *Treatise of Melancholy*, explains how music is used as a cure for melancholy, which he describes as “a certayne fearefull disposition of the mind altered from reason” (1).²⁵ This characterization of melancholy as a disordering of one’s proper state is important. Bright goes on to explain that in the state of melancholy,

Then are all passions more vehement, & so outrageously oppresse and trouble the quiet seate of the mind, that all organically actions thereof are mixed with melancholie madnesse; and reason turned to a vaine feare, or plaine desperation, the braine being altered in his complexion, and as it were transported into an instrument of an other make then it was first ordained. (2)

Here, melancholy is characterized as a condition of difference from a more ordered, regulated state. The composition of the body is “altered” and “transported” into something “of an other make” from its natural condition. At its heart, then, melancholy is a compromising of identity, an inability to assert and regulate an embodied self.

Burton, writing some thirty-five years later, notes that those most afflicted with persistent melancholy “cannot arm themselves with that patience as they ought to do . . . and according as the humour itself is intended or remitted in men, as their temperature of body, or rational soul, is better able to make resistance; so are they more or less affected” (I.145).

²⁵ A much fuller discussion of music’s connection with melancholy in the early modern period than is possible here can be found in Gibson 41-66. Gibson’s essay is primarily concerned with the intersection between music, melancholy, and gender.

Both Bright and Burton identify music as one of the most effective methods of restoring the melancholic to his proper disposition. Bright informs us that

Not only cheerefull musicke in a generalitie, but such of that kinde as most rejoyceth is to be sounded in the melancholicke eare . . . For that which reason worketh by a more evident way, that musicke as it were a magicall charme bringeth to passe in the minds of men . . . which agreement betwixt concert of musicke, and affection of the minde, when Aristophenes perceaved, he thereby was moved to thinke, that the mind was nothing else but a kind of harmonie.

(247-48)

Rehearsing conventional sixteenth century ideas about the mystical confluences between music and the soul, Bright argues that what reason does conventionally (the regulation of the passions and the bodily humours they affect), music can do by more subtle, mystical means.²⁶ That is, music returns the soul to its right condition, and thereby reorders the bodily spirits and humours and quells the inordinate passions of the sufferer. Burton echoes this idea, suggesting that music is an effective cure because “corporal tunes pacify our incorporeal soul” and that it “exercises domination over the soul, and carries it beyond itself, helps, elevates, extends it.” He then goes on to account for these observations by appealing to ancient sources: “Scaliger . . . gives a reason of these effects, ‘because the spirits about the heart take in that trembling and dancing air into the body, are moved together, and stirred up with it’” (II.116).²⁷ In essence, then,

²⁶ Lindley cites a variation on this passage from Bright in his discussion of music as a cure for various diseases (*Shakespeare and Music* 31).

²⁷ Burton’s account of the relationship between music and melancholy—as both cause and cure—is cited in full in Long, *Shakespeare*, Vol. 2, 30-2; Austern discusses it in connection with early modern ideas of the soul’s affinity with music (426); Gibson cites

music's restorative functions, like its affective and persuasive ones, depend on its capacity to enter the body and physically alter its composition, restoring order and rationality.

A good example of these ideas in practice is the musical treatment for the king's madness in *King Lear* (1605). The music called for in Act 4, scene 7 is intended to remedy what Cordelia calls "this breach in [Lear's] abused nature, / Th' untun'd and jarring senses" (4.7.14-15). Lear is an instrument that has gone out of tune; the constituent elements of what Cordelia recognizes as his fundamental character—his nature—are no longer harmonious. He is, in a very real sense, no longer himself, a fact the king appears to acknowledge when he says, "I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see, / I feel this pin prick. Would I were assur'd / Of my condition" (4.7.54-56) and acknowledges "I fear I am not in my perfect mind" (4.7.62). That music is the remedy prescribed to assuage his condition suggests the degree to which the art was considered to influence the material, psychological and spiritual condition of the body and the self. The music, presumably calm, ordered, regular and soothing, will impart to Lear the corresponding disposition, returning him to himself.

All this prefigures, to some degree, the ideas expressed in Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* discussed earlier: the profound psychological and spiritual effects attributed to music begin as profound physical alterations of the composition of the body. Music as a cure for melancholy demonstrates its capacity to return the body to its natural, ordered and unified state. This may at first seem to contradict many of the ideas,

a portion of this passage in a discussion of early modern explanations for the penetrative power of sound (56); Wong refers to the passage as an example of music's dual nature, as a cure and cause of disorder (18)

explored above, of music's capacity to excite the listener to inordinate passions or improper behaviour, and even to transform the body on the level of gender, but these two facets of musical theory can be made to cohere by considering them as two ends of a complex spectrum of experience grounded in music's effect on the self. It is useful, therefore to return to Michael Schoenfeldt's compelling argument that "the Renaissance seems to have imagined selves as differentiated not by their desires, which all more or less share, but by their capacity to control these desires" (17). The fact that, in the Galenic worldview, control over the psychological aspects of the self required control over the bodily ones suggests some of the force that musical ideas, which express an affinity between the music and the soul or between music and the porousness of the body, had for understanding and testing out the limits of subjectivity.

What I have sketched above is by no means an exhaustive account of the ways in which music might be implicated in ways of thinking about the self in the early modern period, but it does begin to suggest the contours of the general case: that music intersects with a number of the discourses that structure ways of thinking about identity in early modern culture. Music is implicated in a number of modes of fashioning a public self. Musical performance conventions carried class and gender connotations. It was broadly implicated in considerations of the workings of the humoral body and suggested ways of imagining and accessing a reserved, private interiority. Finally, music could both usurp and restore the primacy of the individual will, depending on its usage. I want to turn now, however, to a number of particular dramatic representations of music—moments of musical imagery as well as real

musical performances—in which conventional views of music's influence over the mind, body and spirit are reconfigured in ways that advance and complicate our understanding of early modern subjectivity.

CHAPTER 2

Many Sorts of Music in *Twelfth Night* and *The Roaring Girl*

Of the anxieties expressed about music by early modern commentators of all stripes, its power to effeminize the listener—who is usually, by default, a man—is by far the most prevalent. The fear that music led, almost inevitably it seems, to the loss of self-control over the humours and passions of the bodily interior, to inordinate and lascivious behaviour, and even to the transformation of the physical body into something more feminine, pervades the discourse surrounding music throughout the period. In fact, these three realms—the private bodily interior, its public and visible exterior, and gender—are deeply intertwined in the period’s discussions of music. Musical sounds, according to the prevailing wisdom from Plato to Prynne, enter the body and work physical changes on its spirits and humours, which have consequences for the expression of passions. The difficulty in regulating these powerful feelings leads to corresponding behaviours that manifest visibly and publicly these interior changes. The consequence is that gender itself, as a signifier of identity, is rendered unstable. Even in this simplified summary of the issue, we can sense how music might be deeply troubling for masculine subjectivity. It would seem that music, because of its capacity to infiltrate the depths of subjective interiority and to compel thoughts, feelings and behaviours that undermine the rigorous self-control upon which early modern masculinity depends, calls into question the very distinction between men and women.

The danger of music’s effeminizing power over the bodies, minds and souls of the men that stand to be affected by it has been written about extensively and the critical

tendency even in recent scholarship has been to see this largely as a one-way street. Music threatens masculinity (and therefore conventional dynamics of power) and must be carefully controlled just as women's troubling bodies and the voices that emerge from them must be strictly policed. My aim in this chapter, however, is to tease out a more complex view of the relationship between music, the body, and the performance of gender. I want to suggest, therefore, that because of its pervasive connection in the early modern imagination to anxieties about the stability of gender, music is also a useful imaginative strategy for troubling gender and producing alternative subject positions that resist—however temporarily or unstably—essentialist notions of femininity that limit women's agency and autonomy. And what is especially significant about these musical subjectivities is that they resist, at least in part, the tendency to see women's agency and autonomy as constituted only in terms of subversion of male authority. This strategy is most readily apparent in two plays that feature cross-dressed women who already trouble, to varying degrees, established conventions of gender performance. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Viola frames her ability to pass as a male servant in Orsino's court by claiming she can "sing and speak in many sorts of music," and in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*, Moll performs music as ambiguously as she performs gender. In both plays, the spectre of women's dangerous musicality and its effeminizing potential for the male listener is raised, but each play subverts this expectation, seeming to suggest instead that music might be useful as a mode of self-fashioning that offers women a subjectivity less severely circumscribed by essentialist notions of femininity as a binary opposite—an other—to masculinity. In an important sense, then, these two plays are examples of the framework McGrath

outlines in which “Female subjectivity is not a stable position, but rather operates in a process of sometimes combative, always off-balance, dialogue with the language which produces it” (16). Both the idea of music and real performances of musical sound in these two plays become the site of just such an instability where music facilitates the imaginative construction of alternative forms of agency not ordinarily available to women, forms of agency that signify outside binaries of submission and subversion that structure women’s subjectivity as already discursively produced by the masculinity against which it is defined.

Anxieties about music’s power in the early modern world were deeply intertwined with fears about the potential for effeminization: the slip from masculinity into femininity. As Gibson explains it, in the early modern world “masculinity was defined in relation to ‘effeminacy,’ which was widely understood in literature of the period as a ‘naturally’ feminine state of weakness, passivity, changeability, deceptiveness, unrestrained emotion, excess, sensuality and embodiment, self-indulgence and, perhaps most importantly, a lack of self-control and reason” (42). Music, with its powerfully affective properties and its dangerous irrationality, was especially problematic for a masculinity that was always in danger of slipping into femininity, because it entered the body and effected changes to its humours and passions that could have dire consequences if not strictly regulated. Gibson elaborates on this notion:

Within the humoral regime—under which entry and evacuation of substances into and out of the permeable humoral body had to be strictly regulated—music was regarded as an airy substance that could affect health, humoral balance and

well-being. In this context, music's role was dualistic: it could help maintain the natural order, but it could also dangerously disrupt "normative humoural masculinity." (51)

This fear that music might corrupt manhood is often implicit in writings about the value and power of music, as it is in Richard Mulcaster's *Positions Wherein Those Primitive Circumstances Be Examined Which Are Necessary for the Training Up of Children* (1581). Mulcaster advises his readers that "Musick moveth great misliking to some men . . . as to great a provoker of vain delites" and suggests that this is because

it carieth away the eare, with the sweetnesse of the melodie, and bewitcheth the minde, with a Syrenes sounde, pulling it from that delite, wherein of duetie it ought to dwell, unto harmonicall fantasies, and withdrawing it, from the best meditations, and most vertuous thoughtes to forreine conceites, and wandring devises. (38)¹

The danger of music here is its bewitching, sirenic quality, which suggests a dangerous femininity that inheres in music itself. This gives music the power to undermine the male listener's "duetie" to maintain "the best meditations, and most vertuous thoughtes" (ie. reason), provoking instead the "vain delites," "fantasies" and "wandring devises" associated with the wanton frivolity of women. Thomas Coryate, in *Coryat's Crudities* (1611), warns travellers to Venice to "furnish thy selfe with a double armour,

¹ Austern discusses the latter part of this passage as an example of the sorcerous power of music over its listener ("Sing Againe Syren" 427) and again later in connection with the frequent link, in early modern thought, between music and femininity ("Alluring the Auditorie" 348). Gibson uses it as evidence of music's pervasive sexual overtones (60). Part of it is discussed in some detail, as well, in Minear, who connects it with early modern religious debates over music and the danger that the sensuous qualities of the melody might distract from the text that a song was meant to convey (168).

the one for thine eyes, the other for thine eares” against both the beauty and the tempting music of a Venetian courtesan, who “will endeavour to enchaunt thee partly with her melodious notes that shee warbles out upon her lute” (qtd. in Gibson 63). This invokes a commonplace that sees sweet music and beautiful women as comparable enticers to excessive affection and lust.² Here, again, effeminacy is not directly invoked, but the text implies that appropriately masculine self-discipline must be maintained in order to resist the tempting power of feminine musical enchantments. The famous misogynist pamphleteer Joseph Swetnam, in his *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women* (1615), suggests that “A man delights in armes, & in hearing the rattling drums, but a woman loves to heare sweet musick on the Lute, Cittern, or Bandora” (38),³ a sentiment that echoes Benedick’s description of Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*: “I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife; and now had he rather hear the tabour and the pipe” (2.3.12-15).⁴ In both cases, particular kinds of music are masculine and others feminine and each seems to say something about the listener who prefers it.

² A good account of this idea is given in Austern, “For Love’s a Good Musician,” 614-653. See also her “Sing Againe Syren,” which deals with many of the same ideas.

³ For more on this passage from Swetnam in connection with gendered attitudes toward music, see Austern, “Alluring the Auditorie,” 351; Gibson 57-8.

⁴ As Constantia Munda points out in her response to Swetnam, *The Worming of a Mad Dog* (1617), Swetnam has actually appropriated a conventional description of the difference between a warrior and a lover, both of which are usually men: “Thus you see your cheefest elegancie to bee but miserable patches and botches: this Antithesis you have found in some Author betwixt a warriar and a lover, and you stretch it to shew the difference betwixt a man and a woman” (F1v). The musical inclinations of warriors and lovers is also what underpins the reference in *Much Ado*. In both cases, music is invoked as a sign of an internal disposition, a telling revelation of femininity and effeminacy. For more on this dichotomy and its relationship to early modern ideals of masculinity, see Moulton 70-1.

In the examples above, music is either feminine-sounding or it shares qualities with femininity (ie. it is unrestrained, changeable, exciting). Music, or at least certain kinds of sweet-sounding, pleasurable music played on specific instruments, is like women: enchanting, voluptuous, wanton. Other texts are more explicit about the literally effeminizing power of music. Gasparo's opinion, in *The Book of the Courtier*, that music is "well suited to women, and perhaps also to others who have the appearance of men, but not to real men; for the latter ought not to render their minds effeminate and afraid of death" (55) gestures to this power.⁵ Men who are too taken by music's charms are rendered effeminate and have only the appearance of masculinity, not real manhood. Elyot's *Book Named the Governor* is generally favourable toward the place of music in the education of young men, but cautions that it must be used properly: "It were therefore better, that no musike were taught to a noble man, than by the exacte knowledge therof, he shuld have therin inordinate delyte: and by that be illected to wantonnes, abandonyng gravitie and the necessary cure and office in the publike weale to hym committed" (22r). The danger of effeminacy is implied here: too much music might lead young men to feminine wantonness and the abandonment of properly manly pursuits like public office. Stephen Gosson acknowledges that a number of other facets of the theatre are equally corrosive to proper conduct and manners, but he singles out music as particularly troubling, since it might, "by the privie entries of the eare, slip downe into the hart, & with gunshotte of affection gaule the minde, where

⁵ It is worth keeping in mind that Gasparo is Castiglione's conservative voice and is alone in his condemnation of musical training for young men in *The Book of the Courtier*. His reasons for distrusting music, however, are conventional.

reason and vertue should rule the roste" (*School* 15r). Stubbes' *Anatomy of Abuses*, offering a similar argument, compares music and food, noting that

as honie and such like sweet things received into the stomack, dooth delight at the first, but afterward they make the stomack so quasie, nice and weake, that it is not able to admit meat of hard digesture. So sweet Musick, at the first delighteth the eares, but afterward corrupteth and depraveth the minde, making it weake, and quasie, and inclined to all licenciousness of lyfe whatsoever. (O3v)

Though he does not specifically invoke effeminacy, Stubbes' suggestions here that music might make the mind weak and queasy and unable to "digest" more substantial fare echo early modern discourses of femininity that paint women as weak, inconstant, and licentious, incapable of regulating their bodies and behaviours. William Prynne devotes several lengthy passages to the question of music's appropriateness in the public theatre, concluding at one point that "Effeminate accurate lust-provoking Musicke . . . must undoubtedly bee utterly unlawfull unto Christians, in regard of the fore-named lewde effects which issue from it." Among these lewd effects are echoes of the standard arguments against music, that it might "effeminate mens mindes, corrupt their manners, abate their courage, consume their time; and . . . draw them on to idlennesse and voluptuous living" (289).

While assertions that music had distinctly feminine qualities and that it could instill feminine qualities and behaviours in men if not carefully regulated were common enough in sources that discuss music in this period, a number of these sources take this assertion further. Ascham's *Toxophilus* concludes that music does more harm than good, arguing that it has "quicklye of men made women, and thus luting and

singinge take awaye a manly stomacke, when should enter and peerce deepe and harde studye" (10v).⁶ Here music is not merely effeminizing in the sense of provoking behaviours or conditions that are like those of women; rather, music is physically transformative, undermining the regulation of bodily composition (the "manly stomacke") that is maintained by conventional masculine pursuits like "deepe and harde studye" and making men into women as a result. We might, understandably, be inclined to read this as hyperbole, but the language of transformation pervades the more vehement critiques of music in the period. The antitheatricalists, especially, are clear that music sometimes goes beyond simple effeminization of behaviour (which is troubling enough) and into the realm of physically transforming the body. This is the idea that underpins Stubbes' claim that

if you wold haue your sonne, softe, womannish, uncleane, smoth mouthed, affected to bawdrie, scurrilitie, filthie rimes, and unsemely talking: brifly, if you wold haue him, as it weare transnated into a woman, or worse, and inclyned to all kind of whordome and abhomination, set him to dauncing school, and to learn musicke, and than shall you not faile of your purpose. (05r)⁷

In addition to affecting a child's mannerisms and behaviours, Stubbes suggests that the end result is that he will be "transnated" into the opposite sex. Prynne, too, believes

⁶ Austern discusses this passage in connection with attitudes about music's effeminizing power ("Alluring the Auditorie" 351). A shortened version of it is discussed in Gibson as evidence of the gendered perceptions of stringed instruments circulating in early modern England (58). It is also discussed indirectly in Marsh in connection with a broad treatment of early modern gendered perceptions of music (177).

⁷ Discussions of this passage are ubiquitous in the secondary literature on early modern perceptions of music. See, for example, Austern, "Sing Againe Syren," 432-3 and "Alluring the Auditorie," 350; Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 47; Winkler 119; Gibson 64; Marsh 62; Ortiz 27; Wong 6.

the ultimate consequence of the effeminizing power of inappropriate music is that “men will soone degenerate into women” (288). In both writers’ estimation, music does not merely cause men to behave like women; rather, the behavioural changes are inseparable from the transformation of the physical body into a more feminine state.

As Laura Levine points out, the fear of effeminization and gender-slippage in writings by Gosson, Stubbes and Prynne is part of a larger anxiety over the stability of identity (12). And this anxiety is most clearly articulated in relation to clothing, a point that will be important to discussions of *Twelfth Night* and *The Roaring Girl* because each features a musical woman dressed as a man. In antitheatrical tracts, costuming, like music, appears to be understood as constitutive of gender itself (Levine 3-4).⁸ Gosson argues that “garments are set downe for signes distinctiue betwene sexe & sexe,” and suggests that “to take unto us those garments that are manifest signes of another sexe, is to falsifie, forge, and adulterate, contrarie to the expresse rule of the word of God.” And while he never explicitly mentions effeminization or the physical transformation of the body, he is careful to point out that those “that put on, not the apparrell onely, but the gate, the gestures, the voyce, the passions of a woman” are abominations (*Plays Confuted* E3v). Citing the Deuteronomic code, Philip Stubbes explains “that what man so ever weareth womans apparel is accursed, and what woman weareth mans apparel is accursed also” and concludes that “to weare the apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde” (F5v). Prynne’s contribution is, unsurprisingly, the most anxious and

⁸ My discussion of antitheatrical attitudes toward clothing here is indebted to Levine. Many of the passages quoted below are also cited in her book and receive more detailed discussions than are possible or necessary here. See Levine 19-25.

the most vehement. In a long passage devoted to highlighting the abominable practices of stage actors who take on the clothing and manner of women in order to play women's roles, he quotes Asterius, Bishop of Amasea, who asks,

Doth not that valiant man, that man of courage, who is admirable in his armes, and formidable to his enemies, degenerate into a woman with his vailed face? he lets his coate hang downe to his ankles, he twists a girdle about his brest, he puts on womens shoes, and after the manner of women, he puts a cawle upon his head; moreover, he carries about a distaffe with wooll, and drawes out a thred with his right hand, wherewith he hath formerly borne a trophie, and he extenuateth his spirit and voyce into a shriller and womanish sound. (197)

Here, the man (indeed, no less a paragon of masculinity than a soldier) who veils his face like a woman literally “degenerates” into a woman, leading to the adoption of feminine mannerisms, a weakened sprit and even a female voice.

Women, too, are prohibited from dressing in ways that belie their gender, so as not to “adulterate” their sex. Stubbes, for example, argues that “If [women] could as wel change their sex, & put on the kinde of man, as they can weare apparel assigned onely to man, I think they would as verely become men indéed as now they degenerat from godly sober women, in wearing this wanton lewd kinde of attire, proper onely to man” (F5v). Prynne, likewise, clarifies for his readers that the dangerously constitutive power of dress is not limited to men: “As the verdict of human nature condemnes mens degenerating into women; so from the very selfesame grounds, it deeply censures the aspiring of women above the limits of their female sex, & their metamorphosis into the shapes of men, either in haire, or apparel” (200). These prohibitions are, of course,

simply the other side of the coin. The underlying anxiety that antitheatrical condemnations of the theatre and its costumes express is, to paraphrase Levine, that gender itself is either inherently monstrous or inherently nothing at all (12).⁹ Both men and women must perform the codes of their respective gender in order to maintain their stability as categories of identity. What the antitheatricalists seem to express, Levine argues, is an idea of the self always in danger of slipping from one thing into another—a self not so much actively fashioned as always under threat from powers outside itself and against which the self must always be carefully guarded, “a self which can always be altered not by its own playful shaping intelligence, but by malevolent forces outside its control” (12). Music and clothing, these antitheatrical tracts seem to suggest in strikingly similar terms, are two such malevolent forces

With these anxieties about the instability of gender circulating in early modern England, highlighted in attitudes toward the slipperiness of both music and clothing as signifiers, both *Twelfth Night* and *The Roaring Girl* contain characters who are doubly threatening to any perceived stability of the self because they are both musically skilled and ambiguously dressed. Viola, in the former, effects her disguise both by dressing as a young page and by claiming an ability to “sing and speak in many sorts of music.” Moll, in the latter, appears dressed as a man, sings songs about transgressive women and is persistently linked to the musically dangerous Sirens of classical myth. But as we turn to the specifics of these representations of musical women, what we find is not a feminine musicality that threatens male subjectivity and the signs of difference upon

⁹ Levine’s conclusion is that the early modern view of the self that is exposed in both antitheatrical tracts and the plays attempting to work out the same issues appears to be *both* monstrous *and* nothing at all—a self which is fundamentally unstable.

which it depends. Rather, we find music represented as an imaginative strategy that deploys a complex appropriation of music's associations with the instability of gender as a means of articulating a female subjectivity that exists—or attempts to exist—outside the conventions that define and structure early modern gender binaries. Viola and Moll each willfully make use of music—characterized as a violating force that *overthrows* the will in a number of anti-musical and anti-theatrical writings—to imagine an autonomous, active self. Viola's music is largely metaphorical, imagined as a capacity to amplify and add a certain charm to the speech of others as a way of both passing safely through Illyria and becoming an agent of change for its various erotic misalignments. For Moll, musical metaphors and actual musical performances allow her to articulate a gender identity that lies somewhere between rigorously enforced masculine and feminine ideals; by singing songs of transgressive women who ultimately remain chaste, Moll is able to imagine—to dream—a womanhood that partakes of the freedoms allowed to men without compromising her sexual reputation. In each case, music's associations with gender instability, and its capacity to mean many things at once allow for new ways of imagining kinds of agency and autonomy ordinarily denied to women.

Singing and Speaking Charm in *Twelfth Night*.

The opening lines of *Twelfth Night* are some of Shakespeare's most famous on the topic of music, and the now stock-image quality of "If music be the food of love, play on" makes it easy to overlook the fact that Orsino's meandering, synesthetic musing on music, appetite and passion actually announces one of the central anxieties that

underpin the play. Orsino suffers from love-melancholy, an excessive passion brought on by his desire for Olivia, and one he hopes to assuage with music:

If music be the food of love, play on,
Give me excess of it; that surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die. (1.1.1-3)

The duke's choice of music as a cure is based in conventional wisdom: Burton tells us that music is "a roaring-meg against melancholy"¹⁰ and lists a wide variety of classical and medieval sources that attest to music's effectiveness as a cure for the disorder (II.115-19). But Burton is also careful to point out that music is only effective as a remedy for the sufferer of melancholy, "provided always, his disease proceed not originally from it, that he be not some light innamorato, some idle phantastic, who capers in conceit all the day long, and thinks of nothing else but how to make jigs, sonnets, madrigals, in commendation of his mistress" (II.118). Wright, too, advocates for music as a cure for an excess of melancholy, but is more clear about how to ensure its effectiveness:

As this perverse malignant humour causeth fears, sadness, and such like melancholy passions, so music causeth mirth, joy, and delight, the which abate, expel, and quite destroy their contrary affections, and withal rectify the blood and spirits, and consequently digest melancholy, and bring the body into good temper. (202)

Given that Orsino identifies music as the food for his love rather than a merry distraction from it, it is not surprising that the cure fails. In fact, Orsino takes a much

¹⁰ "Roaring-meg" refers to a large defensive cannon of the same name.

riskier approach, hoping to purge his body of desire (his appetite) by consuming an excess of the music that feeds that desire. Burton advises that such strategies are likely to fail: “In such cases, music is most pernicious, as a spur to a free horse will make him run himself blind, or break his wind . . . for music enchants, as Menander holds, it will make such melancholy persons mad” (118).

Orsino’s tactic, ill-advised as it may be, is a relatively clear example of one strategy of self-fashioning in the caloric economy of embodied selfhood indentified by Schoenfeldt, an attempt at “the self-control that authorizes individuality” (11), where subjectivity is located in the process of maintaining rigorous control over the body’s internal state through ingestion and purgation. Orsino’s hope is that he can find a balance in himself by controlling what goes into and out of his body. But his strategy fails, at least in part, because he has chosen the wrong kind of music (Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 32). His call for a repeat of a particular strain with a “dying fall” (1.1.4) suggests that what he (and the audience) hears is soft, sad music. Orsino believes that by gorging on love through music, he will purge his body of excessive passion (figuratively vomiting it out) in order to restore balance to his body and his sense of self-mastery. But because the wrong kind of music, as Bacon points out (following Burton and Wright), “feedeth that disposition of the *Spirits* which it findeth” (38), his strategy fails and ultimately causes him to fall deeper into the inordinate and unmanly love that has ravished and overwhelmed him. The lines that follow, in which Orsino explores a rapid succession of poetic images—from musical and appetitive excess to the music’s “dying fall” to violets and their odours to sea imagery to the language of economic value—indicate something of the seriousness of his condition.

His passion has made him effeminate, given to emotion rather than reason, and prone to idleness, inconstancy and changeability, qualities unacceptable to the early modern masculine ideal.

Orsino's effeminate condition is driven home to us again in Act 2 when Feste the clown concludes his performance of "Come Away Death" by saying to the Duke, "Now the melancholy god protect thee, and the tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal. I would have men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be every thing and their intent every where, for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing" (2.4.73-8). Feste, with typical jester's insight and license to speak the truth, points out the absurdity of Orsino's self-indulgence in calling for musical performances that only reinforce his own desires. A few lines later, the Duke himself, missing the obvious irony, gives his opinion of a woman's capacity to love:

There is no woman's sides
 Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
 As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart
 So big, to hold so much; they lack retention.
 Alas, their love may be call'd appetite,
 No motion of the liver, but the palate,
 That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt,
 But mine is all as hungry as the sea,
 And can digest as much. Make no compare
 Between that love a woman can bear me

And that I owe Olivia. (2.4.93-103)

Orsino's choice of the words "appetite" and "surfeit," and his reference to the sea, echo his opening speech, reminding Cesario and the audience that Orsino himself is the play's best example of the stereotype of the incontinent, inconstant woman. The speech also directly contradicts his assertion, some sixty lines earlier, that "[Men's] fancies are more giddy and unfirm, / More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won, / Than women's are" (2.4.33-5), an inconsistency that further reinforces Orsino's inconstancy of mind (Schalkwyk 87).

The play's opening musical image is an argument, then, for Orsino's essential disorder that is elaborated upon in later scenes. But music is tied more broadly to the play's staging of subjectivity as well. When Feste sings "Come Away Death," he does so because Orsino has called for "That piece of song, / That old and antique song we heard last night" (2.4.2-3), which he describes as

old and plain.

The spinsters and the knitters in the sun
 And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
 Do use to chaunt it. It is silly sooth,
 And dallies with the innocence of love. (2.4.43-8)

But the song that Feste eventually sings, as Hollander notes, "is a highly extravagant, almost parodic version of the theme of death from unrequited love" (*Untuning* 157). While it is hard to say with any certainty how the song's description and its actual content may have intertwined on stage, there does seem to be an obvious disjunct at play, an instability, that Feste appears to deliberately highlight, between the sound of

music and the way it is heard.¹¹ Orsino calls for a song, as he did in the play's first scene, that will "relieve [his] passions much" (2.4.4), and while his response to the song seems to suggest that he gets what he wanted (he pays Feste for his performance), the audience is made aware of the "radical promiscuity of musical meaning" (Ortiz 11), its wide availability to different schema of interpretation. The audience and even Viola, who listens alongside Orsino, may recognize immediately the ways in which the song can be heard as a send-up of the duke's overwrought passion for Olivia, or they may reflect on that level of meaning once Feste compares Orsino's mind to an opal (whose colour varies with the light) or to "changeable taffeta" after the song finishes. Or the audience may simply accept the song as a pleasant musical performance without paying it much attention.¹² But in all of these cases, what Shakespeare appears to be doing is highlighting the ways in which music is set up to reflect or echo Orsino's own

¹¹ No clearly attributable setting exists for "Come Away Death," though Long has speculated on a setting that is close to the traditional "Heart's-Ease" tune (*Shakespeare*, Vol. 1., 178). Ross Duffin makes a more compelling case for the popular "King Solomon" tune because of some metrical affinities with the text and because an early text connected with that tune was called "The Pangs of Love," which he suggests may be echoed in Orsino's line about "the sweet pangs" of love at lines 15-16 (98). But even in the absence of a definite setting for the song, a critical consensus seems to have formed that suggests that whatever the original tune, there is a gap between what Orsino calls for and what Feste delivers. See, for example, Seng 109-19; Tan 114-15; Kelsey 146-7; Ortiz 124; Stern 177-8. Notable exceptions are found in Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 199-200 and 205-9, as well as in Minear 133-5. Considering the play's music as a whole, Stern argues perceptively that any attempt to read the content of the songs as intrinsic to the play is complicated by the uncertainty of their place in the drama and questions of authorial intent: "It should be borne in mind that the relevance [the songs] have to the text may arise simply from the fact that they are (now) there" ("Inverted Commas" 171). My own feeling is that while it is important to acknowledge this uncertainty, the play's overall musicality is hard to dispute and, in light of recent scholarship (some of which, including Stern's own, is discussed below) that demonstrates fairly convincingly the thematic work accomplished by each song, it is hard to imagine them as entirely arbitrary or disposable.

