**Sounding Shakespeare: Acts of Reading in Cavell and Derrida**

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**Summary**

Philosophy has always turned to literature, but its engagement with Shakespeare in particular has been problematic. Stanley Cavell and Jacques Derrida do better than most other philosophical readers to meet the three criteria for worthwhile philosophical engagement with Shakespeare recently outlined by Martha Nussbaum: namely, that it should actually do philosophy, that it should illuminate the world of the plays, and that it should account for why literature can do something for philosophy that philosophy cannot do for itself. Cavell's and Derrida's acts of reading Shakespeare are, however, marked by a seemingly unphilosophical aural sensitivity. This thesis argues that we will only begin to grasp their singular and radical understanding of the relationship between literature and philosophy once we get to the bottom of these auricular preoccupations. The first part will show that in Cavell's readings of Shakespeare the figure of the ear and actual process of listening not only mark "separateness," but are also instrumental in helping us to "acknowledge." Although Derrida does not listen for separateness but *différance*, the second part argues that for him too the ear both actually and figurally inaugurates an act of reading which not only blurs the borders between the philosophical and the literary, but also fundamentally changes the way we relate the one to the other. The way Derrida and Cavell listen to Shakespeare, therefore, suggests three criteria to be added to Nussbaum's. First, the philosopher's act of reading must resonate beyond the conventional boundaries of philosophy and literature. Second, a philosopher's account needs to be based on a textual model describing how the very encounter between text and reader can become part of the philosophical endeavour. Third, this realisation must be internalised in the very way philosophy is written.

**Acknowledgments**

**Table of Contents**

**Introduction: Thinking Through Shakespeare**

Philosophers do not always know what to do with Shakespeare. As much is at least suggested by Martha Nussbaum's review of three books written on Shakespeare and philosophy in *The New Statesman,* published in May 2008. From the very beginning her judgment is rather damning: "Philosophers often try to write about Shakespeare. Most of the time they are ill-equipped to do so" ("Stages" 1). Although Nussbaum acknowledges that "there is something irresistibly tempting in the depth and the complexity of the plays," she concludes that most philosophers "lured" into responding "to that complexity with abstract thought" are "for the most part … utterly unprepared, emotionally or stylistically, to write about literary experience" (1). She continues: "armed with their standard analytic equipment, they frequently produce accounts that are laughably reductive, contributing little or nothing to philosophy or to the understanding of Shakespeare" (1). Although Nussbaum covers a small sampling, her review's implicit claim that any philosophical reading of Shakespeare should aim to contribute to the progress of at least either, and at best both, disciplines allows us to propose a taxonomy of philosophical approaches to Shakespeare.

Studies belonging to the first category include Colin McGinn's *Shakespeare's Philosophy: Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays,* reviewed by Nussbaum. McGinn attempts "a systematic treatment of the underlying philosophical themes of the plays," including "skepticism and the possibility of human knowledge; the nature of the self and personal identity; the understanding of causation; the existence and nature of evil [and] the formative power of language," which he claims are "woven deeply into Shakespeare's plots and poetry" (viii). His is precisely the kind of reading that Toril Moi criticises in "The Adventures of Reading: Literature and Philosophy, Cavell and Beauvoir": "I have long been frustrated with criticism that reduces the literary text to an example of pre-existing theory or philosophy" (18). Equally, for Nussbaum there is nothing "subtle or new" in McGinn's approach, who "just identifies familiar philosophical themes that figure in the plays" ("Stages" 2). The impression conveyed is thus, writes Nussbaum, "that Shakespeare has gotten a good grade in Phil 101, with

McGinn as his professor and his superior in understanding. This is a terrible way to approach Shakespeare's complexity" ("Stages" 2).

Studies in the first category also often tend to identify a Shakespearean philosophical credo which often enough is uncannily similar to their own. David Bevington, for instance, concludes his *Shakespeare's Ideas: More Things In Heaven and Earth* by listing some of Shakespeare's supposed wisdom: "One can still be a practicing Christian and still be a sceptic about so many important things" or "men and women must learn to get along with one another and to practice forbearance, because otherwise human life will have no way to continue" (215, 217). Shakespeare is thus, as Marjorie Garber puts it, chopped up into "sound bites," small palatable nuggets of wisdom, to be used to give a certain unquestionable ring of authority to one's statement: "Shakespeare said it: therefore it must be true. True, somehow, to human nature, whatever that is. Universally, transhistorically true" (*Symptoms of Culture* 155). Therefore, these studies are on a fundamental level similar to studies belonging to the second category which, like Michael Macrone's *Shakespeare's Guide to Life* search the sonnets and the plays for philosophical tenets or "wisdoms" to be transformed into readily available and marketable snippets.

The third category of studies focusing on Shakespeare and philosophy identifies philosophical themes or stances in the plays, but does not ascribe them to Shakespeare. In showing how different philosophical themes are addressed and developed in the plays, these studies, to which A.D. Nuttall's *Shakespeare the Thinker* (also reviewed by Nussbaum) belongs, do not seek mainly to illustrate either a philosophical tenet or to illuminate the play in which we find them. Rather, they seek to show that whatever we may think of, Shakespeare will have thought of it first. Yet, for Nussbaum, Nuttall "has nothing to say about why someone interested in philosophical problems should turn to Shakespeare" ("Stages" 2). Nuttall is also criticised for being unable to contribute significantly to an understanding of Shakespeare in general, or the plays in particular. His analysis of the plays speak of a critic "who is no longer electrified by the dramas and who finds the task of interpretation rather boring" (2). Whilst Nussbaum is right to find problems with Nuttall's book, they are, as I shall suggest in a moment, different to what she sets out.

Studies in the fourth category, for example Julia Reinhard Lupton's *Thinking With Shakespeare*, use the plays as a launching pad for their own philosophical ruminations. Reinhard Lupton argues that although

> we can choose any number of conceptual environments to refresh our sense of the plays … all readings … risk turning into what Ian Kott calls 'costume drama,' productions constrained by the corsets and laces of their own apparatus, whether the interpretation is flooded by too much contact or left high and dry by too much concept. (17-8)

In contrast, Reinhard Lupton imagines *Thinking with Shakespeare* as a return to Kott's project in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, namely "to engage Shakespearean drama with a sense of playfulness, experiment, and historical awareness, but *without too much make-up*, in order to touch what is timely in Shakespeare" (18). *Thinking With Shakespeare* is, however, less concerned with "reconstructing the significance of Shakespeare for later traditions of thinking or staging his uncanny echoing of current events" than with excavating those "constellations" or "ensembles of meaning, character and setting … that *persist,* that appear in, before, and after Shakespeare" (18). What Reinhard Lupton is after is thus "a kind of thinking with Shakespeare" which does not "analy[ze] Shakespeare per se" but follows "the rhythm and images of thought in Shakespeare in order to achieve original interpretative ends, effecting a kind of renaissance in and through them" (20). In contrast to studies in the second category, for Reinhard Lupton the plays have such a hold on us not because they are a "thesaurus of eternal messages," but because they are able "to establish real connections with the successive worlds shared and sustained by actors and audiences over time" (18).

Nussbaum's incisive account not only allows us to portray the different approaches currently characterising the interdisciplinary encounters between philosophy and Shakespeare, but also outlines lucidly how philosophers might do better. "Stages of Thought" names three criteria that a worthwhile philosophical engagement with Shakespeare should fulfil:

> First and most centrally, it should really *do* philosophy, and not just allude to familiar philosophical ideas and positions. It should pursue tough questions and come up with something interesting and subtle – rather than just connecting Shakespeare to this or that idea from Philosophy 101. A philosopher reading Shakespeare should wonder, and ponder, in a genuinely philosophical way. Second, it should illuminate the world of the plays, attending closely enough to

language and to texture that the interpretation changes the way we see the work, rather than just uses the work as grist for some argumentative mill. And finally, such a study should offer some account of why philosophical thinking needs to turn to Shakespeare's plays, or to works like them. Why must the philosopher care about these plays? Do they supply to thought something that a straightforward piece of philosophical prose cannot supply, and if so, what? (1)[1]

I would like to argue that Stanley Cavell and Jacques Derrida do better than most philosophers to meet these criteria. Shakespeare occupies a prominent space in Cavell's corpus: his encounters with the plays – from the earliest reading of *King Lear* in "The Avoidance of Love," first published in *Must We Mean What We Say?,* to his discussion of *Othello* in *The Claim of Reason* and his most recent reading of *Macbeth* – are all collected in the seminal *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare.* Cavell is, in Nussbaum's own words, "by a long distance" the "most distinguished Anglo-American philosophical writing on Shakespeare in recent years" ("Stages" 2). She continues:

> Cavell's essays, collected in the book *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, amply fulfil my first and second standards for this enterprise. His sometimes mysterious and idiosyncratic readings of a group of plays offer philosophical insights that are surprising and subtle, while genuinely illuminating themes of love, avoidance, skepticism, and acknowledgment in the dramas. (2)

Derrida has written less prolifically and less systematically about Shakespeare than has Cavell: in his published work Shakespeare is only referred to in six pieces: "Aphorism Countertime," "My Chances," *Specters of Marx, "*What is a 'Relevant' Translation?," "The Time is Out of Joint" and "This Strange Institution Called Literature." Nussbaum does not mention Derrida's writings on Shakespeare at all in "Stages of Thought," but, given that she deems him "simply not worth studying," it does not take much imagination to guess what her verdict would have been (*Cultivating* 41). In *Love's Knowledge,* for example*,* she describes her reaction on reading Derrida's "witty analysis

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[1] For Nussbaum, these three criteria are met by the third book she reviews in her article, Tzachi Zamir's *Double Vision: Moral Philosophy and Shakespearean Drama.* According to Nussbaum, it offers new insights into the plays, it actually does philosophy and it gives an account for why – and in what manner – philosophy must turn to Shakespeare. Nussbaum is particularly struck by Zamir's analysis of Shakespeare's depiction of mature love in Antony and Cleopatra ("Stages" 3). The ways in which this account clashes and resonates with Cavell's understanding of love deserves more attention than I can give it in this thesis. Similarly, the discussion of how Nussbaum's own philosophical practice stands in relation to Cavell's and Derrida's must remain for another time.

of Nietzsche's style" in *Spurs*: "After reading Derrida and not Derrida alone, I feel a certain hunger for blood; for, that is, writing about literature that talks of human lives and choices as if they matter to us all" (171). Nussbaum here appears to be joining the long line of critics (to which Cavell also to some extent belongs) that accuse Derrida of a certain nihilism and scepticism, on the grounds that "attention to textuality" indicates a lack of humanity, or of "blood."[2] Despite the opinion she holds of Derrida, this project will argue that his readings meet her criteria just like Cavell's do. Both *do* philosophy, illuminate the plays and give reasons why the philosopher should care about Shakespeare. For our philosophers, literature is not a simple reflection of the "philosophy" espoused by its author. Both "offer some account of why philosophical thinking needs to turn to Shakespeare's play, or to works like them" ("Stages" 1). More importantly, neither sees literature merely as a repository for convenient illustrations philosophers can draw on.

Whilst this project will illustrate how Cavell and Derrida meet Nussbaum's criteria, its main aim is to sound out the ways they draw on Shakespeare in their philosophical writing which are not anticipated by Nussbaum's approach, which is here representative of what is thought of as the pinnacle of literary-philosophical pursuits. Although the model she outlines does not stand at odds with Cavell and Derrida's readings, it cannot fully account for two crucial aspects of their literary-philosophical writing. First, it cannot offer an explanation for what, for want of a better term, I will call the inefficiency of their writing and their oblique approaches to the plays. Nussbaum's criteria hence cannot fully contain their different mode of interdisciplinarity; the fact that, as Colin Davies suggests in *Critical Excess: Overreading in Derrida, Deleuze, Levinas, Žižek and Cavell*, we are now moving in a modality of reading, writing and thinking where "literature and philosophy have equal but different, distinct but interdependent, roles to play if we are to release ourselves from ingrained habits of thought" (1). Second, if we want to account for their idiosyncratic philosophical voices and what Davies calls their "bold, inspiring, outrageous and sometimes implausible encounters with literature," we must be prepared

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[2] In a short essay on "Deconstruction and Love" Peggy Kamuf sums up Nussbaum's argument thus: "too much attention to textuality leads to bloodlessness." She then adds "but is this a good thing or a bad thing? Says who?" (168). In line with Kamuf, I will challenge Nussbaum's view in Chapter 5 and in the Second Interlude.

to make room for a view of the encounter between literature and philosophy that is different from the one voiced by Nussbaum: one where literature and philosophy are not merely friendly neighbouring precincts, but where literature and philosophy become two aspects of the same modality of thought and of writing (Davies 1).

Although this project is the first to consider the resonances between Cavell's and Derrida's readings of Shakespeare at some length, it joins an already considerable and ever-growing number of studies on Cavell and Shakespeare, or Derrida and Shakespeare.[3] Shakespeare's importance for Cavell has been addressed by virtually all major Cavell scholars. Of particular note are Lawrence Rhu's "Competing for the Soul: Cavell in Shakespeare," Anthony Cascardi's "'Disowning Knowledge': Cavell on Shakespeare," Gerald L. Bruns "Stanley Cavell's Shakespeare" and "Shakespeare: Scepticism and Tragedy" in Stephen Mulhall's *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary*. At the same time, Cavellian thought has increasingly been influencing Shakespearean scholarship. Many have successfully used Cavellian insights to illuminate what Shakespeare's plays do (to us). Harry Berger (*Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistributing Complicities in Shakespeare),* David Miller (*Dreams of the Burning Child: Sacrificial Sons and the Father's Witness*) and David Hillman ("The worst case of knowing the other? Stanley Cavell and Troilus and Cressida") have drawn on Cavell in illuminating ways. Amongst others, I shall turn to Janet Adelman's *Suffocating Mothers,* Sarah Beckwith's "William Shakespeare and Stanley Cavell: Acknowledging, Confessing, and Tragedy" and Naomi Scheman's "A Storied World: On Meeting and Being Met."

Commensurate with the lesser prominence of Shakespeare in Derrida's oeuvre, there is less secondary material exclusively addressing his readings of Shakespeare. They are, nevertheless referred to by many prominent scholars working on Derrida, among them Peggy Kamuf (in "The Ear, Who?" and in *Book of Addresses*), Derek Attridge ("Following Derrida"), Nicholas Royle (*In Memory of Jacques Derrida*) Sarah Wood ("A New International, or What You Will") and of course Hélène Cixous, on

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[3] Of these studies on Derrida and Shakespeare or Cavell and Shakespeare, none focus on the ear, with the prominent exception of Peggy Kamuf's "The Ear, Who?," Nicholas Royle's *In Memory of Jacques Derrida* and Sarah Wood's "A New International, or What You Will" to all of which I shall return in the second part.

whose "Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida" I shall draw extensively. Naturally, Derrida's reading of Marx through and with *Hamlet* in *Specters of Marx* has triggered a significant number of critical responses, some of which are collected in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's* Specters of Marx. As I will show in Chapter 8, few of these, however, seriously consider Shakespeare's role in the text. On the other side of the disciplinary divide, scholars including Malcom Evans ("Deconstructing Shakespeare's comedies"), Howard Felperin ("'Tongue-tied our queen?': the deconstruction of presence in *The Winter's Tale*") and other contributors to *Shakespeare and Deconstruction* (eds. G. Douglas Atkins and David M. Bergeron, 1988) have considered "deconstruction's" reverberation in Shakespeare studies. As attested by a conference held on "Shakespeare and Derrida" in 2007 at Cardiff University, the forthcoming special edition of *Oxford Literary Review* entitled "Shakespeare and Derrida," as well as the recent publication of Colin Davies' *Critical Excess* (2010), *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies* (eds. Richard Eldridge and Bernard Rhie, 2011) and the forthcoming *Stanley Cavell and Literary Criticism* (eds. Andrew Taylor and James Loxley), the interest in the interdisciplinary encounter between Derrida and Cavell and literature, and in particular Shakespeare, is far from receding.

The previous accounts of Derrida's or Cavell's readings of Shakespeare mostly inhabit the space outlined by Nussbaum's criteria. They dwell on how either Derrida's or Cavell's philosophy can clarify what happens in the plays. They show how in their readings of Shakespeare these thinkers actually do philosophy. Some of them also offer accounts of why at times philosophy must turn to Shakespeare. Although it will in one way or another draw on many of the more important critical accounts, this thesis does not wish to give a comprehensive record of these preceding studies, simply because it would like to understand how Derrida and Cavell *exceed* these criteria. Echoing the apparently oblique, unorthodox and counterintuitive approaches Cavell and Derrida take to literature, the thesis will, from time to time, draw on other selected primary and secondary material on different aspects pertaining either to Cavell or Derrida that have so far not yet been analysed in conjunction with their readings of Shakespeare, in order to sound out what is unique and singular about their respective acts of readings.

Whilst there are other paths of enquiry that we could follow in order to illuminate the ways these philosophers exceed the current view of interdisciplinarity none is, I believe, more eloquent than following how the ear comes into play in their acts of reading. The thesis' proposed project to read Derrida and (against) Cavell on Shakespeare through the ear may seem implausible, even portentous. But we must also ask ourselves "how far is it possible or interesting to submit [their] work to normal academic standards in order to test their coherence or falsehood?" (Davies 24). The guiding argument of my thesis is that we will only begin to grasp their different but equally singular and radical understanding of the relationship between literature and philosophy once we get to the bottom of these auricular preoccupations. It is only if we contextualise their philosophical uses of the ear that we will see how they not only meet but indeed expand Nussbaum's criteria.

Cavell and Derrida's acts of reading Shakespeare are marked by an extraordinary aural sensitivity. It is on the one hand expressed by their heightened awareness of the nature of sounds and voices in the play: in "The Avoidance of Love" Cavell dwells on the nature of Cordelia's voice and Derrida pays marked attention not only to Juliet's voice in "Aphorism Countertime," but also to the voice of *Hamlet's* ghost in *Specters of Marx*. It is also demonstrated in their attention to how the ear or the act of listening is described in the plays. In *Disowning Knowledge*, Cavell picks up Mamillius' whispering in Hermione's ear and the curious detail of poisoning through the ear in *Hamlet,* whilst in   *Specters* and "Aphorism Countertime," Derrida thinks about how the darkness that envelops both Hamlet's first meeting with his father's ghost and the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* means that in both of these scenes the brunt of the dramatic tension is transposed to the characters' ears. Most crucially, both think about the relationship between text and reader through the ear. As I will suggest in "A Scarred Tympanum" and "Frequencies" respectively, Cavell compares Shakespearean drama to Beethoven's Sonatas while Derrida's concern with the sounds of Shakespeare echoes his discussion of the philosophical ear in "Tympan" and elsewhere. Whilst there are some accounts of the role of the ear, related figures and listening in Derrida or Cavell (Arnold Davidson, Timothy Gould and Garrett Stewart have all written on matters of the ear in Cavell's work), none connect the way Cavell uses the ear

"figurally" to the way he "actually" listens (to Shakespeare, to opera or to jazz). Although there have been studies on figural deconstructive hearing, Stewart notes that "any inclination to sustain and extend the impetus of poststructuralist theory into the atrophied field of phonological analysis has a difficult allegiance to win in the ranks of deconstruction itself" (*Reading Voices* 2-3). I would, perhaps, not go as far as to call this "phonophobia," as Stewart does, but I would concur that we are, at times, dealing with a certain selective deafness (3). I will argue that most Shakespeare scholars, thinkers of deconstruction, or scholars working on Cavell, whether they are using the ear as a metaphor or solely auditing it, are affected by a kind of selective deafness: for some this is a deafness to the figurative or philosophical uses of the ear, whilst for others this is a deafness to what the ear can actually pick up. Neither Cavell nor Derrida are affected by this selective deafness: their grasp of Shakespeare's figurative uses of the ear is matched by the acuity with which their ears pick up on rhymes, sounds, rhythms and breaths. It is precisely in how the ear comprises and combines these three aspects that lies its import for understanding both Shakespeare's philosophical purchase and Cavellian and Derridean acts of reading. The most meaningful aspect of their "auricular" readings of Shakespeare is, however, the fact that their dual – both figural and actual – clairaudience allows us to link their practices of reading as listening to their theoretical understanding of what is at stake when reading a text. It will, indeed, allow us to suggest that their at times apparently outlandish acts of reading are commensurate with the demands of the literary text and the demands of philosophy.

As on any aspect of Shakespeare, there are numerous critical accounts of the role of sound in his work. Wes Folkerth's relatively recent *The Sound of Shakespeare* in particular, is worthy of note. On the one hand revealing how Shakespeare's writing is informed by early modern attitudes towards listening, and on the other hand connecting these with what it means to listen to the plays today, Folkerth has bridged two ways in which the ear and Shakespeare have traditionally been thought about. Since Ralph Waldo Emerson, matters of the ear have been used as a metaphor to illustrate the way Shakespeare's texts work on their audiences. Emerson had already suggested that the Shakespearean text could change the reader. Shakespeare did not only write "the airs for all our modern music," but his work also changed the way we think about literature,

philosophy and thought itself (*Representative Men* 163). Interestingly enough, Emerson presents the change Shakespeare works in us as a kind of syncopation, a change in rhythm, perhaps a change in ear: "Now, literature, philosophy, and thought are Shakespearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which at present we do not see. Our ears are educated to music by his rhythm" (158). There is another image related to the ear of which Emerson was fond, namely being "in unison," or receptivity (145). Ideas of receptivity or resonance are repeatedly used to make a point about Shakespeare's unfaltering and encompassing interest; Folkerth for instance suggests that "his bottomless receptivity takes the form of a radical openness, an indiscriminate enthusiasm both taxing and infectious to those around him" (92). Terrence Hawkes' comparison of reading Shakespeare to listening as "impos[ing] a meaning on a sea-shell's silence that appears to extend well beyond ourselves" works along the same lines (*Rag* 43). In all of these examples the act of listening figures not in its own right, but as a metaphor seeking to trace the strange mechanism by which Shakespeare ventriloquises us.

There are also scholars such as PA Skantze and Bruce Smith who argue that the physical process of hearing is not only a suggestive metaphor, but that the actual process of listening can help us understand something about Shakespeare that other sensory processes cannot. In a talk given at the Globe Theatre in London in 2010, PA Skantze argued that sound offers us a way to think about the perceived improvised (and hence always new, actual, and contemporary) nature of Shakespeare: "the fact that the work cannot be separated, recalculated and made to add up to a tidy sum, pertains to the play of the plays, as if the composition only works in the air because improvisation adds the final and necessary catalyst that both forms and unforms the composition by making it vulnerable to change." What Skantze seems to suggest is that Shakespeare happens somewhere in the distance between the actors' mouths and the audience's ears. She is thus claiming that we help make Shakespeare by listening.[4] The interesting thing about these ways of attending to Shakespeare is that figural and actual processes of listening

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[4] In this workshop we were also asked to recite some parts of *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale* backwards. As Skantze explained in her talk, this was not a mere "party trick" but rather a "mode of undoing our habits of aural reception, or at least disrupting them, in order to 'hear' aslant what the language does, what it can do, and what our not early modern ears make of the lushness of the sound, the persistence of a kind of meaning or more precisely an acoustic forcefield that conveys meaning not always word by word."

are interdependent here, not unlike in Cavell and Derrida. The difference between

Smith's approach in particular is significant, however. In *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor*, Smith locates this effect less in the resonant space between us and Shakespeare than in something intrinsic to Shakespeare, something he calls the "O-Factor." What exactly this mythical O-factor is or what it consists of remains ultimately unclear. Although Smith protests that the O-factor is exactly what takes metaphysics out of Shakespeare studies, it could be argued that it is precisely what allows it to creep back in. In the same gesture with which Smith tries to trace a phenomenological criticism of Shakespeare centred on the O-factor, he elevates this same O-factor to a metaphysical and quasi-mystical presence. Conversely, what Cavell and Derrida hear in Shakespeare is not something fixed or intrinsic but the ear mirroring the relationship between text and reader; the *act* of reading.

In "Adventures of Reading," Toril Moi asks: "What is the point of reading literature if we all manage to see in it is a theory we already know? Why not simply stick to reading theory and philosophy if that's what we really want to do?" (18). For Moi the question of the interdisciplinary encounter between literature and philosophy thus pertains first and foremost to finding a reading stance: "How can we read philosophically without reducing the text to a witting or unwitting illustration of a pre-existing theory? How can we read literature with philosophy in ways that suggest that the writer may actually have something to tell the philosopher?" (19). In this sense the four groups outlined above can be further distinguished into two broad attitudes of reading. The first assumes that either the author or his philosophy can be distilled from the plays and injected into statements when one wishes to give them that *je ne sai quoi* of undebatable truth. In the second attitude of reading, the work becomes a repository for illustrations to be drawn on whenever the philosopher wishes to give his philosophical excursus a certain panache. In the first act of reading the reader is drowned out by the work's "aura"; in the second, the work vanishes behind the reader's agenda. Tracing the ways in which the ear comes into play, indeed orchestrates, Derrida and Cavell's acts of reading will also disclose how for both the way they think about the interdisciplinary encounter between philosophy and Shakespeare depends on listening out for this resonant space in

which text and reader may change each other. An analysis of the auricular aspects of their acts of reading Shakespeare will show how far Cavell and Derrida differ from, for instance Nuttall's and Reinhard Lupton's accounts, in that they do not omit to describe a textual model that accounts for our ability to think with and through Shakespeare. In heeding the ways the ear comes into play in their readings of Shakespeare, I will thus clarify how their practices of reading correspond to their ideas of the relationship between reader and text and, indeed, how this very act of reading is of philosophical value.

For Cavell and Derrida, each act of reading has philosophical repercussions; for both, an act of reading *is* the philosophical repercussion. As Julian Wolfreys argues in "Justifying the Unjustifiable: a Supplementary Introduction, of sorts," Derrida understands reading "as an act which responds to those aspects of a text which cannot be defined grammatically (that is, according to a general code or program) ... forcing one to face the paradox that reading in the strict sense is called for by that which is *unreadable* in a text' (3). I would like to argue that the same is true for Cavell, even if he is interested in a different kind of unreadability. As we shall see in parts one and two respectively, whilst, as Wolfreys suggests, Derrida "attend[s] patiently to the contours" and "rhythms" of a text, Cavell picks up on a text's separateness" (3, 12). In this sense their acts of reading may be understood, to use Colin Davies' terms, as acts of "overreading" which entail "a willingness to test or to exceed the constraints which restrict the possibilities of meaning released by a work" and which at times "depend upon what might appear to be bizarre, disorientating interpretive leaps" (ix, xii). In his Introduction to Derrida's *Acts of Literature*, Derek Attridge draws attention to the "polysemy of the term *act*: as both 'serious' performance and 'staged' performance, as a 'proper' doing and an improper or temporary one, as an action, a law of governing actions, and a record of documenting actions" (2). I contend that both Cavell and Derrida have deeply understood that, as Attridge puts it, "literary texts, one might say, are acts of writing that call forth acts of reading" (2). Examining the figure of the ear in their respective readings of Shakespeare will not only be conducive to sound out the significance of their acts of reading but also to further enhance our grasp of their idiosyncratic writing styles.

In this thesis I therefore propose to listen to how Derrida and Cavell sound out Shakespeare. As Folkerth notes, Shakespeare "uses the word sound ... almost always as a verb or adjective, only rarely as a noun" (15). To sound "means not only to produce sound, but also to measure the depth of something, to establish its boundaries, to define it spatially" (15). *Sounding Shakespeare* is therefore a statement of intent as well as an augury: I hope to listen into the resonant spaces opened by Cavell and Derrida's readings in order to *sound out* the question of philosophy and Shakespeare further than the comfortable place it has hitherto been thought to inhabit. Reading Derrida and (against) Cavell reading Shakespeare with my philosophical and literal ears pricked up, I will in the course of this thesis propose three different criteria to be added to Nussbaum's: first, if a philosopher wants his engagement with literature to interest us, his account needs to be based on a textual model describing how the very encounter between text and reader can become part of the philosophical endeavour. Second, this realisation must be internalised in the very way philosophy is written. Third, this act of reading must resonate beyond the conventional boundaries of philosophy and literature.

In Chapter 1, "Literary Investigations," I seek to radically question the way Shakespeare's role in Cavell's philosophical writing has been traditionally understood. Although Nussbaum rightly argues that Cavell meets her first two criteria, she finds him lacking in the third, in that "he has little to say about why we would want to turn to poetic drama in general, and to Shakespeare in particular, in pursuit of philosophical themes" (2). In her own words: "Cavell brilliantly succeeds at being Cavell, which is to say that his readings always illuminate issues of human significance; but one often has the sense that the plays are being used as occasions for the pursuit of Cavell's own preoccupations" (6-7). Nussbaum's view is, unfortunately, representative of much existing work on Cavell and Shakespeare. I suggest that this interpretation of Cavell's engagement with Shakespeare is mistaken. It is only through his engagement with Shakespearean drama – especially the tragedies, where the potentially tragic consequences of a failure to "acknowledge" attain their full poignancy – that he is able to give a name to the cause of the metaphysical illness that J.L. Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein wanted to cure. Cavell's readings of Shakespeare, therefore, do not "tend to confirm the philosophical notions for which he has already argued independently, in

readings of Wittgenstein, Descartes, and other philosophers," but are, quite on the contrary, crucial to his absorption of the sceptical problem ("Stages" 2).

In Chapter 2, "Cavell's Ear," a comparison between those moments in Cavell's writings on Shakespeare in which he turns to matters of the ear, and the way the ear features in his other more "philosophical" or autobiographical writings, will confirm Shakespeare's central importance for Cavell's formulation of "separateness" and "acknowledgment." Through an account of the way he shifts his attention to the ear in crucial moments in his readings of *The Winter's Tale* and *Hamlet*, I argue that in his philosophical discourse the existential and traumatic experience of the separation from the mother leaves its mark on the ear: whether this be on the scarred tympanum addressed in his autobiographical writings, or in the ear-poisoning or ear-whispering described in Shakespearean tragedy. The narratives of ear-pain and perfect pitch, at precisely those crucial moments when he himself pricks up his ears or listens through the ears of Shakespeare's characters, therefore, become reminders of the fact that we are born of woman and that we are separated from her; in other words, that we are mortal and that we are alone. However, the ear is not only the figure through which separateness is registered: the figure of the ear and the actual process of listening are also used to show how our experience of separateness is to be alleviated. Falling back on Cavell's reading of Austin's Hippolytus and his notion of "passionate utterances," I will maintain that when we pick up on the breath or tone of voice with which things are said (or are left unsaid), we are also picking up on the separateness of our interlocutor, and therefore putting ourselves in a position to acknowledge the other. It is precisely this aspect of Cavell's interest in the ear that allows us to make sense of the musical metaphors with which he speaks about Shakespearean drama.

Chapter 3, "Mending the Heart of Language in a Heartless World," contends that in suggesting that we can listen to Shakespearean drama in the same way that we can listen to other people, Cavell is not only claiming that the plays are subject to acknowledgment, but that the experience of reading or seeing them in the theatre can prepare us to better acknowledge the people around us. Cavell therefore shifts the sceptical focus away from the author of the plays to what the plays can do to their audience. In other words, what matters for Cavell is no longer who wrote the plays or

even what exactly he wrote but what the words give us occasion to do. I contend that this idea of Shakespearean drama is on the one hand indebted to Wittgenstein's idea of Shakespeare as a creator of language, and on the other dependent on a textual model of reciprocal receptivity of text and reader, which again displays figurative uses of the ear, and which is formulated on the back of Emerson's reading of Shakespeare and Henry Thoreau's *Walden.* For Cavell, philosophy must thus turn to Shakespeare or to literature not only because it illustrates separateness and acknowledgment, but also because the literary encounter can help us to go beyond *knowledge* in order to acknowledge the other, whether this be a text, a character or a person.

To conclude the first part of the thesis, the fourth chapter, "Perfect Pitch," argues that on both sides of scholarship – looking at Cavell through Shakespeare, and looking at Shakespeare through Cavell – the significance of the dramatic Shakespearean form for Cavell's philosophy has hitherto not been realised fully, partly because the many ways in which he imagines and practices the interdisciplinary encounter between philosophy and literature have not been adequately understood. One important repercussion of this encounter is his writing style, for which he has often been criticised but which is central to his philosophical method. By offering a series of hypotheses regarding the role of parentheses in his writing, I suggest that the notion of "remarriage comedies," in particular *The Winter's Tale*, serves as an illustration of what Cavell's writing sets out to do: the dialogue between a "male" and "female" voice aims at the remarriage of philosophy and the ordinary, or human, voice.

By examining moments when Derrida talks about Shakespeare as well as instances when Shakespeare is grafted into his philosophical writing, the second part of the thesis invites us to listen to "frequencies." In Chapter 5, "*Flèches*," I argue that Derrida's reading of *Romeo and Juliet à contretemps* radically unsettles the way a text is thought to behave in time, and thus also the relationship between text and reader. In bringing his essay "Aphorism Countertime" in conversation with the striking image of Shakespeare shooting arrows at us in *Specters of Marx* and the discussion of the arrow in *Politics of Friendship*, I suggest that for Derrida the trajectory of Shakespeare's work is indeed "teleiopoetic," to use a term that features heavily in *Politics of Friendship*. Following

this, I draw from the image in *Monolingualism of the Other* of the penetrating, loving and loved, wounding and wounded arrows of French philosophy and language to suggest that the image of Shakespeare's arrows implies a similarly violent and loving traversal; one in which neither the reader nor the text, including the body of its idiom, remains unscathed. What we are therefore dealing with when reading Derrida reading Shakespeare is not, as Nussbaum suggests, a "detached" or "bloodless" reading that brushes away the singularity of the text (*Love's Knowledge* 171). On the contrary, as Derrida's image of the poem as a wound suggests, it is precisely the text's singularity which demands a similarly singular and dated response in the reader.

Chapter 6 follows the movements of the *porpentine*, a poematic and clairaudient animal that appears both in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, as a guide to the singular ways in which Derrida translates and reads Shakespeare. I begin by contrasting his parenthetical non-translation of the porpentine with Marx's translation of *Hamlet's* mole in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, and argue that although Derrida's use of Shakespeare is similarly performative, it achieves this status by transposing the English idiom into his native French. By tracing how the Shakespearean word "relevant," which Derrida speaks about in "What is a 'Relevant' Translation," comes to haunt Derrida's previous translation of Hegel's *Aufhebung*, I suggest that the sounds or syllables of Shakespeare's idiom come to bear on the Derridean act of translation. The catachrestic porpentine thus helps us understand how for Derrida the Shakespearean idiom, which is always *plus d'un*, not only watches over English, but also Marx and Hegel's German, and indeed Derrida's French.

Derrida, like Cavell, is a particularly clairaudient reader of Shakespeare and like his contemporary, the act of listening has both an actual and philosophical valence. In Chapter 7, "*Génie qui es tu*," I propose using the term "frequencies," as it emerges in *Specters,* in order to address how these two modes of listening are intertwined. Whilst the ways in which sounds plays into Derrida's acts of reading will have already been examined in the chapters prior to this, here I draw on both the image, in Derrida's *Genseses, Genealogies, Genres, & Genius*, of the "genius who are you/who is silent [*génie qui est tu*]" and Derrida's reading of the spectral voice in *Hamlet* in order to show that it is the caesura, or moment of silence, which allows (Shakespeare's) literary

genius to sound the reader out, and to be sounded out by him or her. The second part of this chapter juxtaposes Persephone's role in Derrida's "Tympan" with the persephonic model of philosophical writing I propose in Chapter 4 in order to sound out the differences between the ways in which Derrida's and Cavell's distinct philosophical voices seek to shake up or tympanise philosophy.

Chapter 8, "Differential Tones," turns to the political impact of Derrida's acts of reading. I argue that any misreading of *Specters of Marx*, and what Derrida is doing with Marx, is also based on a misunderstanding of the role the Shakespearean references play in this text. We cannot understand Derrida's re-politicisation if we do not understand it as an act of re-reading, which in the essay "Marx & Sons" is also comprehended in terms of "differential tones" (234). With a reading of how Derrida plays on the appearance and disappearance of *Hamlet's* ghost in *Specters*, and more precisely of how he paraphrases one reappearance as "*Re-enter the Ghost*," I argue that it is precisely in this "*re-*" that we can hear the differential tones of Derrida's performative reading resonate.

In arguing that Cavell and Derrida provide positive examples of what philosophy can learn from literature and that, moreover, they do so – among other ways – via an extraordinary aural sensitivity, one is faced with a number of caveats and problems, not least their different philosophical backgrounds and traditions. The complex ways in which Derrida's and Cavell's work seem both to clash and harmonise with each other has been written about by a handful of scholars; Gordon Bearn's "Sounding Serious: Cavell and Derrida," Roger Bell's *Sounding the Abyss: Readings between Cavell and Derrida,* Hent de Vries' "Must We (Not) Mean What We Say? Seriousness and Sincerity in the Work of J.L. Austin and Stanley Cavell," Toril Moi's "'They practice their trades in different worlds': Concepts in Poststructuralism and Ordinary Language Philosophy," Michael Fischer's *Stanley Cavell and Literary Skepticism*, Chapter 3 of Asja Szafraniec's *Beckett, Derrida, and the Event of Literature* and, among other works from his oeuvre, Cavell's *Philosophical Passages* all venture descriptions of what unites and separates these philosophers. I will address the relationship between their acts of reading in two interludes: the first between Part One and Part Two, and the second

between Chapters 7 and 8. As I will argue, most of these studies are too skewed to give a fair portrait of what these philosophers, and most importantly their acts of reading, have in common, and where their fundamental philosophical assumptions become irreconcilable. It is not my intention to offer a comprehensive comparison between Cavell and Derrida, although scholarship is in need of one, or to claim that one philosopher is better at thinking through Shakespeare than the other. Neither is it this project's aim to propose that one listens better to Shakespeare than the other, or indeed that Shakespeare's plays justify one act of listening over and above the other. Instead, its object is to understand each act of reading in its own terms in order to show that they both, in their way, give us occasion to radically rethink the relationship between philosophy and literature.

## Part I – A Scarred Tympanum

## 1. <u>Literary Investigations</u>

"But can philosophy become literature and still know itself?" (*Claim* 496). Despite its being situated at the end of *The Claim of Reason,* this question regarding the interrelation between the two disciplines hovers over what is perhaps Cavell's most uncontroversially philosophical work from the very beginning. Similarly, the reading of *King Lear* in "The Avoidance of Love" hovers over the largely philosophical investigations of *Must We Mean What We Say?* I begin my exploration of the role of Shakespeare for Cavell's philosophy with the very end of *The Claim of Reason* because, with its palintropic bearing, this question sets the tone for both the indirect paths of his philosophical writing as a whole, and the palintropic narratives with which it obsessively returns to Shakespeare.

Cavell's readings of Shakespeare deviate. There is what Rhu calls the "proleptic claim" that frames his readings of Shakespeare, namely the contention that the scepticism portrayed in Shakespeare's plays is more similar to Descartes' than Montaigne's ("Competing" 145). This prolepsis is echoed in Cavell's narrative of that first philosophical spark, which seems both to have preceded and succeeded his interest in Shakespearean drama. In Cavell's work, Shakespeare refuses to be pinpointed or confined to one single place or role. Staying in the company of this idiosyncratic thinker we will soon realise that his references to Shakespeare are, though singular, never confined to a single, isolated place in his oeuvre. To complicate matters further, his philosophical interests mark out a path of reading that is anything but linear: from Austin to Wittgenstein, Thoreau to Emerson, it does not progress from one to the next; just like notes in a chord, they do not succeed so much as augment each other.

The idiosyncratic lack of linearity in Cavell's investigations should neither be ignored nor berated if one wishes to grasp his philosophical acts of reading. In *Little Did I Know* he writes:

> I am familiar with the thought that there ought to be an orderly course of preparation for what is commonly thought of as a path. I am I think more impressed with the counterthought that there cannot be such a course, for the

> reason that there is no predicting what text, or conversation, will produce in this or that mind, a conviction, I might say, in the reality or presence of philosophy, without which such a course cannot seriously begin to take effect. (253-4)

The obliqueness of his philosophical-literary approach is indicative not of a lack of rigour, but rather is the expression of a different philosophical diligence more in line with what he wants philosophy to be, indeed what he believes philosophy already is. The non-linearity of Cavell's philosophical-literary itinerary is dictated by his conviction that literature and philosophy are part of the same endeavour; that, in other words, they are – or should be – aiming at a conversion. In *Contesting Tears* Cavell declares: "for me there is no itinerary, say no approach, to philosophy; rather philosophy comes upon me, approaches me, like a conversion" (64). If we wish to make sense of how his readings of Shakespeare bear on his philosophy, we cannot confine either discipline to what are traditionally thought to be their precincts; nor will it will be sufficient to merely speak of an affinity between the disciplines. We must take a quite different approach.

My approach to the question of how philosophy and literature intersect in Cavell's acts of reading Shakespeare is quite different to the one taken by Nussbaum. Her diagnosis of Cavell's readings of Shakespeare is correct in most points: Cavell illuminates the plays, and his readings of Shakespeare also lend insights to philosophy ("Stages" 2). Although these acts of reading may be literary in nature, they are philosophical in outlook. They are, in this sense, not only concerned with opening new perspectives on the plays but also on scepticism. What is, however, troublesome in Nussbaum's picture is that she presents two distinct, albeit at times intimately linked, disciplines. In this picture, although literature and philosophy become more affine, disciplinary boundaries remain ultimately unchallenged. This view of two related yet distinct disciplines seems also to be held by Beckwith, who proffers an image of two chiasmatically related disciplines: "employing this novel interpretation of skepticism, Cavell develops stunning readings of Shakespearean tragedy, but his reading of Shakespearean tragedy also inform his definition and brilliant redefinition, of skepticism" (125). Whilst Eldridge and Rhie – the editors of the first collection of essays on Cavell's relationship to literary studies *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies* – are right in claiming that

"arguably no other living philosopher has done as much as Cavell to show the common cause shared by literature and philosophy, where both stand to lose by failing to acknowledge and embrace the claims of the other," simply positing this common cause is not doing the intricacies of Cavell's philosophical-literary investigations any justice (2). Although I commend Nussbaum, Beckwith, and Eldridge and Rhie for their recognition of the double character of Cavell's readings of Shakespeare, I am suspicious of the idea of interdisciplinarity that they imply. As Rhu observes in *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies* often "pious fantasies of inter-disciplinarity abound, but the challenges of frank exchange and mutual intelligibility abide" ("Competing" 143). It is certainly true that the way in which literature and philosophy mingle in Cavell's work is not always comfortable, but it is in just this difficulty that the value of what he is trying to do rests*:* "I know the company [between literature and philosophy] is sometimes restive, difficult, occasionally quite impossible. If you do not find it so it may be that you are too much conceiving of philosophy as a well-behaved and well-explored function of literature, or of literature as treating independently well-known philosophical ideas" (*Disowning* 2). The texts collected in *Disowning Knowledge* are negotiating this difficult relation, treating Shakespeare's plays neither as a mere illustration of well-known philosophical ideas, nor philosophy as a mere function of them. Instead, literature is seen as "partak[ing] of a mode of existence which is philosophical, and from which the philosopher might find instruction" (Davies 137).

I would like to challenge a too-comfortable view of the interdisciplinary nature of Cavell's work, which sees literature and philosophy as attuned yet separate disciplines, because it gives rise to the belief, expressed also by Nussbaum, that "the plays are being used as occasions for the pursuit of Cavell's own preoccupations" ("Stages" 7). This image is in turn related to the notion that Cavell's work on Shakespeare is secondary to his purely philosophical discussion of scepticism, for instance through his engagement with Austin and Wittgenstein. In this first chapter, I will address these misconceptions and argue that we will not be able to fully understand how Cavell's readings of Shakespeare *do* philosophy as long as we think of philosophy and literature as two distinct precincts of his thought. I am here arguing along those lines traced by Katrin Trüstedt when she writes that "seine detaillierten Text-Lektüren

haben es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, diese Texte in ihrem spezifisch literarischen So-Sein ernst zu nehmen und eben darin ihre philosophische Bedeutung aufzufinden" (107).[5] Whilst the question concluding *The Claim of Reason* is, according to Moi, natural for "someone who believes that a work of art can have philosophical insights," it can also be posed the other way around ("Adventures" 19). Like this question, Cavell's work raises doubts about our traditional image of philosophy, just as it does about what we think literature is. Far from drawing on the question of literature and philosophy, it aspires toward a new comprehension of philosophy and literature, as well as philosophy *and* literature, that radically shifts our understanding of what characterises these disciplines individually and what they can achieve together.

1.1 Shakespeare's Sceptics

Cavell's readings of Shakespeare blur disciplinary distinctions by showing us that his tragic heroes are also sceptics. His readings of Shakespearean tragedy and late romance propose that the sceptic is not only someone who wonders about the existence of a goldfinch at the end of the garden. The sceptic is someone who, like Lear, banishes his daughter; who, like Leontes, wonders whether his children are truly his; and who, like Othello, thinks that he has reason to doubt his wife's faithfulness. The sceptic is, in other words, just like us – indeed he *is* us. As Leontes, Othello, Lear, Hamlet, Coriolanus and Macbeth become Shakespearean embodiments of the sceptic, so Cavell's readings of tragedy diagnose the tragic streak of philosophy.[6]

Cavell's twin concerns of philosophy and literature – as expressed in his readings of Shakespeare, and others besides – surface most clearly in his discussion of language. Language, the medium through which philosophical and literary endeavours

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[5] "His detailed acts of reading have proposed to take these texts seriously in their specific literary nature, and it is precisely in their literary nature that they find their philosophical significance" (my translation).

[6] Unfortunately the scope of this thesis does not allow me to give full accounts of all of Cavell's acts of reading Shakespeare. Out of the total of seven collected in *Disowning Knowledge* the choice fell on "The Avoidance of Love," "Hamlet's Burden of Proof," "Othello and the Stage of the Other" and "Recounting Gains, Showing Losses: Reading *The Winter's Tale"* because they provide the best insight into the role of Shakespeare in Cavell's philosophy. His readings of *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus,* as well as a short reading of *The Merchant of Venice* in *The Claim of Reason* must remain for another time.

alike are channelled, communicated and considered, therefore comes to bridge his readings of the tragedies and his work on the philosophical problem of scepticism. "Recounting Gains, Showing Losses: Reading *The Winter's Tale*" is illuminating to read alongside Cavell's work on Austin and Wittgenstein because it illustrates, perhaps more than the other plays Cavell scrutinises for the cause and cure of the sceptic's malaise, the imbrications of scepticism, tragedy and language. It is no coincidence that Leontes is taken over by sceptical doubt shortly after he has heard Hermione deftly convince Polixenes to stay with them a little while longer. Hermione is, indeed, all but "tongue-tied" (1.2.27). Half-mockingly repeating the very same word with which Polixenes feebly protests against staying – "verily" (1.2.46) – she insists that "a lady's Verily's / As potent as a lord's" (1.2.50-1). Although Leontes is evidently pleased that Polixenes is staying – "Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok'st / To better purpose" (1.2.88-9) – he is somewhat taken aback at how quickly she succeeds. Indeed, he compares the speed of her convincing Polixenes with the "three crabbed months" that "had sour'd themselves to death" (1.2.102) before she accepted his proposal. Leontes' sceptical doubt is here stirred by the fact that it took Hermione less to convince Polixenes than it took Leontes himself to convince *her*.[7] Even more so, that her language succeeded in doing something that his did not. It would therefore seem that the onset of Leontes' erosive sceptical doubt has more to do with the realisation of the strange *double face* of language – its power and its impotence – than in his wife's behaviour towards Polixenes *per se*. The sceptic's anxiety is noted in the realisation that, as Ludger Viefhues-Bailey asserts, our agreement in what we mean when we say something is "not secured by transcendental structures of language" (8). Consequently the sceptic's "misuse" of language is much more than a collateral symptom of his scepticism.

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[7] In this thesis I consciously choose to go against the convention of referring to the reader as "she" rather than "he." I do so for a variety of reasons. I have always felt that this convention is, albeit well-meaning, still a rather vacuous gesture. What does the use of a female rather than a male pronoun achieve? Does it actually shake up the way we think about sexual difference? Does it actually level the playing field for female academics? I doubt it. I have also chosen to use the male pronoun throughout for reasons of clarity, since Cavell identifies scepticism as a "male" position and acknowledgment as a "female" position. The question of how gender comes into Cavell's understanding of scepticism and acknowledgment is, to say the least, contentious and I briefly turn to it in Chapter 4. Derrida's similar, if less pronounced, tendency to privilege a "female" mode addressed in Chapter 7 is no less problematic. In any case, the substitution of a pronoun would in this context, I feel, not work towards a resolution of these tensions but merely gloss them over.

Leontes not only speaks a language that Hermione and the audience cannot understand, he also hears in language something only he can detect (3.2.80). Making words his own, Leontes charts a parallel world in which words have a weight and significance only he is able to appreciate. Let us listen to his conversation with Camillo, shortly after he has decided that Hermione and Polixenes have cuckolded him. When asked why Polixenes is staying, Camillo answers:

> CAMILLUS        At the good queen's entreaty.
> LEONTES         At the queen's be't; 'good' should be pertinent,
>                 But so it is, it is not.
>
> (1.2.220-2)

Leontes is no longer taking the meaning of "good" for granted, and rather measures, weighs and scrutinises it for its meaning, as if he has just heard it for the first time. In his ear the meaning slips from the apostrophic use to an adjective denoting the queen's virtue. Similarly, after hearing Camillo's reason for why Polixenes is staying longer – "To satisfy your highness, and the entreaties / Of our most gracious mistress" (1.2.231-2) – Leontes again inflects what he hears to feed his suspicions. "Satisfy? / Th' entreaties of your mistress? satisfy?" (1.2.233-4). No longer merely inflecting what he hears, he repeats it as if to savour the resonances he cannot help but hear. Here, Leontes is slipping poison into his own ear. We might concur with Beckwith that "Shakespeare's tragic heroes, such as Othello and Leontes, are would-be private linguists, imagining that they can define a world from their viewpoint only" (135). As the play's winter segment draws to an end, Leontes' language becomes increasingly inventive and incomprehensible – the composites of "inch-thick, knee-deep; o'er head and ears a fork'd one" only being one example (1.2.186). Here language is no longer shared; rather, it has become a coagulant separating those who hear, those who do not want to hear and those that hear something in language that is not there, indeed perhaps unheard of.

