

The Dramatic Role of Astronomy in Early Modern Drama

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Abstract

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By examining five types of astronomical and celestial phenomena—comets, constellations, the zodiac, planets, and the music of the spheres—this thesis posits not only that early modern dramatists were influenced by established and emerging natural philosophy as habits of thought that manifested in their writing, but also that astronomical phenomena operate within the drama, performance, and in the theatre as elements for creating and developing a distinctly spatial dramaturgy. Using theories from the spatial turn, this thesis maps the positions, edges, disturbances, and motions of celestial properties within the imaginary and physical space of early modern drama and theatre. It argues that the case study plays examined within this thesis demonstrate a period-wide engagement, rather than an authorial-, company-, theatre-, or even genre-specific practice. Dramatists developed techniques using astronomical phenomena as dramatic methods that occasionally underscored early modern astronomical thought. However, in many cases constructed plots, characters, visual and sound effects, and movements transgressed astronomical expectations. Dramatists broke down constellations, inserted new stars in the heavens, created zodiacal females, launched pyrotechnical comets, moved planets unexpectedly across the stage, and played (and refrained from playing) celestial “music” for the audience. Recognising composite and often contradictory astronomical constructions within the drama, this thesis moves the critical discussion away from an intellectual history of natural philosophy and gravitates toward an active astronomical dramaturgy.

Conventions

Quotations from early modern printed books retain the original spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation. Dating suggested throughout the thesis aims for performance dates, rather than publishing dates. Unless otherwise noted suggested dates, venues, and companies taken from Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012-) in its respective volumes. All Shakespeare plays and poems from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells et al., 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Introduction

This thesis considers the dramatic role of astronomy in early modern drama and investigates the ways that dramatists from this period used established and emerging astronomical concepts in plays and on the stage. Their borrowing and reconstituting astronomical elements corresponded to the period's interest in celestial phenomena, discovery, and cosmological significance. However, as dramatists developed an astronomical dramaturgy, they modified and reshaped celestial elements, events, and ideas for specific theatrical purposes.

Contemporaries of continental astronomers, such as Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galilei, and those closer to home, including Leonard and Thomas Digges, Thomas Harriot, and John Dee, early modern dramatists participated in the astronomical momentum by manipulating ideas and expectations from early modern natural philosophy. Plays from this period demonstrate an alertness to the dramatic potential of celestial objects, properties, and events. Throughout the thesis, I argue that early modern dramatists used astronomical figures as part of their dramaturgical strategies. Astronomical phenomena functioned as verbal and visual dramatic tools, and were put into plays as spatial metaphors, narrative events, characters, and as visual spectacle and acoustic effect. This thesis explores the complex use of astronomical elements as catalysts for staging spectacle, stimulating wonder, altering plots, developing character, and prompting movement.

Astronomy has been underexplored in our critical understanding of early modern drama. Though broadly addressed within Shakespeare studies with Cumberland Clark's 1929 *Shakespeare and Science: A study of Shakespeare's interest in, and literary and dramatic use of, natural phenomena...* and W.G. Guthrie's "The Astronomy of Shakespeare" (1964), these writings produce concordance-like catalogues of references highlighting Shakespeare's application of astronomical elements, rather than detailed dramatic or literary analyses. Carla

Mazzio's edited collection, *Shakespeare and Science* (2009), creates a starting point for delving into Shakespeare's use of natural philosophy. However, the compendium only briefly touches on astronomy in a much larger "scientific" discussion. Elizabeth Spiller's *Science, Reading and Renaissance Literature* (2004) similarly provides a broad, though useful, sweep through a variety of natural philosophical topics and their relationship to literature. S.K. Heninger's *Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology* (1960) provides an entry point for considering atmospheric phenomena of the period, but does not treat astronomy as a whole. His *Touces of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (1974) comes closer, and it is this work that in many ways paves the way for chapter 5 and *musica mundana*.¹

Other studies inch toward astronomy with topics including cosmology, geometry, and space, such as Angus Fletcher's *Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare* (2007) and Henry S. Turner's *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580-1630* (2006).² Tom McAlindon's *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* (1991) examines the tragedies, using the cosmological and elemental as a point of entry into the genre and defining conflicting nature within the heavens as a necessary part of the elemental.³ These critical works are useful to gain a broad understanding of key concepts and will be

¹ Cumberland Clark, *Shakespeare and Science: A Study of Shakespeare's Interest in, and Literary and Dramatic Use of, Natural Phenomena...* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1929); James Guthrie, "The Astronomy of Shakespeare," *Irish Astronomical Journal* 6 (1964): 201-211; Carla Mazzio, ed. *Shakespeare and Science*, *South Central Review* 26, no. 1-2 (Winter and Spring 2009); Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); S.K. Heninger, *Handbook of Renaissance Meteorology: With Particular Reference to Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1960); S.K. Heninger, *Touces of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1974).

² Angus Fletcher, *Time, Space, and Motion in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Henry S. Turner, *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580-1630* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³ Tom McAlindon, *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

used throughout the thesis as they also consider space in habits of thought (Fletcher) and on the stage (Turner). More recent energies behind the specific study of connections between early modern drama and astronomy remain outside the domain of mainstream critical scholarship. Retired astronomer, Peter D. Usher (*Shakespeare and Saturn: Accounting for Appearances*), and popular scientist, Dan Falk (*The Science of Shakespeare*), publish works akin to code-breaking and authorship studies, rendering them suspect for scholarly use.⁴ Unfortunately, this has thrown a shadow over the legitimate and interesting critical work to be done and has perhaps diffused critical energy around the topic.

This thesis, therefore, fills the gap within the critical landscape for exploring astronomy in early modern drama. Rather than cataloguing occurrences of celestial images or tackling generic composition, I explore astronomical referents and interrogate their dramatic role. I contribute to an area of early modern studies that has been so far peripheral to criticism of drama and theatre, and, it is to be hoped, stimulate further enquiry. The examples above are primarily focused on Shakespearean plays. Exploring astronomy in plays written by a wider range of dramatists allows for a more complex analysis of the use of astronomy within the early modern period.

Tracing astronomical elements in early modern plays will quite naturally parallel historical astronomical study, discovery, and debate. I consider contemporary ideas from the history of natural philosophy, including first-hand observations of astronomical phenomena (e.g., Queen Elizabeth's record of the new star of 1577), almanacs, instruments such as armillary spheres and celestial globes, and treatises in natural philosophy (e.g. Kepler's *Astronomia Nova* and Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius*) as a means of identifying and comparing

⁴ Peter D. Usher, *Shakespeare and Saturn: Accounting for Appearances* (New York: Peter Lang, 2015); Dan Falk, *The Science of Shakespeare: A New Look at the Playwright's Universe* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2014).

astronomical ideas, events, and contemporary responses. However, this is not an enquiry primarily concerned with the history of ideas. The focus remains squarely on dramatic techniques and the use of astronomical material to create theatre. Dramatists of the period demonstrate that their use of these materials is rarely didactic. They combine anachronistic and mixed cosmologies, blending antiquated views and contemporary discovery throughout the plays. Their borrowing and altering of contrasting concepts and expectations demands a particularly flexible approach that recognises the use of astronomical knowledge as a dramatic tactic, rather than as the subject of a natural philosophical treatise.

Astronomy's enquiries have always been concerned with questions of space, including queries addressing distances, positioning, and locations. Ascribing cosmological meanings to these spatial properties required the exacting practice of measuring and marking celestial and terrestrial relationships. In this thesis I engage with methodologies from the "spatial turn" in early modern and literary studies. Spatial theories offer foundational techniques for approaching astronomical ideas of space within early modern dramatic fictions and theatre. These methodologies have proven particularly instructive in other forms of spatial enquiry that are closely related to astronomy in the period and provide a useful framework for registering the overlap between the distinctly spatial properties of astronomy, early modern drama, and the spatial art of the theatre.

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre investigates the correspondences between parts of theatrical activity, which engage in an "interplay between fictitious and real counterparts and its interactions between gazes and mirages in which actor, audiences, 'characters', text, and author all come together but never become one."⁵ Lefebvre's conception of drama in the theatre is one composed of distinct spatial regions which interact

⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 188.

but ultimately resist coherence and unification. He articulates the interaction of these conversant theatrical spaces, as they engage with one another in performance and generate new spaces:

By means of such theatrical interplay bodies are able to pass from a 'real', immediately experienced space (the pit, the stage) to a perceived space—a third space which is no longer either scenic or public. At once fictitious and real, this third space is classical theatrical space....The representational space, mediated yet directly experienced, which infuses the work and the moment, is established as such through the dramatic action itself.⁶

The intersection of space, Lefebvre's "perceived" or "third space," is not a locality (e.g. London) or a stage space (e.g. the Globe), but a space that is negotiated in and amongst the other spaces of the theatre yet is distinct from them. It is a space that is "produced" by dramatic action. Similarly, Gaston Bachelard explicates the interrelation of imagination, space, and action and suggests that: "Space calls for action, and before action, the imagination is at work."⁷ In his work on space and social theory, Benno Werlen defines space as "neither an object nor an *a priori*, but a frame of reference for actions."⁸ These theories of space and its relationship to action and imagination offer a means of thinking about celestial space and its imaginative construction within early modern drama and theatre.

A consideration of space in relationship to the celestial in early modern drama corresponds to the theatre's fundamentally spatial makeup. Anne Ubersfeld equates the two and proclaims that: "Theatrical activity...is by nature spatial."⁹ Critical appropriation of the "spatial turn" provides particularly apt methodological and theoretical ways of thinking about theatre and drama which are spatially dynamic in form and practice. Gay McAuley observes that "written texts of all sorts contain a great deal of spatial imagery and spatial metaphor, but

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 81.

⁸ Benno Werlen, *Society, Action and Space: An Alternative Human Geography*, trans. Gayna Walls, ed. Teresa Brennan and Benno Werlen (London: Routledge, 1993), 1-2.

⁹ Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, trans. Frank Collins, ed. Paul Perron and Partick Debbèche (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 98.

dramatic texts are particularly interesting in this regard.”¹⁰ Russell West similarly highlights the fullness of spatial markers in early modern drama as possessing intrinsically spatial signification. He notes that “even the verbal text of drama, whose traditional prominence in theatrical criticism tended to elide the concrete spatiality of performance, is replete with spatial indicators.”¹¹ This thesis finds that astronomical elements within early modern plays, whether metaphorical or used as spectacle, form networks of spatial interaction on stage and in the drama.

In order to explore these spatial sign systems, semiotics—specifically spatial information, spatial referents, and the world-building potential of spatial dramatic discourse—will be used as a key theoretical bridge to understanding the celestial signs embedded into dramatic texts, performance, and theatre space. Keir Elam’s “macro-context” and the concept of “possible worlds” is particularly useful to navigate and chart the spatial potential of the celestial within the spatially rich environment of dramatic fiction, performance, and the physical theatre.¹² As Julie Sanders suggests, drama was “one of the key means by which early modern English society strove to make sense of space.”¹³ This thesis investigates how dramatists appropriated the spatially nuanced properties of the cosmological, which were dense with social and symbolic referential possibilities.

Elam’s work highlights the theatre as a correlation of “levels of a unified cultural phenomenon” whose signification potential is not limited to a dramatic text.¹⁴ McAuley echoes Elam’s conception of a range of systems of signifying within drama and theatre: “The spatialisation of language that is so fundamental to theatre enables the words spoken to

¹⁰ Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 218.

¹¹ Russell West, *Spatial Representations and the Jacobean Stage: From Shakespeare to Webster* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2002), 6.

¹² Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 125 and 91-2.

¹³ Julie Sanders, *The Cultural Geography of Early Modern Drama, 1620-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

¹⁴ Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre*, 2.

function in relation to larger signifying structures, enables meaning to extend far beyond the verbal.”¹⁵ As West notes, “Theatre is a complex process of spatial semiosis utilising a diverse range of spatial codes. Almost everything on the stage—stage design, scenery, lighting, actor positioning with respect to the audience and with respect to other actors, gesture and mime, voice projection, costuming—can be seen to participate in the spatial aspect of theatre.”¹⁶ Astronomical elements within early modern drama function within these “spatial indicators” and coded sign systems. Performance studies and its appropriation of phenomenology and ethnography offers a dynamic method for exploring the exchange between what Richard Schechner labels as “relational nodes in constantly emerging systems.”¹⁷ Specifically important for this study, Schechner includes “performances, people, places, planets, star systems, and thinking machines” into the web of these relatable and interconnected “systems.”¹⁸

One of the hallmarks of spatial literary criticism leading from the broader spatial turn is a preoccupation with boundaries, delineating or contesting territorial edges of a particular space or place. Critics position early modern drama as a highly spatialised form within early modern culture and open the plays to exploration of particular spatial areas (the theatre, the city, and exotic spaces of travel and discovery). These studies interrogate perceptions of space and question the ways in which drama interacts with, absorbs, perpetuates, or resists boundaries. Sarah Dustagheer labels Steven Mullaney’s *The Place of the Stage* (1988) as “one of the first significant examples” of the influence of spatial turn on early modern drama.¹⁹ In his book Mullaney considers the “cultural and ideological significance” of

¹⁵ McAuley, *Space in Performance*, 211.

¹⁶ West, *Spatial Representations and the Jacobean Stage*, 6.

¹⁷ Richard Schechner, *Environmental Theater*, rev. ed. (New York; London: Applause, 1994), xi.

¹⁸ Ibid., x.