¹² For a thorough analysis of the interpretive possibilities offered by this dramatic moment, see Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 205-9.

subjective experiences while simultaneously being available to a wide variety of other subjectivities. And this point is made both more clear and more complex by Viola's response, as Cesario, to the instrumental opening of the song. Cesario tells Orsino that the music "gives very echo to the seat / Where love is throned," (2.4.21-2), a description that reads as either manipulative—if she tells Orsino what he wants to hear—or authentic—if she tells Orsino the real effect the song has had on her in that moment.¹³ Music, in the play, becomes one of the central means by which identities are articulated, commented upon, and problematized precisely because of its promiscuity, its availability to different modes of production, reception, and interpretation.

"Come Away Death" is the play's most obvious demonstration of music's interpretive pregnancy in the play, but other references function in similar ways, even if more limited ones. Sir Toby, appearing to defend Sir Andrew Aguecheek's nobility, informs Maria that "He plays o' th' viol-de-gamboys" (1.3.25-6), undercutting his praise with a commonplace joke about the sexual suggestiveness of the viol's playing-posture (Ungerer 79) and calling attention to Sir Andrew's profligate character. Later, when Feste sings what is supposed to be a love song at Toby and Andrew's request, he performs "O Mistress Mine," a song that fails to live up to the pair's expectations for bawdiness, and instead comments rather frankly on Olivia. This, Hollander argues, "undercuts the Duke's overwhelming but ineffectual mouthings, Viola's effective but necessarily misdirected charming, and, of course, Aguecheek's absolute incompetence

¹³ Tiffany Stern suggests that this latter response to the song itself may offer two intertwined possibilities: "Viola may be imagined seeing it as a reflection about her unfulfilled love for Orsino—or about the love she has for the brother she thinks is dead" ("Inverted Commas" 174).

as a suitor" ("Twelfth Night" 232-3).¹⁴ Music is also the site of assertions of communal bonding, as in the catch and ballad fragments sung by Feste, Toby and Sir Andrew that set up the conflict between the trio and the music-hating Puritan, Malvolio (2.3.63-124). Music also, as David Schalkwyk argues, promotes a moment of interpersonal openness between Orsino and Viola/Cesario when the former asks the latter, "How dost thou like this tune?" (2.4.20), as they listen to "Come Away Death," a moment which

opens the possibility of genuinely interactive dialogue with a servant/lover whose subjectivity is for once not merely obliterated by [Orsino's] own narcissism, and where the place of music and its relation to player, audience and affective response is potentially contested rather than wholly controlled by the patriarch. (86)

In Feste's "Hey Robin," on the other hand, identity becomes unclear when the clown sings both parts of a dialogic song that foreshadows his adoption of two voices—his own and the fictitious voice of Sir Topas—to torment Malvolio (4.2.72-9), a problematization of singing subjectivity that broadens our understanding of the play's concern with voices and disguises. In song, where the singing voice is always in some sense performative, Feste can adopt a number of roles that comment in various ways on the action of the play as a whole. In the case of "Hey Robin," this possibility takes on a double significance: the song about a young man whose lady loves another has obvious connections to the play's many erotic misalignments, but also demonstrates

¹⁴ On "O Mistress Mine," see also Tan 106-10. Tan's musicological analysis of the song suggests that it may have signified instrumentally the androgyny of Viola/Cesario, which is also gestured to in the line referring to the lover "That can sing both high and low."

how the singing voice can be an unstable signifier of identity—moments later, he will hold a dialogue with himself in order to torment Malvolio. In other words, the dialogic song, in which the adoption of more than one identity or persona is “natural and inevitable” (Minear 138) and even required by the song’s form, indicates and anticipates the possibility of using the voice to produce more than one self. “It calls no notice to itself,” Minear argues. “It is not comic; it does not deceive: this is simply the way songs often go” (138). Music is a natural form for the imagination and adoption of multiple selves. Finally, Feste’s last song, “When That I Was and a Little Tiny Boy,” reminds both characters and audience, as the play comes to a close, that whatever revelry has been had and however happy the endings may seem, “The rain, it raineth every day” (5.1.393). Minear’s reading here is, again, instructive, finding an interpretive instability in the song: “Feste’s final song, with its ominous iterance of wind and rain, returns the audience to quotidian reality; but it also extends the peculiarly musical enchantment of the play.” In other words, she argues, “The meaning of the song dissolves; the negative images of the lyrics are forgotten and the melody remains” (139), suggesting that the song is yet another instance of music’s capacity to be more than one thing at once in the play. In each of these examples, music is exploited for its multiplicity, its capacity to say one thing and mean another, to make one thing sound like something else. It is also persuasive, rhetorical; it shapes perceptions even as it evades or obfuscates stable meaning.

This, then, is the overall soundscape in which Viola finds herself. Orsino, we learn early on, will be served by the disguised Viola, whose name evokes the Latin word for the violet as well as the musical viol that was becoming increasingly popular among

musicians in the early seventeenth century, both of which were used as cures for melancholy and both of which are invoked in Orsino's synesthetic opening lines.¹⁵ But Orsino is not the only receiver for Viola's musical medicine. The play takes place in Illyria, a revels-space of more generally distempered passions, disordered festivity and occasionally sinister machinations whose own name may suggest the dissonant music of an out-of-tune lyre (Kelsey 141). And Olivia and Malvolio, both jarring, in one manner or another, with the social world of the play, appear to be linked anagrammatically to Viola in ways that likewise suggest disordered music.¹⁶ Viola, then, is set up as the source of the play's eventual harmony, the arbiter of its misplaced desires, and the instrument that reorders the its various affects and appetites.

Indeed, Viola is the only character—with the exception, perhaps, of Feste—who seems to grasp the real potential that music offers in the world of Illyria. It is its multiplicity of meaning that she invokes when she concocts a plan to pass safely and unremarkably through the court of Orsino. Antonio at one point warns the less-musical Sebastian of the dangers of “Being skillless in these parts; which to a stranger, / Unguided and unfriended, often prove / Rough and unhospitable” (3.3.9-11). It is only

¹⁵ The case for the floral significance of Viola's name is made in Schleiner 136-40 who surveys a number of early modern sources that demonstrate the violets were common ingredients in cures for melancholy.

¹⁶ The significance of the names in the play is, admittedly, not straightforward. On the musicality of the names, see Kelsey 140-2. Schliener 135-41 picks up on the Latin meaning of Viola's name but makes no mention of any musical significance. Wilson is skeptical of a definite link between Viola and the viol, but accepts that her name likely plays on a broader musical symbolism (135). For an alternative perspective on the names that is unrelated to music, see Nathan 281-4. It seems to me, in light of recent interventions in the scholarship by critics like Kelsey, Minear, and Stern that attempt to recover some of its now-obsolete musical vocabulary, that the names' musical valences must at least have been present for an early modern audience, if not necessarily primary.

by disguising herself, it seems—concealing her foreignness, her sexual availability, and her gender—that Viola can safely navigate the island’s roughness.¹⁷ And she imagines this concealment, significantly, through music. Imploring the Captain with whom she has been stranded on the island to assist her in entering Orsino’s service, Viola asks him to

Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
 For such disguise as haply shall become
 The form of my intent. I’ll serve this duke;
 Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him,
 It may be worth thy pains; for I can sing
 And speak to him in many sorts of music
 That will allow me very worth his service. (1.2.53-9)

Music, which the play establishes more generally as a site of ambiguity—of both concealment and revelation, of subject-performance and the disturbing volatility of the embodied subject—becomes for Viola the imaginative site of a potential malleability of the self, and especially of gender. Viola will disguise herself, giving form to her intent, both in clothing and in music, the two grounds that most explicitly invoke early modern anxieties about gendered identity. It is a potent assertion, one that capitalizes on music’s many meanings and one that stresses her active production of rhetorical and

¹⁷ As Keir Elam notes, “Viola intends to hide . . . not only her innate sexuality but also her assumed masculinity, thereby ensuring a double barrier of chastity against potential sexual dangers in the world of Orsino’s court and a doubled privatisation (through the self-privation of her “private” parts) in her personal dealings with the courtiers” (4). This “doubled privatisation” depends in part on her desire to be presented as a eunuch, on which I (and Elam) will say more below.

affective power.¹⁸ Recall that we have just witnessed Orsino being overwhelmed by this very power. Hollander points out that Orsino's music, in the play's opening scene, "is a static well of emotion in which he allows his own rhetoric to submerge" ("Twelfth Night" 225) that contrasts with Viola's much more active uses of music's affective power. Orsino is a passive receiver of music in the play, eschewing even any real critical appreciation of it beyond its ability to enflame his passions. And even when the performance is commanded by the duke, as it is when Feste sings "Come Away, Death," it fails to signify as an expression of the Duke's self-fashioned identity, instead highlighting the gap between the audience's understanding of Orsino and his own. The Duke's melancholic character is revealed to the audience in a song that he commands but does not appear to fully understand. It speaks for him. Viola's assertion that she will sing and speak in many sorts of music, on the other hand, is her most clearly defined moment of authorial presence, the moment at which, to borrow Belsey's phrase, she most clearly identifies with "the 'I' of an utterance" (5). And while the subjectivity that she claims for herself in this moment is already radically decentered—there is no central/centred voice; she says she will speak in *many sorts* of music, many registers, a multiplicity of rhetorics and affects—the agency she derives from the utterance is useful and powerful precisely because of that instability. Viola's capacity for a measure of autonomy in part depends on her ability to slip between identities, to "conceal me what I am," which she imagines by invoking early modern ideas about music.

¹⁸ It is also a nearly perfect reversal of the anxiety described by Levine, above, over the possibility that forms (clothing, and theatrical representation more generally) might overthrow the will. Here, Viola will appropriate clothes and music to give shape to her will.

It is important to note, however, that Viola never actually sings or performs music in the play, a disparity that has remained a persistent problem for critics and editors alike. Hollander argues that Viola's "many sorts of music" is indicative of an earlier, lost version of the play in which the songs attributed to Feste were originally sung by Viola. He goes on to suggest that a boy-actor's cracking voice and the addition of the musically gifted Robert Armin to the Lord Chamberlain's Men may have occasioned the switch in the extant version of the play (*Untuning* 159). But, as Lindley points out, this assumption is itself problematic: "since the play was written either just before or just after *Hamlet*, the company had at that time a boy capable of singing Ophelia's songs" (*Shakespeare and Music* 201).¹⁹ Minear also notes, rightly I think, that the case for an alteration requires that we accept the Folio text as an imperfect or incomplete one, since "if the play was revised to eliminate a singing Viola . . . it seems strange that her claim to 'speak in many sorts of music' was retained" (131). It would seem unlikely, in other words, that a significant revision of the play that gives Viola's music to Feste would have overlooked the earlier references to the former's ability to sing and her desire to be presented to Orsino as a eunuch or *castrato*.²⁰ Both references are, if we take singing literally, disposable.²¹

¹⁹ Lindley provides a good overview of the scholarly debate over the opening of 2.4 and ultimately finds both sides unsatisfactory (*Shakespeare and Music* 199-201). Stern deals with the problem more extensively and makes the case for an alteration ("Inverted Commas" 183-8). See also Long, *Shakespeare's Use of Music*, Vol. 1, 174-8 and Seng 113-5.

²⁰ The *castrato*, popular in Italy, was a boy singer castrated before puberty to maintain the soprano vocal range while capitalizing on the superior volume and power of the male singing voice. For a fascinating unpacking of the history of the eunuch singer and that history's relationship to the themes explored in *Twelfth Night*, see Elam 1-36.

²¹ Seng, in fact, raises this very point in his eventual rejection of the necessity for a substitution/revision (115).

One way to address the problem of a singer who never sings is to take at face value the fact that music is most useful to Viola as an idea, an imaginative strategy that indulges fully in music's semantic promiscuity. This is made especially clear when we consider that Viola explicitly links her singing and speaking with her cross-dressing, and further complicates the levels of ambiguity by desiring to be presented as a eunuch.²² Viola's singing and speaking invoke specifically gendered concepts of persuasive power. Singing, especially coming from a woman, carries suggestions of a ravishing, emotional power that affects the humours, spirits and passions of the listener—especially in a play that has specifically evoked, already, this affective power and its effeminizing potential in its treatment of Orsino. Speaking, on the other hand, suggests the rational, intellectually persuasive power of rhetoric and, perhaps, the function of words in music to temper the irrationality of purely affective, instrumental music. In other words, Viola's singing and speaking in many sorts of music suggests that it is through music that she can most readily imagine a subjectivity that bridges the masculine and the feminine in ways that will effectively ensure that she “might not be delivered to the world / Till [she has] made [her] own occasion mellow / What [her] estate is” (1.2.42-4). And it is ultimately this hybrid identity that allows her to retune the affective disorders of Illyria, reorienting both Orsino and Olivia's desires through her rhetorical/affective voice and the androgynous erotic allure of her disguised body. Orsino falls in love, by the play's end, with the woman concealed beneath the disguise, but only because they have had the near-constant contact afforded by Viola's masculine

²² A role which, obviously, she does not in fact adopt. As Lindley notes, “for Viola to appear as a eunuch would have had fairly disastrous implications for the plot, which requires Olivia to credit [her] masculine disguise and fall in love” (*Shakespeare and Music* 200-1). I discuss an alternative reading of this reference below.

disguise; Olivia, on the other hand, falls in love with the affective power of Viola's voice, but legitimizes her desire through her masculine appearance, which eventually allows her to seamlessly transfer that desire onto Viola's twin, Sebastian.²³ And it is music, with all its polysemous potential and its close connection to the troubling instability of gender, that gives Viola the capacity to effect this kind of action. It becomes a vehicle by which she can conceptualize a hybrid subjectivity that is both active and passive, affective and rational, one which—like the eunuch whose androgynous combination of masculine body and feminine voice made him a complex site of erotic fascination—derives agency from its refusal to resolve into stability.²⁴

Viola's musicality is further reinforced in two later scenes that can help us understand more clearly the imaginative potential that music offers her. Earlier I argued that Orsino himself never produces any music, preferring instead to receive it passively as an echo of and fodder for his passions, rather than an active expression of them. There is, however, an exception. In 1.4, the duke implores Cesario to seek an audience (a hearing, as it were) with Olivia. He implores his page to "Be clamorous and leap all civil bounds" (1.4.21) in the attempt to "unfold the passion of [the duke's] love" (1.4.24) and argues that

It shall become thee well to act my woes:

She will attend it better in thy youth

²³ For a thorough analysis of the ways in which the play stages and troubles gender roles and erotic desires, see Charles 121-41.

²⁴ Elam highlights the "undoubted fascination that the androgynous singer, endowed with male/female body and voice, exercised over auditors of both sexes" and suggests that "Given the spectacular success of the *castrati*, it is fair to suppose that Viola's goal of self-elected unsexed 'singer' is not a form of impotence but a mode of power, an irresistible appeal for her dramatic and theatrical audiences" (34-5).

Than in a nuntio's of more grave aspect.

.....

Diana's lip

Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe

Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,

And all is semblative of a woman's part. (1.4.26-34)

Orsino's speech here functions ironically on both theatrical and metatheatrical levels, playing on the comic potential of Orsino's unwitting expression of something he does not fully comprehend: the audience knows simultaneously that the young man, Cesario, is really the young woman, Viola, and that in reality a boy actor plays a young woman playing a young man. The complexity of the role-playing is further highlighted by Orsino's inadvertent pun on "part" that suggests the performativity of Cesario's gender—on more than one level, gender is revealed as an act. But as Kelsey helpfully reminds us, "It is difficult for modern readers to remember that the idea of playing a part . . . is not simply a dramatic metaphor but—much more vitally for this period—a musical one" (138). This suggests that Orsino's words, already full of intended and unintended resonances, actually suggestively conflate music, gender, and theatricality, and highlight Viola's role as his instrument. One of Viola's many sorts of music, it seems, is a music that is not always entirely her own, and here she is imagined as the pipe or organ that will ravish Olivia's soul and excite her passions on Orsino's behalf. In this sense, Viola adopts a hybrid subjectivity that is both active and passive, both self-speaking and spoken-through by an other. By fully inhabiting the musicality of her name, Viola can more effectively (and affectively) perform on Orsino's behalf. She can

more competently voice the desires that Orsino himself cannot express since, as Lindley points out,

When a singer performs a song, at one level he or she is adopting a dramatic persona for whom the song he or she sings makes sense as an outburst of feeling. The 'I' of the lyric is not the 'I' who is the singer, and it is the music which renders it possible for an audience to accept the transformation. (*Shakespeare and Music* 207-8)

Actual musical performances are associated with a kind of performativity that complicates the subjectivity of the singer, and this is one of the many instabilities that Viola exploits. Her many sorts of music are, in effect, ways of imagining the occlusion of her own identity and the production of a new one that crosses gender lines and that sounds—in both the probing and expressive senses—the subjectivity of others²⁵ in ways that make Viola both the play's most mobile character and its conductor, harmonizing its various dissonances.

It is, at least in part, this hybridized subjectivity that makes Viola into an effective orator in her appeal to Olivia, as Cesario, on Orsino's behalf. Once again, the double sense of play, the theatrical and the musical, is invoked when Viola tells Olivia "I am not that I play" (1.5.184) and she later tells her that the message she brings "alone concerns your ear" (1.5.208), alerting the audience to the primacy of the auditory and the performative in this particular dramatic moment. What follows is then a complicated polyphony of voices. Viola begins with the "text" she has received from Orsino, full of stock Petrarchan images—the duke loves Olivia "With adorations, fertile

²⁵ On the early modern use of the word "sound" to describe the process of interrogating the "deeply subjective experience" of others, see Folkerth 25-33.

tears, / With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire" (1.5.255-6)—to which Olivia responds less than favourably. But when Viola goes off-book and blends Orsino's desires with her own improvised rhetoric, her words—replete with musical imagery—find greater purchase. Viola says that if she herself loved Olivia, she would

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,
 And call upon my soul within the house;
 Write loyal cantons of contemned love,
 And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
 Hallow your name to the reverberate hills,
 And make the babbling gossip of the air
 Cry out "Olivia!" (1.5.268-74)

It is significant that it is at this moment, in which we are reminded of the rhetorical and affective power of Viola's "many sorts of music" and in which she speaks in a polyphony that uses the pretense of her master's appeal as the base (or bass) from which to express her own idealized love (perhaps thinking of the man for whom she speaks), that Olivia appears to fall in love with the disguised Viola. Her words are a perfect harmony of musical imagery and rhetorically persuasive speech and it is the intersection of the two that appears to make the difference. Indeed, in a later scene, when Viola returns to Olivia to engage in a second suit on the Duke's behalf, Olivia admits that she would rather hear Viola's voice again "Than music from the spheres"

(3.1.109) and calls her initial suit “the last enchantment you did here” (3.9.111), a word that carries implications of both magic and song.²⁶

The subject-position from which Viola speaks, and from which she wittingly and unwittingly reorients the various erotic dissonances in the play, is therefore both her own and not, a harmonious meeting of a private self largely withheld and the adopted persona that affords her the capacity to speak (and sing) that private self in the voice of an other. Indeed, Viola becomes a powerfully enticing locus of the play’s desires only when she speaks in the polyphony that combines her own voice and the echo of the other.²⁷ It is in these moments that she is most powerfully charming, a notion she seems to acknowledge when she says of her encounter with Olivia, “Fortune forbid my outside have not charmed her” (1.5.18). The audience of course recognizes here that it is at least as much her inside, the singing/speaking subject, as her outside that has done the charming.²⁸

I want to take this idea one step further, though, concluding my analysis of *Twelfth Night*’s musical subjectivities by briefly exploring in more detail a specific resonance of Viola’s apparent “charm”—her capacity to speak for and as someone else

²⁶ I discuss the etymological connection between magic and music in words like “enchantment” and “charm” briefly in Chapter 3.

²⁷ An interesting parallel to this line of thinking can be found in *The Book of the Courtier* when Federico, exploring the relative merits of instrumental and vocal music, concludes that “Especially it is recitative with the viola that seems to me most delightful, as this gives to the words a wonderful charm and effectiveness” (76).

²⁸ Gina Bloom’s fascinating *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* notes that the distinction between inside and outside, when it comes to the voice, is difficult to pin down, since “voice is not embodied as much as it is temporarily attached, released, and exchanged by bodies” (16). The voice, in other words, traverses bodily interiors, moving “from the speaker’s body, through the air, and to the listener’s body” (17). Viola’s voice, already partially belonging to Orsino, for whom she speaks, is in a sense already part of her “outside” here.

even as she expresses a self and its private, interior desires. In a recent essay, Patricia Parker has identified a number of the major editorial problems present in *Twelfth Night*. One of these is Viola's curious request—of which I've discussed one aspect above—to be presented to Orsino as a eunuch. Parker, suggesting one way of reconsidering this problem, points readers to a brief 1986 essay in which David Crookes explores a similar reference to a eunuch in *Coriolanus* (1608) that he suggests may have a double meaning. In that play, Coriolanus laments that to placate the plebeians and yield to popular rule will be to give up his manly, martial nature:

Away, my disposition, and possess me
 Some harlot's spirit! My throat of war be turn'd,
 Which quier'd with my drum, into a pipe
 Small as an eunuch. (3.2.111-14)

Crookes argues that the “eunuch” here is meant to call to mind, for an early modern audience, both the castrated male singer and an obscure musical instrument, a small pipe with one end covered in a thin membrane or skin, called a “eunuch.” The eunuch pipe is deployed in *Coriolanus*, he argues, as a multivalent image of the effeminization and subjection the title character imagines himself suffering at the hands of the people, invoking both the feminine sound of the *castrato's* voice and the passive melody-making of the musical instrument (Crookes 159-61). Parker, in light of all this, sees a significant interpretive possibility in this suggestion for *Twelfth Night* and argues that

It is crucially important that this early modern resonance—of an instrumental “eunuch” that transmits the voice of another outside it—be heard in relation to *Twelfth Night*, not only because of Viola's intention to become a “eunuch” that

can “speak” as well as “sing” in Orsino’s “service” (1.2.56-59) but also because of its added “charm,” even as it functions as an apparently passive transmitter.

(57)

Parker notes, following Crookes, that the “charm,” to which she refers here and to which I have loosely alluded above, is explicated briefly in Marin Mersenne’s description of the eunuch pipe in the catalogue of various wind instruments included in his *Harmonie Universelle* (1636):

[The eunuch pipe] has no other tone than that of the mouth or the tongue which speaks, whose force and resonance it augments by means of its length and capacity and by a small piece of thin skin, as thin as an onion peel, in which the top is wrapped . . . so that the wind and the voice pushed through the hole . . . goes to strike this peel like a small tambourine, which gives a new charm to the voice through its small vibrations. (qtd. in Parker 57)

The implications of this instrumental meaning of “eunuch” and the charm by which it is characterized are fascinating for the reading of the play I have been advancing here. Reading Viola’s request to be presented as a eunuch in terms of the musical instrument, I think, offers us a way of unifying the otherwise problematic reference to the *castrato* tradition—which critics have read as a remnant of the lost version of the play in which Viola actually sings—with the ways in which the play explores the implications that music’s semiotic promiscuity might have for early modern notions of subjectivity.²⁹ If

²⁹ I am not arguing, however, that the instrumental valence of “eunuch” replaces its other potential significations, since the possibilities offered by both the idea of the androgynous eunuch body and the musical/physical instability of the *castrato* seem fairly obviously to be at play in the text as well, especially in light of Elam’s virtuosic

we accept that the eunuch here carries connotations of the instrument and is a precursor to its appearance in *Coriolanus*, then Shakespeare appears to deliberately be playing with the idea that Viola both speaks and is spoken through.³⁰ She is the mouthpiece for Orsino's desire, but is only effective as a mouthpiece when she acts like the eunuch pipe, amplifying and adding a certain charm to his words. Her ability to affect Olivia and effect productive changes in the play's economy of desires is therefore explicitly imagined through music. Viola, by channeling a number of musical ideas, is able to conceive of a complex subject-position in which self-abnegation becomes a potent form of agency. By becoming the blank that she invokes in the thinly-veiled personal history she rehearses to Orsino (2.4.110-18), Viola opens herself to the voice of others, making the voice musical—making it charming. By singing and speaking in many sorts of music, Viola achieves a social and geographic mobility (she can move between characters and spaces like no one else in the play) and a powerful, if temporary and unstable, subject-position from which to speak and act in the play as simultaneously man and woman, a hybrid subjectivity that offers her the power to reorder Illyria's dissonant desires in ways that a stable gender-identity could only have further complicated.

catalogue of the various interpretive possibilities contained in the term's more obvious glosses.

³⁰ Parker ends her discussion of the instrumental resonance of the word "eunuch" by suggesting the question it raises: "Whether Viola as 'Cesario' . . . is the merely passive transmitter of Orsino's 'message' (1.5.191), simply serving his 'will' (in a play whose Folio title was *Twelfth Night, Or what you will*), or adds a new 'charm' that makes all of the difference" (57-8). Reading the moment as an experiment in subjectivity, I would argue, suggests one possible answer.

Moll's Dream of Gender Trouble in *The Roaring Girl*

Unlike *Twelfth Night*, Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* is not generally thought of as an especially musical play even though it makes a similarly complicated use of musical images and places them in dialogue with actual musical performances. Despite the fact that these images and performances are carefully linked to Moll Cutpurse's troubling sexual instability—manifested in her dress and behavior—the significance of her music has largely gone overlooked. For example, Wong's *Music and Gender* includes only a single passing mention of *The Roaring Girl* and that is unconnected to its music (48). Likewise, Jennie Votava, examining “the centrality of the o/aural in the play's construction of its title character,” argues, rightly, that “More so than visual stimuli, sound resists the spatial fixity that so often circumscribes representations of the female body on the early modern stage” (69), but mentions the songs only very briefly (79). Both Vivian Comensoli and Lloyd Kermode examine the songs in some detail, providing useful interpretations of the meaning of each and linking them to some of the play's wider themes, but both overlook, for the most part, the wider early modern discourses of music that inform the songs as well as the specific ways in which the songs are performed in the play. Two studies have attempted more comprehensive analyses of Moll's musicianship in the play. The first is Jean E. Howard's, which argues that Moll seems to make music “not so much to make herself an erotic object, as to express her own erotic subjectivity” and that her music, specifically, “acknowledges, insists upon, female erotic desire, while making clear the cultural imperatives that operate to shape, channel, and control that eroticism” (142). This is a useful way of thinking about the complexity of Moll's music in the play, but it overlooks the larger context of Moll's

performances, which circulate not only within discourses of eroticism, but also of gendered performance conventions and music's semiotic instability. More fruitful is Raphael's Seligmann's detailed examination of the historical Mary Frith as well as her representations on stage, in which he suggests that music is "a powerful medium for self-presentation," one that "betrays a complex understanding of music's persuasive power, embracing both orthodox and progressive views" (190). My argument builds on Seligmann's, where music is a powerful vehicle for the expression of a nuanced subjectivity. What I want to focus on, however, is the ways in which music in this play is the nexus of a set of ideas, anxieties and possibilities through which Moll's selfhood is constituted in productively unstable terms. If, as we have seen, music was one of the destabilizing forces that trouble gender in early modern culture, it becomes, for Moll, a strategy for the articulation of an identity predicated on hybridity and instability. Where Viola's music is a purely imaginary polyphony of self and other that affords her both the ability to pass unrecognized through Orsino's court and the agency necessary to effect productive change in Illyria, Moll's music articulates a more radical gender identity that resists patriarchal discourses that structure women's sexual identities from the outside and does so through subversive, public performances of music.

Moll's status as a musical character is established, if subtly, early in the play. In Scene 2, after Sebastian has convinced his father that he means to marry Moll, Sir Alexander describes her to Trapdoor: "This wench we speak of strays so from her kind, / Nature repents she made her. 'Tis a mermaid / Has tolled my son to shipwreck"

(2.221-3).³¹ As Votava points out, this is an invocation of the mythical sirens, women whose voices compelled sailors to steer their ships into dangerous waters (78-9). And in fact, it clarifies an earlier comment by Sebastian himself. In an effort to provoke his father and friends alike with his inappropriate choice of wife, Sebastian dismisses their entreaties to reconsider by saying

I am deaf to you all.

I'm so bewitched, so bound to my desires,

Tears, prayers, threats, nothing can quench out those fires

That burn within me" (2.176-9).

The rest of text is replete with images of sirenic enchantment. Laxton claims that Moll has "a voice that will drown all the city" (3.195-6). Sebastian later responds to Moll's assurances that she is not marriage material by saying "This were enough now to affright a fool forever from thee, when 'tis the music that I love thee for" (4.49-51). Asking Moll about her musical skill, Sir Alexander responds to Moll's claim that she can play a song called "The Witch" better than anyone else by saying, in an aside, "Ay, I believe thee. Thou hast so bewitched my son, / No care will mend the work that thou hast done" (8.207-9). The frequent recourse to images of musical bewitchment suggests pervasive early modern anxieties about the female musician's ability to overwhelm reason through the combination of beauty and musical skill, a fear of the disastrous and effeminizing potential of women performing music.

³¹ Parenthetical citations to *The Roaring Girl* refer to the edition in Oxford's *Thomas Middleton: Collected Works*. Note that this edition organizes the play in accordance with the source text, including only scene numbers with no act divisions.

The combined effect of these references to sirenic enchantment and musical bewitching is to position Moll as a conventional example of the dangerous intersection of a woman's sexuality and music's power to ravish the listener. Moll as musician and singer, as the siren that has ensnared Sebastian and who, according to Laxton, may very well do the same to every man in the city, is implied to be capable of usurping the will of her male listeners, enticing them to lust and dissolute behaviour and robbing them of good judgment (a thing Sir Alexander fears has already happened, since Moll is so clearly an inappropriate match for his son). And it would be easy to accept these characterizations as commonplace metaphors for Moll's problematic sexuality, were they not complicated by the fact that Moll actually sings several songs and plays the viol da gamba on stage at two different points in the play. The characters' various anxious responses to her as a siren, then, must be read against her actual musical performances which, interestingly—and perhaps counter-intuitively, given Moll's overall portrayal in the play—are difficult to position as wholly subversive or inappropriate when considered against early modern prescriptions for women's musical performances.