Cavell is not only interested in thinking about how a particular philosophical problematic is played out and illuminated by literature; he is also inquisitive about how this affects philosophy. When Cavell tends his ear to how the sceptic plight reverberates in the language of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, he is with his other ear listening to how,

for instance, Leontes' plight may be transposed to the philosophical realm. When reading Shakespeare he is, in other words, always attentive to the lessons tragedy holds for philosophy. When Leontes misuses language, when he is "wanting to tell more than words can say and evade telling altogether" he is therefore falling into philosophy's original sin (*Disowning* 201). In "Knowing and Acknowledging" Cavell notes that "the skeptic uses a form of words that makes perfect sense in certain contexts and then applies it to a case in which it makes no sense" (250). Philosophy's progress is of course dependant on using words "outside its language game(s), apart from its ordinary criteria" (*Disowning* 7). Whilst it is naturally "essential to language that words *can* so be turned," that we can stretch their use, an over-stretching of language, such as happens in vast areas of professional philosophy, has potentially tragic consequences (7). In Beckwith's words, the tragedies "diagnose the relentless cost of imagining that language can be private property of the mind – the protagonists of those plays define the world from their single perspective and lose it along with everyone they love" (135). Yet somewhat paradoxically, a certain part of philosophy interprets this loss of common ground with its interlocutors as a state of enlightenment (perhaps the obtainment of a particularly sophisticated and scholarly rigour). Leontes' sentence "I have drunk, and seen the spider" (2.1.45) – the spider in the cup being the certainty that Hermione has been unfaithful to him and that the child she is carrying is not his – perhaps best denotes the sceptic's idea "of being cursed, or sickened, in knowing more than his fellows about the fact of *knowing* itself, in having somehow peeked behind the scenes, or, say, conditions, of knowing" (*Disowning* 197).[8]

In Cavell's act of reading, Leontes, who explodes the ordinary use of language in order to satisfy his own fantasies of *knowledge,* grows into the epitome of another tragic figure: the philosopher. The tragic hero has something of the sceptic when he removes himself from ordinary language, just as there is something tragic in the way the philosopher frequently raises radically sceptical demands, "in which *the best case of knowledge* shows itself vulnerable to suspicion" (7). The philosopher's sceptical stance is tragic because, in raising sceptical demands, the philosopher implies that "true

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[8] I italicise *knowing* or *knowledge* every time I wish to indicate knowing as opposed to acknowledging, as contrasted by Cavell in his early essay "Knowing and Acknowledging." When I wish to speak of knowing as acknowledging, it will not be italicised.

knowledge is beyond the human self, that what we hold in our minds to be true of the world can have at best the status of opinion, education, guesswork, hypothesis, construction, belief" (7). When the philosopher "turn[s to] the concept of belief" to name our "absolute intimacy" with the world, he describes this relation in a way that "no human other *could* either confirm or compromise," simply because our "intimacy" with the world is not a question of belief (7-8). The sceptic thus puts the world into the position of a speaker, whose claims the philosopher cannot "listen" to (7-8). The philosopher's claim to *knowledge* therefore substitutes a more immediate, and Cavell seems to suggest more human, relationship to the world and those who live in it.

In "Recounting Gains, Showing Losses: Reading *The Winter's Tale*" literary and philosophical interests are not merely affine to each other; they become one another. Despite his literary insight, the discipline of literary studies has been, write Eldridge and Rhie, slow to welcome Cavell as one of its own: "obviously held in high esteem, he is rarely cited, and more rarely do his insights and ideas establish the terms of professional debate within literary studies about a given intellectual issue, whether theoretical or interpretative" (2). This resistance is particularly conspicuous when compared to the impact Derrida has had on literary studies. For Eldridge and Rhie, literary studies has been reluctant to accept Cavellian acts of reading for a variety of reasons, ranging from the all too pedestrian-sounding approach of ordinary language philosophy to his seemingly out-dated humanism (3-5). Another reason why Cavell's acts of readings have so far failed to take hold on the imaginations of literary scholars is that they have failed to appreciate both the intricacies of Cavell's literary-philosophical investigations, as well as what they are ultimately aiming at. They have, in other words, not yet come to appreciate fully that his philosophical and literary ambitions are both secondary to a wider concern which we may, with Eldridge and Rhie, call "humanist," but which for the time being I would like to call "human." And the end of "Recounting Gains," for instance, when Cavell, with an ear to *Hamlet*, speaks about the mirror held up to nature, the distinction between philosophy and literature becomes less important to the point of vanishing. For Cavell "Hamlet's picture of the mirror held up to nature asks us to see if the mirror as it were clouds, to determine whether nature is breathing (still, again) – asks us to be things affected by the question" (*Disowning* 221). The tone of Cavell's

disciplinary irreverence is set by his attention to how this drama affects us. It is precisely this drama's capacity to arouse in its readers certain emotions, or questions that are not traditionally thought to pertain to the philosophical realm that, as I will go on to argue in the next section, paradoxically contributes to the laying of Cavell's philosophical foundations.

1.2 Separateness: Towards Philosophical Foundations

There exists a widespread view that a writer's philosophical and literary interests must succeed each other, either temporally or in importance, that, in other words, they cannot be on equal footing. Accordingly, the overwhelming scholarly consensus is that Cavell's readings of Shakespearean tragedy are secondary to his own philosophical concerns. According to this view, his literary investigations are thus built on philosophical foundations, which in turn are constituted by a move from Austin to Wittgenstein. Such a view can, for instance, be found on the very first page of Eldridge's and Rhie's "Introduction" to *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies*: "By synthesising lessons about ordinary language he first learned from J. L. Austin with the teachings of the later Wittgenstein, Cavell early on developed a radically original interpretation of skepticism that would go on to inform all his subsequent philosophical investigations" (1). Along similar lines, Espen Hammer asserts that the development of the notion of acknowledgment is ascribable to the fact that in his later work Cavell moves away from an Austinian vision of language, where speakers are guided by impersonal rules (still at times held in *Must We Mean What We Say*), towards a view of language more akin to Wittgenstein's notion of forms of life (43-8). Likewise, for Mulhall, Cavell's view of language is a blend of Austin's ordinary language philosophy and Wittgenstein's understanding of criteria and grammar: "beginning from a classically Austinian emphasis upon 'what we say when', he ends up placing great weight upon the essentially Wittgensteinian notions of grammar and criteria" (19). Whilst these pictures of Cavell's philosophical endeavours are accurate enough, something essential, namely what triggered Cavell's turn to philosophy, escapes them.

When Cavell collected the pieces he had written on Shakespeare in *Disowning Knowledge* he "began to wish to assess what happens to the essays in the face of one another, or backed against one another, and to let them find their weight with just the philosophy that clings to them in their individual emergencies." He continues:

> The misunderstanding of my attitude that most concerned me was to take my project as the application of some philosophically independent problematic of skepticism to a fragmentary parade of Shakespearean texts, impressing those texts into the service of illustrating philosophical conclusions known in advance. Sympathy with my project depends, on the contrary, on unsettling the matter of priority (as between philosophy and literature, say) implied in the concepts of illustration and application. (1)

In Cavell's readings of Shakespeare, the relationship between philosophy and literature goes deeper than the concepts of priority, illustration and application can fathom. Amongst the critics writing about Cavell and Shakespeare, Mulhall is, to my knowledge, the only one to highlight the fact that "Cavell is convinced not only that scepticism is a topic within these plays, but also that the Shakespearean corpus of which they are members – this particular mode of poetic drama, this particular body of expressions – itself constitutes an effort to overcome the sceptical impulse in our culture" (196). I want to go a step further and proffer the hypothesis that acknowledgment and separateness are not only something that the plays trace, but that Cavell's engagement with Shakespearean drama plays a crucial role in the formulation of his philosophical contribution.

It is remarkable, though hardly surprising, that the Shakespearean influence is not taken into account in most narrations of Cavell's philosophical evolution. There is another way of tracing the arch of Cavell's career. Rhu, for instance, describes Cavell's career as arcing from "skepticism to perfectionism" before claiming that "the defining arc of Cavell's career could also be described as a development from Shakespeare to Emerson, with particular attention appositely paid to how Emerson begins to enter Cavell's interpretation of Shakespeare" ("Competing" 141).[9] The parallel arches drawn up by Rhu come, to my mind, closer to sketching his career because they move away from a discipline-based approach to one focusing on trans-disciplinary preoccupations.

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[9] For more on this arc from scepticism to perfectionism, see also Rhu's *Stanley Cavell's American Dream,* in particular Chapter 3.

If we had to draw an arc it would have to curve from "skepticism to perfectionism," or put in Shakespearean terms, "from tragedy to romance," rather than from philosophy to literature (141). In contrast to Rhu and others, I maintain that this arc is not merely *echoed* in his readings of Shakespeare but that it was, in all its urgency, first discovered by Cavell through an encounter with Shakespearean drama.

Although Cavell's contribution to the philosophical problem of scepticism is certainly indebted to a cross-fertilisation of Austin and Wittgenstein, its genesis, so to speak, is more complicated than generally assumed. In the first part of *The Claim of Reason,* Cavell outlines the differences between Austin's and Wittgenstein's understanding of criteria. In "Austin and Examples," Cavell reads Austin's "Other Minds" as discussing "the relation between knowing what a thing is (by means of criteria) and knowing that it is" (*Claim* 49). Criteria in the Austinian sense will therefore allow us to claim that something is a goldfinch no matter whether it is a real one or a stuffed one, because "the criteria (marks, features) are the same for something's being a goldfinch whether it is real, imagined, hallucinatory, stuffed, painted, or in any way phoney" (51). For Wittgenstein, by contrast, criteria unveil (our) use *as* (our) meaning. As *The Claim of Reason* states, "criteria do not relate a name to an object, but, we might say, various concepts to the concept of that object" (73). Put differently, "the test of your possession of a concept (e.g., of a chair; or a bird; of the meaning of a word; of what it is to know something) would be your ability to use the concept in conjunction with other concepts, your knowledge of which concepts are relevant to the one in question and which are not" (73). What criteria, therefore, reveal for Wittgenstein is an underlying grammar of understanding, only subsequently filled by the world. In asking myself, for instance, what I mean when I say "I have a toothache," I am, in a Wittgensteinian vein, not asking myself about the nature (or existence) of a pain or feeling that would elicit such an utterance, but rather about the context and consequences under which I might be saying (or indeed not be saying) "I have a toothache". Simply put, the question for Wittgensteinian criteria does not lead to the answer about what something *is* but what it *is for us.*

For Wittgenstein criteria have a greater affinity with judgments than with statements; and our ability to establish criteria indeed depends upon a prior agreement

in judgments (30). Wittgensteinian criteria do not discover a factual or *knowledge*-based root of our criteria, but our attunement in them. In § 241 of the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein writes: "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" – It is what human beings *say* that is true and false; and they agree in the *language* they use. [*Richtig und falsch ist, was Menschen* sagen*; und in der* Sprache *stimmen die Menschen überein*]. That is not agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] in opinions but in forms of life."[10] As Sandra Laugier points out, "it is of the first importance for Cavell that Wittgenstein says that we agree *in* and not *on* language. That means that we are not makers of the agreement, that language precedes agreement just as much as agreement makes language possible, and that this circularity amounts to an irreducible element of skepticism" (24). For Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, Wittgestein's hypothesis that criteria unveil our attunement (or lack thereof) demonstrates that "the stability of meaning in ordinary language cannot be confused with conceptual necessity because it rests on a common linguistic practice – on the agreements in judgements reached among the speakers rather than on the rules of reason" (27). Therefore, "if our relation to the world and to others in general presupposes a background of attunement in criteria, then it cannot be one of *knowing*, where *knowing* is construed as certainty" (Mulhall, 84, my italics). We are attuned or in attunement with each other. This attunement is surprisingly robust, yet fragile. The very possibility of attunement in judgments harbours the possibility that at some point we will cease to agree and that our attunement will disintegrate top to bottom. In Mulhall's words: "we cannot 'refute' the possibility that someone will decide (or find, or be driven to the conclusion) that he no longer agrees with others, that his attunement with them has limits; we cannot 'refute' the possibility of repudiating an agreement, however fundamental that agreement may be" (104).

Although Wittgenstein's criteria go beyond *knowledge*, they do not offer an antidote to the sceptical threat. Let us, for instance, take the example of pain. As Mulhall explains, Wittgensteinian "criteria of pain are satisfied by the presence of pain-behaviour, and so cannot guarantee the presence of pain" (83). Similarly, the very

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[10] The term "attunement" is better than "agreement" here, not only because it echoes Wittgenstein's idea of agreement as a kind of *tuning* into one another, but also because it has significant psychoanalytic reverberations that, as we will see in the next chapter, are a crucial framing element of what Cavell does with Wittgenstein.

words, utterances, or gestures that express pain cannot be fully trusted. Though pain manifests itself "right at the surface, like shivering," the "idea of someone's pain" seems "so far from what manifests it" (80). In short, whilst the reality of pain is "wholly inner," its criteria are "wholly outer" (80). Criteria, the very thing meant to get us closer to the thing in question, is thus the very thing that blocks our access to it. Criteria are therefore "disappointing," because they "do not assure that my words reach all the way to the pain of others" (79). In introducing the thought that there is no way in which we can actually know what the other means when he says that she is in pain, thus proposing that there are moments when we are simply not attuned, Wittgensteinian criteria paradoxically show that the limitations of criteria do not limit our abilities to respond to the other even if we do not *know* her pain. Wittgenstein's idea of *Übereinstimmung* (like Cavell's acknowledgment) does not so much oppose *knowledge* as pull the rug out from under the necessity to *know,* and redirect our enquiry to different ground. Again Laugier offers a lucid formulation:

> There is not, then, an "answer" to the skepticism that emerges from the fragility of our agreements. That our ordinary language is founded on nothing but itself is not only a source of anxiety as to the validity of what we do and say: it is the revelation of a truth about ourselves that we do not want to recognize – that "I" am the sole possible source of their validity. To refute this, to attempt to surpass skepticism, ends up reinforcing skepticism. (22)

This shift away from *knowledge* is momentous for Cavell's understanding of language and is indeed indicative of what the sceptic's misuse of language, as for example illustrated by his diagnosis of Leontes, is a symptom of.

Cavell's groundbreaking contribution to the philosophical problem of scepticism turns on the simple realisation that we cannot help not *knowing* some things for certain but that this does not mean that we cannot know. There is something – a lack but also a possibility – that eludes epistemology and that underlies Cavell's reliance on a Wittgesteinian notion of attunement. We may perceive traces of this "lack" in his discussion of Wittgenstein's criteria:

> What is disappointing about criteria? In a philosophical mood, we wanted the wince to take us all the way to the other's pain itself, but it seems to stop at the body. The feeling is: The wince itself is one thing, the pain itself something else;

the one can't *be* the other. But what happened to the pain that was *in* (what we called) the wince? That – the pain he's wincing in – is what I called his being in pain, and pitied. (That *is*…what I *called*? What is? Why the past tense with a present demonstrative? Do I not call it that now? Or has it vanished?) He was *wincing in pain*. It wouldn't have been a wince otherwise. – And was it? Surely he could have come out with *that* (what we call – called – a wince) with nothing behind it. Or maybe the "wince" *meant* something else. It's the same old circle. (*Claim* 81)

In Cavell's meditation the idea surfaces that something, a moment or a pain, or someone, me or you, can be completely and wholly separate, complete and wholly beyond the grasp of our *knowledge*. There is no way of one *knowing* another person's state of mind, feelings, what they mean exactly: the wince, although an expression of it, *is* not the pain, and even if it were, as soon as these questions are posed, the present tense in which it could be apprehended slips into the past. The pain dodges our grasp and vanishes. Whilst the feeling of separateness guides Cavell's shift from an Austinian to a Wittgensteinian understanding of criteria, leaving the matter at merely accepting or recognising it would be meaningless, since it is clear that human beings are mostly attuned: they are able day in, day out to judge each other's state of mind, feelings, and what they meant when they said "I have a headache" correctly.

The point here seems to be that although we do not *know* precisely, we know enough to live and most importantly live *with* others. In other words, even if we do not *know* some things, we still know them well enough to get by. In drawing "Knowing and Acknowledging" to a conclusion Cavell writes:

> I take the philosophical problem of privacy, therefore, not to be one of finding (or denying) a "sense" of "same" in which two persons can (or cannot) have the same experience, but one of learning why it is that something which from one point of view looks like a common occurrence (that we frequently have the same experiences – say looking together at a view of mountains, or diving into the same cold lake, or hearing a car horn stuck; and that we frequently do not have the same experiences – say at a movie, or leaning the results of an election, or hearing your child cry) from another point of view looks impossible, almost inexpressible (that I have your experiences, that I *be* you). (262)

The question is therefore not why at times we cannot *know*, but why at times we choose not to know. The point is that although the sceptic's conclusions – "that we can't know what another person is feeling because we can't have the same feeling, feel his pain, the

way he feels it" – leaves us "shocked," we still at times behave as if we believed him (246-7). We cannot, it seems, shake this feeling of separateness: "But I am filled with this feeling – of our separateness, let us say – and I want you to have it too. So I give voice to it. And then my powerlessness presents itself as ignorance – a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack. (Reverse Faust, I take the bargain of supernatural ignorance.)" (263). The problem is not that we are separate, in other words, that my experience of hearing a child cry may stir different emotions in me than it does in you; it is rather but *how* I react to these cries and why sometimes I pretend to hear and know less than I actually do.

I have tried to show that Cavell's philosophical readings are based on the experience of separateness, the source of which is, although not extraneous to Austin's and Wittgenstein's oeuvres, external to both. His reading of both Wittgenstein and Austin is indebted to a third influence – the experience of separateness – which, together with its potentially tragic or redemptory consequences, is, I will go on to argue in the next section, first grasped and formulated in his encounter with Shakespeare. We must also turn to *King Lear* to understand why for the sceptic taking this dehumanising bargain is easier to bear than acknowledging our common separateness.

1.3 Lear's Avoidance, Cordelia's Acknowledgment

What "The Avoidance of Love" and other Shakespearean readings urge is that the sceptic chooses his actions: that though tragic in their consequences, they seem less awful than running the risk of discovering and indeed facing his separateness. Cavell repeatedly argues that the sceptic's claim on *knowledge* is not a positive but a negative one, motivated by wanting to avoid the metaphysical consequences of our common separateness and our finitude. The sceptic therefore chooses to "interpret[s] a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack" (*Disowning* 11). In Gould's phrasing, scepticism thus "refers less to an intellectual position concerning the impossibility of *knowledge*," but "disguises a deeper anxiety," for instance about "our place in the world" and "the fateful precariousness of our *knowledge*, which the epistemic

constructions of skepticism can never catch up with or domesticate" (208, my italics).[11] This misguided faith in epistemology is mirrored in the sceptic's misunderstanding of what criteria can actually do. One example of this is Leontes' perversion of the function of criteria when trying to ascertain whether Mamillius is truly his son. When, as Cavell writes, "Leontes cannot convince himself that Mamillius is his son on the basis of criteria such as their having similar noses and heads," he does not conclude that these criteria are insufficient, or that that knowledge in general is insufficient for ascertaining whether he is truly Mamillius' father. Instead, he "concludes that he may disown his child, not count him as his own" and tragedy ensues (*Disowning* 206). Leontes the philosopher-sceptic is here perverting Wittgenstein's understanding of family resemblances. Let us briefly turn to § 67 of the *Philosophical Investigations*: "I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc., etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way. - And I shall say: 'games' form a family." What his scrutiny of Mamillius' face does not account for is that in order to establish a "relation" between them, two things, games or people do not need to be connected by one essential common feature (for example a nose), but that a "resemblance" may be traced by connecting a series of overlapping similarities, where no feature is common to all. In short, the sceptic Leontes entrusts the solution of a problem to knowledge even if this problem does not fall into its realm.

Why does the sceptic turn to *knowledge* if *knowledge* cannot bring the relief he is after? We could look to any of the tragedies analysed in *Disowning Knowledge* for the existential drama that the sceptic's epistemological crisis hides, but it is perhaps nowhere more poignantly described than in "The Avoidance of Love," his reading of *King Lear*. The play, we recall, begins with a father's ploy to obtain his daughters' public demonstration of their love in exchange for a portion of his kingdom, corresponding to the expanse of their professed love. Goneril and Regan comply, Cordelia does not. Lear is not satisfied and tragedy unfolds. To be sure, Cordelia's

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[11] Another useful formulation can be found in Eldridge and Rhie: "For Cavell, skeptical doubt about the external world or other minds is neither an intellectual error in need of logical refutation (as philosophy has traditionally assumed), nor an ill-formed worry that we might readily put behind us, but a reflection of the inescapable finitude that characterizes every human life" (1).

answer "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.87) and concession that she loves Lear "according to [her] bond, no more nor less" (1.1.93) seems rather tight-lipped. This lack of emotional expressiveness, however, does not explain Lear's reaction, nor does it make it any less puzzling. The question is whether we are ready to believe that Lear does not know his daughters well enough to be aware that Cordelia's "love's / More ponderous than [her] tongue" (1.1.77-8), and that Goneril and Regan's words are a mere rhetoric.[12] For Cavell, this seems unlikely. How then does Cavell explain Lear's bizarre behaviour?

In "The Avoidance of Love" Cavell suggests that Lear turns to *knowledge* by asking his daughters to quantify their love for him, because he cannot bear to be separate. As Davide Sparti has argued, "in avoiding Cordelia's sign of authentic love, Lear is avoiding what *every* love implies, that is, one's need of and hence dependency on the other, thus, one's incompleteness and potential vulnerability" (92). What does Cordelia do in the face of her father's avoidance? "Love, and be silent" (1.1.62). Cordelia's answer is outrageous to Lear, precisely because it answers his demand too well. When Cordelia says "nothing" she cuts right through his *spiel*, and threatens to reveal his dependence, because she is voicing their common separateness (1.1.87). When Cordelia confirms that she loves him "according to [her] bond," she is in truth declaring that her love will not bow its head to tyranny, i.e. that it cannot be swayed by monetary or emotional blackmail; that there is nothing her father can do to make her love him more or less (1.1.93). Cordelia's refusal to gush forth hyperboles, regardless of the consequences for her, makes her expression of love, if sober, truthfully and freely given. Her refusal to be paid off, Cavell suggests, both reveals the depth of her affection and shows that there is nothing that Lear can do to deserve, or buy, this love (*Disowning* 62). As Bruns notes, "Lear turns on Cordelia because he knows, or fears, from her directness, possibly from her look, anyhow from her refusal to play the game, that she can't feign feigning but genuinely loves him" ("Cavell's Shakespeare" 619). For Lear, recognising Cordelia's true expression of love would amount to admitting that such a thing as unconditional love exists and that he could be wondrously worthy of it. It would mean that he would have to accept that love explodes the realm of what is

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[12] In some editions, Cordelia's words are not "more ponderous" but "richer" than her tongue. Ponderous is more suitable to Cavell's reading, since it reverberates with Cavell's interest in the weight of words, but also with his image of Cordelia choking with her heart in her throat, that I will turn to in Chapters 2 and 3.

*knowable* and that the reasons he himself could be considered loveable are not recountable. Put differently, if Cordelia's love can only be given freely and received freely, then there is nothing in the realm of Lear's *knowledge* that explains this love. When he holds her to ransom, he is therefore doing nothing other than trying to pull love back into the realm of what is graspable, even countable in monetary terms. There is, however, a further twist to Lear's behaviour. As is asserted in "Knowing and Acknowledging," "the skeptic's knowledge, should we feel its power, is devastating: he is not challenging a particular belief or set of beliefs about, say, other minds; he is challenging the ground of our beliefs altogether, our power to believe at all" (240). In not accepting Cordelia's response, he effectively shuts his ears to her and her cry of acknowledgment. Shakespeare's tragedies thus show "the annihilation inherent in the skeptical problematic, that scepticism's 'doubt' is motivated not by (not even where it is expressed as) a (misguided) intellectual scrupulousness but by a (displaced) denial, by a self-consuming disappointment that seeks world-consuming revenge" (*Disowning* 5-6). What Cordelia's death illustrates is that the truly tragic consequences of the sceptic's choice are played out on the skin of others, to whom he refuses to relate and whom he hinders from relating to him.

If Lear is the epitome of the sceptic, then Cordelia is the embodiment of acknowledgment, understood as the revelation of our common separateness. The way to overcome scepticism is neither denying the grounds for scepticism (because they cannot be shifted), nor tackling them on the basis of *knowledge,* but by shifting the ground of inquiry away from *knowledge* and towards acknowledgment. *Knowing* and acknowledging do not represent polar opposites; rather, they are both different modes of knowledge. In Cavell's words: "One could say: Acknowledgment goes beyond knowledge. (Going beyond not, so to speak, in the order of knowledge, but in its requirement that I *do* something or reveal something on the basis of that knowledge)" (*"Knowing"* 257). In saying that the question of other minds is not a matter of *knowledge,* but of acknowledgment, he is not only saying that we must forgo *knowledge* but that we must work within our limitations. When, in *The Claim of Reason,* Cavell therefore suggests that "we have *faith* that the things of our world exist," here faith is not divinely given, but must be worked for and towards on the basis of our

knowledge: "But how is that faith achieved, how expressed, how maintained, how deepened, how lost?" (243). What counts for Cavell is not whether we *know* for certain but what we choose to do, or more precisely to *reveal*. It is only when I admit to myself and others that I am separate from them, just as they are from me, that we can start taking steps towards each other. Similarly to attunement, faith is not simply given but must be achieved and maintained; indeed, it is our *responsibility* not to lose it.

"The Avoidance of Love" is not merely the literary illustration of an independently formed philosophical investigation. On the contrary, the way Shakespearean drama illuminates a pivotal "human" problematic (how do we deal with our common separateness?) and the way it repositions this at the centre of what philosophy should consider, underlines the necessity of pursuing literary-philosophical investigations. In *Little Did I Know,* Cavell repeatedly returns to a fateful encounter with Austin – more precisely with his Hippolytus and with what he had to say about promises in "Other Minds" – as the crossroads where he finally began to find his perfect pitch of philosophy. After this crucial encounter with Austin, Cavell, however, still had "little idea how to clarify [his] intuition" of "Austin's idea of the claim of knowledge as 'going beyond'" (321). It was only, Cavell continues, "some ten years later" that he was "able to begin articulating this region "beyond" knowledge by taking into account the concept of acknowledgment" (321). He goes on to suggest that this philosophical "small advance" was also taken in response to Shakespeare: "what the advance required in my case was coming upon a way to make sense of the mysterious and grave events of *King Lear*" (322). In other words, his response to scepticism was also motivated by his urge to make sense, perhaps to alleviate, Lear's loss. In the "Introduction" to *Disowning Knowledge* Cavell indeed observes that "tragedy is an interpretation of what scepticism is itself an interpretation of" (5-6). In other words, both scepticism and tragedy, both philosophy and literature, are an interpretation of an underlying experience. For James Conant, "Cavell takes himself to have uncovered in Shakespearean tragedy an exploration of the problem of skepticism that is able to both complement and supplement the discussion advanced in the work of the later Wittgenstein and Austin" (620). Austin's and Wittgenstein's influences therefore mingle with a different kind of experience: not a philosophical one, not even a literary one, but a "human" one

enshrined in Shakespeare's play. Whilst Cavell's formulation of acknowledgment and separateness seems to follow from readings of Austin and Wittgenstein, it answers a more existential problematic illuminated by a Shakespearean tragedy. I would, therefore, go further than Conant and contend that the literary experience of separateness is not a mere complement or supplement to his philosophical investigations. Instead, I argue with Davies that here "philosophy comes *after* literature's great achievement" (139). Returning to the question of the relationship between literature and philosophy in Cavell's work, this means that he "does not use Shakespeare to illustrate, to exemplify or to explain pre-existing ideas, because those ideas did not exist, or they had not been lucidly articulated, before Shakespeare gave them dramatic form" (139).

Whilst an increasing number of scholars highlight the double – literary and philosophical – nature of Cavell's readings of Shakespeare, we will not be able to fully appreciate the intricacies of Cavell's "interdisciplinary" approach unless we acknowledge that Shakespeare is not secondary, but fundamental to Cavell's philosophical investigations. His readings of the tragedies not only give us an insight into the philosopher-sceptic's tragic predicament, but also show that, contrary to popular belief, his work on Shakespeare plays a fundamental part in his formulation of separateness and acknowledgment. Shakespeare is not a marginal region of Cavell's thought; rather, something that he experiences in the tragedies makes him recast the manner of his philosophical questioning. In "A Conversation with Cavell" in *The Senses of Stanley Cavell,* he admits that the final sentence of *The Claim of Reason* was partly motivated by the lingering doubt that he had succeeded in doing philosophy by asking something that would usually fall into the literary realm. He was wondering whether he might "be asking something of the literary that the philosophical should scrupulously deny itself, something that plays with truth" (313). Cavell is not choosing literature over philosophy. What his diagnosis of scepticism in Shakespeare's tragedies show is that philosophy and literature do not supersede or trump one another; instead, they are two related modes with which Cavell seeks to alleviate the problem of scepticism, which in turn is not understood as exclusively belonging to the philosophical realm, but rather as a symptom of the human predicament. Only when we bring his writings on Shakespeare

in direct relation to those focusing on matters of the ear, will we be able to identify the root of the experience of separateness and what his literary-philosophical investigations are trying to alleviate.

## 2. <u>Cavell's Ear</u>

Cavell has a fine ear. His philosophical writing is interspersed with moments when he shifts the reader's attention to a sound, the tone of a voice, or the act of listening itself. One such example is a rather peculiar passage in the discussion of the differences between Austinian and Wittgensteinian criteria. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell is thinking about Austin's goldfinch and wondering what exactly he was claiming when he claimed to know that there was a goldfinch in the garden:

> Whether or not there are Austinian criteria for something's being real, or for being a real something of a particular kind, Austin must imagine, validly, that we know how to make sure, know what to do to make sure and certain, of such things. For example, to make sure that the bird is not stuffed I could puncture it and see whether stuffing falls out. I have no idea whether this bit of academic sadism would be making sure it's real "in the same way" as I might have made sure it's a goldfinch (unless someone wishes to insist that this *is* making sure it is a goldfinch, while another might wish to insist that only God could really do that (as only a composer can make sure that the tonic is well established (though who is it who makes sure that the singing is on pitch, the singer or the sung to?))). (58)

In this wonderful sequence of parentheses within parentheses – to which I shall return in Chapter 4 – the question of whether an other (I or God) can know that the goldfinch exists (or perhaps even that the goldfinch is in pain) is presented as similar or identical in philosophical force and significance as the question of whether the singer knows her own pitch better than the listener wincing at its flatness or sharpness (if this were the case there would be no more singing out of tune, I suppose; ears can lie). An aural image similarly slips into the scrutiny of his own sceptical doubt, undermining his ability to confirm that there is a goldfinch in the garden:

> There is this humming in the air; or a noise at midnight in the basement – there it is again. Shall I say: "I don't by any means *always* know…", and let it go at that? But there aren't *just* hummings in the air; it is *imperative* that I find out whether there happens to be one in the air now or whether it is only in my ears. Certainly I may not be able to learn the answer in this case, to convince myself one way or the other. But it won't help my condition to say that sometimes I *just* don't know. I am left with the question; it stays in me, until it decays in my memory or I overlay it, perhaps symbolize it, with something else. (60)

In both these instances Cavell is thinking about the question of scepticism through our convoluted aural passageways. These instances when Cavell transposes the question of scepticism to the ear should not be disregarded for their supposed lack of philosophical rigour. Is the pitch in the singer's ear? Is the humming in the air? Is the act of listening located closer to the object or the subject of sound? The answers to these questions will be momentous for Cavell's philosophy. Here, we might project what Cavell observes about Shoshana Felman's supposed lack of philosophical rigour: if this "invocation" of ears "lacks philosophical decorum, so much the worse for philosophical decorum" ("Foreword Body" xx). Cavell's reference to all things aural does not explode philosophical decorum so much as seek to reinvent it, that is, propose a new rigour more in keeping with what he wants philosophy to do.

Passages discussing the relationship between philosophy and matters relating to the ear, such as tonal music, the ("female" (operatic)) voice, rhythm and breath have not received the attention they demand and deserve. As far as I am aware, only three critics focus on matters of the ear in Cavell. Stewart, whose *Reading Voices* listens to the phonotext of literature (interestingly also to Shakespeare), has in more recent work endeavoured to audit Cavell's reading of literature and style. Yet, apart from a short analysis of the "imp" sound in his reading of Poe's "The Imp of the Perverse" in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, he does not often turn his attention to the sound of writing ("World Viewed" 79-81). In a paper given at a recent conference, Arnold Davidson presented very interesting work on the intersection between jazz and philosophy, or rather how Cavell's view on jazz may be understood to bear on his philosophical mission. Focusing on an anecdote related in *Little Did I Know*, where Cavell notes that Ben Webster could not keep on playing because he had forgotten the words to the song, Davidson reads Webster's breath as his own idiosyncratic signature and therefore as the ethical act *par excellence*. Davidson is here gesturing towards Cavell's understanding of passionate utterances – to which I will turn in the next chapter – taking the idea about the fundamentally ethical nature of language a step further to include all those things we say without words, or despite words. In an inspiring and inspired response at the same conference, Cornell West called Cavell the jazzman of

philosophy: a charming idea, which however would need more fleshing out.[13] Gould's *Hearing Things* also centres on the ear in Cavell, but whilst Stewart audits it, Gould philosophises it. The ear and hearing for Gould become descriptive of a certain textual model that distinguishes Cavell's style.[14]

Although Stewart's attention to the phonotext, Davidson's attentiveness to breath, West's musicological and historical contextualisation and Gould's philosophical-textual reading are valuable, these approaches fall short of unravelling the role of the ear in Cavell's philosophy. They fail to do so for three reasons: firstly, they do not link Cavell's more properly aural and musical concerns with his figural uses of the ear. Secondly, they do not contextualise the moments in which he refers to the ear both actually and figuratively in his autobiographical writings. Finally, they fail to see how these aural references function as a sort of hinge between his philosophical and literary, more precisely, Shakespearean, investigations. For Cavell turns with considerable interest to moments in the tragedies and romances that pivot on the ear: whether this be the strange detail of the ear-poisoning in *Hamlet*, or Mamillius' whispering into Hermione's ear. And then there is, of course, Cavell's unexpected and idiosyncratic notation of the nature of Cordelia's voice in "The Avoidance of Love." Fathoming these aural narratives and how they echo each other and how each of them reverberates with a deeper concern, is therefore crucial in sounding out the philosophical import of his readings of Shakespeare, as well as the *impetus* of his philosophy in general.

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[13] Davidson's paper was, like Stewart's, given at a conference in Harvard in October 2010, but only the latter was published in *Stanley Cavell and Literary Studies: Consequences of Skpeticism* (Eds. Rhie and Eldridge). Cornell West made his remark I believe also in response to Davidson's presentation. One possible avenue to begin to understanding what West meant would be to start with a recent interview with Anna Fifield in the *Financial Times* where, speaking about his political and democratic commitments, he describes himself as "a jazzman in the life of the mind," and goes on to say: "I'm going to blow my horn and sing my song in such a distinctive way that people will have to take notice. Not notice of me but of the point." The term "jazzman of philosophy" would therefore not only point to Cavell's idiosyncratic philosophical voice, to which I shall turn in Chapter 4, but also to how this is linked to an idea of quasi-religious as well as political witnessing.

[14] Gould's is one of the more significant contributions to the illumination of Cavell's work in recent years and I will return to it when I analyse Cavellian acts of reading (and writing) in Chapter 3.

2.1 A Damaged Left Ear

The experience of separateness is not something that Cavell inherits from either Austin or Wittgenstein; rather, it is an experience that he brings to his philosophical readings. Although the previous chapter has examined what separateness is and how it chimes with Cavell's readings of Austin and Wittgenstein, we have so far failed to determine what causes separateness. We are still to ascertain what existential experience creates a metaphysical lack for which the sceptic mistakenly seeks to compensate with impossible demands upon our *knowledge*. Yet, "true recovery" from scepticism "lies in ... finding skepticism's source (its origin, say, if you can say it without supposing its origin past)" (*Disowning* 198). One way of getting closer to what Cavell means by separateness, and thus of finding scepticism's source and remedy, is to further investigate the language or imagery with which Cavell frames the experience of separateness in his autobiographical writings.

Cavell's autobiographical experience of separateness, although encrypted in all of his philosophical writings, is first overtly voiced in the narration of his childhood in *A Pitch of Philosophy*. His childhood account is pervaded by a deep sense of gratitude towards his parents, as well as by an acute experience of separateness. Immediately the child's separateness is understood as an extension of the parents' lack of attunement, what he also calls "their despair of harmony" (*Pitch* 21). The main reason for the difference between his immigrant father and his musician mother – marking out what to him seemed then an insurmountable separateness – was, on the one hand, "the glad unsayability of her knowledge of the utter expressiveness of music," and, on the other, "his wild love of the eloquence he would never have" (21). It is striking that Cavell comments on his parent's avoidance of each other, or rather lack of acknowledgment of each other, in terms of a melancholy silence, which in the case of his mother is often translated into impassioned and solitary piano playing (*Little* 111). This equation of separateness and acknowledgment with silence and music is not accidental. Throughout his autobiographical writings, memories of a painful aural injury and subsequent treatments colour the experience of his self-alienation, or the "distance from one's body," at the heart of the sceptical problem.

In *A Pitch of Philosophy* and *Little Did I Know*, the existential crisis of the separateness between mother and child is persistently registered by the ear. One example for this is Cavell's account of his ear pain. As a child, Cavell was "hit by a car as [he] ran headlong into [his] most uneventful street to retrieve a ball" and was "left with a damaged left ear" (*Pitch* 25). This damage was frequently the cause of the painful ear infections that punctuated his childhood. Significantly, in *The Claim of Reason* Cavell uses ear pain as an example of the sceptical problem of pain:

> A ringing in the ears is nicely describable as such, and typical manifestations are to frown or open the mouth very wide so as to move the ears around, or to press your palms against them for a moment, or to shake the head vigorously once or twice and then listen – people who haven't had the experience probably won't understand what you're doing. (80)

Cavell, of course, does not only use examples of ear pain, but also refers to headaches or toothaches, amongst other sources of pain. This particular passage is, however, crucial, as a typical parenthetical comment in "Philosophy and the Arrogation of Voice" maintains:

> But while the story of my ear as an organ of my body is less articulated here (for example, details of the primitiveness and painfulness of the early medical treatments of my ear, in the days still preceding the discovery of sulfa drugs, treatments which determined a general attempt to learn a distance from my body and so attempts to undo that learning, and which will mould the common male doubt, at certain stages, that one specifically will bear up under torture), it colors the others, in ways I know I have not fathomed. (*Pitch* 30)

We can detect a slight hesitation on Cavell's part. In one and the same gesture, he offers and withdraws the figure of the ear as something central to his philosophy. It is as if he were trying to say that the question of the ear is philosophically pervasive and pertinent, but in ways that he has not fathomed, in ways that are perhaps not fathomable, at least not by "traditional" philosophy. In order to unravel what is registered here by the ear – the experience of separateness – the philosopher must therefore turn to the rigours of other disciplines more suited to this task than philosophy.

Whilst the passage from *A Pitch of Philosophy* is, as far as I know, the only place in which the autobiographical narration explicitly links the problem of his ear to this sense of separateness, and thus the question of scepticism, the connection is made more often

in his readings of Shakespearean tragedy. It is striking how often Cavell turns to a scene revolving around the ear in an attempt to locate the trigger for the tragic mechanism. At the end of "Hamlet's Burden of Truth," Cavell adds a short comment on the peculiar detail of Old Hamlet's poisoning through the ear. It could be argued that the sheer obtrusiveness of killing somebody by pouring poison into their ear merely underlines the shifty ground on which Hamlet's sceptical claim to *knowledge* stands. Considering, however, the importance the of the ear in other plays – for example Iago pouring pestilence into Othello's ear – and indeed in Cavell's narration of his own childhood, this scene takes on an additional significance.

When Cavell introduces the question of the ear in his reading of *Hamlet* he introduces it in explicitly Freudian terms. Freud speculates that the primal scene, a "phylogenetic inheritance," is transmitted from parent to child by way of the ear: "the family *sounds* or *sayings*, the spoken or secret discourses, going on prior to the subject's arrival, within which he must take his way" (*Disowning* 189). Cavell continues: "I hope you will be struck by the fit of this account with the fact that Hamlet's fantasy of the dumb show takes up something he heard from his ancestor's ghost and that features the mortal vulnerability of the ear" (189). The ear is the place where, on the one hand, the parental ghost's injunction is heard, and on the other hand, the place where this injunction must be shut out, whether the child wants to or not. Through his reading of *Hamlet,* Cavell therefore re-imagines the ear as the place where the battle of individuation takes place, where the individual must learn how to make his way with and against his parents' anxieties and fantasies. The ear is also the place where the child must learn to accept his separateness. In the "Introduction" to *Disowning Knowledge*, Cavell further locates the root of separateness not merely in the primal scene, but in the child's relation to its mother: "what philosophy registers as uncertainty in our knowledge of the existence of the world is a function of, say intellectualization of, the child's sense of loss in separating from the mother's body" (13). This proximity of the "motherly" or the "female" to the struggle of individuation is no doubt linked to his equating of acknowledgment with the "female voice," and I will return to this issue in Chapter 4. For the purposes of our present enquiry, however, namely the valence of

matters of the ear in his writings, we must stay with Cavell's (and indeed Shakespeare's) association of the female body with the struggle to come to terms with one's mortality.

Perhaps the most eloquent example of how closely the "female" is associated with the individual's experience of separateness in Cavell's imagination is his treatment of breath. Breath is something that Cavell returns to in all of his writing, be it his reading of Shakespearean tragedy, his anecdotal tales about jazz, his writings on film, or his study of Emerson. In "Henry James Reading Emerson Reading Shakespeare," for instance, he briefly turns to Lear's "No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose / to wage against the enmity o' th' air" (*Transcendental Etudes* 246). Earlier in that scene Lear "had recorded his sense of suffocation ('Hysterica passio, down thy rising sorrow,' well studied by Janet Adelman in her *Suffocating Mothers*)" and Cavell thus takes "the enmity of the air as encompassing not only a disturbed sky, but the mortal's condition of living in the medium of air, subject to the necessity of breathing" (246). Adelman's reading of Lear's sense of suffocation is part of a longer chapter in which she argues that the sceptic fantasy of maternal contamination and its flip side, the longing for maternal presence, are expressed through Lear's relationship to Cordelia (116). Here Lear's welling up ("O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! / *Hysterica passio*, Down, thou climbing sorrow, / Thy element's below. Where is this daughter? [2.2.246-8]) is read as a rejection of his mortality, which is linked to the female (114). In line with Cavell's assertion that what philosophy deems to be an intellectual lack is instead "the child's sense of loss in separating from the mother's body," *Suffocating Mothers* argues that Shakespeare's tragic heroes persistently project the fear of their own mortality onto the mother's body (*Disowning* 13; Adelman 6)

What is rising in Lear's throat, and in ours, what is shortening breath is the realisation of our mortality. Lear's fantasy of *hysterica passio* can therefore be understood as an expression of anxiety about his own existence similar to the one voiced in Descartes' Cogito, but transposed onto the maternal body. As Cavell writes in relation to *Hamlet*, the burden of human life is to come to terms with our own mortality: "the burden of proving that he or she exists, and that this burden is discharged in *thinking* your existence, which comes in Descartes (though this is controversial) to

finding how to say, 'I am, I exist'; not of course to say it just once, but at every instant of your existence; to preserve your existence, originate it" (*Disowning* 187). As Cavell so pithily puts it in *The Claim of Reason*, the sceptic's problem is neither with *knowledge* nor with his mother, but with himself: "I am the philosophical problem. I am" (83). The use of the utterly Emersonian image of a joining and disjoining breath – "as if his every breath and gesture disjoin and join him, from and with mankind" – to describe Hamlet's separateness, must in this sense be viewed in terms of Lear's *hysterica passio* and the struggle to preserve and acknowledge our existence as separate and therefore mortal (*Disowning* 188).

Cavell's discussion of breath is also salient because it bridges his treatment of the existential struggles underlying the experience of separateness and his discussion of the sceptic's "misuse" of language discussed in the previous chapter. *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* links Lear's claim that he would rather "abjure all roofs, and choose / To wage against the enmity o'th' air" (2.2.297-8) to the sceptic's "sense of suffocation," and hence to Emerson's "idea of the fear of breath as a fear of speech" (246). The link between the image of breath and the fact that words remain beyond our control originates in Emerson, especially in his idea that "character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment" ("Self-Reliance" 92). Emerson's image of emitting breath is here married to Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein's notion of private language as an effect of the sceptic's "wish to deny the publicness of language" (*Claim* 351). This conjunction of two philosophical acts of reading may be further sounded out by Cavell's incisive discussion of Lear's fear that his words (gestures, breaths, intonations, silences) could betray his vulnerability and separateness. "Wittgenstein's idea" thus receives "amplification" from the role of breath in Shakespeare and Emerson "so that the fear of breathing is seen as a projection onto language of a fear of its insufficiency, as if it is language itself that has shrunk from its responsibilities of reference and expression" (*Transcendental Etudes* 246). In *The Claim of Reason*, the image of breathlessness, our inability to express ourselves, grows more acute:

> My problem is no longer that my words can't get past his body to *him*. There is nothing for them to get to; they can't even reach as far as *my* body; they are

stuck behind the tongue, or at the back of my mind. The signs are dead; merely working them out loud doesn't breathe life into them; even dogs can speak more effectively. Words have no carry. It is like trying to throw a feather; for some things, breath is better than strength, stronger. This is also something I meant by saying that voicing my criteria has to have the force of "call." (84)

This passage echoes Lear's final speech in Act 5, Scene 3. Here, as in the passage above, dogs make an uncanny appearance. Whilst Cavell laments the fact that our words have no breath left in them and that even dogs can speak more effectively, Lear cannot understand why life and breath should be in a dog, a horse or even a rat, and not in his poor Cordelia. It is almost as if, to paraphrase *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, "the world and [his] desires in it are too monstrous for telling, and the burden of language, of bearing meaning, of making myself intelligible, crushes [him]" (247). Lear's and Hamlet's breath are thus a "reasonable portrait of something ... that philosophical skepticism dreams of explaining as an intellectual lack in human knowledge rather than a perpetual contending with the fate or condition of finitude" (247).

   *The Winter's Tale* also draws a link between the precariousness of language, the mother, our sense of separateness and the ear. Just before Leontes has his sceptical outburst, Mamillius, whose infant state is forever etched into his name, is seen whispering into Hermione's ear:

| | |
|---|---|
| HERMIONE | Come, sir, now |
| | I am for you again: 'pray you, sit by us, |
| | And tell's a tale. |
| MAMILLIUS | Merry, or sad, shall't be? |
| HERMIONE | As merry as you will. |
| MAMILLIUS | A sad tale's best for winter: I have one |
| | Of sprites and goblins. |
| HERMIONE | Let's have that, good sir. |
| | Come on, sit down, come on, and do your best |
| | To fright me with your sprites: you're powerful at it. |
| MAMILLIUS | There was a man – |
| HERMIONE | Nay, come sit down: then on. |
| MAMILLIUS | Dwelt by a churchyard: I will tell it softly, |
| | Yond crickets shall not hear it. |
| HERMIONE | Come on then, |
| | And giv't me in mine ear. |

(2.1.21-32)

It is a lovely, intimate scene: a child whispering a story into his mother's ear. Here the original union with the mother is presented as a union of common language, a story that only Hermione and Mamillius know. We shall not hear it. Hermione and Mamillius are completely attuned to each other, they are in what the renowned psychoanalyst Susie Orbach calls "attunement," or "a circle of positive engagement," which occurs when the mother is "on the baby's emotional wavelength" (59). When Cavell suggests that Leontes' sceptical outburst is in fact not only triggered by his realisation of the *double-face* – the power and impotence of language – but also by Hermione's pregnant state, reminding him of his own original union with his mother, he is not presenting two alternative explanations for Leontes' behaviour, but instead gesturing at how they might inform each other (*Disowning* 196). For the sceptic who has forgotten how to communicate beyond language's short-comings, Mamillius' whispering into Hermione's ear comes to stand for the intimacy and trust in language that he, like Leontes, has lost. What the conjunction of these acts of reading suggests is that the sceptic's misuse of language, as illustrated in the first chapter by Leontes, is linked to his inability to overcome the traumatic separation from his mother. The metaphysical finitude that the sceptic wrongly and wilfully interprets "as an intellectual lack" is thus tightly wound up with the child's experience of the separation from his mother, the realisation that he is separate and thus mortal (*Disowning* 11).

A comparison of how the figure of the ear and the related figure of breath come into play in his readings of Shakespeare, as well as his philosophical and autobiographical writings has unveiled the psychoanalytic impetus of Cavell's work. By linking an apparently purely, even supremely, intellectual problematic with the primal experience of the child's separation from the mother, he is not only introducing an element that is thought to belong to the psychoanalytic realm, but also boldly redrafting the goals and parameters of philosophy. Indeed, for Plonowska Ziarek he supplants "the epistemological quest for the legitimation of knowledge" with "a project of therapy, what might be called a psychoanalysis of philosophy" (27). In Cavell's work psychoanalysis, like literature, does therefore not supplant or supplement philosophy. In chapter 2 of *Contesting Tears,* "Psychoanalysis and Cinema: Moment of <u>Letter from an Unknown Woman</u>" Cavell in this sense speaks of psychoanalysis' "reassociation with

philosophy on its appearance on the stage of skepticism" (97). To borrow an image used in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes,* the psychoanalytic problem Cavell locates behind scepticism "amplifies" philosophy (246-7). This, however, is an "amplification" that not only influences how Cavell uses figures of the ear, but also how he actually listens to Shakespearean drama.

2.2 Passionate Utterances – Heaving Hearts into Mouths

In Cavell's work, matters of the ear are never merely figural, but also describe the actual process of listening. In his readings of Shakespeare's plays he often pays particular attention to breath, rhythm, trembling and even the quality of the character's voices. In "The Avoidance of Love" Cavell remarks that Shakespeare's notation of Cordelia's "stature and of the quality of her voice is unique in the play" (*Disowning* 63). Yet since "the idea of a defiant *small* girl seems grotesque, as an idea of Cordelia," its significance must lie somewhere else (63). Here is how Cavell pictures that first crucial exchange between father and daughter in *King Lear*:

> I imagine the scene this way: The older daughters' speeches are public, set; they should not be said to Lear, but to the court, sparing themselves his eyes and him theirs. They are not monsters first, but ladies. He is content. Then Cordelia says to him, away from the court, in confused appeal to their accustomed intimacy, "Nothing" – don't force me, I don't know what you want, there is nothing I can say, to speak what you want I must not speak. But he is alarmed at the appeal and tries to cover it up, keeping up the front, and says, speaking to her and to the court, as if the ceremony is still in full effect: "Nothing will come of nothing; speak again." (*Hysterica passio*, is already stirring.) Again she says to *him:* "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth" – not the heart which loves him, that always has been present in her voice; but the heart which is shuddering with confusion, with wanting to do the impossible, the heart which is now in her throat. But to no avail. (64)

For Adelman, as for Cavell, "Cordelia embodies the rising, choking heart (*cor*) that we half-hear in her name": not only in her "first appearance, when she cannot heave her heart into her mouth" but also on her return, when she "pantingly heav[es] forth the name of father" (127). When Cordelia claims that she cannot heave her heart into her mouth, she seems to be saying that, in contrast to her sisters, she cannot boast of her

feelings. But Regan and Goneril are not heaving their hearts into their mouths, quite the contrary. For Cavell, Cordelia is not speaking here of the heart that loves Lear, which has been present in her voice (and we will soon see how a heart can be present in a voice), but of the heart that is "shuddering" and that is "stuck in her throat."