¹⁹ Sarah Dustagheer, “Shakespeare and the ‘Spatial Turn,’” *Literature Compass* 10 (2013): 571, doi:10.1111/lic3.12068.

theatres in London, using spatial theory to examine the positions and social posturing of early modern theatres within and sometimes against their surroundings.²⁰

The corpus of critical spatial work since Mullaney continues to consider boundaries and the influence divisions and spatial distinctions have on drama. Criticism on spaces or places of the period, though defined by geographical or architectural markers, is often characterised by a recognition that spaces are not isolated areas but porous and negotiated constructions of “multidirectional influence” within a broader culture.²¹ Current critical discourse opens previously distinct geographical regions and, through research spurred on by philosophical and literary theory, understands these areas as interconnected networks or as more “permeable boundaries.”²² However, to manage the scope of spatial environments, critical discourse continues to define specific regional environments. Considerations of the city and urban landscapes, rural space, domesticity, theatrical space, colonial space and exploration cover the terrestrial spatial regions within and without drama in ongoing spatial discourse.

By engaging with these spatial concepts and relationships, this thesis investigates the next boundary in early modern drama that has so far been ignored from a spatial perspective. It explores the role of astronomy within the interstices of spatial imagination and the physical theatre. In doing so, I work to emulate Simon Palfrey’s critical focus found in *Shakespeare’s Possible Worlds*: “I do not use the playtext as an occasion for exploring other discourses.”²³ While my thesis finds it instructive to engage spatial theories and illuminating to enter into dialogue with early modern natural philosophical texts, the intention of this project from the

²⁰ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), vii.

²¹ Sanders, *The Cultural Geography*, 13.

²² Gerald M. MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward, *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of culture, 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

²³ Simon Palfrey, *Shakespeare’s Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 11.

beginning has been to explore the plays. To borrow Palfrey's phrase, this thesis works to keep the drama as its "fundamental occasion."²⁴ It engages a range of texts and spaces (both imagined and physically present) in order to understand the function of astronomy as part of this interactive and living spatial conversation in early modern dramatic texts, performance, physical theatre spaces, and Lefebvre's "perceived space," which are experienced and represented in and through the imagination. While not erasing territorial distinctions, spatial studies put pressure on established terrestrial boundaries. If the regions found within the spatial turn may be considered as spheres, as those in Aristotelian cosmology, this thesis explores the next sphere beyond the terrestrial regions of enquiry typically investigated in critical discourse concerned with space—that of celestial space.

Playgoers and readers familiar with Shakespeare will undoubtedly be aware that he wrote about star-crossed lovers and moon-lit nights, but perhaps they, like me, did not know that he and his fellow dramatists repeatedly found dramatic use for a topic so specific to natural philosophy as the retrograde motion of planets. I was eager to explore what dramatic function astronomical elements served within early modern plays. Were these ideas only used as heightened decorative language or did they serve a broader purpose in character creation, plot development, movement and choreography, audience experience, and in the construction of imaginary fictional worlds? This thesis explores these questions by focusing on five types of astronomical phenomena used in early modern drama: comets, zodiacal bodies, constellations, planets, and the music of the spheres.

The first chapter argues that early modern dramatists used comets as a recognisable stimulus for wonder. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first explores comets as a special pyrotechnical effect. From 1588 to 1622, at least seven plays from the professional stage employ a comet apparition within a stage direction. By examining John Bate's 1634

²⁴ Ibid.

The Mysteries of Nature and Art, I reconstruct or at least reimagine the spectacle used to make comets appear on stage and reassess the potential for artificial comets to stimulate wonder in the viewer. The second section questions the dramatic role of the comet as a reported event, with particular attention given to *Sejanus* and *Julius Caesar*. In the third section, I explore the metaphorical use of comets in Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore, Part One* (1604) and his *If This Be Not a Good Play, The Devil Is in It* (1611-12), and John Webster's *The White Devil* (1611-12). Comets appearing onstage in theatrical spectacle and verbally referenced in the drama functioned as part of a network of wonderful visual and rhetorical devices. I argue that by appropriating comets into plays, early modern dramatists accessed, amplified, and reframed the available resources embedded within the broader cultural imagination in order to produce wonder.

In Chapter 2, I investigate the dramatic relationship between heavenly and human bodies. I argue that as early modern almanacs presented a universal male body in the zodiacal man, dramatists explored the potential of redrafting the image and staging a zodiacal female. The chapter analyses the role of three female characters: Lyly's Pandora in *The Woman in the Moon* (1587-90), Dekker's Celestine in *Satiromastix* (1601), and Webster's Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14). The female figure disrupted the stable male image of celestial correspondence found in early modern almanacs, and the change in gender increased the dramatic tension and presented new possibilities for character creation and dramatic action. These plays challenged the uniform edges of zodiacal figures and pressed the boundaries of how female characters could register mutability and flexibility. I use the spatial theory of topology to navigate the overlapping, intersecting, and repelling relationships between heavenly bodies and the female bodies assumed in the drama. Interrogating heavenly bodies in the almanac and female bodies in the drama through the lens of topology reveals that

female characters retain identities and bodily shape under pressure while manipulated onstage.

Chapter 3 charts planetary motion with specific attention to the significance of vertical and horizontal axes of movement. In order to do so, I consider three case study plays: Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (1610), Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (1610-11) and (1612-13), and Heywood's *The Golden Age* (1611). In these plays, I trace the planetary characters' movements onstage and the proposed movement through the imagination. This chapter argues that dramatists strategically position planetary characters and choreograph their movements using verbal, visual, aural, and sometimes olfactory means. These movements correspond with the characters' function in the drama and alert the audience to the planets' dramatic roles. *Cymbeline* and *The Golden Age* use vertical motion to bring the god/planet figure of Jupiter into the playing space. As *deus ex machina* figures, the gods interact with the play world in their vertical descent and ascent. Their vertical movements indicate the intersection of the celestial and the terrestrial world. As this chapter argues, Beaumont and Fletcher's Cynthia in *The Maid's Tragedy* breaks the vertical tradition, as she moves horizontally throughout the playing space of the theatre and the imaginary space of the drama. Her horizontal and orbital motions replicate masque convention and early modern natural philosophy. I propose that her motion registers her role in the masque-like scene, not as a deity arranging the narrative events but as a satellite drawn to the kingly sun.

Chapter 4 posits that constellations symbolised figures of change. The chapter establishes an early modern expectation of stasis by examining armillary spheres and celestial globes. The zodiac band, which illustrated the astrologically significant constellations, remained mechanically immovable on early modern armillary spheres, and representations of the fixed stars in diagrams of the universe highlighted their immobility. While constellations appeared within some early modern plays that reflected pre-Copernican and Copernican

cosmologies of being fixed, constellations feature in this chapter as contradictions of the expectation of stasis. Dekker's *Whore of Babylon* (1607) disrupts traditional patterns of celestial regularity by dislocating constellations from their ancient moorings. The disintegration of the fixed stars accentuates the allegorical structure of the play and highlights apocalyptic themes. Heywood's *2 If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* (1606) unsettles constellations in the reverse manner to that employed in Dekker's play. Instead of dropping the stars from the heavens, Heywood inserts new stars and creates new asterisms. Constellations in these plays collapse or receive new additions. In both their addition and subtraction of stars these plays work against and transgress the perception of the immutable fixed stars. By scripting constellations that perform in direct opposition to cosmological thought, Dekker and Heywood defy expectations, prompting dramatic action and altering narrative time. The stellar violations reinforce the dramatists' experimental dramaturgy, as they worked against the anticipated fixity of the celestial sphere.

Chapter 5 challenges critical assumptions about the sound of *musica mundana* (the music of the spheres) in early modern drama. In this chapter I question the claims of the ongoing critical tradition that requires stage music to represent the music of the spheres in early modern drama. I examine Shakespeare and George Wilkins' *Pericles* (1606-8), George Chapman's *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron* (1607-8), and John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's *The Double Marriage* (1620-3) and *The Prophetess* (1622). This chapter compares and contrasts these plays in order to reconstruct the ways in which early modern dramatists used the phenomenon, to question whether or not sound was always available to the audience, and to suggest how receiving or being denied access to the sound altered the effect of the phenomenon in the theatre. It begins with a primary literature review to establish the concept of the music of the spheres as something not universally heard. It then addresses the common arguments that critical tradition posits as reasons for the audience to hear the

music of the spheres with Pericles, including the reliability of a non-deluded protagonist, early modern theatrical convention, and theatrical effect. Analysis of these plays in concert with one another reveals a more nuanced theatrical and dramatic history than has previously been assumed.

Each chapter interrogates the dramaturgical strategies, methods, and effects of bringing non-dramatic astronomical material into dramatic form. While the dramatists resist neat divisions of a univocal dramatic role that each phenomenon plays, every chapter emphasises specific theatrical elements and techniques in ways that are loosely divided in the chapter-by-chapter structure. While the boundaries remain fluid, the dramatic elements are arranged as follows: Chapters 1 and 5 address the visual and aural stage effects of comets and the music of the spheres. Chapters 2-4 examine planetary characters but do so in specific ways that are necessarily bound up with narrative structure and plot development: Chapter 2 focuses on character creation and development with the zodiacal (wo)man, Chapter 3 charts character and plot, as it works through the expectation of stasis and the contrast of disintegrating stars, and Chapter 4 maps the movement of planetary characters within the stage space.

Early modern dramatists developed a range of dramatic strategies using natural philosophy and specifically astronomical phenomena to project a character's experience and to stimulate a response in another character, the audience, or both. As Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan observe: "If we do want to historicise the early modern passions, then, we need to give more attention to the other systems of knowledge and representation that people used to conceptualise and articulate emotional experience."²⁵ This thesis works to attend to this "system of knowledge" of astronomy and the ways in which early modern dramatists used its

²⁵ Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan, eds, *The Renaissance of Emotion: Understanding Affect in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 6.

materials to not only “articulate emotional experience” but also articulate a variety of dramatic effects.

In *A Defence of Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney develops his aesthetic apologetic by positioning the astronomer alongside the maker of art.

There is no art delivered to mankind that hath not the works of nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend, as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth. So doth the astronomer look upon the stars, and, by that he seeth, set down what order nature hath taken therein.²⁶

He envisions nature as the provider of raw, aesthetic materials, making itself available as the subject for artists who produce their art more as recipients than as creators. Borrowing from the theatrical arts, Sidney compares the mimetic artist to actors relying on the boon from nature in order to stage their dramatic product out of the “principal object[s]” provided. Similarly, the astronomer borrows from what he observes and transcribes the order nature delivered to his faculties in order to produce his star charts. Sidney’s overlap between the theatrical and the astronomical is not a rare one, particularly within early modern texts of this kind. In their comparable works of defending and defining poetics and the theatre George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesie* (1589) and Thomas Heywood in *An Apology for Actors* (1612) also situate the literary and dramatic alongside the astronomical.²⁷

As this thesis demonstrates, the analogy worked in both areas of thought, as practising astronomers and natural philosophers from this period related the movement of planetary bodies to theatrical relationships onstage, while literary and dramatic writers created fictions from available astronomical material. In *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions*, Ronald

²⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 78.

²⁷ George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007). See Book I, chapter 4: “How the poets were the first philosophers, the first astronomers...” (98-99); Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, in “*An Apology for Actors*” (1612) by Thomas Heywood and “*A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*” (1615) by I.G. (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1941), D2v-D3r.

Levao identifies “astronomical speculation” as one of “the fascinations with other worlds in time and space,” which “exert[s] pressure on the ways Renaissance minds shape the world they know and the ways the world shapes them.”²⁸ Astronomy actively participated in shaping the imaginative configuration of the universe, and the drama of the period interacted with these imaginative constructions, as dramatists repurposed celestial material from their experiential understanding of the heavens, as well as from learned natural philosophy. Throughout this thesis, astronomy emerges as a flexible but powerful dramatic element that operated throughout early modern drama and its theatre in sights and sounds, plots and characters, metaphor and structure, choreography and pyrotechnics.

²⁸ Ronald Levao, *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions: Cusanus, Sidney, Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), xviii-xix.

“confounding and delightful,” with its ability to simultaneously perplex and entertain.

Nguyen’s article’s subtitle reads: “Moving paintings, a shooting star and Ketchikan, Alaska?

All part of the wonders of HBO’s audacious religious drama.”³⁰ The opening sequence provides a twenty-first-century parallel to early modern spectacle that staged comets in order to stimulate wonder.

The comet plays covered in this chapter range in date from about 1588 to 1622, during which time several comets were observed in the night sky, with recorded occurrences in 1577, 1580, 1585, 1602, 1607, and 1618. Though outside of the date range for the case study plays, the Great Comet of 1577 is essential to this chapter, due to its astronomical significance, association with comet plays, and the widespread cultural commentary it prompted. Not only were these comets observed by leading natural philosophers such as Brahe, Mästlin, Kepler, Dee, and Digges, but interest in the phenomena also spread past the theories of astronomers and into the imagination of the populace, who noted the phenomena’s appearances and commented on their features. Comets or blazing stars, as they were often called, are vitally connected to early modern notions of sight and wonder. As Friedrich Nausea noted in his treatise, published in two editions in English in 1577 and 1618: “Comets carrie with them a prognostication of some strange *wonder*.”³¹ From apocalyptic preachers to anxious royalty, cometary observations produced wonder across diverse segments of early modern culture. Almanacs, sermons, diaries, ballads, correspondence, paintings, and

Kangaroos and More: Moving paintings, a shooting star and Ketchikan, Alaska? All part of the wonders of HBO’s audacious religious drama,” review of *The Young Pope*, by Paolo Sorrentino, HBO, *IndieWire*, 22 January 2017, <http://www.indiewire.com/2017/01/the-young-pope-paolo-sorrentino-title-sequence-star-meteor-kangaroo-1201771989/>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Friedrich Nausea, *Of all the blasing stars in general...*, trans. Abraham Fleming (London, 1577), Chapter IX, C4r. Early English Books Online. Accessed 28 September 2017, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2175/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:176506:20. Most likely the treatise was translated during these years as a response to the “Great Comet” of both years.

theatrical performances all expressed varying perceptions and theories surrounding the comets.

