

■ “Every Noise Appals Me”: Macbeth’s Plagued Ear

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Abstract

This paper will examine the destructive effects of sound/voice on *Macbeth* by taking the standpoint of Macbeth-as-listener, that is, of his receptive ears. I will explore how Macbeth degenerates into a pathological subject by looking at early modern physiological theories, especially with a Galenic medicinal standpoint, about the human ear/hearing and its impact on the brain. More precisely, I will analyze Macbeth’s various physical, spiritual, and moral transformations in terms of the interchange between his internal passions and the external sounds. In *Macbeth*, then, Shakespeare shows us the fearful result of those unsettled passions made possible by the protagonist’s desiring ears, once they have surrendered to the world’s tempting voices and words. On the other hand, unable to unburden himself of his fear and grief generated from his acts of murder, Macbeth is suffocated by the heavy “black bile” of the melancholy humor. In this play, evil is conceptualized as a disease, a disease of excessiveness that thickens the blood inside the body and blocks its healthy flow, and gives rise to a monstrous exaggeration, misinterpretation, distortion (as in hallucinations) of what lies outside of us. Thus, what Shakespeare is concerned with in *Macbeth* is not so much with rebellion and murder as it is the Renaissance concept of the self’s need to maintain a corporeal equilibrium that balance of the inner passions.

Keywords: early modern medicine, sounds/voices, hearing faculty, passions, Galen, Paracelsus, melancholy, Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

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Woe to the prince that pliant ear inclines
 And yields his mind to poisonous tale that floweth
 From flattering mouth!

— *Gorboduc* (2.2.103-05)

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a tale "full of sound and fury," a play full of the clamor, the noise of war and also of women's voices. Sounds are heard in the opening scene with its "hurly-burly" (1.1.3) of battles and thunder, in the witches' boiling cauldron of poisoned insects, in Lady Macbeth's outpourings of rage, in the shrieking owls on the night of Duncan's being murdered, and in the mournful cry of the women when Lady Macbeth dies. To the very end we hear the curses of the obsessive listener Macbeth, as if the voices he constantly hears have become a thundering "fury" within his maddened self. The polyphony of this world of noises is bewildering, and grotesque visions and sad feelings are also made to appear and to be felt in the sounds.

The play profoundly exhibits Shakespeare's interest and intention in the hearing faculty that gives rise to the speculation on the association of sound/voice and bodily inwardness in both a private and public spectrum. The soundscape of the world of *Macbeth* serves not merely as a background for the acts of evil, but instead the core source of the ultimate catastrophe, specifically enacted in the ears of the title protagonist. The play becomes a theatrical performance of Macbeth's moral as well as physiological degeneration as he moves from a passive and vulnerable hearer of dangerous words (articulated by Lady Macbeth and the witches) to a compulsive sound-seeker desperately in need of them that were taken by him as the remedy of his stolen yet decaying political body. Moral deterioration is admittedly conceptualized in terms of bodily materiality, where the notion of vice and disease is merged and evil appeals more to the ears than to the eyes. The excessiveness of bodily humoral fluids is equivalent to the disorder of a socio-political organism, which points to the emphasis of the governing of passions in a world haunted by sounds.

Depicted as a charmed auditor, Macbeth appears to be among the few of Shakespeare's dangerous yet unnoticed hearers.¹ Critics on the study of voice/sound in relation to Shakespeare's works, as particularly seen in Wes Folkert's

¹ Greatly associated with the depiction of ears like *Hamlet*, there appears a number of studies on sound and hearing of the play, but *Macbeth* has only received scanty attention in its criticism. Though, however, Evelyn Tribble's "When Every Noise Appals Me': Sound and Fear in *Macbeth* and Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*" (2005) includes the discussion of noise, it focuses instead on the film adaptation performance and the effects of soundscape in cinematic presentation than on the physiological exploration disclosed here.

The Sound of Shakespeare, though admirably exploring the several cases of sounds and subjectivity, do not seem to include the discussion of *Macbeth*. Moreover, studies also focusing on physiology (anatomy) and medicine in *Macbeth* give more attention to the analysis of blood rather than on the somatic parts.² Distancing itself from the current related literature of the play, this paper will examine the destructive effects of sound or voice on Macbeth, by taking the standpoint of Macbeth-as-listener, that is, of his receptive ears, to look at the interiority within an acoustic context, the *hereness* of the listener. I will show how Macbeth as self or subject is permeated and corrupted by voices from outside that lead him to commit evil acts. More precisely, I will analyze Macbeth's various physical, spiritual, and moral transformations in terms of the interchange between his internal passions and the external sounds. To do this I will be looking closely at early modern physiology and psychology, which were seen as being closely interrelated.

Early modern medical theories took the self as being constituted by both the corporeal body and its restive passions, by their interplay which itself becomes a transformative force. This susceptibility of the self to constant transformation, to being easily altered by inner/outer forces, calls our attention to its fragility. I will therefore be interpreting Macbeth's degeneration in his pursuit of absolute power as a pathological case, for his overreaching self is characterized by a body that is easily permeated, easily infected by the venomous language of the witches and the demonic urging of Lady Macbeth. Therefore this essay will explore how Macbeth degenerates into a pathological subject by looking at early modern physiological theories, especially with a Galenic medicinal standpoint, about the human ear/hearing and its impact on the brain.