As Lloyd Kermode points out, "where there is music in this play, there is sex" (439). Indeed, in one of her early scenes, Moll appears with a porter who is carrying her viol on his back. Asking where he should take the viol, the porter asks Moll "Must I carry this great fiddle to your chamber, Mistress Mary" (4.20-1). The porter's suggestive misnomer (it is a viol, not a fiddle) is fairly innocuous here, even when coupled with repeated references to Moll's bedchamber.³² But some fifty lines later, as

³² In fact, this moment in the play is downright ambiguous, acting as an early sign of the play's tendency to trouble the associations between music and inordinate female sexuality. While Kermode reads the moment as overtly suggestive, "as if the bedroom is

Moll is being measured by a tailor for “new breeches” (80), she suddenly interrupts the tailor’s work, asking “What fiddling’s here? Would not the old pattern have served your turn” (86-7), implying, if jokingly, that his hands are doing more than measuring, and thus explicitly aligning musical performance with sex.

The use of “fiddling” as an innuendo in early modern drama is common enough. In George Chapman’s *Bussy D’Ambois* (1604), Pero reveals the answer to a riddle that has stumped Monsieur by saying “’Tis my chastity, which you shall neither riddle nor fiddle” (E4v). In Jonson’s *Volpone* (1606), Corvino describes the title character as “a common rogue” whom he has seen “come fiddling in / To th’osteria with a tumbling whore” (2.6.13-14). Massinger’s *The Unnatural Combat* (1624) features a scene in which Belgarde is confronted by two wenches who tell him he “may pay in publique for the fidling / [he] had in private” (I2r), and present him with what are apparently his bastard children. Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Fair Maid of the Inn* (1626) features a scene in which the host and hostess of the titular inn debate the relative merits of several suitors to their daughter, Biancha. One, a musician and dancer, is dismissed outright by the hostess, who says “Hang him and his fiddle together, hee never fidles any child of ours” (389).³³ The effect of the associations between Moll and both siren song and ambiguous sexual morality (she is, at different times, both the fiddler and the one fiddled) is to position her as both dangerously available and dangerously seductive,

inevitably where the instrument that fits between the legs must go” (439), it is possible that Moll’s response to the porter, “Whither else?” is meant, instead (or, more likely, in addition), to refer to conventions of decorum intended to mitigate the threat of women’s alluring music by specifying that they should practice their music privately. Whither else would a woman perform music than in her private chamber?

³³ Since the 1679 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Fifty Comedies and Tragedies* does not contain line numbers, the in-text reference indicates the page number. The line occurs in Act 3, scene 1.

traits that were markers of transgression, since overt expressions of sexuality were unacceptable in early modern women, but also of containment of that transgression, since any sign of wantonness was confirmation of femininity which could then be marginalized and policed.

By the time we arrive at Scene 8, with its frequent, suggestive musical puns and its two song performances, we as readers and auditors expect to see Moll positioned as musically and sexually seductive. Her sirenic charms will be both metaphorical and physical as she performs real music that will, if we are to believe a number of early modern critics of music, ravish the ears of the listeners, celebrating—and perhaps even catalyzing—inappropriate lasciviousness. But the play quickly complicates these assumptions, and music becomes fundamental to the play's explorations of a more nuanced subject-position for Moll, where it figures, as it did in *Twelfth Night*, as an imaginative strategy for conceiving of a selfhood that occupies a temporary, liminal position between essentialist markers of identity. Mary Fitzallard, for example, tells us that she has “heard her much commended [as a musician] . . . for one that was ne'er taught” (83), a claim that disrupts our assumptions about Moll's class position. As Austern reminds us,

The plethora of surviving music books and self-tutorial manuals from Middleton's era clarify that the ability to sing, dance, and perform on soft-sounding instruments that were played in a seated position (such as lute, viol, or virginals) were considered necessary skills, or at least social graces, for well-to-do men and women. (“Music on the Jacobean Stage” 186)

Moll has received no formal training in music, but is skilled enough to be “much commended,” placing her ambiguously between gentlewoman and, for example, London’s itinerant public musicians, who were often considered among the city’s lowest-ranking inhabitants.³⁴ While she lacks the social and economic capital to have been trained formally in music, perceptions of her performance seem to be above what might be expected of a musician otherwise associated with London’s underground community of thieves and rogues. She is commended here rather than denigrated or abused for her musicality.

The exchange that follows also complicates our understanding of Moll’s sexuality. Following Mary’s commendation, Sebastian invites Moll to play upon her viol and the two engage in an exchange of musical-sexual puns on the word “instrument.” Moll claims that “It shall ne’er be said I came into a gentleman’s chamber and let his instrument hang by the walls” (8.85-7), to which Sebastian replies, “It had been a shame for that gentleman, then, that would have let it hung still and ne’er offered thee it” (8.88-90). But Moll’s final quip, “though the world judge impudently of me, I ne’er came into that chamber yet where I took down the instrument myself” (8.92-4), aligns her with more conventional, idealized musical practices for women (she performs

³⁴ The composer, musician, and tutor Thomas Whythorne, in his autobiography, sets out a hierarchy of musicians that begins with composers, descends through church musicians, music teachers and choir singers, and comes finally to the lowest stratum, those do use to go with their instruments about countries to cities, towns, and villages, where also they do go to private houses, to such as will hear them, either publicly or privately; or else to markets, fairs, marriages, assemblies, taverns, alehouses and suchlike places and there, to those that will hear them, they will sell the sounds of their voices. (194)

Whythorne’s attitude is typical, if perhaps a little unfair, as Lindely points out (*Shakespeare and Music* 53), to the wide range of experiences available to professional musicians in early modern England.

music in private and only when invited to by a man) and one that complicates her position as musical/sexual seductress by pointing out the obvious: that the men whose “instruments” she is referring to are implicated in the sexual acts that make up the exchange’s subtext as well. This suggests that the musical images we associate with Moll are not to be read in as straightforward a manner as we might otherwise have assumed. The exchange demonstrates Moll’s capacity to imagine a subject-position that sits unstably between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for women: she can be both musically and sexually skilled, but adhere to conventional standards of decorum and propriety. She is neither wholly the chaste, silent, and obedient ideal woman, since she happily participates in Sebastian’s sexually charged exchange of musical puns, but nor is she wholly the licentious whore or swaggering rogue that others accuse her of being, since she is careful to position her musical/sexual practices as less problematic than the slanders against her suggest. That she does all this through the linguistic instability of musical puns is no less significant. Puns involve words that can mean more than one thing simultaneously while also offering plausible deniability—offense at one meaning can be dissipated by claiming ownership only of the other. By punning, Moll can take control of her sexuality while simultaneously connecting that sexuality to an acceptable marker of identity (musical skill) and pushing the limits of what a woman can and cannot say since either meaning might reasonably be disavowed in favour of the other.

Moll’s most interesting musical moment follows this exchange. As she takes up the viol, Sebastian says “Pish, let ‘em prate abroad. Thou’rt here where thou art known and loved. There be a thousand close dames that will call the viol an unmannerly

instrument for a woman, and therefore talk broadly of thee, when you shall have them sit wider to a worse quality" (8.95-9). The viol in question, also known as the bass viol or viol da gamba, was primarily played between the legs. If Moll were to play, conventional wisdom goes, she would violate not only the codes of decorum that demand women perform music only in private, but the instrument's playing posture would also demand that she position her body in a sexually suggestive way. As Gustav Ungerer notes, "With the rising popularity of the bass viol as a solo instrument in England, the practice of playing came to be considered as an accomplishment of the educated gentleman and gentlewoman," but this was complicated by the fact that, because of the suggestive physicality of the instrument, "there was . . . a tendency to look down on the bass viol as an indecent instrument for woman" (83). Sebastian recognizes here, however, that this is an absurd line of reasoning and he offers what is essentially an anti-antitheatrical critique: doing does not necessarily lead to being. He acknowledges in Moll a subjectivity that is different from, and not necessarily wholly constituted by, her appearance or actions. And it is a subjectivity that is articulated (on Moll's part) and recognized (on Sebastian's) through music.

The interplay between the content and the conditions of performance of Moll's two songs in the lines that follow are likewise the site of a complex self-presentation. Again, Austern helpfully summarizes the stakes, arguing that a musician's "choice of what to perform where, when and before whom provide clues about identity and self-fashioning. To participate in music within a Jacobean play is to also perform gender, profession, social status, and sometimes nationality" ("Music on the Jacobean Stage" 186). As Moll begins her first song, she responds to Sebastian's suggestion that other

women will speak ill of her for playing the viol by saying “Push, I ever fall asleep and think not of ‘em, sir; and thus I dream” (8.100-1), and the songs themselves seem to fashion a dream world of sorts in which she can imagine an idealized subject-position for a marginalized figure like herself.³⁵ The first imagines a woman lying to her husband and enjoying forms of entertainment inappropriate for women:

I dream there is a mistress,
 And she lays out the money.
 She goes unto her sisters;
 She never comes at any.
 She says she went to th’Burse for patterns;
 You shall find her at Saint Kathern’s,
 And comes home with never a penny. (8.103-9)

Jennifer Panek, in her recent edition of the play, notes that the song’s meaning is somewhat ambiguous, but I agree with her reading: a married woman claims to go shopping for clothing patterns, but instead goes drinking with other women, spending all of her husband’s money (69). What is interesting about the song is that, for all its improprieties in terms of acceptable conduct for a woman, the song is careful to point out that “She never comes at any.” Though the song’s protagonist is out on the town, engaging in questionable activities, she does not compromise her chastity. She may lie,

³⁵ The note to this line in the Oxford edition suggests that “dream” here probably puns on an archaic usage that denoted melody-making. This would suggest a fundamental connection between the idea of music and Moll’s capacity to imagine an idealized subjectivity.

drink, and squander her husband's money, but she is not unfaithful or unchaste.³⁶ The woman Moll dreams of engages in the kind of freedom that is the birthright of the city's young men (control over household money, going out in public, boisterous entertainments) and remains secure, whatever others might think, in her own reputation. And like the play's men, the song's woman spends her time socializing with a same-sex group. In this sense, the music accomplishes imaginatively what Moll's cross-dressing can only approach in reality. As Adrienne Eastwood argues,

Her cross dressing enables her to freely patronize businesses and engage in activities such as drinking and smoking that would not have been considered 'feminine.' Middleton and Dekker's play responds to this cultural tendency (or the desire) of women to transcend both social rank and gender prohibitions in order to purchase certain commodities and entertainments that would ordinarily have been off limits. (17)

What is important here is Eastwood's parenthetical aside that implies, rightly, that not all women would have satisfied their desire and engaged in cross-dressing to access realms of experience denied to women, because while women who cross-dress have greater mobility, they are also more visible and subject to greater censure (usually in

³⁶ David Bevington's notes, in the edition of the play included in *Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, suggest a different reading that sees the songs as primarily celebrations of sexual licentiousness. He glosses the line "She never comes at any" in two ways: "She never arrives at any money," and "she never comes to sexual fulfillment" (1422 n.2). The first reading would presumably require that the line refers back to "And she lays out the money," despite the intervening line to which it seems more logically linked, grammatically. The second makes more sense, but it is worth noting that the OED defines the phrasal verb "to come at" as "To come into bodily contact or sexual connection with" (*OED* "come, v."). This would align more closely with Panek's reading, and my own, though it would not be unusual for both meanings to be in play.

the form of assumptions about their sexuality, which was connected analogically to their free movement and free tongues). Real freedom, then, is part of what Moll expresses in her song. The woman in question participates in the same activities that Moll enjoys, but without the judgment Moll suffers for doing so. Indeed, as the song ends, Sebastian remarks “That’s a free mistress, faith” (110), which appears to be a sincere assessment of the freedoms the song’s subject enjoys rather than yet another sexual pun, since Sir Alexander, watching the scene from afar, seems to delight in taking up a sense of the word “free” that his son has missed when he says, in an aside, “Ay, ay, ay, / Like her that sings it, one of thine own choosing” (111-12).³⁷

The second song is more directly sexual, but is no less a scathing critique of the various ways in which women’s subjectivities are circumscribed by the perceptions of others. After asking, “Shall I dream again?” Moll sings:

Here comes a wench will brave ye
 Her courage was so great;
 She lay with one o’the navy;
 Her husband lying i’the Fleet.
 Yet oft with him she caviled.
 I wonder what she ails?
 Her husband’s ship lay graveled
 When hers could hoise up sails;
 Yet she began, like all my foes,

³⁷ Because the song concerns a woman who “lays out the money,” the term “free” here may also denote generosity, making two positive connotations to Sir Alexander’s one negative. This is the gloss given in the Oxford edition of the play.

To call “whore” first; for so do those.

A pox of all false tails! (114-24)

This song begins by seeming to celebrate a woman’s sexual liaison with a sailor while her husband is in prison, and it puns on naval imagery to suggest that he is impotent while she is sexually free (his ship has run aground while she hoists her sails). But while the song may seem at first to make an identification between the woman and Moll herself, concerned as it is with “a wench will brave ye” whose “courage was so great” (114-5), the tone changes abruptly when the woman is revealed to be one of Moll’s enemies who has hypocritically called her a whore. What begins as a musical performance that seems to confirm societal perceptions of Moll as both hypersexual and immoral abruptly changes tenor in the final lines to become a critique of a wider cultural morality that sees Moll’s identity as entirely constituted by her appearance rather than by her actual behaviour which, throughout the play, is largely heroic.³⁸

In her chapter on representations of women musicians in the early modern period, Wong notes that in many cases, “musical episodes in English Renaissance plays . . . reflect the conventional Madonna/whore dichotomy” and that often “we find seductresses transmitting their sexual allure through seductive songs, mad women venting their sexual desire and frustration through bawdy snatches, witches being represented through music and dance punctuated with disorderliness and dissonance” (23).³⁹ Women, at least in conventional representations, it seems, tend to use music to express or reveal something of their essential natures. A good example can be found in the Welsh Gentlewoman’s song in Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613). Tim,

³⁸ On Moll’s heroic qualities, see Krantz 8.

³⁹ See also Austern’s “Sing Againe Syren” 436-48.

fooled into thinking that the Welshwoman is Sir Walter's landed niece—and therefore a suitable marriage match—rather than Sir Walter's mistress, says “before I marry, I would see all my wife's good parts at once, to view how rich I were” and asks her therefore to sing a song. The song (4.1.167-193) is lighthearted, describing a mischievous Cupid who targets women with his arrows and makes them wanton. It is also filled with images of women's “naked breasts” and puns suggestive of erections and cuckoldry. The song is a source of comic irony in the play, revealing Tim's foolishness for not recognizing his wife-to-be's real status, but it is also a clue for the audience: the Welsh Gentlewoman is recognizable as a lower-class, sexually licentious woman and an inappropriate marriage match for Tim precisely because she has chosen a bawdy song and has sung it in mixed company. And as Austern notes, the woman who performs music outside of strict conventions of female propriety becomes a figure of sexual danger “when she becomes completely aware of the effects of her music, especially when she begins to control that effect or combine it with other artificial allurements” (“Sing Againe Syren” 440). Moll, with all her frank discussions of sexuality, her unconventional dress, her boisterous behaviour and her musical performances is set up as just such a character. But Wong's *Music and Gender*, which seeks to look beyond the conventions identified by Austern, goes on to point out, rightly I think, that “the moral distinction of good and evil in women involved in musical activities is sometimes present, but more frequently absent. The dividing line between modesty and promiscuity in the female musicians is in fact mobile” (23). It is this mobility, and even ambiguity, that Moll seems to exploit in staging a musical subjectivity that refuses to resolve into established gender conventions.

In order to fully appreciate the effect of these two songs in the play, however, it is important also to consider them as a physical musical performance on a stage that occurs both within the world of the play, for a small, intimate audience, and in the world of the theatre, for a large play audience in a public theatre. For a female musician who has been consistently painted as a dangerous seductress up to this point in the play, Moll's performance is actually fairly normative. She plays at Sebastian's invitation and—at least to her knowledge—her musical skill is “used with meane, and exercised in due tyme” (Gosson, *School*, 5v), performed only in front of a small group of close associates.⁴⁰ Sebastian acknowledges this shortly before the songs themselves, saying “Thou’rt here where thou art known and loved” (8.96-7), as though to reassure Moll both that her reputation is spotless in the eyes of Sebastian and Mary, and that singing would not endanger that reputation because the conditions of performance are appropriate. This places Moll's performance squarely within the parameters of musical decorum for women, “which finds it desirable for marriageable young ladies to be skilled in music and yet judges them if these women's musical performance ventures into the public arena” (Wong 9), since Moll's songs, at least within the world of the play, are not explicitly public.

Within the dramatic narrative, therefore, Moll's songs become a fascinating intersection of discourses that rebuff our attempts, as a reading, viewing and hearing audience, to locate a stable subjectivity for Moll. In a sense, the songs act like her clothes—she appears, as Trapdoor tells us at the start of the scene, “in man's apparel”

⁴⁰ Sebastian's father, Sir Alexander, watches the scene from a hiding spot and comments on the performance, but Moll, Sebastian and Mary remain ignorant of this until line 156.

(5)—troubling (if not exactly disguising, as Viola does) her identity and allowing her the freedom to signify as more than one thing simultaneously.⁴¹ In this sense, I wish to suggest, following Kelly Stage's assessment that "recent hand-wringing over Moll's position—submissive or subversive, criminal or heroine, exception or exaggeration—exposes critics' insistence on resolution that may not exist" (432), that Moll's musical performances are perhaps the most compelling manifestation of a kind of Protean, unstable self that Moll embraces and uses to her advantage in the play. Music does, in other words, what her clothing does: it marks her as an unstable signifier. Moll is repeatedly described as a siren, the quintessential manifestation of dangerous femininity, but performs her songs dressed as a man, complicating our assessment of her character through a kind of audio-visual tension that both highlights the inappropriateness of the performance but also mitigates it. She likewise plays on a stringed instrument associated with gentility, courtly refinement, and even universal harmony, but one that also carries sexual connotations in the hands of a woman. Moll is complicit in highlighting those connotations in her exchange with Sebastian before the songs begin, but only in a limited sense, where she is careful to maintain her own essential chastity while calling our attention to the sexual double standards that see women's and men's eroticism perceived radically differently. Each song that she plays focuses on a woman transgressing the boundaries of acceptable femininity, yet both are ultimately critical of her culture's attitudes toward women. The first is critical of the idea that chastity can be a function of anything other than actual sexual conduct, and

⁴¹ On the distinction between Moll's cross-dressing and disguise, see Rose 367. Her article in general presents a helpful overview of the play's connection to early modern debates about clothing.

Moll is at pains throughout the play to make clear to her critics that free talk and free movement about the city are not the same as free sexuality. The second is critical of the pervasive patriarchal values that lead to women policing one another's bodily conduct. The complexity of the interplay between Moll's physical performance in the play and the content of her songs serves, therefore, to both highlight Moll's transgressive qualities and to channel them into a musical dreamscape in which she can imagine a subjectivity that is not circumscribed by deeply hypocritical ideologies imposed upon her by others. By calling her songs dreams, Moll makes us aware that the songs are intensely personal expressions of her own ideals, feelings and desires rather than a dangerous enticement to her listeners to abandon theirs, even as we are made aware that they are fleeting and, perhaps, unreal or unattainable in the world she occupies. Rather than compromising the integrity of the body, mind and soul of the listener, Moll's songs make her audience acutely aware of the reality of her own.

Moll's songs also operate on a second level, one that differentiates them in an important way from Viola's purely imaginative uses of music. Moll performs her songs in a real theatre, for an audience made acutely aware of the play's auditory register throughout the play. That is, Moll's subversive musical performance is as much for us as it is for her fellow characters in the play. In the prologue, the audience is told that "A roaring girl (whose notes till now never were) / Shall fill with laughter our vast theatre" (9-10) and the speaker emphasizes that Moll's real character will be distinguished from her reputation and will be made known through sound, since "Attention sets wide open her gates / Of hearing, and with covetous list'ning waits / To know what girl this roaring girl should be" (13-15). Moll's "real" identity, figured here

as “notes that never were,” will be ascertainable, in the play that follows, primarily through the ears. And, as Votava notes, there is an obvious sexual underpinning to the personification of Attention as a woman with wide-open gates, waiting to “know” the roaring girl (85). This early example of the link between the sonic and the sexual in the play also calls to mind the penetrative qualities of sound and music that give anxieties about musical influence some of their urgency in this period. The audience is therefore made aware of the stakes from the play’s outset and confronted with the very real possibility of music’s dangerous erotic power: music and sound are productive of a subjectivity for Moll (however unstable it may be) that will make her true self known to us, but they are also potentially threatening, according to the popular debates about music, to an audience that stands to be penetrated, ravished and even effeminized by inappropriate music played by a female character on a public stage.

The effect of these two competing experiential possibilities for a theatre audience is that the playgoers become implicated in a real process of negotiation. The listener/viewer, reminded of his or her culture’s concern about the dangerously penetrative and ravishing power of music, especially in the hands of a sexually subversive woman, is then exposed to actual music—a music whose enchanting, siren qualities do not dissipate at the edge of the stage, but rather facilitate a kind of communication between the play world and the real one it represents. That potential danger is then both heightened and complicated by a series of metatheatrical layers of gender ambiguity that converge in Moll: she is a woman musician who is dressed, in the song scene, entirely in men’s clothing. But the cross-dressed woman is in turn played, in the theatre, by a boy actor. As Anthony Dawson has noted, the combined effect of

these competing layers of representation is that the play establishes “an unusually close and self-reflexive relationship between stage and auditorium, fictional character and actual person, actor and spectator” (“Mistris Hic and Haec” 402). The question, then, becomes: from whom does the music originate? Visually, the question would be difficult to answer, but the songs themselves, echoing the play’s wider themes, seem to suggest that the “real Moll,” the one invoked in the play’s prologue, “whose notes till now never were,” is the one that can act, speak and sing in whatever way she sees fit.⁴² Through music, the audience is invited into the process of resolving Moll’s complex modes of signifying into an overall acceptance of her subjective experience (which is most clearly articulated in song) and her desire to live free of the ideologies that define her music as dangerous in the first place.

Engaging the audience directly in a consideration of Moll’s dreams of free agency and autonomy can be read, I would argue, as an example of what Jodi Mikalachki has termed “cross-talking,” a social mobility facilitated by her knowledge of thieves’ cant and her ability to translate it for Lord Noland and a group of noblemen, effectively functioning as a go-between for vastly different social groups.⁴³ “Like her cross-dressing,” Mikalachki argues, “Moll’s translating allows her a certain license to move between the rogues of the London suburbs and the gentlemen and lords who

⁴² Obviously the idea of a “real Moll” is complicated by the character’s basis in the actual Mary Frith who appeared on the Fortune stage herself. I say more on this additional resonance below.

⁴³ It is worth noting that Moll’s translation of cant for Noland and the other noblemen involves a song sung in cant (a word, interestingly, that the OED shows having etymological connections to the Latin *cantus*, or singing—see “cant, n.3, v.3.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2014. Web). I have omitted a detailed reading of the song because it falls outside the immediate concern with gender that is the subject of this chapter.

visit the City. Although it argues a familiarity with street culture that might put her on the wrong side of the law, Moll's 'cross-talking,' like her cross-dressing, paradoxically entrenches her yet further with gentlefolk and aristocrats" (119). Using this as a model, I want to suggest that Moll is also engaged in a practice of cross-singing, one which not only moves ambiguously between gendered performance conventions and articulates a hybridized identity, but also maximizes its capacity to make Moll known to its hearers by extending its effect to both characters and audience. The fact that Moll's performance is as much a physical one in the theatre space and for the theatre audience as it is a representational one for the characters in the play is perhaps best attested to by the fact that it is based on a real practice of the real Moll (Mary Frith, upon whom Moll Cutpurse is based) who, a few days after the first performance of *The Roaring Girl*, spoke and played music on the Fortune theatre's stage.⁴⁴ The play, therefore, blurs the line between theatrical representation and physical performance by representing theatrically a performance that would actually happen. And this metatheatricity also heightens the urgency of the potential danger (and indeed the subversive pleasure) of viewing Moll Cutpurse's songs since Moll Frith's song performances are specifically singled out as examples of the inappropriate sexuality for which she was brought up on charges of indecency. According to *The Consistory Court of London Correction Book*, Frith "sat there upon the stage in public view of all the people there present, in man's

⁴⁴ The performance is alluded to in the final lines of the play's Epilogue which informs the audience that if they have not been satisfied by the play,

The Roaring Girl herself, some few days hence,
 Shall on this stage give larger recompense;
 Which mirth that you may share in, herself does woo you,
 And craves this sign: your hands to beckon her to you. (35-8)

For a thorough account of the interplay between Frith's appearance on the Fortune stage and the representation of her in *The Roaring Girl*, see Seligmann 204-7.

apparel, and played upon her lute and sang a song” (qtd. in Panek 147). Her music is mentioned alongside more concrete examples of her dangerous sexuality (“she told the company there present that she thought many of them were of opinion that she was a man, but if any of them would come to her lodging, they should find that she is a woman, and some other immodest and lascivious speeches she also used at that time”), and the account reminds us of the transgressive potential of the problematic combination of women’s bodies, voices and music. The play exploits, then, the discrepancy between the supposedly dangerous expressions of sexuality and indecency for which the real Moll was charged and the more nuanced depiction of female subjectivity that appears in Moll Cutpurse’s songs, allowing her to cross-sing to the audience, generating, in both the characters on stage and the audience members viewing it, a powerful sympathy and a more nuanced understanding of her interior life.

If early modern discourses about music are pervaded by cautions against the dangerously effeminizing power of women’s music when it is not correctly contained by performance conventions, Moll Cutpurse’s appearance singing along to her viol on a public stage before a large audience would have invoked, I think, many of the anxieties that led to the imprisonment of the real Moll Frith. The performance in the play makes immediate and tangible a pervasive notion that music could influence behaviour and even produce an effeminate bodily condition, undermining the stability of gender as a category of identity, in both the performer and the hearer. The play’s audience members, at least at first, stand to be ravished by Moll’s lascivious songs, perhaps even transformed themselves into cross-dressers like Moll. But as I have shown above, the

actual performances, while lascivious and inappropriate on the surface, subvert these expectations and are in fact much more nuanced treatments of the social pressures faced by women and the social forces that seek to police and contain all but the most conventional expressions of women's identities. By using song and music to express her dream of a more nuanced form of subjectivity for women—a self that escapes, however temporarily, the social forces that circumscribe women's identities—Moll explores gender conventions through a medium with powerful ties to anxieties about the very stability of gender. An attentive listening audience, therefore, is ravished not to effeminacy, but to identification with a character who does not fit, and does not wish to fit, acceptable categories of gender identity.

CHAPTER 3

Music, Magic, and Community in Early Modern Witchcraft Plays¹

Of the twenty-one extant early modern plays containing a witch as a significant character, just over half (eleven) include scenes where the witch (or group of witches) sings, dances or is accompanied by ambient music.² The music in these plays can perform a number of possible functions. It is often symbolic, where disorderly, dissonant or sinister-sounding music is representative of a wider social, political or cosmic chaos that arises from the witch's disruptive force in the play. Music can also be practical, where it is performed on stage by the witch as an expression of her inherent

¹ Portions of this chapter, especially the material in the final section, have appeared previously as "My poor fiddle is bewitched': Music, Magic, and the Theatre in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches*," in *Magical Transformations on the Early Modern English Stage*, eds. Lisa Hopkins and Helen Ostovich (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 215–232. Copyright © 2014. I am grateful to the publishers for granting me permission to reuse that material here.

² Berger, Bradford and Sondergard's *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama* lists twenty-six plays containing characters identified as witches. For my purposes here, I have excluded Thomas Snelling's *Thibaldus* (1640) because it is written in Latin, as well as John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608) and two of William D'Avenant's masques, *The Temple of Love* (1635) and *Luminalia* (1638), because they make only passing reference to witches who never appear in the action of the play (though the case is unclear in *Shepherdess*—Amarillis is the granddaughter of a witch, and while she performs one magical charm, the play text never uses the term "witch" and is unclear in its attitude toward Amarillis). The editors of the *Index* list Robert Yarrington's *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1594), but unless we are to take the character of Avarice as a witch, I assume it is mis-catalogued. I have chosen to exclude references to "conjureess," "enchantress," and "sorceress" since, aside from those entries which cross-reference with "witch," these terms tend to refer to beneficent characters. It's also worth noting that the ratio of musical to non-musical witchcraft plays would be rather larger if we were to limit the field to depictions of what I might term "English" witchcraft and exclude "classical" witches based in the mythology of the ancient world; however, the distinction between "English" and "classical" witches is not always straightforward, since they both tend to be viewed through the lens of English concerns about witchcraft as a whole. The frequency with which music appears in these kinds of plays is evident either way.

unruliness, and this occasionally leads to a related function where music becomes the vehicle for magical influence over other characters. And in still other cases, music can be both symbolic and practical. A brief survey is illustrative of these possibilities. Two plays by Robert Greene, *Alphonsus of Aragon* (1587) and *Orlando Furioso* (1591), for example, feature witches that charm men to sleep with music.³ In both John Marston's *Sophonisba* (1605) and Thomas Goffe's *Orestes* (1617), witches perform (or pretend to perform) magic accompanied by "infernal music" that signifies their status as unruly figures and their capacity to disrupt the musical order of the cosmos. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606), Middleton's *The Witch* (1616) and Jonson's *The Sad Shepherd* (1637) all feature witches engaged in unrestrained song and dance that can be troubling, comical, and sometimes both. Dekker, Rowley and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) and Heywood and Brome's *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) contain scenes where witches disrupt musical celebrations put on by the communities from which they have been ostracized. The text of John Jones's *Adrasta* (1635), which was never performed, calls for a witch who sings to her daughter a series of instructions for various acts of *maleficia*. John Kirke's *Seven Champions of Christendom* (1635) contains a witch who lays claim to the noisy calls of bats, toads, and birds as her music.

The frequency with which witches are depicted in conjunction with some aspect of music and dance is not really all that surprising. Witches were perhaps the early modern theatre's most spectacular characters and they often appear in plays that exploit them for this very purpose. They were unruly, chaotic figures associated with all manner of stage spectacle, including special effects, song, and dance. But their

³ On musical sleep-enchancements see Williams, "Singe," 179-96.

disorderly nature also suggests another connection with music that positions them as disruptive of the wider cosmic and social order, an order that is often conceptualized and symbolized through music. This led to a widespread convention that saw the use of disruptive or unrestrained musical performances to signify the wider disruptive potential that witches represent for early modern culture. Indeed, magic itself was fundamentally connected to music; the two ideas intertwine deeply enough to manifest their interdependence on the etymological level. Northrop Frye notes that “charm is from *carmen*, song, and the primary associations of charm are with music, sound and rhythm” (123). Amanda Winkler points out a parallel connection when she notes that “The act of singing was literally imbedded within the word incantation (*cantare*), reflecting the belief that sound and song were essential tools of the magician’s and the witch’s trade” (23). And it is partly because of this deep structural connection between music and magic, explains Gary Tomlinson, that “There can be no clear and precise boundary between music conceived as magical and as a non-magical force,” and that “all musical effect in the early-modern era was at the very least susceptible of magical interpretation” (xiii-xiv). Witches in early modern belief, and their fictional counterparts on the early modern stage, were thoroughly musical characters, in part then, because music itself was magical.