The Great Comet's portent carried with it the weight of a wonderful event and was much discussed. Cultural commentators asked, through a variety of types of writing, including astronomical and political tracts, poems, letters, and sermons: "What does this comet signify, and how can it be read?"³² It was thought that comets posed a particular threat to royalty, and the Great Comet was no exception. Simon Goulart's *Admirable and Memorable Histories* (1607) includes a section entitled "Of Comets" in which he "represents" the comets observed in the previous century. In his retelling, Goulart includes details about the comets' features, but most of the history is taken up with the effects of the phenomena in political spheres, including wars, "the death of great men," and wonder-filled responses to them.³³ The *Calendar of State Papers* records Queen Elizabeth's emotional and physiological response to the fearful apparition: "That comet, which had not been long seen, filled the Queen and her followers with great fear: for meantime she laboured with a very burdensome disease, so that from day to day she vomited blood in the greatest abundance."³⁴ While opinions differed on causes for comet appearances, their material composition, their position within the sky, and what (or if) they might signify, the phenomena were objects of wonder and prompted a response of the same. This chapter argues that by appropriating comets into plays, dramatists accessed, amplified, and reframed the available resources embedded within the broader cultural imagination in order to produce wonder.

³² See Clarisse Doris Hellman, *The Comet of 1577: Its Place in the History of Astronomy* (New York: AMS Press, 1971).

³³ Simon Goulart, *Admirable and Memorable Histories Containing the Wonders of Our Time*, trans. Edward Grimeston (London, 1607).

³⁴ Anon., "Extracts from a letter written at London," 4 February 1577-8, in *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, ed. Joseph Bain et al., 13 vols in 14 (Edinburgh: H. M. S. O., 1898-1969), vol. 5: 1574-1581, ed. William K. Boyd, 270 (Entry 297).

“Often called the age of discovery, the Renaissance should also be seen as the age of the marvellous.” Peter G. Platt declares the marvellous and the wonderful to be so all-encompassing that “wonder was an absolutely central concept” to early modern epistemology.³⁵ It is in this broader context that an aesthetic of wonder emerges. Stephen Orgel highlights “how central the idea of wonder was to all Renaissance discussions of art in general, and of poetry in particular. The means of drama, the age asserted, was spectacle, [and] its end was wonder.”³⁶ Renaissance theorists, such as Robortello and Castelvetro, developed theoretical principles for creating models and ideals, while remoulding and often casting quite a different shape from Aristotelian concepts. Their neo-Aristotelian aesthetic and patterns of spectacle and wonder persisted throughout the Renaissance and eventuated into performance practice.³⁷

In *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* T.G. Bishop notes: “Renaissance theory joined stage practice in enormously expanding attention to the role of stage spectacle in creating wonder.”³⁸ As a result, the early modern theatre became a space that was at the forefront of a burgeoning aesthetic. Kristin Keating and Bryan Reynolds identify the early modern theatre as the “central locus for the production and experience of wonderment.”³⁹ Bishop locates the aesthetic of wonder in an audience’s ongoing negotiation with what they experience within the theatre. Wonder develops not as an “additive” to tack onto a play, but rather it operates in a “complex modulation of audience identification and detachment, making the between of the theatrical performance a space of semiotic and psychological

³⁵ Peter G. Platt, *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture* (Newark: Associated University Presses, 1999), 15.

³⁶ Stephen Orgel, “The Poetics of Spectacle,” *New Literary History* 2, no.3 (Spring 1971): 56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 53-56.

³⁸ T.G. Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theatre of Wonder* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 39.

³⁹ Kristin Keating and Bryan Reynolds, “A World of (No) Wonder, or No Wonder-wounded Hearers Here: Toward a Theory on the Vanishing Mediation of ‘No Wonder’ in Shakespeare’s Theater,” in Adam Max Cohen, *Wonder in Shakespeare* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 176.

experiment, through which the audience, like the characters, must negotiate a way.”⁴⁰ As theorists from the period reached back to classical theories of drama, neo-Aristotelian ideas of wonder granted spectacle and its emotional end in wonder a primary position in the aesthetic aims of the artistic medium. In the Renaissance, as Bishop goes on to say: “Wonder was generally considered the central goal of the dramatist’s art, the primary pleasure offered to the audience and a principal agent in effecting the much-discussed end of tragedy—the regulation of audience emotions through *katharsis*.”⁴¹ Wonder commanded the primary station in theory and in practice, as the aim, pleasure, and agent of response within stage plays and entertainments.

Critical exploration has produced in the last two decades a variety of perspectives and resources within the field of early modern wonder, including the work of theorists and literary historians, such as Alexander Marr, J.V. Cunningham, Stephen Orgel, T.G. Bishop, Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, and Peter G. Platt. Alexander Marr highlights the difficulty in isolating a unified system of early modern wonder when he observes: “Indeed, if it can be said that there is any consensus, no matter how loose, about the nature of curiosity and wonder in the early modern period, it is the sheer diversity of meanings, interpretations and uses attached to these objects from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment.”⁴² The “diversity of meanings” produced from what could be called “the wonderful” corresponds to the diversity of theories on the subject of comets during this period.

In their seminal work on the subject, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park argue that objects or phenomena belonged to an established collective or “canon” of wonder, which included objects like the lodestone, individuals such

⁴⁰ Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theater of Wonder*, 41.

⁴¹ Ibid, 39.

⁴² Alexander Marr, “Introduction,” in *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. R.J.W. Evans and Alexander Marr (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 2.

as pygmies, natural and preternatural phenomena (magnets and unicorn horns), and the monstrous and the strange (monstrous births and conjoined bodies). Daston and Park describe these objects as possessing “emotional import” based on signification and meaning attached to them at various times. They list comets as a phenomenon belonging in this canon until the objects were scientifically explained and thus shifted outside the realm of the stuff of wonder.⁴³ While Daston and Park do not identify a precise time when the removal of comets from the canon of wonder took place, they provide reports of wonder at a comet appearance in 1680, well past the period of this chapter, suggesting that comets maintained their status at least until then.⁴⁴ Even if scepticism over comets were threatening the wonder-producing status of comets, Dennis Kay contends that: “The theater...could sustain marvels long after they had been explained away in other spheres.”⁴⁵ As this chapter argues, dramatists appropriated comets throughout Elizabethan and Jacobean plays as a recognisable stimulus for wonder in the drama and on the stage.

The Great Comet of 1577 challenged previously held Aristotelian theories of cometary activity and received widespread attention across Europe. As Tofigh Heidarzadeh has noted, within a decade after the appearance of the comet one hundred treatises and pamphlets that discuss comets were published in Europe.⁴⁶ While the blazing star shone, those who observed the phenomenon raised questions about its origins, including its location, motion, and material, as well as its effect on the world below. Were “blazing stars” naturally occurring exhalations and burning fatty substances within the earth’s atmosphere, as Aristotle

⁴³ Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴⁵ Dennis Kay, “Who Says ‘Miracles are Past’?: Some Jacobean Marvels and the Margins of the Known,” in *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Peter G. Platt (Newark: Associated University Presses, 1999), 169.

⁴⁶ Tofigh Heidarzadeh, *A History of Physical Theories of Comets from Aristotle to Whipple*, *Archimedes: New Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology* 19 (Springer, 2008), 47.

proposed, or were they new, star-like bodies born in the celestial region as an act of God or other heavenly beings? Primarily, these questions of cometary origins and materiality centre on location and positioning, including the comet's spatial distance from earth and from other celestial objects. The fundamental tension between cometary theory in the Aristotelian cosmology and the emerging one developed from disagreements over cometary location (sublunary or supralunary), their material composition, and the spatial relationship between the blazing stars and the earth.

When Tycho Brahe observed the Great Comet, he sketched diagrams and recorded the positioning of the phenomenon, charting its relationship to the fixed stars and to the earth. Using the comet's parallax, Brahe formulated a theory of celestial supralunar bodies, which contrasted with the longstanding and commonly held Aristotelian theory. Aristotle had maintained that comets remained in the atmosphere and below the moon. They were mutable, unstable objects that could not exist in the changeless perfection within the aether of the celestial spheres. Four other astronomers observing the comet came to similar conclusions about its positioning beyond the moon: Helisaeus Roeslin, William IV, Landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, Cornelius Gemma, and Michael Mästlin.⁴⁷ Brahe theoretically repositioned blazing stars into the realm of the celestial. By moving comets much farther from the earth, he significantly altered the dominant cosmological and spatial model.

As early modern astronomers and natural philosophers debated the comets' origins and distance from the earth, dramatists brought the blazing stars near to their audiences with special effects and verbal spatial markers. Comets remained strongly associated with the miraculous and the wonderful and marked moments of strangeness and change. In his chapter "The Aesthetics of the Marvelous," James V. Mirollo notes the potential in "inventions" to replicate nature and suggests that Renaissance "artifices or inventions of an ingenious kind

⁴⁷ Ibid.

elicit wonder as much as do nature's marvels."⁴⁸ Comets onstage crossed into both categories, as artifice and as nature's marvels, functioning in dramatic texts and theatrical spectacle as part of a network of wonderful rhetorical and visual devices.

"A blazing star appeareth:" The Visual Comet

"There you may see the bright shining Moone ascending...and already risen up, before the spectators are ware of, or once saw it ascend. In some other Scenes you may see the rising of the Sunne...you may see it goe downe most artificially, where at many beholders haue bene abasht...you also see some Comets and Stars shoot in the skyes."

Sebastiano Serlio, *The First Book of Architecture*

As Serlio notes of an earlier Italian theatre, spectators viewing comets and other celestial happenings on stage "haue bene abasht," though the spectacle was produced "most artificially."⁴⁹ An English translation of *The First Book of Architecture* was published in 1611 and would have resonated with theatre-goers of London, who had the opportunity both to view comets in the night sky and the artificial blazing stars used on the early modern stage. Serlio's observation of Italian theatre space and the effect of stage comets offers a suggestive link in the period between artificiality and the effect onstage. It seems that for Serlio and the spectators he observes, the artificiality of the special effect contributed to the result of the "beholders" being "abasht" by the sight. The OED connects the term *abashed* with astonishment, and many of the sixteenth century examples it provides associate the word with

⁴⁸ James V. Mirollo, "The Aesthetics of the Marvelous: The Wondrous Work of Art in a Wondrous World," in *Wonders, Marvels, and Monsters in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Peter G. Platt (Newark: Associated University Presses, 1999), 25.

⁴⁹ Sebastiano Serlio, *The First Booke of Architecture, Made by Sebastian Serly, Entreating of Geometrie*. The Second Book, Chapter 3, 43r. (London, 1611). Early English Books Online. Accessed 30 September 2017, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2175/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:17622:41.

other feelings of amazement and wonder.⁵⁰ For Serlio the form of the representation (whether fireworks, automata, or painting on cloth) was necessarily artificial. But the transfer of location onto the stage decreased the distance between subject and object and broke down the expected spatial relationship associated with the phenomena. While it may seem obvious that this was a reconfiguration, unlike trees, buildings, animals, or even other lighting effects (e.g., tapers or candles) which could have generated a level of realism on the stage, celestial objects did not belong nor did they ever appear so close to the earth or to the human eye in any other context outside of the theatre or other entertainment venues. In artificially bringing comets to the stage, dramatists reduced the distance between the viewer and the object. This decrease in distance heightened the dramatic effect of wonder associated with and produced by “naturally” occurring comets.

Stage directions within several plays throughout the early modern period call for comets to appear. Ranging from 1588 to 1622, at least seven plays from the professional stage employ a comet apparition within a stage direction.⁵¹ The following plays will be included in the case study: *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588-9)⁵², *The Famous History of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (Admiral’s Men at the Rose, 1596), *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, Part 2* (Queen Anne’s Men at the Curtain or Boar’s Head, 1603-5), *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (King’s Men at the Globe, 1604-7), *The Bloody Banquet* (Queen’s Men at the Red Bull, 1610)⁵³, *Thorney Abbey* (1615), and *The Birth of Merlin* (Prince Charles Men at the

⁵⁰ OED Online, “abash, v.,” accessed 28 September 2017, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/101>.

⁵¹ Dating suggested throughout the thesis aims for performance dates, rather than publishing dates. Unless otherwise noted suggested dates, venues, and companies taken from Martin Wiggins, *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012-) in its respective volumes.

⁵² The stage history of *Alcazar* is particularly complex. Perhaps performed by Lord Strange’s Men at the Rose from 1592-3 (if the same play as *Muly Molocco*) or performed by the Admiral’s Men at the Rose from 1594-5 (if the same play as *Mahamet*). Performed by the Admiral’s Men in 1594 and likely at the Fortune around 1601. See Wiggins, *British Drama*, vol. 2, 433.

⁵³ Date argued by Gary Taylor, “Gender, Hunger, Horror: The History and Significance of *The Bloody Banquet*,” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring/Summer, 2001): 2.

Curtain, 1622). This section works to reconstruct or at least reimagine the spectacle used to make comets appear on stage and reassess the potential for the artificial comets to stimulate wonder in the viewer.

The catalogue above attests to the diverse grouping of dramatists, companies, and theatres (both outdoor and indoor) which staged comet plays across a broad date range. The data suggests a pattern of widespread employment for the staging device without any gravitation toward individual playwrights, companies, or performance venues. The effect of the blazing star, as Joanna Udall notes, “cannot be used to identify a play with a particular theatre.”⁵⁴ When comparing the stage directions alongside one another, the most immediately striking element is the simplicity of the stage direction that prescribes the effect or, as it may be, records or attempts to capture what would have been an original practice. The stage directions include: “*Here the blazing star.*” (*The Battle of Alcazar*, V. Prol.14-15 s.d.) “*Blazing Star appears*” (*The Birth of Merlin*, IV.v.s.d.), “*and the blazing star appears*” (*Stukeley*, sc. 20, 21-22 s.d.), and “*A Blazing Star Appeareth*” (*The Revenger’s Tragedy*, V.iii, s.d.), etc. These stage directions give little information about the nature of what was being prescribed or recorded, but the repetition of the direction “appears” emphasises the visual importance of the special effect.