To hear what Macbeth hears, one is led into his inner passage of passion that displays the drama of fear and grief; however, rather than seeing the horror visage of evil itself, it is the vision of a self in desperate search of his imaginary cure for empowering a melancholic "hurt mind" from the voices of the women. Through the early modern physiological lens, Macbeth is disassociated from his heroic legacy, appearing a mere living creature born to be affected, in his case, by the sound of siren. If listening is a choice (Smith 6), both the presentation of Macbeth's obsession with the words he chooses to listen to and the cause of that attachment demand a careful examination. The ear's choice of sounds, as they

² See for example, W. A. Murray's "Why Was Duncan's Blood Golden?" (1966) and Marian Joyce Angele's dissertation, *Bloodscripts: Violence and the Construction of the Body in Seneca's Medea and Shakespeare's Macbeth* (1994). Arguing also with a medicinal viewpoint, Lisa A. Tomaszewski's "'Throw Physic to the Dogs!': Moral Physicians and Medical Malpractice in *Macbeth*" (2008) aims at a textual examination of the doctor-characters in relation to the practice of physician in the Renaissance era.

threaten to alter one's interiority, becomes a choice of moral acting. Macbeth remains a failed listener, one who is mastered and maddened by his greedy ears, doomed in his utter surrender to the attempting sounds in domestic and alien fields.

The Sense of Hearing and the Passions of Early Modern England

"Man's 'sinfulness' is not a fact," as Nietzsche put it in *The Genealogy of Morals*, "but merely the interpretation of a fact, namely of physiological depression" (Paster 274). The association of material corporeality with morality suggested here has shaped the framework of this article, for the evil of a character like Macbeth may be seen as being manifested, not in the reality of his evildoings but in the "physiological depression" of the self, in how this sinfulness is interpreted/configured by the interrelation of the body and identity.³ In the context of early modern physiological speculation on the relation between affections and actions, Macbeth may be seen as a self disturbed and plagued by his passions, a self unable to regulate himself like a government that is out of control. The monitoring of the sensuality of the self is considered to be, in the early modern era, essential to the formation of a healthy body and soul. Thus Michael Schoenfeldt says: "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).⁴

Macbeth's failure to be a good ruler, in other words, is analogous to his powerlessness in the self-governing of his passions. Thomas Wright,⁵ a moral philosopher contemporary to Bacon, in *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604) compares the ruling of one's own affections with that of one's kingdom:

By two ways the subjects of every Commonweale, usually disturbe the State, and breede civill broyles therein: The first is, when they rise up and rebel against their King: the second is, when they brawle one with another, and so cause riots and

³ I consider Macbeth's "physiological depression" to be a humoral disease, one seen in his melancholy, and so I examine it in the latter part of the paper via the application of Galen's medical theory.

⁴ Michael Schoenfeldt contrasts the early modern and modern views of emotion. As he puts it, "In the early modern regime, it is unfettered emotion that is most to be feared, while in the modern psychoanalytic regime it is the unhealthy effect of those fetters" (17).

⁵ According to E. David Hoeniger, Thomas Wright, a Catholic, appears to have been a moral psychologist in Shakespeare's time, one who "tended to follow Aquinas on the inward wits, the relation of heart to brain, and the role of the sensitive or vital soul, as well as on the temperaments and passions" (156). The popularity of Wright's work *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604) "suggests that Shakespeare may have known it" (156).

tumults: the former is called Rebellion, the latter sedition. After the same manner, Passions either rebel against Reason their Lord and King, or oppose themselves one against another. . . . This internall Combat and spirituall Contradition every spirituall man daily perceiveth, for inordinate Passions, will he, nill he, cease not almost hourelly to rise up against Reason, and so molest him, troubling the rest and quietnesse of his Soule. . . . For these rebellious Passions are like crafty pioners, who, while shouldiers live carelessly within their Castle, or at least not much suspect, they undermine it, and breake in so upon them, that they can hardly escape: in like manner these affections undermine the understandings of men. (68-70)

Thus our attempt to control our own affections is really a civil war between our opposed internal affections, and also a rebellion of all our uncontrolled desires against our disciplined will. From this political-physiological perspective, the interiority of the self is imagined as a kingdom that is continually beset by these two kinds of conflict. The self is a site of infection, contagion, constant self-transformation. Again, in Wright's illustration of the political physiological perception of the interiority of the self, we are led back to Nietzsche's "physiological depression" in perceiving evilness, which is an interpretation of the fact: the predominance of passions in moral existence.

In *Macbeth*, then, we could speak of the disorder that prevails within the inner "kingdom" of the protagonist himself, whose reason may seem not up to the task of staying in control: his out-of-control ambition leads him to kill Duncan, and this act leads in turn to a feeling of guilt and confusion. It is a play manifesting evil through the display of the rebellious passions. The loss of reason in Macbeth's self leads to his restlessness: right after murdering the king, Macbeth hears a voice—his own inner voice, the voice of a guilty conscience, of regret, of fear—crying: "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murther Sleep" (2.2.34-35). Thinking of the larger-scale "kingdom" here we could also see Passion, now personified as Macbeth, rebelling against reason (Duncan) and killing reason (Duncan and Banquo). It is a breakdown of both the health of the public and private bodily kingdoms.