Questions of breath and swallowing, voice and trembling are also addressed in *The Claim of Reason* in the guise of the "half-swallowed apple of knowledge":

> Is being human exactly to be incapable either of swallowing it or spitting it out? Is the gasping of the human voice, say sobbing or laughing, the best proof of the human? or best picture, i.e., mask? To swallow once and for all would be to live always within ordinary language-games, within the everyday; to spit once and for all would be to exist apart from just that life, to live without. In particular, to live without the human voice (e.g., without appeal, without protest). (477)

As with Hamlet's joining and disjoining breath, this moment, when the "apple of knowledge" is neither swallowed nor spat out, marks our struggle to overcome separateness. The apple of knowledge is, of course, reminiscent of the forbidden fruit in *Genesis*, standing for man's shame, his awareness of his nakedness. Here this image of the apple represents man's awareness of his separateness: spitting it out would mean pretending that there is no separateness, would mean aspiring, like the sceptic-philosopher, to transcend our human condition. It would also mean living without what Cavell calls the "human voice." To swallow it would mean suffocating under the burden of separateness. Living *with* the human voice would mean neither clearing one's throat completely, nor swallowing the apple of knowledge. As the parenthesis suggests, living with the human voice entails living with appeal and protest, means living with gasping, sobbing and laughing. What these passages suggest is that, for Cavell, this struggle leaves traces on the body, and that these traces are, furthermore, audible. Cavell's focus on the quality of Cordelia's voice suggests that these sounds are nothing other than voiced betrayals of the body's separateness, sounds that we need to heed in order to acknowledge the other. Similarly, when Cordelia cannot heave her heart into her mouth, when her heart is stuck in her throat, she is voicing the existential conflict inherent in the human condition, that is to say, her separateness.

Cavell's notations of voice and breath and their tremors, rhythms and sounds must be taken in conjunction with his reading of Austin, in particular his expansion of perlocutionary speech acts to passionate utterances. Cavell's awareness of the body's sounds is founded on his reading of Austin's take on Hippolytus' famous quote: "my tongue swore to but my heart did not," in *How to Do Things with Words* (9-10). Cavell argues that Austin uses Hippolytus' citation to enact a claim that "the metaphysician in each of us – will use metaphysics to get out of the moral of the ordinary, out of our ordinary moral obligations" (*Passages* 75). Austin's reading of Hippolytus' excuse is aimed at banishing intention from the weight of our responsibility, meaning that we will still be bound by our word, even if we did not *mean* to say it. In contrast to Austin, Cavell argues that intention, at least a conscious one, is always impossible because we will never really be able to know what others, including ourselves, mean, what the intonation we give to our words exposes. Whilst Austin's clinging on to intention is expressive of a (sceptical) fear of the metaphysical dodge, Cavell embraces it precisely because of its inevitability. Cavell goes beyond Austin in believing that "an enlightened world" can run on the basis that "promises may sometimes rightly be broken, that our word is no more than our bond, that our bond is sometimes forfeit" (*Pitch* 103). He also believes, as Hent de Vries puts it, that "seriousness and sincerity require that we indeed grant and indeed cherish this semantic and ontological 'let out', which is a possibility for good and for ill, no mere escape from moral constraint and our answerability to others, the world, and ourselves" ("Must" 111-2). His reframing of Austin is indebted to an understanding of separateness that, although not incompatible with Austin's philosophy, does not emerge from it. For Cavell, Austin's distinction between false interiority and the seriousness of honouring our bond is pushed further: he concludes that precisely because there is no way of telling another's inner or private intention from his words, there must be something else that explains the everyday miracle of our mutual understanding, or "our unastonishing yet astonishing ability to say what we say, I for you, you for you" (*Pitch* 59). We will have to take the other by his word, not despite, but *because* we are separate from him, because we can never really know what the other means, or what we mean.

The consequences of Cavell's interpretation of Hippolytus' quote are momentous. In it he hears something very different from Austin. For Cavell, it rings with the "incessant, unending vulnerability of human action, its exposure to the independence of the world and the preoccupation of the mind" (*Passages* 53). He therefore subtly but significantly alters the meaning of Hippolytus' famous phrase: it is no longer a metaphysical dodge, but an expression of an existential and insurmountable separateness. Cavell's reading of Hippolytus is, however, not to be understood as a move away, but rather as a repositioning or amplification of Austin. We are again in the resonant space of Cavell's writing where two different and at times divergent philosophical narratives chime. Cavell's reading of Hippolytus is, for instance, dependent on Austin's understanding of the ethical nature of language. According to Cavell, in "Other Minds" Austin argues that saying "I know" is similar to saying "I promise," because in uttering both statements one "takes a step, makes a commitment, beyond saying that you fully intend to" (*Little* 320). In other words, saying "I know" transports you to a place beyond or after *knowledge.* For Cavell, Austin implies "that the step beyond can be said to be the *same or sufficiently similar* step that is taken in the case of promising … namely, that you give others your word" (320-1). Cavell writes: "(Say that it reveals human speech to be radically, in each uttered word, ethical. Speaking, or failing to speak, to another is as subject to responsibility, say to further response, as touching, or failing to touch, another. To have muttered such a thing then would have seemed, well literary.)" (321).

Cavell's reading of Hippolytus also depends on an amplification or radicalisation of Austinian perlocutionary utterances into "passionate utterances." In *How To Do Things With Words*, Austin not only distinguishes between constantive and performative speech acts, but also differentiates between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts, where illocutionary acts do something *in* saying something (i.e. I christen this ship Lucy), and perlocutionary acts do something *by* saying something. Whilst Austin pays a great deal of attention to illocutionary acts, he seems reluctant to engage more deeply with perlocutionary acts. One of the reasons he gives is that, unlike illocutionary speech acts, the effect of perlocutionary speech acts is impossible to control or trace properly. If, for instance, I say "I frighten you" this would

not necessarily frighten you, in fact it might just make you laugh. Conversely, if read as a simple statement, this sentence might actually frighten you, depending on the context in which it was uttered. Perhaps unable to find a serious flaw in his teacher, Cavell does not read Austin's lack of interest in perlocutionary acts as an inconsistency on his part, but merely as a missed opportunity for exploring another way in which language and our relation to it are intertwined. For Cavell, the unexplored potential of perlocutionary acts lies precisely in the fact that their effects are hard to trace. In his "Foreword" to Felman's *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, Cavell characterises the difference between performative and passionate utterances as follows: "I mark this difference between performative and passionate utterances by saying that with the latter the 'you' comes essentially into the picture" (xx). Or, as Ian Munday summarises, "whether or not my words (which may appear in all manner of forms), succeed in frightening you depends not just on the words I use to try and bring this effect off, but also (and this is crucial) on how 'you' respond to them" (63). Perlocutionary acts are hard to trace because they are "passionate," because they do not only account for what is said, but how it is said, or indeed how something that is left unsaid affects the other.

Like Austin, Cavell takes the fundamentally ethical nature of language seriously, the fact that whether we want it to or not, it traces out the bond that each utterance creates between speaker and addressee. Unlike him, however, he believes that the "expressive" in speech also bears on the bond language creates between interocutors; in other words that the body's silences and sounds may also affect it. In Munday's words: "taking seriously the importance of the perlocutionary effects of language is to acknowledge the individual/expressive uses of speech in which people establish relationships with one another" (63). Whilst Bell is right to describe Austin's gift to Cavell "not in terms of a body of work, but of an ear, one lent to one's own voice, to find or hear that voice of one's own," Cavell's ear differs slightly from Austin's (150).[15] Ordinary language philosophy's reliance on listening to, or if you will, sampling ordinary speech to understand what we mean when we say something, suggests that for Austin there is in fact a link between heart and tongue. Just as the heart, tongue or breath can carry intention, the way something is delivered – in writing as well as in

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[15] As I show in the Second Interlude, hearing this nuanced difference is also pivotal in beginning to sound out the difference between Cavell and Derrida.

speaking – can give an indication as to its meaning. As Austin puts it, "the *force* of utterances" – for instance the "tone of voice" or "cadence" – can be an indication for how it is to be taken (73, 74). At the same time, Austin's damning of Hippolytus rests on the possibility that there can be a discrepancy between heart and tongue, in other words that expressions can be feigned. Austin's relationship to *phone* and to the expressive in speech is therefore a contradictory one: on the one hand the surface of language, *phone*, is to Austin's ear imbued with intention; on the other hand intention is, according to Hippolytus and Austin, what is in the heart and not what is propelled by the tongue. In his "Foreword" to *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, Cavell describes "Austin's vision of the human being as a field of vulnerability whose actions imply wider consequences and effects and results – if narrower meaning – than we should have to be answerable for" (xvi). In listening out for "intention," Austin is thus not seeking to satisfy a metaphysical desire for origin, but, instead, protection against the danger of the metaphysicians' avoidance of responsibility or the "metaphysical dodge."

As Cavell's attention to Cordelia's voice in his reading of *King Lear* illustrates, he is much less reluctant than Austin to embrace the expressive character or the passions of speech. Cavell is therefore not only expanding Austin's idea of perlocutionaries but also addressing what in "Passionate and Performative Utterance, Morals of Encounter" is called Austin's "relative, continued neglect of the passions, or say the expressive in speech" (180). This is where the nuanced difference between Cavell's and Austin's ears comes to the fore. When Cavell pricks his ears up to the breath and voice of characters (as if they were real people), he is not listening out for Austin's metaphysical dodge. Whilst, as Cavell notes in "Knowing and Acknowledging," "the skeptic is going to be impressed by the fact that my knowledge of others depends upon their *expressing themselves*, in word and conduct," these expressions not only give room to the possibility of feigning or lying but also "to discover[ing] the specific plight of mind and circumstance within which a human being gives voice to his condition" (254, 240). He is, in other words, listening out for separateness, for what demands our full attention and, in time, acknowledgment.  In his "Foreword" to *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, Cavell explicitly describes the perlocutionary as the field of passions:

> The perlocutionary is the field of human interaction which is not governed by the conventions and conditions or rituals Austin invokes, but represents the complementary field occupied by or calling for improvisation and passion and aggression. It is the region Austin backs away from in backing away from investigating the perlocutionary. (xx)

Whilst, as Sparti points out, the sceptic's dilemma is exacerbated by the fact that *expressions* can be feigned – "although [criteria] enable us to establish whether a piece of behavior expresses pain or joy, they cannot discriminate whether that behavior expresses *real* pain or the *simulation* of pain" – it is precisely in the other's (and my own) *expressiveness* that the chance of acknowledgment lies (87). Cavell is even "(... perhaps prepared to recognize, regarding a cry in pain, or a prolonged silence, as a 'preverbal' call for help; a tear as a trace of rage, perhaps at oneself; a sob as a reminder of comfort)" ("Passionate" 196).[16] Our responsibility to others lies in how willing we are to listen out for the traces of their separateness. Or as Sparti has it: "our *responsibility* to the others lies in our *responsiveness* to them" (91).

When Cavell listens out for Cordelia's stifled breath, or when he imagines how she would have confronted her father in the play's first scene, he is listening out for how her being is abandoned to her words. "It is," Cavell writes in *Philosophical Passages*, "in recognizing *this* abandonment to my words, as if to unfeasible epitaphs, presaging the leave-taking of death, that I *know* my voice, *recognize* my words (no different form yours) as mine" (65). The expressive in speech, created by gestures, but also by our intonation, our hesitations, our breath, is what may betray us. Cavell is interested in the sound of characters' utterances because, as the later Wittgenstein and Freud have recognised, they become "victims of expression – readable in every sound and gesture – their every word and act apt to betray their meaning" ("Passionate" 195). As Cavell writes at the end of "Knowing and Acknowledging": "when you have twisted or covered your expressions far or long enough, or haven't yet found the words which give the phenomenon expression, I may know better than you how it is with you. I may respond even to the fact of your separateness from me (not to mention mine from you)

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[16] Particularly interesting in this sense is his reading of Carmen's *pianissimo* in response to Don José (194). Cavell's notion of "passionate utterances" has, I believe, great potential in illuminating contemporary theatrical and indeed operatic performance, in particular the perlocutionary repercussions that singing has on the audience.

more immediately than you" (266). The other's ethical demand on us is therefore also made in the almost imperceptible, and absolutely idiosyncratic, bodily collaterals of speech or singing (for instance breath, swallowing, or trembling of the voice). Matters of the ear in Cavell's readings of Shakespeare are therefore not only a philosophical metaphor through which Cavell locates the root of scepticism, but testament to the fact that the ear can also pick up those sounds (or lack of sounds) that speak of the body's tragic predicament.

In the past, a failure to consider the role the ear plays in Cavell's readings of Shakespeare has contributed to a failure to fully comprehend the role Shakespeare plays in his philosophy. Cavell's idiosyncratic use of aural imagery, as well as his attention to what the ear can actually pick up, in his readings of Shakespeare helps us identify the root of "separateness," and thus come to a clearer understanding of what Cavell wants philosophy to alleviate. With an account of the way he shifts his attention to the ear in crucial moments in his readings of *The Winter's Tale* and *Hamlet,* I have argued that the ear is figuratively and imaginatively intertwined with the experience of separateness. The existential and traumatic experience of the separation from the mother leaves its mark on the ear: whether this be on the scarred tympanum, addressed in the autobiographical writings, or in the ear poisoning or ear-whispering described in Shakespearean tragedy. I have also suggested that for Cavell the pseudo-intellectual problem of scepticism is the symptom of a metaphysical lack, which, although projected onto the mother's body, in fact represents the problem of coming to terms with our own existence as separate. Just as the figure of the ear shows the root of separateness, the process of listening can help us acknowledge the other better. By extending Austin's ethical understanding of language and his perlocutionaries into passionate utterances, and by making amends for his neglect of the expressive in speech, Cavell also locates our ethical relationship to the other in the sounds that accompany utterances. He thus encourages us to listen out for the bodily and audible marks of the other's separateness. It is only now after we have sounded out his clairaudient reading of Shakespeare that, to return to Nussbaum, we can truly fathom how and why these acts of readings *do* philosophy. Only after showing both that Cavell's turn to philosophy is motivated by a wish to alleviate the human suffering he saw portrayed in Shakespeare, and under what

terms this separateness is investigated, can we begin to address how the Shakespearean oeuvre can come to play a crucial role in absorbing the very separateness that it portrays.

## 3. Mending the Heart of Language in a Heartless World

At the end of "Skepticism and Iconoclasm," Cavell wonders about the possible effect Shakespeare's words might have on us, considering that "any and all of them are words on a page; and all of us are flesh and blood. What exchange between us can we understand as working to cleanse our imagination of each other – to mend the heart of language in a heartless world? Where do words come from?" (247). This question reverberates with the concerns of traditional ordinary language philosophy, which deals with more important issues than we might think. As Laugier observes, the questions posed by ordinary language philosophy have "a significance that goes beyond the philosophy of language" (20). Indeed, *The Claim of Reason* posits that "the philosophical appeal to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis of which we say what we say, are claims to community" (20). Whilst the link between criteria and the claims to community have been widely discussed in the secondary literature, only a few critics turn to what Cavell seems to be aiming at here. The reverberations of Shakespeare's language not only reach our flesh and blood, but also our soul.

At the beginning of *Disowning Knowledge*, Cavell writes that it is his "intuition" that the advent of scepticism as manifested in Descartes' *Meditations* is "already in full existence in Shakespeare, from the time of the great tragedies in the first years of the seventeenth century, in the generation preceding that of Descartes" (3). Despite the fact that a comparison with Montaigne's scepticism would have made more sense from a chronological point of view, "the skeptical problematic [Cavell] has in mind is given its philosophical refinement in Descartes's way of raising the question of God's existence and of the immortality of the soul" (3). In Shakespeare, Descartes' scepticism is already anachronistically present because the issue is no longer "how to conduct oneself best in an uncertain world" but "how to live at all in a groundless world" (3). In other words, for Cavell, Shakespeare "registers a shift in the skeptical problematic from its earlier formulations, a shift to which Descartes's *Mediations* (1641) would give decisive expression for the future development of Western philosophy" (Davies 139). The difference between the problem of scepticism as posed by Descartes and by

Shakespeare respectively is, however, the status of God. What Rhu calls "Cavell's Renaissance Skepticism" is even more modern than Descartes because it runs on the assumption that there is no God, or at least no God that could grant us certainty as Descartes' does (*American Dream* 84). For if the Cartesian problem (i.e. that there is no way for us to find out whether or not there is "a rough adequation or collaboration between our everyday judgements and the world") is accepted, but the Cartesian solution (that such an adequation or collaboration can only be granted by the existence of God) is rejected, then the "ground of the everyday" remains irrevocably shaken (*Disowning* 3). What Cavell's readings of Shakespeare point towards in particular is that in a world where the ground of certainty has been shaken, where even the ground of a Cartesian solution to scepticism has been unsettled, our search for redemption must begin with ourselves. In contrast to Kant, who "banked the immortality of the soul on the fact that in this world goodness and happiness are unaligned," and that supposedly therefore they must be aligned in the afterlife, Cavell believes that "immortality is not necessary for the soul's satisfaction" (81). What is necessary is rather the soul's "own coherence, its ability to judge a world in which evil is successful and the good are doomed; and in particular its knowledge that while injustice may flourish, it cannot rest content" (81). And for Cavell an encounter with Shakespearean drama can help the soul regain such coherence; it rivals religion in an age where religion has lost its purchase. Although Fergus Kerr is to some extent correct in saying that "Cavell is typical of the Western intellectual who insists, against all the evidence, that religion is declining," Cavell's relationship to religion is more complex than the notion of a simple and complete rejection might lead us to believe (127). God is, to echo what has become a Nietzschean platitude, not so much dead as replaced. As Kerr argues and as certain passages in "The Avoidance of Love" clearly indicate, the other comes to bear the weight of my existence in God's stead (130). Parallel to Derrida's messianism without a messiah, we are dealing here with a religion without God, a religion of perfectionism and of acknowledgment, and of the therapy they entail.

The suggestion that Shakespeare's tragedies are expressive of Cartesian scepticism is bold enough. Even bolder is his proposition that the Shakespearean text offers a "salvation" from it. Speaking about *King Lear*, Cavell, for instance, maintains

that despite the heart-rending ending "there is hope in this play, and it is not in heaven" (*Disowning* 80). This is what Mulhall has called "the doubling of issues within the plays" – that scepticism is not only illustrated in them, but that the plays themselves can help the audience to transcend the sceptical position that we have brought to them (196). Although Mulhall's assertion that "this doubling of the theme of failures of acknowledgment presupposes that human beings can stand in (at least some of or some version of) the same relations to fictional characters as they can to fellow human beings" is illuminating, he does not address the question of what allows Shakespearean drama to make the demand of acknowledgment in the first place (197). At the beginning of the second section of "The Avoidance of Love," Cavell suggests that it is not (or not only) the content of Shakespearean drama that teaches us how to endow justice, peace and salvation, but also its form:

> These last remarks come from a response not so much to the content of the play as to its form. It is a drama not about the given condition in which the soul finds itself (in relation to gods or to earth), but about the soul, as Schopenhauer puts the vision of Kant, as the provider of the given, of the conditions under which gods and earth can appear. It is an enactment not of fate but responsibility, including the responsibility for fate. However this is finally to be put, its reception demands a particular kind of perception. (*Disowning* 81)

I take this passage to mean that Shakespearean drama is about the conditions in which the soul (in the absence of God) finds itself (finds its separateness, hence is able to acknowledge itself and others); but in order to see, in order to realise this, it needs to learn a new kind of perception.

The philosophical importance of Shakespearean tragedy lies not only in the way its plots problematise Cartesian scepticism, but also in the way their very form points towards its absorption. The tragedies do indeed play out "the progress from ignorance to exposure, I mean the treatment of an ignorance which is not to be cured by information (because it is not caused by a lack of information)" (85). Since this progress from ignorance to exposure, from scepticism to acknowledgment if you will, is the main "motive" of what philosophy means to Cavell, Shakespeare's theatre is a "philosophical drama" (85). Cavell goes a step further still: Shakespeare's "philosophical drama" not only helps us to overcome the sceptical position that we bring to it, but it also enables us

to better acknowledge those outside the theatre's borders, empowering us to lead more ethical lives. Shakespearean drama does not indicate certain tenets or rules by which we should live; rather, it addresses and helps us overcome the hindrances that stand in the way of our acknowledgment. This, then, is the kind of conversion Cavell describes in *Contesting Tears*: "for me there is no itinerary, say no approach, to philosophy; rather philosophy comes upon me, approaches me, like a conversion" (64). He is speaking about a conversion rather than a cognisance because in his eyes, Shakespearean drama no longer simply belongs to the order of *knowledge,* but rather is imbued with a quasi-religious significance. Here "philosophy" competes with religion or, strictly speaking, takes the place of religion because it is aiming at a fundamental shift not only in our perception of ourselves but in our perception of others. This turning point is thus the vanishing point of Cavell's philosophical-literary investigations; harking back to the previous chapter, and his auricular narration of the child's traumatic separation from the mother as the root of our painful experience of separateness, it is also to be understood as the ultimate objective of the therapeutic or healing progress Cavell wants his philosophy to achieve.

We would run the risk of grossly misunderstanding Cavell's philosophy and what it hopes to achieve from an encounter with Shakespeare if we shut our ears to its quasi-religious, or therapeutic, overtones. The religious reference may, however, be less jarring than it might initially seem. When *Disowning Knowledge* puts forward the notion that Shakespeare's theatre is "in competition with religion, as if declaring itself religion's successor," this is less a metaphysical claim than a claim about the import of language (218). Speaking specifically about the last scene of *The Winter's Tale*, Cavell equates "the resurrection of the woman" with the "claim that the composer of this play is in command of an art that brings words to life" (218). The quasi-religious claim Cavell makes for Shakespeare is not a departure so much as a radical reconsideration of the arrogation of philosophy. What the strange concomitance of saving the world and mending the heart of language elliptically gestures towards is this: if the question of what we mean by what we say, and whether we must bear the consequences of what we say, belongs to the precinct of philosophy, and if what we do and do not say to each other (and *how* we *say* it) defines us and our relationship to others, then we must begin

to save the world by trying to mend the heart of language. This chapter will therefore put forward the hypothesis that, for Cavell, the hope that the plays give is not *in* them as much as in our relationship *to* them. In order to understand the redemptive nature of Shakespeare's words, however, we must first turn to Cavell's reading of Shakespeare through Henry James, Wittgenstein and Emerson and his relocation of sceptical doubt from questions about the bard himself to the effect his language has on us.

3.1 The Relocation of Sceptical Doubt

"Unbestreitbar heißt Cavell lesen immer auch wieder lesen, was er an anderer Stelle, an anderem Ort, und davor an noch anderer Stelle und an noch anderem Ort bereits gesagt oder geschrieben hat" (Thiele 72).[17] The texts in which Cavell explicitly mentions Shakespeare are many and varied, among them those collected in *Disowning Knowledge, A Pitch of Philosophy* and *The Claim of Reason.* However, the texts in which Cavell explicitly addresses the Shakespearean form are few and far between: some parts of *Disowning Knowledge* (especially the "Introduction" and "The Avoidance of Love"); "The Interminable Shakespearean Text" and "Henry James Returns to America and to Shakespeare" in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*; the "Foreword" to *Philosophical Shakespeares*; "Skepticism as Iconoclasm" in *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century: the Selected proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress Los Angeles 1996*; and "Henry James Reading Emerson Reading Shakespeare" in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*.[18] In this conglomerate of near-identical texts, Cavell weighs up the issue of the relationship between philosophy and Shakespeare by asking a question that is as easy as it is impossible to answer: Why praise Shakespeare? The problem of praise is understood as the difficulty of praising Shakespeare without stating the obvious, without diminishing his achievements, without

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[17] "Undeniably, reading Cavell always means re-reading what he has already said or written previously – in another place, another time; and perhaps even before that."

[18] Confusingly in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, "Skepticism as Iconoclasm" is referred to as "Skepticism and Iconoclasm". Perhaps this is merely a typo. Since this is a text that Cavell returns to and rewrites multiple times, I am inclined to think that this change was made consciously, in order to highlight that scepticism about Shakespeare must not always lead to iconoclasm – quite on the contrary.

falling into bamboozled idolatry, and without searching for the man in the artist.[19] Three other thinkers directly influence Cavell's reading of Shakespeare. Wittgenstein and Emerson not only have a great impact on Cavell's view of language and scepticism; their reading of Shakespeare also directly influences Cavell's reading of what he sometimes dubs Shakespeare's "endlessness" (*Disowning* 4). There is also a third influence, that of Henry James. James, Wittgenstein and Emerson all grapple with this problem of praise, and each of them gives voice to a fundamentally sceptical attitude. Although Cavell gains important insight into the workings of Shakespeare's text (and how in turn it works on us) from all three, their readings are conflicting in ways that prove crucial for the philosophical importance Cavell bestows on Shakespearean drama.

In his 1907 "Introduction" to Sidney Lee's edition of *The Tempest,* James wonders at the widespread assumption that this play represents Shakespeare's farewell to the stage. James is trying to understand why Shakespeare should have chosen silence after this most perfect command of expression: "*How* did the faculty so radiant there contrive, in such perfection, the arrest of its divine flight?" (xxxi). James does not deny the myth of the farewell to the stage, accepting that there are no facts that disprove it. What James contends with is rather what Cavell calls "the weight" of this acceptance: whether we fully "understand what we have accepted" when we have accepted what we have accepted about Shakespeare (*Transcendental Etudes* 234). What we readers of Shakespeare have knowingly or unknowingly accepted is precisely the fact that we will never know who Shakespeare really was, yet the weight of this acceptance – the consequences and desires it brings with it – are not always understood, perhaps not even by James himself.

In the "Introduction" to *The Tempest,* James defends his "persistent or recurrent desire … to touch, or glimpse, the man in the artist," whilst at the same time recognising the futility of such a desire (234). And yet the desire persists, is even

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[19] Cavell may have been thinking of Wittgenstein: "If e.g. I hear expressions of admiration for Shakespeare made by the distinguished men of several centuries, I can never rid myself of a suspicion that praising him has been a matter of convention, even though I have to tell myself that this is not the case. I need the authority of a Milton to be really convinced. In this case I take it for granted that he was incorruptible. – But of course I don't mean to deny by this that an enormous amount of praise has been & still is lavished on Shakespeare without understanding & for specious reasons by a thousand professors of literature." (Culture and Value 55e)

heightened by our lack of knowledge. The little that we do know only "throw[s] us back on the work itself with a rebellious renewal of appetite and yearning" ("Introduction" xxxi). Although the "tapestry" or "long arras … hides him," he is "always there" and James cannot but wonder whether in the future it would merely necessitate "a finer weapon, the sharper point, the stronger arm, the more extended lunge" to catch him (xxxi-ii). With this image of a blind dab at a curtain, James' desire "to touch the man directly in the Artist" takes on a markedly violent and obsessive character (xxxi). In James' "argumentative rhythm" – swinging between statements such as "there are moments, I admit, in this age of sound and fury … when we are willing to let it pass as a mystery" and "its power to torment us intellectually seems scarcely to be borne; and we know these moments best when we hear it proclaimed that a comfortable clearness reigns" – Cavell recognises "the rhythm of the skeptical problematic" (*Transcendental Etudes* 235, 234-5, 235).[20] Just like the sceptic, James is alternately comforted and tormented by the "assurance that the matter is simple," for instance that *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's last play because he "had made, before fifty, all the money he wanted; therefore what was there more to express?" (235); comforted because it relieves the itch of the desire to *know,* tormented because the sceptic does not want to be relieved of this itch.

The Shakespeare enthusiast's sceptical problem is also at the heart of James' short story "The Birthplace" (1903). Although this earlier text strikes an altogether different tone from the Introduction to *The Tempest*, the same sceptical problems lurk beneath its satirical veneer. The story relates how the Gedges, the new wardens of the birthplace of a great poet who is never named, come to terms with the conflict between the lack of factual knowledge about his life, and their visitors' thirst for the very same. Much to his dismay, Mr. Gedge soon realises that there is not much factual information about the poet and the place itself and thus initially refuses to supplement his guided tours of the house with speculation about the poet's life. He also becomes increasingly uncomfortable with the ease with which his wife Isabel plays up to the visitors' expectations. One summer's afternoon, a young American couple finally encourages Gedge to expand on the paucity of facts on the birthplace. They soon convince him that

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[20] Interestingly Cavell also speaks about "the rhythm of skepticism" in his reading of *Othello* (*Claim* 484).

what is most important are the literary works themselves, and that he should not feel guilty about earning his keep by indulging the expectations of his visitors. The story ends with Mr. Gedge being awarded a pay-rise for his charming new act, in which, much to the delight of his visitors, he expands on what kind of games the young poet used to play as a child.

Apart from being very funny for Cavell, James' story is about the sceptic's oscillation, his rhythm.[21] It "best isolates and analyses the compulsion to praise Shakespeare" and whilst "it obviously deals in some parody of banal religiosity" its underlying problematic is no light matter (*Transcendental Etudes* 238). Cavell quotes lengthily from the first interview with the American couple, when the husband explains that for him "the interesting thing – or at all events the eternally tormenting one" is "the fact of the abysmally little that, in proportion (that is in proportion to the magnitude of Shakespeare) we know" ("Birthplace" 239). Foreshadowing the sceptical rhythm of James' 1907 Introduction to *The Tempest*, Gedge soon underplays his own desire to know more (or proportionally more) about the man in the artist by making a point of the fact that "luckily" this particular lack of knowledge "doesn't at all affect the *work*!" ("Birthplace" 283). As James has the American husband say, what matters is the *work* itself (having him also echo Hamlet's "the play is the thing"), not the author who wrote it. "Practically," he continues, "there *is* no author", there are only "all the immortal people – *in* the work; but there's nobody else" (283). Mrs. Gedge's protest that surely someone must have written the plays, is met with her husband's retort that "there was somebody" but that "they have killed him" and keep on killing "Him every day" (285). For Cavell, "Gedge's triumph only serves to isolate him further, from the different, wordless, breathless satisfactions his curious virtuosity affords the American husband and Gedge's wife" (*Transcendental Etudes* 241). Hence Cavell recognises different stances regarding the authorship question in James' short story: a) the most primitive position ("taking our ignorance of origins to be simply an empirical matter)") of the American wife ("It's rather a pity, you know, that He *isn't* here. I mean as Goethe's at Weimar. For Goethe *is* at Weimar" ("The Birthplace" 280), b) the most "civilised" stance, "combining interest with torment, and 'liking' the fact of our

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[21] For me it is also a tale about the impact of financial pressures on academic freedom.

empirical ignorance" portrayed by the American husband and c) Gedge's sceptical oscillation between not caring at all and caring very deeply about who wrote the work.

The idolatry of the American husband, the empiricism of the American wife, and the scepticism of Mr. Gedge and James himself all miss the point. Cavell traces Gedge's declaration that He, the divine author, is dead back to Nietzsche's ubiquitous "Gott ist tot" and to Emerson's earlier version of the same concept. He argues that this praise misses the point of Shakespeare, just as according to Emerson's "Divinity School Address," preachers who either accord too much importance to the person Jesus or preachers who "speak of the revelation as somewhat long ago given and done, as if God were dead" have missed the point of religion or God (*Transcendental Etudes* 243). Mr. Gedge's position is perhaps most like James' own desire to pierce the "long arras" that hides the truth about Shakespeare, most like the sceptical rhythm oscillating between the desire for knowledge and the denial of the importance of such knowledge. Cavell does not comment on this, but it is somewhat astonishing that James here seems to be echoing Hamlet's manic stab at a curtain. Yet like Hamlet, James and Mr. Gedge might be looking for one thing but killing another. The search for the man *behind* the text might not allow us to grasp something much more important that is happening *in* the text itself.

The originality of Cavell's discussion of the Shakespearean form lies in the fact that he moves from James' author- or text-based scepticism to one more akin to Wittgenstein's, who locates this sceptical impulse not only in the authorship question or textual history, but also in the form or language of the plays themselves. Wittgenstein's relationship to Shakespeare is ambivalent, and the very little he wrote about him is tinged with a strange kind of reluctant praise. In his notes, published under the title *Culture and Value,* Wittgenstein repeatedly returns to Shakespeare, as if he were an itch that he could never quite scratch. I include only a few examples:

> I do not think that Shakespeare can be set alongside any other poet. Was he perhaps a *creator of language* rather than a poet?

> I could only stare in wonder at Shakespeare; never do anything with him.

I am *deeply* suspicious of most of Shakespeare's admirers. I think the trouble is that, in western culture at least, he stands alone, & so, one can only place him by placing him wrongly.

It is *not* as though S. portrayed human types well & were in that respect *true to life*. He is *not* true to life. But he has such a supple hand and such *individual brush strokes*, that each one of his characters looks *significant,* worth looking at.

"Beethoven's great heart" – no one could say "Shakespeare's great heart".
'The supple hand that created new forms of language' would seem to me nearer the mark.

The reason why I cannot understand Shakespeare is that I want to find symmetry in all this asymmetry.

It seems to me as though his pieces are, as it were, enormous *sketches*, not paintings; as though they were *dashed off* by someone who could permit himself *anything*, so to speak. And I understand how someone may admire this & call it *supreme* art, but I don't like it. – So I can understand someone who stands before those pieces speechless; but someone who admires him as one admires Beethoven, say, seems to me to misunderstand Shakespeare. (Culture and Value 95e, 96e, 98e)

Here the object of sceptical doubt is not the person Shakespeare but the text "Shakespeare," the plays or language themselves. Wittgenstein's comments exude a kind of frustration at the fact that he himself could not *do* anything with Shakespeare. What would Wittgenstein want to do with Shakespeare, or rather what does Wittgenstein normally want to do with words that he cannot do with Shakespeare's? He is uneasy about his poetry because there is something in his words that does not allow for Wittgenstein's "late way of bringing words back to their homes, their home language games, back to the order he calls the ordinary, back, as if anew, from chaos" (*Transcendental Etudes* 236). Shakespeare's works are deleterious to Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations because they bring words further than what "language games discern home" (237). Rather than teaching us again what words can mean, rather than making us feel back at home in our language, fundamentally Shakespeare makes us feel that it is "something miraculous that words can mean at all, that such things can be said, that there are words": they plunge us into the chaotic forge of language, where "chaos cling[s] to his creation" (237). The root of Wittgenstein's

uneasiness about Shakespeare is thus that he is not a poet so much as he is a creator of language.

Cavell shares the sceptical desire of James and empathises with Wittgenstein's awe and frustration, but it is through Emerson that he finds a way to get to grips with the Shakespearean form. Cavell's reading of the Shakespearean oeuvre as being able to transcend the scepticism we brought to it is thus dependent on marrying the reasons for Wittgenstein's scepticism about Shakespeare with Emerson's idea of Shakespeare as a poet-philosopher. In contrast to Wittgenstein, Cavell sees Shakespeare's language not as something detrimental to philosophical endeavour, but rather as something which will allow philosophy to do something that it cannot do alone. Emerson recognises the same distinctness in Shakespeare's language as Wittgenstein does. Like Wittgenstein, Emerson notes that whatever Shakespeare does, he does not only with our words but also with our concepts, with how we grasp the world around us. However, in contrast to Wittgenstein, Emerson is still able to do something with Shakespeare, or to allow Shakespeare to do something to him. Whilst for Wittgenstein, Shakespeare was not a poet, for Emerson he was supremely so. Indeed, he is cast as "the Poet" in *Representative Men*. Emerson argues that although "some able and appreciating critics think no criticism of Shakespeare valuable that does not rest purely on the dramatic merit," he himself does not agree that Shakespeare is "falsely judged as poet and philosopher" (*Representative* 163). On the contrary, he argues that his "dramatic merit" is only "secondary" to his philosophical merit (163). For Emerson, Shakespeare is not only poet *and* philosopher, but also a philosopher *because* he is a poet. Emerson does not see the ultra-conceptual nature of Shakespeare's language as a by-product of the poetry, but rather the other way around. Poetry becomes the tool with which Shakespeare seeks to do something conceptually.

Emerson's stance does not deny the possibility for James' and Wittgenstein's intuitions of Shakespeare as unknown, perhaps unknowable, beyond or behind or within the things and persons we apprehend with our senses. But on the back of Emerson's account, there is a shift in the location of our sceptical doubt. As is noted in *Philosophy The Day After Tomorrow*, some critics have rejected Cavell's reading of *King Lear* for

not taking into account the play's complicated textual history (29). Cavell takes this objection seriously and argues that the questions put by what he dubs New Textualism, about the true nature, provenance or dissemination of the Shakespearean text, though in many ways illuminating, miss the point of the tragedies:

> The excessive certainty of the claims made for the New Textualism strikes me as displacing the presence of words in its insistence on the absences of the absolute text – as if the very emphasis on the text's materiality at the same time is meant to avoid some encounter with what, in each case, it provisionally says. (47)

Here, not unlike the sceptic, the reader hides behind a intellectual question in order to avoid an encounter with what the text actually says, with what demands it makes on us. As Rhie and Eldridge point out, although for Cavell "there are insight to be won" from other acts of reading, what is irreducibly at the centre of his own is "an agon of human subjectivity, poised between acknowledgment and avoidance" (11). In a move similar to his acceptance of the truth of scepticism, Cavell thus suggests that it is precisely because we cannot help not *knowing* some things about Shakespeare that we must turn our attention – and our praise – to something else. What is important for Cavell is not who wrote the plays, or what exactly he wrote, but what call or claim the Shakespearean text makes on us, and whether we hear it and, if we do, how we act upon it. Reading Shakespeare through James, Wittgenstein and Emerson, Cavell shifts the grounds for scepticism away from matters falling into the realm of *knowledge* to issues pertaining to the effect his drama has on us. What we are called to do when reading Shakespeare is therefore not to seek out *knowledge* but acknowledgment.

## 3.2 Acknowledging Shakespeare

As a student in Berkeley in 1946, Cavell was part of a production of *King Lear*. He would go on to claim, in *Little Did I Know*, that "no experience of theater I have been exposed to in my life has made a greater lasting impression on me" (218). As Beckwith indicates, his "lengthy exposure to the play's words" provided occasion to "[consider] what each line means, a question of imagining the motivation and setting" (123). It was, perhaps, a first exposure to "a form of ordinary language philosophy," because it too

"requires us to ask" why characters say and do certain things and what it all means (124). It was, in the words of *Little Did I Know*, an opportunity to "materialise the expression of what *you* say it means" (215, my emphasis). In giving rise to "eventual and perpetual considerations of the possibilities of mood and condition into which each line can be delivered then and there, and responded to then and there," the 1946 Berkeley student production of *King Lear*, and more importantly Cavell's endeavour to write incidental music for it*,* ultimately triggered the crisis for his (philosophical) conversion (215):

> Intellectually and artistically, the most lasting of these efforts was writing music for the production of *King Lear* (running, it will emerge, just over four hours, with two intermissions). It was here, playing music cues at the piano for scene rehearsals, and for run-throughs, and, assembling and rehearsing a small orchestra, conducting dress rehearsals and eight performances, that I came, not without considerable anxiety, to the first clear inklings, consciously and unforgettably, that I was more interested in the actions and ideas and language of the play, and in learning and understanding what might be said about them and what I felt I had to say about them, than I was in the music in which I expressed what I could of my sense of those actions and ideas and words (though doubtless writing music in response to the play had led me further into its world than, at the stage, I would or could have otherwise found myself). It is to this production, intermittently still on my mind twenty years later, that I refer in the course of writing my essay on *Lear* …. (215)

There is something in *King Lear* that, though not incompatible with his love of music, draws Cavell away from his supposed vocation. The question of what happens on stage in Shakespearean drama, indeed what is at stake for its audience, fashions Cavell's idea of what philosophy should set out to do. And in order to capture what happens in Shakespearean theatre and what contributed to his (philosophical) conversion we must, it seems, listen as he reverts to markedly musical metaphors.

What provokes Cavell's reference to music, however, is neither the role music plays in Shakespeare nor the language's more or less musical properties. Whilst as he notes in *Disowning Knowledge*, "it is not uncommon to find Shakespeare's plays compared to music," his comparison does not simply "rest upon more or less superficial features of music, for example, on its balance of themes, its recurrences, shifts of mood, climaxes – in a word, on its theatrical properties" (91). Cavell places Shakespearean drama alongside music because since "Monteverdi (born three years after

Shakespeare),” or at least since “the establishment of tonality,” finally climaxing in “the development of the sonata form,” music has been “dramatic in a more fundamental sense” (92). What Cavell has in mind here is the “*development*” of the sonata form, particularly “preeminent in late Beethoven or Brahms ... in which *all* later material can be said to be ‘contained’ in the rising and falling interval of a third in the opening two bars” (92). Viewed in conjunction with his previous discussion of Beethoven in “Music Discomposed,” this comparison gains further importance:

> But in the late experience of Beethoven, it is as if our freedom to act no longer depends on the possibility of spontaneity; improvising to fit a *given* lack or need is no longer enough. The entire enterprise of action and of communication has become problematic. The problem is no longer how to do what you want, but to know what would satisfy you. (201)

Echoing his discussion of Shakespeare in the “Introduction” to *Disowning Knowledge,* this passage suggests that the difficulty and possibility of living “in a groundless world” is posed by a characteristic present in both Shakespeare’s dramatic and in Beethoven’s late style (*Disowning* 3).[22]   Just like in Beethoven’s Sonatas, when listening to Shakespeare we perceive only what is in front of our ears and our eyes at that given moment:

> I will say that the quality we are to perceive is one of directed motion, controlled by relations of keys, by rate of alteration, and by length and articulation of phrases. We do not know where this motion can stop and we do not understand why it has begun here, so we do not know where we stand or why we are there. The drama consists in following this out and in finding what it takes to follow this out. (92)

In this sense, the difference between “waiting for a sentence in prose or conversation to end and attending to a line of poetry or a tonal phrase” is that “in conversation, a remark which begins a certain way can normally have only one of a definite set of endings,” whereas in “dramatic poetry and tonal music” this is not the case:

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[22] Theodor Adorno also found philosophical parallels in Beethoven’s late style. For an illuminating account on the relationship between music and philosophy, see Daniel Steuer’s “Adorno’s Beethoven: Some remarks on the relationship between music and philosophy, with particular attention to the themes of recognition and reification.” *Germanistik in Ireland: Jahrbuch der/ Yearbook of the Association of Third-Level Teachers of German in Ireland. Vol. 3. Weg und Bewegung*: *Medieval and modern encounters. Festschrift in honour of Timothy R. Jackson and Gilbert J. Carr.* Ed. Cordula Politis and Nicola Creighton. Konstanz: Hartung-Gorre Verlag, 2008. 161-173.

> It is as if dramatic poetry and tonal music, forgoing these givens, are made to imitate the simplest facts of life: that life is lived in time, that there is a now at which everything that happens happens, and a now at which for each man and each woman everything stops happening, and that what has happened is not here and now, and that what might have happened then and there will never happen then and there, and that what will happen is not here and now and yet may be settled by what is happening here and now in a way we cannot know or will not see here and now. (92-3)

Cavell's comparison to music indicates that both separateness and its companion acknowledgment are to be found not only in the plays' themes but also in what he calls their "dramatic form." Although we are told that Shakespeare's dramatic poetry shares the feature of "constant presentness" with music, we are not given a clear indication of how the plays (or perhaps the way they are performed) establish it. We are, however, offered some clues. One contributor to the quality of "constant presentness" of Shakespearean drama is the absence of narration. In "accounts which are simultaneous with the events they describe," we are somewhat removed from the events, because the narrator is always "in a position to know something *we* do not know" (107). Modern playwrights thus often feel that the audience has to be taken "into the confidence of the tale." Consequently the "awe in experiencing [the unravelling of tragedy] was like the awe in suddenly falling into the force of nature or of crowds watching a building collapse" (89). In Shakespearean drama, with no God and no fate to blame, tragedy is no longer simply fated and thus inevitable; and yet never do we find ourselves in Shakespeare's confidence. Because there is no meta-level – neither narration nor a metaphysical mechanism – from which we can overlook the actions on stage, we are at all times "present at what is happening" (107). We are, to use Cavell's image, *in* the building *as* it collapses.

The "constant presentness" of Shakespeare's plays radically changes the way we relate to this drama. What demands does Shakespearean drama place on us? In what relationship do they stand to the demands that others place on us? What are the consequences of how we relate to it? These questions are raised by a particularly haunting moment in *Disowning Knowledge* when Cavell compares our perception of the events that happen on stage in *Othello* with our perception of an everyday scene:

That couple over there, drinking coffee, talking, laughing. Do I believe they are just passing the time of day, or testing out the field of flirtation, or something else? In usual cases, not one thing or another; I neither believe or disbelieve. Suppose the man suddenly puts his hands to the throat of the woman. Do I believe or disbelieve that he is going to throttle her? The time for that question, as soon as it comes to the point, is already passed. The question is: What, if anything, do I do? What I believe hangs on what I do or do not do and on how I react to what I do or do not do. And whether something or nothing, there will be consequences. At the opening of the play it is fully true that I neither believe nor disbelieve. But I am something, perplexed, anxious….Much later, the warrior asks his wife if she has said her prayers. Do I believe he will go through with it? I know he will; it is a certainty fixed forever; but I hope against hope he will come to his senses; I appeal to him, in silent shouts. Then he puts his hands on her throat. The question is: What, if anything, do I do? I do nothing; that is a certainty fixed forever. And it has its consequences. *Why* do I do nothing? Because they are only pretending? That would be a reason not to do anything if it were true of the couple over there, who just a moment ago were drinking coffee, laughing. There it is a reason because it tells me something I did not know. Here, in the theatre, what does it tell me? It is an excuse whistling in the dark; and it is false. Othello is not pretending. Garrick is not pretending, any more than a puppet in that part would be pretending. I know everything, and yet the question arises: Why do I sit there? And the honest answer has to be: There is nothing I can do. Why not? (100-1)

In transposing a scene from Othello to a mundane setting, Cavell is highlighting the differences in how we relate to a "real" or a "staged" scene. At the same time he casts doubt over our choices by suggesting that our position in both scenes is very similar. Because we are not given a detached narration explaining the events, we are faced with figures on stage which "are radically and continuously *free*, operating under their own power, at every moment choosing their destruction" (88). The characters on stage are "in a word, men and women" and "our liabilities in responding to them are nothing other than our liabilities in responding to any person – rejection, brutality, sentimentality, indifference, the relief and the terror in finding courage, the ironies of human wishes" (89). For Bruns, what this comparison highlights is neither "psychological projection," nor a simple identification with these characters; rather, it is a question of "finding some internal connection with them, taking them as, in some sense, irreducible to mere representations – in other words, taking them as not really intelligible as (just) fictions" ("Cavell's Shakespeare" 623). For Cavell the "constant presentness" of Shakespearean drama "literalise[s] the conditions we exact for existence

outside – hiddenness, silence, isolation" (*Disowning* 104). The characters' separateness hence crystallises something about how Cavell understands our relationship to the other: our knowledge can never make us understand the other fully, instead the only thing we can hope for is to be able to make the other present to us:

> We are not in, and cannot put ourselves in, the presence of the characters; but we are in, or can put ourselves in, their *present*. It is in making their present ours, their moments as they occur, that we complete our acknowledgment of them. But this requires making their present *theirs*. (108)

In Mulhall's words, "Shakespeare employs the medium of poetic drama in such a way as to locate the members of his audience in a position which is structurally analogous to that of the play's characters" (197). And yet in all probability we will react differently to staged events than we would to real ones.

When we go to the theatre something more than the suspension of disbelief happens to us: it is something more akin to paralysis. This something that happens to us, tells us, for instance, that getting up and begging Othello not to kill Desdemona would not only be unacceptable behaviour in a theatre, but would also be quite beside the point. Imagine a theatregoer who for one reason or another did not understand the concept of playacting. Imagine him getting up during the play and telling Othello what Iago is really up to. Imagine him wrestling Othello off Desdemona. Imagine him even succeeding in stopping the play. Still nothing has changed: "It has merely interrupted an evening's work. Quiet the house, pick up the thread again, and Othello will reappear, as near and as deaf to us as ever –" (*Disowning* 101). Whilst the character can be present to us, just as they are present to themselves, to their now, we can never be present to them. The "grammatical entity" of the character – the fact that "we are not in their presence" and that they cannot be aware of us – is underlined by our theatrical conventions. "Darkened, indoor theatres" and "a theatre whose house lights were left on (a possibility suggested, for other reasons, by Brecht)," for instance "might dramatize the equally significant fact that we are also inaudible to them, and immovable (that is, at a *fixed* distance from them)" (103). As Rhu observes in "Competing for the Soul," in "patiently" attending a play, the audience "becomes present not only to the sufferings undergone by the characters in the drama" but also "to its separateness from the sufferers" (145). The way Cavell listens to Shakespearean drama is, however, not only

an example of what Bruns calls "careful attention to particular human situations and to what people say and do in them vis-à-vis each other," it is also, as I will go on to show in the next subsection, to some extent what attunes Cavell's ear to the separateness of others (*Tragic Thoughts* 200).

Under Cavell's gaze, the theatrical situation becomes marked by an insurmountable and paradoxical disjunction between theatre and audience: insurmountable because we can never change the events that happen on stage and paradoxical because it is precisely this disjunction which is the basis for a cathartic identification with the staged events. In highlighting our separateness from the events played out on stage, the theatrical situation also illuminates our relationships to other people; at the same time, a comparison between our reaction to other people and to the characters on stage also reveals a truth about what our behaviour in the theatre entails. Because our relationship to the characters on stage is structurally akin to our relationship to other people, our choice not to do anything to stop Othello killing Desdemona is not caused by a lack of *knowledge.* As Cavell's transposition of the situation to a daily scene shows, the question of *knowledge* should not and effectively does not come into play in my decision about whether or not I should stop a man strangling his wife. The recourse to *knowledge* is an excuse whistling in the dark. In positing and emphasising the separateness of its characters, Shakespearean drama demands that our perception and relation to them move beyond *knowledge.* But how can we understand these demands that the Shakespearean form makes on us, especially since there is nothing that we can really *do* to stop Othello? And what are the ethical implications of my failure to acknowledge others both inside and outside of the theatre?