Philip Butterworth’s *Theatre of Fire* includes many examples of pyrotechnic technologies available to stage technicians to produce a variety of phenomena on the medieval and early modern stage. Butterworth describes methods for producing meteorological effects, such as lightning, thunder, and tempests, as well as spiritual and mythological creatures and sites, such as devils, the “hell mouth,” and dragons. However, he

⁵⁴ Joanna Udall, *A Critical, Old-Spelling Edition of “The Birth of Merlin”* (Q 1662), Modern Humanities Research Association, Texts and Dissertations (formerly Dissertation Series) vol. 31, ed. J.R. Watson (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1991), 14. See also: David L. Frost, *The School of Shakespeare: The Influence of Shakespeare on English Drama, 1600-42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 259-60.

does not address techniques used for comets, nor does he mention them at all.⁵⁵ In *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage* R. B. Graves addresses the presence of comets within early modern plays but notes: “Unfortunately, no Renaissance handbook or list of fireworks mentions blazing stars.”⁵⁶ Graves hesitates to equate the spectacle with fireworks, but he identifies a strong association of the comet staging with a potential special effect: “Because blazing stars are so often associated with pyrotechnics, one explanation of them is that they were a kind of fireworks representing comets.”⁵⁷ While Graves uses proper caution in assigning specific techniques without hard evidence, there are clues in one of the manuals which he cites that offer a stronger argument for cometary fireworks and their anticipated response than has been previously noted.

John Bate’s 1634 *The Mysteryes of Nature, and Art* includes a book on fireworks. In it he presents a section called “Compositions for Starres,” which contains a series of recipes for creating firework stars.⁵⁸ While Bate’s pyrotechnic cookbook does not explicitly use the terms *comet* or *meteor*, after stipulating three recipes for generic stars, Bate provides “another receipt for Starres, whereof you may make fiends and divers apparitions according unto your fancie.”⁵⁹ Bate’s open-ended category suggests the variety of “apparitions” that could be created using this particular technique. Later, when providing another category of firework, he titles it “How to make fiends, or fearefull apparitions.”⁶⁰ He calls for the apparitions to follow the basic starry recipe and stipulates that: “These must bee made of the compositions for Starres” with slight additions and were formed by the maker to his “fashion.”⁶¹

⁵⁵ Philip Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1998).

⁵⁶ R.B. Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage 1567-1642* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 209.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ John Bate, *The Mysteryes of Nature, and Art: Contained in Foure Severall Treatises* (London, 1634), 61-2.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 75.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Bate's book provides a strong case for comets as fireworks, not only in the text of his work, but also in another clue that appears to have gone unnoted in considerations of Bate's book as a resource for pyrotechnics on the early modern stage. At the top of the woodblock frontispiece (Figure 1) fireworks that Bate mentions in his recipe are illustrated, including rockets and a fire drake (fiery dragon). There is one firework that has the form of a star and there are six other firework shapes that appear exactly in the form of comets (circled in red). As star-like apparitions that were intended to prompt feelings of wonder, stage comets match the description of fearful apparitions that would have been identified as part of the family of effects in Bate's recipe of starry apparitions. What is most important to this argument is not only that stage comets were most likely fireworks, but also that Bate included the anticipated emotional response to the apparition within the instruction for creating the effect. It is as if to say, if a star-like fearful apparition is needed, use this formula. Bate's pyrotechnics were engineered with built-in wonder.

century the term *wonder* belongs to a “new set of syntagmatic partners,” which include but are not limited to *wonderful*, *admirable*, and *notable*. He suggests that these collocations to *curiosity* formed as these terms became attached to objects of knowledge (e.g., a comet). The collection of terms “had a strong performative...sense: they were not just describing objects of knowledge but were also exhorting readers to take a particular attitude towards those objects.” Many of these words appear in the immediate context of comets in early modern drama. They function, as Kenny reveals, not only as descriptions of what could be observed, but also as a way to stimulate or “exhort” the audiences’ emotional response or “attitude toward those objects.”⁶²

The experience corresponds to questions being asked in the early modern period by natural philosophers concerning the origin, composition, and placement of heavenly objects. These queries relate to similar early modern optical investigations into perception and the visual representation of reality, cognition, and the ability to process depth and distance, as well as the effects of passion aroused by certain types of images. In *Vanities of the Eye*, Stuart Clark links fascinations with melancholy in the Renaissance to “contemporary concerns about the rationality of seeing.” He references *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, where in Clark’s words, Robert Burton places “the apparitions and illusions produced by strange natural causes” and the “tricks of legerdemain and lighting effects” side by side.⁶³ In *The Anatomy* Burton investigates visual deceptions, false realities, and visions alongside natural apparitions as potential causes of physical and mental symptoms associated with melancholy. While identifying the causes of melancholic symptoms, Burton ticks through lists of “naturall and inward causes,” and includes meteors and other apparitions that trigger the conditions of

⁶² Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 134-138.

⁶³ Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 53.

melancholy.⁶⁴ For Burton, the apparitions of natural phenomena and stage illusions seem to share similar space in the realm of human perception and cognition. He specifically highlights the use of tricks, such as an attempt “to frighten children with squibs,”⁶⁵ as a cause for the onset of disorders, as the viewer may become confused. Apparitions, such as an appearance of a naturally occurring comet (a wonderful, natural cause) and an artificial comet (a wonderful, firework effect), produce the same mental questioning over what is real.⁶⁶

For Burton fireworks and comets belong somewhere in the interstices between artificiality and reality. The blurred area of sensation has the potential to strongly affect the viewer, trick the eye and the mind, and move him or her from stability to instability. As such, Burton’s assessment of comet apparitions and firework illusions, as objects which stimulate parallel emotional effects, offers a helpful way to understand the ambiguous, flexible, and multi-layered tool for a dramatist to stimulate wonder. The proximity of blazing stars on stage to fireworks and pyrotechnics and the similarity of the description in Bate’s firework collection provide strong support for the theory that comets used as spectacle would most likely have been some form of firework. If comets are fireworks and both comets and fireworks produce this response, as Burton proposes, then dramatists calling for a blazing star onstage double the wonder-inducing effect.

The repetition of the spectacle within several plays from the period seems to suggest that the dramatic effect was worth repeating. Stage directions, while far from perfect records, give a sense of the role comets played in the broader structure of the drama. There may not be distinct overlaps of playhouse, company, or dramatist, but there is a historical, narrative pattern that surfaces among some of the comet plays. Out of seven plays of the period that

⁶⁴ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. 1, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, and Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 418.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 426.

⁶⁶ The term “natural” here is used to contrast with the artificial representation onstage. It is not intended as a term which would seem to ignore certain early modern theories that consider the comet as unnatural in the sense that they are “miraculous.”

employ an explicit stage direction for a comet to appear on stage, three of them appear near the character of the historical “Ruffian”⁶⁷ and sometime captain, Thomas Stukeley. George Peele’s *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588-9), *The Famous History of Captain Thomas Stukeley* (1596),⁶⁸ and Thomas Heywood’s *2 If You Know Not Me* (1603-5) feature comets that make stage appearances.⁶⁹ The Stukeley plays offer a narratively linked case study group to explore the ways in which comets appeared on stage and the role the comets played in the production of wonder.

The primary source for *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Second Part of the Booke of Battles, Fought in Our Age*, does not reference the comet of 1577. The only element relatively close to a heavenly phenomenon is the description of the battle, which renders the warfare in terms of tempestuous weather patterns:

And straight waie the harquebuziers on foote on both sides discharged as thick as haile, with such an horrible, furious, and terrible tempest, that the cracking and roaring of the Gunnes did make the earth so to tremble, as though it would haue sunke downe to hell, and the element seemed to burne with the Fire, flames, lightning, and thunder of the Gunnes.⁷⁰

The historical report seems to include everything wondrous except for a comet: lightning, thunder, fires, hail, storms, earthquakes, and even eternal damnation. The absence of the comet in the historical source and its prominence in the plays suggests that dramatists, beginning with Peele, found the phenomenon useful to the dramaturgical force of the fiction.

⁶⁷ William Camden. *The Historie of the Life and Reigne of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princesse Elizabeth, late Queene of England*. (London, 1630) Bk I, 61-2.

⁶⁸ Dating suggested here aims for performance dates, rather than publishing. It is recognised that dating for these plays is often complex. *The Battle of Alcazar* dates are discussed in greater detail below. For *The Famous History*, see Martin Wiggins, “Things That Go Bump in the Text: *Captain Thomas Stukely*,” *The Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 98, no. 1 (March 2004): 5-20. Wiggins notes that there were performances at The Rose between Dec. 1596 and June 1597 (citing Henslowe’s record of “Stewtley”).

⁶⁹ Charles Edelman, *The Stukeley Plays*. The Revels Companion Library. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005)

⁷⁰ John Polemon, *The Second Part of the Booke of Battailles, Fought in Our Age: Taken Out of the Best Authors and Writers in Sundrie Languages* (London, 1587), X2v.

In all three plays, the dramatists moved beyond the source texts of the battle to include widespread, “popular” materials which associated the portent of the comet appearance with the unrest that resulted in the historical Battle of Alcazar.

Contemporaneous accounts of the Great Comet position Stukeley in relationship to the phenomenon. In early modern popular culture Stukeley is, or at least comes to be, the persona that bridges the rising, faceless tension between the knowable England (and Western Europe) and “Barbarie” of Northern Africa and the Turks—the exotic and unknown “other.” Stukeley appears contextually alongside first-hand accounts of the cometary apparition:

It is said that Stuckley came here before Fitzmorris, and has gone with him in the ship; but others say he is secretly in the Ambassador's house of Spain. There also went with Fitzmorris a bishop lately made in Spain, of the order of the Greyfriars; another had embarked for Ireland before, and was robbed by the way, and returned hither, where he yet remains.

On Saturday night, 9 Nov., there arose out of the W.S.W. from this place a great blazing star, with his beams towards the east, inclining something towards the south; the like has few times been seen, and still continues. The King here makes great preparation for Africa against spring, because the Turk daily sends great power thither.

Botulphe Holder to Lord Burghley
9 December 1577.⁷¹

The comet and precise detail, including dates and directional positioning, feature poignantly in this political discussion of conspirators and political motions. Although the record is months before the battle, Stukeley and the comet appear side-by-side in the letter. This piece of correspondence is only the start of extended contemporaneous material that connects the comet to that political conflict, positioning the legends of Stukeley and the comet together, though the events mentioned did not happen at the same time. Not only do three plays from

⁷¹ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green, 5 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857-1872), vol. 5: *Addenda (Elizabeth and James I), 1580-1625* (1872), 522.

the period closely link the battle to the blazing star, but later broadside ballads also take up the repetitive melodic strains of Stukeley fame. The ballad entitled *In The Life and Death of Famous Thomas Stukelie*⁷² repeats the prominent providential trope of the blazing star foretelling the judgment of God. The popular association with Stukeley bolsters his ties to the Great Comet of 1577, the prognostication of the comet, and the surrounding wonder of viewing and interpreting.

The connection between Stukeley and the comet evidenced within the correspondence of those at court and ballads sung on the street, demonstrates a cultural identification with the appearance of the comet, the Battle of Alcazar, and the portent of the Barbary Wars as it relates to Thomas Stukeley. Three early plays and successive songs create a figure in Stukeley that could be considered an early modern star. To gain the most effect from the comet and the notable figure, a visual context and formula was necessary. In what appears to be the oldest of the plays in examination, *The Battle of Alcazar* rediscovers a useful form for creating a wonder-filled spectacle—the dumb show, a highly visual, dramatic form that had fallen from favour.

Recent dating of *The Battle of Alcazar* situates the play in a unique position within the history of dumb show as a convention. In his Malone Society introduction of 1922, W.W. Greg noted that while the Quarto is dated 1594, evidence suggests 1588-9 as a probable original performance date. This date continues to remain largely unchallenged.⁷³ The Greg dates situate *The Battle of Alcazar* near the resurgence of interest in dumb show on the early modern stage. In “Dumb-Show in Elizabethan Drama,” B.R. Pearn traces the shifts in the popularity of the dumb show and the “chronological distribution” of the implementation of

⁷² Broadside Ballad. *The Life and Death of Famous Thomas Stukelie*
<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/view/sheet/782> ESTC: R234889

⁷³ Reiterated by Yoklavich and subsequently by Martin Wiggins. See George Peele, *The Battle of Alcazar*, ed. John Yoklavich, in George Peele, *The Dramatic Works of George Peele*, ed. Frank S. Hook and John Yoklavich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), vol. 2, 226. And Wiggins, *Notes and Queries*, June 2002.

the stage practice. Pearn highlights the twenty-year gap between 1567-1587, where dumb show was not used.⁷⁴ If, as Greg, John Yoklavich, Charles Edelman and Martin Wiggins have it, *The Battle of Alcazar* was composed in 1588-89, the play would have been an early pioneer in resurrecting the dumb show and placing it back into common usage. This dating also proves helpful in the analysis of the type of dumb show that appears in *The Battle of Alcazar* and explains the more antiquated, traditional approach that the play employs.

It is fitting then to consider dumb show as fundamentally tied to the way in which these comet scenes were viewed by the original spectators. As comets were visually presented in or near the spectacle-heavy performance convention, the combination of elements would have affected the overall experience and response to the visual effect.