To analyze out-of-control human passions we have to first look at the five senses, which produce internal vibrations, in particular those of sound in the case of *Macbeth*. The effect of hearing on the human brain, for such early modern philosophical-psychological thinkers as Francis Bacon and Thomas Wright and anatomical physiologists like Helkiah Crooke, is considered to be much more powerful than that of seeing. Bacon in *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626) gives the supremacy of hearing over sight a physiological base.⁶ For him, though sight is "the most

⁶ This seems to have been something new in the early modern period, for Plato "had declared in no uncertain terms that sight provides the most direct access between external objects and the soul" (Smith

spiritual” (1626: no. 873) of the senses, other sounds and especially music are far more able to arouse men’s passions. Bacon explains: “The *Cause* is, for that the *Sense of Hearing* striketh the *Spirits* more immediately, than the other *Senses*; And more incorporeally than the *Smelling*. For the *Sight*, *Taste*, and *Feeling*, haue their *Organs*, not of so present and immediate *Accesse* to the *Spirits*, as the *Hearing* hath” (1626: no. 114).⁷ The visual impressions taken in via our sense of sight, clearly enough, do not act on the brain in the same way that sounds do, for sound is carried through the air and has the more gross physical sense of something that “emerges” or “bursts forth” or “interrupts,” etc. Thus, again, sound has something more like a physical force to move us, move our passions (e.g. anger or pleasure). The sense of sight, however, does not act on the brain in the same way as does hearing, which heavily depends on the medium of air and involves sounds that may “emerge” or “burst forth” and that may also be “broken off.” Hearing also makes for stronger passions of pleasure and offense. As Bacon says, “We see, there is no *Colour* that affecteth the *Eye* much with *Displeasure*: There be *Sights*, that are *Horrible*, because they excite the *Memory* of *Things* that are *Odious*, or *Fearefull*; But the same *Things* Painted doe little affect, by a *Participation*, or *Impulsion* of the *Body*, of the *Object*” (1626: no. 700). In conclusion, “So is *Sound* alone, that doth immediately, and incorporeally, affect most” (1626: no. 700).

Hearing gives us “access to the spirits,” for Bacon and older thinkers like Aristotle and later Galen, because the inward flow of air through the passage of our ear is a form of communication with our soul. More precisely, there is a conjunction of external sounds with internal perception via the “implanted air” of the inner ear, and sounds, carried by the inner ear’s nerve to the brain, stimulate or generate “passions.” To suit the passions in respect to sound and hearing, Wright says in his *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604) that the heart has a different relation to the passions: they “dilate or coarct the heart” (60), that is, to contract it. Joyful passions dilate the heart, while painful ones confine it. When one experiences a pleasant passion, “the purer spirits retyre vnto the heart” (60) to produce rich blood and thus promote good health, and painful passions cause the melancholy humor to invade the heart, which blocks the process of purifying the blood. The relation between the passions and humours is interactive: “Passions ingender Humours, and humours breed Passions”

103). In his *Timaeus*, Plato states that the first sense organs to be placed on or in human heads by the creating gods were the eyes (Smith 103).

⁷ For the quotes from Bacon, I am indebted to Bruce R. Smith. See *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, 103.

(Bamborough 64). Wright, who specifies the power of music to generate passions, speaks of "the very sound itself, which according to the best philosophy is nothing else but a certain artificial shaking, crispling, or tickling of the air . . . which passeth through the ears, and by them into the heart, and there beateth and tickleth it in such sort as it is moved with semblable passions" (209). For Wright, the moving air waves physically strike the inner faculty of hearing. Crooke, in *Microcosmographia. A Description of the Body of Man* (1615), discusses the organs located in the head, including those of hearing. Crooke mentions the interrelation between the outer and inner ears: "For in these breaches of the eare as it were in hollow bodyes, not onely the sound of the ayre that rusheth in is readily and exactly drawne and fully receiued: but also it is broken and boundeth or reboundeth as a ball against the sides of the inequalities . . ." (575). Crook's observation on the ears here is not too much different from that of Wright in the sense that air is an essential part in producing sound and causes great effect to the ear.

Inasmuch as it is the sense of hearing that has the greatest effect on the brain, especially in its stirring up of the passions, the self has to guard its own porous passages (the ears) against the intrusions of a potentially harmful world. In *Macbeth*, then, Shakespeare shows us the fearful result of those unsettled passions made possible by the protagonist's desiring ears, once they have surrendered to the world's tempting voices and words. From the early modern point of view, the feminine receptivity and penetrability of an aggressive male warrior's sense of hearing may potentially confuse his passions, transforming him into a doer of evil deeds. Thus what Shakespeare is concerned with in *Macbeth* is not so much with rebellion and murder (not in this "sinfulness" itself, to use Nietzsche's term) as it is the Renaissance concept of the self's need to maintain a corporeal equilibrium, where virtue is achieved for the avoiding of excessiveness and alternation, that balance of the passions which Schoenfeldt speaks of.

Macbeth's Desiring Ears: "Tell Me More"

At the end of his duel with Macduff, Macbeth desperately denounces the witches' "tongue":

MACBETH. *Accursed be that tongue* that tells me so,
 For it hath cow'd my better part of man:
 And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
 That palter with us in a double sense;
 That keep the work of promise to our ear,
 And break it to our hope. (emphasis added, 5.8.17-22)

Here Macbeth acknowledges the threatening power of the female tongue, more specifically the witches' tongue(s) that has (have) confused his mind ("my better part of man") or rather "cowed" it—made it weak and submissive (to them), literally "made it a woman" (or "a woman's mind"). That it is their "tongue"—that phallic female part from which, as the art of speech, women gain much power—which is as it were thrusting it "into his ear" is very significant here.⁸