3.3 "hidden and silent and fixed" – The Theatricalisation of Others and the Passionate Utterances of Shakespearean Drama

With its overt hints at the actual political situation in America of the mid 1960s, and with its likening of America to Lear, the second part of "The Avoidance of Love" may perhaps take its place amongst Cavell's most outraged political writings:

> Now we are surrounded by inexplicable pain and death; no death is more mysterious or portentous than others; because every death which is not the fruit of a long life is now unaccounted for, since we cannot or will not account for it: not just because, taking local examples, we no longer know why a society may put its own people to death for breaking its rules, nor when it may intervene with death in a foreign place, nor because highway deaths need not happen, nor because the pollution of our air and water has become deliberate, nor because poverty has become inflicted – but because we do not know our position with respect to such things. We are present at these events, and no one is present without making something happen; everything which is happening is happening to me, and I do not know what is happening. I do not know that my helplessness is limited only by my separateness, because I do not know which fortune is mine and which is yours. The world did not become sad; it was always sad. Tragedy has moved into the world, and with it the world becomes theatrical. (*Disowning* 114-5)

Although publishers were reluctant to print the second more politicised part of "The Avoidance of Love" in subsequent editions and collections, the philosophical and literary interventions he makes in the essay's first part remain incomplete without it. Despite having "been requested for reprinting" more than any other of his pieces, "without exception the request has been to use only its first part, and even from that to excise everything 'philosophical' (naturally the request was not put that way), which in practice meant everything not contributing to a fairly direct recounting of the interpretation of the play's narrative" (*Disowning* xiii). The second part of "The Avoidance of Love" shows that his interdisciplinary investigations are not a means unto themselves. Although it was written in the context of the Vietnam War, the previous quotation also throws light on a very contemporary ethical problem: how we relate to the pain of others in the age of information? What do we do when we see the newsreels depicting the pain of others who – though we are in that moment not present to them – are very present to us and, furthermore, real? If we *know* that people are dying – dying perhaps at the hands of our country, or as a consequence of our country's or society's

actions – why are we not preventing this? Do we merely sigh and change the channel? What else can we do?

The theatrical situation shows us that – both inside and outside of the theatre's borders – there is always "a point at which I am helpless before the acting and the suffering of others" (109). At the same time, in Shakespearean drama we are confronted at all times by what we need to know in order to acknowledge. As Bruns notes, Cavell is interested in "what, in shifting attention from character to language or text or context, we [are] (ourselves, as readers) turning away from, or trying to avoid?" ("Cavell's Shakespeare" 617). The fact that "the medium is one which keeps all significance continuously before our senses" also means that when we fail to acknowledge, this will have been "wilful, complicitous, a refusal to see" (*Disowning* 85). In this sense, Mulhall argues that Cavell's illuminating reading of *Lear* has not been advanced before because we have "difficulty in seeing what is right in front of our eyes" (197). One such example is our inability to see what happens to Gloucester at the end of the play. Cavell spends a long time on Regan's sending of Gloucester to "smell" his way to Dover (3.7.92-3). Critics have decided that this is a lapse in Shakespeare's construction because there has been no talk of Gloucester going to Dover before this and because Regan knows that it is Lear and not Gloucester who is going to Dover. Shakespeare being Shakespeare, audience and critics tend to excuse this lapse. Cavell, however, notes that what looks like "a lapse is sometimes meant" (*Disowning* 54). Sometimes the failure to notice the lapse is in fact our failure.

As in all his readings of Shakespeare, here Cavell shifts the attention from traditional contentions (why does he go to Dover?) to the demands the Shakespearean text is placing on us.

> We "do not notice" Regan's confusion of identity because we share it, and in failing to understand Gloucester's blanked condition (or rather in insisting upon understanding it from our point of view) we are doing what the characters in the play are seen to do: we avoid him. And so we are implicated in the failures we are witnessing; we share the responsibility for tragedy. (54)

As Davies rightly notes, the issue for Cavell "is not to ask what we might know of a text, but rather to ask what it is that a text we care about might know, and how it might

call on us to receive its instruction" (135).[23] The text is here giving us occasion to acknowledge our own separateness and our propensity to evade its consequences. We think there is an intellectual lack that keeps us from understanding why Regan sends Gloucester to Dover, whereas in fact it is a metaphysical finitude that keeps us from grasping what is happening in this text, just as it keeps me from *knowing* if the other is in pain. In order to know what is going on in Shakespeare's plays, it is not sufficient to *know* about early modern play conventions. It is not even sufficient to *know* precisely what originated from this author's pen (indeed, the oeuvre we call Shakespeare's resists such *knowledge*). To understand "why a given remark or a particular play was made *here* …. you have to know something more for that, and you have to look" (*Disowning* 48). Unlike "a failure to know," which can be seen as "an absence of something," a blank, "a 'failure to acknowledge' is the presence of something, a confusion, an indifference, a callousness, an exhaustion, a coldness" ("Knowing" 264). Our blanking of Gloucester is not inevitable; we choose to do it by electing to "interpret a metaphysical finitude as an intellectual lack" (*Disowning* 11). Or put differently, "spiritual emptiness is not a blank" ("Knowing" 264). We could respond differently to Regan's avoidance of Gloucester, but instead we choose to avoid him too.

Cavell's description of the theatrical situation as one in which a semi-permeable membrane divides the audience from what happens on stage explains why we cannot do anything to stop Othello killing Desdemona, or why we fail to see Gloucester's blanked condition, but it also shows why "we are responsible for the death of others even when we have not murdered them, and even when we have not manslaughtered them innocently" (*Disowning* 103). There is structurally really no "difference between tragedy in a theatre and tragedy in actuality," since in both "people in pain are in our presence" and unless we "put ourselves in their presence, reveal ourselves to them" acknowledgement in reality too remains incomplete and the world and all the pain in it

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[23] In this sense Cavell is very much Emerson's disciple: "so the question Emerson's theory of reading and writing is designed to answer is not 'What does a text mean?' (and one may accordingly not wish to call it a theory of interpretation) but rather 'How is it that a text we care about in a certain way (expressed perhaps as our being drawn to read it with the obedience that masters) invariably says more than its writer knows, so that writers and readers write and read beyond themselves?' This might be summarized as 'What does a text know?' or, in Emerson's term, 'What is the genius of the text?' (*Transcendental Etudes* 95). This is a the genius of the text, similar yet different to the one Derrida hears in Shakespeare, and to which I shall turn in Chapter 7.

becomes our theatre (103-4). This claim that we may be responsible for an action that we have not committed and could in any case not have prevented from happening is central to Cavell's argument that Shakespeare can provide "education for grownups" (*Claim* 125). This argument is also based on the belief that a play or piece of literature as a whole (and not only their characters) can make a demand on the audience and, furthermore, that this demand is ethical in nature. Put differently, Cavell's reading of Shakespeare implies that this drama may be read in terms of his notion of passionate utterances.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Cavell's notion of "passionate utterances" is response both to Austin's reluctance to expand on perlocutionary speech acts and his avoidance of the value and status of the expressive in speech. The concept of passionate utterances is such a compelling one because it shows that there is a strong connection between the expression or passion with which something is said and its ethical repercussions, understood primarily as the demand it makes on the interlocutor: "in speaking from my passion I must actually be suffering the passion (evincing, expressing, not to say displaying it, though this may go undeciphered, perhaps wilfully, by the other), in order rightfully to …. Demand from you a response *in kind*, one you are *moved* to offer, and moreover …. *Now*" ("Passionate" 193). Because the "staging" of my "perlocutionary invocation, or provocation, or confrontation" is not backed by "conventional procedure" as an illocutionary speech act because (we could add) there is nothing in the realm of *knowledge* that can assure us how we should react, or what a passionate speech act is expressing, hence demanding from us, it is solely "grounded in my being *moved* to speak, hence to speak in, or out of passion, whose capacities for lucidity and opacity leaves the genuineness of motive always vulnerable to criticism" (193).

Let us assume for a moment that a play as a whole, or even a text that does not include dialogue, can be thought of in terms of Cavell's passionate utterances. Like passionate utterances, Shakespearean drama does not make a statement that is true or false, nor does it depend (or at least solely depend) on convention (and here a point could be made about theatrical conventions); what it does do, however, is create a response in us: *Othello*, for instance, did not make Cavell "believe nor disbelieve," nor

did it (at least not in the first instance) make him do anything – but it did make him *feel* "perplexed" and "anxious" (*Disowning* 100). According to the logic of "passionate utterances," if we have failed to acknowledge the real reasons for tragedy, we are complicit in it, because we have not responded to the way the drama has singled us (and our common separateness) out, and this failure "puts the future of our relationship, as part of my sense of my identity, or my existence, more radically at stake" ("Passionate" 194). This is because "with perlocutions interpretation is characteristically in order, part of the passionate exchange" (194). In blanking Gloucester, we therefore become complicit in the unfolding tragedy.

There is, nevertheless, at least one significant difference between "passionate utterances" and Shakespearean drama. Whilst "passionate utterances" may at times go unacknowledged, theatrical passionate utterances, if indeed we may call them this, must per definition remain unacknowledged: "If the suggestion is right that the 'completion of acknowledgment' requires self-revelation, then making the characters present must be a form of, or require, self-revelation," and if we are right to believe that there is no way in which I can reveal myself to the character on stage (reveal anything but our common separateness, that is to say), then acknowledgment in theatre must remain incomplete (*Disowning* 108). The same is true for reading Shakespeare. In trying to acknowledge a text, we are faced with the same problems as when we are trying to acknowledge a character on stage. Just as we cannot make ourselves present to a character, we cannot make ourselves present to a text: acknowledgment of a text, a play or a character therein will thus always remain structurally incomplete. The "educational" potential of our interaction with Shakespearean drama hinges on the realisation that although there are situations, such as the theatrical one, in which we literally cannot *do* anything, doing *nothing* is not always of the same ethical value. Although there is nothing we can do to save Desdemona, or Cordelia, or reverse Regan's blanking of Gloucester, we still become complicit in the tragedy as soon as we fail to recognise (and act on) why we cannot help them. Unless I "know the true point of my helplessness" (in other words, our common separateness), "I am not emptied of help, but withhold it" (109).

Shakespearean drama shows us that whilst there is nothing we can do in theatre, if we choose to do nothing in reality then we theatricalise the other. Or as Sparti sums up: "theater re-creates and reflects a peculiar situation that occurs in ordinary life, the one in which we are overcome, exactly like Lear (and the skeptic), by an impulse to neglect and avoid" (94). Its redemptive character, however, does not only consist in showing us our complicity, but also in giving us a space in which we can change. As Cavell suggests in "Music Discomposed," music offers similar respite, because it plays with our "fate of being accountable for everything you do and are, intended or not" (199). In giving us "actions to perform whose consequences, commitments, and liabilities are discharged in the act itself," it momentarily sets us free, and allows us to "cede the possibilities of excuse, explanation, or justification for [our] failures" (200). Sparti again offers a clear summary:

> Theater enables us to avoid the anxiety and the weight of having to put ourselves in the presence of the other, and this is the fascination but also the cost of the theatrical experience, which turns us into – 'freezes' us in the role of – viewers. On the other hand, Shakespeare's work as such is also a warning and an invitation, the basis of an ethical commitment, because it enables us to understand that when we are hidden, and silent, and fixed, when we keep ourselves in the dark and isolate ourselves, the consequence is that we convert the other into a character, and make the world a stage for him or her. (95)

Indeed, Cavell argues that by offering us a situation where there is simply nothing we can do to stop tragedy from happening, theatre offers us a "respite within which to prepare for this necessity, to clean out the pity and terror which stand in the way of acknowledgment outside [of the theatre]" (*Disowning* 103-4). Shakespearean drama gives us a space and a place for catharsis, but what is it that is encrypted in "pity and terror"? Cavell returns to the question of catharsis in "Skepticism and Iconoclasm": "According to my way of looking at *Lear*, [the catharsis] is from enforced or stifled words, from enforced silence, from voices not our own, from falsifying accent, from the breath of words held too long" (246). In this sense, changing our words would mean ridding them of all those markers of the avoidance of our, and the other's, separateness. And in true Austinian spirit, Cavell therefore identifies language as the space in which we must change our relationship to the other, from one of avoidance to one of acknowledgment. In true Emersonian spirit, he believes that Shakespeare's language can help us forge our own.

Charles Altieri argues that Cavell's work on Shakespeare "is typical of philosophical work on fiction in its eagerness to explore moral and psychological dilemmas" and in its "ignoring" of what he calls "the provocative imaginative space" disclosed "by attention to how the text builds distinctive structural relations that at once distance it from the empirical world and model alternative ways of participating in that world" (267). This reading is, I believe, belied by the way Cavell's readings locate the philosophical significance of the plays in something that happens not only in and through Shakespeare's language, but precisely in that "imaginative space" between the text and the reader. According to Beckwith, "Shakespeare's theater ... charts from first to last, with huge clarity and remorselessness, the transformed work of language in human relating" (128). Shakespeare's language, with its "extraordinary, unprecedented expansion in the expressive range, precision, and flexibility," Beckwith claims, "takes up this terrible burden and gift of human relating when nothing but language secures or grounds human relations" (128). It is this shift in language that is "the miracle in an age where all miracles are past" (128).

The miracle here is not something metaphysical, but rather relates to "language's powers of representing the world and of expressing our relation to others" ("Skepticism" 241). It relates to the fact that "when authority is no longer assumed in the speech acts of a sacramental priesthood, it must be found, and re-found in the claims, calls, and judgements of individuals" (Beckwith 128). The miracle is that the burden of language offers the chance of becoming once more attuned as a community of speakers. In Aletta Norval's words: "what is at stake is precisely the *founding* of community, its *invocation* in the claims we make, and what we can say, and what others can say for us in such voicing of claims" (173). Only if I change my words will I cleanse my perception (of myself and others) of what keeps me from acknowledging our common separateness. Although they are only words on a page, Shakespearean drama gives us occasion to re-evaluate what we mean when we say something, as well as the opportunity to give our words a different weight and thus change the way we reveal ourselves, the way we relate, to others.

3.4 Words on a Page

What exchange can take place between us and Shakespeare's words, Cavell asks, if "any and all of them are words on a page; and all of us are flesh and blood" ("Skepticism" 247). One of the most striking things about "The Avoidance of Love" is that, although Cavell spends a considerable amount of time sounding out how the theatrical medium in Shakespeare "is one that keeps all significance continuously before our senses," he ultimately ascribes the experience of the constant presentness of Shakespearean drama not to a performance but an act of reading:

> This is a fact of my experience in reading the play (it is not a fact of my experience in seeing the play, which may say something either about its performability or about the performances I have seen of it, or about the nature of performance generally). (*Disowning* 85)

In this sense, the notion that Shakespeare can help us change ourselves and our relationship to others is certainly indebted to Cavell's idiosyncratic blend of Wittgenstein and Emerson, but it is also underwritten by a reading model first formulated in his reading of Thoreau's *Walden.* If we want to understand Cavell's idea of Shakespeare's salvational potential, we must understand the relationship between reader and text, the interaction between audience and stage, and even our relationship to the other, as governed by the same – redemptive – act of reading.

*Walden* is a book about writing and reading.[24] For Thoreau, acts of reading and writing are part of the same mechanism. In *In Quest of the Ordinary* Cavell advances a similar argument: "reading is a variation of writing, where they meet in mediation and achieve accounts of opportunities; and writing is a variation of reading, since to write is

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[24] Unfortunately, I do not have the space to delve further into Cavell's reading of *Walden.* I would, however, briefly like to point out that the textual model that Cavell evinces from both Thoreau's notes on reading and writing and from his experiences of reading Thoreau has been an important component in the formulation of "theatrical passionate utterances." There are, of course, important differences regarding how a drama and a text make demands on their audiences. What highlights separateness in a text such as *Walden* is neither the experience of the insurmountable and paradoxical disjunction of the theatrical situation, nor the sound of a character's utterances, but moments in the writing that are particularly difficult or hard to absorb. In *Senses of Walden,* this is primarily understood as the ability of Thoreau's words to on the one hand challenge us "to conjecture and calculate with them," and on the other to be indifferent as to whether we do so or not. In Cavell's words: "the choice to go on reading or not is left absolutely up to me – whether I am to invest interest here or not. Nothing *holds* my interest, no suspense of plot or development of character; the words seem continuously at an end" (*Senses* 47-8). The words are separate from us, but also, Cavell suggests, from their author:  "we feel this as the writer's withdrawal from the words on which he had staked his presence; and we feel this as the words' indifference to us – that is, his willingness to remain obscure" (48).

to cast words together that you did not make, so as to give or take readings" (18). This reading model does not envisage the much-lamented death of the author. For Thoreau, as well as for Cavell, the mechanism at work in reading and writing is one in which reader and text can change each other. In Gould's *Hearing Things*, the description of this model is further refined as consisting of a chain of reversals echoing the original oscillating reversals of the relationship between text and reader. The first reversal must be the one in which the philosopher stops seeing himself as a writer producing a text and becomes a reader reading a prior text. In the second reversal, the philosopher-turned-reader has to acknowledge that he does not read but is read by the prior text. The third reversal is the most difficult: the philosopher/reader's own reader, in other words us, must join into the chain of reading reversals and the philosopher/reader must invite him (Gould 148). If this reading model is to function properly, the text must invite the reader to take his position in its weaving net of mutual receptions. The writer must, as Cavell puts it in *Senses of Walden*, prepare a "ground upon which they will meet," he "must establish or create his mode of presence to the word, he must admit or create the reader's mode of presence to it" (61). Equally, in *In Quest of the Ordinary* he argues that there is not philosophy "until the philosopher is *being* read (at least, necessarily by himself, by herself)" (19). An act of writing must, in other words, always inaugurate an act of reading.

The mutual reception between text and reader that Cavell observes in Thoreau's account of reading and writing in *Walden* is, in Gould's words, "fed by explorations of Shakespeare and film and Cavell's increasingly less subterranean conversation with Freud's writing and with various ideas and methods of therapy" (4). These "various ideas and methods of therapy" are, however, far less subterranean and far more important that Gould would have us believe. In "Beginning Cavell," Davidson highlights the therapeutic aspirations of Cavell's philosophy and juxtaposes them directly to what he calls the "professionalisation of English-speaking philosophy" (239). For Davidson, Cavell's writing explodes the norms of professional philosophy not because it is "self-indulgent," but because the writing itself (just as the reading) can resist the oppression of the human voice and "allow one to recall or remember wishes, fantasies, temptations, illusions, urges, desires, and hopes." For Davidson, "this explains

why Cavell understands reading and writing as redemptive and therapeutic, and why he says that any credible model of such reading and writing will have to be psychoanalytic in character" (239-40). Gould, on the other hand, believes that "one must not be too quick to characterise the liberation in exclusively psychoanalytic terms" (41). He is adamant that Cavell's idea of the relationship between text and reader is not based on psychoanalysis. It "only borrows features of psychoanalytic therapy in order to further develop a model of philosophy as a kind of reading" (41). I disagree with Gould's notion of the incompatibility of a psychoanalytic influence and a rigorous philosophical methodology. About a decade after *Senses of Walden,* Cavell returns to this reading model when writing about the influence of psychoanalysis on his work. Here Cavell calls the mutual receptiveness of text and reader "countertransference": every reception of the text is already made possible by the text itself or rather by "a further understanding of the text's relation to me, and that that further relation cannot be said either (or can be said both), to be prior or/and posterior to any approach (or say attraction) to a text" (*Contesting* 112-3). In light of the ultimate therapeutic or salvific objective of Cavell's philosophy, we would be mistaken to dismiss the similarities between Cavell's textual model and the mechanisms of psychoanalytic therapy, in particular Freudian notions of transference and counter-transference.

The act of reading Shakespeare can, Cavell claims, help us free ourselves and our words from "enforced or stifled words, from enforced silence, from voices not our own, from falsifying accent, from the breath of words held too long," because his textual model allows for the fact that we can take the author's breath away ("Skepticism" 246-7). Sometimes, Cavell writes in *Pitch of Philosophy,* the "drive of reading will present itself as taking away an author's breath, not taking away the right to speak, but following the inspiration otherwise than we find it followed; the author may or may not be glad" (16). Again we encounter Cavell's interest in breath, but this time not as an expression of the body's separateness, but of the "intention" of a text. In *In Quest of the Ordinary*, he links this idea of the text's breath back to the sceptic's anxious relationship to language as something that always says more and less than it says:

> Both the idea of grasping the intention of a text and the idea of sharing or hearing what has called it, are interpretations of reading, of following a text. But

the idea of being intended can close out what the idea of being called and of obedience, of listening, bring into investigation: namely, how is it that one writes better than one knows (as well as worse) and that one may be understood better by someone other than oneself (as well as understood worse). (24-5)

The parallel drawn between the breath of the words uttered by a person (or a character) and the breath of words written by an author again expresses the significance the act of reading (Shakespeare) holds for Cavell. The full weight of this equation will become apparent if we link it back to Cavell's discussion of Lear's *hysterica passio*, his sense of suffocation addressed in the previous chapter. In *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* Cavell asks: "Without you, Lear's isolation, his breathlessness, would go unrelieved. And what, since noting that condition may well isolate you, will relieve you?" (248). The importance of Cavellian acts of reading lies in the fact that they aim to alleviate the characters' (and thus our own) breathlessness or suffocation, and in the notion that this is precisely what philosophy should contend with.

In this chapter I have identified four pillars on which Cavell's idea of Shakespeare's salvific potential is founded. First, Cavell's shift of the sceptical focus away from the author of the plays to what the plays can do to their audience; second, his marriage of Wittgenstein's idea of Shakespeare as a creator of language and Emerson's acknowledgment of his poetic-philosophical force; third, the notion that, just like passionate utterances, Shakespearean drama makes a demand on us, and fourth, a textual model detailing the reciprocal permeability of text and reader, formulated on the back of his reading of Thoreau's *Walden*. Gould was the first to recognise that this textual model also influences Cavell's philosophical writing style (*Hearing Things* 23). In turning to his polarising philosophical voice in my final chapter, I will suggest that we must listen to Cavell's *perfect pitch* of philosophy if we want to sound out yet another aspect of how literature comes to bear on his philosophy.

## 4. Perfect Pitch

The ear not only plays an important role in Cavell's description of his own separateness and in his discussion of the tragedies, but also in his account of his philosophical vocation and style. Cavell speaks of his philosophical vocation and particular philosophical style in terms of perfect pitch, most notably in *A Pitch of Philosophy,* his first, partially autobiographical, work. For the young Cavell, his mother's and uncle's perfect pitch was a source of mystery, admiration and envy; of mystery because the way a person with perfect pitch knows the note she hears in her head to be a C seemingly exceeds traditional modes of *knowing*; of admiration, because his mother's perfect pitch somehow seemed to be intertwined with her uncanny ability to sight-read, and hence with her unsurpassed and inexplicable natural musical talents; and of envy because Cavell did not have perfect pitch, and therefore his mother's musical vocation could never be his. Although he could not follow in his mother's footsteps, her natural musical ability made him want to find his own vocation, his own perfect pitch: "Yet I felt there must be something I was meant to do that required an equivalent of the enigmatic faculty of perfect pitch" (*Pitch* 21). Cavell's perfect pitch was, however, not to be found in music and neither in a traditional study of philosophy and literature, but rather in a philosophical *pitch* that would allow him to address and absorb the experience of separateness.

Whilst an encounter with *King Lear* convinced Cavell that his vocation lay in philosophy rather than in music, it was only after engaging with Austin that he understood what *kind* of philosophy he wanted to pursue. Austin made Cavell "throw away beginnings and plans for a perfectly good Ph.D. dissertation," because it was "good enough to have earned the degree but not good enough to have given me what I variously imagined as a voice, a way, a subject, a work of my own" (55). The idea of finding a vocation, which here also means finding one's voice, is inextricably linked to questions of the ear and of a certain modality of hearing. When in *The American Philosopher*, Giovanna Borradori asks whether "the idea of the perfect ear" is "tied to a primitive sense of nature, unfastened by cultural contextuality" and whether it is "tied in some way to [his] reading of skepticism," Cavell replies:

Skepticism is the denial of the need to listen. It's the refusal of the ear. Skepticism denies that perfection is available through the human ear, through the human sensibility. This is what Wittgenstein calls the "sublimation" of our language, and he means sublime in the same sense that Kant did. It's as though we were on a slab of ice: on the one hand there is smoothness of the surface, its perfection; on the other, our inability to walk on it. In one sense, conditions are perfect, but, for that reason, we as humans cannot belong. We are all too human. Skepticism as a search for the inhuman is a search for a means to the perfection of the ear, to the extent that the ear is no longer required to listen. It is the denial of having to hear. (133-4)

What is addressed here through the gateway of the ear is Cavell's wish to allow the human voice, a voice that is imbued with our separateness, to ring through philosophical discourse. When Cavell speaks of philosophy's denial of the ear, he is transposing the sceptic's deafness to the human voice and the separateness that is ingrained in it to philosophy. Like Austin and Wittgenstein, Cavell is therefore interested in "shaking up" the existing distinctions governing philosophy and supplanting them with new ones that, though perhaps not "finer," are nevertheless "fruitful where the others stop cold" (*Must* 103). When in *A Pitch Of Philosophy*, Cavell therefore writes that "certain questions of ear that run through my life – questions of the realities and fantasies of perfect pitch, of telling pointed stories, and of the consequences of a scarred tympanum – become, in these pages that record fragments of my life, questions of the detections of voice," he is speaking of nothing other than his idiosyncratic philosophical style (30). When Cavell proposes to talk about philosophy in connection with the ear, he does not only mean opening up philosophy to the passionate utterances ingrained in the voice;  he means writing a certain kind of philosophy, taking a certain "tone of philosophy," as well as his "right to take that tone" (3).

Cavell's style is often considered a regrettable by-product of his philosophy. Nussbaum is in good company when she voices her suspicion of his "difficult" and "opaque" style, and although she immediately concedes that "we should see this way of writing as expressing the agony of human emotions and the intense difficulty of philosophical thought," she sees his style as quite distinct from his writings on Shakespeare ("Stages" 2). A similar argument can be found in Bruns, who claims that: "Cavell's writing does not try for transparency, nor does it always coincide with itself, and anyhow Shakespeare is not so much an object as a region of Cavell's

thinking" ("Cavell's Shakespeare" 613). Bruns, Nussbaum and others erroneously distinguish between Cavell's acts of reading and his writing style. I believe, on the contrary, that to refuse to understand his style as an intrinsic part of what doing philosophy means for him, we run the risk of mishearing him completely. Cavell's style is not an unfortunate eccentricity in an otherwise sober thinker; it is not extraneous but central to his philosophical method. I am by no means the only defendant of Cavell's style. Arnold Davidson has convincingly argued that Cavell's style is not merely "self-indulgent," or narcissistic as others would have it, but "redemptive and therapeutic," aimed precisely at "transform[ing] the reader's sensibility, to undo his self-mystifications and redirect his interest" (240). Gould, too, has written extensively on the relationship between voice and method in his philosophy. In *Hearing Things*, Gould tells "a story about a fundamental shift in the philosophical methods and procedures of Stanley Cavell" (1). In this story the leading role undoubtedly goes to the voice, first as "a condition of human expression and meaning to be recovered from its philosophical neglect," then as "a way of conceiving the medium and the goal of the philosophical method of appealing to ordinary language," and finally as "the sound of Cavell's voice as a writer" (1).

Gould is in good company when he asks why "Cavell keep[s] writing in ways that seem to flout the normal tone and mode of addressing an audience in academic philosophy?" (3). I am, however, alone in arguing that Cavell's encounter with Shakespeare is central to the development of his distinct philosophical style. More than any other of his works (apart, perhaps, from *Senses of Walden)* Cavell's readings of Shakespeare shows that philosophy is to be understood "not as a set of problems to be solved but as a set of text to be read" (*Claim* 3). It is precisely by formally playing out "the progress from ignorance to exposure, I mean the treatment of an ignorance which is not to be cured by information (because it is not caused by a lack of information)," that the Shakespearean dramatic form stretches Cavell's conception of what a text, and therefore also a philosophical text, can be understood to do (*Disowning* 85). Apart from offering an illustration of the modality of thought Cavell is after, Shakespearean drama also puts forward a palpable model for writing philosophy. I will argue in this sense that Cavell's style can be understood as an attempt to reproduce within philosophical writing

the dialogue between a "male" and a "female" voice as observed in remarriage comedies, such as *The Winter's Tale.*

4.1 Remarrying the Human Voice and Philosophy

For Cavell, Shakespeare's tragedies illustrate and enlighten the sceptical problematic, and their dramatic form can help us to transcend the sceptical position we bring to them and to our lives. There is, however, a third side to how Cavell's literary-philosophical investigations blur the borders between the disciplines. Plays such as *The Winter's Tale*, in which "men must and must not hear the woman's voice," come to represent the relationship between the human voice and "that philosophical self-torment whose shape is skepticism, in which the philosopher wants and wants not to exempt himself from the closet of privacy, wants and wants not to become intelligible, expressive, exposed" (*Pitch* 132). Equally, if *The Winter's Tale* is "understandable as a study of skepticism – that is, as a response to that which skepticism is a response – then," Cavell writes in *Disowning Knowledge,* "its second half must be understandable as a study of its search for recovery" (198). Plays and films belonging to the genre of Remarriage Comedy, for instance *The Lady Eve* and *The Winter's Tale,* fascinate Cavell because something happens in them that he would like to see happening in philosophical writing.

Since Cavell recognises in "remarriage comedy" something that his own philosophy sets out to achieve, it would only seem natural to scrutinise the prototype of this genre – *The Winter's Tale* – for something approaching a model for his own philosophical style. In *Contesting Tears,* Cavell states that Shakespearean comedy usually revolves around "the overcoming of obstacles to a young pair's desire to be together in the first place and in a condition called marriage" (4). In contrast, remarriage comedies "begin or climax with the threatened end of a marriage, that is to say, with the threat of divorce; the drive of the narrative is to get the original pair together *again*" (4). In *Pursuits of Happiness*, Cavell describes remarriage comedy as an "undertaking to show how the miracle of change may be brought about and hence life between a pair

seeking divorce becomes a marriage" (23). As Cavell notes in relation to *The Winter's Tale*, remarriage comedy entails "the reconciliation of a genuine forgiveness; a reconciliation so profound as to require the metamorphosis of death and revival, the achievement of a new perspective on existence" (19). For Cavell, this change, which is nothing short of miraculous, is dependent not on the intervention of a deity or a superior power but instead can be gained by means of a dialogue or conversation between the couple seeking divorce. These conversations, Cavell suggests, bring on "a phase of the development of consciousness between a woman and a man, a study of the conditions under which this fight for recognition (as Hegel put it) or demand for acknowledgment (as I have put it) is a struggle for mutual freedom, especially of the views each holds of the other" (17-18). By achieving acknowledgment, by revealing one's separateness to the other, the couple seeking remarriage also has a chance to regain attunement. In Cavell's mind, acknowledgment, like attunement is, so writes Viefhues-Bailey, "not simply given … it is achieved by being worked out, threatened, and regained again through acts of speaking in mutuality" (83). Cavell wants to further a similar miracle in philosophy: he wants to remarry the human voice and philosophy.

The gendering that underlies Cavell's discussion of remarriage comedy and the "Melodrama of the unknown woman," as well as his readings of Shakespeare, has been well documented. Indeed scepticism itself is characterised "as a distinctively male response to distinctively male anxieties" (Scheman 95). But where, Scheman wonders, does this, leave Cavell's female reader? Referring to Cavell's reading of *Othello*, she writes: "I loved this account of skepticism, loved the grounding in human feelings, the palpable anxiety, the way in which bringing philosophical problems home brought home the fears. But I didn't know how to find myself in that story" (94). The gendering of Cavell's reading of scepticism is nowhere more problematic – or more salient – than in his discussion of the difference between the male and the female voice in his reading of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*. In this scene we find the betrothed couple in Susanna's chamber. Figaro is measuring out their wedding bed and Susanna is trying on her veil in front of the mirror. Susanna's "pointed interruptions demanding attention to the narcissistic measures she is taking before a mirror" are to be understood as an ecstatic, narcissistic "irrupting of a new perspective of self to itself" (*Pitch* 152, 145).

Conversely, Figaro's repetition of his measurements (just like Leontes' repetition of words) betrays his desire "to remain in control of his answers, a desire that makes his answers echo, new existences of course, but not new enough" (146). Susanna's measuring shares a narcissistic element with Figaro's; yet, despite this structural similarity, for Viefheus-Bailey, there is a significant difference between them. Whilst "male skepticism leads to a situation of painful conventionalism, where words are to be controlled and only echoes can be heard; female narcissism, on the other hand, allows for mourning and for creativity" (117-8). The female voice can also be understood in terms of what Cavell understands as singing. The word or concept "song" is, in Cavell's vocabulary, not exclusively reserved for singers or musicians. Singing "does nothing to speaking, as it were, that spoken words do not already do." Singing merely "isolates, absolutizes, even theorizes what words do to themselves, as proposed in the idea that the voice become signature is absolutely abandoned to its song" (*Pitch* 153). It is important to note that "male" and "female" are not gender categories here but categories of writing or thinking: "the woman's [voice] narcissistic, erotically imaginative far beyond the man's worldliness; the man's [voice] at once expansive and constricted, self-congratulatory and blind" (152-3). Whilst male narcissism is aimed at staying in control of words, the "female" voice's self-eruption of itself to itself allows for a passionate, complete and expressive abandonment that speaks, and sings, of separateness.

The second half of *The Winter's Tale* is a story of recovery and redemption, but this is not achieved through Hermione and Leontes regaining their attunement. Come to life, Hermione "hangs about" Leontes' neck, but she never addresses him directly (5.3.112). She is there, yet she remains separate from Leontes. To echo Cavell's terms, Hermione is not the star of remarriage comedy, but of "the Melodrama of the unknown woman" as described in *Contesting Tears.* Viefhues-Bailey gives a pithy description of this figure: "*the stars in the Melodrama stand for a humanity that can be gained only through a rejection of the terms of a society that has no words for these types*" (108). Although "*the women of the melodrama demand the transformation of a man's world,*" they do not achieve it. In contrast, the stars in the Comedies do, because they "*stand for humanity achievable in mutuality*" (109). The melodramatic star abandons herself fully to her words, even if this means that she won't be understood, even if this means that

she will have to die. It is precisely the melodramatic star's ability to abandon herself fully to her words, thus fully expressing her own idiosyncrasy, which prevent her from entering into dialogue with the sceptic and potentially shifting his ground. The pure self-expression of the melodramatic star cannot change the latter's position in the world; nor can it avert tragedy and divert it into comedy because, being totally other from the male sceptical discourse, it cannot enter into a dialogue with it.

In Shakespeare's play, most of the dialogue takes place not between the couple – Hermione and Leontes – but between Paulina and Leontes. Paulina is, even for Shakespeare's standards, an extraordinarily witty and eloquent character, amongst Shakespeare's women perhaps only second to Rosalind. She does with her own and other's words as she pleases, twisting and turning them and, to stay with a Cavellian image, taking her interlocutors' breath away. Paulina is a good match for the sceptic-philosopher Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and their conversations make for some very good theatre, like for instance in Act 2, scene 3. Hermione has given birth to Perdita in disgrace. In this scene Paulina is taking Perdita to Leontes, eager to convince him that she is truly his daughter and that Hermione is, as before, his "good" Queen.

> PAULINA:  Good my liege, I come,
>      And, I beseech you hear me, who professes
>      Myself your loyal servant, your physician,
>      Your most obedient counsellor, yet that dares
>      Less appear so, in comforting your evils,
>      Than such as most seem yours; – I say, I come
>      From your good queen.
> LEONTES:  Good queen!
> PAULINA:  Good queen, my lord, good queen: I say good queen,
>      And would by combat make her good, so were I
>      A man, the worst about you.
>
>                 (2.3.52-61)

Paulina and Leontes are here battling it out for the territory of the word good; the winner will redraw its borders, coin its meaning as if for the first time. There is, of course, nothing special about the way Paulina uses words, just as there is nothing special about the way Leontes does. Paulina and Leontes merely use the full spectrum of language, they hear the echoes spreading and oscillating between one fixed meaning of the word "good" and the other. Leontes sceptical sensibility for words leaves him

stranded on a sceptical island, but Paulina uses that very same skill to try and reel him back on to common ground and attunement. Despite her best efforts, Paulina's re-shifting of Leontes' philosophical ground does not work and tragedy ensues. Leontes' ear remains deaf to her deft manipulation of his language, because her recounting still happens in the realm of *knowledge,* because, in other words, her strategy does not explode Leontes' sceptical territory.

Before Leontes is fully cured of his scepticism at the end of the play, four things escaping reason must occur: the oracle must speak; Mamillius must die; a statue must come to life; Perdita must be found. Although all of these marvellous events form a necessary counterpoint to the sceptic's clinging onto *knowledge,* not all of them are equally successful in counteracting or absorbing Leontes' scepticism. Leontes, as we well know, does not believe the oracle: "There is no truth at all i'th' Oracle" (3.2.140). And even Mamillius' death, though chilling to the core, still does not suffice to shake Leontes' scepticism. Although the coming to life of Hermione's statue is generally understood to be the play's miracle, the play's real miracle is the finding of Perdita. For Rhu, for instance, "Hermione's final silence toward her husband, Leontes, expresses the perhaps unbridgeable gap between them, just as the blessing she solicits for her daughter, Perdita, indicates what is the significant reunion that Shakespeare is staging here" (*American Dream* 170). Many critics, amongst them Garber, discern strong parallels between Shakespeare's characterisation of Perdita and the Prosperina/ Persephone myth (*Shakespeare* 847-8). The name Persephone derives from the Ancient Greek *pherein phonon*: to bring or cause death. Persephone is thus the one who is alive and yet brings death, or the one who, though dead, is allowed to walk among the living. Persephone, sometimes also known as Kore, is the daughter of Zeus and Demeter. In Homer, she is the wife of Hades. According to another version she is unwillingly so, having been carried off by Hades. In this other version, Demeter demands that Hades restore Persephone to the world of the living. Hades, however, tricks Persephone into eating a kernel of pomegranate. In eating it, Persephone becomes doomed to the lower world. An agreement between Hades and Demeter establishes that Persephone "lives there for part of the year, and in spring she returns to the world above and spends the other part of the year with her mother" (Cancik, Schneider 811).

Perdita's story shares many of the guiding themes of the Persephone / Prosperina myth: Perdita was condemned to die before she was born and yet, when returned to her parents, it was as if she was "stolen from the dead" (5.3.115). Again and again she is likened to the earth ("Most peerless piece of earth, I think, / That e'er the sun shone bright on" [5.1.94-5]). She is often referred to in terms of spring or prosperity. It is for example a "prosperous south-wind" (5.1.160) that brings Florizel and Perdita to Sicilian shores. Upon greeting her, Leontes says: "Welcome hither, / As is the spring to th'earth" (5.1.150-1). Like her mother, Perdita is brought back from the dead. Unlike Hermione, however, she is able to converse with her father. Indeed it is she who leads Leontes to Hermione's statue and who in the end turns tragedy into (albeit problematic) comedy. Perdita thus inhabits the space between Paulina's quasi-sceptical recounting and Hermione's narcissistic expression of self. In balancing on the cusp between two precincts, she also stands for the kind of style of philosophical writing that Cavell aspires to: a writing attuned to separateness, which can nevertheless still be heard by the sceptical philosopher.

In § 107 of his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein rejects the way philosophy has been using language:

> The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement. (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a result of investigation: it was a requirement.) The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty. – We have got on to slippery ice where there is no friction and so in a certain sense the conditions are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk. We want to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to the rough ground!

In order to do philosophy, to walk and progress, we need friction. By the same token, we cannot do philosophy if the friction is so great that we cannot move. Hermione cannot be heard by Leontes, precisely because she is voicing her total separateness in the trial scene (or indeed in the last scene). A philosophical style modelled solely on the "female" voice would be just such an overly rough ground. Although the "female voice" is important in Cavell's philosophy, it only becomes philosophically viable as part of a dialogue. I find this view confirmed by Cavell's telling reading of the gesture Wittgenstein describes in § 217 which, just like his idea of ice and rough ground, is about how philosophical style might renew philosophy.

> "How am I able to obey a rule?" – if this is not a question about causes, then it is
> about the justification for my following the rule in the way I do.
> If I have exhausted the justifications I have reached bedrock, and my spade is
> turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do."

It is precisely in this gesture that Cavell reads the remarrying of "male" scepticism and the "female" voice: "the implement is, so to speak with due banality, masculine, but the gesture (of waiting, putting one's self, or body, on the line that way) is feminine" (*Pitch* 15). Cavell concludes that "patience, and a recognition of rebuff and exhaustion, also become earmarks of the writing of this (or philosophy's) pedagogy" (15). For Adam Gonya, the point about this picture of two distinct yet interdependent philosophical voices is "that both parts of speech are necessary, the economy of speech (control of concepts by criteria) and the aesthetics of speech (self-revelation)" (595). In order for philosophy to address and comprise the human voice and still remain intelligible, "these two interests" most come "into some sort of productive calibration" (595). I have put forward the notion of remarriage comedy, in particular its prototype *The Winter's Tale*, as a model for the dialogue between the two distinct voices at work in Cavell's writing. I have also proposed that the main aim of this dialogue is the remarriage of philosophy with the ordinary, or human, voice. By offering a series of hypotheses regarding the role of parentheses in "The Avoidance of Love," I will finally analyse how this dialogue of voices translates into his writing, and what this entails for us, as readers of Cavell.

4.2 Parentheses

Just as the Shakespearean form helps us absorb the sceptical position we bring to it, the style of Cavell's writing becomes part of his philosophical endeavour. In Cavell's writing two voices call to each other: the voice of traditional philosophy (echoing, as it were, Wittgenstein and Austin) and a voice resonating with something that exceeds its realm. Although Cavell is on the margins of traditional "analytic" philosophical discourse he is not at odds with it. The reason why Cavell does not pay heed to Richard Rorty's suggestion that "if he finds professional philosophy so bankrupt, then he should give up his quarrel with it," is that he wants to heal philosophy, so that it can heal us

(Davidson 239). This, to be sure, is not an easy task. According to Davidson, it requires a "delicate and never-ending balance to claim, on the one hand, that the professionalisation of philosophy can lead to a 'desert of thought' and yet, on the other, to refuse to renounce that profession's paradigms of comprehensibility" (239). As Davidson rightly points out, this balance is "nowhere ... more striking than in Cavell's essays on Shakespeare" (239). By way of concluding my exploration of the importance of Shakespeare for Cavell, I will listen to this balancing act, to this duet between "more than one voice," and try to heed its demands (Gould 2). Robert N. Watson calls Cavell's style "oracular" (54). I believe that it is rather "auricular," in that it asks its reader to constantly listen out for the interplay and conversation between a "male" and "female" voice, in other words, two voices adhering to different philosophical or stylistic rigours. The "female voice" takes hold in a variety of forms in Cavell's writing; a turn of phrase that remains ajar and hence invites a plurivocal reading, or repeated intimate and autobiographical insertions, or the introduction of a different viewpoint or tone. The use of parentheses, among other stylistic quirks, allows Cavell to write in a way that will produce flashes of idiosyncrasy that escape immediate understanding, whilst still being audible to the ear of more traditional philosophers.

Cavell's style has many resonances with Shakespeare's late style; the late plays not only delight their audiences' ears with a revolutionary use of music, song and sound, but also challenge them with a highly concentrated or distilled prose. Sense is concentrated as the poet exerts more and more pressure on his language. On a micro-textual level this becomes evident in the increasing removal of syllables between words, which wreak havoc with metre (McDonald 92). Although the literary standard in Early Modern England had very loose syntax, Shakespeare stretches its connective tissue to its utmost limits. Sentences becomes more and more convoluted and twisted by semantic postponement (92). According to Russ McDonald, "the conspicuously suspended sentence … represents a kind of gamble, a form of verbal play within the play." Shakespeare is "testing the listener's patience and acuity, pressing towards the limits of comprehensibility, and, what is more, he seems to be doing so playfully, as if the verbal medium were a kind of athletic bar to be continually raised" (97). Lines of thought, too, seem more spasmodic, whilst metaphors are often only hinted at rather

than explained, "some utterances break off and resume in another direction, while other sentences that would seem to have reached completion are extended, often to remarkable length, by the accretion of participial phrases and other modifiers" (92, 94). Shakespeare is no longer concerned with spelling out connections. As McDonald puts it, "words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are less significant than the meaning beyond them, and the playwright seems to be pointing us to that mysterious region beyond" (96).

Shakespeare's late style is also characterised by pleonastic addition. The late Shakespeare is also very fond of parenthesis; *The Winter's Tale* alone contains 396 pairs (95). Keir Elam is therefore right in speaking about a Shakespearean "parenthomania," or "the alarming outbreak of brackets" (69). Like Shakespeare, Cavell has a penchant for semantic postponement and continual clauses. They share a fondness for elision and ellipsis and semantic postponement and tend to over-use parentheses. One example of his idiosyncratic use of parentheses is the long citation from *The Claim of Reason* with which I opened the second chapter (58). Here parentheses within parentheses do not only interrupt the flow of reading, they also contain Cavell's exuberant prose, which seems to want to shoot off in all directions at any moment. Another good example is the following paragraph taken from his reading of *The Winter's Tale*:

> Wittgenstein's *Investigations* draws this most human predicament into philosophy, forever returning to philosophy's ambivalence, let me call it, as between wanting to tell more than words can say and wanting to evade telling altogether – an ambivalence epitomized in the idea of wishing to speak "outside language games," a wish for (language to do, the mind to be) everything and nothing. Here I think again of Emerson's wonderful saying in which he detects the breath of virtue and vice that our character "emits" at every moment, words so to speak always before and beyond themselves, essentially and unpredictably recurrent, say rhythmic, fuller of meaning than can be exhausted. So that it may almost be said of every word and phrase in the language what William Empson has said of metaphors, that they are pregnant (or are they, or at the same time, seminal?). (*Disowning* 201)

Here we have interpolation ("let me call it") and aggregation ("language to do, the mind to be"). We also have ellipsis in the last parenthesis, which omits the second and clarifying "are." The greatest syntactical knot, however, is tied in the first parenthesis, which is not a pleonastic addition, since the intricacy and pluridirectionality of the prose

depends on it. What we have here is a sort of concatenation alluding to but never choosing or closing down any of the four potential syntactic alleyways. It is almost as if Cavell was leaving open all four possibilities; that the sceptic's wish was either for language to do and the mind to be either everything or nothing. The end of the extract is marked by a similar openness. The parenthesis does not only question the apparent conclusion of the previous sentence, but again here we have a syntactic concatenation leaving open all and closing nothing. Cavell, of course, does not always write like this. But he does so more often when his argument comes under pressure, or to a point, when he is struggling with a particularly difficult hypothesis or comparison. In moments such as this, Cavell seems to want to test the listener, like Shakespeare's late plays, and challenge him to listen out for a region beyond *knowledge.*

Cavell can perhaps be said to share Shakespeare's "parenthomania." There are approximately 197 parentheses in "The Avoidance of Love." Parentheses are a stylistic feature of Cavell's writing, conspicuous in his work since his early essay "Knowing and Acknowledging." Parentheses are one of the hallmarks of what some would like to call Cavell's under-edited, un-rigorous, obfuscating style. To me, though, these are marks of Cavell's voice and therefore of the "seriousness" of his philosophy. Although parentheses are not the only stylistic means by which Cavell pursues literary philosophical writing, they illustrate the strategy by which Cavell's writing manages to resonate beyond the disciplinary boundaries of literature and philosophy. When writing about Gloucester's blanked position and our complicity in Lear's tragedy, a moment I discussed in Chapter 3, Cavell inserts a parenthesis, somewhat unnecessarily, one might say.

> We "do not notice" Regan's confusion of identity because we share it, and in failing to understand Gloucester's blanked condition (or rather, in insisting upon understanding it from our point of view) we are doing what the character in the play are seen to do: We avoid him. (*Disowning* 54)

By putting this surmising in brackets, Cavell might want to highlight his voicing of the text, thereby inviting us to voice ours, to insert our own take or voicing of these particular lines in *King Lear* into the text. Even if we might not agree with a reading, its voicing will illuminate our position as readers. It might be the arrogation to be matched

by my interrogation, as Cavell suggests in *The Pitch of Philosophy* (15). Parenthetical insertions are usually thought to contain material that could be omitted without destroying or altering the meaning of a sentence or a text. They also mark a modulation of voice, therefore, and most probably also an ever so slight change in the pace of reading. On a different level, parentheses also allow the grafting of a different voice – be it a voice that is in dialogue with the main body of the text or a quoted voice etc. – into the text as a whole. There is, however, a further twist to Cavellian parenthesis, a twist that explains to what extent the visual/textual marker of the parenthesis underlines what happens in textual acknowledgment. This parenthesis visually marks the audience's sceptical position whilst also describing it. We fail to understand Gloucester's position because we, as sceptics, insist on understanding it from our point of view: on the basis of *knowledge,* we conclude that the sending off of Gloucester to Dover can only remain unknown, hence we brush it off as a lapse. We overlook the fact that Regan is identifying Gloucester with her father (hence is failing to acknowledge him) because we are asking the wrong question. The question we should be asking, for Cavell, is not why Shakespeare inexplicably has Regan send Gloucester to Dover, but what demand this makes on the audience. Cavell's parenthesis highlights that as readers and spectators we are confronted with an element of the Shakespearean text that is completely alien to us; we cannot wrap our minds around it; we cannot subsume it into our *knowledge.* The audience's inability to transcend the separateness that divides us from Gloucester is visually marked by this parenthesis: we bracket something off because we cannot make sense of it and because we are unable, as it were, to incorporate it into our reading.

Whilst the blanking parenthesis marks the inability to transcend separateness towards acknowledgment, parentheses can also mark acknowledgment. Parenthesising on Lear's "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes; / I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester" (4.6.172-3), Cavell writes "(Here 'take my eyes' can be read as a crazy consolation: Your eyes wouldn't have done you any good anyway in this case; you would need to see what I have seen to weep my fortunes; I would give up my eyes not to have seen it)" (*Disowning* 51-2). Perhaps the space of the bracket (so in and yet so out of the text) is most akin to the reader's position. To weep for his fortunes,

Gloucester would have to take his eyes, to see things from his perspective. The next time we encounter this beautiful phrase is when Cavell speaks about Cordelia: "If we are to weep for her fortunes we must take her eyes" (73). This time Cavell does not frame it with parentheses. The progress from knowledge-bound hiding behind separateness to acknowledgement in "The Avoidance of Love" is marked by how what Cavell first mentions as a quotation or in a parenthesis – in other words, in a way that marks it off from the rest of the text "proper" – is later subsumed into the main body of the text. Reading and text have come to a full acknowledgment. They are as much in each other's presence as will ever be possible. The visual out-bracketing of parentheses does not, of course, do the work of (textual) acknowledgment, it merely marks it. What invites the reader to acknowledge Cavell's text and indeed Shakespeare's is a duet of voices: the "male" voice adhering to the standards of the philosophical profession, punctuated by the "female" voice ringing through the idiosyncrasies of Cavell's philosophical practice, of which his interest in Shakespeare and his "parenthomania" are only two examples.