Referring to the origin of the dumb show, Mehl notes:

[Dumb shows] are an outcome of a characteristic trend of the time, the desire to make abstract and spiritual experiences and conflicts visible as concrete scenes and to impress a moral idea on the spectators by appealing directly to the senses. The drama as well as the prose literature of the Elizabethan period expresses a strong desire for explicitness and repetition.⁷⁵

By establishing the comets' dramatic placement within a highly visual setting such as the dumb show, dramatists use comets as a stage device to manipulate the full use of the spectacle of a comet appearing on stage. The dumb show in *The Battle of Alcazar* strikingly delivers this type of visual repetition and turns the conflict and abstractions into a clear, visible, and altogether sensory impression using the cometary emblem at its core. The Presenter responds to Muly Mahamet's soliloquy from 4.2, where the content and form of the dumb show is the visual comeback to the previous speech. The soliloquy highlights

⁷⁴ B. R. Pearn, "Dumb-Show in Elizabethan Drama," *The Review of English Studies* 11, no. 44 (1935): 385–405.

⁷⁵ Dieter Mehl, *The Elizabethan Dumb Show: The History of a Dramatic Convention* (London: Methuen, 1965), 17.

Mahamet's attempt to make the Portugal soldiers "hew a way for me unto the crown"

(IV.ii.71). What is to come later in the play is foreshadowed in the next scene.

Mahamet's summoning of the classical personages is met by the angelic Fame who does some conjuring of her own.

Enter the PRESENTER before the last dumb show, and speaketh.

PRESENTER. Ill be to him that so much ill bethinks,
And ill betide this foul ambitious Moor
Whose wily trains with smoothest course of speech
Hath tied and tangled in a dangerous war,
The fierce and manly King of Portugal.
(V. Prol. 1-5)

The Presenter directly addresses Mahamet's rhetoric and "smoothest course of speech" and calls forth ill upon him that "so much ill bethinks." Though the speech emphasises the role of rhetoric, it will be the visual that meets and reinforces the warning. It is the dumb show that provides the necessary visual apparatus to not only clearly enunciate, but also demonstrate the fate and "fruit new ripe to fall" (5. Prol.12). As Mehl notes: "The figure of the presenter reflects the tendency...to make everything as clear and impressive as possible. Everything had to be said more than once, using different artistic means, in order to impress it on every single member of the audience."⁷⁶ Part of the repetition in this instance is that other sensory devices appear and sound near the comets and work together to maximise the rhetorical effect and the stage effect of spectacle.

The stage direction "*Lightning and Thunder*" precedes the comet's appearance (V. Prol. 5, s.d.). Lightning and thunder were quite common effects on the early modern stage. Even if the spectators had never witnessed a staged comet, regular theatregoers would have known to associate lightning and thunder with disorder and fear. As Leslie Thomson has noted: "*Thunder and lightning* was the conventional stage language—or code—for the production of effects...that would establish or confirm a specifically supernatural context in

⁷⁶ Ibid., 12.

the minds of the audience.”⁷⁷ Lightning and thunder are commonly linked to comet appearances onstage and in astronomical materials.⁷⁸ The case for a convention related to this stage direction will be further articulated below in relation to *Julius Caesar*, but the flash of the lightning and the noise of the thunder would have prepared the audience for further visual, aural, and olfactory experiences of wonder, emphasising the force of the comet by the similarity and contrast of sight and sound.⁷⁹

In the dramatic text that follows the multi-sensory comet appearance, astronomical declarations are made on all sides of the conflict, each speculating on the significance of the apparition in relation to their present battle. These declarations remind the audience of the spectacle previously seen and renew the force of the emblematic meaning. They draw the viewer back to the comet appearance as it relates to the fate of the day. Muly recalls “My stars, my dam, my planets and my nurse” and “thou fatal star,” here referring to his birth star, with instructions to “spit out thy poison bad, and all the ill” (5.1.77-83). He calls on the elements to “destroy, dissolve, disturb, and dissipate” his body, which he views as already dead and calls a “corpse” (V.i.90-91). The comet of the dumb show “threat[s],” “blaze[s],” and “consumes” in similar fashion (V.Prol.15-19). Stukeley relegates his fate to judicial, astrological powers “since my stars bode me this tragic end” (V.i.122) and, like Muly Mahamet, connects the astronomical relationship with a deterministic view of Fortune: “from our cradles we were markèd all” (171) and “here endeth Fortune’s rule, and bitter rage” (190). The wonder of the comet appearances marks these scenes for the spectators, allowing

⁷⁷ Leslie Thomson, “The Meaning of *Thunder and Lightning*: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations,” *Early Theatre* 2, no. 1 (1999): 1, doi: <https://doi.org/10.12745/et.2.1.570>.

⁷⁸ Thunder also precedes the comets in *Stukeley*, *Thorny Abbey*, *Revenger’s Tragedy*, and *Merlin*.

⁷⁹ For more details of lighting and stage effects on the early modern stage, see Butterworth’s *Theatre of Fire*. Chapter 3 of this thesis considers Jonathan Gil Harris’ “The Smell of Macbeth” for the role that materials used to manufacture lightning and thunder on stage contribute to an overall olfactory experience.

the metaphorical to spill over into the senses and enable heightened emotion through a variety of emotional stimuli.

Not only do the comets appear in and around dumbshows and within heightened sensory contexts, but they also appear at moments of wonder, positioned thus for maximum effect. All the plays identified in this chapter with comet stage directions position the comet late in the play. The pattern suggests that a climactic function is served by the comet as a technical, visual device within the drama. The dramatists save the effect until the fiction requires the visual stimulus and the wonder and of the blazing star. Perhaps the tendency for comets to appear late in the action also relates in part to a more practical issue: the need for darkness to fall at the outdoor playhouses. As Graves suggests: “Most blazing stars occur late in the action of the plays... Could it be that blazing stars were meant to look more real in the gathering darkness at the end of the play? Or were they simply delayed so that the rise in dramatic tension was paralleled by an increase in spectacle?”⁸⁰ Both suggestions seem to bolster what this chapter proposes, particularly in the use of the comet in relation to the dumb show as a theatrical device used specifically for the double effect of spectacle and rhetoric in situational and structural denouement. Either choice emphasises the dramatist’s interest in the comet as visual spectacle that dramatically introduces wonder.

Comets appearing on stage should not be too surprising in a play that reiterates and emphasises the strangeness and wonder of its events.⁸¹ *The Birth of Merlin* begins with the declaration: “The Court’s all fill’d with rumour, the City with news, and the Country with wonder” (I.i.61-62). It is in this location of wonder that apparitions and spectacles of all kinds take place. Before the comet is seen, other sights of wonders and miracles prepare the spectators for the vision that they will see later on. For instance, the Hermit’s head appears in

⁸⁰ Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage*, 211.

⁸¹ See the connection of “strangeness” and wonder in Neil Kenny’s *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, 14.

brightness causing amazement, and the response to the glowing head is: “’Tis full of wonder, sir” (I.ii.26). The description of wonder builds up curiosity and fosters a desire to see the strange vision. “How much the oft report of this blest Hermit/ Hath won on my desires; I must behold him” (I.ii.220-221). It is in this layered play—filled with sight, visions, miracles, admiration, and wonder—that a visible comet is placed on the stage.

The Childe Hath Found His Father, the secondary title for *The Birth of Merlin*, highlights the fact that at some point Merlin’s father is missing or unknown. Finding him is not simple, since Merlin’s father is not only absent, but also has an unknown identity. The search includes identification and interpretation, categorising and clarifying. Throughout the process, reading letters and interpreting their content, abstract feelings such as disdain, and interpreting the features of comets are all described as “in the eye,” as for instance in the scene from *The Birth of Merlin* that provides the epigraph to this chapter (IV.v.34). The comet seems in a strange location. The comet is not literally in Merlin’s eye, or is it? When Merlin carries the comet “in his eye,” he is visualising in an optic form and working through the prognostic signification of what he sees. The comet is located within his eye through physical sight and in his eye as a “vision” of a prophecy. Unlike the prevalent view of Merlin today, in *The Birth of Merlin* he is primarily noted as the Prophet and not the Magician, a role assigned to Proximus. He is seeing and foreseeing—truly a seer, and as the word denotes, one who sees.

When the comet appears in 4.5 the references to sight continue, as the audience should expect by the late point in the play. The Prince immediately says “Look, *Edol*” and associates the “fiery exaltation” with the dragon that Merlin conjured earlier in the play (IV.v.1-2). The Prince says that this apparition “still...shoots / His frightful horrors” and this action and vision gives cause for wonder, as it is “on th’amazed world” (3). As Mark Dominik notes: “The opening lines of this scene in *Merlin* give us a...picture of a disrupted

celestial sphere reflecting and presaging changes in human affairs[.]”⁸² Seeing the comet as a thing of wonder is the first indicator of the disruptions to come. The Prince and Edol then begin to analyse the features of the comet/dragon and assess the phenomenon considering its features and assigning meaning to what they see. From the direction of the “flaming flakes” and the “blazing streams” that point on the kingdom from the comet, both men declare their initial interpretations (6-8). Cador and Edwin work from this description and their own view of the “star” and declare that it is a “dreadful meteor” and “doth portend strange fears” (7-11). The Prince concurs that it is “no Crown of Peace” and an “angry fire” (12). However, he sees more. The “blasing Piramids” seem to be a readable clue to him that the comet has “something more to burn then Vortiger” (13-15). Though the analysis of the comet has caused them to reach their decisions about its significance, they are not content with Vortiger’s death as the sole reason for the apparition, as “these [comets] never come without their large effects” (17). Their interpretation demonstrates the ambiguity associated with the readability of comets as a text to be decoded.

The Prince desires further exposition, and he declares the comet a readable object: “We want a mistick Pithon to expound this fiery Oracle” (19-20). He is recalling ancient forms of divining events, especially as many traditions involved pythons. The comet itself is a message to be expounded and interpreted. This could be orally produced, yet the fact that it is a visible sign requires a reading of some form. “Reading” a comet was a common notion in early modern thinking, as Sara Schechner explains by referring to comets as readable objects: “As celestial phenomena, they were read as hieroglyphs and interpreted as visual signs...printed images of comets served as emblems.”⁸³ When Merlin does interpret the

⁸² Mark Dominik, *William Shakespeare and “The Birth of Merlin”* (Beaverton, OR: Alioth Press, 1991), 116.

⁸³ Sara Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 68.

comet, he speaks of it in textual terms, with the dragon's head as a "Heroglyphick" with "figures" and an "emblem" (95-98). And by these, the Prince has gained a name and title, words that can be read alongside symbols now included in his shield and standard. Of all the plays that included stage directions for comets to appear, *The Birth of Merlin* provides one of the most descriptive visual maps, as the comet was decoded and carefully described in detail. Creating the visual context through extended verbal references and calling for the spectacle of the comet to appear produces a rich context to then reveal and exploit the dramaturgical force of the climactic verbal material.

Contemporary producers and technicians who take on the play wrestle with its considerable visual content. Health and safety regulations, as well as budget concerns, present limitations that the original company might also have faced in different ways. A modern production at the Los Angeles Globe simplified the appearance of the comet to a single light, which allowed the audience to "see" the detail of the description in their imaginations, as they saw the generic light from behind. A reviewer reported the staging of the effect: "Prince Uter and his men gathered around this Merlin under the light beaming down from above and behind the audience, the wizard stretched his arms to the light and matter-of-factly prophesied[.]"⁸⁴ Though this contemporary staging exemplifies one of the performance possibilities for a modern production, a theatre tradition which possessed the technology for a pyrotechnic cometary spectacle (as argued above) and a flaming, firework dragon and had the opportunity to use it, likely did.

While no known record gives insight into the first performance of *The Birth of Merlin*, R.B. Graves provides a theory of its provenance and suggests that Rowley wrote the play in 1608 for the Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull.⁸⁵ And if indeed, as Graves suggests,

⁸⁴ Joseph H. Stodder, "Mucedorus and *The Birth of Merlin* at the Los Angeles Globe," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (Autumn, 1990): 371.

⁸⁵ Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage*, 209.

Rowley's authorship connects the play to the Red Bull, enough evidence exists to suggest that the playhouse's properties, equipment, and expertise in all things pyrotechnical were sufficient to stage a grand spectacle. Referring to Heywood's cycle *The Ages* at the Red Bull, Mark Bayer puts forward the type of effects available at this theatre when he states: "These plays tell their story through a series of vignettes punctuated by breathtaking special effects that include fireworks, otherworldly settings..., and stage properties that include magic snakes, the seven planets, and even the Trojan Horse[.]"⁸⁶ Bayer also notes the Red Bull's reputation for "innovative special effects,"⁸⁷ as is explored more fully in chapter 3 of this thesis.⁸⁸ In *Theatre of Fire*, Butterworth shows that all the necessary elements would have been available to early modern stages, including a dragon on a wire, spinning axle-wheels, flaming tails, etc.

As William Lawrence noted a century ago: "Obviously, it was not left to the imagination of the audience to conjure up the nine streams of fire, and the whole effect must have been carefully visualized."⁸⁹ Yet against Lawrence's intuition and the capability and technical prowess of the theatre, Graves is sceptical of a fully realised, pyrotechnical show which would realise all the features described within the play. He speculates that: "Even though the Red Bull was famous for its special effects, one wonders whether all the fire Rowley describes was real, painted, or imaginary."⁹⁰ Though Graves gives no further insight into why he is sceptical about the use of visual effects, the timing for the effect does present reason enough to question what might have been used. The length of the spectacle and the

⁸⁶ Mark Bayer, "The Red Bull Playhouse," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 226.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Bayer draws attention to Homer, the narrator of Heywood's *Brazen Age*, who offers a clue that perhaps the general audience constituency was illiterate, hence the heightened spectacle was necessary to drive home certain aspects of the language. See Bayer, 231.