My aim in this chapter is to examine closely the ways in which the connection between music and magic is exploited to represent witches in the early modern theatre and to complicate, on a number of levels, the ways in which these musical witches are seen, heard, and read. A careful attention to the context and the details of musical performances in a number of the popular witchcraft plays in this period, I will argue,

suggests that the function of music in these plays was a great deal more complex than has so far been noted. By focusing on the ways in which certain kinds of music and performance conventions were understood as markers of communal identity and facilitators of social cohesion amongst communities in the early modern world, I argue that several dramatists use music performed by witches, as well as musical performances that are disrupted by witches, to explore and trouble the self-other distinctions between normative social groups and the marginal figures excluded from them. Disorderly musical performances in these plays intervene in various communities' capacity to establish a collective identity in opposition to the threat of witches. Music, in this sense, becomes more than a marker of unruly otherness. It is adopted, rather, as a powerful tool for the subversion of the very process of othering: the formation of a normative social identity through the exclusion of its dangerous, marginal members.

While early modern representations of witchcraft have been the topic of a number of important studies in a wide variety of disciplines over the last several decades, investigations into the music that accompanies or is produced by witches in the literature of the period are still scarce and the ones that have been conducted are relatively recent. Winkler's *O Let Us Howle Some Heavy Note*, which includes a chapter devoted to the music of witches, is to date the most comprehensive examination of the various ways in which music and witchcraft were associated on the stage. Winkler's central argument is that music was a powerful means of conveying the idea of disorder in theatrical representations of "those who disrupted the fabric of the kingdom, those who were neither harmonious nor obedient, those who did not keep a 'steddie meane'"

(2). Because music was thought to impart order to the individual, social and cosmic realms in the early modern world, it is unsurprising, Winkler suggests, that playwrights in the period used music as one strategy through which to engage “the question of disorder and how it might be mediated and contained” (2). And while the book is musicological in methodology and approach, primarily tracing the musical codes and practices that emerged and evolved from this related set of ideas, her analysis has much to offer scholars of literature as well. She argues, for example, that “anxieties about gender, religion, and even politics shaped the body and voice of the theatrical witch” (19), suggesting that a careful examination of the ways that witches are represented musically can offer insight into how we are to receive them as both literary and theatrical characters.

Earlier interventions into the critical discourse surrounding the connection between music and witchcraft include Austern’s “‘Art to Enchant’: Musical Magic and Its Practitioners,” which anticipates some of Tomlinson’s arguments about the deeply structural links between early modern speculative music’s emphasis on number and proportion, on the one hand, and the occult sciences and ideas of sympathetic magic on the other. Austern reads the music in witchcraft drama as primarily an effort at verisimilitude in the early modern theatre, representing real beliefs about music’s magical capacities that are exploited by the theatre, “where action, intellect, belief and disbelief could meet in an infinite variety of ways” (196). Diane Purkiss’s *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*, on the other hand, devotes a chapter to singing and dancing witches on the early modern stage and argues that rendering witches as figures of spectacle, by signifying their disorderly, irrational

and rustic behavior through music and dance, was a strategy of othering witches and subjecting them to the controlling gaze of King, court and respectable English society in order to reinforce normative conduct and power. That is, plays and entertainments that figure witches as performers “also work to produce the performer as other” (200).⁴ From these major works on the dramatic function of witches’ music, we can see that a critical consensus has emerged that reads witches’ musical performances as representative of their unruliness and as a strategy for their containment as amusing, spectacular characters. In the analysis that follows, I will complicate and expand on what has proved to be a valuable way of reading witches’ music in order to see how music was used not only as a strategy for the marking and containing of unruly witches, but as a tool for exploring the identity politics in which witches are implicated.

In order to broaden the understanding of witches’ music in the early modern period, this chapter surveys several of its popular witchcraft dramas. Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Queens* provides a kind of context or background, the *status quo* case, through which to understand the way that musical codes functioned on the stage. In *Queens*, music is deployed conservatively, broadly exemplifying the paradigm identified by Winkler, Austern, and Purkiss in which different kinds of music symbolize either unruly witches or royal authority and are engaged in emblematic negotiations of power

⁴ Another source worth mentioning is Sarah Williams’ dissertation, “*Now Rise Infernal Tones*”: *The Representations of Early Modern English Witchcraft in Sound and Music*. Williams’ work covers some of the same ground as Winkler’s book, though it does broaden the scope of the discussion to include musical representations of witches in a wide variety of literary and musical forms. Her more recent article, “‘A Swearing and Blaspheming Wretch’: Representations of Witchcraft and Excess in Early Modern Broadside Balladry and Popular Song,” is also of general interest. Williams’ monograph on the subject, *Damnable Practices: Witches, Dangerous Women, and Music in Seventeenth-Century English Broadside Ballads*, will be published by Ashgate in 2015.

that position the national community embodied by the audience against its disruptive other. The remainder of the chapter is then devoted to exploring deviations from and innovations on the conventions that structure musical representations of witches. In Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*, we find a community of witches that uses its disorderly music to foster a sense of community, solidarity, and freedom among its members. This contrasts sharply with the chaos generated by the sexual and political intrigues of the courtiers in nearby Ravenna, suggesting that unruly witches might be capable of forming more productive communities than those already in place under the dominant regime of Royal authority, subtly subverting the musical symbolism that structures expressions of power like those in *The Masque of Queens*. In Dekker, Rowley and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* and Heywood and Brome's *The Late Lancashire Witches*, music does not merely symbolize disorder and disruption, but becomes the magical conduit for subverting both individual identity and social cohesion among members of normative communities. Music's conventional symbolic functions, in these plays, are deployed to destabilize the distinction between normative rural communities and the others against which they are defined.

A parallel aim in this chapter will be to attend to the function of music not only within the fictional world of a given play, but also within the physical space of the theatre that play occupies, in order to explore how it might have been performed and how it might have been received by theatrical audiences in a culture still negotiating its anxieties about both the potentially deleterious effects of unruly music on the listener and the existence of witchcraft. Part of what I wish demonstrate, therefore, is how witchcraft plays might have engaged audiences' anxieties about their own individual

and social identities in very direct and immediate ways through music. Music, as a theatrical element that crosses the boundary between the representational world of the stage and the real world of the actual theatre space, directly implicates the viewing and listening audience in the process of testing the limits of both skepticism about and belief in witchcraft.

One final note: while, as I have pointed out above, a large number of the extant witchcraft plays in this period engage with musical representations of witches in some way, my analysis here focuses largely on Jacobean witchcraft plays that deploy contemporary depictions of witches—witches as they were thought to actually exist in England at the time—rather than the more classically-based sorceress figures that we see in Lyly and Greene. Witches in Jacobean theatre tend to be more complex characters than their Elizabethan counterparts—though a firm distinction can be difficult to make—and their uses of music tend to be more varied and interesting. They also tend to be grounded more fully in the context of their day, owing no doubt to the currency of the subject matter among viewing audiences and the interest in the subject exhibited by James I. While interesting in and of themselves, and no doubt in need of additional scholarship, both on their own and in the context of the evolution of early modern witchcraft beliefs, “classical witches” fall outside the immediate scope of this analysis. The focus here on witches and community identity also means that two plays that might seem like obvious choices for a discussion of music and witchcraft, Marston’s *Sophonisba* and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, will be omitted. The latter includes only one definite musical moment in the antic round the witches dance after the parade of spirits at 4.1.129-32. The moment is conventional, an unruly dance that

demonstrates the witches' disruptive nature and is unrelated to the assertion or disruption of a community, except in the most general sense.⁵ *Sophonisba's* uses of music are more varied and probably deserve more careful attention than they have so far received, but they are associated with Erichtho's assertion of magical will in order to trick Syphax into a sexual liaison and, again, have no overt connection to community. The discussion at hand will focus instead on plays in which various senses of community identity are foregrounded and explored through musical ideas and performances.

Musical Communities

When Thomas Rogers writes, in 1579, that “as good musike consisteth not of one, but of divers sowndes proportionable answering together: so doeth a Commonweale of sundrie kinds of men keeping themselves within the limits of their owne callings” (A3r), he gestures toward one of the ways in which early moderns applied the notion of music as an ordering principle to the socio-political realm.⁶ The connection is rhetorical here—music is a metaphor that describes the proper working of the state—but it is analogically connected to the Boethian notion that music structured the cosmos and gave rise to its various hierarchies. A functioning state, in this particular invocation of the idea, requires people of all social positions to know their place within the harmonious whole. It is an idea that echoes Elyot's support for musical training

⁵ For an account of some of the possible readings of the music in *Macbeth*, see Winkler 34-5.

⁶ Marsh cites this passage from Rogers as expressive of “a widely held opinion” about the social and political resonances of early modern ideas about harmony (18) and provides a good overview of the actual and metaphorical connections between music and social relations (15-22).

amongst children because it is necessary “for the better attaining the knowledge of a publyke weale. Which, as I before sayd, is made of an ordre of astates and degrees, and by reason thereof, conteyneth in it a perfect harmony” (23r),⁷ and one which Shakespeare likewise puts in the mouth of Ulysses, in *Troilus and Cressida* (c.1603), when he uses a musical metaphor to describe the consequences of abandoning natural social hierarchies: “Take but degree away, untune that string, / And hark what discord follows” (1.3.109-10).⁸ Samuel Rowley’s *When You See Me, You Know Me* (1604), makes a similar association between harmony and social order when the young Prince Edward reveals a moral dimension to the musicality of social organization, noting that

Mong'st these many stringes, be one untun'd
 Or jarreth low, or hyer than his course
 Not keeping steddie meane among'st the rest,
 Corrupts them all, so doth bad men the best. (qtd. in Winkler 2)⁹

From these examples we can get a sense of the way that music, the ordering principle of the cosmos and of man, could also function as a ready-at-hand descriptor for the proper order of people within communities and states. Just as harmony is produced by having the right notes in the right place at the right time in a piece of music, well-

⁷ This passage from Elyot is oft-quoted, in one form or another, in connection with ideas about music’s capacity to signify social or political order. See, for example, Pattison 1-2; Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 20-1; Ortiz 142-3; Marsh 44-5.

⁸ On Ulysses’ use of a musical image to describe social hierarchies, see Folkerth 18; Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 20; Ortiz 144-6; Wilson 8.

⁹ Winkler discusses this passage from Rowley from a slightly different angle, focusing on it as an example of the corruptive force of disorderly elements in both social and musical contexts (1-2). Wong, too, discusses the long music lesson delivered by Doctor Tye, to which Edward is responding in these lines, and notes that “the hierarchical heavenly imagery and the Orphic effect in the doctor’s speech are allusions to conventional ideas of both macrocosmic and microcosmic order and harmony” (57).

regulated social relationships involve individuals of different degrees (a word with both musical and class resonances) working together for the betterment of the whole.¹⁰

But music was not connected to the social and political spheres of early modern life purely metaphorically. Modern critics have begun to look carefully at the ways in which sound and music (as part of a wider “soundscape”) could act as markers for understanding communal identity and navigating social spaces. Smith, for example, describes what he calls “acoustic communities.” The identity of an acoustic community, he argues, “is maintained not only by what its members *say* in common but what they *hear* in common” and he evokes the musical ringing of church bells as perhaps the most common “soundmark” by which early moderns oriented themselves both conceptually—as part of a particular community—and geographically:

Each of the sound signals possesses its own ‘acoustic profile,’ penetrating a broader or narrower geographic area, standing out to a greater or lesser degree from ambient sounds, taking its place in the mix of sounds as high-pitched or low-pitched, as relatively loud or relatively soft. The community as a whole sits within its own ‘acoustic horizons,’ charted not only by the distinctive sounds that emanate from within but also by the sounds that come from without. Bells from the next parish serve as a reminder of both differences and commonalities.

(46)

He later notes that several early modern sources remark upon the bell of St. Mary-le-Bow, which “signaled the rhythms of the work day” and was a marker of “your true Londoner” according to a proverbial association current in the Jacobean period (53).

¹⁰ A more thorough discussion of music as a metaphor for and facilitator of various social relations can be found in Marsh 15-22 and 44-5.

Folkerth, in *The Sound of Shakespeare*, describes the function of London's town waits in similar terms, since they were "expected in many towns to sound curfew along a specified route, and to play the people awake in the early morning" (39). In this sense a particular group of musicians, their song choices and their particular style of playing could function as one of the acoustic properties that defined a specific town or neighbourhood and its inhabitants. In both cases, real musical practices function as markers of spatial and temporal location and of participation within a particular community.

While Smith's analysis of acoustic communities includes attention to primarily non-musical sounds (an acoustic community, for Smith, includes all of the acoustic phenomena that serve to locate a community in space and time), given the ubiquity of music in the day-to-day lives of people in early modern England, I would like to suggest, in what follows, that musical phenomena, as one particular case of acoustic 'soundmarks' in the lives of early moderns, are particularly potent locaters of communal identity in this period. Country festivals, theatrical performances, banquets, the comings and goings of city life, and court masques were all accompanied regularly by different kinds of music.¹¹ Indeed, music's pervasiveness in early modern social life, I would argue, is one of the reasons that music was adopted so frequently as a strategy for marking witches as disruptive to the social and cosmic order on the early modern stage. Unrestrained music is not only a symbolic representation of witches' failures to abide by acceptable social practices. It is also a representation of witches as radically

¹¹ For an overview of the wide variety of musical experiences that would have suffused day-to-day life in early modern England see Marsh 1-31 and Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 50-103.

other to stable, right-functioning communities that construct and assert their own identities, at least in part, through the social experience of playing and hearing music. In light of this, I want to suggest that theatrical representations of music in witchcraft plays are rather more complex than critics have so far acknowledged. By hearing the unruly music of witches in relation to musical modes of asserting the coherence of communal identities that stand to be threatened by those witches, we can open up new critical possibilities for seeing music as a theatrical tool through which to explore how collective identities are constructed, maintained, and sometimes threatened. It also offers us a useful way of interrogating the function of drama in the production of ideas about witchcraft in the popular imagination of a culture deeply embedded in a debate about the existence and nature of witches.

Political Power and Musical Containment in *The Masque of Queens*.

The most obvious and oft-discussed example of music that functions symbolically as a representation of political unity, and the one that is the most conventional in terms of its use of musical tropes, is Ben Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, the elaborate court entertainment commissioned by Queen Anne and performed at Whitehall on February 2, 1609. Jonson's highly stylized representation of social and political order through dialogue, musical performance and elaborate dancing, is preceded by an antimasque, "a foyle or false-Masque" (13), that acts as a counterpoint to the "Celebration of honorable, & true Fame, bred out of Vertue" (6-7) that drives the masque proper.¹² The antimasque portion of the entertainment, an innovation by Jonson and one he had

¹² In-text citations for *The Masque of Queens* refer to the edition included in the Oxford *Ben Jonson*, edited by Herford, Simpson, and Simpson.

experimented with in a wedding masque for Lord Haddington the year before, was developed and perfected specifically for *Queens*, at the request of Queen Anne.¹³ The masque/antimasque form was popular enough to become standard practice for subsequent masques in part because it rendered clearer and more powerful the political symbolism that drove the form. *The Masque of Queens*, like the *Irish Masque at Court* (1613), the *Masque of the Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621) and the many that followed by Jonson and other authors, was directly concerned with establishing symbolically the court of James I as the source of political order and stability as well as of national identity. As Kristen McDermott puts it, the Jonsonian masque, and especially the innovation of the antimasque, emerges at “a moment in which the English court, representing (in its own estimation) the English nation, struggled to identify itself not only with the qualities and values it possessed but by those it opposed as well” (5). The masques Jonson developed for James I’s court negotiate ideas of national and courtly identity using the full range of the masque form’s multimedia elements, including music.

Jonson’s choice to include witches in the masque is central to *Queens*’ staging of political and religious power and its negotiation of national and communal identity. Witches were figures of radical difference in early modern English culture, an idea delineated in some detail by Stuart Clark in “Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft,” which attempts to understand early modern witchcraft beliefs by recognizing them as fundamentally rational in the context of other ideas and ways of

¹³ In his preamble to the published account of the masque, Jonson notes that “her Majestie (best knowing, that a principall part of life in these Spectacles lay in their variety) had commaunded mee to think on some Daunce, or shew, that might precede hers” (10-13).

thinking that circulated widely in the period. In Clark's estimation, "Renaissance descriptions of the nature of Satan, the character of hell and, above all, the ritual activities of witches shared a vocabulary of misrule," and the language, symbolism and ideas associated with witches in the early modern world were, therefore, "part of a language conventionally employed to establish and condemn the properties of a disorderly world" (151).¹⁴ As such, witches in the English culture of the seventeenth century were understood as manifestations of the disorder, irrationality and difference that threatened the implicitly ordered, rational and unified English world on cosmic, political, and personal levels. Witches, as earthly minions of Satan, represented a threat to God's carefully ordered universe on the cosmic scale. They threatened social and political order by disrupting communities, engaging in ritual inversions of civil and religious ceremony, and presented a direct threat to the king and his court through the possibility of malevolent magical influence.¹⁵ And finally, they were disruptive on an individual level because they were regarded as a kind of anti-citizen: marginalized from the community, rude, spiteful, begrudging, and improper.

Winkler attributes this framing of personal and social identity through radical difference—order versus disorder—to "large-scale political events" and the various upheavals that occurred throughout the early modern period, including the sustained

¹⁴ Clark elaborates on this fundamental idea in great detail in his landmark study, *Thinking With Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*.

¹⁵ This last point was the crux of a real scandal during James I's reign in the form of the Overbury affair in which Frances Howard was accused of soliciting witchcraft that would cause impotence in her first husband, the Earl of Essex, in order to secure a divorce, and against Sir Thomas Overbury, who opposed her subsequent marriage to Robert Carr (whom she had also supposedly bound to herself through the purchase of a magical love charm). A good account of the Overbury affair and its relation to the plot of *The Witch*, discussed below, can be found in Schafer xv-xix.

uncertainty about Elizabeth I's successor, the rumours of immorality surrounding James I's court, the execution of Charles I, the closing of the theatres, the civil war and the restoration of the monarchy. In light of all this, she concludes, "it is not surprising that cultural producers during this era were preoccupied with the question of disorder and how it might be mediated and contained" (2). Winkler sees witches, alongside the melancholic and the mad, as clear examples of the kind of unruly figures through which early moderns reified, by the assertion and subsequent containment of difference, a sense of coherent personal, communal and political identity. She suggests that Jonson's *Masque of Queens* is a powerful dramatic manifestation of this tendency: "Jonson's masque is directly concerned with the relationship between the aristocracy and unruly Others" (30) and music is one of the most powerful markers, in the masque, of that otherness.

The antimasque, the "foyle or false-Masque," serves as a counterpoint to the celebration of established power that is the masque's central theme. The witches are described as "the persons of Ignorance, Suspicion, Credulity, &c. the opposites to good Fame" (22-24), and the masque begins with the scene of "an ougly Hell" and the playing of "a kind of hollow and infernall musique" to accompany the witches' entrance, "all differently attir'd; some, with ratts on theyr heads; some, on they shoulders; others with oyntment-potts at they girdles; All with spindells, timbrells, rattles, or other veneficall instruments, making a confused noyse, with strange gestures" (24-36). The emphasis on sound and music is important, emphasizing sonically what the costumes and movements represent visually: that witches are radically disruptive to the political and social space of the court. In a culture that frequently resorted to musical metaphors

to define and conceptualize cohesive social and political communities, disruptive and unrestrained music powerfully represented threats to social harmony.

The actual “hollow and infernall musique” indicated in Jonson’s gloss to the masque does not survive, but we can guess something of its character from its description. Marston’s *Sophonisba* includes a similar call for “infernal music softly” (4.1.1 *s.d*) at the entrance of the witch Erictho. This seems to suggest a few things. The first is that the “infernal” aspect of the music inheres in its timbre and its arrangement of notes rather than any ferocity of volume, since infernal music can be both hollow-sounding (in *Queens*) and soft (in *Sophonisba*). The second is that the term “infernal” appears to be descriptive enough for both Jonson and Marston, who give no further detail to convey the character of the music, suggesting that a contemporary audience would have understood the music’s basic character from this description alone.¹⁶ Indeed, that music can be infernal at all suggests something of the ethical function that the music is intended to perform in Jonson’s production. Mary Chan, whose *Music in the Theatre of Ben Jonson* is still the most comprehensive analysis of the musical aspects of Jonson’s body of work, confirms Jonson’s interest in musical *ethos*, arguing that Jonson was keenly aware of the potential that music offered to the masque form and noting that Jonson’s use of music is indebted to “new Continental ideas of setting, ideas which stem from a philosophical interest in the legendary effects of ancient music.” In the masques, “the music is addressed to an audience, it has an ethical purpose” (44). And this ethical purpose, in the *Masque of Queens*, has to do with its overt function as an

¹⁶ Goffe’s *Orestes* contains a similar stage direction, “Sound infernall Musique,” that signals the change between scenes 4 and 5 in Act 3 and the entrance of the witch-figure, Canidia (E1r). Later, in scene 6, the same stage direction marks the beginning of a magical dumbshow that reveals the murderer of Agamemnon (E2v).

emblem for the authority of the king as a representation of the divine harmony of the macrocosm.

The witches' "strange and sodayne Musique," later in the masque, is also an occasion for ghastly dancing,
 full of preposterous change, and gesticulation, but most applying to theyr property: who, at theyr meetings, do all thinges contrary to the custome of Men, dauncing back to back, hip to hip, theyr handes joyn'd, and making theyr circles backward, to the left hand, with strange phantastique motions of theyr heads, and bodyes. (345-50)

Winkler—following Peter Walls and Mary Chan—identifies a good candidate for the music accompanying the dance in "The Second Witches Dance," found in GB-Lbl. Add MS 10444. While Winkler notes that the song is not exactly what our modern sensibilities would define as unruly or especially dissonant, she points out that "The piece is certainly metrically unstable; the time signature changes four times, with three of the changes occurring in the second strain." It is "irrational" and "unable to sustain musical coherence," in the framework of early modern musical sensibilities, because of the frequency of its metrical changes and its sudden alternations between rushing notes and regular, droning passages (31-2). The effect is that the music is disruptive in a very particular way, moving "through chaos toward some degree of regularity, from uncontrolled disorder to mockable rusticity, drawing a musical line between the lower-class witches and the beauteous Queens" (32).¹⁷ The witches, therefore, are

¹⁷ I would note, however, that interpretation of the musical score is fraught with ambiguity. As Lindley suggests, "Even where they exist, the musical traces [of masque scores] are difficult to interpret. Dance tunes simply called 'The Prince's Masque,' for

constructed by parallel visual and musical tropes as literal opposites to expected conduct at a masque. The music functions as a strategy of containment, parading the witches before the audience, but ensuring that they are marked as radically other to king and court, their danger marginalized by exploiting the witches' absurdity for the entertainment of the country's ruling class. Masques, as Martin Butler reminds us, were performances

trading in stupendous images of sovereignty; shaped as acts of festive contest in which disorder is routed and subversion contained; and functioning as ceremonial arenas in which ritual exchanges between monarch and courtier mimed the ties of obligation bonding England's political elites. ("Courtly Negotiations" 20)

By counterpointing the spectacle of James I's sovereignty against a demonic other, royal power and the stability it ensures are not only represented for the masque audience, but are made urgent and vital.

This symbolic function finally culminates in the banishing of the witches, which is occasioned first and foremost by music:

In the heate of theyr Daunce, on the sodayne, was heard a sound of loud Musique, as if many Instruments had given one blast. With which, not only the Haggess themselves, but theyr Hell, into which they ranne, quite vanishd; and the whole face of the Scene alterd; scarce suffring the memory of any such thing:

example, might be attached to any number of different masques. Furthermore, the music, both for dance and song, is often preserved only as a melody with bass line, or else arranged in three or four parts, and this gives very little sense of how it might have sounded when orchestrated for the full resources of the King's Music" ("Politics of Music" 275).

But, in the place of it appear'd a glorious and magnificent Building, figuring the House of Fame, in the upper part of which were discoverd the twelve Masquers sitting upon a Throne triumphall, erected in forme of a Pyramide, and circled with all store of light. (354-63)

It is important here to emphasize that the witches are described as leaving the stage at the sound of the music, not at the appearance of the Queens. Indeed, McDermott argues that “In fact, it is music more than any other element that effects the magical transformation of this masque” (44). The unified blast of music that banishes the witches from the performance space serves two functions here. First, it contrasts with and replaces the unruly noise of the witches and their “veneficall instruments” and the “hollow and infernall Musique” that has accompanied them. The single blast is symbolic, standing in for the unity of the court under the king, and also for the king’s power since, as Bruce Smith tells us, music in the masque was one of the “more sophisticated attempts to speak for the court in a unified voice” and “the primary medium for achieving acoustic unity” (92). Music at court was one of the few ways in which early moderns could experience music at extremely high volumes, since only the king had the resources to create “moments of totalized sound” (92). Lindley follows a similar line of thought, pointing out that “Up to 100 musicians . . . might have been employed, an ensemble only possible at court, and making therefore a significant contribution to the assertion of royal magnificence” (“Politics of Music” 275). The effect of music that can overwhelm the unruly sound of witches’ cacophonies and fill all of Whitehall with a single sound must have been both profoundly cathartic and unmistakably powerful for the audience attending *Queens*.

In addition to music's powerfully symbolic representation of royal power, however, I wish to stress the shared communal aspect of the experience. The tensions inherent in the masque form's ritualized performance of power, the binary relationship between courtly authority and unruly elements that seek to undermine that authority, make the masque a theatrical genre intimately bound to ideas of national, monarchical, and courtly identity. In a recent study, Butler recognizes this connection and attempts, rightly, to shift the scholarly discourse about the masque form away from a tendency to emphasize the centrality of the monarch (though this is without question an important dimension) and toward a recognition of masques as complex political, social and aesthetic events ("Stuart Court Masque" 3-5). That is, the masque form was productive not only of kingly authority, but of courtly and national identity more generally for the audience involved in the spectacle. One of the most important facets of this complexity is the symbolic creation of distinct communities of inclusion and exclusion enacted by the masque performance:

Although their primary purpose was to legitimate the king, [masques] never inertly proclaimed kingly values, but performed real material functions in the life of the state. They helped to shape Stuart political culture, responding to current issues, inventing symbolic forms that articulated royal priorities, and devising fables that addressed the uncertainties of the moment. They were involved in and contributed to ongoing debates about policy and ideology, about the values and imperatives of kingship, and the court's ideals, aspirations and objectives. With their conflict-based form, they sought to manage the outlook of their audience, arousing and discharging anxiety, encouraging identification

between spectator and monarch, and endeavoring to create a climate of consensus and confidence. (Butler, "Stuart Court Masque," 5)

In this sense, then, masques were explicitly involved in the formation of a courtly community that participates in the exclusivity of royal favour and the circulation of royal power.¹⁸ By staging witchcraft as a musical spectacle for the entertainment of an audience that included not only the king, but also a court comprised of individuals participating in various degrees of royal favour and privilege, the masque-antimasque dichotomy and its powerful aural symbolism encourages the reification not only of a singular royal power, but also a form of social cohesion that is engaged through musical participation in the masque's symbolic function.

This notion of the masque as a form which does not merely represent a particular kind of power, but actually participates in a process of constructing and also troubling and testing forms of communal identity is essential, I think, to understanding the complexity of the musical representation of the witches in the *Masque of Queens*. While the witches are no doubt marked as unruly others by the music that accompanies them and the dances they perform to it, they are also the masque's most spectacular and entertaining feature. As Winkler points out,

Despite Jonson's obvious distaste for the rag-clad hags, his description of their

¹⁸ Butler goes on to suggest that "The exclusion of some would-be participants was always the masques' defining condition: the legitimation of those taking part in the festival inevitably presumed the delegitimation of others who failed to meet the criteria for inclusion" ("Stuart Court Masque" 39). The marking and banishing of the witches in *Queens* is only the most radical extension of the ambient function of the form in general: to define who is and is not a legitimate member of the court. See McDermott 39-40 for historical examples of the complicated diplomatic and patronage-related negotiations that circulated in the background of the preparation for and performance of *Queens*.

onstage ceremonies and music is more meticulous than his description of the other musical portions of the masque. It would seem that Jonson and the courtly spectators were bewitched by the hags' disorderly feminine vice. (62)

The masque therefore involves the spectator in a kind of negotiation. The witches, marked as radically other, are at the same time the masque's most entertaining and innovative element. The spectator is invited to engage with the witches in a much more immediate way than he or she might by reading accounts of witch trials in pamphlets or learned treatises like James I's *Daemonologie*. Likewise the music that marks the witches as unruly others to the royal court is not limited to its symbolic function. It is a real sound in a real space that carries all the burdens and anxieties with which early modern ideas of music were fraught. Music that symbolically represents disorder carried with it the possibility of actual disordering effects in a culture that understood its world as fundamentally defined by magical correspondences among music, the cosmos, and man. Looking at Jonson's music in this way, the witches are not merely one spectacle that is ultimately dispelled and replaced with another. They are presented, rather, as an actual threat to individual and community alike through music because that music exceeds the space of the stage, enters the bodies of the audience members and carries the threat of real physiological, psychological, and spiritual disorder that underpins early modern anxieties about music in general. This threat is then dispelled by the king's single blast of harmonious music, relieving the tension and reasserting harmony, both actually and symbolically, and subsuming the audience into it. Through music, the audience is engaged in a physical, embodied process as well as a symbolic one, a process that moves from anxiety and uncertainty to reification of the king's

power and the community's solidarity, under his guidance, against unruly elements.

This last point is perhaps most easily understood by looking briefly at the masque proper and, in particular, the revels that conclude the performance. After the witches have been banished from the scene by the concordant blast of Fame's music,¹⁹ an elaborate "*Machina versatilis*" (446-7) in the form of the House of Fame appears with a throne for Fama Bona and the twelve Queens. A series of speeches are given extolling the virtues of each of the Queens during which each descends from the top of the House of Fame. They then engage in a series of elaborately choreographed dances,

graphically dispos'd into letters, and honoring the Name of the most sweete, and ingenious Prince, Charles, Duke of York Wherein, beside that principall grace of perspicuity, the motions were so even, & apt, and theyr expression so just; as if Mathematicitions had lost proportion, they might there have found it. (750-6)

This elaborate display culminated in the masque revels, in which the viewing audience was invited to participate in the celebratory dancing at the masque's conclusion. This practice serves to engage performers and audiences alike in a temporary elision of the boundaries that ordinarily reinforce the essential fiction of theatrical performance. As Chan puts it, "if the masque is to come alive it depends, more than any other form, on a sympathy between its actors and its audience where each takes on, partially, the role of the other" (139). This elimination of difference and reinforcing of social and political identity suggests that in the Jonsonian masque, "the proscenium arch which separated the masque from its audience, myth from reality, existed to be broken down" (144).