To the end, however, what Macbeth questions about is the reliability of the female tongue that provokes much false imagination but not his own shattered mind that misjudges and unconditionally accepts tricky and misleading "female words" throughout the play, words that have perhaps been juggled in the air by these "juggling fiends," words that have poured into his vulnerable, cow-like ear, his fatal orifice that remains open and defenseless. While Lady Macbeth and the witches are made masculine mainly by the power of their phallic tongues, Macbeth can be seen as a feminized warrior who relies so totally, even so desperately on his feminine, receptive ears that it almost seems he himself has become nothing but his sense of hearing.⁹

Yet his ear easily receives the poisoned "tongue" of his wife and the witches, their poisoned words, just as Hamlet's father, the old King of Denmark, was murdered by the poison ("a leprous distilment," 1.5.63) poured into the "porches" of his ear by his evil, deceptive brother. Unlike King Hamlet's, however, Macbeth's is a "desiring" ear, one that remains open and inviting. Sometimes Macbeth may even appeal to us as a vulnerable, sensual, and self-absorbed character whose sensuality is centered in his feminized ear: he tends to hear but not see things around him; he listens only to appealing words and can only see false visions. He lives in an acoustic world that determines his every movement and action, a sub-

⁸ The concept of the corporeal tongue is conceived or gendered as phallic in the early modern period, and thinkers of this era consider the "taming" of this "little member" to be necessary, as we see in such works as Erasmus's *Lingua* (1525) and Thomas Adams's *The Taming of the Tongue* (1619). The female tongue is thought to be poisonous, in both moral and medical terms, and as such the source of contamination, as specified in the well-known but anonymous work *The Anatomy of a Woman's Tongue* (1639). As for English Tudor and Stuart culture, woman's unruly power of speech is depicted in several medical and literary works, including Croke's *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (1615), Phineas Fletcher's *The Purple Island* (1633), and Thomas Tomkis's play *Lingua, or the Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority* (1607). For a fuller medical analysis of the fatal phallic power of woman's tongue as it is used by Lady Macbeth and the witches, see my recently published article, "The Pathogenic Female Tongue: A Galenic and Paracelsian Diagnosis of *Macbeth*," *Humanitas Taiwanica* 78 (2013): 209-37.

⁹ In early modern European discourses the ear is the receiver or medium of both spiritual elevation and evil. Folkerth speaks of "the notion of the feminized ear that crops up in contemporary religious discourse, wherein the ear is held to be the site of spiritual fertilization . . . as well as the temptation of Eve" (72). The ear as feminine "receptacle" can suggest the Virgin Mary's pregnancy (an angel had spoken to Mary) as well as Eve's receptiveness to Satan's words in the Garden of Eden.

ject making judgments solely based on what he has chosen to listen to. Macbeth is a character "always seeking the answers and solutions he wants to hear" (Tomaszewski 188).

Shakespeare has sharpened Macbeth's obscured mind right in the primary scene where his audience witnesses the juxtaposition of Macbeth's pathological subject with Banquo's healthy self. In contrast to Macbeth, who is so easily "solicited" by the witches' words promising his future glory in the opening scene, Banquo remains untouched by their stirring language. Indeed, Banquo uses his eyes rather than his ears in his careful observation of the three weird sisters' grotesque appearance: "you should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so" (1.3.46-47). Before the three witches begin to speak flatteringly about both men's future success, Banquo sees clearly that they are unnatural, grotesque, perverse, perhaps evil. He is a normal man who "sees," a rational subject that can resist appeals to his emotions, control his own passions. He tells the witches he is one "who neither beg[s], nor fear[s], / Your favours nor your hate" (1.3.60-61). Macbeth also sees "that dauntless temper of his mind, / He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour / To act in safety" (3.4.77). However, Macbeth, after hearing the three witches' "prophecy" that he would become the king, says: "Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more" (emphasis added, 1.3.70). Macbeth's ear is greedy in its readiness to capture even the doubted winged knowledge; it is an ear giving credits to unknown and perhaps unsafe and thus unclean voices. He is quite unaware that he has already fallen victim to their deceptive words of the agents from the unknown, "come under their spell." Banquo immediately warns: "The instruments of Darkness tell us truths; / Win us with honest trifles, to betray's / In deepest consequence" (1.3.124-26). Banquo's equating of the words of the three weird sisters with the agents of evil discloses, again, his healthy and reasoning mind that can ward off the invasion of contaminated words.

Macbeth, however, is deaf to Banquo's words of reason, already a listener led by the witches' "prophetic" words: "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill; cannot be good" (1.3.131). The ear of Macbeth is, thus, the site for his intimate experiencing of the play's paradoxical "word": "fair is foul and foul is fair," which may be closely related to the paradox, "true is false and false is true." This uncanny orifice becomes obsessed with the sounds of imagined success, the counterpart to his ambitions, yet it uncontrollably captures the sounds of false knowledge. Macbeth apparently is a dangerous hearer, with too much ambition that easily makes him to be dissolved by the language of temptation, in which evil is enacted and the subject is plagued through the passage of ear. This opening soliloquy already marks a heroic warrior's defenselessness in the face of the

fantasized power of these supernatural agents.