⁸⁹ William Lawrence, *The Elizabethan Playhouse* (Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Head Press, 1912-13), 20.

⁹⁰ Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage*, 209.

complexity of the highly descriptive text require a long-lasting firework that would continue throughout the scene. The nature of the spectacle appears to be of a different quality than that of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, the exceptionally brief apparition in *Stukeley*, or even the somewhat lengthy presence of the brain-scorching comet in *Thorny Abbey*. The extended firework would need to burn during the five pages of text from its appearance in 4.5 until the conclusion of discussing the phenomenon. While this timing has left some critics arguing that original staging left the blazing star to the imagination, one of John Bate's firework recipes for an "apparition" suggests that a firework could be formulated to last longer than a squib or a cracker.

The recipe Bate recommends for the "diverse apparitions" includes not only powders, but also a "jellie" compound, which would make the mixture pliable in order to "make it...into what fashion else you please." The gel was created from gum dragant (a white gum resin also called tragacanth), distilled in "aqua vita" (ethanol), then combined with brimstone, and saltpeter.⁹¹ The sticky resin of the gel, mixed with the other flammable materials could explain how some comets appear for a great length of time on the stage, as the jelly would extend the apparition longer than the straight powder prescribed for the star recipe or even the addition of aqua vitae specified in his modified versions. The jelly-like substance, perhaps similar to a chafing fuel, would provide a longer burn than a powder that quickly flashes and is finished. The complexity and extended time on stage would most likely require a much longer visual, while other flashing fireworks could be set off throughout the scene at key moments. The availability of these materials, coupled with the stage directions, demonstrates an acute alertness and propensity on the part of theatre makers of the early modern stage to

⁹¹ Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "dragant," accessed 30 September 2017, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/57408>.

create a visible spectacle with an astronomical object, creating a sense of wonder for those who came to experience a play.

Dramatists stimulated wonder through the visual representation of comets on the early modern stage by using pyrotechnic technologies readymade to trigger the response, by constructing the blazing stars within dumb show, and by positioning them near the end of the play for climactic effect. By bringing the wondrous and far-off phenomenon onstage, theatre practitioners shortened the viewing distance and combined the wonder-filled response associated with seeing a comet and the wonder stimulated by the flashings, sounds, and smells of a pyrotechnical stage effect. In addition to comets producing wonder in visual effects, dramatists also used comets as part of a verbal system of stimulating wonder within dramatic texts: describing characters as comets, mapping comets' positioning and placement, and ethnographically marking responses to viewing the phenomena. Comet events are reported to be happening onstage without a corresponding visual spectacle or are verbally recreated through reporting they happened elsewhere. Rather than visually and artificially representing the phenomena, dramatists use rhetorical techniques to draw the audience into wonder already anticipated by visual experiences in the sky and in the theatre. As human characters are compared to comets, they are observed, stared at, and read, all of which borrow the expected response of wonder from the visual experience.

“Hears not my lord the wonder?” The Reported Comet

Having explored the effects and performance possibilities of staged comets, this next section moves on to reported ones. Jonson's *Sejanus* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* have often been examined alongside one another.⁹² Shakespeare performed his last recorded role in

⁹² Warren Chernaik, “The Dyer's Hand: Shakespeare and Jonson,” in *The Cambridge Companion*

Sejanus,⁹³ and both plays were staged by the same company in the same theatre space, the Chamberlain's Men (who became the King's Men before *Sejanus*) at The Globe. In *Sejanus* and *Julius Caesar* Jonson and Shakespeare take up historical Roman narratives of political conspiracy and overthrow, and both report comets that are visually unavailable within a spectacle form on the stage but are instead imaginatively present through the dramatic text. Both plays develop an imaginative use of reporting comet sightings without bringing the spectacle onstage. In doing so, they use rhetorical techniques which alert the audience to the spatial distance and the separation of the audience from the spectacle.

Sejanus reports a comet late in the play, a choice which corresponds to the pattern of spectacle comets, while *Julius Caesar* breaks the convention to develop a midpoint denouement which corresponds to other narrative and dramaturgical timings. The difference in timing and placement of the comet suggests the usefulness of the phenomenon as a dramatic device within the period to register a climactic moment of wonder that accompanies tragic downfall. As Robert D. Moynihan notes of the role the comets and other astronomical elements play: "The consideration of the portents and the stars [are] analogues for the events of this drama."⁹⁴ As analogous to events, the use of the comet in these moments corresponds to the dramatists' manipulation of character in relationship to the development of narrative plot. Warren Chernaik observes the distinction between the two titular figures:

"Shakespeare's Caesar is enigmatic and opaque, a blank sheet for others to write on,"

whereas Jonson's *Sejanus* "represents a disease eating away at the Roman republic."⁹⁵

Removing the blank-slate Caesar early gives Shakespeare time to explore other political

to *Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists*, ed. Ton Hoenselaars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 54–69; Ian Donaldson, "'Misconstruing Everything': *Julius Caesar* and *Sejanus*," in *Shakespeare Performed*, ed. Grace Ioppolo (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 88–107.

⁹³ Bart van Es, *Shakespeare in Company* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 258, n. 32.

⁹⁴ Robert D. Moynihan, "Stars, Portents, and Order in *Julius Caesar*," *Modern Language Studies* 7, no. 2 (1977): 30.

⁹⁵ Chernaik, "The Dyer's Hand: Shakespeare and Jonson," 64–66.

ramifications of the assassination, while Jonson takes the entirety of his play to develop the full extent of the disease in Sejanus and Tiberius.

While Shakespeare and Jonson bring the wonderful comet into their playworlds at different places in the dramatic structure, both plays use a verbal report of the comet that happens elsewhere, rather than the spectacle of the comet in the immediate physical space of the stage. The overlap between rhetoric and visual perception prompts J.V. Cunningham, in his examination of wonder, to trace the concept from classical sources to the Renaissance. In this work, Cunningham identifies the classical concern with the wonder produced by rhetoric—primarily how words induce a sense of wonder.⁹⁶ The classical preoccupation with the power of words to conjure images and thus to work wonders has an analogue in Renaissance drama, where rhetoric invokes the spectacle of wonder through the stimulation of the imagination and the perceptive re-imaging of viewed objects. As this section will argue, comets that are heard about onstage borrow from the visual potency and wonder expected from those visually presented. Dramatists use rhetoric instead of spectacle to guide their auditors into an experience of wonder that imitates the response associated with the visual special effect.

In 4.3 of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, a comet is not seen onstage, nor is one described, as if it were visible in the performance space. The comet "appears" in a report of marvels that have happened elsewhere. From the dialogue the audience discovers that Minutius has been describing the details of the astronomical event offstage. Once onstage, however, Terentius recalls the minutiae for Sejanus, the "audience" within the fiction, and the audience proper:

Terentius.

But now, a fiery meteor, in the form
Of a great ball, was seen to roll along
The troubled air, where yet it hangs, imperfect,
The amazing wonder of the multitude!

⁹⁶ J.V. Cunningham, *Woe or Wonder; The Emotional Effect of Shakespearean Tragedy* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951).

(V. iii. 218-221)

Terentius begins recalling the events to Sejanus by saying: “Minutius tells us here.” By providing this detail of place, Jonson draws attention to the stage location (“here”) and the fact that this retelling is being done in the stage place and not where the action happened. The report brings the comet into proximity with the other characters, as they experience the phenomenon through the retelling of the expository dialogue. He collapses, or at least complicates, the spatial distinction of here and there, and near and far.

As the original event happened at an earlier time and at a distance (Pompey’s Theatre), Jonson bends fictional space and time to recreate the spectacle and lead the audience into wonder. By maintaining a mixed sense of past and present during the retelling, the listeners can pass between then and now, experiencing the wonder of the multitude. The retelling of the news develops the audience’s experience of wonder by using the straightforward device of telling them that it was. The repetition of the word “wonder” and its collocations in this scene and scene 1 works to amplify the effect by complicating the sensory distance from the cometary object. By his manipulation of space and time, Jonson repositions a distant, past object of wonder nearer to his onstage and offstage audience, and he does it through the verbal markers of sight within the fiction. As Alison Thorne notes, “rhetorical devices acquired the ability to function within the literary text – and, more specifically, in Shakespeare’s plays – as a recognizable substitute for pictorial perspective.”⁹⁷ While speaking of Jonson’s contemporary, Thorne recognises the ability of the rhetorical devices inherent in a play to stand in for and perform the function of the visual. Jonson multiplies and complicates the effect of the wonder produced, by layering a distant event that happened in the past with the listener’s own space and time. The audience proper absorbs the reporting,

⁹⁷ Alison Thorne, *Vision and Rhetoric in Shakespeare: Looking through Language* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 2000), 2-3.

commingling what they hear, as well as viewing the reaction and response of the onstage listeners.

The potential for wonder in Jonson's narration echoes the effect that George Chapman praises in his commendatory verse in the 1605 quarto of the play. Chapman articulates Jonson's use of the aural to work such stage magic to metamorphose hearers into those that see. Chapman speaks of Jonson: "Performing such a liuely Euidence/ in thy Narrations, that thy Hearers still/ Thou turnst to thy Spectators." While Chapman may not be directly addressing this comet episode, his compliment of Jonson's skill to metamorphose those that hear into those that see matches this scene of verbally transcribing a visual wonder. As the "lively Euidence" is reported in the narrating of the comet event, including the wonder it produced by all who saw it first hand, those that are exposed to the story are transformed from those that hear into those that see. For Chapman the animated words of Jonson's performed stories possess the power to alter the sensory vehicle for experiencing the dramatic fiction. While there is room for scepticism in terms of Jonson's ability to turn this into a successful outcome, particularly in a play that was apparently hissed off the stage, Chapman's commendation is suggestive of the potential for Jonson (and, by extension, other early modern dramatists) to create a sensory transformation through the ways in which narrative material is performed.

Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* presents comets as part of a collection of unusual events, to establish a dramatic scene composed of what Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park might call a "cluster of wonders."⁹⁸ The comets in *Julius Caesar* combine with many "strange eruptions" (I.iii), and form a heightened mixture of earthly faults and heavenly menace. The extended chaos begins with "*thunder and lightning*," the stage direction which heralds the

⁹⁸ Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 10.

beginning of “the perilous night” in 1.3, and lasts through the identical stage direction of 2.2. As noted above, thunder and lightning were aural and visual triggers, prompting the audience to expect other wonders to come. The prompt is used for both visual and reported comets, and the sensory stimuli prompted a response of wonder. Through the combined, concentrated force of sensory description and stage effects, Shakespeare creates an ominous night of terror which includes lions on the prowl in the streets, open graves and gliding ghosts, fire-dropping tempests, and people on fire. The cometary activity in this play does not function in isolation to produce the theatrical effect of wonder, rather the concentrated context heightens the overall force of the apparition. With thunder and lightning the aural cacophony doubtless produced an environ for the verbal description to invoke wonder—the thunder claps underpinning sound and the flashes of lightning promoting sight.

It is within this highly sensory context that wonder is produced. In 1.3, Cicero questions Casca, “why stare you so?” Casca is “breathless” and stares off into space. Casca’s senses have been affected by the horrors of what he has seen. As Mary Blaine Campbell notes, “Speechlessness and a kind of paralysis are major symptoms of the state of wonder[.]”⁹⁹ Cicero’s question follows on the heels of the stage directions of “*thunder and lightning*,” giving the audience a sampling of Casca’s own experiences and an empathetic, corresponding feeling of wonder. “Given that thunder and lightning effects in early modern drama tend to occur alongside the depiction of supernatural events, whether of gods descending from the heavens or devils rising from the traps, an audience watching *Julius Caesar* might think that the characters should be worried, as Casca seems to be.”¹⁰⁰ Casca replies to Cicero with a repeated recollection of vision: “I have seen...I have seen,” alerting his listeners to previous visual memories of catastrophe that could not hold a candle to his

⁹⁹ Mary Blaine Campbell, *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁰⁰ Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare’s Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 39.

immediate optical perceptions and the current upheaval taking place. Cicero responds with “saw you anything more wonderful?” From what follows, the answer is yes, and Casca provides further description of the wonders and prodigies of the outside world.

Cicero’s question not only lets the audience know what Casca thought, but works as a method for stimulating the audience’s feeling of wonder. Cicero’s rhetorical question may be directed at Casca, but the audience is drawn into experiencing the wonder, as they are guided by the responses of the characters. Adam Max Cohen in his book *Wonder in Shakespeare* states: “The plays often present characters who experience and express wonder as if partly to guide...the audience’s response,”¹⁰¹ and those “stage characters...who wonder at the events they perceive serve as ambassadors or go-betweens for the playwright and the audience.”¹⁰² The combination of these events absolutely fits this description and creates an ideal site for the report of wonder that leads the audience to a response of wonder.

In 2.1, the stage business and all the talk of the taper emphasise the importance of the contrasting light and darkness. A concerted effort is made throughout the scene to mark the time of day, as well as the location of the taper and that it will be used inside. Brutus is still in the orchard at night and sends Lucius on an errand to light the taper in the “study” (7) or “closet” (35). When Lucius returns, he brings the letter outside, but he no longer has the taper and noticeably leaves it in another place off-stage. Brutus again declares “It is not day” (39). By this time, the audience is aware of the time of day and that there is no other light source on stage. When Brutus takes the letter to read it, he informs the audience of how he will read the letter, though it is still night: “the exhalations whizzing in the air/ Give so much light that I may read by them” (44-5). *Exhalations* could be read *comets*. The terms were commonly used interchangeably within the Aristotelian model, which held that earthly exhalations of

¹⁰¹ Adam Max Cohen, *Wonder in Shakespeare* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10-11.