Cavell's writing style, so entrenched in the lessons of Shakespearean drama, is able to articulate cracks in the very philosophical ground which Austin and Wittgenstein criticised for being too far removed from ordinary language and the human concerns it voices. We thus find ourselves back at the scene Wittgenstein paints in §217 of the *Philosophical Investigations.* Having reached bedrock, spade in hand, there is nothing left to do for the Wittgensteinian teacher than to shrug his shoulders and to say, "This is simply what I do." There is no way in which the teacher can make the student understand or *know*; learning does not only happen by virtue of a linear transferral of *knowledge*, but by acknowledgment as well. Cavell's style then is perhaps nothing other than a shrugging of shoulders, a simple admission: "This is simply what I do." In this scene of learning and of reading, who teaches and who learns remains uncertain; when philosophy is a text to be read the reversal of roles characterised by Gould is always a possibility. But with these cracks already before us, it is perhaps our turn to take the shovel from our teacher and start digging.

**First Interlude**

Cavell listens to Shakespeare with a scarred tympanum, with an ear attuned to our common separateness. Uniting both the actual and philosophical ways in which he listens to Shakespeare, the ear proves instrumental in sounding out what Cavell hopes to gain from the encounter with Shakespeare and in revealing how his Shakespearean acts of reading influence his philosophical project. In Shakespeare, Cavell finds a persuasive master-narrative, succinctly exposing the sceptic's predicament and eloquently tracing what our response to it has to be. Cavell is drawn to Shakespeare specifically and singularly; in Shakespeare he can find answers to philosophical questions he cannot, at least not at first, find in other works of literature. Whilst Shakespeare is arguably the catalyst for Cavell's turn to philosophy, there is no such dependency in Derrida's thought. If Cavell had not written a single word about Shakespeare his contribution to philosophy would have been very different, and perhaps not nearly as notable. We cannot say the same thing about Derrida. Like Cavell, Derrida seems to suggest that we should sound out Shakespeare; his ears, however, are pricked up to hear something different.

Tuning in to how Derrida draws on Shakespeare in his philosophical writings, I am obliged to change frequency. No longer will I listen to Cavell's arias of separateness. What I must listen to from now on is not separateness but "frequencies": Shakespeare's spectral voices, sounds and syllables that come to haunt not only our English, but also Marx's German or indeed Derrida's French. From now on I must transpose Derrida's critique of ontology to the ear and listen to how a moment of silence, a rhythm or caesura opens the resonant space which allows for Derrida's differential tones of reading Shakespeare... But wait, I am anticipating, fast-forwarding to the end when really I should be thinking about a way to start.

**Part II - Frequencies**

5. *Flèches*

Now halfway through my thesis, I have to start again. At the beginning of "Let's Start Again," Sarah Wood suggests that we cannot start again without also listening to the other words folded up inside this monosyllabic word: "v. i. *to shoot, dart, move suddenly forth, or out ... to break away, to make a sudden or involuntary movement as of surprise or becoming aware: to spring open, out of place, or loose: ... to set forth on a journey, race, career. – v. t. to begin: to set going: ... to startle ... – n. a sudden movement: a sudden involuntary motion of the body: a startled feeling: a spurt: an outburst or fit ...*" (1). Starting is not easy. As soon as we start, the start runs away with itself, taking us to places we did not anticipate. Mostly, to start is always to make an incision and to allow ourselves to be wounded by whatever will start and shoot off.

These are the difficulties I am faced with when trying to start my reading of Derrida and Shakespeare. I recognise my anxiety in Sean Gaston's deceptively titled *Starting with Derrida*. If anything, Gaston's book makes you realise that you will never finish with starting with Derrida, never finish with wondering how Derrida starts. We cannot start, Wood reminds us, without starting *again* (1). There is something of what "Cogito and the History of Madness" calls the *palintrope* in Derrida's writing about Shakespeare (76). *Palintrope* is at work *within* these texts. It is, for instance, at work in the strange preface to *Specters*, the "Exordium," as well as, on a purely syntactical level, the knot of reported speech that kicks it off: "*I would like to live finally [je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin]*" (xvi/13).[25] Similarly, "Aphorism Countertime" begins with its hypothesis and conclusion: "1. Aphorism is the name" (416). Here, words and themes are always forwarding and rewinding to somewhere else in the text, or stretching their antennae to a different part of the oeuvre. As Derrida writes in "Living On," each text is a machine with multiple reading heads for other texts (88). As Gaston points out, it thereby not only starts with its end, but it is always starting *again* differently, thereby "startling" itself and losing its "logos" (Gaston viii). In *Little Did I*

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[25] When referring to both the French original and the English translation, the first reference is always to the English text from which I am working, and the second indicates Derrida's French.

*Know,* Cavell claimed that if philosophy wants to "seriously begin to take effect" it cannot follow a straight or linear path (254). Even if Cavell's writing, and particularly his writing on Shakespeare, does not follow a linear path, it is however held together by something like a "logos": its wish to heal an existential wound and to absorb our common experience of separateness. Derrida's work on Shakespeare is, in contrast, *palintropic* in the very sense outlined above: in resisting a linear account, in starting and restarting again differently with Shakespeare, it loses its logos, and we lose the very possibility of gathering these disjointed and disjointing texts together. It is, however, precisely in this impossibility of offering a simple, linear answer to what he does to Shakespeare (and the other way around) that the thrill and the promise of the Derridean act of reading lies.

Let me therefore start with the end. My acts of reading Derrida reading Shakespeare will never quite draw to a close. All one can hope for in thinking about Derrida is to put reading heads into motion. The more time I spend in the company of Derrida, with the texts he wrote on and with and in the company of Shakespeare, the more I realise that trying to write only about one of these texts is nearly as impossible as playing the root and third of a triadic chord without hearing the fifth in your mind's ear. Even when I speak of one of his texts on Shakespeare, of a single theme addressed in it, an isolated word or sound, another of his texts (whether on Shakespeare or something else) will always be resonating just out of our earshot. The challenge is to impose an order onto this intricate net of harmonies, resonances – to identify the different strands of sound and the way they harmonise or clash with Cavell's philosophical-literary investigations of Shakespeare – without muffling them. It is perhaps a challenge similar to the one Derrida faced when writing *Dissemination.* As translator Barbara Johnson remarks, "to perfectly disseminate the exposition of dissemination would require a kind of textual mastery that would belong among the recuperative gestures that dissemination undercuts" (*Dissemination* xxxiv). Derrida's readings of Shakespeare, indeed the role Shakespeare comes to play in his writings, undercuts our desire to master either discourse. However, although it disseminates, Derrida's writing on Shakespeare neither shatters nor scatters. It does not, as many would have us believe, dissolve into the thin air of mystification or obscurantism. Dissemination does not mean dispersion, and with

every cross-reference, resonance and echo, his writing, which is always an act of reading, hurtles itself ever more violently towards us and therefore towards the "to come," which thus becomes the vanishing point of his rendezvous with Shakespeare and with literature.

Rather than aspire to an unattainable textual mastery, I will therefore resort to a more *palintropic*, and hopefully more resonant, mode of exposition. I will make use of a chain of "non-synonymous substitutions" which surface in Derrida's Shakespearean reading acts ("Différance" 12). In response to Derrida's acts of reading, themes and figures like frequencies, *contretemps,* arrows (*flèches*), peepholes (*meurtrières*), the porpentine and Persephone will emerge to illuminate different aspects of Shakespeare's role in his philosophical writing. According to the logic traced by Derrida's "non-synonymous substitutions," neither can supplant nor supersede the other. Indeed, for Johnson the merit of Derrida's writing lies "in its *inscription* of the ways in which all theoretical discourse – including its own – for ever remains both belated and precipitous with respect to the textual practice it attempts to comprehend" (*Dissemination* xxxiv). None, not even frequencies, can serve as a master-term to unlock what is at stake in Derrida's reading of, and writing with, Shakespeare. If we believe we can ever distil such a master term from his innumerable acts of reading, then we have misunderstood something crucial about Derrida and thus run the risk of misunderstanding what he does with literature and with Shakespeare. Derridean acts of reading resist pinpointing; like music we may best appreciate them if we allow them to resonate unboundedly.

It is hard to pin down exactly what Shakespeare does in Derrida's writing and what Derrida in turn does to Shakespeare, because these acts of reading unsettle any linear understanding of textual transmission. Derrida no longer comes after Shakespeare. Instead, Shakespeare becomes one of us, always trying to catch up with Derrida. At the same time, he is always in front of Derrida, who is forever at his heels. If I had to begin with one word to describe these acts of reading, it would perhaps be *contretemps*. Let us therefore start, as if by chance, with *contretemps*, the *palintropic* force *per excellence*, that strange trajectory of a vibrating arrow, which gives us a start and makes us start reading Derrida reading Shakespeare.

5.1 *Contretemps*

Derrida reads Shakespeare *à contretemps*. In French *contretemps* means "mishap," as well as "out of time," or more literally, "against time" (*French Collins Robert Dictionary*). Speaking about "Aphorism Countertime" to Attridge in "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Derrida states that he simply does not possess "the necessary competence to read [*Romeo and Juliet*] 'in its period'" (62). Neither does Derrida read *Romeo and Juliet* as an ensemble, in other words as "a group of items viewed as a whole" (OED, sense 2). Just like *Specters of Marx*, "My Chances," "The Time is Out of Joint," and "What is a 'Relevant' Translation," "Aphorism Countertime" does not venture to give a "general" reading of a Shakespeare play. Whilst, as Hélène Cixous notes in her recent "Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida," "it is to Shakespeare and Company that he wishes to face owing [*se veut devant*]." He does not read "'all' Shakespeare," but only "some of the plays, a few features, a few tropes, a few words. Almost nothing, apparently. And yet…" (2). Shakespeare is, as the very form of "Aphorism Countertime" seems to indicate, cut up, distorted, un-hinged and desynchronised. Yet this contretemps or temporal disjunction is not external to the play but rather, Derrida suggests, one of its effects.

In "Aphorism Countertime," Derrida clears the stage for the theatre of *contretemps* ("Strange Institution" 62). Here *contretemps* "opens theater," opens *Romeo and Juliet*, as it creates space ("Aphorism" 421). What would *Romeo and Juliet* have been without contretemps? Although this play has often been "represented as the scene of fortuitous contretemps, of aleatory anachrony," nothing, "the failed rendezvous, the unfortunate accident, the letter which does not arrive at its destination, the time of the detour prolonged for a *purloined letter*, the remedy which transforms itself into poison ..." comes as a result of a freakish conjuration of time and chance against Romeo and Juliet; instead all these things are symptoms of a more essential contretemps (419). What would Romeo and Juliet have been without their contretemps? They, their love, their story depend on it, in many ways. For Derrida, Romeo and Juliet's "impossible synchronization" is what ultimately disjoins and joins them together; it is, if you will, the *and* between their proper names (418). "In the beginning" of deconstruction, if there is such a thing, "there is an *and*," Derrida observes ("Et Cetera..." 282). Like

deconstruction, *Romeo and Juliet* is perhaps nothing but a "theater of this 'and',' of this monosyllabic out-of-joint hinge of impossible synchronisation ("Aphorism" 419).

Romeo and Juliet's love is not thwarted by *contretemps*, their love depends on the "essential impossibility of any absolute synchronization" (418). When "*the impossible happens*," when Romeo and Juliet "live *in turn* the death of the other, for a time, the contretemps of their death," this comes to illustrate the heart of love, namely that "right from the pledge which binds together two desires, each is already in mourning for the other" (422). Derrida: "There would have been no love, the pledge would not have taken place, nor time, nor its theater, without discordance" (420). From the beginning love is disjointed; we love, because we know with "absolute certainty … that one must die before the other," that "one of us, only one of us, will carry the death of the other – and the mourning" (422). This "theater of double survival" is also the "*mise-en-scène* of all duels," of all that happens *between* two (422). It is linked with what, as Derrida writes in *Specters,* "happens between two, and between all the 'two's' one likes, such as between life and death" (xvii). The impossibility of synchronisation as bound to the ineluctable eventuality of our death is thus at the heart of love: I love you, because your time is not mine, because one of us will die before the other, because, although we are together now, one of us will – eventually – be alone. Or as the I puts it in "Envois": "*no my love that's my wake"* (141).

No love, then, without this (de)synchronising and (dis)joining *and*; this little syllable which radically alters our idea of love and of time. The story of Romeo *and* Juliet "confounds" that "philosophical logic which would like accidents to remain what they are, accidental," by marking the "absolute interruption of history as deployment of a temporality, of a single and organized temporality" ("Aphorism" 420). Here, Derrida seems to ventriloquise Hamlet's "the time is out of joint" (1.5.186). But what exactly is Hamlet saying? Hamlet's famous statement is usually read as primarily indicating that the age is out of joint, that something is not as it should be in Elsinore. However, it also suggests that in mourning Hamlet's time is somehow out of kilter, disjointed from the passing of time that the other characters perceive. Hamlet, as Derrida observes in "The Time is Out of Joint," "is mad about dates," more precisely about the date of his father's death (17). "Hamlet," Derrida continues, "seems no longer to know *when* his father

died. On what date? Since when?" (22). The time of mourning is strange. As Derrida writes in *The Work of Mourning*, the death of the other (a friend, a lover, a father, a mother) marks "each time another end of the world" (95). Mourning, that contretemps *par excellence*, disrupts the fabric of time. It is the end of the world, but it is also its beginning, because we always begin its work too early. Love is inaugurated by the possibility, and indeed by the anticipation, that the other will die before me, and that I will die before him. Mourning is itself in contretemps.

Derrida notes that as "time passes, time passes" for Hamlet time "disappears … ceases to take place"; first it's "the two months, then a month, the less than a month of the 'within a month,' and then without delay they will become hours, less than two hours – 'within two hours' – or else 'twice two months'" ("Time" 23). He suggests that "time itself, the present indicative of the verb to be in the third person singular, the 'is' that says what time is, this tense of time is out of joint, itself and by itself out of joint" (29). What is at stake here is a temporality which, in Hent de Vries' words, "is neither an indivisible presence or now, nor a moment of retrospective retention or anticipatory protention, nor their total annihilation" ("Shibboleth Effect" 185). Time, Derrida says in *A Taste for the Secret*, is "outside itself, beside itself, unhinged; it is not gathered together in its place, in its present" (6). And this is also true for the times of Derrida, suggests Bennington: "Derrida thinks with (the) time(s), not at all in that he represents the spirit of the times ('post-modern,' 'post-philosophical,' so they say), but in that the time he thinks dislocates all contemporaneity" ("Derridabase" 8). And this concept of time breaks what "The Time is Out Of Joint" calls the "shock waves" that create the tremor at the very heart of the question of "to be or not to be" (29). What is disjointed is, in short, not only Hamlet's perception of time, the time of mourning, but also "a very little word, the miniscule coupling of *two letters*," in short a "*minuscopule*": to be (16).

Wreaking havoc with time, "Aphorism Countertime" confounds philosophy, literature and the way we think of their temporal unfolding. As Attridge notes in the "Introduction," this piece does not only disrupt the "spatiotemporal continuum" of the play, or its "historicity," but also the "homogenous" space that is the "traditional critical

essay" ("Aphorism" 415). Like thirty-nine arrows, the short paragraphs of "Aphorism Countertime" puncture our understanding of what literary criticism is (or what a reading of Shakespeare might be), even of what the temporal relationship between a text and its reader may be. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, it "cuts into the fabric of duration" (421). *A Taste for the Secret* discusses how the out-of-jointness of time affects the very act of reading: when "texts become so heterogenous, so little contemporary to themselves," one indeed can no longer "treat a corpus, or a book, as a coherent whole" (9). And yet, "the survival of a theatrical work implies that, theatrically, it is saying something about theatre itself, about its essential possibility" ("Aphorism" 419). If the play has "been imprinted, superimprinted on the memory of Europe, text upon text," it is not only because the "anachronous accident comes to illustrate an essential possibility," but also because it is saying something about its own survival, the play's capacity to be reiterated text upon text, staging upon staging, adaption upon adaption (420). The essential possibility of *contretemps* does not only undermine the very idea that a text functions on a straight temporal line, even that it can be securely and definitely allocated an original or singular historical context; Derrida's reading of *Romeo and Juliet* also advances the argument that it is precisely this temporal skewing that secures the text's survival through time. And *contretemps* stipulates that the text's trajectory is not linear, but rather *palintropic,* even "teleiopoetic."

## 5.2 *Téléiopoièse*

*Téléiopoièse* is what "we have been following, waiting for, preceding for such a long time – the long time of a time that does not belong to time. A time out of joint" (*Politics of Friendship* 77). The differing and differentiating nature of time goes hand in hand with the logic of *contretemps* Derrida dissects in "Aphorism Countertime." Shakespeare's drama of double survival, Derrida writes there, inaugurates a new "logic," namely that accidents are anything but "accidental" (420). This logic "at the same time, throws out into the unthinkable an anachrony of structure, the absolute interruption of history as deployment of *a* temporality, of a single and organized temporality" (420). In French this sentence reads: "*Cette logique, du même coup, rejette*

*dans l'impensable une anachronie de structure, l'interruption absolue de l'histoire en tant que déploiement d'une temporalité une et organisée*" ("L'aphorisme" 134). Derrida's word choice *rejeter* is striking. *Rejeter* means both (1) "to reject," or "throw out," as well as (2) "to throw back," or (3) "discharge" (*French Collins Robert Dictionary*). Whilst holding on to the idea of throwing, Royle's translation of *rejeter* as "to throw out" loses the word's negative inflection, as well as the pluri-directionality the French word comprises: the anachrony of structure is both *thrown out* into the unthinkable, and *thrown back* – but thrown back or towards what? Together with time, agency and address is also warped.

*Contretemps* throws and hurtles; it shoots (itself) off. The *jet* in *rejeter* refers us to an idea of speed and force, even of violence that might seem to jar with the tone of "Aphorism Countertime." *Rejeter* also chimes with the *coup* of "*du même coup*" at the start of the sentence ("L'aphorisme" 134). In French *coup* is a (1) "knock" or "blow" and (2) a "stroke" or "shot" (*French Collins Robert Dictionary*). Throwing or shooting is what the aphorisms of *Romeo and Juliet* do. Aphorism 4:

> An aphorism is exposure to contretemps. It exposes discourse - hands it over to contretemps. Literally – because it is abandoning a word [*une parole*] to its letter. (Already this could be read as a series of aphorisms, the alea of an initial anachrony. In the beginning there was contretemps. In the beginning there is speed. Word and deed are *overtaken*. Aphorism outstrips. [La parole et l'acte sont *pris de vitesse*. L'aphorisme gagne de vitesse]). (416/131)

Aphorism is an exposure to *alea*, it *throws* the dice of chance (*alea iacta est*).[26] It is also a question of speed. The initial anachrony of the aphorism is produced or produces speed. Aphorism exposes us to *contretemps*, because word and deed *sont pris de vitesse.* This simple present passive construction is more ambiguous than it might at first seem. Literally, it indicates that word and deed are taken, perhaps surprised, by speed. *Prendre de vitesse*, however, also means to gain speed. Word and deed are surprised and overtaken by speed; at the same time, they also do the overtaking. At the beginning of

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[26] Just as the scope of the thesis' first part did not allow for a comprehensive account of all of Cavell's Shakespearean readings, this second part dwells mostly on those acts of readings that are most telling for the role Shakespeare plays in Derrida's philosophical writings. Throughout my discussion of Derrida reading Shakespeare, "My Chances," together with its elliptical and elusive reference to *King Lear*, will be waiting in the wings: in the discussion of parenthetical citations in Chapter 6 and in the complicities between sound that echo in my discussion of *génie* in Chapter 7. For a more detailed account of this complicity see my "Freud's Cadences: Taking Chances with *Julius Caesar." Mosaic.* 44.4 (2011): 63-78.

aphorism, before it can outstrip and beat somebody to the finish line, word and deed are not only overtaken, but also gather or increase speed. Word and deed in the aphorism are already exposed to the outstripping movement of contretemps. This sentence therefore not only links the ahistorical historicity of *Romeo and Juliet* to an *essential* contretemps, which confounds our image of a smooth and progressive unfolding of time, but also suggests that the former is, so to speak, a projection of the latter. This anachrony of structure results in *téléiopoièse,* as it both radiates *from* and is projected *back to Romeo and Juliet*; it is both the result and the cause of Derrida's aphoristic reading. Whatever allows Derrida to read *Romeo and Juliet* is not extrinsic to this play but intrinsic. Indeed, its "anachrony" of structure is something that radiates from it, that the play *throws out,* into the unthinkable, towards those readers who are un-thought of at the time, and those readers who might do the unthinkable to Shakespeare.

In all of his acts of reading, Derrida seeks to reckon with the outstripping speed of contretemps and with what it throws at us. We may, for example, recognise shadows of this outstripping movement in his discussion of missiles in "No Apocalypse, Not Now," or his discussion of missives in *The Postcard.* In *Specter*s, too, everything turns on the desire to respond to this "magisterial locution," this "watchword" which shoots forth "from the lips of the master" and "vibrates like an arrow in the course of an irreversible and asymmetrical address, the one that goes most often from father to son, master to disciple, or master to slave" (xvi). When, at the beginning of *Specters,* Derrida is speaking of the vibrating arrow of the master's locution, he is not only speaking of the ghost's locution of *Hamlet*, but also, and most importantly, of the vibrating arrow that the Shakespearean oeuvre shoots at us:

> "The time is out of joint": time is *disarticulated*, dislocated, dislodged, time is run down, on the run and run down [*traqué et détraqué*], *deranged*, both out of order and mad. Time is off its hinges, time is off course, beside itself, disadjusted. Says Hamlet. Who thereby opened one of those breaches [*brèches*], often they are poetic and thinking peepholes [*meurtrières*], through which Shakespeare will have kept watch over the English language; at the same time he signed its body, with the same unprecedented stroke of some arrow [*et à la fois signé son corps, du même coup sans précédent, de quelque flèche*]. (20/42)

Every time Shakespeare shoots an arrow at us, its trajectory is unthinkable and every time it hits us, our wounds are unprecedented: *sans précédent.* We are in the strange

temporality of the stroke or *coup*, where every hit is new and different and yet anticipated from the arrow's very start.

All this time we have been following the tra*je(t)*ctory of what *Politics of Friendship* calls the "arrow of teleiopoesis" (77). Just like in *Specters* and "Aphorism," the metaphor of the arrow in *Politics of Friendship* traces a text's trajectory from its original *contretemps* to the moment in which it traverses the reader. This is an "arrow whose flight would consist in a return to the bow," and in its return "will nevertheless have reached us, struck home" (32). What is thrown or shot into the unthinkable in *Politics of Friendship* is not some aphoristic fragment of a Shakespeare play, nor the asymmetrical demand of a ghost, but rather a "shudder of a sentence" from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*: "'Alas! if only you knew how soon, how very soon, things will be – different! –' ( – *Ach! Wenn ihr wußtet, wie es bald, so bald schon – anders kommt!*)'" (*Politics of Friendship* 31). This sentence flies like an arrow "of which it is still not known where and how far it will go," its trajectory is perhaps unprecedented like Hamlet's "the time is out of joint" (31). At stake here is what Martin McQuillan dubs "the structure of writing-for-the-future which Derrida will later call 'telepoesis" (58). It is a writing for or towards the *avenir*. At the same time, its trajectory loops backward. The *jet* of this arrow traces the strange back-looping trajectory of *téléiopoièse. Palintrope* is traced in the stereophonic first three syllables of this term: *téléio*. Corinne Scheiner notes that "*téléiopoièse* references the adjectival stem *teleio* deriving from the adjective *teleios* (complete)" (243). In *téléiopoièse,* poetry (*poesis*) and a creative act (*poeiesis*) are therefore brought to fruition, if you will. As such, *téléiopoièse* is part of those acts called performative, or rather perlocutionary; it is what "*renders* absolute, perfect, completed, accomplished, finished, that which *brings* to an end" (*Politics of Friendship* 32). For Derrida, however, the telei*opoetic* always reverberates with the teleo*poetic*; what plays into the *teleiopoesis* of this arrow is vibrating and flying in the air. Starting with its conclusion, its flight towards its aim covers an incalculable distance of both time and space.

The distance covered by the arrow of *téléiopoièse* is unthinkable, at the same time immeasurably big and small. Again, speed expands and outstrips itself:

> Infinite or nil speed, absolute economy, for the arrow [*flèche*] carries its address along and implies in advance, in its very readability, the signature [*la signature*] of the addressee. This is tantamount to saying that it withdraws from space by penetrating it. You only have to listen. It advances backwards; it outruns itself by reversing itself. It outstrips itself [*elle se gagne de vitesse*]. (32/50)

Perhaps the entire reading scene that Derrida sketches in "Aphorism Countertime" and in his other readings of Shakespeare can be summed up in this enigmatic sentence: "L'aphorisme gagne de vitesse." Like the aphorism, the arrow outstrips itself, overtakes itself and thus strips itself bare, annuls itself. It is the speed of the *rejeter* that kicks this reading scene off, that allows Derrida to read *Romeo and Juliet à contretemps* ("L'aphorisme" 134).[27]

 *Téléiopoièse* is a trajectory without fixed beginning and end, all flight and all start. As we shall see in Chapter 8, it is a resonating bodiless voice of differential tones. It is what in *Politics of Friendship* Derrida defines as a "generation by joint and simultaneous grafting of the performative and the reportive, without a body of its own" (32). It is a missive that "pass[es] through the various destinations of his readership, [is] countersigned by the reader en route, without ever coming to rest at a final address" (McQuillan 58). Following the trajectory of this arrow which shoots (itself) off "one begins," "Envoi" suggests, "no longer to understand what to come [*venir*], to come before, to come after, to foresee [*prévenir*], to come back [*revenir*] all mean" (21). The pluridirectional *jet* of the teleiopoetic arrow makes the linearity of the act of reading quiver from the very moment it leaves its quiver. "As soon as, in a second, the first stroke of a letter divides itself, and must indeed support partition in order to identify itself, there are nothing but post cards, anonymous morsels without fixed domicile, without legitimate addressee, letters open, but like crypts" (53). The out-of-jointness of time, which is nothing else than the out-of-jointness of Being and *Dasein*, radically shifts our paradigms of reading. Indeed, it makes any paradigmatic mode of act of reading both impossible and redundant. When, as J. Hillis Miller notes in *Speech Acts in Literature*, the consequences of "iterabilty," the division *ab initio* of the first *stroke* [coup] of a letter, mean both "that any utterance or writing can function in

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[27] It all resonates in this "*re-*" to which I shall return in Chapter 8.

the radical absence of the sender" and that "any utterance or writing must be able to function in the radical absence of any particular receiver," then traditional reading paradigms no longer apply (91). How can we apply traditional interpretative methods when, as Kamuf notes, the text "begins with this response that gives or gives *back* reason to the other" (*Book of Addresses* 6)? The teleiopoetic presence of the other at the *start* of a text, pivotal to Derrida's view of the act of reading, must supplant a general interpretative paradigm with a responsiveness to the singularity of the other.

The teleiopoetic trajectory of the act of reading (which is also the act of writing) annuls time and space, but at the same time it *gives* time and space. *Téléiopoièse* is what "makes the arrivants come," that which "allows them to come" precisely by "withdrawing" (*Politics* 42-3). Its arrow "withdraws from space by penetrating it" (32). When Shakespeare's arrows are pointed at us and eventually shot at us, they do not so much wound us as create space for us and our signature so that we may wound it in turn. When Derrida speaks of the withdrawing-cum-penetrating of the arrow, he is also depicting the paradox of signature as a space for the other's signature. Speaking of Nietzsche's sentence, Derrida continues: "for what is indeed in question here is a poetics of distance at one remove, and of an absolute acceleration in the spanning of space by the very structure of the sentence (it begins at the end, it is initiated with the signature of the other)" (32). The phrase "*elle se gagne de vitesse*," which I discussed above, in this sense not only refers to *la flèche,* but also to *la signature* of the addressee, which is teleiopoetically implied from the start. In "Signature, Event, Context," Derrida speaks of the signature in similar terms to the *flèche*. It, too, has a "breaking force [*force de rupture*]" which "breaks its [immediate] context" (9). It too is "tied to the spacing [*espacement*] that constitutes the written sign" (9). This spacing – or what in Chapter 7 we will come to understand as the caesura or moment of silence – is the means by which a poem may constitute its own poetics.

It is through this withdrawing signature that plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, to put it in the words of "A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text," "*become, invent, institute, offer* for reading in an exemplary way, signing it, both sealing and unsealing it, the possibility of this poem" (180). The poem's, understood here as the *poematic*, "both unique and repeatable moment of a signature" thus "opens the verbal body onto something other

than itself," opens and carries it "beyond itself, towards the other or towards the world" (180). "Address takes place," and address makes space (for the other), Derrida writes in "Shibboleth" (33). Disrupting our idea of the linear unfolding of the time of reading, the Derridean act of reading "will have taken some time" (*Politics* 32). At the same time as covering the incalculable distance between the text and reader it implies from the very start the text which is belatedly projected back from the reader. The incalculable speed of this reading, as I try to show in Chapter 8, "will have changed the order of the world even before we are able to awake to the realisation that, in sum, nothing will have been said, nothing that will not already have been blindly endorsed in advance" (32).

The arrow is in mid-air. Although we do not yet know what frequencies are "quivering here," from what quiver these "vibrations of a shaft of writing" come from, we know that in its flight, this arrow "promises and calls for a reading, a preponderance to come of the interpretative decision" (31). In the temporal limbo opened by Nietzsche, Shakespeare and other literary *génies*, in that "time of a time that does not belong to time," in other words a time which is "out of joint," the arrow, like the spectre, comes back from the future; although it "begins at the end," it "carries its address along and implies in advance, in its very readability, the signature of the addressee" (77, 32). As I will go on to argue in the next section, the singular response that this address demands must also be singular, perhaps like love's wound. "O Romeo, Romeo..." (2.2.33). Just like the teleiopoetic arrow, the "address of love" is, Kamuf argues, "never issued by a pre-existent subject in the direction of an object, its object, or destination" ("Deconstruction and Love" 155). In the words of "Envois": "You, my love, is it you I thereby name, is it to you that I address myself?" (8). "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptis'd" (2.2.50).

## 5.3 How to Love Shakespeare

If there is deconstruction, it is a kind of obsessive love, what in *The Ear of the Other* is called a "loving jealousy" (87). "Aphorism Countertime" is an extraordinary meditation

on love, on the *and* between Romeo *and* Juliet. We must, however, listen for the silent slippage between Romeo *and* Juliet and *Romeo and Juliet*; the one always rings in the other. Derrida is not only, and perhaps not even mainly, concerned with the contretemps of Romeo and Juliet, but with the contretemps of the play. We could not love *Romeo and Juliet* if it were not for its *contretemps*. Just as "I love because the other is the other, because its time will never be mine," we can love *Romeo and Juliet* because its contretemps does something to time ("Aphorism" 420). Just as the "very presence of [the other's] love remains infinitely distant from mine," the *contretemps* of *Romeo and Juliet* "cuts into the fabric of duration" (420, 421). What he is concerned with is therefore "the double survival, the contretemps, in short the aphorism of *Romeo and Juliet*. Not of Romeo and of Juliet but of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's play of that title" (433).

"Aphorism Countertime" declares that such love as exists between Romeo *and* Juliet also exists between us *and Romeo and Juliet*. In "The Time is Out of Joint" Derrida admits that Hamlet's phrase is "cited, recited, analyzed there [in *Specters*], and also loved there like an obsession" (18). Something about Shakespeare, something that Derrida also calls "the force of the poem" makes him "quote it, again and again, by an irresistible compulsion," and makes him learn it by heart ("Un-sealing" 198).[28] In "Deconstruction and Love," Kamuf asks whether we do violence to the concept of love, "which has to be (does it not?) either interpersonal or at least a relation formed between animate, living beings" when we proclaim our love for a text, or even, as Derrida does in "The Time is Out of Joint", for a phrase (152-3). We can love *Romeo and Juliet* and Shakespeare with the passion only a "singular name," or a "signature," can ignite. When in "This Strange Institution Called Literature" Derrida is asked whether *Romeo and Juliet* "merits special attention in terms of [his] interests and goals," he concedes that its thematisation of proper names and contretemps is no doubt "exemplary" for "the effect of the same a-logical 'logic' of the singular and iterable mark," which he seeks to respond to in all of his readings of literary or philosophical texts (66). Just as Juliet loves Romeo not despite but because of his name, such survival, Derrida suggests, would not "have been possible 'without that title,' as Juliet put it" ("Aphorism" 433). To

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[28] I will return to this question of "learning by heart" in my discussion of "Che" in the next Chapter.

ventriloquise Juliet: What is a title's play? It is not premise nor end, nor any part belonging to a play. What, then, is it?

The literary work abides by the same paradoxical rules as the signature. In order to be recognizable, a signature has to have a "repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production" ("Signature" 20). The "absolute singularity of a signature-event" is precisely constituted by the "pure reproducibility of a pure event" (20). It is a spacing which not only separates the mark "from other elements of the internal contextual chain (the always open possibility of its disengagement and graft)," but also "from all forms of present reference (whether past or future in the modified form of the present that is past or to come)" (9-10). Just like a signature, a singular literary work is therefore marked by "iterability," that "logic that ties repetition to alterity" (7). Just like a signature, a literary work would not be one, if it could not survive beyond its intended or implied sender and receiver (8). *Romeo and Juliet* "subsists" because it "does not exhaust itself in the moment of its inscription," and because it "can give rise to an iteration in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it" (9). Though aphoristic, *Romeo and Juliet* resonates with the "open theatre of narratives which bear this name" ("Aphorism" 433). Derrida's reading of *Romeo and Juliet* is hence founded on the iterable structure of the text, "which both puts down roots in the unity of a context and immediately opens this non-saturable context onto a recontextualisation" ("Strange Institution" 63). The work is therefore understood in terms of this structure:

> So by *oeuvre* I mean something that remains, that is absolutely not translatable, that bears a signature (the signature is not necessarily the narcissism of the proper name or the reappropriation of something that belongs to me); in any case, something that has a place, that has a certain consistency, that is recorded, to which one can return, that can be repeated in a different context, that can be read in the future in a context where reading conditions have changed. (*A Taste for the Secret* 14)

None of the play's printing and superimprinting could be possible, Derrida suggests, without the singular Shakespearean signature of *Romeo and Juliet.* This is that "play of uniqueness and repetition" ("Strange Institution" 66), that which "giv[es] rise every time to the chance of an absolutely singular event as it does to the untranslatable idiom

of a proper name, to its fatality (the 'enemy' that I 'hate'), to the fatality of a date and of a rendezvous" ("Aphorism" 419).

Derrida's love of Shakespeare is tied to the idea that the "fatality of a date and of a rendezvous" at the heart of *Romeo and Juliet* can in turn give rise to "the chance of an absolutely singular event." Love is involved in his readings of Shakespeare, but also death. Shakespeare watches over us and the English language through *meurtrières*. A *meurtrière* is an arrow slit or a loophole. It is also a *criminelle,* a murderess. *Meurtrier* is an adjective meaning deadly, lethal. For Royle, *meurtrières* are also death traps, making Shakespeare's a "death-trap English" (*The Uncanny* 123, 124). Addressing his beloved in "Envois," the "I" indeed writes about love in terms of *meurtrières*: "Our delinquency, my love, we are the worst criminals and the first victims, I would like not to kill anyone, and everything that I send you goes through *meurtrières*" (67). The arrows Shakespeare sent through those *meurtrières* are also love letters wounding the body of English, which is also Shakespeare's body. The "stroke of some arrow" is an adequate image not only because it delineates the spacing, perhaps the *brèches,* of the Shakespearean signature, but also because it implies violence. What we are dealing with is the "violent, 'material' effect" of Shakespearean words or phrases that sign their body and the body of English, words or phrases such as *porpentine* or the "time is out of joint". "The signature is a wound, and there is no other origin for the work of art," Derrida writes in *Glas* (184).

Derrida speaks of a similarly violent transversal in *Monolingualism of the Other*. What is at stake, however, is not the love between animate things, not even with the animated work that is Shakespeare, but of the love between Derrida and the French language. Derrida speaks of how he

> ... seemed to be harpooned by French philosophy and literature, the one and the other, the one or the other: wooden or metallic darts [*flèches*], a penetrating body of enviable, formidable, and inaccessible words even when they were entering me, sentences which it was necessary to appropriate, domesticate, coax [*amadouer*], that is to say, love by setting on fire, burn ("tinder" [*amadou*] is never far always), perhaps destroy, in all events mark, transform, prune, cut, forge, graft at the fire, let come in another way, in other words, to itself in itself. (50-1)

Although the translator, Patrick Mensah, opts to speak of "metallic darts," Derrida is speaking here of those same *flèches* that Shakespeare is shooting at the English language, at Derrida, and at us.

We must not imagine that reading Shakespeare should leave either of us without a scratch. When reading Derrida, Nussbaum may have been thirsting for the blood of humanity, but for all her thirst she misses something else that happens in Derrida's acts of reading (*Love's Knowledge* 171). In line with Kamuf, I would like to challenge this notion that "too much attention to textuality leads to bloodlessness" and propose instead that what matters to Derrida is not so much the blood of humanity as the idea of the text and the act of reading as a wound ("Deconstruction and Love" 168). This passage in *Monolingualism of the Other* is perhaps the closest Derrida comes to formulating a manifesto of what he wants to do with the French language, indeed what the French language does to him; he wants to woo, wound and change the French language as it woos, wounds and changes him. *Monolingualism* plays on the partial homophony between *amadouer,* to "coax" and *amadou,* "tinder": here love is never far away from destruction. In an image that uncannily echoes Derrida's *flèches,* Jean-Luc Nancy writes of love as a blade that is plunged into us, and each time in an absolutely singular manner: "for as long as it lasts, love does not cease to come from without and to remain, not outside but this outside itself, each time singular, a blade plunged into me and that I cannot rejoin because it disjoins me" ("L'amour" 247-8). When Derrida is "harpooned" by French philosophy and literature, the "penetrating body" of "enviable, formidable, and inaccessible words," words enter his body, but they also withdraw. He is not only wounded by them, but he wounds and transforms them in turn: he "appropriates," "transforms," "forges," and cuts them, as if the very space in which they are still in the process of penetrating him had become a wordsmith's shop.

Although Derrida's relationship to his "mothertongue" is different to his relationship to (Shakespeare's) English, the echoes between his two uses of *flèches* in *Specters* and in *Monolingualism* are important. This parallel implies that a similarly passionate traversal happens when he reads Shakespeare. Loving as deconstructing is what happens each time we fall in love with Shakespeare's works (and words) all over again. Derrida "love[s] very much everything that [he] deconstructs in [his] own

manner" (*Ear* 87). For him, being hit by the *flèches* of Shakespeare, or any great literary work, is a process as loving as it is passionately violent: he needs to forge the harpooning *flèches* that penetrate him, he needs to "appropriate" and "domesticate" them, he needs to "love" them "by setting [them] on fire" (*Monolingualism* 50). It is this violent transversal that Derrida speaks about in *The Ear of the Other*; but this love, though violent, is not a "negative operation" (87). If there is a deconstructive position it would fall somewhere between the two, where we cannot "*choose* between an operation that we'll call negative or nihilist, an operation that would set about furiously dismantling systems, and the other operation" (87). Loving a text means to allow oneself to be traversed, to create space, but it also means doing something with this *flèche*, burning it with the fire of one's wound and forging something else from it.

Love's arrow wounds every time as if it were the first time and each arrow is always "sans précédent" (*Spectres* 42). As mentioned above, the loving arrow of reading does something to time. In *The Ear of the Other*, Derrida claims that all the texts that he loves are "texts whose future ... will not be exhausting for a long time" (87). Their "signature is not yet finished – that is the destiny of signatures" (87). Whilst, Derrida argues in "Signature, Event, Context," "the signature also marks and retains his {the signers} having-been present in a past now or present [*maintenant*]," at the same time it posits that this now is also a "future now or present [*maintenant*]" (20). Here, just like at the beginning of *Specters*, Derrida is playing on the flexible duration of the present that the French word *maintenant* traces. It means (1) "now", but it can also mean (2) "by now" or (3) "from now on" (*French Collins Robert Dictionary*).[29] Although Derrida calls it "the transcendental form of presentness [*maintenance*]," what is at issue here is not an idea of transcendence, but rather the "singular present punctuality" pinpointed by the signature and the singular literary oeuvre ("Signature" 20). The text's signature opens up toward the other because its singularity demands a singular response, an act of reading that is as much counter time as steeped in its singular datedness.

Every time Shakespeare's arrow is pointed at us, we must, according to Derrida, respond to its singularity. In *The Singularity of Literature*, Derek Attridge argues that

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[29] See Michael Naas' *Derrida From Now On*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, for an illuminating account of what it means to read Derrida in this *maintenant*.

the singularity of a piece of literature, like the singularity of a loved one, is not to be confused with its uniqueness or its idiosyncrasy. Singularity is not "what Benjamin called the 'aura' of the specific, unique art-object"; it is not even limited to one single piece of art, but can "also inhere in a group of works or an entire *oeuvre*" (64). Singularity is rather to be understood as the "situatedness and datedness ... of the act of writing" (110). For Derrida the singularity of the literary text is also, as he suggests in "Shibboleth", its solitude: "the only one: singularity, solitude, the secret of encounter" (5). At stake here is what, in *A Taste for the Secret*, is called "this singularity of the untimely, of non-self-contemporaneity"(13). As de Vries argues, "the date is not an indivisible *hic et nunc,* an atomic point in time and space. From its very inception, the date will always already have broken the silence of a pure singularity" ("Shibboleth Effect" 186). For Derrida, the work's singularity, its "signature," however paradoxically, does not limit it to "reside in the historical past", but "bridges, in a way that is not easy to explain, past and present" (*Politics* 64). The date is not silent "so that its utterance may *resonate* and clamour beyond a singularity that might otherwise remain undecipherable, mute, and immured in its date – in the unrepeatable" ("Shibboleth" 8-9, my emphasis). The text's singularity is dated, it cuts into the fabric of time and it demands that our response to it be similarly wounded by our singular act of reading.

The wound of reading says: "It only happens to me" ("Envois" 135; "Circumfession" 305). No matter how "ahistorical" a reading of Derrida's may appear, it is always steeped in time, in the coincidentals of reading. In "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Derrida points out that "spontaneously" he "would never have had the audacity to write on *Romeo and Juliet* or anything at all of Shakespeare's" (62-3). "Aphorism Countertime" is, rather, a specific response to a specific event. Derrida continues: "In this case, I was asked for a short, oblique text to accompany a production" (63). As such "Aphorism" is a stroke of luck: "If the actor-producer Daniel Mesguich had not put the play on at that point (but why did he?), if he hadn't been interested in what I write (but why? - this opens up another chain of causality), he wouldn't have asked anything of me and I would never have written this text" (66). Derrida "felt like signing and even dating" the singularity of his response "at a past

moment in December, that year, at Verona (as it says at the end of the text)" (65). Here then is his countersignature:

> 39. The absolute aphorism: a proper name. Without genealogy, without the least copula. End of drama. Curtain. Tableau (*The Two Lovers United in Death* by Angelo dall'Oca Bianca). Tourism, December sun in Verona ("Verona by that name is known" [V, iii, 299]). A true sun, the other ("The sun for sorrow will not show his head" [V, iii, 305]). ("Aphorism" 433)

Whilst some parts can be deciphered – for instance, his "signing and dating' the time and place in which he wrote this little text – others remain for ever beyond our reach ("This Strange Institution" 65). In "Following Derrida," Attridge suggests that we turn to the French: *tableau* in French conveys a transition from the theatre to painting in a way that "tableau" in English doesn't, being much more rooted in the world of the stage. For Attridge, "the end of *Romeo and Juliet ...* presents a tableau mirrored in a painting (to be seen, presumably by visitors to Verona)." But we can never hope to get to the bottom of Derrida's countersignature: for instance, why he refers to the painting by the Veronese painter Angelo dell'Oca, whose original title – *Ultimi istanti di Giulietta e Romeo* – refers, as if by a stroke of chance, to the *contretemps* of the theatre of double survival. Together with what Attridge calls Derrida's "irreducibly personal memory," the aphoristic and parenthetical insertions from the end of *Romeo and Juliet* remain as incisive as they are irretrievable. All we can hope to do is countersign in turn.

In succeeding in illuminating particular moments in the plays, and in shifting our focus to what the plays do to us, in other words in showing why philosophy must turn to Shakespeare, Derrida's readings of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* meet Nussbaum's second and third criteria ("Stages" 2). I have maintained that although Derrida reads *Romeo and Juliet à contretemps* he does not deny the "datedness" of Shakespeare. On the contrary, in "This Strange Institution Called Literature," Derrida asks who "demonstrates better that texts fully conditioned by their history, loaded with history, and on historical themes, offer themselves so well for reading in historical contexts very distant from their time and place of origin" (63). Indeed, for Derrida, the oeuvre's datedness, also understood as its singularity, radically reopens "the question of the structure of a text in relation to history" (63). In Derrida's reading, the Shakespearean oeuvre is teleiopoetic precisely because its datedness is a call for a similarly dated and

singular countersignature. Thus the work's "initial" temporal incision is itself *started* by our incisive act of reading which is both anticipated and anticipatory. In turning to Nussbaum's first criterion – that a philosophical reading of Shakespeare actually *do* philosophy – in the next chapter I will argue that Derrida is not only responsive to themes in Shakespeare's plays, but also, as his treatment of *Hamlet's "*porpentine" in *Specters* implies, sensitive to the body of the text's idiom. Indeed, much of the wounding of Derrida's acts of reading is played on the very body of Shakespeare's writing, at the level of syllable, sound and letter, and in ways not anticipated by Nussbaum. By following the catachrestic frequencies of this little textual animal and contrasting it with *Hamlet's* mole – which has captured philosophers' imagination for centuries – I am thus seeking to sound out how the porpentine influences Derrida's philosophical writing beyond those texts which are overtly about Shakespeare.

## 6. __Porpentine__

To understand and to hear [*entendre*] how Shakespeare keeps watch over some parts of Derrida's philosophical writings, we must pay heed to a little catachrestic animal – not the mole or the *hérisson*, but the porpentine. The porpentine epitomises, I would like to argue, the Shakespearean wounded and wounding "signature." It is what, like his cousin the *hérisson*, has the "arrows held at the ready [*toutes flèches dehors*]"; it is what wounds its own body with the teleiopoetic arrows it shoots at us ("Che" 235). Over the years, considerable philosophical importance has been attached to the figure of the mole in *Hamlet*. It has been argued that the mole represents a kind of consciousness, or at the very least the unconscious, working somewhere beneath the surface of Shakespearean language. "Shakespeare in the Ear of Hegel" in Ned Lukacher's *Primal Scenes*, for instance, as Royle notes in "Nuclear Piece," "tracks the 'mole' to a number of purportedly compatible sites: something deep in Hamlet's 'character' [205], .... something that is 'still burrowing' [209] ..., and – last but not least – 'Shakespeare' 'himself' [235]" (42). Nothing could be further from Derrida's understanding of how Shakespeare watches over the English language.

If the mole can indeed be thought of as an example of what Shakespeare's texts do, then this mole traces the "slow mole-like advance" Derrida speaks of in "Freud and the Scene of Writing" (97). This mole "moves out of sync with consciousness, erupting sporadically to break new paths, like deconstructive writing itself" (de Grazia 260). In *The Uncanny*, Royle suggests that the mole-like character of *Hamlet*'s language allows us to think beyond "conventional boundaries of characterology, scenes and acts, and imagery," to think towards a kind of "dramaturgic telepathy" (250). Such a "dramaturgic telepathy" would then also account for what Royle in *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* calls the "sort of telepathic repetition of utterance, apparent displays of telepathy or thought transmission" rife in *Hamlet* and elsewhere, which "no amount of textual scholarship or editorial argumentation can efface" (146).

What I am concerned with on this occasion, however, is not only the mole-like, even telepathic, character of Shakespeare's language, but how it is enmeshed within a

thick net of resonating and travelling sounds, letters and syllables. This resonant modality is not what, in relation to the "imp" in Poe's writing, Cavell calls "these little moles of language," nor "the implanted origins of constituents of words, leading lives of their own, staring back at us, calling upon one another, giving us away, alarming – because to note them is to see that they live in front of our eyes, within earshot, at every moment" (*Quest* 125). Although this impish animal is reminiscent of what Stewart calls "lexical dismemberment" and of the inter- and intratextual travel of sounds and syllables in which Derrida is so interested, it is for Cavell ultimately a negative figure ("World Viewed" 80). In Stewart's words, "these disruptive 'imp words' prevent us not only from saying what we mean but even from meaning it coherently" (80). For Derrida, there is not only no such coherent and self-present meaning to disrupt, as I will argue in more detail in the Second Interlude, but indeed the imbrication of Shakespeare's texts and Derrida's philosophical writing is made possible by the impish travel of sounds, *lettres* and *syllabes*. The figures of the imp, the mole and the porpentine therefore already allow us to trace a significant difference between Cavell and Derrida's philosophical uses of Shakespeare, based on the former's diagnosis of constant presentness and the latter's sensitivity to the essential dispersal of words – the flight of the teleiopoetic arrow – that disperses its very possibility.

Hegel, Marx and Derrida are not the only philosophers interested in *Hamlet's* mole. Jacques Lacan and Sigmund Freud have used it respectively to illustrate Hamlet's "delay," the "trajectory of [male] desire," or the chthonic realm of the unconscious (de Grazia 261, 260). According to Ruth Stevenson, for all these philosophers the mole thus becomes a "cultural emblem, part of a progressive symbolism contributing to a historical allegory whose meaning and function reside outside the verbal patterning of the play" (438). She goes on to contrast this philosophical use of the mole with the sheer linguistic force the mole illustrates and exudes. For her, the mole comes to represent how different lexical or sound patterns (resonating for instance between "mice," "motes," "moles," and "malecho") "stir and stretch out to other words that acquire metaphoric power and momentum" (438). I disagree with Stevenson's dichotomy between the linguistic force of *Hamlet*, and more precisely of the mole, and its philosophical and cultural use. Instead, I would like to propose the "porpentine" as

an alternative to the mole, and argue that this Shakespearean *hérisson* allows us to see how it is precisely the "linguistic" *force* of Shakespeare's writing that opens up philosophical thinking space. By on the one hand considering the parenthetical supplementation of the "porpentine" to the French translation of *Hamlet* Derrida uses, and on the other hand by understanding the "porpentine" as a Shakespearean version of Derrida's *hérisson*, this chapter will propose that, for Derrida, it is precisely the catachresis of the Shakespearean *lettre* that allows him to think *and* translate through Shakespeare as he does. But before we can turn to the porpentine, we must take into account the progress of *Hamlet's* mole in Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire,* since it is his performative translation of Shakespeare that frames the way, to put it in Cixous' words, "Derrida *loves* in French Shakespeare's English" ("Ghosting" 3-4, my emphasis).