Guided intuitively by his hearing, then, Macbeth is literally “possessed” by sounds. In the scene just before he kills King Duncan offstage, Macbeth “hears” rather than “sees” this murder: the assassin and his surroundings are fully absorbed within a kind of acoustic medium, acoustic world. Hearing the murder that he *will* commit, as if in a certain sort of prophecy, its noises frighten him more than the deed itself: “Thou sure and firm-set earth, / Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear / Thy very stones prate of my where-about, / And take the present horror from the time, / Which now suits with it” (2.1.56-60). The earth too, traditionally the fertile womb of the mother bearing fruit, has an ear for listening (“Hear not my steps”) and yet he fears the “very stones” on which he walks may “prate of my where-about.” The sound of the bell strikes Macbeth’s ears, marking the beginning of his rebellion, the moment of his irreversible break with his warrior past:

MACBETH. I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to Heaven, or to Hell. (2.1.62-64)

Here again we see Macbeth’s passive receptiveness to sound, for he feels that he is being invited (to one place or the other) by the ringing bell. In other words, he is dominated by the sound of the bell, a body led by its ears to perform the fatal deeds. His calling to Duncan to shut his ears is really a sort of echo of his call to himself to stop up his own ears so as not to be forced to go “to Heaven, or to Hell.” In this scene, Shakespeare has carefully situated the fateful moment within an echoing world of sound, capturing the face of the murderer’s fear as he takes this irrevocable step. Then, as the immediate aftermath of the murder haunts him aurally, Macbeth hears a voice: “Methought, I heard a voice cry, ‘Sleep no more! Macbeth does murth’r Sleep,’—the innocent Sleep” (2.2.34-35). Significantly, Macbeth’s instant recall after the murder to his wife is enclosed with his hearing of sounds: he is metaphorically killed by the imagining voice, as the words are taking over his life of peacefulness and his heroic identity. In killing Duncan, an innocent man who now can sleep, the protagonist has murdered his own sleep, ruined any chance of sleeping peacefully again—for he will have a guilty conscience, will be haunted by terrible memories and, in his sleep, terrible dreams. Noticeably, Shakespeare has introduced an early modern medical image here: the disturbance of the natural order (by killing someone) as well as, in this case, the political order (killing the king), is analogous to the internal disturbance or disruption of a healthy body which has now become sleepless, that is, it is the initial stage or major cause of “disease”

or another form of it. But if we also take it as meaning that the whole natural order, which includes the cycle of our waking and sleeping states, has been destroyed for everyone, then "time" itself will be, as Hamlet says, "out of joint."

A little later, Macbeth hears another shocking sound:

MACBETH. Whence is that *knocking*?—
 How is't with me, when *every noise appals me*?
 What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
 (emphasis added, 2.2.56-58)

Here the noise of knocking invades Macbeth's diseased interior, who was configured as a frightened, restless, and diseased self, and the perception is materialized to the point that he also sees what he hears, the knocking hands. This hallucination once again reveals Macbeth to the audience as a shattered, fragmented subject who is easily invaded by external hands as well as sounds. Yet we begin once again with the invasive sound, the knocking. He now also sees the hands that knock on or through the boundaries of his self and pluck out the very eyes that have seen (hallucinated) them, leaving again only sound. The theater audience witnesses a raving madman who is "appalled by every noise."

This sound of knocking extends from the ears of Macbeth and continues to echo throughout the dramatic space of the play that is fully preoccupied by the disturbing notes right after the murder, and soon we hear it in the comic Porter's soliloquy.

Here is a knocking, indeed! If a man were Porter
 of Hell Gate, he should have old turning the key.
 [*Knocking.*] Knock, knock, knock. Who's there,
 I th' name of Belzebub?—Here's a farmer, that
 hang'd himself on th' expectation of plenty: coming in,
 time-pleaser; have napkins enow about you; here
 you'll sweat for't. (2.3.1-7)

This soliloquy, though jesting in nature, is enclosed by the knocking refrains, and it gives us more explicitly the images of disorder and hell¹⁰ in the natural and secular world, as well as a glimpse of disease with "you'll sweat for't."¹¹ Those references to hell, the devil, drink and voluptuary display behind the door-gate of the castle point to a more true significance than mere a comic re-

¹⁰ The scene here, with Macduff knocking at the gate of Macbeth's castle, is regarded as an analogous scenario of the arrival of Christ and his knocking of the castle of hell, after his crucifixion and before his resurrection, to claim the release of the souls of the prophets and patriarchs (Wickham 71-72).

¹¹ John B. Harcourt associates the word "sweat" with the sweat-tub therapy for venereal disease, adopted largely as a treatment for syphilis or the "French disease." Words such as "French," "hose," and "goose" are linked with this disease (398).

lief: they are metaphorically sounded in the heard pressing knockings. It is as if the “sound” of Macbeth’s guilt, of the evil he has done, continues to reverberate and to fill this dramatic space or world, its rhythms repeated later on when Macduff finds Duncan dead and cries out: “O horror! horror! horror!” (2.3.62). As human mind is considered in the early modern period as a walled city and here the door-gate of the castle can be presumed as the passage of hearing faculty,¹² the Porter’s act of eventually opening the door to the visitors mimics the ear’s necessary receptivity to the sound of urgent knocking, whose rhythm will stimulate, will give rise to the urgent beat of our inward passions. Here the sudden knowledge of bloody murder and high treason will also arouse the collective passions of the court, confusing it, as if a contagion were now spreading to the public body.