¹⁰² Ibid.

impurities produced comets. Leonard and Thomas Digges' *Prognostication* defines a comet as, "exhalation drawn up to the highest part of the ayre."¹⁰³ Brutus reads by comet light, and here the comets are not necessarily seen, but are used to see. The planted letter suggests to Brutus that the people are waiting for him to act against Caesar and prompts him to "'Speak, strike, redress'" (47). The comet performs a dual function, as it not only signals Caesar's impending doom, but also it is by its light that Brutus reads the letter that prompts him to perform the assassination. The comet blazes as a wonderful cosmic omen warning of the coming death, but it also enables the bloody action through its light.

Unlike the plays that feature stage directions of comets, *Julius Caesar* contains comets early in the play. Structurally, however, this works in the overarching shape of the plot, since most of the play features Brutus, rather than the titular Julius. It is possible that Shakespeare's choice to use the spectacle early demonstrates not only a structural decision based on the transition of power, but also a recognition of the potency of the comet as a climax-inducing spectacle. As mentioned above in the comparison with *Sejanus*, bringing forward what would normally be positioned late in the play provides the death of Julius Caesar with the necessary portents appropriate to the occasion, for "When beggars die there are no comets seen;/The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes" (II.ii.30-3). It is fairly certain that *Julius Caesar* was played at the Globe from Thomas Platter's description of seeing a performance of the play in 1599.¹⁰⁴ Most likely, the play would have started in the afternoon. By happening so early in the play, the night-time scene of disturbances on earth and heaven detailed above would have been seen during daylight. The comets supply a ready light source for a disturbed night scene, in which even the stars are not out. "I cannot by the

¹⁰³ Leonard and Thomas Digges, *A Prognostication Euerlastinge of Righte Good Effecte* (London, 1578), D2v.

¹⁰⁴ See Ernest Schanzer, "Thomas Platter's Observations on the Elizabethan stage," *Notes and Queries* 201 (1956): 465-467. Also, E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 364-365. Chambers provides a translation of Platter's experience. A Globe performance is assumed in the *Oxford Complete Works of William Shakespeare*.

progress of the stars give guess how near to day” (II.i.2-3). But under a sunny sky, the playgoers might accept that it was the comets that “Give so much light that I may read by them” (44-5).

In spectacle and in verbal representation dramatists work, however artificially, to represent comets in the physical space of the stage or illusionistic space of the imagination through the dramatic fiction. Comets are also used figuratively within the drama, as characters identify or compare themselves and others as being in some way possessing comet-like characteristics. In these instances, comets are frequently considered objects to be seen and entities capable of seeing. By retaining or overlapping capabilities of sight and seeing within the metaphorical use of humans as comets, dramatists unsettle the distinction between the object and the subject, or in other words the wonder and the wonderer. Doing so complicates a straightforward experience of the wonderful and replicates the ambiguity of wonder within the period.

“Star'd at Like a Comet” The Human as Comet

Thomas Dekker’s metaphorical apparition of a human comet in the first line of *The Honest Whore, Part I* provides a ready example of the way in which comets could see and be seen and how the phenomenon corresponds to sight and wonder on stage.

DUKE.

Behold, yon Commet shewes his head againe;
Twice hath he thus at crosse-turnes throwne on vs
Prodigious lookes: Twice hath he troubled
The waters of our eyes. See, hee's turnde wilde;
Go on in Gods name.¹⁰⁵
(I.i.1-5)

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Dekker, *The Honest Whore, Part I*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 2, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953-61).

Dekker's choice to begin the play with the cometary trope establishes a stark contrast with the sobriety of mourning established by the funeral properties delineated in the stage direction that precedes the first act. By all appearances, the play opens on a tragic scene of death complete with funeral procession, a hearse, and the décor of mourning. The original staging in 1604 would have been with the Prince's Men who were playing at the Fortune at the time.¹⁰⁶ Unlike the Globe or the Curtain, the Fortune was square, and the stage contained three doors. This first scene, loaded with props and bodies (living and supposed dead), would have appeared quite full, and by employing all entrances would have the chaotic, visual edge of a crowd scene. Before any words are spoken, the conflict is visually apparent: "*Enter Hipolito in discontented apparance: Matheo a Gentleman his friend, labouring to hold him backe*" (I.i.s.d.). The Duke's first lines position the comet character against this visual backdrop of restlessness in a scene full of mourning, crowded entrances, and the physical tension visually evidenced in the restraint of an angry, virulent, and "desprate boy" (7), who pushes and flashes against the black sky of grief.

"Behold" (I.i.1). The grand beginning highlights not only the visible quality of what follows, the weight of the subject that would be viewed, and a separation from the object to be viewed. The highly descriptive comparison is then filled with visual modifiers and declarative statements instructing the others to view the man-labelled-comet. The Duke of Milan's name calling employs standard descriptions of an actual comet sighting, and like most effective pieces of mockery, it overemphasises the recognisable, stock features to make a stronger point of the metaphor. The Comet "shewes his head," referencing the coma or main star-like centre of a comet, as opposed to its tail (I.i.1). In prognostications of the period, the location of the head of the comet would portend an aspect of the augury, in which

¹⁰⁶ Wiggins, *British Drama*, vol. 5, 110.

“the country directly beneath a comet was especially liable to malevolent influences.”¹⁰⁷

Throwing “lookes” seems like only a human trait, but comets were often described in plays as not only viewable objects, but entities that could also gaze (2-3). Appropriating the ancient concept of comets being bearded or hairy stars, Webster (like Dekker) emphasises the head of the comet and lets the comet stare.¹⁰⁸ A stare from a comet would most likely mean that the portent of the comet was intended for the one receiving the gaze.

T. G. Bishop, in his work on wonder in Shakespeare, suggests the possibility for objects to be wonders and defines them specifically in relation to the fact that they are “gazed upon.” He states: “A ‘wonder’ is an object or event which is gazed upon by a beholder.”¹⁰⁹ He is distinguishing a wonder or an object that is capable to produce the passion of wonder from viewing a *wonder-ful* object. In *The Honest Whore*, the Duke continues the comet sighting with more metaphors for sight and seeing. He declares that in both appearances, the comet-man has “troubled the waters of our eyes”(I.i.3-4). The sight of him has been difficult to see or has even stimulated crying. As can be seen in multiple references in sermons of the period, comets were considered instruments of God to instil wonder and the fear of His divine judgment for sin. The sight and resultant wonder of the comet was expected to bring about sorrowful repentance, as evidenced in this translation published in England in 1607:

O frantick *France!* why doost not thou make vse,
Of the strange signes, whereby the Heauens induce
Thee to repentance? canst thou teare-lesse gaze,
Euen night by night on that prodigious blaze,
That hairy Comet, that long streaming Starre,
Which threatens Earth, with Famine, Plague, and Warre:
(The Almighties Trident, and three forked fire,
Wherewith he strikes vs in his greatest ire?)¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Schechner, *Comets, Popular Culture, and the Birth of Modern Cosmology*, 58.

¹⁰⁸ The verb performs an interesting doubling, if one renders “stares” normally as focusing a gaze and “star-es” as in doing the activity of a star. Perhaps Dekker similarly layered “stare” and “star” in *If This Be Not a Good Play, The Devil Is in It* with “Star’d at like a comet.”

¹⁰⁹ Bishop, *Shakespeare and the Theater of Wonder*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Simon Goulart, *Admirable and Memorable Histories Containing the Wonders of Our Time*, trans. Edward Grimeston (London, 1607), 131.

Dekker's human comet is declared to be an "vnreligious youth" (I.i.28). His speech "mockst the teares" (21) and for him to look on her would block the mourning and "emptie all these eyes / Of funeral teares" (29-30). The Duke recognises the comet's typical characteristics of stimulating tears and notes Hippolito's expected response. However, since the "franticke yong man" is "unreligious," he pushes against the image of instrument of God to an entirely different function (19, 28).

By repeating the command of the initial "Behold," the onlookers are told again to look and "see, he's turn'd wild" (I.i.4). Comets were often associated with chaos, in the disorder, death, and judgment that they threaten, symbolically demonstrating their sublunar unfixedness and the suddenness and indeterminacy of their appearing. Dekker mediates between an apocalyptic trope and a purely cosmological one. By doing so, he rounds out the image to include multiple possibilities and intensify the conflict of the first scene on stage. Hippolito, as a flaming comet, shines in contrast—not to Infelice's body—but to her eyes: "That paire of stares that gaue her body light, / Darkened and dim for euer" (24-25). Infelice's starry eyes have been extinguished. Since he is barred from touching her, it is sight that he requests: "let me looke on her" (40). There is a distance that the comet figure offers, an observation from afar. However, to the Duke, even a glimpse of her is "violent torment" (45). Yet, Hippolito persists and stubbornly exclaims, "Ile see how my loue looks" (70). Hippolito's statement is ambiguous. It would seem he is describing how Infelice looks to him, but the syntactical ambiguity allows for her to be active in the looking.

Relating the gaze of humans to comets is not uncommon to Dekker. But in *If This Be Not a Good Play, The Devil Is in It*, Dekker reverses the gaze to have the comet be the one with the capability to see, this time an extended staring, rather than looking. Before employing the simile relating his desire to be unlike a comet, Alphonso is resisting the usual demonstration and signs of submission in kneeling, calling such activity idolatry:

ALPHONSO.

Yet all but flesh and blood; And such I am.
 If such, pray let me eat, drink, speak, and walk,
 Not look'd clean through, with superstitious eyes,
 (Not star'd at like a Comet.) As you go
 Or speak, or feed, (un-wondered at) let me so.
 (I.ii.23-27)

In a play whose central plot is the devilish temptation of humans through the vices specific to their individual propensity, the fledgling ruler, Alphonso, in genuine humility or in self-righteous pretence, declares his proper placement within the authority structure of the universe. He locates himself on a par with his subjects in terms of his physical needs and bodily makeup. Alphonso wishes to be out of the public eye, but as a ruler finds he cannot escape the infiltrating gaze that endlessly stares in wonder, as if he were a comet and not a human that participates in daily tasks and activities. He declares that such ritual toward him as a human king is a mockery, as earthly kings are merely “Gods of clay” (I.ii.20). Alphonso wishes for un-wonder or non-wonder, and that the wonder provoked by seeing kings as if they were comets could be blocked.

He continues the emphasis of the frailty of kings, citing the substantive composition of all humanity as flesh and blood, highlighting the fact that the same bodily construction applies to kings as well as their subjects. He rejects being a celestial object of wonder, but rather heightens his personhood and humanity. And it is his sameness to his subjects, his similitude in weakness which brings him to failure through pleasure-seeking. The gloss of his newly donned humility is as the devils proposed: “for men are out-sides onely.” The devils identify a predictable flaw for a young ruler and apply pressure to his weak seams:

PLUTO.

A Prince there (newly crownde,) aptly inclinde
 To any bendings; least his youthfull browes
 Reach at Stars only, wey down his loftiest boughs
 With leaden plomets, poison his best thoughts with tast
 Of things most sensuall.
 (I.i.96)

The king who refused bowing and being a comet-like wonder, was careful not to “reach[] at Stars only,” yet succumbed to the hedonistic allurements of the devils. In the end, he proved his lack of divinity, kingliness, and likeness to comets, because the lustre of his wonder dimmed through his pursuit of pleasure. Dekker emphasises that the wonder of a comet-like king comes from the distance from the subject beholding him as object. When the king violates that separation, he breaks down the natural wonder of the political construction and hierarchy of the cosmos.

In *The White Devil* Webster uses the comet as an image of instability and illegibility. In the “arraignment scene” of act 3, scene 2, the lawyer begins the trial by directing the visual focus to Vittoria: “*Domine Judex converte oculos in hanc pestem mulierum corruptissimam*” [“Lord Judge, turn your eyes upon this plague, this most corrupt of women”] (10-11).¹¹¹ Subha Mukherji highlights that the lawyer’s opening speech in his interrogation of Vittoria “frames her straightaway as a spectacle.”¹¹² For Monticelso her existence and visible form should quickly affirm his preconceived verdict. In an attempt to build evidence against Vittoria in this way, Monticelso attempts to visually establish a correlation between Vittoria and comets:

MONTICELSO

Such a corrupted triall have you made
Both of your life and beauty, and bene stil’d
No lesse in ominous fate than blasing starres
To Princes;

(III.ii.260-3)

Monticelso claims that her identity (life and beauty) is already a “corrupted triall” that has been fashioned or “stil’d” with a fearful outcome—the same “ominous fate” as comes from a

¹¹¹ John Webster, *The White Devil*, in *The Works of John Webster*, vol. 1, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, Antony Hammond, and Doreen DelVecchio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 293.

¹¹² Subha Mukherji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 147.

cometary apparition. Early modern ideas held that guilt and evil could be identified by viewing a person and that the body would supply the evidence of corruption, but as Mukherji notes: “Her very physical being, Monticelso implies, creates a false semiotic.”¹¹³ Monticelso questions Vittoria and eventually offers the above description of her state before sentencing her to a house for reforming prostitutes. He works to establish evidence against Vittoria, based on her appearance. However, the difficulty to access the surety of knowledge through the senses produces one of the critical complications of the play. While in the candlelit limelight during the arraignment scene, Vittoria’s culpability remains somewhat out of focus. Farah Lehman Den argues that the play operates in a state of anxiousness over whether the senses, particularly that of the visual, are capable of epistemological certainty.¹¹⁴

Many critics have noted the discontinuity of character in Vittoria’s appearances throughout the play, but as Andrew Strycharski notes: “Her lack of coherence makes her the most free character in the play.”¹¹⁵ She is a phenomenon, who operates at a distance and outside the realm of her peers, and her motion seems uncontrollable by those who view her. Like a comet, Vittoria has produced wonder, partially through surprise, confusion, or just a lack of knowledge about her composition and positioning within the cosmos of the play. Observed by the male-dominated ecclesiastical tribunal, whose aim with the trial is to separate her and keep her from affecting others, her trajectory and motion is separated off from the others in the play.