Recent attention to this particularly significant aspect of the masque form has

¹⁹ Fame appears bearing a trumpet (451-2), reminding the audience of who controls the music in the idealized world that replaces the witches' "ougly Hell."

led a number of critics to engage more fully with the idea of the masque as a complex social practice that not only reinforces the power of the king, but produces the socio-political community and sense of national and civic identity upon which Royal power depends. Bishop, for example, notes that

The key moment of the masque is not the “discovery” of the device, but the moment when the hypothetical body that proposes that device proffers its hand and asks the court to accept its reality by joining it in the dance. In dancing, the moving figure was making a case, inscribing with fluidity of gesture and perfection of poise a certain convocation of politic terms. (97)

The virtuous, beauteous queens, the elaborately choreographed dances that traced, through movement, elaborate figures productive of ideas of proportion and order, and the harmonious music of cornets and violins (735-6) serve to produce symbolically an idealized world into which the audience is invited—a world that is made possible and comprehensible through opposition to the witches that threaten it. Witchcraft, in *The Masque of Queens*, is the disruptive other that produces the royal court as a coherent community. As Butler puts it, the unruly figure that is the “supposed toxicity” of the subject of the Jonsonian antimasque “marks the limits of the festivity, and their disempowerment and dismissal is the structural precondition that allows the court to crystallize its sense of itself as a body. Their violation of masquing norms is the necessary transgression out of which the masquing community asserts its identity” (“Stuart Court Masque” 60). But the masque’s function is not merely the product of a juxtaposition of two static opposites: order and disorder. By staging the witches’ music and dance and inviting the audience to delight in the sights and sounds of their

disorder before dispelling them and reasserting royal power by inviting the audience to join in the symbolic inscription of that power, *The Masque of Queens* literally makes its audience into active participants in the production of a stable community identity. That this is accomplished first and foremost through music in the masque suggests the degree to which music was associated with—and productive of—notions of community in the early modern world. It is also an idea that is appropriated by a number of early modern dramatists writing plays about witchcraft—an appropriation that works in part, I would argue, because it offers a strategy for staging a variety of complex negotiations between competing notions of identity, agency and community that are particularly urgent in the context of anxious early modern notions of witchcraft being explored and tested in this period. It is to several of these plays that I now intend to turn.

Music and Marginal Communities in *The Witch*.

Of the popular dramatic works that represent English witchcraft in the early modern period, Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (c. 1615) is the most obviously musical. Hecate, the witch of the play's title, and her coven—alongside a cadre of spirits and familiars—spend much of their stage-time singing and dancing. The effect is largely comic, and the witches are exploited for maximum spectacular effect despite the fact that they are mostly incidental to the main plot, which concerns a group of corrupt courtiers and their political and romantic machinations.

Yet despite the musicality of the play, little serious attention has been paid to the witches' musical performances. The criticism on the play that does exist tends to

focus on the relationship between *The Witch* and *Macbeth* and the inclusion of songs from the former in productions of the latter; or, more recently, it has focused on the play's possible connections to the Thomas Overbury affair. Purkiss has noted the effect of the criticism on perceptions of the play: "All these readings of *The Witch*," she suggests "subordinate it to another text deemed more original and authoritative: whether seen as fashionable, exploitative, or scandalous, *The Witch* is always seen as a recapitulation of a story from elsewhere" (214).²⁰ Interpretive work on the play's music itself, however, is limited. Corbin and Sedge read the songs as functions of the play's light, comedic atmosphere (16). Schafer's edition of the play makes only passing reference to the songs except to note their relationship to those that appear in the Folio *Macbeth* (xii, xiv). In a recent analysis, Tiffany Stern has argued that "music is part of the way the witches are characterized as zestfully comic, and sexually potent" ("Middleton's Collaborators" 74). Winkler, on the other hand, gives the music more careful consideration, noting that the songs and dances in the play are "overtly comical, but ultimately more troubling" because while they perform a function similar to that in *The Masque of Queens*, the play fails to musically contain the witches, allowing them to escape unpunished at the play's end (32-34). In both these examples, the witches' music is reflective of their essentially comic, unrestrained, disorderly nature in the

²⁰ On the relationship between *The Witch* and *Macbeth* see, for example, Nosworthy 24-45, Cutts 203-9, and Brooke 57-9. On the connection to the Essex divorce and the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, see Bromham 149-52, Lancashire 161-81. On the influence of the *Masque of Queens* on the play, see Lawrence 28-33. Good overviews of the relevant criticism can be found in Corbin and Sedge 13-20, Schafer xiii-xix, and Purkiss 214-15.

play.²¹ I would like, however, to advance a more nuanced reading of what are, indeed, ostensibly comic songs and spectacular dances. While elements of spectacular comedy are no doubt in play, Middleton's witchcraft drama explicitly uses music as a facilitator for social bonding among the play's marginal figures, uniting the witches as a community even as the aristocratic world of Ravenna dissolves into chaos.²² The play's music is therefore directly involved in a complicated social commentary. *The Witch* engages with notions of music as a social practice that turns the spectacular performativity of the witches into an appropriation of the rituals of social cohesion that ordinarily serve to mark and perform the distinction between normative community and unruly other. The play suggests, primarily through its music, that a group of women free from the social, sexual and political hierarchies that structure the society outside the coven is capable of fostering a sense of community, of imagining a collective identity, that Ravenna lacks.

Middleton's Ravenna is a romantic and political mess. Sebastian arrives home from war to find his fiancée, Isabella, married to Antonio, who has spread false rumours of Sebastian's death. Sebastian solicits magical revenge from Hecate in the

²¹ For a thorough analysis of the stage practices that can be gleaned from the play's musical scenes see Williams, *Now Rise*, 239. Williams tends, like Winkler, to view the song and dance scenes in the play as indicative of musical conventions for representing the chaos and disorder associated with witches (259-60).

²² While the play is ostensibly set in Ravenna, a number of critics have pointed out that the locale is an extremely thinly-veiled England and bears some distinct parallels to the court of James I. Corbin and Sedge, for example, note that "there is little attempt to present a consistent sense of place or society in the four rather tenuously linked plots of the play" (14). This is echoed by Schafer, whose note to 2.1.169 argues that the reference to "Northern parts" is almost certainly meant to suggest Scotland, since Sebastian (disguised as Celio) speaks his dialogue in a parodic Scottish accent. Schafer's introduction also provides compelling evidence for direct correlations between the characters and plots in Ravenna and the various real participants in the Overbury affair, suggesting a direct topical satire of James I's court (xv-xix).

form of a charm that renders Antonio impotent with Isabella, in what Winkler calls “a disturbingly symbiotic relationship between witch and noble” (32). Almachildes desires Amoretta, but is scorned, and decides, too, to seek help from the local witches. The Duke, hosting a wedding banquet for Antonio and Isabella, engages in a grotesque ritual of toasting the bride by passing around a cup fashioned from the skull of his wife’s father, an insult that provokes her to seek her own revenge. Francesca, Antonio’s sister, is pregnant by Aberzanes, and fears for her life if she’s discovered. These several plots intertwine as romantic interests are exploited for revenge and political gain. Love charms are misplaced. Bed tricks are performed. People are murdered and then found to be the wrong people. And the intended victims, in turn, are discovered not to have been murdered at all.

Against this backdrop, it is difficult to see the witches as especially disorderly or menacing. While they facilitate much of the intrigue and manipulation at court by providing charms to spur the various plots, the witches themselves are a surprisingly close-knit, functional community. It is a juxtaposition that suggests that Ravenna (which stands in here for the English court) and the traditional forms of power it represents, is itself deeply disordered, confronting its audience with the possibility that it is not so different from the witches it fears and persecutes. This eliding of difference is demonstrated through a number of key parallels between the two main groups scattered throughout the play’s action, and is given fascinating complexity through the use of music.

The scenes that feature the witches are suffused with music. When Almachildes visits Hecate and her coven to secure a love charm to use on Amoretta, he gives her a

marzipan frog and is invited to dine with the witches as a cat descends and plays a fiddle (1.2.228-9 and s.d.). In Act 3, the witches, accompanied by Malkin, sing as they fly into the air together (3.3.39-80) and in the final witch scene, Hecate invokes a demonic version of heavenly music when she says “let the air strike our tune, / Whilst we show reverence to yond peeping moon” (5.2.83-4) as the witches dance and then exit.

The court, on the other hand, is starkly unmusical, with few references to music of any kind. The banquet in celebration of Antonio and Isabella’s wedding is described in terms of its noise and impropriety when Ferdinand asks “Not yet hath riot / Played out her last scene?” (1.1.32-3). It is unclear, from this, whether the banquet involves music, but if it does, it would seem to be loud and disruptive. Later a punning reference to tobacco smokers as “pipers” includes an allusion to Ravenna’s (and England’s) statute against wandering minstrels (2.1.85-8),²³ and in the same scene, when Isabella accepts a kiss from Antonio as “payment” for the only song performed by one of the nobles in the play, she invokes widely-held attitudes toward lower-class, working musicians when she says “I will not grumble, sir, / Like some musician” (2.1.135-6). Though they are minor references, they combine to indicate a certain hostility toward musicianship among the courtiers. The obvious counterpoint to this, however, is Isabella’s performance of “In a Maiden-Time Professed,” which is actually the first proper song in the play. But rather than demonstrating some sort of pervasive harmony in Ravenna or in the lives of Isabella and the other members of the court, her song seems to establish a contrast with the celebratory singing of the witches that occurs later in Acts 3 and 5. The song’s subject is the various categories of acceptable

²³ Shafer points out the reference in her note to these lines.

femininity available to women and it advocates for an appropriately conventional middle way in marriage:

In a maiden-time professed,
 Then we say that life is best.
 Tasting once the married life,
 Then we only praise the wife.
 There's but one state more to try,
 Which makes women laugh or cry—
 Widow, widow. Of these three,
 The middle's best and that give me. (2.1.127-34)

Here Isabella musically comports herself in starkly normative terms, plucked straight from the pages of Castiglione and other manuals for musical conduct that suggest that women's music especially must be performed under strict guidelines for modesty. She is of the upper class and a woman, so her performance has to be carefully controlled, performing on a stringed instrument, in a private setting, for the delight of her husband and in the presence of her sister (indeed, an earlier exchange suggests the performance may be aimed at Francesca in an effort to convince her of the value of marriage). She even makes an obligatory excuse for the quality of her voice by warning Antonio that she has a cold (2.1.124-5). The song is carefully constructed and controlled, therefore, in both performance and content, conforming to a set of conventions that circumscribe her capacity to signify as anything other than chaste, feminine and subject to her husband as well as to the behaviors deemed acceptable for both her class and her gender.

The musical environment of the witch scenes is radically different, and the introduction of the witches situates them in a festive, free, supportive and communal atmosphere. Hecate's first appearance in the play involves a call to her attendant spirits and fellow witches:

Titty and Tiffin,
 Suckin and Pidgen,
 Liard and Robin,
 White spirits, black spirits,
 Grey spirits, red spirits,
 Devil-toad, devil-ram,
 Devil-cat, devil-dam.

Why Hoppo and Stadlin, Hellwain and Puckle! (1.2.1-8)

In this way, the witch coven is presented to us as a group, which contrasts sharply with the play's first scene in which Sebastian's "three years spent in war" (1.1.1) have alienated him from his country and from his fiancée, and in which conflict and plotting take the foreground. Hecate and her coven work together to concoct an elaborate potion that will serve "to transfer / Our 'nointed flesh into the air" where the witches can freely "feast and sing, / Dance, kiss and coll" (1.2.20-1, 28-9).

Communal celebration and closeness among the women of the witch coven is likewise taken up as a strong theme in the witches' first song, "Come Away Hecate." As the witches ascend into the air, Hecate remains behind to speak with her son Firestone about the keeping of the household before joining them. The song that follows begins with the other witches calling to Hecate to complete their group. They begin by calling

out, "Come away, come away; / Hecate, Hecate, come away." Hecate responds by performing a sort of roll call, asking "Where's Stadlin" and "Where's Puckle," to which the witches respond, "Here— / And Hoppo too and Hellwain too; / We lack but you, we lack but you" (3.3.44-48). The sense that this conveys is that the coven is a tight-knit community of women seeking pleasure and freedom in one another's company. As the song progresses, Hecate describes the "dainty pleasure" of riding through the air, where the witches are free to "sing and dance and toy and kiss" (3.3.68), suggesting a release from social constraint and propriety that is afforded by their magical flight and which is, by extension, denied to the ordinary citizens of Ravenna whose desires are (destructively, it turns out) circumscribed by familial obligations, politics, sexual mores and the strictures of courtly conduct. The song's final refrain translates this sense of freedom among the witches into spatial terms. Because their magic allows them to fly, they are no longer bound to the geographic margins of Ravenna.²⁴ Their flight takes them

Over woods, high rocks and mountains,
 Over seas, our mistress' fountains,
 Over steeples, towers and turrets,
 We fly by night, 'mongst troops of spirits.
 No ring of bells to our ears sounds,
 No howls of wolves, no yelps of hounds;
 No, not the noise of water's breach

²⁴ While the stage directions for the witch scenes do not make explicit the location of the coven, it is clearly not Ravenna itself, with which the action of the witch scenes is juxtaposed.

Or cannon's throat our height can reach. (3.3.69-76)

The witches' flight, and the song that accompanies it, takes them over the whole of the countryside, affording them the possibility of looking down on elements of their physical surroundings that are unavailable to them in day-to-day life. They are able to look not only upon the rural countryside, with its mountains and forests, but also the steeples, towers and turrets of the court, from which they are necessarily excluded. Similarly, the auditory cues that follow—the ringing of church bells, the noise of wolves and dogs, firing of cannons—are reminiscent of Smith's "soundmarks," the auditory cues of geographic and cultural belonging. The witches sing that none of these sounds can reach them at their lofty vantage point, and their community therefore defines itself through shared musical/magical experience rather than the ordinary cultural marks of conventional identity. After all, for witches, the ringing of church bells, and the firing of cannons are the sounds of a society from which they are excluded, while the barking of nearby wolves and dogs in the woods or fields to which they have been relegated would be sources of danger. Instead, the only sounds the witches hear are one another's celebratory, singing voices. The witches, unable or unwilling to participate in both the power and the political and social belonging of the court of Ravenna due to gender and class constraints, establish a communal identity that revels in its own liminality and the freedom that attends it. "Come Away Hecate," sung in a call-and-response fashion, puts into practice the musical-political metaphor of the social group as harmonious sound. However unruly the actual sounds may be, Hecate's coven is socially cohesive in a way that the courtiers in Ravenna are not (an out-of-tune

state, if ever there was one), and part of this cohesion is accomplished through shared musical experience.²⁵

The songs in *The Witch* appear to innovate, then, on the musical stage conventions employed in the early modern world for accompanying witches in order to present a more complex portrait of English witches to a play-going audience and to comment on the relationship between normative political power and the marginal status of witches. *The Masque of Queens* used “hollow and infernall Musique” to engage the audience in the symbolic threat of witches, only to ultimately mark and contain the threat through conventional musical tropes. Regular, harmonious music supplants unruly, disruptive music and subsumes the viewing audience into the musical-political unity of the King. *The Witch*, however, eschews containment. Though the witches are, as Winkler argues, distinctly marginalized from the court and linked through their speech to the lower classes (33-4), they are the more cohesive, productive social group, working together to concoct various spells and maintaining their sense of communal identity through shared musical experience. In this sense, music—particularly because

²⁵ Williams provides a brief musicological analysis of “Come Away Hecate” that suggests that the music’s characteristics are meant to “add to the ridiculous nature in which Hecate and her followers are portrayed” (*Now Rise* 270). Winkler discusses the music for *The Witch* in a general sense, likening it to the music for *The Masque of Queens* (34), a point that will be discussed in more detail below. In the play itself, Firestone calls the witches’ second song, “Black Spirits and White” a “tune of damnation” and references its “villainous burden,” suggesting that the songs very likely participated in the same general conventions as other witch music that is described in similar terms (81-2). Interested readers can find a brief recording of the beginning of “Come Away Hecate” on the audio disc that accompanies Ross Duffin’s *Shakespeare’s Songbook*. Like the “Second Witches Dance,” used in Jonson’s masque, “Come Away Hecate” does not sound especially discordant to modern ears, but it shares many of the aural characteristics Winkler uses to describe “discordant music” like that in *The Masque of Queens*, where “each line [is] so independent that it cannot be incorporated into a coherent whole” (26).

it is associated in the early modern world with ideas about political and social harmony—becomes a powerful tool through which the witches can imagine themselves as part of a distinct, cohesive community.

The point is perhaps most powerfully made in the play's final witch scene. When the duchess arrives and asks Hecate to give her a poison to kill Almachildes, the witches sing a charm called "Black Spirits and White." Once complete, Hecate cries "Come away sisters; let the air strike our tune, / Whilst we show reverence to yond peeping moon" and a stage direction indicates that the witches "*dance the witches' dance and exeunt*" (5.2.83-84 and s.d.). The call for the air to strike the witches' tune is an obvious reference to the music of the heavens that is now thrown off key by the witches; but as Cutts suggests, the actual dance that follows may well have been borrowed from *The Masque of Queens* since the song's composer, Robert Johnson, frequently composed for the King's Men and the song is described in the stage direction in terms that suggest the dance was already familiar to audiences (114-16). Winkler, arguing more generally that "*The Witch* uses the same musical materials as *The Masque of Queens*," comments on this potential borrowing, noting that if the dance was in fact reused,

then the witches' last moments onstage would have been spent dancing a grotesque antimasque dance, which, in its original context, musically and visually emphasized the hags' estrangement from the idealized harmony of the aristocratic body. However, unlike Jonson's hags, Middleton's coven is not dispelled by courtly order, by the loud music of Fame. Hecate and her cohorts simply disappear. (34)

This, in essence, is the play's climactic moment. The witches leave the stage singing and dancing together shortly after the Duchess has stooped to murder by poison and has been chastised by Hecate for questioning her power.²⁶ The deliberate contrast with *The Masque of Queens* then (either by actual borrowing of musical material or by participation in the same basic tropes as Jonson's antimasque) introduces a level of complexity into early modern notions of music's relationship to ideas of communal identity. Where Jonson used music and its attendant socio-political metaphors to stage a ritualized containment of the disordering power of witches, Middleton's witches appropriate that power for themselves, framing music as a vehicle for shared communal experience even on the margins of a culture that has rejected them. Musical performance and group singing become, in the play, strategies for articulating a collective sense of self, a shared identity and communal belonging even for the radically marginalized witch. Jonson's infernal music was the jarring note sounded briefly before it is resolved into harmony in order to make that harmony sound more sweet. In *The Witch*, unruly music is all the harmony there is. Music becomes the means by which the witches recover a sense of agency as a functional social unit over and above the courtiers of Ravenna, whose supposed moral superiority by no means prevents them from seeking out the help of the witches' powers in order to fulfill their own radically individual, antisocial ambitions.

²⁶ This itself may be a deliberate inversion of authority, since the Duchess is the closest analogue the play offers to one of Jonson's queens, a powerful, normative figure capable of overthrowing the disorderly power of the witches.

**Music and Silence, Skepticism and Belief: Communal Identity
in *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches***

The Masque of Queens and *The Witch* highlight two ways in which music, owing in part to its resonance as a metaphorical descriptor of social harmony, can be used to establish and reinforce a sense of communal identity. In the case of *Queens*, this manifests as a musical containment strategy where the unstable, unruly music of the witches is subsumed into a unified musical performance representative of the king and his court that recovers a sense of order and control and ultimately invites participation of the audience in the musical cohesion made possible by the power of the court. In *The Witch*, music's capacity to invite and express belonging even among otherwise marginalized witches is contrasted with Ravenna's courtiers and their lack of social harmony. Two later plays, however, complicate further these notions of music's relationship to communal and individual identity, highlighting the ways in which music's function as a strategy for the assertion of social cohesion also makes it a vulnerable entry point into that community as well as a subversive tool for its disruption.

Dekker, Rowley and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) and Heywood and Brome's *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) have only recently begun to receive serious critical attention, and very little of it has given any sustained consideration to the use of music in the plays, despite the fact that they contain scenes that parallel one another in striking ways in which music is disrupted and then appropriated for demonic ends through the action of witches. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, a morris dance is brought to a halt by the magical intervention of Dog, a familiar acting on behalf of the

play's witch figure, Mother Sawyer. When Father Sawgut, the fiddler, tries to strike up, he finds that he can make no sound. After an awkward silence and some confusion among the morris participants, Dog, an incarnation of the devil himself, takes up the fiddle and allows the dance and the festivity that attends it to continue (3.4.37-50). In *The Late Lancashire Witches*, musicians attempting to recover the celebratory atmosphere of a wedding beset by witchcraft at first produce an unexpected and jarring cacophony, and are later unable to produce sound at all despite assuring characters and audience alike that they play "as loud as we can possibly" (3.3.539). The celebration is only able to continue when Mall Spencer, not yet revealed as one of the witches responsible for the mischief, brings in a piper who performs where the fiddlers could not. She then disappears suddenly, taking the piper with her, and leaving the guests unsettled and one skeptic finally convinced that "here has been nothing but witchery all this day" (3.3.553).

The parallels between the two scenes are clear from even this cursory comparison, but they are especially interesting to note because both plays are grounded in the details of real witchcraft cases, and insert their respective musical scenes as innovations to each story. Corbin and Sedge, in the introduction to their edition of *The Witch of Edmonton*, note that although the witch plot is undoubtedly based on Henry Goodcole's witch trial pamphlet, *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch* (1621), and although K.M. Briggs has discovered a ballad published between 1640 and 1655 that may share a common source with the Frank Thorney plot, no source has yet been found for the play's morris plot (22). Likewise, Helen Ostovich, in her critical introduction to the *Richard Brome Online* edition of *The Late Lancashire*

Witches, gives a thorough overview of the source material for many of the characters and acts of witchcraft in the play, but this includes no mention of bewitched fiddles (9-14).

I want to suggest, in what follows, that both of these plays use their respective musical scenes as powerful and immediate representations of early modern England's anxieties about the disruptive effect of witches. In each, music is carefully linked to ideas of communal identity and the ritualized performance of that identity in ways that harken back to Jonson's symbolic music in *The Masque of Queens*. But unlike *Queens*, *The Witch*, and a number of other witchcraft dramas in the period, the witches in these two plays produce no music on their own; instead, they choose to intervene in music performed by the members of the communities from which they have been (or stand to be) ostracized. In this sense, the witches use music as a form of what Frances Dolan calls a "subject extension": an access point into the subjectivity of a victim that facilitates the working of *maleficia*. According to Dolan,

bodily excretions and excrescences, household objects, and worn items of clothing were considered so much parts of the self that witchcraft belief construed them as avenues of entry, fragile thresholds of vulnerability. Since the subject was infused and invested in these 'objects,' witches could gain access to their victims by means of apparently inanimate, insignificant, discarded castoffs. (183)

Music, which is implicated in the expression of community solidarity and the production of a normative identity against the unruly witch, provides a point of access for the disruption of these communities. It becomes a potent tool for the undermining

of social cohesion and identity-formation of the communities from which the witches have been excluded. Musical disruption, therefore, is not simply connected to wider metaphorical ideas of music as social and political harmony, but to the specific identity politics underlying English beliefs about witchcraft. Both *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches*, therefore, use music to explore the process of subject-performance and to engage and involve both the plays' characters and their viewing audiences in the problems that arise from negotiations of communal belonging and radical marginalization.

The first mention of music in *The Witch of Edmonton* comes at a significant moment in the play and highlights the morris plot's importance to the play's depiction of the witch, Mother Sawyer, emphasizing the ways in which Sawyer's identity is a social construction imposed on her by the community from which she has been marginalized. Sawyer, in her first major speech at the beginning of Act 2, scene 1, explores the role her social position plays in her capacity for agency and self-determination. After Old Banks, a countryman and landowner, beats and berates her for collecting a few sticks from his land to build a fire, Sawyer acknowledges that she is persecuted "Cause I am poor, deformed, and ignorant, / And like a bow buckled and bent together / By some more strong in mischiefs than myself" (2.1.3-5). Even more telling is her admission that because of her particular social position, she is "made a common sink / For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues" (2.1.6-7), explicitly acknowledging that the capacity to construct her own identity has been taken out of her hands. Rather, she imagines herself as a kind of drain or sewer into which the ideas and perceptions of others are

poured. And since the filth here is verbal (Old Banks punctuates his assault on her by calling her “witch” and “hag”), the “mouth” of this particular drain appears, significantly, to be the ear, establishing a connection between the passive receptivity of hearing and the active, penetrative capacity of words as heard sounds in the formation of Sawyer’s identity as a witch, an identity that is, at first, imposed upon her from the outside by her community. Words, like musical sounds, can enter the body and alter its psychomaterial constitution.

The dance preparations that follow, described by Cuddy Banks (the son of Old Banks) and his group of morris dancers, in turn establish a socio-economic opposition between the community of Edmonton and Mother Sawyer. Cuddy and the clowns enter the scene calling for “A new head for the tabor, and silver tipping for the pipe; remember that: and forget not five leash of new bells” (2.1.37-8). The clowns then up the ante to double bells and then trebles, and declare that the hobby-horse “shall have a new bridle . . . The caparisons new painted . . . The tail repaired. The snaffle and the bosses new saffroned o’er” (2.1.75-78).²⁷ Evidently the clowns expect their dance to be popular enough to make the expense worthwhile,²⁸ suggesting that the village as a whole is reasonably invested in the festivity the dance offers and might be willing to support it where it would not even extend Sawyer the right to “gather a few rotten

²⁷ As a number of critics have pointed out, this exchange probably depends more on the punning significance of trebles as a musical term than on an accurate account of the paraphernalia that would have accompanied a morris dance. The theatrical effect in demonstrating the economic disparity between the morris men and Sawyer, however, remains. See Corbin and Sedge 160 and Forrest 246-47.

²⁸ The other possibility would be sponsorship from the local church, which was fairly common. However, there is no mention of the church’s involvement in the dance in the play. See Forrest 140-176 for details on the changing economic circumstances for morris dances in rural Jacobean England.

sticks" (2.1.20) with which to warm herself. Sawyer's description of her own marginalized position in the community, juxtaposed with the clowns' account of their comparatively opulent morris preparations, make both Sawyer and the audience aware that the community will spend money on its entertainments, but will not extend basic acts of charity to its poorest members.²⁹ That Banks and his fellow clowns are, as Corbin and Sedge point out, probably only a step or two above Sawyer in the social hierarchy of rural Edmonton only hammers home the insult (21).

Sawyer's response to all this comes in the form of the play's most famous speech:

Would some power, good or bad,
 Instruct me which way I might be revenged
 Upon this churl, I'd go out of myself,
 And give this fury leave to dwell within
 This ruined cottage ready to fall with age,
 Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer,
 And study curses, imprecations,
 Blasphemous speeches, oaths, detested oaths,
 Or anything that's ill: so I might work
 Revenge upon this miser, this black cur,
 That barks and bites, and sucks the very blood

²⁹ Julia Garret notes that this also highlights the degree of Sawyer's isolation, since morris dancing itself "belonged to a category of folk rituals that was regarded by many authorities as deviant and potentially disruptive" (348). The village, it seems, will support one kind of "deviant" behavior but not another. For more on witchcraft and charity, see MacFarlane 196-7.

Of me and of my credit. 'Tis all one

To be a witch as to be counted one. (2.1.107-19)

Sawyer here implicitly acknowledges the roles that speaking and naming play in the process of subject-formation. The subjectivity she expresses is complicated, predicated on both the appropriation of a discourse meant to marginalize her, which she reimagines as a form of agency, but also on a kind of emptying out of her sense of self, where she opens her self to a demonic force that will allow her to act on the rage she feels, a hybridized voice of self and other akin to the one we saw Viola adopt under very different circumstances in Chapter 2. Sawyer opts to become the thing she has been called, a witch, simply by accepting and internalizing the discourse applied to her from without as an improvised marker of her own identity. As Richard Grinnell argues, “representation was an essential aspect of power in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. To control the terms of representation was to exercise power” (215). He then goes on to point out that

Banks transforms Sawyer from a bent old woman into a witch by naming her.

But Banks’ definition is not based upon an understanding of Sawyer’s essential self . . . Sawyer recognizes the power in the act of naming, regardless of the motivation of the namer, and when Banks leaves the stage, she attempts to draw upon the power inherent in the name that he has given her. (216)

In this sense, Sawyer’s acceptance of the very term that has structured her marginalization is also an effort to reclaim some measure of self-determination and subjectivity.

It is also at this moment that Dog appears to Sawyer, willing to do on her behalf what she cannot do for herself. But rather than superseding her own agency, acting his own will through Sawyer, Dog becomes something like a reverse of Dolan's subject-extension. Rather than an access point to Sawyer's subjective interior, Dog is the extension of Sawyer's body that allows her to work revenge in the world that she would otherwise be unable to exact due to both her physical infirmity and her marginalization from the community. It is a function Sawyer herself explicitly acknowledges in her desire to be revenged upon Old Banks (115-16).³⁰ Sawyer thus literally empties herself of a fragmented, subjected self, constructed from without by the words and deeds of the community that opposes her, so that she might be filled with the power that Dog offers her.³¹ Like Moll and Viola, as we saw in Chapter 2, Sawyer's subjectivity here is a kind of improvisation, the adoption of a temporary, unstable and even incomplete (since it depends on supernatural forces outside of herself) position from which to act upon the community, one that is effected through the demonic agency of Dog.

Returning to the play's music, in addition to the morris dance's function in highlighting Sawyer's social and economic marginalization, the festive occasion is explicitly set up as an emblem of the communal identity from which she is excluded.

³⁰ Meg Pearson notes that by characterizing Old Banks as a "black cur / That barks and bites, and sucks the very blood / Of me and my credit" (2.1.116-17), "she may even determine the form of her own demon" (Pearson 95). In other words the devil appears to Sawyer as Dog so that she can fight like with like.

³¹ As if to emphasize her fundamentally fragmented condition, Sawyer counters Dog's demands to "make a deed of gift / Of soul and body to me" (2.1.133-34) by offering only "at least so much of me / As I can call mine own" (2.1.144-45), collapsing an equivocation meant to offer an 'out' to her contract with the devil with a tacit acknowledgment that her self is literally only partly her own.

Dawson, treating the dance scene generally, argues for its ritual function in producing a communal identity for the villagers. The morris

stands in deliberate contrast to witchcraft. Where the latter is antisocial and destructive, the former is communitarian and integrative; where the witch is segregated and marginalized, the morris dancer, though naïve, is part of society and therefore valued, or at least patronized. He becomes a sign, his dance a ritual, of social cohesion, though within Jacobean society, a contested and controversial one. (“Witchcraft/Bigamy” 92).