A Galenic Physiological Case Study¹³

The characteristics of Macbeth’s cognitive recognition of his surroundings, which relies so heavily on his sense of hearing, can also be interpreted in terms of Galenic humoral theory. “Humoral theory,” writes Nancy G. Siraisi, “is probably the single most striking example of the habitual preference in ancient, medieval, and Renaissance medicine for materialist explanations of mental and emotional states” (106). From a Galenic perspective, then, Macbeth’s body could be seen as having an excess of cold humors, which means that Macbeth is always seeking heat, and that he clings to the words of the witches and Lady Macbeth due to this need for corporeal heat. This approach also makes it easier to speak of the protagonist’s own voice as well as his desiring, receptive ears. In the view of early modern physiology, as Bruce R. Smith indicates, “[voice] is shaped by the vocal apparatus in ways determined by the body’s four humors,” and the physiologists assumed “volume of voice to be an effect not just of air pressure but of heat” (100). It was also assumed that female bodies tended to be “cold” while male bodies had an excess of heat. As King James I’s physician, Helkiah Crooke, put it in 1615: “For the matter of mans body, it is soft, pliable and temperate, readie to follow the Workeman in every thing, and to every pur-

¹² For the classical and medieval thinkers, as Smith points out, human mind is imagined as a walled city. “The topos is elaborated on an epic scale in Bartolomeo del Bene’s philosophical poem *Civitas Verisive Morum* (1609). . . . Five gates in the city walls correspond to the five senses” (101).

¹³ Galen is the Greek physician of the second century A.D. Siraisi notes, “Greek medicine reached its fullest development in Galen . . . ; he addressed not only anatomy but also physiology, pathology, semiotics (symptomatology), hygiene, and therapy” (4).

pose; for man is the moistest and most sanguine of all Creatures" (5).¹⁴ However, we have already noted the feminine aspect of Macbeth, with his ear that is so open to, and desiring of, the powerful phallic voices of his wife and the witches. In terms of humoral theory, then, we might say that Macbeth's cold body is easily penetrated by the masculine voices of the witches and Lady Macbeth, for they give it heat.

Macbeth's *cold* humor, according to Galen, is thought to produce a melancholic nature that perhaps suggests Nietzsche's "physiological depression." Furthermore, Shakespeare might see, like other Elizabethan writers, "the melancholic's criminal bias as very dangerous because melancholy sometimes endows men with great acumen, which presumably may be turned to evil uses" (Babb 84). At this point Macbeth's overreaching self, a self aspiring for would-be greatness, has come significantly under the influence of his excessive melancholic humor. His character or personality is of the melancholic malcontent type,¹⁵ as he is one of those who is "dissatisfied with the political *status quo* and eager to overthrow it" (Babb 75). Macbeth is the melancholy man who desires a greater self, a melancholic malcontent obsessed with the thought that he is the king,¹⁶ marked with a "dangerous inclination to treachery" (Babb 76).

Thus Macbeth's frequent states or "moods" of anxiety, nervousness, guilt and fear are also the results of his melancholy. In this respect he stands in contrast to the calm, rational and self-confident Banquo. David F. Hoeniger says that the cold humor "can be caused by or is prone to arouse the cold passions, especially fear and excessive grief, and a general state of heaviness" (165). "Fear and grief and other painful passions, contracting the heart as they do . . . cause melancholy humor to invade the heart . . . and hinder the process of purifying the blood" (168). This "diagnosis" may help to explain Macbeth's overwhelming feelings of guilt, self-doubt, confusion and sadness after killing the king and again an intense sense of fear later after killing Banquo, his sense of having taken, as Hamlet says, "the poison of deep grief" (4.5.75), his sense that life itself has now become meaningless for murdering Duncan.

¹⁴ In Croke, *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (London, 1615; STC 6062.2. I am indebted to Gail Kern Paster (1993) for this citation of Croke.

¹⁵ The similar literary figures of melancholic malcontent type in the English Renaissance can also include, to name only a few, Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, another overreacher who sees himself a demi-god, Vindice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, a villain malcontent exercising his assumed wit in murdering, and another villain malcontent, Bosola in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.

¹⁶ Melancholy people "are peculiarly subject to hallucinatory obsessions and fixed ideas," and some believe that they are kings, emperors, popes or cardinals (Babb 43, 45).

MACBETH. Had I but died an hour before this chance,
 I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant,
 There's nothing serious in mortality;
 All is but toys: renown, and grace, is dead;
 The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
 Is left this vault to brag of. (2.3.89-94)

The heroic identity of Macbeth collapses in a sudden moment when he is grasped by his deep grief of his becoming a traitor to his king, his country, and his warrior self.

Other than troubled by his woe, we see Macbeth's fear directly in his hallucinations that accompany his killing of Duncan and then Banquo. Just before stabbing the king as he sleeps, Macbeth hallucinates a dagger that moves through the air, an "air-dawn dagger, which . . . / Led [him] to Duncan" (3.4.61-62). Here he clings, if just barely, to his reason, questioning whether this is "but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, / Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain" (2.1.37-39). The last phrase could suggest the melancholic's transformed state as he is about to actually commit the deed. However, Macbeth is totally lost to his fear in his later vision, after murdering Banquo, of Banquo's ghost. He does not question the reality of his hallucination this time. That is, possessed by the passion of fear, he no longer can tell the difference between reality and fantasy. In these scenes of hallucination we see that his mind, his inward state has become more diseased as a result of this "bloody business" (2.1.48).