6.1 Marx & Mole

"Oh, Marx's love for Shakespeare!" (*Specters* 10). In "Recollections of Mohr," Eleanor Marx writes that Shakespeare was the Bible of the Marx household, "seldom out of hands or mouths" (Baxandall, Morawski 147). Shakespeare was also often used in Marx's philosophical writings. His most famous citation of Shakespeare is undoubtedly his use of *Timon of Athens* in "The Power of Money" from the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* of 1844, as well as in *The German Ideology.* For Derrida, Timon's imprecation "against prostitution – prostitution on the face of gold and the prostitution of gold itself" shows "the genius of Shakespeare will have understood this phantomalization of property centuries ago and said it better than anyone" (*Specters* 52, 51). In this single "poetic flash," with "one blow going faster and farther than our little bourgeois colleagues in economic theory" (51-2). At stake once more is the *coup de quelque flèche* through which Shakespeare will, it seems, not only have watched over the English language, but also German, and through which he will have anticipated Marx's critique of property.

Marx knew about Shakespeare's "poetic flash" and he also harnessed it in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon." "The Eighteenth Brumaire" is widely considered to be Marx's "most brilliant political pamphlet" and is concerned with two things primarily: to offer a rereading of recent French history through a satirical and critical lens, and to separate the wheat from the chaff, the good aspects of the revolution from the ones to be avoided (329). What Marx learns from Napoleon III's rehashing of the French revolution is firstly that repetition is always farcical: "Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce" (327). His second concern is to show that, as Derrida aptly puts it, it is "the condition of inheritance" that "men make their *own* history" (*Specters* 134). I quote from "The Eighteenth Brumaire":

> The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury the dead. There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase. (331)

While Marx brushes "the poetry of the past" to one side, the feet of his argument are firmly placed on its ground. Here the phrase haunts the content. "Let the dead bury the dead" is of course a citation from the gospel of St. Luke: "let the dead bury their own dead" (9.2). The poetry of the past cannot quite be exorcised. In *Specters*, Derrida writes: "And the borrowing *speaks*: borrowed language, borrowed names, says Marx" (136). It is just now, as Marx is slowly enveloping himself in the poetry of the past, that *Hamlet*'s spectre makes an appearance and speaks:

> But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. By 2 December 1851, it had completed one half of its preparatory work; it is now completing the other half. First it perfected the parliamentary power, in order to be able to overthrow it. Now that it has attained this, it perfects the executive power, reduces it to its purest expression, isolates it, sets it up against itself as the sole target, in order to concentrate all its forces of destruction against it. And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: Well grubbed, old mole! (345).

As through a peephole or *meurtrière*, we are suddenly transported to Elsinore and to *Hamlet's* Cellarage Scene.[30] As Hamlet feverishly shifts his ground, the ghost shape-shifts: it is a "boy" (1.5.150), a "fellow in the cellarage" (1.5.151), a "worthy pioner" (1.5.162), and finally an "old mole" (1.5.161). Whilst the reference to the cellarage places Hamlet and his ghost firmly in the wooden reality of the early modern stage, with the reference to the mole and the pioner (a soldier who digs and lays mines), the scene becomes earthier (Thompson, Taylor 225). We are closer to the gravediggers that await us later in the play, closer to St. Luke's image of dead burying their own dead.

Garber has eloquently written on the use of quotation, especially of Shakespeare, in popular culture: "quotations, especially disembodied quotations, can serve an educative function, providing (or counterfeiting) wisdom. Detached from their contexts they seem not only 'true' but iconic, monumental" (*Quotation Marks* 19). Do philosophical quotations of Shakespeare fall prey to the same monumentalising desires? Both of Marx's references to *Hamlet's* mole and *Timon of Athens* illustrate a philosophical point: whilst Timon's speech illustrates the corrosive power of money, the mole epitomises revolution. It is what pushes "beyond the advances of 1848," is able to push away through the "muck of ages" (de Grazia 252). The repercussions of his quotation of Hamlet's mole in *The Eighteenth Brumaire,* however, explode the merely illustrative function Marx's reference to Timon seems to have. Marx's translation of the mole is not, to put it in Moi's words, the projection of "a pre-existing theory or philosophy" ("Adventures" 18). Instead, it appears to fulfil at least one of Nussbaum's criteria in that it actually does philosophy ("Stages" 2). Here, however, philosophy is practiced in a way that is not accounted for in Nussbaum's criteria, namely through translation.

*Hamlet*'s mole resurfaces, perhaps surprisingly, in another German philosophical text. In Hegel's *History of Philosophy* this mole, as de Grazia argues, represents the "spirit advancing dialectically through historical time toward the freedom of full consciousness … like a mole tunnelling through the earth toward open light" (251). In

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[30] For a more in-depth reading of the Cellarage Scene and how this scene of "acousmatics" plays into Derrida's inheritance of Marx, see Chapter 8.

Hegel's own words: "Spirit ... is inwardly working ever forward (as when Hamlet says of the ghost of his father, 'Well said, old mole! canst work i' the ground so fast?'), until grown strong in itself it bursts asunder the crust of earth which divided it from the sun ... so that the earth crumbles away" (547). Before Marx used Shakespeare's mole to illustrate the steadily growing power of the proletarian revolution, Hegel had used the mole to make a quite different point. Marx's German rendition of Shakespeare's English differs both from Hegel's and from Schlegel's then current translation. There the mole is strangely silenced –"*Brav, alter Maulwurf! Wühlst so hurtig fort*" – thus leaving room, Martin Harries suggests, for the varieties of action imagined by Hegel and Marx: working and burrowing. Harries points out that Hegel translates "Well said, old mole" as *"Brav gearbeitet, wackerer Maulwurf,"* whilst Marx quotes Hamlet as saying *"Brav gewühlt, alter Maulwurf!"* (86). Marx's does not use Schlegel's current translation – *"Brav, alter Maulwurf! Wühlst so hurtig fort?"* (80). Instead he changes it: "his slight alteration makes a past principle (*'gewühlt'*) of Schlegel's present tense verb (*'Wühlst'*), and moves it from the beginning of the second phrase of Schlegel's line to the second position in the first phrase" (86). Marx's linguistic subversion of Schlegel, however, is also a subversion of Hegel. Harries continues:

> The mole's emergence, only potential in Hegel, is fulfilled in Marx. Marx's alteration of the present tense in Schlegel's translation into his own past participle is then, in miniature, a way of rehearsing his conception of his own subversive work, his "Wühlerei," as at once the completion and the overturning of Hegel's work. (86)

Marx's "well grubbed, old mole" is not only a quotation of Shakespeare, but also a quotation of Hegel, and one that contains a tightly packed parcel of subversive gestures. For de Grazia, the mole not only illustrates the burrowing progress of the proletarian revolution but textually subverts a Hegelian brand of idealism in favour of Marxist materialism (252). For Marx, Shakespeare's text is not merely an illustration of a distinct or separate philosophical point; rather, one part of the philosophical argument is made through a performative translation of Shakespeare.

Like Marx, Derrida's thinking through Shakespeare is dictated by translation. There is, however, a significant difference between the way Derrida and Marx translate and think

through Shakespeare. In Marx's performative translation, to use the powerful image suggested in *"What is a 'Relevant' Translation,"* the passion of translation comes to lick with a flame his and Hegel's German, and leaves the idiomatic body of Shakespeare's English intact (175). In contrast, Derrida can only *love* and read a text in the manner outlined in the previous chapter. Put in terms of the twinned image of *Monolingualism,* in Derrida's act of reading and translating, Shakespeare's "penetrating body of enviable, formidable, and inaccessible words" are "appropriat[ed], domesticat[ed], coax[ed] [*amadouer*], that is to say, lov[ed] by setting on fire" (50). Turning to *Specters,* a text in which Derrida countersigns Marx by countersigning *Hamlet,* a parenthetical insertion of a very Shakespearean *hérisson* – the porpentine – will helps us think about precisely how Derrida does this.

## 6.2 A Shakespearean *hérisson*

Hamlet's strange reference to the mole is also noted by Derrida. After reaffirming his own inheritance of Marx's radical critique, Derrida inserts the first seven lines of Yves Bonnefoy's French translation of the Ghost's speech ("I am thy Father's Spirit") to Hamlet, and concludes:

> Every *revenant* seems here to come from and return to *the earth*, to come from it as from a buried clandestinity (humus and mold, tomb and subterranean prison), to return to it as to the lowest, toward the humble, humid, humiliated. We must pass by here, we too, we must pass over in silence, as low as possible to the earth, the return of an animal: not the figure of the old mole ("Well said, old Mole"), nor of a certain hedgehog, but more precisely of a "fretfull Porpentine" that the spirit of the Father is getting ready to conjure away by removing an "eternal blazon" from "ears of flesh and blood". (*Specters* 116–17)

De Grazia argues that Derrida substitutes the "porcupine for the mole," because the old mole "had reached the end of the teleological line" (266). For here the "porcupine exists in a post-molean, post-teleological era," and stands for Derrida's messianic promise (265, 266). De Grazia here incorrectly refers to a porcupine. What is unfortunately lost in the English translation is that Derrida opens one of these peepholes, not only when he quotes Hamlet, but also later when he shifts the attention away from the mole, via the *hérisson,* not to the porcupine but rather to the porpentine:

> Il nous faut ici passer, nous aussi, passer sous silence, au plus près de la terre, le retour d'un animal: non pas la figure de la vieille taupe ("*Well said, old Mole*"), ni d'un certain hérisson, mais plus précisément d'un "inquiet porc-épic" (*fretfull Porpentine*) que l'esprit de Père alors s'apprête à conjurer, en soustrayant un "éternel blason" aux "oreilles de chair et de sang" (*ibid*.). (*Spectres* 154).

As Royle notes in *The Uncanny*, the "allusion to the mole" is "subsumed or encrypted, as it were, within an observation about that 'fretful porpentine' (1.5.20) to which the Ghost of Hamlet's father refers" (245). Why does Derrida supplement Yves Bonnefoy's *porc-épic* but not the "*éternel blason*" or the "*oreilles de chair et de sang*"? Is he pointing out the untranslatability of this Shakespearean word, "porpentine," or is he remarking on the specificity of the phrase in Shakespeare's idiom? Perhaps a bit of both. But there is more happening in this "taupological ellipsis" than Royle suggests: the allusion to the mole is subsumed or encrypted within an observation about that "fretful porpentine," but not without first mentioning and eliminating, or mentioning while eliminating, a certain poematic hedgehog or *hérisson* (*The Uncanny* 254). We must stay with Derrida's strange shift from the mole – via the *hérisson* – to the porpentine in order to grasp the different model for imbrication between Shakespeare and literature that Derrida is proposing in *Specters* and elsewhere.

We might almost not have heard this porpentine. The Ghost is indeed conjuring *away* this porpentine by removing his narration from "ears of flesh and blood" (*Specters* 117). Shakespeare's porpentine is almost silent, almost heard, almost listening and almost deaf. Wedged between two lunulae, the porpentine also remains silent, yet strangely eloquent, in Derrida's text. Here it is only a parenthetical afterthought to the *porc-épic*, which itself is an extension, say a variation, of the *hérisson*, which, like the mole, is named and immediately silenced. The *hérisson,* Derrida implies, only has a supporting role: it has already taken centre stage in "Che cos'è la poesia," where it helps him think about poetry. Derrida also dwelt on this little poematic animal in an interview with Maurizio Ferraris, "*Istrice 2: Ich Bünn All Hier*." Although the *hérisson* is not juxtaposed with the mole, porpentine or *porc-épic* here, as it is in *Specters*, but with its German cousin the *Igel*, the differentiations and distinctions are also applied by Derrida to our porpentine.

The *hérisson*, Derrida stresses, is not related to Schlegel's prickly image of the artwork. In his *Athenaeums Fragmente*, Schlegel writes that "a fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine" or *"Igel"* (189). Derrida is suspicious of this idea of the artwork as complete in itself as a porcupine, because in its fragmentary wholeness this *Igel* always assumes a greater whole, an origin and a truth. Unlike Schlegel's *Igel,* the *hérisson* is not part of a different whole or truth, but is only idiomatic of itself. Derrida also makes it clear that his *hérisson* is not related to the *Igel* that briefly surfaces in Heidegger's reading of Grimm's tale "The Hedgehog and the Hare" in "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics" in *Identity and Difference* (*"Istrice" 303)*. Grimm's tale is a version of the story of the tortoise and the hare. This time, however, the hedgehog, to be sure of victory, sends his female mate to the finishing line. From there she is already in a position to turn around to the sprinting and surprised hare and declare triumphantly: "I have already been here." In Heidegger's reading, the ubiquity trick of Mr. and Mrs. Hedgehog speaks of *Dasein*'s ability to recollect its *da* and *fort* to a unity and presence, or, as Derrida puts it: "The *Da* or the *Fort-Da* of the *Dasein* would belong to this logic of destination that permits one to say, everywhere and always, 'I have always already arrived at the destination'" (304). Yet, the mole's *ubiquitas* is not as easily collectable into a *hic*. The Grimms' *Igel*, indeed, has something of *Hamlet*'s mole about it: as the "old mole," it can be *"hic et ubique."* Heidegger's mistake, Derrida continues, lies precisely in this desire to collect Mr. and Mrs. *Igels' fort da*, a desire that is utterly foreign to the humble little *hérisson.* To answer the question "What is poetry?" posed to him by the Italian journal *Poesia* in November 1988, Derrida chose the figure of the *hérisson* precisely in order to distance poetry from Heidegger's conception of *Dichtung* as a "setting-into-work of truth" (304). One of Derrida's reasons for speaking of poetry through the figure of the *hérisson* is precisely "to remove what I am calling the poem (or the *poiemata*) from the merry-go-round or circus that brings them back in a circular fashion to *poiein*, to their poetic source, to the act or to the experience of their setting-to-work in poetry or poetics" (304). As "poematics," and not as "poetics," the *hérisson* remains profoundly alien to the setting-to-work of truth: while it is messianic, even eschatological, it is also profoundly a-teleological (303). It is, perhaps, teleiopoetic.

Derrida's *hérisson* is neither Schlegel's artwork, nor Heidegger's *Dichtung,* and it is certainly not an animal.[31] Referring to Marx's three voices, as heard by Blanchot, Derrida asks in *Specters*: "How is one to receive, how is one to understand a speech, how is one to inherit it when it does not let itself be translated from itself into itself?" (42). We might ask the same about this Shakespearean shape-shifter, the porpentine, which is

> ... indissolubly linked to the chance of language and of signifiers that play the role of temporary proper name (first *istrice* and then its fragile translation into *hérisson*), come into being via a letter, this "catachrestic" *hérisson* is barely a name, it does not bare its name, it plays with syllables, but in any case it is neither a concept nor a thing. (*"Istrice"* 303)

This "animal" is, Derrida admits, "barely a hedgehog, strictly speaking" (304). The word *hérisson* is indeed soon substituted with the word letter or *lettre* in French (*"Istrice"* F 321): "I would rather not re-semanticise this letter. It must remain of little meaning. Without secret but sealed. It is also better not to stuff polysemic vitamins down the throat of a humble little mammal" (*"Istrice"* 311). Everything rests, I believe, on Derrida's word choice here. In contrast to *mot, lettre* does not merely indicate "word," but also the sounds, measure, flow, and rhythm of *parole*, speech, that cannot be linked to only one signification. In view of Derrida's persistent interest in human and non-human animals, this reluctance to speak of the *hérisson* in terms of animality must seem peculiar, especially since what is at stake is, in Derrida's own words, "the return of an animal" or, as Royle paraphrases, "the 'massively unavoidable' question of animals" (*Specters* 117; *Uncanny* 245). Perhaps a discussion too centred on the figure of an animal, even if it is only a figure for something else, would be too vulnerable to the siren call of Being or Present that this very animal-figure seeks to uproot. Giving the figure of the *hérisson* too much weight, conceding it an importance in itself, would perhaps defy the very reason Derrida chooses to talk about poetry in terms of this humble mammal in the first place. As Derrida puts it in *"Istrice,"* his *hérisson* "can barely say '*Ich*' and certainly not '*bünn,*' still less '*hier*' and '*da*'" (*"Istrice"* 304).

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[31] This word surfaces only four times in Shakespeare's works and in none of these instances does it actually denote the animal. It appears as a brothel's name in *The Comedy of Errors*. In York's speech in *King Henry IV Part 2*, it emerges as a simile: one man, York claims, fought so long in battle "till that his thighs with darts / Were almost like a sharp-quilled porpentine" (3.1.361–2). The porpentine also resurfaces in *Troilus and Cressida*. When addressing Thersites, Ajax exclaims "Do not, porpentine, do not. My fingers itch" (2.1.25).

Derrida's *hérisson* consequently does not gather itself up into the presence implied by the fragment or the "always already there" of *Dasein*. Like Hamlet's mole, it continuously shifts its ground, it is always *hic et ubique*, and we, like Hamlet, can barely keep up with it.

The ground on which the *hérisson* constantly shifts is not only ontological, but also linguistic. Due to the strange trans-linguistic publication history of this hedgehog of a text, the French word *hérisson* is simultaneously the original to be translated and the translation of an "original." *Poesia* originally published Derrida's French response to the question "Che cos'è la poesia?", along with Ferraris' Italian translation, in November 1988. Before being collected in Elisabeth Weber's *Points de Suspension* in 1992, Derrida's response was published in the French journal *Po&sie* in the autumn of 1989. Although in both these latter cases only the "original" French is given, the Italian title remains, and with it the following note:

> Destinée à paraître en italien, cette "réponse"-ci s'expose au passage, parfois littéralement, dans les lettres ou les syllabes, le mot et la chose ISTRICE (prononcer ISTRRITCHÉ), ce qui aura donné, dans une correspondance française, le hérisson. ("*Istrice*" F 303)

*Hérisson* is the "correspondance française" of *istrice*, and although "Che" was first published in Italian, *istrice* is the Italian translation of *hérisson*. Here as in so many of Derrida's writings we are, to borrow Bennington's words, "from the first faced with a multiplicity of languages in a situation of reciprocal translation" ("Derridabase" 171). Let us stay a while with the different catachrestic word-guises that Derrida's humble little animal assumes in "Che", "*Istrice*" and *Specters*, be it in Derrida's original French, in Ferrari's Italian or in Kamuf's English translation. The first English translation of "Che" appears in Peggy Kamuf's Derrida reader, *Between the Blinds*, in 1991. *Hérisson* is here translated as "hedgehog." The hedgehog's name is the composite of its likely dwelling place, a hedge, and its hog-like snout. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, another English word for the hedgehog is "porcupine," which is related via Middle English *porc despyne* and the Old French *porc d'espine*, denoting a pig *(porc)* with spikes *(espine)*, to the French *porc-épic*. But *istrice* is, to complicate matters further, neither strictly speaking a correct translation of *hérisson*, nor vice versa.

According to the *Dizionario Etimologico Italiano, istrice,* coming from the Ancient Greek Ystricha (*ys* for pig and *thricha* for hair) via the Latin *hytricem,* is similar to the porcupine or *porc-épic,* although it seems to be less spiky. The Italian equivalent of porcupine would be *porcospino.* In contrast, the French word *hérisson* derives from the Latin *ericius,* which though once used to denote the hedgehog, now denotes an altogether different animal that in Italian is not called *istrice* but *riccio,* or *urchin* in English. It is important to point out that, in contrast to *porc-épic,* porcupine and *porcospino,* none of those words denoting this animal – *hérisson, istrice* or hedgehog – share an etymological root.

On the trail of the *hérisson,* we have found ourselves catachrestically criss-crossing linguistic boundaries. Derrida's insistence on the catachrestic character of the *hérisson,* his insistence on acknowledging again and again that he wrote in French but was always exposed to the Italian language, suggests that this criss-crossing of language is not an accidental but a fundamental effect of the *hérisson.* Derrida's parenthetical supplementation of Yves Bonnefoy's translation *porc-épic* with Shakespeare's porpentine also bears witness to the fact that, as the poematic hedgehog, the porpentine's catachrestic untranslatability posits an impossible injunction:

> *Promets-le: qu'elle se défigure,* trans*figure ou indétermine en son* port*, et tu* entendras *sous ce mot la rive du départ aussi bien que le référent vers lequel une translation se porte.* ('Che' 226–8, my emphasis)

> Promise it: let it be disfigured, *trans*figured or rendered indeterminate in its *port* – and in this word you will *hear* the shore of the departure as well as the referent toward which a translation is portered. (227–9, my emphasis)

Like in "Aphorism Countertime," Derrida is here playing on the verb *porter,* playing on the resonances between 'bearing a name [*porter le nom*]' and 'being in mourning [*porter le deuil*]' (418). There is no translating, no reading of Shakespeare without hearing this *port.* We will, for instance, re-encounter this *port* when, in "Injunctions of Marx," Derrida claims that like *différance,* "the time is out of joint" does not only mean "deferral" or "lateness."

> Without lateness, without delay, but without presence, it is the precipitation of an absolute singularity because differing, precisely [*justement*], and always other, binding itself necessarily to the form of the instant, in *imminence and in urgency*: even if it moves toward what remains to come, there is the *pledge*

[gage] (promise, engagement, injunction and response to the injunction, and so forth) [*même s'il se porte vers ce qui reste à venir, il y a le gage (promesse, engagement, injonction et réponse à l'injonction, etc.)*].The pledge is given here and now, even before, perhaps, a decision confirms it. It thus responds without delay to the demand of justice. (*Spectres* 37 / *Spectres* 60)

There will be no justice, no "to come," without hearing this *port.* In "Che," Derrida's translator Kamuf renders the verb *porte* with "portered" but leaves *port* untranslated and italicised. *Port* is a homophone. *Le port* (in French the t is silent), or "the port," denotes a haven or a harbour, also indicated in "the shore of departure" of translation. Deriving via the Middle and Old French from the post-classical Latin *portus*, this word also reverberates with the idea of *portare*, meaning in both Latin and Italian to bring, carry or bear. The impossible injunction of the *por(t)*pentine has to do with this *port*, this *lettre* that I cannot help but hear in its name. This impossible injunction to the translation of the poematic porpentine is therefore also inscribed in the ear. On the high sea of translation, Derrida seems to say, your compass and navigation will be your ears, with which you will listen for your shore of departure (the "original" text or word) and the shore towards which you are navigating.

When threatened with translation, the porpentine, like the *hérisson*, becomes prickly. Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor note that *porpentine* means porcupine, parenthetically adding that "*porpentine* is Shakespeare's usual form" (212). To our ears, however, there seems to be nothing usual about porpentine. The origins of the word *porpentine* are, according to the *Oxford Dictionary Of English Etymology*, obscure. Although today this word is used solely as a Shakespearean quotation, Shakespeare did not invent this word. Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, for instance, notes this version of "porcupine" in Roger Ascham's *Toxophilus* (1545). Like porcupine, the Early Modern English word porpentine derives from the Middle French *porc despyne*, borrowed from the Old French *porc espin* or *porc d'espine* (literally, pig of spines), a compound of Latin *porcus* and *spina* (Onion 697). I find myself wondering about the bi-furcated evolution of the Old French *porc-espin,* leading to two English words denoting the same thing: porcupine and porpentine. According to Skeat, there are two possible roots of this word. The earliest trace can be found in *Promptorium Parvulorum sive Clericorum Dictionarius Anglo-Latinus Princeps* (1440), which lists

"*Poork-poynt, porpoynte, perpoynt,* beste, Histrix". The second trace can be found in Palsgrave's *Lesclaircissement de la Langue Francoyse* (1530), which links "*Porkepyn*, a beest" to "*porc espin.*" The last trace is to be found in Huloet's *Abecedarium Anglo-Latinum* (1552) which defines something called "*Porpyn"* as a "beaste, havinge prickes on his backe." Having listed these etymological traces, Skeat concludes that "the animal had two very similar names, (1) '*porkepyn*, shortly *porpin*, easily lengthened to *porpint* by the usual excrescent *t* after *n*, and finally altered to *porpentine* as a by-form of *porkepyn*'; and (2) *pork-point, porpoint*; the latter of which forms would also readily yield *porpentine.*" How either *porkepyn* or *pork-point* or *porpoint* could have "readily" yielded porpentine, how this quintessentially English version of a French *porc-épic* shuffled vowels and syllables, shed a *c,* acquired a *t* and the suffix *-ine* remains quite enigmatic. Perhaps it was a mere slip of the tongue or swallowing of the ear that turned the spiky animal into a port-*épic*, something that bears spikes only to immediately add the suffix *-ine,* denoting again the bearing of a particular characteristic. Thus the porcupine has become the porpentine; the animal has become a name that does nothing but name, a pure signifier that defies translation.

J. Hillis Miller has spoken of the hedgehog's catachresis as "what is idiomatic about each literary work" (*On Literature* 34). The idiomatic is, in other words, defined as the impossibility of the idiomatic or rather the acceptance that the idiomatic consists merely of "the coincidence of its meaning and the materiality of its letters" (34). If in *Specters* Derrida prefers to speak of the porpentine rather than of a certain *hérisson,* it is because this peculiar and quintessentially English word porpentine transposes what Derrida has said about the *hérisson* into the materiality of Shakespeare's idiom. It is almost as if through the parenthetical supplementation "*porc-épic* ('fretfull Porpentine')," Derrida's encounter with the *hérisson*'s catachrestic nature was transposed to his reading of Shakespeare, his irreducible, untranslatable and haunting signature. From now on we can call the Shakespearean poem porpentine:

> You will call poem from now on a certain passion of the singular mark, the signature that repeats its dispersion, each time beyond the *logos*, a-human, barely domestic, not reappropriable into the family of the subject: a converted animal, rolled up in a ball, turned toward the other and toward itself, in sum, a thing – modest, discreet, close to the earth, the humility that you surname [*l'humilité que tu surnommes*], thus transporting yourself in the name beyond a

name, a catachrestic *hérisson*, its arrows held at the ready [*toutes flèches dehors*], when this ageless blind thing hears but does not see death coming. ("Che" 235)

In "Che," we suddenly find ourselves in the vicinity of *Hamlet* and *Specters* – back to the humus, to the mole and to the revenant. Only here it is not Shakespeare that shoots arrows, but the *hérisson*. Or perhaps it is Shakespeare after all, only in the guise of the *hérisson* or porpentine. Like the *hérisson'*s, the porpentine's poetry is a-human, it is also not an animal, nor enveloped in the *logos*. It explodes into *hic et ubique* and transports us in the name beyond a name, the pure catachresis of *port*-pentine. This "demon of the heart," Derrida writes, "never gathers itself together … it would rather let itself be torn to pieces by what bears down upon it" ("Che" 235). Waiting for us in the Ghost's speech, it is a "converted animal, rolled up in a ball, turned toward the other and toward itself" (235). The *Folio* and the *First Quarto* read "fretful" rather than "fearful" (5.15). We no longer know whether the porpentine is afraid, or whether it is itself fearsome; are the quills raised in attack or in defence? Is this animal, which the Elizabethans believed to be aggressive and dangerous and which was said to "shoot its quills out like darts," about to attack or to flee (*Hamlet* 212)? In wounding the other, this autoimmune *lettre*, wounds itself.

The points of the *istrice/hérisson/*porpentine have, Kamuf writes, "been sharpened on a 'passion of the singular mark'" (*Addresses* 207). And this passion also belongs to "the signature that repeats its dispersion" ("Che" 235). As I have tried to show in the previous chapter, the singularity of the Shakespearean oeuvre depends precisely on its dispersal. As Derrida suggests in "A 'Madness' Must Watch Over Thinking," "there is singularity but ... it 'consists' in not collecting itself" (354). The *hérisson/ istrice/* porpentine has invited us to think of this disseminating effect in terms of an idiom which is never present to itself. Idiom is, as suggested in "Fidelité à plus d'un", "never proper or the proper identity of oneself [*à soi du propre*], it is already different from itself, it is only of difference" (224).[32]  The idiom to be responded to, to be countersigned is always *plus d'un,* it is more than and no more *one* language. In leaving

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[32] I am using Oisín Keohane's translation, printed in "Tongue-tied Democracy: The Bind of National Language in Tocqueville and Derrida." *Derrida Today.* 4.2(2011): 233-256. p. 252.

the Shakespearean idiom – porpentine – intact in parenthesis, Derrida gives change to what Kamuf calls "the work of translation between languages and idioms: the chance of pluralisation of another language" (*Addresses* 219). What we are dealing with is what "Shibboleth" calls "Babel within *a single* language" (28-9). When reading Shakespeare we must, therefore, following Derrida, be faithful to a language which is (no) more than one. For Cixous, "the very operation of deconstruction ... consists in speaking in more than one language within one single language, like Shakespeare" ("Ghosting" 4). Speaking, and allowing to be spoken to, in more than one language would entail the openness of the teleiopoetic trajectory in all its responsiveness to the other. It would also involve what Kamuf calls "the sense, perhaps, of a vigil and vigilance, the sense of *being on watch* for the passing of the singular other" (*Addresses* 281, my emphasis). At the same time, speaking in more than one language would also have to mean keeping watch over how this idiom finds itself in other languages. Let us therefore keep watch through one of these *meurtrières*, these loving and murderous peepholes, to see how Derrida translates Shakespeare's idiom by loving his *lettre* and by allowing it to haunt him even in texts that are not written in close proximity to Shakespeare.

## 6.3 Peepholes (*meurtrières*)

Shakespeare keeps watch over Derrida's French through *meurtrières,* or peepholes. In Kamuf's translation, there is no trace of the death trap, the murderess, of death, love and violence. "Peepholes" drowns out the passionate, bloodier facets of this word, reinforcing instead the image's visual valence. Thus, the long slit through which watchmen might shoot arrows at approaching enemies turns into the hole we might look through before opening our door to a stranger. But for everything that is lost in a good translation, something is won; in "peepholes," for instance, we may find traces of a vigilance "for the passing of the singular other" (*Addresses* 281).

In Derrida's text, we may find visual traces of these round peepholes in the parentheses that frame Derrida's insertions of Shakespeare's English. In *Specters* Shakespeare's porpentine watches over Derrida's philosophy through peepholes: "'inquiet porc-épic' (*fretfull Porpentine*)" (*Spectres* 154). At the beginning of "What is a

'Relevant' Translation?," however, the peeping is reversed. Here Derrida's French is keeping watch over Shakespeare's English. Perhaps matters are even more complicated. If, like me, you read Derrida in English first, we are peeping in on Derrida's French through Lawrence Venuti's English. Venuti, in another loop it seems, has written about the impossibilities of translating Derrida on translating Shakespeare: "*Then must the Jew be merciful* (Je ne traduis pas cette phrase de Portia dans *Le Merchand de Venise*.)" ("Relevante" 21) or "*Then must the Jew be merciful.* (I leave untranslated this sentence from Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*.)" ("Relevant" 174). For Royle, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation" shows that translating peepholes are translating loopholes (*In Memory* 3). They are a fertile ambiguity by which the translator can twist tongues; they are the phrase or word that again and again throw the translator for a loop. *Je ne traduis pas*: leaving untranslated does not mean not to translate something. It hints at the fact that, as Derrida puts it elsewhere, "the idiom is untranslatable, ultimately, even if we translate it" ("Un-Sealing" 181). Here, *je ne traduis pas* therefore has to be understood in terms of leaving the idiom, that which cannot be translated, to work. Looping peepholes show that translation never only happens between two languages. Translation – whether it be Venuti's of Derrida, or Derrida's of Shakespeare, or indeed Marx's or Hegel's – always criss-crosses between languages which are always more than one (*plus d'un*). I believe that the untranslatable Shakespearean idiom must be understood precisely in terms of such an un-collectability, precisely in terms of the porpentine's wound(ing)/(ed) *flèches.*

In all of his writing Derrida is aware of the impossible task of the translator. However, he gives his clearest description of it when, in 1998, he addresses the annual seminar of the *Assises de la Traduction Littéraire à Arles*, an organisation dedicated to promoting literary translation. Derrida's address, later to be published as "Qu'est-ce qu'une Traduction 'Relevante'?," is a crucial moment in Derrida's work on Shakespeare. This has less to do with the fact that he gives us a glimpse into how he translates him (to some extent all his texts on Shakespeare do), than with his contention that *The Merchant of Venice* tells us something about translation. In other words, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" is not only concerned with how Derrida translates Shakespeare, but also with how *The Merchant of Venice*, more particularly Shylock's

fate, illustrates the impossible task of the translator. Derrida swiftly sets the scene. We are at the court of the Duke of Venice. Shylock refuses Bassanio's offer of double the amount of the original loan and insists on his pound of flesh (4.1.84-7). Portia, disguised as Balthazar, tries a different tactic: "Then must the Jew be merciful" (4.1.178). What follows is Portia's Christian interpretation of the concept of mercy, which equates mercy with supreme power. What does our translator do with Portia's "when mercy seasons justice?" After citing it in English, Derrida "translate[s] or rather paraphrase[s] it step by step," suggesting we substitute Victor Hugo's translation of "to season" as *"tempère"* with another translation that "will not respond to the name *translation"* and that will work outside the economics of translation (191, 194)**:** "Je tradurai donc *seasons* par 'relève': *'when mercy seasons justice',* quand le pardon relève la justice (ou le droit)" ("Relevante" 42). Or as Venuti has it: "I shall therefore translate 'seasons' as 'relève': 'when mercy seasons justice', '*quand le pardon relève la justice (ou le droit)*' [when mercy elevates and interiorizes, thereby preserving and negating, justice (or the law)]" ("Relevant" 195). As Bennington observes, like the translation of Hamlet's "the time is out of joint," here "the translations are *themselves ...* out of joint" (*Interrupting* 135). And this out-of-jointness of every translation "is of course rendered even more serious when Derrida's work is translated back into English" as in this case (135). Like the porpentine, these translations (and translations of translations) "in their irreducible inadequacy can only aggravate or confirm the inaccessibility of the other language" (135). Yet Derrida's philosophical-literary practice rests on this inaccessibility of language, the fact that language will always remain irreducibly *plus d'un.*

Between translations, italics shift and peepholes (loopholes, *meurtrières*) are added. The words – to season and *relève* – consume each other in their idiomatic singularity, cutting and burning each other, like amorous murderesses. The translator has sworn his fidelity to Shakespeare, and keeps his word. *Relever*, of course, means to season. Furthermore it "effectively preserves the gustatory code and the culinary reference of *to season*, '*assaisonner'*: to *season with spice*, to spice" (195).

> It is a question of giving taste, a different taste that is blended with the first taste, now dulled, remaining the same while altering it, while changing it, while undoubtedly removing something of its native, original, idiomatic taste, but also

> while adding to it, and in the very process, *more* taste, while cultivating its natural taste, while giving it *still more of its own taste*, its own, natural flavour – this is what we call "relever" in French cooking. (195)

This gustatory or culinary resonance captures the emulsion of justice and mercy Portia is after well. The second justification for this translation is that "*relever*" effectively expresses elevation (195). Justice is not only qualified or "exalted" by mercy, mercy also "pulls and inspires justice toward highness" (195). In short, "mercy sublimates justice" (196). Derrida's will therefore have been a relevant translation if it allows the idiomatic *plus d'un* to resonate, in the sense that it will have offered the "most economic" solution, allowing the use of "a single word to translate so many other words, even languages, with their denotation and connotations" (198). A translation for Derrida, however, needs to do more. It needs to change itself and the other, it needs to season and to elevate: it needs to be "relevant."

In this cross-fertilisation of texts, Shylock's oath comes to stand for the impossible task of the translator and of the reader of Shakespeare; what it demands is an impossible fidelity, impossible because it cannot be fulfilled without some wounding, the cutting of a pound of flesh closest to the heart. Like Shylock's oath, translation demands to cut close to the heart of the idiom, but knows that this is impossible without breaking the oath. The bond of fidelity demands that the body of the word is cut open, and that it remain intact. Translation, like reading, has to engulf, love with a passion, "consume," it has to "arous[e] ... desire for the idiom," whilst still leaving the "unique body of the other" "intact" (175). The idiom signs and wounds: "is only in the body of its idiomatic singularity … where a passion for translation comes to lick it as a flame or an amorous tongue might" (175). What the *tr*anslation between "the pound of flesh and money" highlights, therefore, is precisely the "required but impractical translation between the unique literalness of a proper body and the arbitrariness of a general, monetary, or fiduciary sign" (184). Put simply, Shylock's oath reaffirms the "law that presides over translation while commanding absolute respect, without any transaction, for the word given in its original letter [*lettre*]" (185).

In "Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida," Cixous writes that "Derrida loves in French Shakespeare's English. His dream is to take Shakespeare at his English word" (4). What would this mean to take Shakespeare at his English word? It may mean to listen beyond its meaning to the way it is posed or uttered in English. This would entail "simultaneously subjecting the word, the subject, love to its condition *as a French word"* ("Ghosting" 3). Loving Shakespeare's English in French would perhaps mean transporting the Shakespearean idiom into French according to a movement in *tr.* that exceeds translation. For Cixous, Derrida indeed "declares *his passion* first to the word, *au mot* – to the 'homoword' [*au mot homo*], to the word with homonymic resources, which plays in and with itself, by itself, pivots, blinks so well that it always eludes the claws of the desire to translate, and does not let itself be clawed (back)" ("Ghosting" 3). What Cixous calls "*au mot homo*" here captures beautifully what I have been trying to think about it in terms of the catachrestic porpentine. Like the porpentine, the "homoword" resists simple translation because some of its sound always remains to haunt its translation. A "*homophonic* or *homonymic effect*," cannot be rendered by linear translation, it rather demands to be rendered "'one word *by* one word'," in other words in and by its singular idiomatic body ("Relevant" 181). In "Translating Derrida on Translation," Venuti argues that a homophonic and plurivocal reverberation can be heard in this "untranslatable" word "relevant," which sounds the same as the French "*relevante*"; thus, this word "may be French and therefore translatable into English, or English yet undergoing assimilation into French and therefore resistant to translation" (240). This Shakespearean word resists translation, because its "unity" is "questionable," because its "signifier potentially contains more than one word insofar as it produces a homophonic or homonymic effect" (240). This word, Venuti continues, "derails the translation process" because it resists a conception of language that is not plurivocal (240). As the intertextual echoes of this word 'relevant' indeed suggest, what escapes Derrida's translation and what simultaneously haunts his translations beyond Shakespeare is precisely "the acoustic form that incorporates or signifies the indivisible unity of a meaning or concept" ("Relevant" 181).

Derrida claims that the English word "relevant," which kicked off his criss-crossing translations, is a Shakespearean word (183). This is strictly speaking not true;

the word "relevant" never appears in the Shakespearean corpus, including *The Merchant of Venice*. What then makes this word Shakespearean for Derrida? For this answer and for the third justification for Derrida's "translation" we must return to Derrida's reading of Hegel:

> In 1967, to translate a crucial German word with a double meaning (*Aufheben, Aufhebung*), a word that signifies at once to suppress and to elevate, a word that Hegel says represents the speculative risk of the German language, and that the entire world had until then agreed was untranslatable – or, if you prefer, a word for which no one had agreed with anyone on a stable, satisfying translation into any language – for this word, I had proposed the noun *relève* and the verb *relever*. This allowed me to retain, joining them in a single word, the double motif of the elevation and the replacement that preserves what it denies or destroys, preserving what it causes to disappear, quite like – in a perfect example – what is called in the armed forces, in the navy, say, the relief (*relève*) of the guard. This usage is also possible in English, *to relieve*. (196)

Again, Hegel is part of this theatre of spectres. The reason why Derrida translates "to season" with "*relever*" is that he had translated Hegel's untranslatable *Aufhebung* with *relève*. "Relevant" and "to relieve" (as well as the noun "relief") derive from the Latin *relevare*, meaning "to raise again, or to alleviate." The word "relief" does appear in *The Merchant of Venice* (3.4.6). I would like to argue, however, that it is another frequency of this word which is haunting Derrida's translation of Hegel, and in turn his Hegelian translation of Shakespeare. Derrida's translation of *Aufhebung* as *relève* resonates with "what is called in the armed forces, in the navy say, the relief (*relève)* of the guard" (196).

Although Derrida is thinking about a frequency of this word in Joseph Conrad's "The Secret Sharer," like Marx he also seems to "evoke or convoke, right from the start, the first coming of the silent ghost, the apparition of the ghost that does not answer, on those ramparts of Elsinore" (*Specters* 11).[33] *Hamlet* and its thematisation of mourning, inheritance and debt is also at work in the subtext of Derrida's further elaboration of his word choice: "by elevating the signifier to its meaning or value, all the while preserving the mournful and debt-laden memory of the singular body, the first body, the unique body that the translation thus elevates, preserves, and negates [*relève*]" ("Relevant"

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[33] This must be the passage from "The Secret Sharer" he was thinking of: "My double followed my movements; our bare feet made no sound; I let him in, closed the door with care and after giving call to the second mate returned on deck to wait for my relief" (90).

199). Through this one-word peephole we are thus transported back to the beginning of *Hamlet* when one watchman asks the other: "For this relief much thanks" (1.1 6) or "Who hath relieved you?" (1.1.15). The ghosting is always reciprocal: before the French translation of Hegelian *Aufhebung* prompted a translation for Shakespeare's English, Shakespeare's English had already haunted Derrida's translation of Hegel. What Derrida's translation of Shakespeare's "to season" and *Aufhebung* with *relève* shows is that Shakespeare not only watches over the English language, but also over Marx's and Hegel's German, and even Derrida's "native" French. The peepholes of Shakespeare's catachrestic language do not only allow him to shoot *flèches* at the (English) language, but also allow language, in the form of other translators and other readers, to penetrate the body of his work.[34] Moreover, they show that this haunting can also be a function of a phonic resonance: *relève*, relief, relevant, *revenant.*

*Meurtrières* are therefore not only for looking, but also for listening. We might say that Derrida reads Shakespeare through peepholes: not only through a phrase or a word, but also through a *lettre* or *syllabe,* and with the help of his ears. When Derrida therefore says that "relevant" "carries in its body an ongoing process of translation" criss-crossing between European languages, between French, German and English in a way that does not really equal "*strictu senso* a translation,*"* he is pointing towards the actual body or sound of the word ("Relevant" 177). In "What is a 'Relevant' Translation" he writes: "Ce mot ["relevant"] n'est pas seulement *en* traduction, comme on dirait en travail ou en voyage, *traveling, travailing,* dans un labeur, un *labour* d'accouchement" ("Relevante" 24). Here Derrida's string of thoughts seems to be propelled by alliteration and homophonic similarities. *Traduction* is not only a *travail,* but since the French "ai" in *travailing* sounds like the English "e" in *traveling,*

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[34] In Derrida's hands, the effects of the catachrestic porpentine thus exceed the strict context of one discourse or one language. This is nowhere clearer than in "My Chances" where Derrida concludes his analysis of the nature of the psychoanalytic discourse by referring to the conclusion of "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood". There Freud is citing "da Vinci foreshadowing Shakespeare, or rather the son, Hamlet: 'La natura è piena d'infinite ragioni che non furono mai in isperienza,' instead of 'There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy'" (373-4). Derrida's parenthetical and enigmatic insertion of *King Lear* in that same text also merits further consideration. This typically Derridean ellipsis opens peepholes not only on to *King Lear*'s many references to nature and fortunes, and how they are enriched by all the movements in *jet* – whether these be letters or astral precipitations – but also on to *The Merchant of Venice* and thus also to Derrida's "What is a 'Relevant' Translation." For more on the relationship between chance and literature in Freud and 'My Chances,' refer to my article "Freud's Cadence: Taking Chances with Julius Caesar" *Mosaic.* 44.4 (2011): 63-78.

translation is also travel, a *voyage*. This attention to sounds is also represents the difficulty in translating Derrida. For instance, *trouvaille* is not translated with "windfall" or "lucky break," but with "treasure trove". Venuti chose this word, so he says, to render the "alliterative series" of the "consonant cluster 'tr'" (253). Another ear-led translation is Venuti's rendering of the French "travail" and "travailler" with the archaic "travail," rather than "work." A "relevant(e)" translation would therefore be *travail* of ears. What we are dealing with here is therefore not translation, but another action or actions beginning in *tr,* an action that we can also hear in *meur*tri*ères*:

> I am not sure that this transaction, even if it is the most economic possible, merits the name of *translation*, in the strict and pure sense of this word. It rather seems one of those other things in *tr.*, a transaction, transformation, travail, *travel* – and a treasure trove [*trouvaille*] (since this invention, if it also seemed to take up [*relever*] a challenge, as another saying goes, consisted only in discovering what was waiting, or in waking what was sleeping, in language). The treasure trove amounts to a travail; it puts to work the languages, first of all, without adequation or transparency, here assuming the shape of a new writing or rewriting that is performative or poetic, not only in French, where a new use of the word emerges, but also in German and English. ("Relevant" 198)

Derrida's radical rethinking of translation hinges on this idea of translation as a movement in *tr.*, a movement that inaugurates a new performative and poetic writing that transcends linguistic borders, an understanding of the poematic as an *istrice/ hérisson/*porpentine.

As in Hegel's or Marx's translation of Shakespeare, in Derrida's translation of Hegel something more than citation or translation in the usual sense occurs: something is done, something is performed. The importance of the ear and sound in Derrida's acts of reading also show how he exceeds Nussbaum's criteria. In forging its very own idiomatic and phonetic body of words from Shakespeare's Derridean translation is responsive to the materiality of the Shakespearean *lettre.* I have proposed the porpentine, this catachrestic *lettre*, to show how the untranslatable Shakespearean idiom watches over some of Derrida's texts. Although the porpentine is a strong visual image, it is introduced in response to an act of listening that is both actual and hypothetical. We encounter this porpentine in the ghost's speech. The ghost, so it tells Hamlet, is "doomed for a certain term to walk the night," until its "foul crimes" are "burnt and

purged away" in Purgatory (1.5.10–13). The ghost continues with a narration that resembles an apophasis, a narration that, in short, is more like a *in*folding than an unfolding. It is perhaps what Royle calls a "strange *occupatio* – saying without saying, marking by not marking, remaining by disappearing, the strangest folding-unfolding of all: signature or blazon in abyss" (*After Derrida* 98). Indeed, in the *First Quarto* this speech is introduced by "Nay, pity me not, but to my unfolding / Lend thy listening ear" (5.7–8).

> GHOST:        But that I am forbid
>               To tell the secrets of my prison-house
>               I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
>               Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
>               Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
>               Thy knotted and combined locks to part
>               And each particular hair to stand on end
>               Like quills upon the fearful porpentine –
>               But this eternal blazon must not be
>               To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list,
>               If thou didst ever thy dear father love –
> HAMLET:       O God!
>
> (1.5.13–24)

It is just as the Ghost envelopes the horrors of his prison house that the porpentine makes its appearance. Listen, the Ghost says, my story is not for your ears. But if ears of flesh and blood could hear my tale, you would be so terrified that your blood would freeze, your eyes would bulge and your hair would stick out *like* the quills of a porpentine. Its quills are raised in dreaded expectation of what it might *hear*. It is through this "listening," through a meddling with sound that transcends linguistic borders, that this creature *porter*s translation. When commenting on the fundamentally catachrestic nature of the *hérisson* in the first French "monolingual" publication, Derrida insists that it is always exposing itself to the letters and syllables of the word and the thing *istrice*. As Derrida's parenthetic direction on how a Frenchman would pronounce *istrice* suggests, *hérisson* is always listening and exposing itself to the sounds of ISTRRITCHÉ. In this context, the *str*-sound that Kamuf stresses in the margin of her translation is not only expressive of "the distress of the beast caught in the strictures of translation", it also echoes *i-str-ice*, the hedgehog's unavoidable catachrestic shadow ("Che" 223). This little hedgehog is, as its Shakespearean relative,

"*un seul trajet à plusieurs voies*" or "a single trek with several tracks" or voices (226, 227). Both seemingly "come into being via a letter," both seemingly "play with syllables" ("*Istrice*" 303). When the "arrows" of this little porpentine "are held at the ready", we must listen and expose ourselves to the pricks, spines or quills that it shoots at Derrida, and at us ("Che" 235).

By following the traces of the porpentine, I have tried to show that in order to understand what Shakespeare does in Derrida's texts we must *listen*. As far as I know, only three critics do this. When Royle listens to the Ghost's first speech to Hamlet, he hears how all the wounds of "e(a)r(e)" weave themselves through these passages right to "the critical injunction to 'Remember' and to the final repetitions of 'Swear'" (*After* 99). In "A New International, Or What You Will…" Sarah Wood, similarly, asks us to listen to Shakespeare's "ill-adjusted" and "lyric" English: "And what should I do in Illyria? / My bother he is in Elysium" (147). Here on the sea of Shakespeare's English, Wood is asking us to "take our bearings from the syllables of the Captain's phrase", and to become "a bit deliriously musical" (148). We are also invited to listen differently: how the letters in the names of Olivia, Viola, Malvolio "discretely read each other, fragment and reassemble each other" (148). Wood: "the interplay of the letters of their names reminds us of the emergence of a mark, the possibility of meaning that cannot be exclusively recruited in the service of a given meaning" (149). As I will argue in the next chapter, however, Kamuf's reading of *Othello* in "The Ear, Who?," suggests that when pricking our ears we should not only heed the catachrestic travel of sounds and syllables, but something beyond that, something altogether more difficult to listen to. Though the porpentine's arrows may be started by sound, the wound they leave is also "aphonic" ("Che" 233). When thinking about how Derrida sounds out Shakespeare, we must therefore also prick up our philosophical ears to the "aphonic spacing" of silent genius.

## 7. *Génie qui es tu*

Shortly after wondering about how Hamlet's "the time is out of joint" disjoints its translations, Derrida speaks of it as "a masterpiece, a work of genius, a *thing* of the spirit which precisely seems to *engineer itself* [s'ingénier]" (*Specters* 20). With the play on *génie* and *s'ingénier*, Derrida is claiming that the genius of Shakespeare has to do with the ability of Shakespeare's writing to engineer itself, to put itself to work through his words (20). Here Shakespeare's work itself and not Shakespeare the man (whoever he was) has becomes the masterwork, the genius, "the thing, the Thing that, like an elusive specter, *engineers* [s'ingénie] a habitation without proper inhabiting, call it a *haunting*, of both memory and translation" (20). The oeuvre we call Shakespeare's is animated, the words are animated, they engineer themselves, they themselves are thinking, are having ideas, are constructing. As Royle argues in *How to Read Shakespeare*, "words in Shakespeare seem to take on an autonomous life or machine-like power. They are like little search engines, meddling imps, strange creatures with wills of their own" (5). Yet unlike Cavell's imp, the porpentine's meddling with sound is not disruptive (*Quest* 125). Shakespeare's "stroke of genius" is based precisely on this meddling capacity (*Specters* 25).