But the dance’s relationship to social identity and witchcraft is more complex than the juxtaposition Dawson identifies. In fact, the clowns actually call for a witch to participate in the dance. At one point during their preparations, Cuddy asks, “Have we e’er a witch in the morris?” One of the clowns replies “No, no; no woman’s part but Maid Marian and the hobby-horse,” to which Cuddy responds, “I’ll have a witch; I love a witch” (3.1.7-11). David Nicol, remarking on this exchange, argues that it indicates that “the morris involves some kind of dumb-show in which the witch-figure is symbolically banished by Cuddy and the hobby-horse” (439).³² John Forrest’s *History of Morris Dancing* lends support to this idea, suggesting that rural morris dances at the time of the writing of *The Witch of Edmonton* were complex pastiches of older customs, and that they frequently employed dance figures to enact sanctioned disruptions of social order and/or rites of inversion in which traditional hierarchies were disrupted in ways implicitly agreed upon by the participants as a kind of social safety valve, ultimately restoring and reaffirming the status quo at the dance’s end (255-6). A witch that

³² For variations on this reading of the morris, see Pearson 105-06 and Dawson, “Witchcraft/Bigamy,” 78-79.

provides an entertaining disruption to the dance or is even allowed to “rule” the dance temporarily would be just such an inversion. The play’s dance, then, probably involved the creation of a communal space in which the witch-figure is temporarily welcomed into the community and treated as an equal while also functioning as a figure of spectacle; alternatively, the witch may have been allowed to rule the dance in an attempt to act out the actual anxieties that the witch-figure stands for in the community—to confront safely and symbolically that which was dangerous and disruptive in reality. In either case, it stands to reason that Cuddy’s intention is to welcome Mother Sawyer’s ritual stand-in into the dance with the ultimate aim of reinforcing her position as radically other to the community.³³ The morris, then, is set up to function simultaneously as a communal gathering that reinforces the unity of the village through festivity and celebration, a ritual that excludes the witch from that community, and an indirect symbol of the socio-economic disparity that produces Sawyer’s marginalized position. When Sawyer and Dog intervene in the morris, then, they undermine these functions as they work their mischief, allowing Sawyer to assert a kind of agency of her own, through her familiar, while interrupting the unity of the community as a whole.

³³ Roberta Barker argues that this is probably what actually played out on stage in the play’s original performances. She notes that Cuddy at one point suggests “Poldavis, the barber’s boy” (3.1.67-68) as a potential candidate to play the witch in the dance, and points out that the name Poldavis appears in the original *dramatis personae*. Since Poldavis appears nowhere else in the play, he must act as the witch figure in the morris dance, appearing physically on stage. Barker’s reading of the morris scene echoes Nicol’s in her suggestion that “the dance may represent—and perhaps even attempt to exorcise—a version of Edmonton’s real witch, Elizabeth Sawyer” (170). Pearson, too, suggests a similar reading when she argues that “What Cuddy loves is the idea of a witch, the representation of evil that the morris dance exists to expel” (91).

As the dance is set to begin, Sir Arthur Clarington, on whose grounds the dance is to take place, reminds characters and audience alike that the dance is meant to allay the community's various personal and social anxieties. He notes to Somerton and Warbeck—the former feeling unaccountably “leaden” (3.4.9) and the latter unusually “disposed to mirth” (10)—that they “may have yet a morris to help both; / To strike you in a dump, and make him merry” (12-13). The comment is a specific invocation of the idea that music could have both physical and spiritual effects on its listener and it assigns a recuperative element to the dance. So when Father Sawgut is finally called upon to “strike up,” his failure to produce any sound at all is particularly troubling. Sawgut asks “How now! not a word in thy guts? I think, children, my instrument has caught cold on the sudden” (3.4.37-38) and Cuddy tries to quell the villagers' outrage at the fiddler's failure by joking “Why, what would you have him do? you hear his fiddle is speechless” (3.4.41-42). Given the play's earlier emphasis on speaking and naming in both Sawyer's identity-formation and her appropriation of the language and demonic agency of witchcraft, the pair's word choices here are important. Sawgut's fiddle is deprived of speech, suggesting that Sawyer's choice of magical vengeance is connected to the particular way in which she herself was marginalized by the community. Sawyer knows first-hand the power of speech. She was called a witch long before becoming one, and it was her appropriation of that rhetoric that brought Dog to her, offering her the agency with which to resist the community that had named her “witch.” So it is appropriate that she, in turn, exploits the quasi-rhetorical power of music, its capacity both to enter and to alter, its ability to persuade the listener, in order to effectively silence the community and prevent it from engaging in a ritual act of solidarity and

hierarchy-making. If we are to associate Sawyer's identification as a witch, and the agency she acquires through that appropriation of identity, with the rhetoric that others use against her ("Tis all one," she tells us, "to be a witch as to be counted one"), then rendering the community both speechless and unmusical as it attempts to assert itself in opposition to her, through the morris dance, is a specific act of *maleficium* that deprives the community of its own agency and its own stable identity, one that goes well beyond conventional notions of the harmony-disrupting witch.

As Andrew Gurr notes, amidst the rapid-fire pacing of early modern stage productions where "Speech was almost non-stop . . . Real silences are truly noteworthy" (218). And *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches* are unique among early modern witchcraft plays in silencing musicians through magic. Williams, echoing Winkler's suggestion that the scene is representative of a general idea that witches lack harmony, suggests that in *Edmonton's* morris scene, "The playwrights choose to characterize Mother Sawyer, or anything associated with her, as so starkly the opposite of anything based on celestial order that they refuse to use the heavenly strains of music—be it either consonant or dissonant—to accompany her acts in the drama" (*Now Rise* 266). However, I would argue that in a cultural milieu that frequently deployed unruly, discordant music to represent the disordering presence of witches, the fact that Sawgut produces no sound at all participates in a much more complex idea. The silent fiddle is not only a musical silence: the fiddle has also been associated with language, which Sawyer has already connected with identity-formation. Christina Luckyj, commenting on the role of silence in the early modern theatre, notes its frequent associations with "effeminate impotence and sottishness" (16) as well as a

parallel association with “chaos, death and the demonic” (36). These two resonances are important to consider in connection with this particular scene. The magical silence of Sawgut’s fiddle is a demonic absence of celestial and social harmony, but it is also a failure to engage in the language of opposition that characterizes early modern discourses of witchcraft. Just as the community of Edmonton is impotent in its efforts to enact the ritual that will symbolically exclude the witch from that community, it is likewise deprived of the language of opposition that structures that ritual exclusion in the first place. If that language is figured here as music, as it was in *The Masque of Queens*, where social harmony expressed as conventional music derives its meaning, in part, through opposition to the cacophony that is conventionally symbolic of demonic characters, then the fiddle’s silence is the utter failure to engage in that binary structure at all. It is a failure of meaning, of social subjectivity. This inability to signify, considered alongside the setup for the morris dance itself, and read in terms of the wider themes of the play, suggests a system of strong associations between music, speech, silence, and identity that position Sawyer’s intervention in and disruption of the morris, via the demonic agency afforded her by Dog, as a specific act of *maleficium* that responds to and revenges her marginalized social position and lack of autonomy.³⁴

While this reading accounts for the complex role of music within the world of

³⁴ I differ from other critics in my interpretation of both Sawyer’s and Dog’s level of involvement in the disruption of the morris. Corbin and Sedge, for example, suggest that Dog acts independently in the disruption of the dance (23). In the play itself, Cuddy Banks, who has enlisted Dog’s talents in order to woo Katherine Carter by becoming the virile star of the Morris, takes credit for what happens during the morris calling the fiddle’s silence “My ningle’s knavery. Black Tom’s doing” (3.4.39). But a later scene makes clear that whatever Cuddy thinks has happened, Dog and Sawyer are jointly responsible. On his return to Sawyer after the dance, Dog includes “rare sport / Among the clowns i’ th’ morris” among the other acts of *maleficia* that he has done at her bidding (4.1.161-69).

the play, I wish to suggest once again that a thorough interrogation of the significance of music in the theatre must attend to the fact that music's semi-magical status in early modern thinking means that its potential to invade and influence the mind, body and soul of its listener is not limited to the representational space of the play world, since music was a real physical phenomenon actually taking place in the theatre space. This is highly significant in a play that, as Nicol argues, is directly involved in negotiating the boundaries between skepticism about witchcraft and belief in it, staging "both social and demonic pressure in order to decide on the boundary between the two, and to decide where the blame for evil finally lies (432). Since ideas about music's invasive and transformative power were at least as widespread as beliefs about witchcraft, and since musical and magical influences were not so different conceptually in early modern culture, I would suggest that the morris scene's effect on its audience might have been as potent as its effect on the play's characters.³⁵ Through the disruption of musical signification, the witch that threatens the communal solidarity of the play's rural village space is also potentially disturbing to the audience that seeks to view a witch at safe distance. Barker makes a similar argument for the metatheatricality of Cuddy's call for the barber's boy to play the witch in the morris, which

reminds the playhouse audience that they themselves are watching a boy apprentice "showing his art" in the role of Elizabeth Sawyer. The performers of the up-to-date "realistic" representation cannot be glibly separated from those of the ancient morris dance; the urbane spectators of such representations

³⁵ Williams notes that while learned treatises on music would have been inaccessible to much of the population in early modern London, the ideas themselves were part of the general ethos of the culture and were intuitively understood (*Now Rise* 322-23).

cannot maintain a fully comfortable distance from the rustic characters they observe. (171)

If moments like this collapse the theoretical distance between character and spectator, representation and reality, then music—which carried equal potential for demonic influence within the world of the play and within the space of the theatre—would have been a particularly potent theatrical device to engage the audience in the very negotiations of agency and identity that the play represents.

The audience, having just witnessed the murder of Susan Carter at the hands of Frank Thorney one scene earlier, has a wider context for the morris than its participants do and so attaches a particular set of expectations to the scene. The beginning of Act 3, scene 4 is, on the surface, lighthearted and signals to the audience that it should expect some form of comic relief from the emotional turmoil of the murder scene before moving into the culmination of the play's several tragic plots.³⁶ The silence of Sawgut's fiddle, then, is as jarring to the audience as it is to the play's characters, since the audience too has invested the dance with a kind of recuperative power. Audience members, either at London's private Cockpit theatre or at court where it was later performed,³⁷ seeing dancers at the ready and the fiddler in place, and

³⁶ The Cuddy plot is obviously the comic portion of the 'tragicomedy' invoked on the 1658 edition's title page. This has, unfortunately, led a number of critics to overlook its importance in the play. Forrest, for example, suggests that in the morris scene, "all is in jest, and the simple message is that country pleasures are harmless—too innocent to be the stuff of real devilry" (248). Anthony Dawson echoes this when he argues that the scene "is a comic meditation on the whole issue [of marginality and power], one that presents folk ritual and 'sport' in a socially sanctioned and harmless way, thus serving an alternative, and recuperative, social purpose in contrast to the tragedy in the other two plots" ("Witchcraft/Bigamy" 78).

³⁷ Anthony Harris notes that "the first recorded production was at Court on 29 December 1621 when it was presented by the Prince's Men," but goes on to suggest

hearing the call to “strike up” the dance, would have expected an entertaining display of rustic music and dance that would lift their spirits and provide an amusing distraction immediately following the murder scene. That this musical relief fails to come at first is important, extending the witch’s power to the theatre audience in a way that moves disturbingly beyond the figurative, and would have been all the more anxiety-provoking because of the currency of the subject matter. Much of the play’s appeal, we must keep in mind, stems from its basis in an actual witch trial.³⁸ It is a domestic tragedy, “a form of theatre that strives accurately to represent the sights and sounds of ordinary existence” (Barker 164). However attentive the play may be to the social forces that drove witchcraft accusations in early modern England, and whatever skepticism may inhere in its representation thereof, the play still exploits actual beliefs about witchcraft—beliefs that were at least palpable enough to spark both vibrant intellectual debate and real trials of real women accused of practicing witchcraft—and places them in dialogue with real and ubiquitous ideas about the magical potency of music in order to engage the audience in the tension between skepticism and belief in a powerfully physical way.

When the dance does continue, after its potent and disturbing silencing, the audience’s engagement with the scene broadens, since the audience’s privileged perspective on the action allows it to see that the fiddle is played by Dog, who is

that a line in the play, “the witch must be beaten out of her Cock-pit” (5.1.48), suggests it was earlier performed at the company’s Cock-Pit Theatre (91-2).

³⁸ Barker reminds us that “the title page of the first quarto edition stresses that this tale of witchcraft is based upon ‘a known true story’” (166).

invisible to all on stage but Cuddy Banks (3.4.48-49).³⁹ So, as the expected social and ritual functions are finally allowed to play out, the audience must confront a disparity between the jollity of the music and the action on stage, in which the figure of the devil leads the dancers on by playing the fiddle: it is, presumably, harmonious, uplifting music, but it is played by Dog. The villagers appear to believe they have engaged in a successful morris (witch-excluding ritual and all), but the audience—aligned with the dancers through an interest in the same kind of musical-ritual investment—knows better, and any enjoyment felt during the dance must be reconciled with its origin in a fiddling devil. This enjoyment of devilish music, which flouts convention and therefore containment by being unexpectedly harmonious,⁴⁰ aligns the audience with the community that has been deprived of its coherence, its autonomy, and its capacity to reassert its relative dominance through the ritual of the morris. Indeed, it makes it difficult for the audience to get any real moral bearings in the play at all. In this respect, I disagree with Kathleen McLuskie's assessment that

Any threat which the Elizabeth Sawyer case might have offered to the stability of the rural order is contained by the dramatic form in which it is presented. It constructs its audience as skeptical, upholders of the law, sympathetic to the

³⁹ The staging for this, however, is unclear from the text. A stage direction indicates that Cuddy takes the fiddle, and he boasts aloud, "I'll play and dance too." Another stage direction then indicates that Cuddy "*Gives it to the Dog, who plays the morris*" (48-9), seeming to imply that while the audience sees that Dog is playing the fiddle, the rest of the characters on stage accept that the sound originates with Cuddy. This may indicate that Cuddy is not visible to the other dancers because he is outside of the main group, or that some sort of illusory magic is at play.

⁴⁰ The Constable who arrives to apprehend Somerton and Warbeck, framed for Susan's murder, enters saying "Away with jollity" (3.3.51), suggesting that the dance is joyful. There is nothing in the text to suggest that the devil-led morris is troubling to the dancers.

victims, both women and men, while at the same time entertaining them with images of country life, picturesque and exotic low-life characters whose critique of urban society is deflected onto its women" (72-3).

If we take music as a key aspect of the dramatic form, and if we consider it in the context of pervasive attitudes about music's connection to social order and to magical influence, it becomes more difficult to view it as only comic or entertaining (though it is both) in this play. Sawyer's disruption of the morris is a significant and deliberate disruption of Edmonton's social order. If early modern ideas about music conceived of a spiritually and socially ordered world through musical harmony, and if harmony in practice can be productive of local social identity, what—the play seems to ask its audience—are we to make of a community that only has music when a witch and a devil are in control?

This disruption of communal subjective coherence parallels a number of examples, a few lines later, of individual *maleficia* that accomplish the same end, as the audience is given a fuller picture of the discordant effect that the witch has had on the community that has ostracized her. The beginning of Act 4 sees Old Banks and three countrymen cataloguing Sawyer's *maleficia*: horses are falling ill (4.1.1-2), wives and serving men are found "thrashing" in barns together (4.1.5-9), and the pervasive anxiety is that "we ourselves shall not be able to stand if this beast be suffered to graze amongst us" (4.1.13-14).⁴¹ Perhaps most significant is Old Banks' own misfortune. He admits to the Justice that

⁴¹ This last example is a telling description that supports the idea that Sawyer and Dog are meant to be understood as essentially one and the same by collapsing Sawyer, Dog and devil into the term "beast."

having a dun cow tied up in my back-side, let me go thither, or but cast mine eye at her and if I should be hanged, I cannot choose, though it be ten times in an hour, but run to the cow and, taking up her tail, kiss my cow behind, that the whole town of Edmonton has been ready to bepiss themselves with laughing me to scorn. (53-59)

The acts of witchcraft described by this chorus of community members⁴² involve losses of control that appear to compromise their senses of individual autonomy and identity. Old Banks “cannot choose” but to kiss his cow’s anus and therefore cannot maintain his position as a respectable figure amongst his peers. The countrymen no longer rule over their households, are cuckolded by their wives, and fear both impotence and the loss of possessions that, as Corbin and Sedge suggest, may mark the fine dividing line between relative prosperity and the kind of poverty that would erode the boundary between themselves and marginal figures like Sawyer (21-22). And the things the community fears with respect to the witch—loss of bodily control, compulsion to ridiculous and inappropriate behaviors, inordinate emotions, sickness, impotence, effeminization—are all fears that converge in early modern anxieties about music. That the consequences of Sawyer’s *maleficia*—a lack of personal agency and autonomy—appear to parallel those of the communal bewitching that interrupts and compromises the morris suggests that anxieties about the disordering effects of both witchcraft and the dangerous power of music originate in a common ground that bespeaks the culture’s profound discomfort with the possibility of forces that could fundamentally

⁴² Dawson notes that “[Old] Banks is not interesting as a character but merely as a social voice” (“Witchcraft/Bigamy” 83).

compromise the integrity and coherence of both social identity and the individual self. Music offers a powerful way of representing this anxiety because its influence is grounded in the same kinds of invasions and transformations that mark the effects of witchcraft and because it can be exploited theatrically to transcend the limits of dramatic narrative to confront the theatre audience with the potential for actual consequences of engaging with witchcraft beliefs, even from the supposedly safe distance that the theatre offers.

The Late Lancashire Witches, another successful domestic witch play, is often compared to its Jacobean predecessor and is generally considered a less sophisticated portrayal of its demonic subject. This reaction depends partly on its more obviously comic structure and partly on the inclusion of a number of production elements that appear, on the surface, to have been incorporated into the play solely for maximum spectacular effect. Dolan notes that while *Lancashire* is “the one play that weaves witches throughout the action and locations, making them protagonists, [it] also trivializes them and their *maleficium*” (211), and goes on to suggest that the play “unambiguously presents the *maleficium* of the witches, who were at that time in jail, as comic” (221). McLuskie argues that “The audience in the theatre are invited to take a . . . distanced view of the witchcraft by the tone and style of its representation” (77) which she reads as predominantly comic and exciting. Comensoli is more measured in her response to the play, suggesting that “The dramatists treat farcically a number of folk beliefs about sorcery,” but acknowledging that “The *maleficia*, on the other hand, are portrayed as serious threats” (*Household Business* 120). On the other hand, Etta Onat brushes off the

maleficia of the witches, noting that “The Witches’ Sabbaths are used for nothing more serious than to disrupt the wedding feast by causing the bridal-cake to disintegrate into bran, by transferring the rest of the food through the air to their own gathering, and by bewitching the fiddles” (50) and later argues that “throughout the entire play the emphasis is upon the sensational for its own sake” (52). Early modern playgoer

Nathaniel Tomkyns, too, dwells on the play’s comic atmosphere when he notes that it is

full of ribaldry and of things improbable and impossible, yet in respect of the newness of the subject (the witches being still visible and in prison here) and in regard it consisteth from the beginning to the end of odd passages and fopperies to provoke laughter, and is mixed with divers songs and dances, it passeth for a merry and excellent new play. (qtd. in Ostovich 1)

But as with the morris plot in *The Witch of Edmonton*, it is important to resist the tendency to equate a comic portrayal of witchcraft with an unsophisticated or inconsequential one. Like *The Witch of Edmonton*, part of the underlying aim of *The Late Lancashire Witches* appears to be a process of working out the limits of skepticism and belief when it comes to witchcraft, since while it may “not really seem to matter what becomes of the witches once they have been apprehended” (Dolan 222), this must be balanced against the knowledge, as Tomkyns reminds us, that the actual women accused of the actual offences represented on stage were still awaiting a verdict from London authorities. And as with *The Witch of Edmonton*, one of the ways in which *The Late Lancashire Witches* engages in this process of negotiation is by exploiting the practical and theoretical aspects of English musical conventions, the instability of musical signification that allows for subtle subversions of these conventions, and the

power of the physicality of music to elide the boundaries between audience and characters in the space of the theatre.

Like its predecessor, *The Late Lancashire Witches* makes use of musical performances and musical images that interweave musical-theatrical convention and innovation to produce powerful effects. The first of these comes when Seely, the head of a recently bewitched household in which the children rule over their parents and the servants rule over their masters, notes that Lawrence and Parnell (the servants) must be on their way from their wedding ceremony since “The bells have rung out this half-hour.” His wife Joan, however, upon listening for their music, notes that “They ring backward methinks” (3.1.368-69). This sets the tone for what is to follow. Recall Smith’s identification of the ringing of church bells as a ubiquitous component of the early modern English soundscape, one strongly associated with community identity, calling community members to worship and acting as spatiotemporal soundmark. The church bells in the play should be a mark of identity for both a physical space and its inhabitants. The backward ringing, then, suggests something of the topsy-turvy condition of the community as a whole.

As the wedding celebration gets underway, and in direct response to the troubling effect of the backward church bells, the celebratory music that is to accompany the wedding reception in the Seely household becomes, like the music for *Edmonton’s* morris, closely tied to communal solidarity and spiritual and social recuperation. Doughty, initially the play’s skeptic, admits he is unsettled by the bells and encourages the wedding fiddlers to attempt a sort of musical redemption:

'Slid, [the bells] rung tunably till we were all out of the church, and then they clattered as the devil had been in the belfry.— [To the fiddlers] On, in the name of wedlock, fiddlers, on! (3.1.377)

Later in the scene, as the acts of *maleficia* pile up and the fare for the wedding feast is transformed and transported (3.1.381-415), Doughty is less resolute and he suggests the wedding guests flee the house. But when Arthur says that he, at least, intends to stay, Doughty, attempting to shore up his bravery and remain firm in his skepticism of witchcraft, once again calls on the musicians to banish the sense of unease that the characters feel. He asks, “Where’s the bride? Where’s the bridegroom? Where’s the music? Where be the lasses? Ha’ you any wine i’ the house? Though we make no dinner, let’s try if we can make an afternoon . . . I hope the country wenches and the fiddlers are not gone” (3.1.421-34). For Doughty and the other wedding guests forced to confront the possibility of demonic influence in their community, the musicians offer the possibility of distraction, reinforcement of communal solidarity and perhaps even a literally curative effect to counteract the influence of the disorder around them. While the wedding cake has crumbled and turned to bran and the feast has been magically transported away from the Seely household, the musicians—the last of the provisions for celebration provided by the Seely family—remain, and so the celebration stands a chance of succeeding. Master Seely himself acknowledges his investment in a successful wedding reception, which he calls “all very good country fare, and for my credit” (3.1.399), suggesting that his ability to function as a good host (and thus the strong head of a household that has so far appeared absurd and “all now turned topsy-turvy” [1.1.88]) depends to some degree on how the celebration is received by the guests.

Music, then, is integral to the celebration that will go on, if the group has its way, in the face of demonic mischief.

The focus on the communal dimension of the musical performances at the wedding places music, as in *The Witch of Edmonton*, front and centre as a symbol of social cohesion, social order, and sanctioned festivity, in contrast to the disorders, inversions, and carnivalesque pranks that the witches have visited on the community at large. So when the musicians begin to play “Sellenger’s Round,” a popular folk-dance tune, and then fall into cacophony, playing “every one a several tune” (a stage direction that itself suggests that not even the musicians can function as a unified group, each playing a different song that fails to resolve into harmony with the others), the resulting dissonance is all the more powerfully felt.⁴³ It implies to both characters and audience that the witches have had a deeper effect on the community’s ability to function than we’ve seen so far, since confused music was a relatively unambiguous marker for social and cosmic chaos.⁴⁴ And as was the case in *Edmonton*, the silence that follows the aural disorder of the musicians’ first two attempts to play is as powerfully felt (if not more so) than the cacophony.

⁴³ Attendees at the 2012 *Capturing Witches: Histories, Stories, Images* conference at Lancaster University had the opportunity to experience this in action during a fascinating staged reading of the play in Lancaster Castle that included a pair of musicians that aptly demonstrated this point. The comic action of these scenes, in performance, was immediately rendered tense and uncomfortable as the fiddler switched from a lively dance tune to abstract, jarring dissonance. The silence that accompanies the musicians’ failed attempts to produce sound at all, a few lines later, was staged in this case by having the fiddler draw the bow lightly on muted strings, producing a kind of scraping sound that was even more profoundly unnerving.

⁴⁴ The second call for music after the first descent into aural chaos is for “The Beginning of the World,” which Ostovich glosses as “Another name for ‘Selenger’s Round,’” explaining that “The title suggests the original chaos from which the world was made, and thus the kind of musical confusion the request for that tune provoked” (3.3.519 and note). The change in title suggests that the imagery is deliberate.

The silence in this case signifies in much the same way that it does in *Edmonton*, though it is preceded by the more conventional use of dissonant or cacophonous music to symbolize the disorder of the community; while music's rhetorical overtones (the idea of music as a kind of speech) are not explicitly invoked here, they are none the less present for the audience. The absence of music, then, is not explicitly a speechlessness here, but still succeeds in depriving the community of its social identity since it can no longer function in a cohesive way. More important, however, is the silence's strong association with Lawrence's impotence, as he receives an enchanted point from Mall Spencer that will deprive him of his virility (3.3.532-35). The musicians' admission that "We do [play], sir, as loud as we can possibly" (3.3.539), in fact, follows directly on the heels of Lawrence's acceptance of the magical gift. Given the emphasis that the play's characters have placed on the necessity of successful music to combat the disordering effects of the witches and promote communal rejuvenation, the musicians' failure to perform thus aligns with both Lawrence's sexual impotence and the community's social impotence, its powerlessness to combat the demonic influence of the witches. This is driven home, finally, in the scene's last reference to the musicians, who ultimately devolve into internal chaos. When Doughty threatens to smash their instruments if they do not play a song, Arthur says "Look you, sir, they'll save you a labour: they are doing it themselves" (3.3.545). Whether still enchanted, or simply destroying what they now perceive to be instruments of the devil, the musicians have the final word: there will be no hope of harmony in Lancaster.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Indeed, the village's social dissonance seems to be affirmed, if perhaps indirectly, by the play's final musical intervention: the skimmington ride in act 4, scene 3. Musically, the skimmington exploits "rough" or cacophonous music produced by household items,

The moment when Arthur calls out “Play, fiddlers, anything!” (3.3.537) and Doughty adds, “Ay, and let’s see your faces, that you play fairly with us” (3.3.538)—prompting the musicians to show themselves in the gallery or music room above the stage⁴⁶—accomplishes in this play what the aural/visual disjunct between Cuddy and Dog as leaders of the morris did in *Edmonton*: it collapses the distinction between the physical theatre and the represented world of the play by reminding the audience that music, and even the musicians, can move between these two spaces. The musicians have already appeared on stage as characters earlier in Act 3, indicated by Bantam’s call to “Enter the gates with joy, / And as you enter play ‘The Sack of Troy’” (3.1.379)⁴⁷ as the wedding party goes into the Seely household; now they appear in the music

and here it is the final musical performance, this time put on by the members of the community itself in an attempt to shame the sexually impotent Lawrence and the scolding Parnell and signify through sound the disorder that their topsy-turvy marriage represents (713-19). That Lawrence and Parnell end up beating the participants and driving them off (766-767) suggests that its ritual function of reinforcing dominant hierarchies has failed and the community remains disordered with or without the direct intervention of the witches. Compare this musical/communal failure with the witches’ “merry round” dance at 4.1.601-5, performed “To close up our feast, / To welcome every guest” (601). The sense of community here carries echoes of the musical community fostered in *The Witch* and the scene in general, with its stolen feast and merry-making, provides an obvious counterpoint to the disrupted wedding.

⁴⁶ See Ostovich’s note accompanying the stage direction, “*Musicians show themselves above*,” that follows this line. Gurr uses this play as an example of the development of a theatrical practice of placing hired musicians in a curtained room above the stage in order to provide musical accompaniment (181-3), and as Mary Chan points out, “the technical possibility in the private theatres of concealing the musicians above the stage may have contributed to its popularity and widespread use because a sense of mystery and the supernatural could be thus attached to it” (35).

⁴⁷ Findlay notes that the stage direction indicating that the musicians “*play the battle*” here refers to “music designed to accompany battle scenes on stage” (155). This early signal of the disorder that affects the community also suggests the disorder that threatens the theatre itself: while the characters in the play accept the song (Bantam has specifically called for it), the theatre audience is aware of its inappropriateness in context. This indicates some of the instability between play world and theatre world that the play establishes through music.

room as part of the play's apparatus or framework, only to be subsumed back into the narrative world as characters when they reveal themselves. By emphasizing the musicians' unstable position in the theatre, straddling the line between play world and real world, the play highlights the more general instability of the boundary between text and context, image and frame. This metatheatrical moment, like the one in *Edmonton*, engages the audience directly in the act of negotiating belief. The dissonance and silence produced by the musicians is a representation of the disorder attending the play's witches, but the revelation of the musicians as actual people that exceed the spatial and temporal limits of the play, ones playing real dissonant music *outside* of that dramatic world as well as inside it forces the audience into the uncomfortable position of acknowledging music's potential effects on itself, since it too traverses those boundaries. The audience members can watch a musical bewitching, but may not be entirely safe from bewitchment themselves. Complicating this matter further is Christopher Marsh's suggestion that "The early decades of the [seventeenth] century witnessed an intensifying demand for specialist musicians" and that indoor theatres with their improved acoustics and music-rooms hired these specialist musicians more regularly in order to facilitate "elaborate off-stage music" (132). The musicians appearing above the stage, then, were not necessarily members of theatre companies at all, occupying an ambiguous position between dramatic character and professional musician, fiction and reality, and rendering them more closely associated with the audience itself—members of ordinary London society—than with the on-stage actors who are conceptually distanced by representing characters from a rural town far removed from London life. The play's musical elements serve to collapse any perceived

difference between London audience and Lancaster villagers affected by witchcraft. If, as Robson suggests, heard sound's real danger is that it is recognizable as dangerous only after the dangerous element has already been incorporated into the body, the dissonance and troubling silence produced by the musicians becomes a real, physical analogue to the fictional magic that can only be represented through theatrical spectacle on stage. Whether or not audiences received it as such in all cases, the dissonance that *might* disorder one's interior disposition and threaten one's autonomy by provoking emotions or behaviour against one's will is, when set against the ubiquity of early modern beliefs about music's penetrating and persuasive power, a real potential danger.