There are various early modern medical theories about the causes of hallucination and its relation to melancholy, such as those of Avicenna, André Du Laurens (Laurentius), Thomas Aquinas, and Robert Burton. Aquinas explicates the three ways in which hallucinations may be caused or may occur:

Thence, when the intellect [reason, judging faculty] is not dominant, animals act after phantasy. . . . This veiling of the intellect, happens in three ways. First, from a certain passion of wrath, or concupiscence, or fear Second it results from a certain infirmity, such as occurs in frenzied or furious persons. And third, in a dream, as happens in sleeping persons. For from these causes it happens that the intellect does not prevail over the phantasy, when the person follows the phantastic apprehension as if it were true. (qtd. in Hankins 90)¹⁷

Indeed, Macbeth's hallucinations do seem to result from his excessive fear (related to guilt) or from the "infirmity" of "frenzy," which are a part of his melancholic humor.¹⁸ His condition reminds us of Du Laurens's description of the melan-

¹⁷ See John E. Hankins's *Backgrounds of Shakespeare's Thought* for the citation and translation from Aquinas's *Commentarium in De Anima Aristotelis* 3.6.670, as in *Opera omnia* (Rome, 1570).

¹⁸ Those characteristic symptoms of Macbeth's melancholia, his hallucinations including especially

choly man in the medical book *A Discourse of the Preservation of Sight* (1599):¹⁹

The melancholike man properly so called . . . is ordinarily out of heart, always fearful and trembling, in such sort as that he is afraid of every thing, yea and maketh himself a terror unto himself, as the beast which looketh himself in a glasse; he would runne away and cannot goe, he goeth oftentimes sighing . . . he is subject to watchfulness, which doth consume him on the one side . . . hee is assayed with a thousand vaine visions. (82)

This quality of being or becoming "a terror unto oneself" fits well the character of Macbeth, as does "watchfulness," which may suggest Macbeth's "murdering of sleep" and his "thousand vaine visions." On the other hand, the melancholic subject of Du Laurens, Burton and the others is, to use Lawrence Babb's words, "conscious of a 'ringing' or a 'hissing' in the ears." Babb continues, "[t]hey hear 'bells' or 'a voice sounding in [their] eares'" (42). This observation recalls Macbeth's hearing of various sounds and voices after his murder of Duncan.

Unable then to unburden himself of his fear and grief, Macbeth is suffocated by the heavy "black bile" of the melancholy humor. The excess of black bile endangers the body, especially the spleen, as "it is due to a blockage in the vein that connects the liver to the spleen, preventing an adequate amount of the dark humor from reaching the spleen and causing it to return to the liver instead, where it 'muddies' all the rest of the body" (Hoeniger 143). In the play, Macbeth's inner "darkening" parallels the outer darkness of the night, the metaphor of black bile, the main cause of melancholy.²⁰ As a melancholic who "maketh himself a terror unto himself" and is "always fearful and trembling," "afraid of every thing," Macbeth nonetheless repeatedly returns to the witches' words, as these can keep alive his so-far thwarted desire. He takes these words as a remedy, a cure for his diseased spirit.

Later in the play, under siege, Macbeth for the first time reasserts his bravery he remains as a self dependent on his sense of hearing: "I have almost forgot the taste of fears. / The time has been, my senses would have cool'd / To *hear* a night-shriek . . . / Direness . . . / Cannot once start me" (emphasis added; 5.5.9-15). Macbeth's famous soliloquy on the occasion of his wife's death also appeals to the sense of hearing, but now he notes that sound, after all, signifies nothing:

his auditory ones, can be interpreted via Babb's observation in *The Elizabethan Malady* that "[a] frequent result of melancholy, . . . is hallucination—usually fearful—due to the corruption of the physical instruments of the mind, specially the animal spirit, by the melancholy humor or its vapors" (110).

¹⁹ Du Laurens "was the principal physician of Henry IV and chancellor of the faculty of Montpellier. He died in 1609" (Babb 191).

²⁰ As Burton notes, the melancholy man "*loves darkness as life, & cannot endure the light, or to sit in lightsome places,*" (I, 445).

MACBETH. Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is *heard no more*: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of *sound* and fury,
 Signifying nothing. (emphasis added, 5.5.24-28)

Macbeth sees the over-inflatedness of his own mad ambition here, his ultimately empty posturing as a figure who, judged from a more distant and objective view, would seem absurdly vain and self-important, especially given that life is short for everyone, no matter how good or how successful. Still, he casts his own absurd quest in terms of sound: it is a “tale” that is “told” (albeit by an idiot), and all of its anger and aggression and violence and inflated self-importance is or will have been “sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.” This long tale of sound finally signifies nothing to Macbeth: sound that prompts him king, sound that turns his loyal blood into rebellious blood, sound that deprives him “Balm of hurt minds” (sleep), sound that but leads “The way to dusty death.”

A Tale from “Tell Me More” to “Heard No More”

The last “sound” of Shakespeare’s Macbeth is heard in the final, futile outcry of an unyielding Macbeth. Explicitly referring to a tongue and to the acts of telling and signifying, this speech clearly, on various levels, “signifies nothing.” Macbeth is cursing the witches’ “forked” tongues, for what they last told him—he shall be harmed by “none of woman born” and “shall never vanquish’d be, until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill, / Shall come against him”—has “falsely” encouraged him, and led him to this fatal encounter with Macduff. Yet he brought this doom upon himself at every step of the way, including his wrong interpretation of the witches’ speech based upon his inability to imagine that such “unnatural” things could actually happen, or rather that the witches might be using the ideas (the terms) of “birth” and “a moving forest” in this unexpected or tricky, playful way.

However, to gain a broader perspective on Macbeth’s “cursing of the tongue” it will be helpful to quote from Adams in “The Taming of the Tongue” (1629): “if the depopulation of Countries, if the consuming fires of contention, if the land manured with blood, had a tongue to speake; they would all accuse the Tongue for the originall cause of their woe” (148). Human language and discourse is what makes possible the commands of kings and the arguments between rival kings and high officials in government, that is, the “consuming fires of contention” which lead to wars (or *are* wars), covering the land with blood and

depopulating countries. In encouraging Macbeth to lead his forces against those of Macduff/Malcom, no matter who the victor turned out to be they were promoting further strife and bloodshed.