Perhaps, as Derrida suggests in *Politics of Friendship*, all we have to do to grasp this "stroke of genius" – which in my ear seems to echo with the "same unprecedented stroke of some arrow" discussed in Chapter 5 – is to listen (20):

> Infinite or nil speed, absolute economy, for the arrow carries its address along and implied in advance, in its very readability, the signature of the addressee. This is tantamount to saying that it withdraws from space by penetrating it. You have only to *listen*. It advances backwards; it outruns itself by reversing itself. ("Aphorism" 32, my emphasis)

Sound is important in Derrida's acts of reading Shakespeare, but here sound is to be understood both actually and, to anticipate one of Cixous' terms, "philosophonically" (Armel 6). Like Cavell, although less markedly so, Derrida uses musical analogies to describe the effects of Shakespearean drama. "Aphorism Countertime," for instance, plays on the double meaning of *contretemps,* which, in French, can also mean "syncopation" or being "out of time" (414, 416). Romeo and

Juliet and *Romeo and Juliet* are, therefore, out of time in more than one way. No love, of either man or text, then, without syncopation, without the missing beat of a rhythm. A similarly aural vocable resonates in Derrida's affirmation that there would have been neither Romeo and Juliet's love, nor its theatre, without the "discordance" of contretemps ("L'aphorisme" 134). In French, just as in English, discordance means both difference and conflict, as well as musical discord, understood as a "lack of harmony between notes sounding together," or "a chord which is regarded as displeasing or requiring resolution by another," more specifically "any interval except unison, an octave, a perfect fifth or fourth, a major or minor third and sixth, or their octaves" (OED). Yet, this musical analogy is aiming at something very different than that which underlies Cavell's comparison of Shakespearean drama to Beethoven, and the kind of response – the act of reading/listening – it requires from the reader is very different.

Derrida's relationship to music is complex.[35] In "The Spatial Arts", an interview with Peter Brunette and David Wills, Derrida admits to his love for words, his way of making them "explode so that the nonverbal appears in the verbal," that is to say his way of using words so "that at a certain moment they no longer belong to discourse, to what regulates discourse – hence the homonyms, the fragmented words, the proper names that do not essentially belong to language" (20). Indeed, what Derrida loves about words is "their ability to escape their proper form ... letters representing the spatial visibility of the word, or as something musical or audible" (20). Whilst Derrida's "breath" is rarely "taken away" "by the beauty of pictorial or architectural works ... this does sometimes happen with music or when [he] hear[s] the spoken word or read texts – by listening to the voice, that is'"(23). What takes Derrida's breath away is thus "what works through the voice as desire [*ce qui dans le désir travaille le voix*]" (23). "Music" is, Derrida confesses, "the object of [his] strongest desire," perhaps not in spite of, but because of the fact that he does not have "any truly presentable musical culture" (21). As Marcel Cobussen remarks in his Ph.D. dissertation, "Deconstruction in Music" (2002), Derrida is concerned with "the idea that texts, either spoken or written,

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[35] For the controversies between deconstruction and musicology, see Christopher Norris "Music Theory, Analysis and Deconstruction: How They Might (Just) Get along Together." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music. 36.1* (June 2005): 37-82.

are marked by a certain (non-sonorous) tone, or better, a multitude of (non-sonorous) tones".[36] As Cobussen points out, this does not mean that he "pay[s] no attention to sonority, sound, music." As we have seen, homophones or the reverberations of *syllabes* and *lettres* are a crucial part of Derrida's acts of reading. Cobussen: "his play with words, his fascination for the materiality of words, the working of dissemination is certainly also influenced by their sounds, their audibility." Cobussen's entire project is a fascinating and important one. We must focus in particular on what he calls "a multitude of (non-sonorous) tones," which, despite its lack of actual sonority of sound, is an intrinsic part of the kind of *sonority* Derrida is interested in.

Derrida's love for words is thus related to what in "The Spatial Arts" he calls his "paralysed" desire for music; it is a desire not for music as an independent art form, but rather for something music-like that he recognises in the "nondiscursive sonority" of words (21). The porpentine – the figure through which, in the last chapter, we thought about what role Shakespeare's English plays in Derrida's French – is itself – though it opens up the questions of the role of sound in inter- and intratextual translation and reading – silent. Indeed, in *Hamlet,* the porpentine does not actually hear; rather, it trembles for fear of hearing. In Derrida's text, too, the *hérisson*/porpentine, as already noted, balances on the edge of hearing. Like *Hamlet*'s porpentine, the *hérisson* is "a silent incantation," an "aphonic wound" ("Che" 233). The *hérisson*, Derrida writes in "Che," is blind but listens for death's arrival. Death is in earshot, but these things are not for "ears of flesh and blood" to hear. Our porpentine is not listening, not yet, or not actually. Whilst in Cavell, the musical analogy between Beethoven and Shakespeare is justified by the fact that both represent constant presentness, in Derrida the musical analogy does not aim at presentness, however momentary it may be, but rather at an absence: not something that creates sound, but something that lets the other's sound resonate.

I would like to argue that, like Cavell, Derrida's concern with the aural is twofold: he is not only interested in what ears can pick up, but also in how the act of listening can figuratively represent his acts of reading. As in Cavell's work on Shakespeare, Derrida's

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[36] Cobussen's is a wholly remarkable text, not only for its content but also for its non-linear presentation: it is published online primarily as a hypertext including sound fragments.

musical or aural analogies trace the relationship between text and reader, albeit very differently from the act of reading outlined in, for example, *Disowning Knowledge*. In Derrida's readings of Shakespeare, the ear not only picks up homophonies and syllables that alloy and forge new connections and new meanings;  it also hears the spacing of the mark or trace, in other words, *différance*. Nowhere is the enmeshment of actual listening and figural listening in Derrida's readings of Shakespeare more provocatively formulated than in his definition of "frequencies," a concept that is interspersed throughout *Specters* but only defined once in relation to Marx's Dissertation: "Frequency counts. The experience, the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into *frequency*: number (more than one), insistence, rhythm (waves, cycles, and periods)", or "la fréquence compte. L'expérience, l'appréhension du fantôme s'accorde à la *fréquence*: le nombre (plus d'un), l'insistance, le rythme (des ondes, des cycles et des périodes)" (133/174). When Derrida writes that the apprehension of the ghost is tuned into frequency, he is not primarily saying that we must actually listen for the sounds the ghost makes. What is at stake with frequencies is not only hearing in the usual sense, but also the inscription of the spectre's insistences, rhythms, waves, cycles, periods and radical fissuring of Being on the ear. Uniting both actual and figurative valences of the ways in which Derrida listens to Shakespeare, the multifaceted notion of frequencies, which pulls together the many concerns addressed in Chapter 5 and 6, allows us on the one hand to formulate a comprehensive hypothesis for how Shakespeare works in Derrida's philosophical writing. On the other hand, it also illustrates how Derrida's acts of reading are also acts of (philosophical) listening. I thus propose to add "frequencies" to the chain of Derridean "non-synonymous substitutions," as a term through which we will be able to think about the interface between literature and philosophy in Derrida's writing by way of the ear ("Différance" 12). This plurivocal term – *fréquence* – will therefore allow us to prick up our ears to both the ghost's voice in *Hamlet,* as well as to how the relationship between literature and philosophy is inscribed in the ear.

7.1 Listening to *Hamlet's* Ghost

Listening has been my subject throughout. In Derrida's writing on Shakespeare and others, we are often asked to sharpen our philosophical ears by the onset of penumbra or darkness. Let us listen, for example, into the dark of the balcony scene in "Aphorism Countertime." Juliet is here speaking "in the night, and there is nothing to assure her that she is addressing Romeo himself, present in person" (423). Everything revolves around the setting of this reading scene – in the dark and in the night. Derrida writes:

> 20. Night. Everything that happens at night, for Romeo and Juliet, is decided rather in the penumbra, between night and day. The indecision between Romeo and the bearer of this name, between "Romeo," the name of Romeo and Romeo himself. Theater, we say, is visibility, the stage [*la scène*]. This drama belongs to the night because it stages what is not seen, the name; it stages what one calls because one cannot see or because one is not certain of seeing what one calls. Theater of the name, theater of the night. The name calls beyond presence, phenomenon, light, beyond the day, beyond the theatre. It keeps – whence the mourning and survival – what is no longer present, the invisible: what from now on will no longer see the light of day. (425)

Listen closely to what Derrida is saying. The night, and Romeo's subsequent stepping into the "penumbra" where Juliet can see him, illustrates the "indecision between Romeo and the bearer of this name." Derrida is here, of course, referring to the scene's context, but Juliet's location in the dark on the balcony, addressing these words perhaps to nobody but the darkness, is also representative of what, for Derrida, happens whenever we call somebody, perhaps a loved one, by their name, which he bears [*porte*] despite himself: "Roméo et Juliette portent ces noms. Ils les portent, les supportent même s'ils ne veulent pas les assumer" ("L'aphorisme" 136). Here the dark and the night illustrate and illuminate the "the lack of distinction between the name and the bearer of the name" ("Aphorism" 425). For the moment, Derrida notes, Romeo, who is lingering somewhere in the darkness, in the shadow, is not sure whether he should "take her at her word," which would mean "committing himself to disowning his name," and decides, for the time being "to wait and carry on listening" (424). As Juliet cannot see him, he who is "bescreen'd in night" (2.2.52), and as her "ears have yet not drunk a hundred words" (2.2.58) uttered by his voice, she too must listen to him. Not being able to see him, in the night, Juliet, as Derrida puts it, "*identifies* him on the one hand by the

timbre of his voice, that is to say by the words she hears without being able to see" ("Aphorism" 431).

What voice is Juliet listening to in this darkness? For Derrida, in listening she is giving in to her desire to distinguish between "Romeo *himself,* the bearer of the name" and "*Romeo* the name which he bears" ("Aphorism" 423). Juliet is not Cordelia and Derrida is listening for something very different to Cavell: "Speaking to the one she loves within herself and outside herself, in the half-light, Juliet murmurs the most implacable analysis of the name. Of the name and the proper name" (427). For Derrida, her analysis "is implacable for it announces or denounces the inhumanity or the ahumanity of the name" (427). For Juliet, "a proper name does not name anything which is human, which belongs to a human body, a human spirit, an essence of man" (427). As Derrida paraphrases: "Romeo *himself,* the bearer of the name is not the name, it is *Romeo*, the name which he bears" (423). All Juliet hears in *Romeo* are names, and "the circle of all these names in *o: words, Romeo, words, love*" (429). When Derrida listens to Juliet listening for Romeo he is not listening for his voice's *timbre*, in the way Cavell listens to Cordelia's. He does not listen out for the heaving of heart into tongue, the shortness of breath. He does not imagine how her voice would have sounded. He is much more interested in what resonates in all those names in O that Juliet the philosopher enumerates.[37] Juliet's recognition of Romeo is not, in other words, dependent on the recognition of a voice that is present to itself, which, as Cordelia's does for Cavell, conveys something quintessential about who they are in the moment they speak. Rather, it is dependent on a voice that speaks because it denounces itself, because it is (or no longer wants to be) what it is. Although, like Cavell, he suggests that Shakespearean drama demands an attentive ear, Derrida is not listening out for the separateness that we share with the character on stage and with everybody who is sitting in the auditorium. He is harking for something more disembodied, something altogether louder, but more difficult to hear, for what in *Paper Machine* he calls a trace that is "never, fully present, by definition," but that "inscribes in itself the

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[37] It would, in other circumstances, have been interesting to triangulate this enigmatic focus on O with Fineman's reading of O in "The Sound of O in Othello: the Real of the Tragedy of Desire," as well as what Cixous says and does with the O in "Ghosting Derrida," to propose an alternative O-Factor to the one suggested by Bruce Smith.

reference to the specter of something else" (151). He is, in other words, listening for spectral or spectred voices.

When Derrida claims that *Romeo and Juliet* is a "theater of the night," he is also saying that in staging the name, it "stages what one calls because one cannot see or because one is not certain of seeing what one calls" ("Aphorism" 425). *Specters of Marx,* too, is about the night. Indeed in the "Exordium," Derrida writes that *Specters* "advances like an essay in the night" (xvii). For Royle, "Derrida's published texts on Shakespeare are night letters of a sort, essays about *the night"* (*Uncanny* 124). When Derrida writes that Shakespeare is the theatre of the night, he is, however, not only saying that the plays are about the night, but that they themselves are *of* the night. "Theater," Derrida writes, "is visibility, the stage [*la scène*]" ("*Aphorism"* 425). But this theatre stages what belongs to the night, what cannot be seen. This theatre is about the name as what "calls beyond presence, phenomenon, light, beyond the day, beyond the theatre" (425). Derrida is not so much seeing or reading Shakespeare, as *listening* to him. "Night writing", Royle writes, "… would be an experience of hearing" (*Uncanny* 116). When Derrida therefore writes that *Specters* advances like an essay in the night, he is also saying that he advances with his ears.

In *Hamlet*, Derrida writes in *Specters of Marx*, "everything begins by the apparition of a specter" (2). He immediately qualifies. In *Hamlet* everything begins "by the *waiting* for this apparition" (2). "The anticipation is at once impatient, anxious, and fascinated: this, the thing ('this thing') will end up coming. The *revenant* is going to come. It won't be long. But how long it is taking" (2). I will qualify even further: in *Hamlet,* everything begins with waiting to *hear.* From the very beginning of *Hamlet* something ghostly happens to our ears. If Shakespeare "*wrote for sound*," as Bruce Johnson has argued in "*Hamlet*: voice, music, sound," then *Hamlet* is a "noisy play" (257, 259). This noise is not only produced by "around a dozen heraldic flourishes involving trumpets, drums and ordnance," "instrumental and vocal music" but also "includes references to the voice and hearing, and vocalisation which is purely sonic rather than lexical," as well as sounds which are "acousmatic" or "acousmêtric," in other words, sounds which have "no visible source" (259). *Hamlet* begins with an example of such an acousmatic effect: "it begins with disembodied voices in the

darkness" (259). For Johnson, moments such as these not only pose unsettling epistemological questions – "what may be known of a thing that is heard but not seen…" – but also unsettle our understanding of ontology (260).

| BARNARDO | Who's there? |
|----------|--------------|
| FRANCISCO | Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself. |
| BARNARDO | Long live the King. |
| FRANCISCO | Barnardo? |
| BARNARDO | He. |
| FRANCISCO | You come most carefully upon your hour. |
| BARNARDO | 'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco. |
| FRANCISCO | For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold |
| | And I am sick at heart. |
| BARNARDO | Have you had quiet guard? |
| FRANCISCO | Not a mouse stirring. |

(1.1.1-8)

When we first hear Barnardo's question in the dark, we, like him, do not know that he is not calling to a ghost, but rather to his friend Francisco, who has come to *relieve* him. And yet, from the very start of the play, the ghost is already on the stage, already in our ears. There are no stage directions specified but, according to Bernice W. Kliman, the text's punctuation functions as one, guiding "elocution" and "effect" (74). Both the *Second Quarto* and the *First Folio* use full stops and not commas. Although the first Sentinel and Barnardo's dialogue in the *First Quarto* is different, it too is punctuated by full stops, achieving a similar effect. The period after "Long live the King" is commonly read as indicating an "interruption where the speech might have been construed as complete"; eager to ascertain their identities, Francisco and Barnardo interrupt each other (78). Lines overlap, creating a ghostly effect of non-sequiturs that trail off the stage and confuse our ears. At the beginning of *Othello* our ears are similarly confused. A night-screened Roderigo asks old Brabantio whether he recognises his voice (1.1.93). Brabantio does not, and answers: "what are you?" (1.1.94). In "The Ear, Who?" Kamuf wonders about this use of "what," where a "who" would have sounded more natural to our ears (177). Similarly, when Barnardo throws his question – "Who's there?"– into the night air, he is really asking: "what are you? Are you a ghost?" In the night of this theatre, the "who" and the "what" mingle. Like Brabantio, who, as Kamuf notes, seems to be "calling upon the voice to attach itself again to a name," Barnardo seems to be listening out and addressing a disembodied, spectral voice ringing in the dark (177).

The ghost is in the ear; it is to be *apprehended* by tuning into frequency. What is at stake with frequencies, however, is not only hearing in the common sense. Frequency is more than this: it is *nombre (plus d'un)*. Like spirits, frequency is "the *more than one/no more one* [le plus d'un]" (xx). The spectre that is "listened" to in the night of Shakespeare's text is a "remainder" which "*is* not," and which thus remains "inaccessible to a straightforward intuitive perception (since it refers to something wholly other, it inscribes in itself something of the infinitely other), and it escapes all forms of prehension, all forms of monumentalization, and all forms of archivation" (*Paper Machine* 151). It is, it seems, a paraphrase of *différance* and the chain of terms it belongs to: "Differance, which (is) nothing, is (in) the thing itself. It is (given) in the thing itself. It (is) the thing itself. It, differance, the thing (itself). It, without anything other. Itself, nothing" (*Given Time* 40). *Le plus d'un* is a spectrally polyphonic term, its definition comprises insistence, rhythms, waves, cycles and periods. As Kamuf notes, "depending on whether or not one pronounces the 's': *plu(s)/plus*, the expression shifts registers from that of counting by ones to that of counting without number one, or of taking account of the other than one" (*Addresses* 219). It is perhaps because its definition is so wide-meshed that this net of a term can be thrown over the ghost, which can only be apprehended if it is allowed to unfold.

According to *Le Grand Robert, fréquence* is a "*réitération, répétition.*" *Enter* GHOST (1.1.38). *Exit Ghost* (1.1.50). *Enter* GHOST (1.1.124). [*Exit Ghost*] (1.1.140). Thus the ghost of Hamlet's father enters and *re*-enters the stage, amidst waiting men, some of them soldiers, some of them scholars, some of them both. First there is speculation as to its existence, later there is speculation as to what its appearance might mean. What is certain, however, is that the ghost's first stage-entrance is a return. Derrida: "everything begins in the imminence of a *re*-apparition, but a reapparition of the specter as apparition *for the first time in the play*" (*Specters* 2). The spectre is a "revenant," Derrida writes, "because it *begins* by *coming back*" (11). For Derrida, the ghost in *Hamlet* is returning "from what could be called the other time, from the other scene, from the eve of the play, the witnesses of history fear and hope for a return, then, 'again' and 'again', a coming and going" (11). The frequentation of the ghost is a frequency, a repetition: "repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since

the singularity of any *first time*, makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other" (10). For Michael Naas, indeed, "any consideration of the phantasm ... must emphasize less the ontological status of the phantasm than its staying power, its returning power, I would be tempted to say its *regenerative* power" (192). Even when the ghost in *Hamlet* is on the stage, it does not belong to presence, Being or *Dasein*. "There is no *Dasein* of the specter, but there is no *Dasein* without the uncanniness, without the strange familiarity (*Unheimlichkeit*) of some specter" (125). Rather than imagining a *Dasein* for the spectre, we must think of the spectre in terms of this repetition that fissures every presence and makes every presence spectral; because the spectre is a revenant, there cannot be an ontology of a spectre, but only a spectral ontology (say hauntology).

Frequency is what the *Grand Robert* calls a *période,* or as the OED has it, "the rate per second of a vibration constituting a wave, e.g. sound, light, or radio waves." Frequency is a cycle, it counts the "nombre de cycles identiques d'un phénomène par unité de temps (en général, par seconde)." We cannot see the ghost, it goes beyond hearing and beyond sight. The waves, periods and cycles of frequency mark the rhythm that is beat out between the ghost's *re*-apparitions. The ghost *is* not; it is a rhythm. What is also inscribed in the elliptical mention of rhythm in Derrida's definition is not only the insistence or repetition of frequency, but also the fissuring of presence. As Derrida writes in "Desistance," rhythm "belongs neither to the visible nor to the audible" (32). Rhythm in this sense is also what in *Monolingualism* is called the missing beat, the "incalculable origin," which always begins "before the beginning" (48). It corresponds with what in "Rams" is called the "spacing that does not pertain to meaning" (165). It is the "rhythm, caesura, hiatus, interruption" that exceeds meaning and that makes Derrida "listen for something that [he] cannot hear or understand" (165, 166). What is here called "rhythm," is, in other words, the possibility of audibility and visibility itself. When we listen, therefore, for the ghost and for spectral rhythms, we are listening into that space or spacing which, although being beyond presence and phenomena, makes them possible. In *Specters,* Derrida writes that the ghost is the "*frequency* of a certain visibility" (125). "And visibility," like audibility, is "by its essence" not seen, "which is why it remains *epekeina tes ousias,* beyond the phenomenon or beyond being" (125).

Rhythm also marks the temporality of the spectre and of literature. It marks what in *Mémoires: for Paul de Man* Derrida speaks of as a "rhythm without rhythm," which does not "designate a particular rhythm, a measurable or comparable speed, but a movement which attempts through an infinite acceleration to win time, to win time over time, to deny it" (62). One might say that this rhythm outstrips, it "*gagne de vitesse*" ("L'aphorisme" 50). It opens time and opens it for the other who has already been there, listening: "The poem falls to me, benediction, coming of (or from) the other. Rhythm but dissymmetry," Derrida writes in "Che cos'é la poesia" (233).[38]

Frequencies mark the re-apparition of the ghost in *Hamlet*, and the unmasterable dissymmetry that separates us from it. One does not see "this Thing that is not a thing, this thing that is invisible between its apparitions, when it reappears" (*Specters* 6). The ghost is shielded from our sight by its full armour, what Horatio the scholar calls its 'warlike form' (1.1.46). For Derrida, the armour allows "the so-called father to see and to speak … some slits are cut into it and adjusted so as to permit him to see without being seen, but to speak in order to be heard" (*Specters* 7). He, of course, knows that the ghost's visor was raised, but for him the mere "possibility" of the visor, the possibility of seeing "without being seen," suffices (8). And yet, although we cannot see "this Thing," it sees us. Derrida calls this "the *visor effect*: we do not see who looks at us" (6). This ghost is therefore looking at us "outside of any synchrony, even before and beyond any look on our part, according to an absolute anteriority (which may be on the order of generation, of more than one generation) and asymmetry, according to an absolutely unmasterable disproportion" (6–7). Since we cannot see the ghost, we must, like Juliet in the darkness of the balcony scene, listen for it: "we must fall back on its voice" (7). But since, as Kamuf argues, "the visor effect [is] also a prior pluralization of every one, everyone," this voice is, albeit singular, not single (*Addresses* 234). It is what in "Ulysses Grammophone" is called "a skein of voices" (278).

The voice Derrida is interested in has nothing to do with Cavell's "ordinary voice," but it does have to do with "tone" and "timbre" ("The Spatial Arts" 21). So "contrary to the nonsense that circulates in this regard, nothing interests [him] more

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[38] These accounts of rhythm echo Derrida's discussion of *fort:da* and *Zauderrhythmus* in "To Speculate - on Freud," a text that haunts *Specters,* particularly in how it plays on the rhythmed appearance:disappearance of *Hamlet's* ghost, which I will turn to in Chapter 8.

than the voice, more precisely the nondiscursive voice, but the voice all the same" (21). *Speech and Phenomena*, his critique of what Simon Morgan Wortham calls Husserl's desire to "understand the expressive and logical purity of meaning in terms of logos," and to understand logos as a self-given meaning, does not banish voice from philosophy, but rediscovers it for its use (200). Husserl's phenomenological project, Derrida argues in *Speech and Phenomena*, is founded on the assumption that this self-presence can then be transposed, so to speak, to the voice: "my words are 'alive' because they seem not to leave me: not to fall outside me, outside my breath" (76). Voice and speech give themselves out in this manner, because "*I hear myself* [je m'entende] *at the same time that* I speak." "The signifier," Derrida continues, "animated by my breath and by the meaning-intention … is in absolute proximity to me" (77). For Husserl, meaning can be self-present, because it can be present to the self, in a manner which is unmediated by signs: "if 'mental acts' are not announced to themselves through the intermediary of a '*Kundgabe,*' if they do not have to be informed about themselves through the intermediary of indications, it is because they are 'lived by us in the same instant' *(im selben Augenblick)"* (*59*). Although Husserl uses a visual metaphor of the *Augenblick*, this blink of an eye is also to be understood as a caesura, a moment of silence. For Husserl, meaning can be present, because the "relationship to self" is absolutely silent: "expressive language itself would be something supervenient upon the absolute silence of self-relationship" (69). In Geoffrey Bennington's paraphrase: "the internal voice with which I express myself to myself in the *silent* selfpresence of my consciousness preserves meaning in its purity" ("Derridabase" 66, my emphasis). Husserl's "phonocentism" – the "unfailing complicity here between idealization and speech [*voix*]" – is paradoxically founded on a silencing of voice, and Derrida's critique depends to some extent on making this voice and its "silence" heard (*Speech* 75).

Whenever Derrida plays on this word – frequency – he is also playing on the frequentation of ghosts, who are always more than one, who, according to *Le Grand Robert*, are always a *fréquence*, which also means a '*foule*', or crowd. A voice is never single, or present; it never belongs to a body. "Voice," he writes there, "can betray the body to which it is lent, it can make it ventriloquize as if the body were no longer

anything more than the actor or the double of another voice, of the voice of the other, even of an innumerable, incalculable polyphony" ("Voice II" 161). What we are listening out for when we are listening for the ghost's voice is the "writing in the voice," its "differential vibration" ("Dialanguages" 140). The voice Derrida is interested in is a voice that vibrates with a different kind of silence than Husserl's; it is a silence that allows for what Byung-Chul Han calls the "an- un abschwellenden Körpers des Klanges" (11).[39] For Han, therefore, the "logozentrische Phonozentrismus ist nicht nur die Unterdrückung der Schrift, sondern auch bzw. vor allem die Unterdrückung des Klanges oder des Klang-Raumes" (12).[40] What Han is addressing here is not (or not only) actual resonance, but a "spacing" allowing and inviting, indeed relying on, the other's resonance. It is what in "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" is called a "pure address, on the edge of silence, foreign to every code and to every rite, hence to every repetition" (194). It is what Kamuf calls "*donner lieu,* that place-less place in which the impossible encounter takes place as giving of place beyond or before any give-and-take. A place-less place or a silent word, unballasted of even the slightest weight, a breathless word, perhaps...." (*Addresses* 131). It is what Werner Hamacher calls "the ellipsis which silently accompanies any act and which may silently interrupt any speech act" ("Afformative" 1139).[41]

The question of the identity of the *génie* – "*qui es tu*" – which is posed at the very beginning of *Geneses, Genealogies, Genres and Genius* is also its answer (2). As

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[39] "*Crescendo* and *diminuendo* of the resonant body."

[40] "Logocentric phonocentrism not only entails the suppression of writing, but most importantly the suppression of sound as resonant space."

[41] Hamacher coins the concept of the "afformative" in response to the failure of classical speech act theory to "inquire after the conditions under which conventions can be linguistically prepared and established – and precisely for this reason, it cannot account for the performativity of its performatives" ("Lingua" 190). This "afformative" is, I believe, important if we are to understand Derrida's performative interpretation of *Hamlet* in *Specters*. What is at work in the background of Hamacher's idea of the afformative as a perceivable, if silent, interruption, is not only Derrida but also Benjamin's reading of Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, in particular his idea of the *Ausdruckslose*, which is heavily indebted to Hölderlin's idea of the caesura. The way this idea of the "afformative", with its resonances in Benjamin, Goethe and Hölderin comes to bear on Hamacher's "Lingua Amissa: The Messianism of Commodity-Language and Derrida's *Specters of Marx*," and how in turn this is perceived by Derrida in "Marx and Sons," merits further exploration. It would, for instance, be interesting to approach the question of the performative of perlocutionary effects of literature through two of the three instances of the *Ausdruckslose* which Benjamin identifies in his *Wahlverwandtschaften* essay*:* the sentence marking the vanishing possibility of happiness - "Die Hoffnung fuhr wie ein Stern, der vom Himmel fällt über ihre Häupter weg" – and Ottilie's silent death (*Wahlverwandtschaften* 212).

Beverly Bie Brahic notes, "*qui es tu*" is a homophone meaning both "who are you" and "who has fallen silent" (*Geneses* 92). The only visual marker which could keep them apart, namely the *trait d'union* between "es-tu" remains silent. Derrida addresses a silent genius: "'Genius, who are you {*qui es tu*}?' I am asking you this question, genius, hear, do you hear?" (2). He addresses this genius, which remains silent, asking it to listen to him and to make itself heard. This then is the stroke of the silent genius. In his description of the silent genius (genius who is you) Derrida seems to be ventriloquising the unprecedented and performative trajectory of the teleiopoetic arrow. Like the teleiopoetic arrow, the work of genius penetrates by withdrawing. It is what in "A Self-Unsealing Poetic Text" "speaks to the other by keeping quiet, keeping something quiet from him. In keeping quiet, in keeping silence, it is still addressing itself" (206). The stroke of genius – this teleiopoetic arrow – may strike with sound, but it withdraws in silence. "Geniusness is the uniqueness of an impossible arrivingness {*arrivance*} to which one addresses oneself which is only to the improbable destination of the address – and it is always '*tu*'. A silenced {tu} instant, the instant of the eternal return" (*Geneses* 78-9). To listen with our philosophical ears always means, as "Voice II" suggests, to "turn one's ears to the other" who is yet to come but who is still *resonating* there from the beginning (163).

Genius is you, and it is silent; it is silent so that you may hear. What is inscribed in this moment of silence, in the spectral vibrations of every voice, is the ear of the other. When Derrida, therefore, writes that "it is the ear of the other that signs," he is, I believe, thinking about the play of signature and countersignature, addressed in Chapter 5 in terms of this resonant space opened by the silent genius (*Ear* 51). In *H.C. For Life*, the arrival of the other through Cixous' poetics is similarly understood in terms of music: "the arrival as if by enchantment, where the poetic song, the charm, the *carmen*, and magical power are allied to *kommen lassen,* make come in letting come" (79). When Derrida thus speaks of music he is speaking of this "chant of enchantment" this "song of songs," the kind of musical opening that resounds between the text and the reader (79). The voice Derrida is criticising in *Speech and Phenomena* is the voice of auto-affection, the voice that we hear as we speak, the voice that carries the full breath of our meaning. But this is not the voice he is listening for. As the silent caesura that

punctuates the voice of the relationship to self can never be purely idealised, it can never be muffled fully. If the voice with which we talk to ourselves is never silent, the voice with which we talk to others, which we hear, is never single. Voice never just sounds, it resounds. In the relationship of self to self, there will always be resonance, or what Jean-Luc Nancy calls the "arch-music of that resonance": "it *listens to itself* [s'écoute], by listening to itself *finds itself* [se trouve], and by finding itself *deviates* [s'écarte] from itself in order to resound further away, listening to itself before hearing/ understanding itself…."(*Listening* 35).

Nancy is perhaps the thinker of "deconstruction" who has dwelt most upon the "*philosophical ear*" (5), arguing that "the visual persists until its disappearance; the sonorous appears and fades away into its permanence" (2). Like Derrida, Nancy understands the process of listening as reaching beyond presence or *Dasein*:

> To be listening is thus to enter into tension and to be on the lookout for a relation to self: *not,* it should be emphasized, a relationship to "me" (the supposedly given subject), or the "self" of the other (the speaker, the musician, also supposedly given, with his subjectivity), but to the *relationship in self*, so to speak, as it forms a "self" or a "to itself" in general, and if something like that ever does reach the end of its formation. Consequently, listening is passing over to the register of presence to self, it being understood that the "self" is precisely nothing available (substantial or subsistent) to which one can be "present," but precisely the resonance of a return [*renvoi*]. (12)

Although Nancy at no point mentions Derrida or indeed frequencies, the terms he uses to speak about the sonorous are strikingly similar. Nancy matches frequency's waves, cycles, periods and rhythm, with "amplitude," "density," "vibration" and "undulation" (2). Frequencies like Nancy's resonance allow us to make sense of the musical analogy and most importantly of the moment of silence, caesura or rhythm encased in it. As Cobussen notes, "Derrida's ear develops into an organ that needs to train itself in receiving the unpredictable, the uncanny, the 'unheard'" (u.p.).

*Enter* GHOST (1.1.38). *Exit Ghost* (1.1.50). *Enter* GHOST (1.1.124). [*Exit Ghost*] (1.1.140). The appearance of the ghost marks its frequency. But the appearance of the ghost also escapes frequencies. In *Specters*, Derrida writes that frequency also counts and it does so quite literally: it is the "*fréquence d'un mot,*" it is the number of times a word reoccurs in a corpus. We might for instance be familiar with the idea of a

frequency of a Shakespearean word, or the amount of times it appears in his work. Of all the attempts to order and categorise Shakespeare's words, none is more ludic than the work done in concordances. Marvin Spevack's *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* is a veritable Shakespearean *treasure trove*. As outlined in its "Introduction," it "lists alphabetically all words exactly as they appear in Shakespeare' and 'each different word (or linguistic type) – a word is defined as a graphic unit – is followed by a line of statistical information: its absolute frequency (FR), its relative frequency (REL FR), the number of occurrences in verse passages (V), and the number of occurrences in prose (P)" (v). This task is, as Spevack himself is the first to admit, 'not without problems', and not only because mistakes are bound to occur 'when one is dealing with almost a million words in a myriad of configurations' (1974, vii). The problem is also Spevack's definition of context, namely 'the typographical line (often the contents of one punch-card) in which the indexed word or lemma appears', because words in Shakespeare exceed their immediate context and always resonate with another frequency and use of that word (vii). The first meaning given for frequency in the *OED* is 'state or condition of being crowded'. In this sense every frequency listed in Spevack's *Concordance* is also a frequency in the sense that it is crowded, inhabited, frequented if you will, by its other frequencies, or occurrences.

Although frequencies should not be understood as a "master term" it is, I have tried to suggest, illuminating for the study of Derridean acts of reading: in comprising both valences of the ear and listening in his writing – both actual and philosophical or figural – it allows us to understand the modes of his acts of reading – characterised by the inter- and intratextual travel of the *lettre* – as directly linked to his theorisation of the trace. Simply put: there cannot be resonance and echoes if there is no resonant space. Listening to Shakespeare with Derrida, we must allow for his words to resonate otherwise and in places beyond either oeuvre in ways not anticipated by Nussbaum. Frequencies account for how words can resonate with other words, uttered, written or read by somebody else and in a different context. It is also what in "Anachronistic Reading" J. Hillis Miller calls a "future *chiming*," or "an anticipatory allegory or prophecy, or, perhaps, a miniature apocalypse in the etymological sense of an enigmatic unveiling of what has not yet happened" (75, my italics). For Royle, these "peculiar

ways in which specific words in Shakespeare come to be traced, in a sort of 'now without present,' by other appearances or apparitions of the 'same' words" belong to a logic "of another time, a 'dead time perhaps, or time without time. It is a matter of dramaturgic telepathy, the iteraphonic and iteraesthesia" (*In Memory* 33). This idea of the "iteraphonic" functions as "'a sort of guiding thread'" of much of Royle's work on Shakespeare and is in many ways close to my notion of frequencies (37). Like frequencies, the iteraphonic does not only denote the telepathic echoing of something that could not have been heard. It also means hearing something differently, the ear changing something. Moreover, it means allowing for ghostly frequencies in Shakespeare's corpus, like for instance Derrida's "Shakespearean word" "relevant." And it allows for an echoing of something that was never sounded; for a hearing of what is not yet there. This is the silent genius of Shakespeare and of literature for philosophy. In reading Derrida, we too must become more receptive to the resonances and reverberations of frequencies, which are an important aspect of his opening of philosophy to literature and its tympanisations.

7.2 to tympanise – philosophy

"Is listening something of which philosophy is capable?" (Nancy, *Listening* 1)

"Speech is the sperm indispensable for insemination. (Conception, through the ear, all of philosophy one could say)" ("Tympan" xiv).

Derrida wants "to tympanize – philosophy" ("Typman" x). As Alan Bass' note reminds us, "*tympaniser*" in French means "to criticize" or "ridicule publicly"(x). When Derrida, however, sets out to "tympanize" philosophy he does not mean to ridicule it, but to open it up to the ear's resonance chamber. Just like in *Speech and Phenomena*, at the beginning of "Tympan" the ear becomes a figure for auto-affection; philosophy here is "affecting itself without delay, on the domestic page of its own tympanum (still the muffled drum, the *tympanon,* the cloth stretched taut in order to take its beating, to

amortise impressions, to make the *types* (*topoi*) resonate, to balance the striking pressure of the *typtein*, between the inside and the outside)" (xii). In an expression which seems to echo or be echoed by the question Nancy poses in *Listening*, as well as Cavell's question of whether philosophy can become literature and still know itself, Derrida asks whether one can interrupt philosophy's auto-affection, or "puncture the tympanum of a philosopher and still be heard and understood by him?" (xii). We need not "philosophize with the hammer" like Nietzsche, we need not, in other words, "*ihnen erst die Ohren zerschlagen.*" Rather, we should philosophise with a different kind of hammer – the *malleus*, which, as Derrida notes, "belongs to the chain of small bones," which is "placed on the *internal* surface of the tympanic membrane" (xii, xiii).

The figure of the ear discloses the resonances opened by Shakespeare and sounded out by the reader; likewise, the role of the ear in Derrida's oeuvre is to suggest that such auricular acts of reading must become part of the philosophical endeavour. "Tympan" shows, both in its content and in its style, that philosophy's auto-affection – "it has always intended to hear itself speak, in the same language" – is already fissured, that philosophy's voice is already mad, already governed by vibrations and frequencies ("Tympan" xii). The hammer's role is one of "mediation and communication: it transmits sonic vibrations to the chain of small bones, and then to the inner ear" (xiii). As the vibration reaches the tympanum – which connects/separates the outer and middle ear – the hammer receives this vibration but its function is to "weaken the blows, muffle them" to protect the tympanum (xiii). The hammer, though lying further inside the ear, and although it receives vibration, also acts upon the tympanum by changing this vibration. The hammer is thus not only mediator or vehicle, it is also a protector and as such an unfaithful mediator of sonic vibration. This balancing asymmetry is made possible by the tympanum itself. Derrida writes: "we know that the membrane of the tympanum, a thing and transparent partition separating the auditory canal from the middle ear (the *cavity*), is stretched obliquely (*loxōs*)," λοξ-ός coming from the Greek meaning 1) "slanting, crosswise", 2) "of suspicious looks" and 3) (of language) "indirect, ambiguous" (xiv-xv). According to Derrida, "one of the effects of this obliqueness is to increase the surface of impression and hence the capacity of vibration" (xv). The tympanum is what allows this self-relation, this echoing between

the outer and middle ear, which is in turn echoed between the middle and inner ear. Derrida's virtuoso play on the ear's anatomy, the description of its erasure of limits, not only illustrates the resonances of *différance*, but is also directed at unsettling what philosophy has traditionally understood to be its limit.

To tympanise philosophy must not only mean opening it up to the play of *lettre*, but also, and more importantly, to the ear as the organ of the text. According to Joel Fineman, Derrida's conception of the ear as an "instrument of delay and deferral" is foreshadowed by none other than Shakespeare ("Shakespeare's Ear" 12). For Shakespeare's contemporaries hearing is, Fineman suggests, "that which slows the logos, leading it astray within its labyrinthine folds and plaits" (12). For Fineman, this contemporary understanding of the ear explains not only "why for Shakespeare the ear is so often a figure of momentous suspense, as in *Hamlet*," but also allows him to hypothesise that for Shakespeare, like for Derrida, "the ear is the organ of the text" (13). This is to some extent echoed by the typographic oddities of Derrida's little ear of a text. *"*Tympan" is a tripartite text: the text proper starting with the sentence "To tympanize – philosophy"; footnotes, and the marginal long citation of Michel Leiris' *Biffures*. In this ear of a text, themes and words bounce off one another and with every resonance something changes. For Mark Robson, Fineman's argument about the ear as a textual organ is particularly suggestive because "it allows us to trace a connection between textuality, sexuality and sovereignty" ("Looking with Ears").[42] The *oreille* of the text is feminine. In *The Ear of the Other*, Derrida also refers to the ear as a she ("it is to her – this ear – that I myself will feign to address myself") (33). Derrida starts spelling out the sexual reverberations in footnote 6 of "Tympan":

> Without an inventory of all the sexual investments which, everywhere and at all times, powerfully constrain the *discourse of the ear*, I shall give an example here to indicate the topics of the material left in the margins. The horn that is called *pavillon (papillon)* is a phallus …, and the auditory canal a vagina. (xiv)

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[42] In "Shakespeare's Ear," Fineman turns to *The 'Rainbow' Portrait of Queen Elizabeth I*, attributed to Isaac Oliver (c. 1600). He notes that among the eyes, mouths and ears adorning the Queen's dress, there is an "exceptionally pornographic ear," formed by two creases in Elizabeth's dress precisely over her genitals (10). When taken in conjunction with the feminised early modern understanding of the act of listening and Shakespeare's accounts of voracious female ears this observation sheds new light the many sexual reverberatons of "Tympan," thus allowing us draw links between Shakespeare's and Derrida's understanding of textuality (Folkerth 106).

When Derrida writes that "speech is the sperm indispensable for insemination" what is at issue here is not so much the question of gender (in philosophy), but a certain kind of textuality which "Tympan" also seeks to illustrate with its tripartition (xiv). In "Heidegger's Ear (Geschlecht IV)" everything circles around a short extract from *Sein und Zeit*: "*...als Hören der Stimme des Freundes den jedes Dasein bei sich trägt*" (166). For Heidegger, *Dasein* carries the voice of the friend *bei sich*. Derrida reads this *bei sich* (indicating in German "with" or "near it", hence neither inside nor outside of *Dasein*) as a marker of marginality. *Dasein* can listen to the voice of the friend because Dasein carries this voice *bei sich*, because the voice of the friend is "neither in … nor outside" *Dasein's* ear (164). Whilst Heidegger speaks of *der Freund* (masculine), Derrida's speaks of *"une oreille"* (feminine). What is marginal is not *der Freund* but a woman. Yet, "woman" cannot be separated from the "incalculable sexual differences" Derrida speaks about in "Choreographies" (167). As Bennington argues, he supplants a clearly delineated sexual difference with "invagination" which, as we shall see, "is going to allow us to risk paradoxes whereby the other would be no other than the same itself [*le même même*], in the doubling traced toward the double, the ghost and *Unheimlichkeit*" ("Derridabase" 221).

What does this figure of the ear in "Tympan" mean for the kind of philosophical voice Derrida chooses in his writing? In "Derridas Ohr," Han suggests that the *différanciating* of the ear is grounded in Derrida's experience of ear pain as a child, precisely in the "bad auricular ringing" described by Artaud: "Die Mittelohrentzündung mit ihrem Ohrensausen bestimmt die bio-politische Anatomie des Derridaschen Ohrs" (Han 5).[43] Han is here referring to certain moments in "Circumfession," when Derrida writes about his mother praying "each time she saw me ill ... and it was almost always otitis, the tympanum" (117-8). She prayed and called the name of God when "a doctor had threatened me with a violent and dangerous operation, that serious operation that in those days left you with a hole behind your ear" (118). Although this account seems to uncannily echo Cavell's narration of his damaged left ear, Derrida's insertion of Artaud's poem here points towards something rather different. Although Derrida's

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[43] "With its concomitant buzzing, the inflammation of the middle ear sets the tone for the bio-political anatomy of the Derridean ear."

autobiographical writing is also oto-biographical, Derrida's "hematographic music" does not refer to a Cavellian experience of ear pain as existential separateness (Han 6). If Derrida's ear writes with some blood or "hematography," it is the blood of some "carnage of language" or of poetry ("Tympan" xv). The ear is, as Martin Heidegger has already noted, *dichtend,* poeticising and inventive. The ear, Derrida writes in "Heidegger's Ear (Geschlecht IV)" is "poetic (*dichtende*) because it hears *in advance* just what it causes to burst forth. It *gives* itself to hear what it hears [*Elle* donne *elle-même à entendre ce qu'elle entend*]" (186). In "Circumfession," Derrida does not hear the *logos* of the voice of God, or what comes to replace it. This is not because an infected ear-drum keeps him from hearing "the voice of Being," as Han suggests, but because there is no such voice, because voice is always spectral (9). All the ear can do is listen to this splintering, because it is the philosophical organ *par excellence*.

In my Cavellian reading of *The Winter's Tale*, I suggested three different modes of philosophical voice, respectively represented by Hermione, Paulina and Perdita. I argued that Perdita, or more precisely Persephone, united both elements of the quasi-sceptical Paulina and the voiced separateness of Hermione, and thus best represented the kind of plurivocal philosophical voice Cavell is striving towards. It is my belief that when we reencounter Persephone in "Tympan" she inaugurates a new philosophical voice, but one fundamentally different to Cavell's. Indeed, the very different gendered inflections of Cavell's and Derrida's figurative uses of the ear illustrate the fundamental difference between what their philosophies aspire to achieve. Although in Derrida's writings the female figure works differently than in Cavell's oeuvre, it too is linked to an idea of philosophical renewal: Echo in *Rogues*, Khora in "Choreographies", Nietzsche's eternal feminine in *Spurs,* etc. As we have seen in Part One, the "female voice," which is able to remarry the estranged couple of ordinary language and philosophy, is constituted by an ability, shared by both men and women, to voice one's separateness. Although Cavell insists that "the female voice" is not a gendered concept, it is still wound up in the gendered inflections of his account of the infant's traumatic separation from the mother. The "female voice" still operates in a system of gendered binaries, where woman is origin, patience, acknowledgment and where man is *knowledge*, violence and scepticism. As Persephone's marginal role in "Tympan," as

well as Derrida's figural use of the ear, illustrates, Derrida's philosophical voice, too, wants "to change the sensibility of the reader," albeit not by being sensitive to or expressive of separateness; rather the act of reading Derrida is after is one which is forever listening into the resonant space – perhaps not unlike the margin in "Tympan" – opened by the splintering of Being (Davidson 234).

In "Tympan," Persephone emerges from the Michel Leiris' *Biffures* in the margin of the very first page (x).[44] Leiris extracts "the entirely floral and subterranean name of Persephone … from its dark terrestrial depths" (x). Persephone is herself an ear. In her name Leiris hears "the concha of the ear, the sinuous curves of a path, everything that is wreathed, coiled, flowered, garlanded, twisted, arabesque" (xii). Here, Persephone has become what *The Ear of the Other* calls, an "invaginated fold" and "involuted orificality" (36). We are again faced with an "invaginating loop" ("Law of Genre" 238). We have thus re-encountered *meurtrières* which, as Royle points out in *In Memory of Jacques Derrida*, not only mean "murderess" or "murder-hole," but also

> ... generate a sense of strangeness, not only to do with the oblique evocation of the uncanniness of the female genitals and ghostly feminisation of Shakespeare's act of keeping watch over the English language, but also to do with an act (the act of murdering) that is prescribed but has perhaps not (yet) taken place'".(3)

Here invagination, as Derrida suggests when writing about the hymen in "Choreographies," "no longer simply designate[s] figures for the feminine body" (181). As Maud Ellmann points out, biologically "invagination" designates the "folding-up process" by which the "cortex of the brain is formed *in utero"* in a "folding-up process" or "by the introversion and reticulation of the surface of the embryo" (218). In "Choreographies," invagination is what has "always been reinscribed in a chiasmus": it is thus what makes a clear establishment of boundaries, whether these be between text and reader, literature and philosophy – or, as I will go on to suggest, life and death – impossible (182).

Persephone has something of the spectral mole about her. As Thomas Dutoit notes in "Mythic Derrida," "as Proserpine, she is the figure of the serpentine zigzag between

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[44] It would also be important to account for Persephone's reappearance in *Faith and Knowledge,* as discussed, for instance, by Naas in *Derrida From Now On.*

the underworld or death and the upperworld, which constitutes the cycle of seasons" (105). She is between the dead to be inherited and the living to inherit. She is the one who is alive and yet brings death, or the one who though dead is allowed to walk among the living. Persephone is thus no-one other than that "glorious cadaver" Derrida speaks about at the end of "Tympan" (xxix). As we shall later see in *Hamlet's* Cellarage scene, there is an affinity between "the deep country of hearing" and Persephone's "subterranean kingdom", not only "by virtue of the cartilaginous cavern that constitutes its organ, but also by virtue of … all the pockets hollowed out of the terrestrial crust whose emptiness makes them into resonating drums for the slightest sounds" (xvi). In Leiris' marginal text, all "the chthonian divinity, the insect piercer of pits, the matrix in which the voice is formed, the drum that each noise comes to strike with its wand of vibrating air" becomes one (xix). Indeed, Dutoit thinks of Persephone as a singer: "Taken from Sicily to death by Dis, Persephone screamed loud enough for her mother, who was not in Sicily, to hear the dying voice, and ultimately to retrace its echo to her daughter in the underworld" (105). A singer is "emerging from the moist earth of a hothouse stretched out in breaking glass filament." What emerges is "one of the creatures more readily called *cantatrices* than *chanteuses* (even though cantateur is an unknown species)" ("Typman" xxiii).[45] Derrida expands in a footnote: "*Cantatrice* has the sense of an opera singer, a diva (a hothouse, glass-breaking voice), while *chanteuse* is simply a female singer. There is no masculine form *cantateur* corresponding to *cantatrice*" (xxiii). Persephone's subterranean realm is hence not only an ear, but also a mouth, a bodiless spectral voice fissuring philosophy's ear.

Like Persephone in "Tympan," Derrida's writing sings. In an interview published as "From the Word to Life: A Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous" Derrida notes that his writing "models itself on voice" (1). Whether he writes for a seminar, "as well as for texts which are not meant to be pronounced," Derrida writes with and for voice, both "*à voix haute*" and "*à voix basse*" (1). In all of his writing, he continues, "I try out in advance the rhythm and the tonality of what, pretending to improvise, I will 'vocalize'": "I listen to myself, or I listen to the dictation of another voice, of more than one voice: staging, therefore, dance, scenography of

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[45] I modify Alan Bass' translation here, because it contains a typopgraphical mistake. The correct word is not *cantratrices* but *cantatrices,* from cantare, "to sing."

terms, of breath and of 'changes in tone'" (1). Derrida thus "never write[s] in silence" (1). We might add that he never writes in a silence that is not the silence of the silenced genius – a silence that allows the other to resonate. It is, I believe, precisely this mechanism in Derrida's writing that Cixous addresses she when speaks of Derrida's text on Artaud – *La parole soufflée* – or more precisely "in this bivalence of the *soufflée:* a word whispered/given by someone else, and a word stolen, whisked away" ("From the Words to Life" 2). We can indeed, to reappropriate a Cavellian term, take Derrida's breath away, because, as he replies to Cixous, "the *parole soufflée* is also the dictation of more than one voice (masculine and feminine). They weave together, intertwine, replace each other. Always more than one voice that I let resonate with differences in pitch, timbre, and tone: so many others, men or women, who speak in me. Who speak (to) me" (2). Derrida's writing sings because it lets us breathe, following the "trajectory of obscure circumvolutions" which circumscribe each time a space in which the other already resonates. At once, "other unconsciouses also intervene, or the silhouettes of known or unknown addressees, for whom I speak and who let me speak [*me donnent la parole*], who give me their word [*me donnent leur parole*]" (2).