One final significant musical parallel between *Edmonton* and *Lancashire* deserves some attention. In the latter play, as in the former, the musical celebration is allowed to continue even after the musicians themselves have been disrupted. Mall Spencer, determined to hear music, but not yet known to the other characters to be one of the witches working mischief on the community, informs Doughty that "there's a piper without would be glad to earn money" (3.3.547). And while Whetstone appears to believe this performer will be the saving grace of the dance, since "no witchcraft can take hold of a Lancashire bagpipe, for itself is able to charm the devil" (3.3.548), the audience is aware of Mall's status as one of the very witches the music is intended to resist. The piping that allows the wedding dance to continue is facilitated by demonic influence, rendering the music's social function ambiguous just as Dog's fiddling did in *The Witch of Edmonton*. The play therefore exploits, once again, the disparity between what the audience knows and what the characters know and highlights the parallels

between music and magic that collapse the play world into the real one inhabited by the audience. Unlike in *The Witch of Edmonton*, we are given none of the usual physical markers that describe and contain the witch figure. Where Sawyer is “poor, deformed, and ignorant, / And like a bow buckled and bent together” (2.1.3-5),⁴⁸ the witches of Lancashire are wives, mothers and former lovers of major characters in the play. Like music, these witches are only recognizable as maleficent entities after harm has already been visited on the community. Again, this impact reinforces the precarious position of the audience invested at once in engaging with the witch in a theatrical context and reinforcing either skepticism or distance through that very theatricality. The audience knows that by the time the villagers of Lancaster can tell who is or is not a witch, the damage will already be done.

Although Dolan argues that the play’s comic treatment of the witches “may have helped an urban elite define itself through its ability to laugh at what the vulgar might find threatening” (223), the ambiguous position of its musical elements would seem instead to support Findlay’s suggestion, in her analysis of the play’s specific references to the city of London, that

the play eliminates the geographical distance between Lancashire and London and, by implication, erodes the difference between rural and urban communities. The character Robin tells how Mal Spencer took him over three hundred miles in eight hours and claims that Mrs. Generous could move over a hundred miles in a quarter of an hour. The London references suggest to the

⁴⁸ This description of Sawyer is probably based on Prospero’s description of Sycorax in *The Tempest* (1.2.258-59), which demonstrates something of the conventionality that *Lancashire* subverts here. I am indebted to Lisa Hopkins for pointing out the parallel.

audience that such disruptive energies cannot be safely contained in the particular social context of a Lancashire village. (154-5)

By calling attention to the unstable boundary between play world and real world, the representation of music in the play further troubles the perception of safety and distance provided by the sanctioned engagement with the dangers of witchcraft through theatrical representation. Though fictional, the witches' musical *maleficia* are represented by real music that carried the potential for real physical and spiritual effects in the theatre audience. If witches are figures deprived of agency and the potential for self-determination, marked as such by power structures outside of their control, music offers a potent means for reappropriating that agency by providing a mode of access to the interiority or subjectivity of others and a means of disrupting rituals of social cohesion. By attending to actual music played in the theatre (rather than as a literary image of music), we recover a sense of the particular power the theatre held in terms of its capacity to exploit this kind of reappropriation in order to confront its audience with the indistinct boundary between skepticism and belief. Because music was understood in invasive, persuasive, and transformative terms that closely paralleled early modern beliefs about the capacity witches had for disrupting communal and individual identity through magically compelled behaviour or the interruption of acts of subject-performance, theatrical music was a unique tool for directly engaging an audience in the process of negotiating ideas about witches.

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate that the uses of music in a number of popular witchcraft plays in the early modern period are a great deal more complex

than has been previously acknowledged and that these plays use music, in part, as a device for experimenting with and developing ways of thinking about communal identity. *The Masque of Queens* uses music in conventional and even conservative ways, establishing sonically the disorder and chaos that witches represent for English society and its monarch in order to render more effective the harmonious blast of music that stands in for the king's capacity to impart order to the nation. *The Witch*, on the other hand, takes up a more complicated position, using its unwieldy, comical, singing and dancing witches to establish a contrast between the coven's ironically stable, supportive community of marginalized women, articulated for the most part through music, and the conventional social structure embodied in the just-barely-fictional court of Ravenna. The contrast alerts its theatrical audience to the instability of the lines between good in evil that spectators might expect to find in a witchcraft play and satirizes the very institutions that purport to use witches as a device, as they were used in *Queens*, for the reassertion of power. In both *The Witch of Edmonton* and *The Late Lancashire Witches*, music is established as a device deeply connected to ritual performances of community identity that depend on asserting and maintaining difference from the witch figures that act as others to those communities. And in each of these plays, the witches in question resist this process of marginalization by disrupting those musical performances and rendering obscure the line between normative society and its other for both the characters within the plays and the audiences viewing them. Music does not simply mark and contain witches as unruly others in these plays; it rather functions as one locus for a much more complicated

articulation of individual and social senses of self that emerge and dissipate under the anxieties that are manifested in the period's discourses of witchcraft.

CHAPTER 4

Noise, the City, and the Subject in *Epicoene*

Noise is not music. In precise, scientific terms, noise is “a non-periodic complex sound, in other words, a sound that can be decomposed into a large number of sound waves all of different frequencies that . . . are not multiples of one basic frequency and which do not therefore enter into harmonic relations with each other” (Hainge 3). Noise is that which must be separated or eliminated from a signal in order to arrive at a coherent or intelligible sound. This sense of the word has led to its adoption on a conceptual level in the field of information theory as well as in a number of related philosophical discourses. Jacques Attali, for example, understands noise as

the term for a signal that interferes with the reception of a message by a receiver, even if the interfering signal itself has a meaning for that receiver. Long before it was given this theoretical expression, noise had always been experienced as destruction, disorder, dirt, pollution, an aggression against the code-structuring messages. In all cultures, it is associated with the idea of the weapon, blasphemy, plague. (27)¹

Attali’s noise is rooted in ideology and conflict. Noise is the radical opposite to music, which is characterized by order and power. “With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world,” he writes. “With music is born power and its opposite:

¹ Attali’s formulation of noise as an ideological container for anything that threatens the dominant discourse, as well as its obverse function as a tool of subversion is discussed briefly in Gross 210 n.6. See also Hegarty 6-10 and Hainge 10. This particular passage also appears in Votava as one useful way of thinking about noise’s significance in the early modern world (78).

subversion” (4). Michael Serres, on the other hand, reads noise as a kind of potentiality for meaning, the unformed primordial soup from which particular significations arise as they are stabilized and given form. “Background noise,” he writes, “is the ground of our perception, absolutely uninterrupted, it is our perennial sustenance, the element and software of all our logic. It is the residue and the cesspool of our messages. No life without heat, no matter, neither; no warmth without air, no logos without noise, either” (7).² In Serres’ formulation, noise is the multiplicity from which stability arises (“the background of information, the material of that form”), a concept that draws on both the auditory and information-theory definitions of noise—*bruit*, in the original French—as well as the archaic French *noise*, which translates roughly as “ado, strife, contention.”³ Early modern definitions and usages of the word “noise” often invoke related concepts. The meanings of noise current in early modern England include the aggregate of sounds at a particular place and time, a disturbance or discordancy caused by sound, and notions related to strife, contention and quarrel (echoing the old French *noise*), as well as gossip, rumour, and slander (OED “noise, *n.*”). Following from these definitions, I would suggest that if—as Chapter 3 demonstrates—discordant, unrestrained, or inappropriate music troubled a cosmic, social, and individual stability and order that was frequently represented by musical harmony, noise, in early modern thinking, can be read as music’s radical opposite. “Noise has a history,” Paul Hegarty reminds us. “Noise occurs not in isolation, but in a differential relation to society, to

² Gross suggests the usefulness of Serres’ philosophy of noise, as it appears in both *Genesis* and *Parasite*, for understanding its possible resonances in the early modern world (210 n.6). Another helpful overview of his ideas can be found in Hainge 18-20. This particular passage is also quoted in Smith in a discussion of the “continuous field of sounds” out of which meanings emerge in a particular soundscape (9).

³ This is the definition given in the translator’s footnote to Serres’ text (141).

sound, and to music" (5). Noise, then, is not-music, and it is also whatever is not the dominant meaning or discourse in a particular context. It is the raw material for the making of new meanings, new ways of signifying, new contexts. Connecting early modern conceptions of noise with recent theoretical models can lead, I argue, to productive ways of reading and understanding early modern culture's uses of noise as a potentially subversive multiplicity of meanings that resists and reconfigures entrenched discourses and structures of power and, on the stage, selfhood.

In this chapter, I explore Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*, a city comedy that foregrounds noise as one of the fundamental features of a newly bustling urban soundscape. Jonson's use of noise—and especially Morose's intense antipathy toward it—can best be understood, I argue, by contrasting it with early modern ideas about musical harmony and the ways in which they function as strategies for conceptualizing and signifying the self. Most of the characters in Jonson's play are noisy signifiers. They improvise selves at will from the background noise of available meanings in a social setting where identity is less and less explicitly enmeshed with history, community, and hierarchy. Morose, a bastion of older social codes and one who is profoundly uncomfortable with the instability of identity and meaning in a rapidly expanding and diversifying city, fixates on and rejects utterly the auditory register of that instability, uncertainty, and provisionality: noise. Noise, in other words, becomes for Morose a strategy for imagining and articulating, in the absence of a modern vocabulary for the self, a notion of subjectivity with which he is profoundly uncomfortable.

Because musical harmony was a useful metaphor, in the early modern world, for the proper ordering of states, communities, individuals, and the social hierarchies and

ideologies that structure and unite them, the idea of noise—characterized by contention, multiplicity, instability, and an absence of harmony even more disturbing than the discordant music performed by witches—is a useful imaginative locus for anxieties about new, less stable versions of these concepts. London was, without question, England’s noisiest locale and its most visible site of social change, a space in which more traditional sources of personal identity and modes of self-presentation are no longer strictly necessary, and in which they might even be counter-productive. That is, while London was a massive geographical community, the structure of that community and the ways that individuals functioned within it was drastically different from anything that had come before. Attending to the ways in which the geographic and social layout of London was changing in the early seventeenth century, I argue, helps us to understand Jonson’s use of noise in the play. Noise, which resonates with notions of indeterminacy, competition, conflict, and imperfect signification, becomes a useful metonymy for new modes of self-fashioning that emerge with the rise of London’s urban space. The manifestations of noise in *Epicoene*, in other words, are figurative antecedents to Attali’s suggestion that “What is noise to the old order is harmony to the new” (35).

What Means This Noise?

Before turning to *Epicoene*, it is worth exploring in more detail the various ways in which early moderns understood noise and how that understanding shaped cultural perceptions of auditory phenomena that include music. In a chapter titled “Restraint,” David Hendy has recently argued that ideas of decorum in the early modern world that

privileged silent, restrained self-presentation were connected to the increasing noisiness of city environments: “In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, all across Europe and in the new colonies in America, there was a new emphasis on self-discipline in everyday life, and with it a revulsion against noise of every kind” (146). This is understandable when considered in conjunction with the notions that underpin early modern conceptions of noise. Bacon’s *Sylva Sylvarum*, for example, offers a kind of taxonomy of sounds, dividing them into musical and “immusical” ones:

All Sounds are either Musicall Sounds, which we call Tones; Wherunto there may be an Harmony; which Sounds are ever Equall; As Singing, the Sounds of Stringed, and Wind-Instruments, the Ringing of Bells, &c. Or Immusicall Sounds; which are ever Unequall; Such as are the Voice in Speaking, all Whisperings, all Voices of Beasts, and Birds, (except they bee Singing Birds;) all Percussions, of Stones, Wood, Parchment, Skins (as in Drummes;) and infinite others. (35)

Musicality, for Bacon, derives from the equality or regularity of the body that produces the sound. The more regular, uniform and perfect the body that produces the sound, the more musically pleasing the tone that is produced. Bacon therefore marries quasi-magical notions of music’s analogical correspondences between cosmos and soul with a more scientific understanding of the way sound is actually produced. Pleasing, musical tones are produced by sounding bodies that approximate, as closely as possible, ideal proportions (an idea different only in scale from those that underpin musical metaphors for social order and the music of the spheres). Complex, irregular bodies, on

the other hand, produce complex, irregular sounds, which are reflective of their imperfection by being less pleasing to the ear.⁴

Noise is not music, but it is connected to music through difference. Noise is music's radical opposite—the auditory antithesis of music's valences in cosmic, social and bodily order. For instance, where music was conventionally seen as reflective of the proportion and order imparted to the cosmos by God, noise, in Thomas Nabbes' *Microcosmus* (1637) is used to reflect the original chaos that preceded that order and from which the world was formed, a signifier of “rebellious difference” and “Accurst confusion that neglects the forme / Nature prescribes” (1-8). In Middleton's *The Lady's Tragedy* (c.1611), Govianus makes reference to “th'aeternal noise of hell” (2.1.115), and later a spirit appears accompanied by “a kind of noise like a wind, the doors clattering” (4.4.42 s.d), setting up associations between noise and the infernal or supernatural that depend, for meaning, upon a contrast to the association between the divine and the harmonious. Likewise, where music often functioned as a signifier of social cohesion and community, noise is frequently deployed in dramatic works to signify a nation or community plunged into chaos. Consider, for example, Calpurnia's description, in *Julius Caesar*, of the omens that portend Caesar's death:

There is one within,

⁴ As an interesting aside, note that Bacon in a later passage describes the human voice as being capable of both musical and immusical sounds depending, in part, on the volume of sound produced. Commenting on the musicality of the voice, he says that “the Weasill or Wind-pipe, (which we call *Aspera Arteria*,) which being well extended, gathereth *Equality*; As a Bladder that is wrinckled, if it be extended, becommeth smooth. The Extension is alwaies more in *Tones*, than in *Speech*: Therefore the *Inward Voice* of *Whisper* can never give a *Tone*” (51). The notion that whispers cannot be pleasing, musical sounds is perhaps a source for the early modern usage of the word “noise” to denote rumor, slander, and gossip, one that is derived from the physical experience of the whispering voice as noise.

Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
 Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
 A lioness hath whelped in the streets,
 And graves have yawn'd and yielded up their dead;
 Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds
 In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
 Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
 The noise of battle hurtled in the air;
 Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
 And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets. (2.2.14-24)

Though she begins by noting the “horrid sights” seen by the watch, Calpurnia’s description ends with the hideous noises that act as portents to Caesar’s death, suggesting a world thrown into chaos and uncertainty. Noise is likewise associated strongly with military conflicts on the stage. A stage direction in *Antony and Cleopatra* indicates “*Canidius marcheth with his land army one way over the stage, and Taurus, the lieutenant of Caesar, the other way. After their going in, is heard the noise of sea-fight*” (3.10.1 s.d), suggesting that noise was an effective auditory marker for off-stage battles that would have been difficult to stage visually. In *Coriolanus*, the trumpet flourish that announces the title character’s return to Rome is both triumphant and troubling—“These are the ushers of Martius: before him he carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears” (2.1.158-9)—suggesting that the sounds of the trumpets herald both victory and destruction. Just as music could signify the ordered, regulated body and soul of the upright gentleman, noise could signal its opposite: a body and soul thrown out of tune

and inconsistent with the divine order it was meant to imitate and reflect. So Shakespeare's Macbeth, hearing MacDuff's knocking on the castle gates, asks, "Whence is that knocking? / How is't with me, when every noise appalls me?" (2.2.54-5), suggesting that Macbeth's guilt makes even ordinary sounds into harsh, unpleasant noises that reflect the state of his mind and soul. Likewise, in John Fletcher's *The Pilgrim* (1621), Alphonso is warned that conversing with madmen will "confound ye, Sir, like Bells rung backward, / They are nothing but Confusion, and meer Noises" (4.3.5-6) in a comparison that conflates the disordered body of the madman with disordered, unmusical noises and, significantly, suggests the condition might be catching. Noise could also reflect a more general sense of confusion as it does in *The Tempest* when the Boatswain describes how he arrived on Prospero's island:

We were dead of sleep,
 And (how we know not) all clapp'd under hatches,
 Where, but even now, with strange and several noises
 Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains,
 And moe diversity of sounds, all horrible,
 We were awak'd. (5.1.230-5)

Here, the "strange and several noises" and "diversity of sounds" appear to reflect the Boatswain's own uncertainty about how exactly the chain of events that led him to Prospero played out. In *The Roaring Girl*, Jack Dapper, hearing Moll speak cant, says "The grating of ten new cart-wheeles, and the gruntling of five hundred hogs coming from Rumford market cannot make a worse noise than this canting language does in my ears" (10.236-40) because he cannot attach a meaning to the words she speaks.

Indeed, noise frequently appears in stage directions in connection with sounds of uncertain character, source or import. And a wide variety of plays throughout the early modern period include characters responding to such sounds in similar ways, by asking, “What noise is this?”⁵ Noise—different from sounds, words and music—is often the troubling, uncertain background from which meaning must be made.

Despite the recent critical turn toward investigations of the experience of sound in the early modern period, surprisingly little has been said about noise. Smith, while attentive to individual noises as functions of a larger soundscape, makes only a brief mention of noise as a concept in the early modern world, discussing it in relation to the ‘rough music’ of the skimmington ride, where noise “excites bodies into action” (155). Folkerth, on the other hand, devotes part of his “acoustemological” reading of *Othello* to examining its linguistic noisiness, indicative of “a sense of destabilization and uncertainty [that] marks the play, which is crowded with acoustic disturbances, tempestuous noises and decentering words which catch characters off guard and throw

⁵ In Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, Heironimo responds to the sound of Don Bazulto and three citizens arriving to ask him to plead cases on their behalf to the King by asking “How now, what noise? What coil is that you keep?” (3.13.45). During the final prank on Falstaff in Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mistress Page indicates the arrival of the “fairies” that will torment him by asking “Alas, what noise?” (5.5.30). In Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, the duchess asks about off-stage noises on two occasions in the same scene. The first is the sound of the madmen her brother intends to torment her with (4.2.1-4) and the second is a servant come to inform her of their impending arrival (4.2.37-8). To get a broader sense of the usage, a search for dramatic works published between 1585 and 1642 containing instances of the word “what” occurring within a five-word range of the word “noise” in *Early English Books Online* (using “what NEAR.5 noise” in the keyword field) returns 83 records. 56 of these are unique and contain some variation on the phrase “What noise is this” where it indicates confusion or uncertainty about off-stage sounds. Many of these records include more than one hit. While perhaps not perfectly scientific, this at least gives the sense that the usage is common.

them off balance” (109). Kenneth Gross engages with noise more fully, characterizing it in terms of “the movement of language” in the early modern theatre and exploring the ways in which “language interferes with itself, assumes the power of its own disorder” (1). Gross, however, focuses his study only on noise as a linguistic phenomenon—its metaphoric connections to slander, defamation and cursing—and limits his examples, like Folkerth, entirely to Shakespeare’s plays. He does, however, helpfully connect noise with “a kind of furious blankness of meaning that gathers around certain words and utterances,” especially in connection with “moments of iteration and repetition” (120), suggesting that noise in the early modern world can mark an indeterminacy or inaccessibility of signification and meaning-making. Laura Feitlinger Brown has noted noise’s associations with various forms of disruptive or unruly behaviour, especially in church where hearing, speaking, and singing are crucial to religious practice. She points out that noise that disrupts worship suggests, for various religious writers, “social unrest, gossip, fights, harshness, and rudeness” (“Brawling in Church” 963) and that noise therefore frequently became a rhetorical device used to condemn disorderly behaviour.

Studies of *Epiicoene* itself have, until very recently, seen the play’s uses of noise, and particularly Morose’s antipathy to it, as symbolic of something else, a comedic trope intended to satirize the curmudgeon or a metaphor that highlights the play’s other themes. Ray Heffner sees noise as indicative of two related character traits in Morose, his abhorrence of courtly ostentation and his desire for total control (81-2). Mark Anderson reads the desire to control noise as representative of Morose’s autocratic character (357). Thomas Greene suggests Morose’s fear of noise is intended

as a catalyst for his isolation, making him a caricature of the need for stability in an inherently unstable environment (335). Gail Kern Paster calls noise “the symbol of life in the play” (“Ben Jonson” 68) and sees it as a self-imposed limit of experience for Morose, while Laura Levine reads the play’s noise as indicative of otherness and death from which Morose retreats, fleeing into a fantasy of absolute selfhood (80-1). Michael Flachmann argues that the play “represents sounds and values which suggest to [Morose] a world of hypocrisy, distorted sexuality, greed, and gross sensual indulgence” (133). P. K. Ayers (77) and Katherine Maus (Introduction 779) both see Morose’s phonophobia as an indication of Morose’s own hypocrisy, since he affects to hate noise, but has chosen to live in London. Karen Newman, on the other hand, notes that Morose’s hatred of noise, “which is presented as generalized at the outset of the play, becomes increasingly gender specific . . . Woman becomes the overdetermined locus of noise, the screen on which Morose’s agoraphobia is projected” (“City Talk” 508), suggesting productive ways of reading noise as indicative of early modern anxieties about unruly women. Votava, echoing Newman, reads the play’s noises as indicative of various kinds of disturbance, especially in connection to the violation of gender norms (77). But in each of these cases, discussions of the play’s aurality are incidental to discussions of themes that are developed in more concerted fashion through other elements of the play.

More recently, a number of critics have given the play’s soundscape more thorough consideration, undertaking phenomenological readings of the play’s noise that connect it to the play’s locale: a rapidly expanding urban London. Though he discusses noise only briefly, Adam Zucker perceptively notes that “the more details we

learn about Morose 's phobias, the more it becomes clear that they have less to do with noise itself and more to do with the material practices that create that noise." And this suggests that Morose is "a man isolating himself from an entire system of behaviors, from the markets, entertainments, juridical establishments, and general social practices and locations that constitute seventeenth-century London" (49). Mimi Yiu has suggested that the play's deployment of various noises is one strategy by which Jonson defamiliarizes London and renders it "an epicene space that seems both familiar and strange" (74) to his Whitefriars audience, implicating it in the experience of a London that is at once recognizable and alienating. Taking a broader view, Newman has recently examined "what the relation of cultural production, particularly what we call literature, is to sense experience" (*Cultural Capitals* 76), by using *Epicoene* as indicative of the historical acoustic experience of early modern London. She reads the play as "a brief, aural register of the sounds that assaulted the senses of inhabitants of the early modern city regardless of their socioeconomic status and which . . . the rich sought to control and avoid" (89). Adrian Curtin, on the other hand, interrogates the play's use of "semiotic noise." Curtin's focus is on the figure of the mute, whose gestures he associates with the dumb-show, and whose silent presence is nevertheless "replete with meaning" (46). The gestures of Morose's silent servant, Mute, he argues,

are double if not triple coded, at once establishing the rules of decorum and simultaneously parodying or subverting them. In this conception, Mute's gestures toy with referentiality and enjoy the polysemic quality of gestures performed in dumb shows. This allows the spectator to read (through) their

difference and to appreciate their semantic ‘noise,’ which is both performative and visual. (52-3)

In what follows, my aim is to demonstrate that Jonson’s play deploys noise in ways that combine the symbolic and the phenomenological, and that *Epicoene* uses noise as one way of conceptualizing new possibilities for subjectivity in a rapidly-expanding London cityscape, subjectivities that depend, in part, on embracing instability. If, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, music is a way of signaling the self, then noise—the jarring register of a multiplicity of indeterminate, non-harmonious signals—appears to enable radically unfixed selves. And for Morose, the obsolete holdover of older ways of being-in-the-world in seventeenth century London, noise is the tangible, audible marker for an experience of the self he abhors—a means of reifying the metaphysical experience of a selfhood he cannot abide in order to repudiate it utterly.

So Many Several Noises

Were he to make an exception and submit to a discourse other than his own, Morose might well have found himself nodding in agreement with the opening passage of George Simmel’s famous essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903). “The deepest problems of modern life,” Simmel writes, “derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and of the technique of life” (47). The aptness of Simmel’s theory of the psychic anxieties that accompany urban life for understanding Jonson’s portrayal of the phenomenological experience of living in early modern London is suggested by Karen Newman. In *Cultural Capitals*, Newman refers to

Simmel's essay when she argues that "already in early modern Europe, new configurations of time and urban space produced . . . modes of subjectivity that have been claimed exclusively for modernity" (4). Indeed, Jonson's play, the first of his productions to adopt London as its primary setting, anticipates many of Simmel's concerns with the effects of the urban environment on the individual psyche, what Simmel calls "the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" (48) that threatens the coherence of individual identity. Jonson, operating in the absence of a sophisticated language for the psychological experience of the self in the city, adopts a simple metonymy for the same kind of experience: noise.

In *Epicoene*, the deployment of various noises, and Morose's reactions to them, suggests that his antipathy to noise is grounded first and foremost in an underlying anxiety about the coherence and stability of his own identity in a rapidly changing urban environment that privileges new modes of shaping and performing selfhood, ones that are at least as aural as they are visual. The play represents two forms of noisiness. The first is the actual, physical noise of urban London, which manifests as discordant, competing, cacophonous, disruptive sounds. The second is a metaphoric or "semiotic" noisiness⁶ that functions more broadly to denote a multiplicity of possible experiences and the consequent ambiguities of interpretation that arise from this potential—a complicated mixture of signals and of significations—that are instantiated and perpetuated by a newly emerging urban culture. By reading the play's real and

⁶ As I noted above, this is the term used by Curtin to denote the capacity for one signifier to refer, often incompletely and unstably, to a number of different and even competing signifieds. While Curtin's focus is on Mute's "dumb" gestures, my own reading suggests that this semiotic noise pervades the whole play.

symbolic noises in dialogue, and even conflict, with early modern ideas about music, sound, and hearing, ideas that privilege order and stability, we arrive at a more complex understanding of noise as a potent signifier for the demands that radically new social contexts, emerging out of London's rapid urbanization in the early modern period, placed on the self.

Morose's idea of himself—as a man, as a gentleman, as the head of a household, as an autonomous and even autocratic subject—manifests in the play as a desire for careful self-regulation and discipline. Offering a brief but significant insight into his attitudes toward noise near the end of the play, Morose explains to the incessantly chattering Otter and Cutbeard that

My father, in my education, was wont to advise mee, that I should alwayes collect, and contayne my mind, not suffring it to flow loosely; that I should looke to what things were necessary to the carriage of my life, and what not: embracing the one, and eschewing the other. In short, that I should endeare my selfe to rest, and avoid turmoile: which now is growne to be another nature to me. (5.3.48-54)⁷

Morose's choice of the word "flow" here deliberately invokes the fluid interior of the humoral body and suggests that noise, entering, as music does, through the ear and affecting that interior, must be avoided in order to maintain an acceptable "carriage." For Morose, the noises that constantly assault his ears must be guarded against in order to maintain a regime of careful discipline over the "flows" that govern his nature. Morose seems, in other words, to be following Donne's advice to "take heed what you

⁷ In-text citations for *Epicoene* refer to the edition included in the Oxford *Ben Jonson*, edited by Herford, Simpson, and Simpson.

hear,” but is attempting to do so in an unusually overwhelming acoustic environment: the cacophonous soundscape of early modern London, filled at all times with competing, potentially dangerous noises.

In the context of a worldview that sees intrusive sounds as potentially dangerous to the integrity and coherence of the humoral self, early modern London which, as Newman points out, “may have quadrupled its population between 1550 and 1650, from more than 80,000 to some 400,000 or more” (*Cultural Capitals* 2), must have been a troubling aural environment. “Even without internal combustion engines and large-scale electrical equipment,” Smith points out, “early modern London was notably full of sound” (52). Smith goes on to note that as London grew, so did its population, its proliferation of ringing church-bells, its variety of speech communities, its concentrations of industrial noises, its marketplace bustle, its traffic noises and its crowds. The city was a unique concentration of sounds in the early modern world, a distinct soundscape with a particular set of attendant problems and anxieties (52-79). And the result of this unprecedented growth and change, Yiu argues, is that London, in the early modern period, “no longer materializes as a secure and coherent sign in the English mind's eye” (73). Nor, the play seems to suggest, was it coherent in the mind's ear.

Much of the noise that Morose fears, described both by himself and by those who ridicule him for his infirmity, is specifically connected to this unstable urban environment. Truewit, for example, informs Clerimont that Morose has “beene upon divers treaties with the Fish-wives, and Orange-women” to keep them from crying their wares near his home, and when he speculates that “a Smith should be ominous,”

Clerimont agrees: “Or any Hammer-man. A Brasier is not suffer'd to dwel in the parish, nor an Armorer. He would have hang'd a Pewterers 'prentice once upon a shrove-tuesdaies riot, for being o' that trade, when the rest were quit” (1.1.149-59). They mention, too, the city waits, whom Morose has paid “not to come neere that ward” in which he lives (1.1.162-3), as well as the town criers and incessant church bells that are sources of auditory disruption unique to the London soundscape (1.1.173-6, 180-6). Morose himself associates noise with particular city locales in a later scene, promising—if he can be delivered from his railing wife—to do

supererogatorie penance, in a bellfry, at Westminster-hall, i' the cock-pit, at the fall of a stagge; the tower-wharfe (what place is there else?) London-bridge, Paris-garden, Belins-gate, when the noises are at their height and lowdest. Nay, I would sit out a play, that were nothing but fights at sea, drum, trumpet, and target! (4.4.12-18)

Here, Morose maps London by its sounds, associating its major landmarks with its intolerable noises.⁸ If, for Morose, the experience of the city *is* the experience of noise, the city itself is a threat to his ability to regulate the effects of invasive auditory stimuli.