Yet gender clearly also plays a central role in the play, and it is the tongues of his wife and the witches that powerfully feed the flames of Macbeth's mad ambition. This fits with the early modern view that whereas men represent Logos or Reason in their thinking and also in their speech (Logos also means "speech" in Greek), women's Lingua (literally "tongue") is the expression of a wild and chaotic, emotional and irrational "Unreason." Thus even Adams may have been assuming that the angry, contentious, irrational, violent speech of rival kings or other political leaders was the result of their domination, at that moment, by the female Lingua, the female "humor" of irrationality.

Spoken "language" obviously has powerful effects, as in the violent outpouring of emotional sounds/words (in rage, pain, joy), the moving rhetoric of a public speech or the seductive sounds of a foreign language. These speech sounds may cause the unnatural flow of bodily fluids. In *Macbeth*, "health" appears to be based on ethical and medical speculations, to be imagined as a balance or equilibrium between the inner humors and outside contacts, where "alien" contacts such as those with diseases and other unfamiliar, unnatural forces (the witches) are to be avoided.²¹ To the degree that negative forces are taken into the body, the inner humors must try to compensate for them, balance them out, overcome or "cure" them. In this sense, generally in the early modern period and specifically in this play, evil is conceptualized as a disease, a disease of excessiveness that thickens the blood inside the body and blocks its healthy flow, and gives rise to a monstrous exaggeration, misinterpretation, distortion (as in hallucinations) of what lies outside of us. In *Macbeth*, disease is constructed as both a breakdown of this balance, as a transformation for the worse of the internal humors and the foreign invasion of the female tongue, where the latter both causes and is made possible by the former. The female language might seem to be inescapable and seductive, and yet the self of the hearer can still be as impenetrable as Banquo if reason persists.

Macbeth is Shakespeare's probing of the corrupted body of an excessive self poisoned by female articulation. The languages of the women might be condemnable, yet equally condemnable is the greedy hearer, the listener who is subjected to their acoustic manipulation. Paracelsus stresses the need for order, reason, self-control:

²¹ The contact between Native Americans and Europeans in the early modern period subjected both parties to unfamiliar viruses such as influenza, measles, smallpox and syphilis, leading to epidemics in both North America and Europe.

If a man has the will, the desire arises in his imagination, and the desire generates the seed. . . . But man himself cannot kindle the desire, it must be fanned by an object. That is to say, when a man sees a woman, she is the object, and it depends only upon him whether he wants to fasten to it or not. . . . God endowed man with reason, in order that he might know what the desire means. But he himself must decide whether to yield to it or not, whether to let it act on him or not, whether to follow his intelligence or not. (33)

That is, the self is responsible for his own conduct, and in governing well his own desires and appetites he may best serve his society and the king. Through the proper use of his conscience and reason—which means they must not be entrapped by any bodily, sensual faculty—one is able to guard well his porous orifices and to shield himself from the attacks of invisible forces inside and outside his castled mind. But the body of the uninfected self, which is able to function harmoniously in all of its corporeal parts, also represents the healthy body of the polis, state or kingdom with its healthy “circulation,” the free and orderly flow of social communication. On the other hand, the body of the infected, unhealthy self—that of Macbeth—represents a chaotic, diseased polis.

While Macbeth seems to have an individual understanding of the therapeutic medicine in the play, especially when he asks the doctor to cure Lady Macbeth with the formula of purgation, he is unable to purge or “cure” the public and private contamination he himself has infected. Disease/Chaos is caused by the overthrowing of the natural matrix, which in turns leads to the overthrow of the social and natural matrices: intelligence (the brain) is overpowered by sensuality (the five senses), sleep by restlessness, daylight by dark night, and, in the traditional view, “masculinity by femininity.” A further transformation, a counter-movement or counter-flow of natural, social and political forces, will be needed “to ever make it right,” to restore a healthy social and cosmic matrix.

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「聲聲迫我魂」：馬克白的聾耳

摘要

本文將探討莎翁作品《馬克白》一劇中的音聲如何對主角馬克白之主體造成鉅大之影響。本文將以早期醫學的觀點，特別是生理學的角度，來檢驗《馬克白》劇中的外在聲音對於人的內在情緒之關連，包括生理、心理、以及道德等層面的轉變。在本劇中，莎翁呈現出馬克白之主體因其慾望之耳，受制於聲域場中，並在多重音聲與語言之牽引下，終起叛君之心而行謀殺之舉。而其因謀殺而導致之情緒如哀傷（對國王鄧肯）與恐懼（對袍澤班科），此皆是由於憂鬱腺體所產生的黑色膽汁，使得馬克白因此陷於此一病態循環中。在此劇中，罪惡如同疾病一般，是一種過度與氾濫之罪的表徵，於人體而言即是，過於濃稠的膽汁阻礙身體應有的流動力而致病，刻畫於此劇中即是，馬克白無可言喻的自我膨脹、對語言音聲的曲解、以及對物像的幻覺，此皆由於其對聽覺感官之濫用，未加以約束所致。而個人主體對生理感官與情緒的有效控管，正是英國文藝復興時期所要強調的。

關鍵字：早期醫學，聲音與耳朵，情緒，蓋倫，帕拉塞爾塞斯，憂鬱症，《馬克白》，莎士比亞