Derrida's knack for writing in many voices, for allowing other voices and the voices of the other to resonate in his writing means, so suggests Herman Rapaport, that when reading Derrida "one has to think contrapunctually, much as a conductor does when conducting a fugue" (96). In this scene of voices, of Cixous reading Derrida, we have once more returned to *Hamlet* and to *Specters*, for it is "through literature" that Derrida gave Cixous "access to philosophy, showing me its arrow slits and draw-bridges; I slipped through underground passages" (5). The image of arrow-slits or *meurtrières* is therefore not only useful to think about how Shakespeare keeps watch over Derrida, but also how Derrida keeps watch over us. We might say the same of *Hamlet*'s ghost and its frequencies. As Cixous states, "in describing in *Specters of Marx* the visor effect, he makes his own self-portrait" (3). During their first encounter Cixous did not see him, she only "heard him" (3): "it was at the Sorbonne, he was taking his *agrégation,* I was way in the back of the lecture theater, I 'saw' only his back. I saw only his voice. He was speaking of that which has eternally interested me: the question of death" (3). When we listen to Derrida we are always dealing with the visor effect:

"He has a helmet [*heaume*] (what word of words: home homme heaume, om), a natural visor, he looks without being seen. *Unheimlich.* The being, this man, stays back and looks at you. All you have is the letter" (3). All we have is the *lettre*, Shylock's bond, which is also Derrida's bond, what Cixous calls "his hypersensibility to what French [and I would add English] words conceal both follitterally and philosophonically" (6).

Shakespeare's *génie* speaks polyphonically, yet its silence is our eloquence. Like *Hamlet's* ghost, it can only be apprehended by frequencies which mark both the dissemination of sounds and syllables discussed in the previous chapter, as well as the caesura, or moment of silence, which allows the *génie* to sound the other out and to be sounded out by him. It "*engineers* a habitation without proper inhabiting" (*Specters* 20). In "Shakespeare Ghosting Derrida", Cixous suggests that Shakespeare "can be more easily incorporated than others with whom Derrida weaves an alliance (Blanchot for instance)" because he "does not exist." "Shakespeare," she continues:

> ... is the name of a corpus, of an infinite, unlimited body without ego, without an absolutely identifiable owner, it is the name of the skull which had a tongue which is the whole tongue, Hamlet Derrida gathers him in the graveyard which houses [*où demeurent*] the archives of his innumerable melancholy affects. (17)

In the words of "Demeure," Shakespeare "does not remain at home, *abidingly* [à demeure] in the identity of a nature or even of a historical being identical with itself" (28). "Deconstruction is just visiting" Derrida suggests in "The Time is Out of Joint" (29). What is at stake when Derrida writes about Shakespeare, "visit upon visit," is hence "the recurrence or returning, the frequency of a visitation," because "*visitare*," Derrida reminds us, is the frequentative of *visere* (to see, examine, contemplate)" (*Specters* 126). No frequentation of Shakespeare without the visor effect and Derrida's analysis of the spectralisation of every voice. No reading of Derrida reading Shakespeare, indeed no reading Derrida, without this realisation that no oeuvre can escape the logic traced by his chain of quasi-synonymous terms to which "frequencies" now also belongs. And as I will suggest in my next chapter with an analysis of how Derrida plays on the appearance:disappearance of *Hamlet's* ghost in

*Specters*, his inheritance of Marx depends on the differential tones that can *re*-sonate in the space opened by Shakespeare's frequencies.

**Second Interlude**

For a while now I have been listening, it seems, with two different ears. One of my tympani is scarred and perceptive to the separateness in the other's voice. The other is listening out for the frequencies of the spectral voice and of the *génie* of literature. Can these two modalities of thinking as listening [*entendre*] listen *to* each other? Cavell and Derrida met at least four times.[46] The first meeting occurred in 1970 (one year before the publication of "Signature, Event, Context") when Cavell was invited to Paris to discuss "Must We Mean What We Say?" Also present was "a certain Jacques Derrida, with whose views, my host was interested to tell me, my book bore a number of affinities" (*Pitch* 57). Cavell hoped that these affinities would trigger a stimulating, if heated, debate on Austin. But the event never lived up to its promise:

> One morning of the three or four days of scheduled conversation with Derrida was to be devoted to a discussion of my title essay, and as I entered the seminar room I noted my book in Derrida's hand. Again my exposed essay did not come into discussion, this time because no one present, so far as I could tell, besides Derrida and me, was much interested to think about Austin. (57)

Although Cavell assumed that he must have read his book, Derrida remained silent and the possibility for a dialogue fizzled out. According to Bell, author of *Sounding the Abyss: Readings Between Cavell and Derrida*, there were at least three subsequent meetings: one at "a study group during the academic year 1985-6 at The Institute for Advances Studies at Hebrew University" (109) the proceedings of which, *Languages of the Unsayable*, would include Cavell's "Naughty Orators" and Derrida's "Languages of the Unsayable" (109); one in March 1987 in San Francisco at "a session of the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division entitled "The Philosophy of Jacques Derrida" at which Cavell was one of two commentators on the program (the other being Rodolphe Gasche)" (119-120); and finally in 1988 at Cavell's Carus Lectures in Jerusalem (111).

Despite his silence on their first meeting, Derrida engaged with Cavell's work on at least two occasions. Derrida's response to Cavell's presentation of "Naughty Orators"

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[46] This does include the period between 1956-57 when, so J. Hillis Miller tells us, Derrida was an exchange student at Harvard from the École Normale Supérieure and also attended Austin's lectures, which ultimately proved to be so seminal for Cavell (*Speech Acts* 61-2).

in 1986 is recorded in the "Postscript 1988," printed in *Contesting Tears*: he observed "that 'gas' and the fateful German Geist ('spirit,' 'mind.' etc.) are related words" (73). In 1988, on the other hand, so Cavell writes in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome,* "it fell to Derrida to tell me, in response to my emphasis in the first lecture on Emerson's hand in 'handsome,' that he had written a text on the hand in Heidegger ('*Geschlecht II*')" (xii). Bell is interested in how "Derrida's first response to *Gaslight,* was still playing itself out in San Francisco, foreshadowing Derrida's second response to come the following year back in Jerusalem," and indeed how Cavell integrated or failed to integrate these responses. Bell takes this echoing and haunting as an occasion to put forward an "audacious idea" that "Derrida might have written the 'text' of Cavell's comments [in 1987]" (120). Although I am not sure how seriously Bell wants us to consider his hypothesis, it is representative of a certain desire to fill a silence, or to adjust an asymmetry: "while Cavell has gone into print on Derrida, Derrida hasn't done the same for Cavell" (ixx). The dissymmetry of their dialogue thus sets the tone for much of the work done in this area, where scholars either "stand in" for Derrida, as Bell does, or indeed only listen to Cavell's side of the story (ixx).

Perhaps the most benevolent characterisation of the discrepancies between Derrida's and Cavell's reading of Austin is offered by Cavell himself, in certain passages of *Little Did I Know*; in "Counter-Philosophy and the Pawn of Voice" in *A Pitch of Philosophy*; and "What Did Derrida Want of Austin?" and the "Seminar on 'What Did Derrida Want of Austin?'" in *Philosophical Passages.* In his reading of *How to Do Things With Words*, Derrida overlooks Austin's reference to Hippolytus – much to Cavell's dismay. Derrida's "misreading" of Austin surprises Cavell, since both Cavell and Derrida want to "dismantl[e] the metaphysics of Western philosophy," both of them "find philosophical procedures that are neither those of commentary nor of interpretation … but ones of what Derrida calls going through texts," in order "to produce an exemplary text in response …, to show how to think in the aftermath of some destruction of thinking" (*Philosophical Passages* 47-8). Derrida also appreciates, he adds, that "Austin's analysis of the performative may be seen to be motivated precisely as an attack on what deconstruction attacks under the name logocentrism" (49). Indeed, the reason why Cavell writes about Derrida's reading of

Austin is that he "felt both that he understood something in Austin that others missed and also that he was not interested in something else in Austin which I regarded as fundamental" (67). Another way to think of it would be "to note that the way Austin draws differences does not make differences for Derrida" (70). This is, Cavell writes, hardly surprising: "In foreign territory you sometimes just cannot hear a change of vowel" (70). If we want to sound out the actual differences between Cavell and Derrida, and thus the differences between their philosophical uses of Shakespeare, we must prick our ears up to the different ways in which they learn to listen to Austin.[47]

Cavell's encounter with Austin was, as already noted, seminal. It was "the occasion for [him] to ask …, whether he was *serious* about philosophy": whether, as he puts it later, he "could speak philosophically and mean every word [he] said" (43). It was only after the encounter with Austin that he refocused his philosophical inquiries on existential questions of existence, posed by, among other things, Shakespearean drama. When he therefore describes a mode of speaking philosophically and *meaning* every word, he is not claiming that a philosopher can actually mean what he says (separateness, in fact, makes this near impossible); rather, he is suggesting that, even when we speak philosophy, we *must* mean what we say, that we cannot escape our finitude and the bonds of our words that trace our responsibility towards our interlocutors and ourselves. What Cavell learns from Austin is the acknowledgment "that the most *casual* of utterances may be irretrievable: so my tongue swore without my heart – *nevertheless I am bound*" (62). For Cavell, Austin does not deny "that I have to abandon my words, create so many orphans, but is affirming that I am abandoned *to* them, as to thieves, or conspirators, taking my breath away, which metaphysics seeks, as it were, to deny" (64). In his reading, Austin's idea of "tethering" hence "reverses Derrida's picture of philosophy's concept of writing as extending the limits … of the voice or breath …; turns it so to speak into one of *limiting the inevitable extension* of the voice, which must

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[47] No critic working on the interface between Cavell's and Derrida's work has, as far as I am aware, focused on questions of the ear. Despite the title of Bearn's "Sounding Serious: Cavell and Derrida" suggesting otherwise, he does not dwell on questions of the ear in either philosopher. Whilst Bell often touches on the ear, for instance in "Autobiographically It Comes Down to Austin: Cavell Puts an Ear to *Sec*," his concern with how the resonances between Nietzsche and Emerson may bridge the abyss between continental and analytic philosophy at times cloud his ability to pick up the differences between Cavell's and Derrida's acts of listening.

always escape me and will forever seek its way back to me" (64). As Moi puts it: whilst "both traditions agree that mishaps, mistakes, misunderstanding, and accidents will arise in human communication ... deconstruction draws the skeptical conclusion, namely that this means that we can *never* really be sure that we know what a word or sentence means" ("Different Worlds" 812).

Moi's defence of Cavell is typical of the approach taken by many scholars looking at the relationship from the side of ordinary language philosophy. Although she is absolutely right to draw a definitive line of separation between Derrida and Cavell, she does not make such a distinction between Austin and Cavell. In her account, she presents a Cavellian Austin, who is further removed from Derrida and his argument in "Signature, Event, Context" than is actually the case. Indeed, when Cavell notes that he can "hear the traditions scrape as they pass each other," much of this scraping happens in his own ear (*Pitch* 74). In *Philosophical Passages*, Cavell is thus not only, or not primarily, defending Austin, but himself. In Bell's words: "one senses that for Cavell, what was at stake was not so much a defence of Austin, as of this new voice Cavell was hearing emanating from himself" (150). Cavell seems to suggest that although Derrida listens to Austin, he misses the essential difference between the voice Austin is writing *with* and the metaphysical voice Austin is writing *against.* For Cavell, Derrida does not understand "the way in which Austin is at odds as much with his tradition as Derrida is with his tradition," because he does not have "an ear for, or patience for, certain dimensions of Austin" (69, 70). Derrida might turn a deaf ear to one part of Austin, but he listens to another; we might say that Derrida's ear is attuned to a different poetical-philosophical tone that Cavell, in turn, does not hear.

As one of my ears listens to Hippolytus' "my tongue swore so, but my heart did not" (Austin 9-10), I cannot help but hear Derrida's take on Shylock's insistence on his bond – "I stay here on my bond" (4.1.238). Like Austin and Cavell, Derrida affirms that, once given, "the human tongue … cannot loosen" the bond ("Relevant" 185). The oath, whether this be Hippolytus' or Shylock's, whether hearts were heaved into mouths or not, is a "bond" that is stronger than language. We are, it seems, in Cavellian territory: an oath is not only a performative, but also a passionate utterance. But the ground of our inquiry has radically shifted. Derrida is interested in seeing what happens

to Austin's idea if we assume that a self-presence at the heart of Cavell's idea of separateness, no matter how fleeting or hard to obtain, does not exist. If, J. Hillis Miller argues in *Speech Acts in Literature*, "the sign is already divided within itself by iterability, and if it can act and be readable both in the absence of its 'origin' in an emitting consciousness and in the absence of any determinable or 'intended' receiver, then my intention to say something ... has, distressingly, no power to control the meaning of what I say" (92).

For Cavell, Derrida's "deafness" to certain nuances in Austin (and also Wittgenstein) is a wilful one, one fuelled by the very human sceptical position in which an unbearable metaphysical finitude is exchanged for a problem of *knowledge*: "Austin's and Wittgenstein's surprises of the everyday are not ones for which Derrida has much ear, or much patience. But who could be exempt from turning a deaf ear, sometimes, just here?" (*Philosophical Passages* 90). Thus Derrida's overdetermination of Austin's performative is often taken to be a form of scepticism, of a Hippolytan scheme to escape from the bond of our words, even if these are the words of literature. In *Stanley Cavell and Literary Scepticism*, Michael Fischer spells out what are often thought to be the consequences of such a "sceptical" reading of literature: "Instead of a living body infused with meaning and consciousness, the text becomes a hollow shell or corpse" (43). Thus for Fischer "the deconstructionist's problem" is not the text's "absence" but its "presence": "He wants the hollowed-out, indecipherable text that he gets" (78). For Fischer, the arguments made in "deconstructive" literary theory, as presented by Derrida, but also J. Hillis Miller or Paul de Man, resemble other-minds scepticism and thus have deleterious ethical consequences: "like the other-minds skeptic [the deconstructive literary theorist] feels limited to merely indirect, arbitrary signs" (75). Both the sceptic and the "deconstructive" literary theorist "suspect that our criteria for interpreting these signs are disappointingly provisional or local," and like the sceptic he will "leave other people ineluctably hidden behind unreadable signifiers, blank looks, and dense barriers" (75). In this view "the other turns out to be unintelligible, inanimate, empty" (75). As a true Cavellian sceptic, Derrida and others would therefore, in Fischer's account, cling on to "epistemological assumptions" to "free us from ethical dilemmas: from being there for another, from acknowledging

someone's pain or evading it, from hiding violence or expressing it, from giving in to desire or repressing it, from overcoming shame or succumbing to it" (77). This widely-held image (at least amongst scholars of Cavell) of Derrida as the sceptic is inaccurate, and arises precisely from listening to Derrida with ears attuned to Cavell.

Reading Cavell and Derrida reading Shakespeare I, perhaps, must not necessarily be left with a ringing in my ears. I have been listening to two singular and very distinct philosophical voices which, far from being dissonant to each other, exist in entirely different modalities. Let's return to my double-eared reading of Shylock and Hippolytus. What for Derrida is at stake in Shylock's insistence on his oath is not the metaphysical outlet Austin feared, quite the opposite. Whilst Cavell hears separateness, there is one passage in "Heidegger's Ear" which clearly highlights the pitfalls that Derrida might have found in such an approach: "to prick up the ear is not to hear auditory sensations and noises, sonorous complexes, acoustic phenomena that could give rise to a psychology. No, we prick up our ear toward what is beyond the ear, the open ear ...." (178). What Derrida is interested in is the open and resonating ear of the other; it is not the pathos of separateness, but what in "Che cos'é la poesia" is called "a certain passion of the singular mark, the signature that repeats its dispersion" (235). The oath is, to pick up Hippolytus, not in the heart, but, as Derrida writes, "*in* the human tongue" ("Relevant" 185). The "bond," "promise," or "fidelity" due not to a metaphysical being, but to the "word given in its original letter," or "*la parole donnée dans sa lettre originale*" (183/33). Our bond is not only with the *mot*, or the meaning of the word, much less with the utterer's separateness, but also with its *parole,* even more specifically its *lettre*, and how it can sound and resound differently across texts. Derrida's sensitivity to the way the *lettre* haunts is in this sense not a symptom of his sceptical dodging of responsibility to the other (whether this be a text or a person, or indeed a text and therefore a person); rather, for Derrida, our responsibility to the other begins with this fidelity – this fidelity as infidelity – to the (Shakespearean) idiom.

Just like for Cavell, for Derrida the "ethical" significance of literature is bound up with his understanding of the act of reading. But whilst the Cavellian act of reading is sensitive to the other's constant presentness and the separateness that hinders our

(direct) access to it, the Derridean act of reading is responsive to the resonant spaces opened by a text and the differential readerly tones they allow for. To return to where we left off in the previous chapter, Derrida's attention to the *lettre* does not constitute the stance of the sceptic who is deaf to others and their ethical demands. Rather, it forms the *differential tones* of Derrida's philosophy that trace what, in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida calls a "nonethical opening of ethics" (140).

## 8. <u>Differential Tones</u>

To hear what Derrida does with Marx we must listen to the "differential tones" of *Specters of Marx*, which resonate in the space between Derrida's reading of Marx and his reading of *Hamlet.* Amongst Derrida's texts on Shakespeare, *Specters* has attracted by far the most interest, albeit more for the fact that it is considered to be Derrida's most overtly "political" book than because it is a book about Shakespeare. What is perhaps the most astonishing feature of many critical responses to *Specters* is that the vast majority of scholars seem to ignore Shakespeare or misunderstand his role in this text. *Specters'* wake was filled with impassioned critical responses, defending Marx and finding fault with Derrida's reading. Many Marxists critical of what Derrida seemed to be doing in *Specters* took to the stage in a symposium published in 1999 as *Ghostly Demarcations*: *A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's* Spectres of Marx. Amongst Derrida's critics were Terry Eagleton and Aijaz Ahmad, both of whom took the literary nature of Derrida's reading of Marx at best as a sign of political timidity, and at worst as pseudo-intellectual escapism from the strictures of "real" political engagement. Eagleton's "Marxism without Marxism" begins with the backhanded compliment that although Derrida "has always been a man of the Left," he is left-wing "in some suitably indeterminate sense" (83). In contrast to the "genuine radical" whose "hearty desire" is "to stop having to be so obdurately oppositional" Derrida is characterised here as "an exasperating kind of believer who holds what he does until he meets someone else who holds the same" (86, 85). For Eagleton, Derrida only reaps Marxists' negative lessons, its critique, its questioning, leaving its "positivity" to Marxists like Eagleton himself. Starting from a single-minded idea of what "political engagement" is and can be, Eagleton concludes that Derrida's "curiously empty formalistic messianism" does not amount to an "effective" socialism, but merely remains an "ultimate poststructuralist fantasy … a dissent beyond all formulable discourse, a promise which would betray itself in the act of fulfilment, a perpetual excited openness to the Messiah who had better not let us down by doing anything as determinate as coming" (87). Ahmed argues along the same lines, but transposes Eagleton's critique to the ear in lambasting Derrida's "*messianic* tonal register" (90). Derrida's handling of Marx also proved to be a bitter pill to swallow for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who, in "Ghostwriting," struck a

particularly aggressive note. At the beginning of her piece Spivak admits that she has "always had trouble with Derrida on Marx," according to a friend of hers it is "maybe because [she] feel[s] proprietorial about Marx" (65). Like Eagleton and Ahmed, Spivak feels that "the ghost of Marx that Derrida is most haunted by returns to the bosom of Abraham, shorn of all specificity, mark of a messianism without content, carrier of merely the structure of a promise which cancels the difference between democracy and Marxism" (66).

Neither Eagleton, Ahmed nor Spivak give a satisfactory account of what Shakespeare is doing in *Specters* and this is, I would like to argue, one of the reasons for why they misinterpret Derrida's project. Like in Keston Sutherland's *Stupefaction* – which portrays the relationship between Derrida and Marx as largely adversarial – here a misreading of what Derrida is doing with Marx is linked to a blindness to what Shakespeare is doing in *Specters*, indeed what, as I argued in Chapter 6, Shakespeare is doing to some of Marx's own texts (10). At the same time, without an in-depth analysis of what *Hamlet* is doing in *Specters*, any positive reading of *Specters* must remain little more than aspirational.

Let us, for instance, turn to Ernesto Laclau's "The Time Is out of Joint" and Christopher Prendergast's "Derrida's Hamlet." For Laclau, "the logic of the specter" cannot be separated from "the category of messianism" (87). In other words, "the messianism we are speaking about," the one "without eschatology, without pregiven promised land, without determinate content," is dependent on a thinking of hauntology as what fissures the present, "resulting from the radical opening to the event, to the other," which in turn is "the very possibility of justice" (91). Like Laclau, Prendergast recognises the two interconnected, deep-structural, and persistently recurring preoccupations of deconstruction: ontology (the philosophy of Being) and justice (the sphere of the politico-ethical) (44). But although Prendergast asks the right questions – "What is Hamlet doing in a book about Marx and ghosts (…)?" (44) – like Laclau, he does not really engage with the subject. Laclau's and Prendergast's readings are representative of most good criticism on *Specters* in that although they acknowledge what is really at stake in Derrida's reading of Marx, they do not explicitly link this to what *Hamlet* is doing in the text, more precisely to how Shakespeare's position in the

text opens our acts of reading to a radical *re*-thinking of an event or an opening towards the other. Put differently, the question of how Shakespeare is imbricated in the hauntological textuality *Specters* describes – a textual hauntology Prendergast aims at with this question: "How is it that Derrida, citing an essay by Blanchot, in which Blanchot uses the expression 'since Marx,' can add that Blanchot's 'since Marx' could easily have been 'since Shakespeare'?" (44) – is never broached. Whether we criticise or welcome what Derrida seems to be doing with Marx, we miss something essential when we do not account for the differential tones of *Hamlet* in this text.

We cannot grasp *Specters*' political and ethical import if we do not understand it primarily as an act of reading. In "Marx & Sons," Derrida's response to the other essays published in *Ghostly Demarcations,* Ahmed is on the one hand criticised for being too cavalier in his admission that he only read *Specters* on his flight to Ljubljana a day before giving his response (264). On the other hand, he points out that some of Spivak's "errors stem from an outright inability to read, exacerbated here by the wounded resentment of her 'proprietoriality about Marx'" (223). Derrida illustrates this with Spivak's misreading of "there will be no re-politicization, there will be no politics *otherwise*" as "We won't repoliticize!" (*Specters* 109, 69). What McQuillan and Bennington have perhaps argued better than anyone else is that "deconstruction cannot account for itself within a traditional political order because deconstruction wants to understand and exceed all and every such order" (McQuillan 100). "Deconstruction" does not offer a practical politics and to demand the formulation of the latter "is fundamentally to miss the point of the New International and all that it implies" (93). What is at stake here for Derrida is not only a lack of attention in reading, as well as a complete misunderstanding of his idea of political commitment, but also how the two are connected. When he, therefore, rebuffs his critics on the grounds that they have not read him properly, he is not distancing the debate from politics, but is rather refocusing the debate on what "re-politicization" entails for him.

It is striking that in "Marx & Sons," Derrida understands the failure to engage in an appropriate act of reading *Specters* in terms of an aural insensitivity. Both Eagleton and Ahmed are "insensitive … to variations of tone" in this text (234). In order to

understand *Specters'* "re-politicization" we would have to listen to its "tone," indeed it would mean obtaining "a slightly more elaborate concept of tone, of its fusion with concept, meaning and ... performativity" (234). One must therefore have "a finer ear for the differential, unstable, shifting qualities of tone – for example, the tonal value that signal irony or play, even at the most serious moments, and always in passages where the tone is, precisely, inseparable from the content" (234). For Derrida "re-politicization" always means a re-reading which, inverting Feuerbach's 11th thesis, posits that philosophers can change the world *because* they can interpret it. Indeed, central to Derrida's reading of Marx is "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets" (*Specters* 81). For Derrida, such performative acts of reading cannot lead towards the formulation of political action; they rather posit the New International as "an inoperative community of transformative interpretation" (McQuillan 102). Therefore, at the heart of Derrida's understanding of re-politicisation as re-reading lies, Bennington writes, "the paradox that theorising and interpretation are structurally interminable and can *never* prepare for the interruptive and precipitate moment of decision and action, but that the decisiveness of the decision depends none the less on its structural relation to interminable analysis" (*Interrupting* 25). I read Derrida's criticism of Ahmed's hardness of hearing, and his linked proposal of tone, as an indication that the interminable analysis Bennington speaks of must be understood in terms of both the syllabic travel of frequencies, its *lettre* or *parole* and its inter- and intra-textual reverberations, as well as the interminable and indeterminable resonances and echoes the "differential, unstable, shifting qualities of tone" effect in the resonant space between text and reader, between Shakespeare and Derrida.

Whatever tone is, its "distinctive signs are difficult to isolate," because a tone never exists "in complete purity," because the tone of this tone is constituted by gaps, by a "tonal differential" (29, 21). It is precisely "these gaps, this tonal differential" that interests Derrida when he reads and when he writes: how this tone "shifts, moves from one phrase to another, from one tone to another" (21, 22). What we are dealing with, then, when we speak of tone is perhaps what Martin Hägglund has addressed as spacing [*espacement*], or "the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space" (*Radical Atheism* 2). I quote again from "The Spatial Arts": "I have written

many texts with several voices, and in them spacing is visible. There are several people speaking, and this necessarily implies a dispersion of voices, *of tones that space themselves*, that automatically spatialise themselves" (22, my emphasis). Hägglund's greatest merit in *Radical Atheism* is certainly his analysis of this spacing which, although it "defines all of Derrida's key terms," although it is an "ultratranscendental" condition, has received little systematic attention (2, 10). As for Derrida, for Hägglund spacing is an "*absolutely general condition*." Without itself being definitely describable, it is "nothing in itself because it designates the spacing of time that makes it impossible for anything to be in itself" (3). Hägglund's account is nevertheless off tone. In saying this, I do not want to "denounce a *manner* of giving oneself airs," which seems to be the current vogue ("Apocalyptic" 29). What I rather want to propose is that Hägglund seems to follow "the dream or the idea of philosophical discourse, of philosophical address [*allocution*] ... to make tonal difference inaudible" (29).

Despite Hägglund's remarkable treatment of spacing, something about it is still evading him, something that we might think of precisely in terms of tone. In "Language Remains," Samir Haddad comes closest to putting his finger on what is amiss in Hägglund's book: "the strength of the book lies in its articulation of a fundamental logic that functions across Derrida's writing. But this carries with it a certain weakness that I would describe as an indifference to language" (139). For Haddad, Hägglund can only "sustain his view of deconstruction as an enterprise free of evaluation," because he overlooks the evaluative forces always already at work in language (143). Hägglund has given a convincing answer to Haddad's query, but a different aspect of Haddad's interest in language still remains unresolved.[48] Hägglund's indifference to language is less expressed in his disregard of the evaluative structure of language, than in the question of "tone." By abstracting one common movement – spacing – from Derrida's "non-synonymous substitutions," Hägglund is missing out on the nuances between Derrida's uncanny treatments of *différance*, supplement, trace etc.. What he overhears are, in other words, the specific and singular *acts of reading* from which this chain of "non-synonymous substitutions" emerge ("Différance" 12). It is, however, precisely in these differential tones, in the way Derrida responds and appropriates, performatively

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[48] See Hägglund's "The Challenge of Radical Atheism, A Response." *The Centennial Review.* 9.1 (2009): 227-252.

interprets the terms of the texts he reads, that the opening towards the "to come" lies. Put differently, since Hägglund shuts his ears to the differential tones of Derrida's writing, he undercuts the very idea of a non-ethical opening to ethics for which he is arguing. If we want to understand the vanishing point of Derrida's reading of Marx, with its idea of a justice and ethics "to come," we must listen to the differential tones that resonate in Derrida's acts of reading Shakespeare.

## 8.1 Resonances of Shakespeare

At the beginning of the "Exordium," we hear a voice ringing in the dark. It belongs to "you or me," Derrida writes, and says: *"I would like to learn to live finally* [*je voudrais apprendre à vivre enfin*] "(xvi/130). At once this "*mot d'orde*" is linked to Shakespeare. Peggy Kamuf's translation of *mot d'orde* as "watchword" immediately resonates with the image of the genius Shakespeare watching over the English language by shooting *flèches* at it. This watchword, indeed, Derrida continues, "vibrates like an arrow in the course of an irreversible and asymmetrical address, the one that goes most often from father to son, master to disciple, or master to slave ('I'm going to teach you how to live')" (xvi). In *Hamlet* and in *Specters*, everything turns on this desire to speak with this spectral voice and its *mot d'orde*. Again, the visor effect and its frequencies are quivering. For Derrida, there is no inheritance, no scholar to come without such an asymmetrical address and if we do not listen to the frequencies that create it and which spring forth from it.

How do we listen to this voice which is also the voice of the ghost, the voice in every ghost, as well as the voice of the "Thing Shakespeare" that Derrida is listening to? Whilst most scholars believe that "looking is sufficient," one of the most radical claims made by *Specters* is that in order to respond to Marcellus' call for the scholar of tomorrow, we must not only look at but also learn to listen to the spectre (11). Let us return to *Hamlet*, whose theatre of the night in the Cellarage scene is also a theatre of what Nancy calls "*acousmatics*, or the teaching model by which the teacher remains hidden from the disciple who listens to him" (*Listening* 3). This scene is characterised

by a strange polyphony and counterpoint of Horatio and Marcellus' voices, speaking as one and then after the other. There is a strange repetition or circularity about Hamlet's demands, based perhaps on a distinction between sight and hearing and on a desire to match the word (swear) to the deed (the laying of hands on swords). The strangest element is, however, the *contretemporal* voice of the ghost. The scene is marked by both a temporal and a spatial disjunction: the Ghost's "Swear!" always comes after Hamlet's "Swear!" and the Ghost is under the stage, in the Cellarage, while Hamlet is on at least two different spots on the stage, as he asks Marcellus and Horatio to follow a curious choreography. As Samuel Weber has argued, the cellarage "suddenly reveals itself to be the haunt of a ghost allows his voice, echoing words of the others, to interrupt and impede the action they intend" (184). For Weber the ghost's "utterance is both eminently theatrical, bringing into play – in the play – all of its theatrical elements, and eminently antiperformative: it renders impossible the performance of an act and the continuation of the plot" (184). I would like to suggest instead that despite punctuating the performance of the oath, the ghost's resonant and *re*-verberating voice marks the performative nature of the act of reading that posits *Specters'* "*re*-politicization" (my emphasis).

Asking Marcellus and Horatio to swear, Hamlet speaks of the spectre, but he also speaks to the spectre, replying, himself, to the spectre's injunctions. Hamlet's words, to the spectre and of the spectre, however, do not return to him as his own but return strangely altered and only after a delay. The Ghost's Cellarage is a veritable resonance chamber. The Ghost's first interpunctuating "Swear" comes three whole lines after Hamlet's "Nay but swear't" (1.5.149, 144). The ghost's second "Swear" is again heard three lines after Hamlet's "Consent to swear" and one line after "Swear by my sword" (1.5.155,152,154). Before they are allowed to resonate, the Cellarage's resounding membrane keeps Hamlet's words a while. Finally the spectre is made or allowed to speak: Hamlet's "Swear by my Sword" is echoed as "Swear by his Sword" (1.5.158,159). Like at the beginning of *Hamlet*, where our ears are haunted by resonating and intermingling voices, in the Cellarage scene we are not dealing with two distinct and corporal voices. We are not listening, or not only listening, to the voice(s) of the spectre, but also to the spectral voice, the voice that resounds whenever a self, in Nancy's words, "*listens to itself* [s'écoute]," and thus "resound[s] further

away" (*Listening* 35). By "differing/deferring itself," by speaking "at the same time several times – and in several voices" this spectral voice also says: "choose and decide from among what you inherit" (*Specters* 18). It says: choose what you listen to, choose what to echo.

Letting the spirit speak, Hamlet also speaks *with* and to the ghost. As in Derrida's account of Echo in "*Veni*," in the Cellarage scene we are not only confronted with an echo, but with iteration. In "Resonances of Echo: A Derridean Allegory," Pleshette DeArmitt points out that what Derrida "hears in Echo's reply to Narcissus is by no means an empty reduplication or a hollow reverberation of the same … but a unique and inventive response" (95). In Derrida's words: "Echo thus lets be heard by whoever wants to hear it, by whoever might love hearing it, something other than what she seems to be saying" ("Veni" xii). Just as Echo who "might have feigned to repeat the last syllable of Narcissus in order to say something else or, really, in order to sign at that very instant in her own name," in allowing the ghost to speak and to echo him, Hamlet obeys the injunction by "tak[ing] back the initative of answering or responding in a responsible way, thus disobeying a sovereign injunction" (xi–xii). In DeArmitt's reading, Echo can "passionately" open herself "to the future, to what is to come" (95), precisely because, as Derrida writes in "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," she passes "through the economy of the same, indeed while miming or repeating it" (45). It is just in this moment of resonance, this "intersection of repetition and the unforeseeable," that we find "the call for a thinking or the event *to come*, of the democracy *to come*, of the reason *to come*" ("Veni" xii, xv).

*Enter* GHOST (1.1.38). *Exit Ghost* (1.1.50). *Enter* GHOST (1.1.124). [*Exit Ghost*] (1.1.140). As Attridge reminds us in "Ghost Writing," it is not only "possible to talk about the ghost *in* literature; we can say that the ghost *is* literature (as long as we're cautious about that word 'is')"(224). When Derrida asks us to listen to the ghost's voice in *Hamlet*, he is also asking us "*to make or to let* a spirit *speak*" (*Specters* 11). We must "speak *of the* ghost, indeed *to the* ghost and *with* it," meaning that we must not only speak of, to and with the ghost in *Hamlet* but also the ghost *of Hamlet* (xviii). We must look at the minutiae of Derrida's reading of *Hamlet* to sound out how he allows himself

to be ghosted by Shakespeare; indeed, how he ghosts him in turn. And it is precisely this reciprocal haunting that the theatre of Derrida's philosophical-literary writing opens that marks how different Derrida's use of Shakespeare is compared to other philosophers'. It is, so Timothy Clark argues, "one thing to come up with a general defence of the institution of literary writing" it is "another thing, however, to put such thinking in practice in the minutiae of how to read, interpret and talk about specific texts" (130). In *Specters*, *"*the Thing Shakespeare" is made to, or let speak, in particular through an intricate play on the appearance:disappearance of *Hamlet's* ghost. In the first two parts of *Specters*, the ghost's appearance:disappearance is evoked three times. What we lose in translation is that when echoing the ghost's frequencies Derrida always echoes Shakespeare's English. The first time is in the "Exordium": "Furtive and untimely, the apparition of the spectre does not belong to that time, it does not give time, not that one: 'Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost' (*Hamlet*) ['Enter the Ghost, exit the Ghost, re-enter the Ghost' (Hamlet)]" (xix/17). The second time is at the beginning of "Injunctions of Marx," the part of *Specters* in which Derrida interweaves *Hamlet* and Marx most tightly, when, answering his own question of "what goes on *between* these generations?" Derrida responds: "An omission, a strange lapsus. *Da,* then *fort*, exit Marx [*Da,* puis *fort, exit* Marx]: (3/23). The third time is also in "Injunctions of Marx," where Derrida notes that "this first theatrical apparition already marked a repetition" (11). Again, Derrida inserts Shakespeare's English in parentheses: "(*Marcellus:* 'What, ha's this thing appear'd againe tonight?' Then: *Enter the Ghost, Exit the Ghost, Enter the Ghost, as before*) [*Puis: 'Enter the Ghost. Exit the Ghost, Re-enter the Ghost N'*)]*"* (11/32).

The ghost is in the detail. In the first play on the ghost's frequency, Derrida does not italicise Hamlet, whereas the translator Peggy Kamuf does. What enters and returns is thus not only Hamlet the father of Hamlet, Hamlet the ghost, but also *Hamlet* the play. What returns are also the resonances of this play, and the differential vibrations of Derrida's rendition of them. In the third reiteration of the ghost's enter:exit, Kamuf changes Derrida's "*Re-enter the Ghost*" to "*Enter the Ghost, as before.*" It is, I believe, crucial to hold on to Derrida's original rendition, because we cannot think of this reading scene without this "*re-*." Let us return to the *flèches* we thought about at the

beginning of this second part, the "re" in "*re-jette*," the porpentine's "re-semanticization of the letter" ("L'aphorisme" 134; "*Istrice*" 311). This "*re-*" which has been haunting us ever since Nancy's resonance, through to Derrida's "re-politicization" that Spivak misheard (*Listening* 40; Spivak 69). What do we make of this "*re-*"? Nancy writes: "Meaning consists in a reference [*renvoi*]" (*Listening* 7). According to *Le Grand Robert*, *renvoi* is 1) *le fait de porter une affaire devant un autre juge*, the recourse to another judge; 2) *marque invitant le lecteur à se reporter*, or in other words a footnote or reference; 3) *le fait de renvoyer*, or a revocation; 4) *le fait de retourner*; 5) *action de renvoyer*; 6) *un ajournement*. *Renvoi*: a return, a sending back, a dismissal, a suspension, a postponement, a cross-reference, even a footnote. In music, a *renvoi* is a *da capo* sign. The common denominator of *renvoi*'s meanings might be understood as a certain movement traced by the prefix *re-*: a movement indicated by the *OED* as one of repetition or return to a previous state (first meaning), one of mutuality (second meaning), one of coming behind or after (third meaning), and finally a movement of frequentative or intensive force (fourth meaning).

Here the "*re-*" marks the resonating space of the arrow and the inauguration of a different understanding of time, what Nancy calls a "sonorous time," a "'present in waves on a swell, not in a point on a line; it is a time that opens up, that is hollowed out" (*Listening* 13). In this reverberation chamber, the present is made to resonate as a "successive addition of presents" where every "reprise" of present is both past and "(still) to come" (18). It marks a time that opens a "spatiality by which, at the same time, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, and from me as well as toward me" (14).We must understand the "*Re-*" of "*Re-Enter the Ghost*" as "a Derridean performative," which in J. Hillis Miller's words, "creates an absolute rupture between the present and the past. It inaugurates a future that Derrida calls a future anterior, or an unpredictable *à-venir*" (*For Derrida* 152). The *re*–politicisation at the heart of *Specters* lies in the "*re-*" and in the resonances of Derrida's performative acts of reading Shakespeare. Without such acts of reading there will be "no future, no time-to-come [*à venir*], no other, otherwise; no event worthy of the name, no revolution. And no justice" ("Marx & Sons" 251).

In an academic context *renvoi* can also mean expulsion (*Grand Robert*). We must listen to the ghost and balance on the suspended edge of this '*re-*' – at once expulsion and reincorporation. Friends and scholars lend me your ears: it has never been more important to learn "not how to make conversation with the ghost but how to talk with him, with her, how to let them speak or how to give them back speech, even if it is in oneself, in the other, in the other in oneself" (*Specters* 221). I would like to learn to speak *to* and *with* the ghost. Faced with the ghost, Marcellus refers to Horatio: "Thou art a scholar – speak to it, Horatio'" (1.1.41). At first Horatio does his best "to call it, interpellate it, interrogate it, more precisely, to question the Thing that it still is" (*Specters* 12–3). He says: "What art thou that usurp'st this time of night" (1.1.45). Who or what is this ghost? The scholar does not receive an answer; the ghost remains silent. What or who is a scholar? For Kamuf, "taking account of the general condition of spectrality has to displace the limits of scholarship and even redefine altogether the role of scholars" (*Addresses* 239). In Derrida's reading, Marcellus calls for "a reader, an expert, a professor, an interpreter," a "*scholar* classique," who might even have had to jump through one or two institutional hoops (*Specters* 11/33). As Sutherland points out, here "Derrida's use of an English word in italics cannot be unimportant" (8). Perhaps, Derrida suggests, Marcellus was "anticipating the coming, one day, one night, several centuries later, of another 'scholar,'" a scholar who would know all about how in this drama of the night the who and what bleed into each other. For Derrida, this scholar "would finally be capable, beyond the opposition between presence and non-presence, actuality and inactuality, life and non-life, of thinking the possibility of the specter … he would know how to address himself to spirits" (*Specters* 13). How does such a scholar come into being? In Elizabethan England, a scholar was also someone "who had studied at the university, and who, not having entered any of the learned professions or obtained any fixed employment, sought to gain a living by literary work" (*OED*, meaning 2b). In the future, the *avenir,* the scholar must learn to think beyond this opposition of "fixed employment" and "literary work," beyond complicity with and opposition to a system; and so does the university.

8.2 Postscript: "Come"

Come, we are back where it all started: Shakespeare's arrows. There is what in "Of an Apocalyptic Tone" Derrida calls "an apocalyptic *pli* [fold, envelope, letter, habit, message]" in their trajectory (58). Their *pli* which induces "a tonal change [*changement*] and an immediate tonal duplicity in every apocalyptic voice," is also a folding back to its beginning where the other already resounds (58). Listen: "Come!" It does not speak of separateness, it is "not itself a full presence; it is differential, that is to say, it is relayed through the time and the gradations or gaps of tonality" ("The Spatial Arts" 21). Instead, "come" is always said to the other, and the other already "*re-*"sonates in its undecidable address:

> .... the voices, the places, the routes of 'Come' traverse the partition [*paroi*] of a song, a volume of citational and recitative echoes, as it [*ça*] began by responding. And in this traversal or this transfer(ence), the voices find their spacing, the space of their movement, but they nullify it with one stroke [*d'un trait*]; they no longer give it time. ("Apocalyptic Tone"63)

It is all a question of the speed of the "re-*jette*": not of the speed of the arrow's or missile's flight, but rather the speed which propels it ("L'aphorisme" 134).

The speed of the arrow's *re*-jette is what, to return to "Aphorism Countertime," confuses our understanding of an act of reading as linear. In "Of an Apocalyptic Tone," Derrida writes that "come" comes "from the other already as a response, and a citation without past present" (65). Derrida's play on the appearance:disappearance of the ghost opens *Specters* up to the strange temporal mode Derrida recognises in Shakespeare's watch over the English language: "Qui ouvrit ainsi l'une de ces brèches, souvent des meurtrières poétiques et pensantes, depuis lesquelles Shakespeare aura veillé sur la langue anglaise [...]*"* ( *Spectres* 42). *Futur antérieur* or future prefect. In "This Strange Institution Called Literature" Derrida says:

> I would very much like to read and write in the space or heritage of Shakespeare, in relation to him I have an infinite admiration and gratitude; I would like to become (alas, it's pretty late) a "Shakespeare expert"; I know that everything is in Shakespeare; everything and the rest, so everything or nearly. (67)

In French, Derrida inserts this English term "Shakespeare expert." What is a Shakespeare expert? An expert is someone who has "a special skill at a task or

knowledge in a subject" (OED). This term resonates with the trappings of professional academia, the professionalisation of research and of thought. It smacks of the categorisation of research interests, of the ticking of boxes on forms, of key word searches. Experts of Shakespeare, declare yourselves if you want to be counted! This is not the kind of Shakespeare expert Derrida desires to be, and indeed, already is. Deriving from *expertus,* the past participle of the Latin *experiri,* an expert is one who has already has gained the experience, already gathered the knowledge of many failed and successful attempts. As the past tense perhaps suggests, an expert is done trying and attempting, he already is in the know.

Derrida, he himself readily admits, is no "Shakespeare expert." In "Derrida's Event," Royle notes that the inverted commas here not only suggest "a characteristic sense of irony and comedy," but also "draw attention to the connotations of trying, testing and experimentation that belong with the word 'expert'" (39). Derrida's work shows that the space opened by Shakespeare must always remain something of the future, yet to be tried and experienced. And the same may be true for readers of Derrida (reading Shakespeare) who are faced with the Derridean event of reading, an event, Bennington writes, "so worthy of its name that it would suggest a kind of impossibility ... or unthinkability" ("In the event" 33). "Derrida's event," Bennington suggests a little later, "is an ongoing series of after-the-event reprises and iterations of an event" that "never quite or entirely happened, or finished happening, and is to that extent still to come" (34). Just as one cannot become a Derrida expert, one cannot become a Shakespeare expert, only a *experiendum*, one who will experience and try his luck with Shakespeare. "Everything," Derrida writes, "is in Shakespeare; everything and the rest, so everything or nearly" ("Strange Institution" 67). Derrida's wish to become a "Shakespeare expert" is hence articulated as a wish to "read and write in the space or *heritage* of Shakespeare" (my emphasis). The territory of the Shakespeare expert would hence not only be the corpus of his oeuvre but also what is written after it, what belongs, in other words, to "the rest" which is already in Shakespeare and the rest of Shakespeare still to come.

**Conclusion**

This thesis started by outlining Nussbaum's representative exposition of what a sophisticated literary-philosophical investigation should do: it should illuminate the world of the plays, actually *do* philosophy and account for why literature can do something for philosophy that it cannot do for itself. I have tried to show that both Cavell and Derrida meet these criteria. The reasons and reasonings of scepticism illuminate the plays, Cavell's act of reading itself aspires to acknowledge the texts and its characters, and his observations about what demands Shakespearean drama makes on us, together with his account of this drama's substitution of religion, show why literature can help philosophy do something that it cannot do for itself. Similarly, the logic traced by Derrida's "quasi-identical synonyms" not only illuminates certain moments in the plays – whether this be *Romeo and Juliet's* balcony scene, or Hamlet's dis-jointed mourning – but also the plays' reverberative effect on us, thus outlining the reasons for why a philosopher may find something in his readings of Shakespeare that he cannot find in philosophy alone.

Yet, philosophy and literature alike are deaf to what is most singular about Cavell's and Derrida's acts of reading Shakespeare: their clairaudience. And it is precisely be giving heed to their clairaudience – by becoming clairaudient ourselves, perhaps – that we may outline how different Cavell's and Derrida's acts of readings are to those described by Nussbaum. An analysis of the role of the ear in Cavell's reading has shown how his readings exceed Nussbaum's criteria. Discovering the experience of separateness, Cavell's interest in Shakespeare is fundamental to his philosophical endeavour. The ear's marking of separateness in Shakespearean drama, and in Cavell's reading of it, furthermore suggest that in turning to literature, Cavell does not simply engage with a precinct of thought that is affine to philosophy; rather philosophy and literature are both aspects of a modality of thought seeking to alleviate separateness. Shakespeare's importance thus resonates throughout Cavell's oeuvre even in places where he does not write about him. Furthermore, what the ear discovers as the root cause of scepticism also dictates a modality of thought underpinning Cavell's acts of

reading. Moreover, it is a textual model which also informs his own philosophical writing style, his pitch of philosophy.

Like Cavell's readings of Shakespeare, Derrida's ear can not only pick up actual sounds and silences; it also becomes a figure for the act of reading. His extraordinary attention to sounds, rhythms, echoes and reverberations *of* and *in* Shakespeare is thus inextricably linked to his use of the ear as a figure for a textual model explaining the relationship between Shakespearean text and reader. In allowing his acts of reading and writing to be haunted by the *lettre* and sounds of the Shakespearean idiom, Derrida's texts on Shakespeare *do* philosophy, albeit in a way perhaps not anticipated by Nussbaum's criteria. For Derrida, Shakespeare's oeuvre is not merely a neighbouring precinct of thought; in texts written on Shakespeare (and as his translation of Hegel's *Aufhebung* shows, not only on Shakespeare) thought is pushed forwards by and thanks to the "philosophonic" haunting of the "porpentine." Here Shakespeare haunts, translinguistically becoming the *mot d'orde* (watchword or rather a word ringing in the dark), putting in motion differential tones and inaugurating a performative act of reading central to Derrida's notion of the "democracy to come."

After reading over Derrida's and Cavell's shoulder, we can thus propose three new criteria to be added to Nussbaum's: First, the philosopher's act of reading must resonate beyond the conventional boundaries of philosophy and literature. The conviction that an act of writing is never accomplished once and for all, and that it always demands that the reader rethink it (Derrida) or improve his position towards it (Cavell) not only also radically redraws the way we think about philosophical writing, but also how we think about the reverberative range a literary text can have on philosophy. Second, if a philosopher wants his engagement with literature to interest us, his account needs to be based on a textual model describing how the very encounter between text and reader can become part of the philosophical endeavour. Third, this realisation must be internalised in the very way philosophy is written. Both Cavell and Derrida thus see the encounter between philosophy and literature not as something that happens once, but something that fundamentally changes the way we think and write philosophy. For both philosophers, the literary becomes a modality of thought, shifting

parameters of "philosophical" inquiry and thus orchestrating idiosyncratic but pivotal changes in philosophical style.

This thesis did not set out to suggest that either philosopher is better at reading and listening to Shakespeare, or indeed that the things they hear are or are not in Shakespeare. Everything (or almost everything) *is* if we listen hard enough. It was rather to suggest that whoever is interested in the border between literature and philosophy, and indeed whoever wants to shake off a conventional understanding of interdisciplinarity, would do well to turn to Cavell and Derrida. Although the thesis has argued that Cavell's and Derrida's clairaudient acts of reading Shakespeare propose a new way in which we can think of the relationship between literature and philosophy, it has also sought to suggest that we are far from having sounded out the difference and similarities between these two philosophers. Possible avenues for further exploration would be the role of autobiography in their writing, their reading of music and opera, their thoughts on animals and, finally, their readings of Samuel Beckett. The most important comparative study, however, would have to examine the different yet similar ways in which they think about the relationship between the arts, ethics, and politics via their inheritances of Austin's "perlocutionaries." The question of the perlocutionary and how it is influenced by *phone* is particularly important because it is the basis for the different, although equally intriguing, cases they make for a radically new understanding of the performative and transformative powers of literature. Cavell's notion of "passionate utterances" on the one hand, and Derrida's practice of "performative interpretation" on the other would perhaps allow us to propose two frameworks for understanding how the "ethical" import of literary and dramatic works besides Shakespeare may be linked to their use of sounds, music or voices.

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