But London, in *Epicoeone*, is not only a source of physical noise. As I noted above, it is also a symbolically or metaphorically noisy space, replete with a multiplicity of unstable, imperfect and competing signals and significations. Of London itself it is pertinent to ask: “What noise is this?” Maus argues that seventeenth-century London was the site of a number of “emergent social formations” (Introduction 775), one of the most important of which is the fact that in the city, “externally imposed forms of

⁸ Smith in fact cites this passage as one source for an “acoustic profile” of London’s noises (60).

affiliation—one's kinship group, one's inherited standing, one's traditional rivalries and obligations—become less important than the voluntary affiliations among like-minded people" (777).⁹ Helen Ostovich makes a similar claim that "The volatile world of the play depends on its unnerving liminality. Jonson's London is on the threshold of major social upheaval as a town elite thrusts its way between court and country life. The old standards are vanishing, and distortion, ambiguity, randomness, and risk are taking their place" (*Jonson: Four Comedies* 19). The result, Greene argues, is that in the newly reconfigured social world of Jonson's London, "the most nearly successful characters seem to be the chameleons, the Shifts and Brainworms and Faces who refuse to be centred, who are comfortable with the metamorphoses society invites" (336). In other words, Jonson's successful characters—those who put the city's possibilities for expressing the self to good use—are those who permit their minds to "flow loosely," to use Morose's term, when it suits their aims. The characters in the play, in fact, appear to make up a kind of auditory spectrum. Some, like the gallants, Dauphine, Truewit and Clerimont, are producers of noise, shaping meanings to suit their aims. Their ability to adapt to the social demands of the city—through careful self-presentation, the manipulation of social conventions, urban environments, and other people, as well as the capacity to artfully fashion selves that adapt seamlessly from one context to another—affords them social capital and financial success. The gallants are rewarded, in other words, for making new meanings, new selves, from the city's semiotic background noise. Others, like Daw and LaFoole, strive and fail in the endeavor, proving themselves unable to shape artfully the multiplicity of meanings available to

⁹ This is a simplified version of an argument Maus explores in greater detail in *Inwardness and Theatre* 147-8.

them, and ultimately become little more than another noise shaped and manipulated by the gallants. The two dupes go through the motions of self-fashioning, but their modes of self-presentation harken back to old ways of establishing identity. They pretend to ideas of masculinity and courtliness that are outmoded and which they cannot fully occupy. LaFoole, for example, talks at length about his family lineage, his (purchased) knighthood, and his appearances at court (1.4.35-68). Daw composes ornate madrigals in praise of conventional femininity and affects learning that he does not have (2.3.23-92). The two make noise, but cannot make meaning from it. Morose, on the other hand, repudiates noise entirely, believing himself to be capable of signifying as a pure, uninterrupted, and uncorrupted signal. In between are the play's many minor characters—the Ladies Collegiate, the Otters, Cutbeard, Mute, even Epicoene herself—all variously noisy, all variously participating in new ways of producing both social bonds and individual identities, all variously successful.

Nearly all of the play's characters participate in some way in both audible and symbolic modes of noisemaking. Clerimont, for example, expresses disdain for the idea that women use cosmetics to hide their flaws in public. Ayers reads the play's invocations of cosmetics as "an explicit metaphor for the transformation of the self offered by the city" (80), but the play's attitudes toward carefully manipulated self-presentation are complicated by the Clerimont's conflicting signals. While he decries the artful construction of an advantageous public self in women, he is literally engaged in a process of artfully preparing himself for a day on the town negotiating the city's various social demands. Mistress Otter, one of the most obvious beneficiaries of the availability of cosmetics and other beauty-enhancing products and prostheses is

described at one point by her husband as a collection of items from around the city, a noisy mixture of signals from different sources:

All her teeth were made i' the Blacke-Friers: both her eye-browes i' the Strand,
and her haire in Silver-street. Every part o' the towne ownes a peece of her . . .
She takes her selfe asunder still when she goes to bed, into some twentie boxes;
and about next day no one is put together againe, like a great Germane clocke:
and so comes forth and rings a tedious larum to the whole house. (4.2.92-100)

Here, Mistress Otter, by assembling an advantageous self, becomes the nexus of both the city itself (each part of which “ownes a peece of her”) and its noises.¹⁰ Yet while his description is critical, Otter himself exploits a capacity to signify differently for different audiences. “Wife! Buz,” he says, dismissing her with a noise, as he, Daw, and LaFoole engage in a drinking contest, “There's no such thing in nature. I confesse, gentlemen, I have a cook, a laundresse, a house-drudge, that serves my necessary turnes, and goes under that title” (4.2.50-53). A few lines later, however, when she confronts and beats him, he responds deferentially and “under correction” (4.2.110), adapting his disposition to suit both audience and circumstance. Daw, LaFoole and Dauphine have all purchased knighthoods, eschewing the military service and breeding traditionally required but reaping the benefits of status that knighthood confers nonetheless. Indeed, Anderson suggests that Daw and LaFoole function as Morose’s opposites in the play, “examples of the meaningless noise he abominates” (362). The pair claim titles they have not earned, brag of qualities they do not possess and give false testimony on Morose’s behalf during the trial scene. In this sense, they seem to

¹⁰ That she is described as “ring[ing] a tedious larum,” like the clock to which she is compared, reinforces the connection with noise.

function as examples of the kinds of noise that Gross connects with rumour and slander, a noise which “makes us consider how words about the self are heard and overheard, and how, in passing between speakers, their identity and power is transformed” (2).¹¹ Late in the play, Cutbeard and Otter appear disguised as a lawyer and a doctor and make themselves believable by inundating their auditors with discipline-specific Latin phrases, a scene that is both physically and conceptually noisy as the pair interrupt Morose incessantly and repeat or reinterpret his words, prompting him to implore, “Good eccho's, forbear” (5.3.233). By the play’s end, Epicoene herself has signaled a number of conflicting gender identities—silent woman, scolding wife, boy imposter, and boy actor—even as she becomes physically louder. In each of these cases, the self is shown to be a function of signifying in the right way for the right context rather than any inherent, stable identity or nature. This is reflected, too, in the names of most of the principal characters. Epicoene, Sir Dauphine Eugenie, Sir Amorous LaFoole, Mistress Otter, Mistress Centaur and Ladies Collegiate all suggest that gender, in the city, is indeterminate, sourceless and malleable. They are noisy names that signify two things simultaneously, but also no one particular thing—competing and conflicting signals that contribute to the semiotic noise of the play.

Morose’s fear of noise is thus a rejection of the auditory register of a new kind of subjective experience. The self of the city is one largely divorced from the traditions,

¹¹ In fact, this kind of noise has already been invoked. Early in the play we learn that Morose’s plot to disinherit Dauphine by marrying is motivated by revenge. He believes that Dauphine and the other gallants “are authors of all the ridiculous acts, and monuments are told of him” (1.2.9-10). It is the noise of rumour that sets up the conflict of the play as a whole. Morose, it seems, is anxious about every kind of noise, including the strictly metaphorical. Rumor and slander highlight the danger that language poses to identity: a rumour would convey a sense of Morose’s identity that competes and conflicts with his own in London’s social circles.

history, and heritage that Morose represents in the play and is based instead on active, fluid self-assertion where multiple modes of signification become tools for social mobility. In the absence of a sophisticated language for describing his anxieties about this conceptual cacophony of selfhood, he fixates on its physical, audible register as actual noise and demands, in response, utter silence. The city's soundscape becomes the imaginative locus for his anxieties about a subjectivity to which he cannot or will not lay claim. His response to the new social demands of urban London, therefore, is a radical repudiation of all of the city's noises since they expose to him, by association, his own obsolescence, since he insists on a strictly regulated, stable identity and is unwilling to embrace instability. Rather than adapting himself to the city, wielding its many available meanings as the gallants do, he attempts instead to adapt the city to himself—to police its noises. As Truewit and Clerimont reveal in the play's opening scene, in addition to the agreements he has struck with various tradespeople to avoid his area of the city, Morose "hath chosen a street to lie in, so narrow at both ends, that it will receive no coaches, nor carts, nor any of these common noises" (1.1.167-9). His house, because of the incessant ringing of church bells to announce plague deaths, includes "a roome, with double walls, and treble seelings; the windores close shut, and calk'd" (1.1.184-5). His servants, in slippers and socks that prevent heavy footfalls, communicate with him through a speaking trunk that allows them to whisper back and forth at a distance, and as we later learn, they have been bade to remove the door knocker and fasten "a thicke quilt, or flock-bed, on the out-side of the dore; that if they knocke with their daggers, or with bricke-bats, they can make no noise" (2.1.11-13). Morose appears to have attempted to shore up his sense of a stable self by insulating

his house against noise.

Greene has argued that houses, in Jonson's plays, often stand in for a kind of idealized subjectivity, "the closest dramatic equivalent to the gathered self" (344).¹² But Morose's house is not only a representation of his ideal, impenetrable, fixed selfhood, but also of a specifically embodied one. Both domestic and bodily interior remain stable, sound and private only if they are carefully guarded against invasive noise. Because he cannot close off his ears, Morose does the next best thing: he exercises architectural control over the very environment that threatens him, reconfigures the city to conform to his needs, and makes his house into a fortified body rather than adapting his way of being-in-the-world to suit the aural character of the city. Indeed, when he must leave the house to go about any bit of unavoidable public business, Morose dons "a huge turbant of night-caps on his head, buckled over his eares" (1.1.144-5). Clothing and architecture do what physiology cannot: resist the onslaught of unwanted sounds that threaten the integrity of Morose's sense of self.

As Curtin rightly points out, one of the most perplexing things about Morose is that he lives in London at all, a fact "which is perverse given his pathological aversion to noise" (47). The play itself offers no clues as to why a man who fears noise above all else would choose to inhabit England's noisiest locale, but Ayers offers a helpful interpretation, suggesting that Morose is "an urban solipsist who simultaneously hates the city yet chooses to live in its very centre because it is only there that he can indulge

¹² Greene's article is broadly concerned with the figure of the circle and its centre in Jonson's poetry, which he reads as representative of an ideally stable, proportioned, harmonious selfhood (325-6). He finds this figure harder to locate in the dramatic works, but uses *Epicoene* as an example of one iteration, where Morose's insulated house and his retreat into it are indicative of his concern with maintaining a stable identity.

freely his self-assertive egotism" (77). He goes on to argue that "In the country, Morose would be either ignored or compelled to conform to the basic social proprieties; only in the city can he simultaneously exert his tremendously anti-social will, and yet remain the centre of social attention" (77). Morose, in other words, seeks a self that is impossible to sustain in urban London: he wants at once to fashion and display himself publicly—to be seen and especially heard—but wants to mitigate the threat to his sense of self that the close-quartered agglomeration of other selves in early modern London presents to him. Morose desires, in other words, to be received as an uncorrupted and uninterrupted signal, to separate himself from the noise that is the city's pervasive background. Serres offers one way of thinking about this:

Noise cannot be a phenomenon; every phenomenon is separated from it, a silhouette on a backdrop, like a beacon against the fog, as every message, every cry, every call, every signal must be separated from the hubbub that occupies silence, in order to be, to be perceived, to be known, to be exchanged. As soon as a phenomenon appears, it leaves the noise; as soon as a form looms up or pokes through, it reveals itself by veiling noise. (13)¹³

Morose wants to be phenomenon, signal, stability, form. And the city is at once an ideal and an impossible locus for that desire. The city provides a multitude of possible receivers, but it carries simultaneously the threat of imperfect transmission against the degrading background of competing signals, other selves; he thus seeks to amplify himself and suppress the background noise. These conflicting desires for widespread

¹³ This passage is quoted in Folkerth as part of a discussion of "the various acoustic events through which we coordinate our spatial orientation, social position, emotional proximity" (108-9). A portion of it also appears in Hainge 20.

audibility and total stability lead him into both physical and symbolic conflict with the urban world around him, a noisy quarrel that he cannot hope to win.

As if to specifically acknowledge that noise is less the experience of sound itself than the sonic representation of a larger idea, Morose indicates, at the start of Act 2, that he does not find *all* sounds intolerable. As he explains to his silent servant, at the beginning of Act 2, “All discourses, *but mine owne*, afflict mee, they seeme harsh, impertinent, and irksome” (2.1.4-5, emphasis mine). In fact, what Morose experiences as intolerable noise is itself radically subjective, and depends on how badly it violates his own idea of himself and the insular world he is attempting to maintain. His own voice actually appears to please him, while other voices at normal speaking volume—like Mute’s, in his only spoken lines in the play, announcing Truewit’s arrival—send him into a rage (2.1.42-6). And it is significant that Morose makes clear that all other voices *seem* irksome, implying that the effect is at least as much a function of perception as it is of source or sonic character. It is not noise itself that irks Morose, but the noise of the other, the existential threat of other subjectivities that remind him of the transience and instability of his own.

Two scenes provide a clearer sense of Morose’s subjective experience of noise. In Act 2, scene 5, when he meets Epicoene for the first time in order to judge her fitness as his bride, Morose offers her a series of tests. When he pretends to courtly ambitions and asks, “Can you speake lady,” she answers, “Judge you, forsooth” so softly that he has to ask her to repeat herself more loudly. When he asks if she will willingly “trust [her] graces to the faire conscience of virtue, then to the world’s, or [her] owne proclamation,” she must repeat her response, “I should be sorry else,” so that he can

hear her. And when he asks how she will give “the manifold (but necessarie) instructions” for clothing befitting a fashionable lady, she repeats “I’ll leave it to you, sir” twice before he is satisfied (2.5.33-82). What this exchange reinforces is that it is not the volume or quality of a sound that registers as noise for Morose, but its content. He reacts favorably to Epicoene’s answers because they harmonize with and reinforce the primacy of his own sense of self as the head of a household and as a man who commands speech and demands appropriately feminine silence from his wife. When Epicoene expresses total deference to his judgment and control, her responses fail to register as noise for Morose because they boost and harmonize with his own signal, which dominates the scenes that take place in the carefully controlled space of his home. Indeed, in 2.1 and 2.5, the two scenes that focus on Morose, he speaks 43 of 46 lines and 125 of 131 lines respectively. “The supposed lover of silence,” Maus points out, “is an indefatigable monologist” (Introduction 779). This suggests that rather than harsh, impertinent or loud sounds, what Morose fears is a dangerous signal-to-noise ratio, the loss of his own capacity to signify clearly and coherently in a physically and conceptually noisy soundscape.

This threat of signal loss manifests again in the play’s mock-trial scene, Act 5, scene 3, in which Cutbeard and Otter appear disguised as a lawyer and a parson. Throughout the exchange, Cutbeard and Otter deploy a variety of Latin phrases to lend legitimacy to their adopted roles—their capacity to shift from one self to another. Morose, predictably, connects their linguistic shifts to noisiness. Early in the scene, he informs Cutbeard that he avoids public pleadings “for the mere avoiding of clamors, & impertinencies of Orators, that know not how to be silent” (5.3.57-9). So when he

reacts to one of Cutbeard's English explications of a Latin phrase by saying "I understood you, before: good sir, avoid your impertinencie of translation" (5.3.82-3), he implies that the impertinency is less the excess verbiage or the quality of Cutbeard's voice than it is the loss of control over meaning. Morose would prefer to be his own translator, to assign meaning to language himself.

But in an urban world that privileges noisy significations over single-source, coherent meaning, Morose does not stand a chance. His body, his home, and the self that they protect are all violated by the play's end. When Epicoene reveals herself to be willing to speak out, in the first of her shifts of identity in the play, her noisy speech—which responds to Morose's poor treatment of the Parson after their wedding—criticizes his social position, overthrows his rule over his household and reveals the instability of gender identities in the play. "It do's not become your gravity, or breeding, (as you pretend in court)" she tells him "to have offered this outrage on a waterman, or any more boystrous creature, much lesse on a man of his civill coat" (3.4.30-3), taking a deliberate jab at his inability to perform adequately the dignity of his social position.¹⁴

Later, when Mute arrives and only gestures in answer to Morose's questions, she says

¹⁴ In connection with this point, it is interesting to note that part of Morose's antipathy to noise may stem from its associations, in early modern consciousness, with hired musicians, who are specifically invoked at one point in the play as "one noyse of fiders, or other" (3.3.86). Laura Feitzinger Brown has traced the pervasive connection between noise and the working classes, noting that "Since the gentry did not need to work for a living . . . the middling and lower sorts, because they needed to work to survive, by default would become associated with noise" ("The Isle is Full of Noises" 110-11). Class certainly seems to be an abiding concern of Morose's in the scene in which he gleefully imagines the humiliations he will subject Dauphine to once he has been disinherited, metonymically referring to his nephew as "kighthood" (2.5.100-31). Morose resents Dauphine's purchased status because it was not earned through the traditional routes of service and heredity. He delights in the thought of reducing Dauphine's class position in part because it will reinforce his own superiority and restore for him a sense of the stability of class distinctions that underpin his identity.

“I'll have none of this coacted, unnaturall dumbnesse in my house, in a family where I governe” (3.4.53-5). Morose's response reveals a further semiotic noisiness in the scene: hearing her speak out, he calls her “a manifest woman” (3.4.42), revealing that Epicoene's femininity signifies in terms of more than one set of discourses: she is an ideal wife in her silent deferral to his authority, but a stereotype of the vices of womanhood in her unregulated speech. This is complicated further by the fact, revealed at the end of the play, that both the feminine selves presented here turn out to be false.

One more of Morose's reactions to the play's noise is worth further consideration, particularly in light of the gendering of noise in the play. As Otter and his wife quarrel loudly during the wedding feast that has been diverted from the Otter household to his own, Morose “*descends with a long sword*” and says “I will have no such examples in my house, Lady Otter” (4.2.120-1 and s.d.). And in case the phallic imagery is not clear enough at this point, Mrs. Otter later explains to Lady Haughty that “he came downe with a huge long naked weapon in both his hands, and look'd so dreadfully” (4.3.2-4). Part of what Morose appears to fear in connection with noise is both its associations with unrestrained femininity and its threat to his own sense of masculine identity. In addition to calling Epicoene a “manifest woman” when she reveals that her silence has been a ruse, Morose tells Truewit that “Strife and tumult are the dowrie that comes with a wife” (4.4.23-4), invoking a commonplace association between women and unrestrained or impertinent speech. Morose's entrance into the scene brandishing a sword, in response to a wife noisily threatening her husband with violence, can therefore be read specifically as an attempt by Morose to reassert his

masculinity and dominance.

The wedding feast is the play's most physically cacophonous scene, and at one point Clerimont arrives with a band of musicians that plays "*Musique of all sorts*" (3.7.1-2 and s.d.), a band that Truewit earlier calls "one noyse of fiddlers, or other," in a suggestive use of the group noun (3.3.86). The music they make, either played as a progression of different songs and styles, or played as a set of simultaneous melodies that sound cacophonous together makes physically audible what the cityscape appears to privilege in the play: shifting, unstable, competing modes of signification. Unable to hear multiplicity as music, Morose's own reaction is unwittingly noisy: "O, a plot, a plot, a plot, a plot upon me" (3.7.3) he cries, engaging in the sort of pointless repetition for which he will later excoriate Epicoene.¹⁵ He follows this by imagining the disintegration of his body under the aural assault: "This day I shall be their anvil to work on; they will grate me asunder. 'Tis worse than the noise of a saw" (3.7.3-5). He imagines himself reshaped, shredded and dismembered, an incoherent body that reflects the threat of an incoherent self he fears most. Smith, in the passage I noted earlier, reads this moment in the play as a kind of skimmington ride (155), but there are no pots and pans in Morose's skimmington. He is accosted by music, which he hears as noise, because he clings to outdated, stable social roles in a noisy community of scolds, adulterers and epicoenes. In noisy, epicoene London, where forms of behaviour and community are radically different, cacophonous music heralds a new social order, and the rider

¹⁵ In Act 4, when Epicoene tells Morose "You are not well, sir! You looke very ill! something has distempered you," he replies "Oh, horrible, monstrous impertinencies! would not one of these have serv'd?" (4.4.29-36).

becomes the ridden.¹⁶

It is significant that Morose's torment takes place, for the most part, inside his own home. For all his careful attempts to shape the city to his needs, Truewit and the other gallants bring the noise of the city to Morose, an invasion of privacy that functions as a symbolic invasion of the body and the self. Indeed, he says of the trumpeters and drummers that accompany the wedding feast, "They have rent my roofe, walls, and all my windores asunder, with their brazen throates" (4.2.129-30), an evocation of physical destruction in response to noise that echoes his earlier bodily discomfort during the musical performance at the wedding feast. By the feast scene, Morose's formerly impregnable house is filled with a cacophony of noises, and his speeches, which dominated earlier scenes, have been reduced to single lines, replete with the kind of distressed repetition he deplores. And they devolve, finally, into meaninglessness: in his final lines in the scene, as drums and trumpets sound, Morose can only cry, "O, o, o," twice (3.7.46, 49), perhaps prompting his audience to ask, as he will later, "Would not one of these have served?" The violation of his house by noisy people, and the violation of his ears by the noise they make, leaves Morose literally disordered and incoherent. His house and his speech are no longer his own under the onslaught of noises that are endemic to city life. In the play's last moments, the vestiges of Morose's identity are obliterated—his masculinity when he admits his impotence

¹⁶ This reading presents some interesting performance possibilities. If the "*Music of all sorts*" is performed as a mixture of simultaneous songs or styles (akin to what happens in *The Late Lancashire Witches*, where the musicians play "every one a several tune"), then the audience would likely share in Morose's discomfort at the sound, inducing some degree of sympathy for the character overwhelmed by an actual cacophony. If, on the other hand, the group of musicians plays in unison, but varies the style, tempo and volume rapidly, the audience might well enjoy the music, reinforcing Morose's isolation and the radically subjective experience of noise he exhibits in the play.

(5.4.44) and his social status when he offers to hand over his fortune to Dauphine and become his ward (5.4.173-5). He leaves the stage silently.

I want to conclude by giving the play's final invocation of noise some sustained attention because, like the music explored in earlier chapters, it temporarily elides the boundary between the world of the play and the world of the theatre in which the play takes place. After Morose has been thoroughly tormented and duped into admitting his own impotence, Truewit's final lines are projected beyond the edge of the stage. "Spectators," he says, coming forward to address the audience, "if you like this comedie, rise cheerefully, and now Morose is gone in, clap your hands. It may be, that noyse will cure him, at least please him" (5.3.251-3). This moment, I would argue, brings attention to the audience's real stake in the problems of urban subjectivity raised by the play's invocations of noise. Indeed, as Frances Teague argues, despite the play's overall condemnation of Morose, the audience is asked—in at least one sense—to share in some of his discomfort at the play's harsh aural characteristics:

When Jonson filled the Whitefriars stage with characters chattering, music of all sorts, and drums and trumpets, the audience shared Morose's discomfort, for they all sat within 21 yards of the stage. The aural effect of such a scene would have failed at the larger Globe, as would the humour of Epicoene's quiet whispering when Morose first inspects her in II.v. or the shock of Truewit's noisy entry into Morose's room in II.ii. *Epicoene* could have been written only for a small playhouse like the Whitefriars; Jonson takes advantage of the small size of the playhouse to win the response he wants from his audience. (176)

Yiu agrees that part of Jonson's aim in setting the play specifically in the London locale

in which the theatre itself is really located is to remind the audience that, in a sense, it is itself a subject of the play. "Thus subjected to an aural assault in close quarters," she writes, following Teague, "we naturally react by empathizing with the play's antagonist, sharing the otherwise unlikable misanthrope's horror of strangers and noise because our home in the theater mimics his" (74). By calling attention to the familiarity of the setting, but also troubling that familiarity by making it uncomfortable, *Epiccoene* "demands that Whitefriars patrons go out so as to come in, making centrifugal movement a precondition for discovering spatial and psychological interiority" (74). The play's noises, therefore, place the theatre audience in a complicated position, identifying with Morose's reaction to sounds that they themselves find physically harsh in the small space of the indoor theatre, but also recognizing the absurdity of that reaction as residents of the real urban world that the play represents, of which those noises are a fundamental component. The audience members are thus placed in a position that asks them to consider the complexity of the problem of maintaining some sense of self in a setting that makes the centred, stable self irrelevant (they may, after all, share Morose's anxieties about the invasive, disordering potential of noise since they hear the same real noises as he does). When Truewit, the play's most mobile and fluid character, and its strongest case for the advantages of embracing the unstable, provisional, noisy self asks the audience to applaud the play, then, he invites them to accept a more progressive attitude toward noise and the radically new social context of the urban world that it represents: to embrace the noise of the self-as-potential rather than the obsolete dream of stability represented in Morose's older worldview. The "cure" Truewit advises for Morose is, after all, more noise: he must embrace the city's

noise and become noisy himself in order to function in the urban world—and so, the play suggests, must the audience.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that early modern ideas about music made it a powerful imaginative strategy for articulating, examining, and playing with contradictory, problematic, temporary, and provisional notions of the self. For early moderns, music was a multivalent signifier, traversed by disparate and contradictory discourses.

Harmonious, disciplined music was linked to the structure of the cosmos, the nature of the divine, the natural hierarchies of the harmonious state, the disciplined humoral body, the reason and refined tastes of young gentlemen, and the virtue and chastity of young women. But disruptive, undisciplined music signaled all the dangerous opposites of its ideal counterpart: the universe thrown into turmoil and chaos, the hellish and the demonic, social tension and discord, the volatility of the emotions and the permeability of the body, dissolute and sensuous indulgence, and the erotic and effeminizing power of women. Indeed, because music was a kind of convergence point for just such a variety of sometimes conflicting discourses that intersect with a number of the major facets of early modern human experience, music was uniquely suited to the articulation of selves that resist total coherence and unity.

In the absence of a concrete philosophical language of subjectivity, early modern culture appears to have engaged in a process of experimenting with a number of competing potentials for instantiating and articulating selfhood through music. In this sense, the self that modern readers and viewers of early modern drama approach through a careful attention to the language of music and musical performances is not merely a waypoint on a course toward fully realized modern Western subjectivity, a

success or a failure of the unified, autonomous self. It is rather a set of particular, localized moments of articulation for a subjectivity produced imaginatively at the intersection between one or more of the facets of identity that can be signified by music's "radical promiscuity" (Ortiz 3), and the pressures exerted by competing discourses that produce the subjection or dissolution of that identity. The selves glimpsed in the musical moments identified in this dissertation are neither fully achieved subjects nor totally discursively produced effects of socio-historical process outside the self. They are rather somewhere in between. Each is a possibility for selfhood, a striving toward subjectivity that is produced through the language of music.

I have also endeavored to demonstrate that music, as an imaginative strategy for selfhood, is particularly effective in the theatre because the theatre allows for the deployment of music both as a poetic device and as a physical acoustic event. This is essential for the process of experimenting with subjectivity because music is an effect of a sensory realm that refuses containment within the dramatic world of the play, spilling off the stage and into the real world inhabited by a physically present audience invested in the possibilities and potentials on offer. The audience is directly implicated in the process of encountering selves and others because any benefit or danger attached to music in the world of the play is extended to an audience who hears real music and must confront its effects directly and actively even as it passively watches and listens to the play's on-stage characters doing the same.

I want to end, as I began, with one final example from Shakespeare. The opening scene of *Pericles* (c.1608) contains yet another instance of the trope of a secret self

imagined as music that was used to such powerful effect some years earlier in *Hamlet*.¹ When Pericles recognizes the import of the riddle he must solve in order to win Antiochus' daughter—that she is engaged in an incestuous relationship with her father—he expresses the sudden change in his perception of her by comparing her to a musical instrument:

You are a fair viol, and your sense the strings
 Who fingered to make man his lawful music,
 Would draw heaven down and all the gods to hearken,
 But being played upon before your time,
 Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime. (1.1.81-5)²

In *Hamlet*, recall, the prince's articulation of his secret self as musical notes invokes a contradictory subjectivity: a self imagined as private and resistant to scrutiny, but one which contains simultaneously, in the moment of its articulation, the possibility of its radical instability. The heart of Hamlet's mystery is a music that Guildenstern cannot sound, but that someone sufficiently skilled in music might. The situation in *Pericles* is similarly problematic. Pericles' recognition of the nature of the daughter's relationship with Antiochus involves a sudden discontinuity in his understanding of her identity, one that he chooses to express by comparing her to a viol. And like Hamlet's recorder metaphor, Pericles' image of the daughter as a viol is complex: through it, he recognizes some fundamental component of her identity; but he also participates in the inscription

¹ The scene in question was in fact probably authored primarily by George Wilkins, who worked in collaboration with Shakespeare on the play. See Hallet Smith's editorial introduction to the play in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1527-8). The appropriateness of the musical imagery here remains regardless of authorship.

² Discussions of the musical images in this passage can be found in Long, *Shakespeare*, Vol. 2, 36-7; Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, 128; Bloom 122-3; Wilson 53-4 and 172.

of that identity through discourses that shape women in terms of virgin purity and in relation to the men that own them. The daughter may be a viol, she may be the source of music, but that music's character and import changes depending on who plays her. A lawful husband's hand would sound the viol in sympathy with cosmic harmony, enticing even the gods to listen. But a monstrous father's hand leads to hellish, demonic tones that upset the natural order. When Pericles figures the daughter as a musical instrument, he simultaneously imagines a private truth resistant to scrutiny, and imagines the subjectivity that truth implies—the identity not evident in public, visual, articulable terms—as a nexus of discourses originating outside her self, in a culture that constructs femininity in passive relation to male power and ownership.

The two Shakespearean examples that bookend this study are, in many ways, musical worst-case scenarios: moments in which music exerts a profoundly decentering force on the subject. Hamlet imagines a self as musical notes, a self resistant to scrutiny at the hands of an incompetent musician, but also one that is the passive effect of an instrument, a self only awaiting disclosure through skillful-enough manipulation—the kind of manipulation he himself is capable of, as the play makes clear. Antiochus' daughter's deep secret is unearthed in musical language even as that language reveals her identity to be constructed by patriarchal values outside of herself—she is a viol played by one hand or another and does not even get a name. What I have endeavored to demonstrate in the dissertation as a whole, however, is that other plays from a range of early modern authors deploy music, both in poetic imagery and in physical performance, as a means of exploring the ways in which even unstable subjectivities can be sources of agency, autonomy, and resistance to normative

ideologies and structures of power precisely because of their provisionality. For women like Viola and Moll, cultural outsiders by chance and by choice respectively, always already circumscribed by their status as others to normative patriarchal values that generally assume that masculinity is a necessary condition for subjectivity, music functions as a discourse through which the dangerously affective, erotic power of women can be reappropriated for the production of selfhood. Each manipulates music in different ways as a strategy for the imaginative construction of an ideal, hybridized gender identity that allows for a measure of autonomy and agency, even if it is incomplete or temporary. For witches, like Hecate and her coven, Mother Sawyer, and the wives and mothers of Lancashire, music is a means of participating in and disrupting the imaginative construction of the self-other distinctions upon which social belonging in the early modern world depends. Witches, who are often the unruly other against which a normative community constructs the discourses of inclusion and exclusion that structure social identity, appropriate music's quasi-magical status to reclaim self-determination and to trouble the notions of absolute difference upon which English witchcraft beliefs in this period depend. Finally, for poor Morose, the absurd relic of old ways of living and being in the radically new social context of urban London, noise—the absolute other of music—is the acoustic locus of an experience he cannot abide: the total contingency and arbitrariness of a selfhood estranged from history and continuity. Noise, for Morose, is a strategy for imagining and rejecting a selfhood he cannot wield for his own benefit.

In broader terms, my hope is that this project has contributed to a process of approaching, in some measure, a greater sense of the vibrant give-and-take occurring

between the early modern theatre, the wider culture in which it is situated, and the playgoers that attended it. By listening carefully to its vibrant and complex uses of music, what we find on the early modern stage is not merely a mode of representing the ideas and experiences of a culture, but rather a kind of workshop or rehearsal space for producing, exploring, and experimenting with those ideas and experiences. Artists, actors, audiences, and the theatre space in which they converged were all engaged, this project demonstrates, in a dynamic and often imperfect process of imagining and constituting ways of thinking, feeling, and being in the early modern world.

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