The separation is also structurally apparent, in that Vittoria only appears six times in the play. Her distance from the action accentuates the perception of her being the unknowable and wonderful female other, a comet with a comet’s fate. As a cometary-like figure, this

¹¹³ Ibid., 157.

¹¹⁴ Farrah Lehman Den, “‘We Confound Knowledge with Knowledge’: Posthumanism and Sensory Encounter in John Webster’s *The White Devil*,” *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 80, no. 1 (2011): 35-46.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Strycharski, “Ethics, Individualism, and Class in John Webster’s *The White Devil*,” *Criticism* 54, no. 2 (2012): 299, doi:10.1353/crt.2012.0009.

distance increases her wonder. Vittoria's ambiguity as a character is difficult to critically assess. In the same way that her body lacks "a straightforward correspondence between inner and outer, hidden and visible,"¹¹⁶ her character is also a wonder. Put forward in chapter 2 of this thesis is the idea that while almanacs of the period feature the anatomical figure as male, dramatists almost exclusively develop the heavenly body and human body relationship and its accompanying influence on the female body, rather than on the male body. While not exclusively so, the overarching pattern of celestial objects used metaphorically in relation to humans is predominately connected to the female gender. By layering celestial properties and identities onto female characters, dramatists tend not only to invest female figures with potential agency and sway within the fictional universe of the play, but also to characterise them as figures of disruption and chaos that stand out against the backdrop of anticipated celestial stability.

Monticelso's comment on Vittoria's cometary effect is later picked up more explicitly by Ludivico: "O, thou hast been a most prodigious comet" (V.vi.210). To Ludivico, Vittoria is not only cursed with the fate of a prince under a fiery comet, she becomes a comet. Ludivico marks her ability to do damage and to be a wonder. In a desperate attempt to limit her effects, he says: "But I'll cut off your train— /Kill the Moor first" (211). As a comet, she has a train, or as John Russell Brown notes, this is most likely a reference to the tail of the comet, which the dramatist then identifies as Zanche.¹¹⁷ As noted above, the head or nucleus of the comet provided one hieroglyph for prognostications, but most interpretations of comets from the period locate its power and the subsequent fallout by the direction of its tail. Ludivico attempts to minimise her influence, by removing a significant portion of her cometary sway. Combining the previous passage from the arraignment and Ludivico's

¹¹⁶ Mukherji, *Law and Representation*, 157.

¹¹⁷ John Russell Brown, *The White Devil*, 164. Note on line 215.

metaphor, to these men Vittoria has been corrupted in beauty (her visual form), and her person carries a fate likened to the ominous fortune announced by blazing stars to princes. Webster uses the metaphor of the comet, within broader contexts of Vittoria as spectacle, making her a blazing star that invokes wonder.

Early modern dramatists manipulated astronomical phenomena of comets in diverse and dynamic ways, producing renderings and representations of wonder through both visual and verbal methods. The textual references in dramatic texts that connect sight, wonder, comets, and the eye capitalised on classical and emerging theories of comets and wonder, emphasising the ability of rhetorical devices to produce a visual result, through verbal means. Publications, prognostications, correspondence, and astronomical records, testify to the prevalence of contemporaneous treatments of comets as wonder-evoking phenomena. Alexander Marr finds that: “The lens of...wonder offers a legitimate tool with which to assess the rich interconnections between early modern objects, texts, individuals and ideas.”¹¹⁸ This chapter has used the lens of wonder and argued that early modern dramatists brought comets onstage, as objects of knowledge, to stimulate responses of wonder in the physical space of the theatre through spectacle and in the illusionistic space of the theatre through verbal expression. By using these methods for representing comets, dramatists guided their audience's perceptions and responses with wonder as the end.

In reporting the offstage comets that happened outside of the view of the audience in *Sejanus*, Jonson compresses space and time to relay the information, amplifying wonder, as he uses the characters to direct the audience to experience an enhanced version of the “spectacle.” Shakespeare, in *Julius Caesar*, breaks the convention of a late appearing comet and brings the comet on early to shine within an environment of wonders, emphasise the

¹¹⁸ Marr, “Introduction,” in *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Evans and Marr, 4.

structure of the play, and mark the time of day and the imaginative difference between light and darkness. Dekker and Webster's plays blur the boundaries between subject and object by making human comets that are wonders and are wondered at, who are seen and see.

Complicating the distinctions between a wonder and the wonderful creates a multi-layered sense of wonder in connection to the cometary character.

Though dramatic language capably stimulated a sense wonder in the imagination of the hearers, the comet also emerged on the early modern stage in visible and often pyrotechnical force. The prevalence of stage directions calling on blazing stars to appear provides ample proof that comets did indeed shine in the theatre as a recognisable emblem of admiration and wonder. By using the convention of dumb show, dramatists employed a ready convention, which heightened the already visual experience of a comet on stage. Though extant records for these plays do not fully fill the entire picture with the details of the methods of stage technicians, what is available in firework manuals points to the technological ability of these theatres and companies to produce pyrotechnical visual effects capable of staging an aesthetic of wonder using comets. Comparing the dramatic, verbal context to the visual effect of comets demonstrates the combined powers of stimulating visual wonder in audiences and spectators on the early modern stage. As Webster's cometary Vittoria blazed against her would-be controllers, this next chapter explores female zodiacal characters that remained flexible in their identities against attempts to confine, control, and collapse their female forms.

Chapter 2

“For the Zodiacke shine”: The Zodiacal (Wo)man and the Cosmological and Topological Correspondence of Female Characters

On the frontispiece of a 1581 almanac by Alexander Mounslowe, a compression of 1 Corinthians 15:40 reads: “*Alia gloria caelestium, et alia gloria terrestrium*” [in one way the glory of the heavenly things, and in another the glory of the terrestrial].¹¹⁹ The brief Scriptural caption, a condensed paraphrase of the Latin Vulgate, may seem upon initial reading to point to the similar (in possessing glory) yet differing (in spatial boundaries) realms of heavens and the earth. However, Mounslowe’s source overlaps the edges of the cosmological regions to include the corpora associated with each, describing bodies that are separated but related, in that they each possess or are characterised by glory. In its position of prominence on the almanac’s frontispiece, the text of the Pauline epistle introduces the almanac and applies the biblical text with a newly pointed emphasis. The passage grounds the almanac maker’s activity of connecting celestial and terrestrial bodies and does so backed by the authority of Scripture. Mounslowe introduces his almanac by spatially connecting the glory of the heavens and the glory of the earth through the human body.

The epigraph provides a telling introduction to the almanac and elucidates the genre of almanacs as a whole. In his study of almanacs from 1500-1800, Bernard Capp describes the basic tenets of judicial astrology which undergirded the almanac: “Traditional medical theory and practice depended heavily on astrological assumptions, especially the belief that the four humours of the body corresponded to, and were influenced by, the qualities of the

¹¹⁹ Alexander Mounslowe, *An Almanacke and Prognostication, Made for the Yeere of our Lord God, M.D.LXXXI*. (London, 1581).

planets and the signs of the zodiac.”¹²⁰ Mounslowe’s almanac, like many others from the period, provides a visual connection between the bodies celestial and terrestrial with its woodcut of what is often referred to as *homo signorum* (man of signs) or the “zodiacal man.”

In the commonplace woodblock images of the astrological figure throughout the period, early modern almanacs presented what was considered to be a “universal” human form. However, the body image represented not a universal human, but rather one that is distinctly male. As Bianca F.C. Calabresi notes of the figure within early modern almanac print practice: “Despite a medieval manuscript tradition that at times included a female version alongside the male, printed almanacs contain only a masculine zodiacal figure.”¹²¹ The absence of the female body in the figural representation of a universal picture of mankind, as Calabresi argues, works as an “erasure of the feminine body,” and the all-male image “confirms Renaissance notions that the male body serves as the locus of medical knowledge.”¹²² In *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, Thomas Laqueur gives special attention to the gendered zodiacal figure. He notes that in “countless illustrations of ‘zodiacal man’...the male body as usual stands for generalised humanity.”¹²³ While clearly male, the image of the zodiacal man presents what Hilda L. Smith calls a “false universal,” where the male sex stands for all in a “conflation of man and human.”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press, English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London: Faber, 1979), 204-205. For a more recent and specialised view of the role of the humours, see Gail Paster’s *The Body Embarrassed* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) and Mary Floyd-Wilson’s *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹²¹ Bianca Calabresi “‘Red Incke’: Reading the Bleeding on the Early Modern Page,” in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 242.

¹²² Calabresi, “‘Red Incke’,” 242.

¹²³ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 116.

¹²⁴ Hilda L. Smith, *All Men and Both Sexes: Gender, Politics, and the False Universal in England, 1640-1832* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 40.

Edward Pond's 1612 *An Almanack for the Yeare of Christ* provides an example for the mapped division of the human body within the representation of the "Anatomie" or the zodiacal man:

And comparing Cosmus with Microcosmus, the great World with the little World Man: they have divided his body likewise into 12 parts, affirming that those 12 signes doe rule and gouern over the same 12 parts of the body of Man in order...As in the Anatomie, in the beginning of the Booke is plainly described, with the Characters of the signes and planets.¹²⁵

After describing the constellations of the zodiac and their division into 12 regions, Pond explains that the "operation & force" of the celestial bodies causes "alteration and change of humours," and "perturbing & distempering mans body" (C3r). Pond describes the celestial modifications of man's body using active terms which include implicit spatial adaptations of the universalised human form: operation, force, alteration, change, perturbation, and distemperment.¹²⁶ Early modern plays evidence similar correspondences, but the gender of the figure is not a universalised male. As early modern dramatists create characters whose identities and bodies are marked by zodiacal influence, they do not replicate the universalised map produced in the almanac. Instead, they transform the figure and explore the dramatic potential of a zodiacal woman.

In 2014, The Dolphin's Back professionally produced John Lyly's *The Woman in the Moon* for the first time in over 400 years. The company staged the play above the archaeological site of The Rose Playhouse, creating a heightened sense of historical place and space. They defined the genre of the play within the production's tagline: "An Astrological Sex Comedy." Marketing materials for the play focused visual attention on a solitary image of what could be called a Vitruvian Woman. The graphic designer attached the ruffed neck and the head of Queen Elizabeth I to a nude female body, outstretched within a circle and

¹²⁵ Edward Pond. *An Almanack for the Yeare of Christ* (London, 1612), C3v.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, C3r.

postured as da Vinci's proportioned man, his rendering of the cosmological positioning of man's body analogous to the geometrically proportioned universe. The production's emblematic collage foreshadowed the play's and the production's obsessive gaze on Pandora's celestially constituted female body. The play began with Pandora's body being created from the elements on a white circular bed. The set piece not only symbolised the moon into which she would eventually be metamorphosed; but, as she was being constructed by Nature, the furniture also encircled her body as a sign that she, like the Vitruvian Man, corresponded to the proportions of the universe.

While early modern almanacs "erased" the female body in the period's figural depictions of heavenly and human correspondences, dramatists drafted what could be thought of as zodiacal females within early modern plays by constructing female characters whose fictional bodies also correspond to the heavens. This chapter investigates three case study plays to explore the distinctive dramatic roles that celestial correspondence plays when applied to cosmologically invested female characters: Lyly's Pandora in *The Woman in the Moon* (1587-90), Dekker's Celestine in *Satiromastix* (1601), and Webster's Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14). While early modern almanac images collapse two genders into a representative male form, this chapter spreads the almanac's universalised body maps alongside the dramatic portraits of zodiacal women. Like the almanac's connective map or rubric of the "universal" human body, the planetary influence over the female body in these plays registers the potential for female characters to participate in the almanacs' "fantasy of somatic control."¹²⁷ Didactic texts like the almanac presented predictable bodily outcomes based on the influence of celestial bodies, but plays often block the realisation of somatic control. The chapter argues that as female characters operate under a zodiacal frame, the plays resist the notion of a contained female character or one that consistently aligns under

¹²⁷ Calabresi, "'Red Incke'," 242.

the universal map of astrological control. The zodiacal man features as a paradoxical touchstone. The female characters are presented within the plays, not as predictable forms but rather as malleable and unstable subjects. In many ways the only predictability attached to their character is their unpredictability.

The correspondence between bodies, that of the celestial and the terrestrial, contributed to the way in which the early modern imagination navigated ideas of corporeality within space. This chapter borrows from the spatial theory of topology, as it offers a qualitative way to think about the overlap between types of bodies, not only between the celestial and terrestrial but also between the almanac's zodiacal man and the plays' zodiacal women. As John W. Wylie notes: "Topology is a form of geographical/mathematical thinking that conceives [of] space and spatial relations primarily in terms of connective properties rather than distance and position."¹²⁸ While other chapters in this thesis explore measurable spatial relationships, such as distances and positioning, topology's conception of space through "connective properties" is particularly useful in mapping the influence of one body on or over another, as it registers the correspondence between bodies. Topologists observe and qualitatively map spatial relationships, looking for edges, holes, and gaps. Wylie provides a concise definition of topology: "Topology is the study of object properties which are maintained even when the object is stretched, compressed, twisted or otherwise altered (but not torn)."¹²⁹ Objects, including bodies, maintain their topological unity of shape during the process and completion of alteration (stretching, compressing, twisting, etc.), remaining invariant in form though possessing variation.

Topology, typically applied to the discipline of geography, features within the anatomical study of the body and the geographic study of landscapes. Recent geographers

¹²⁸ John W. Wylie, *Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2007), 203.

¹²⁹ Wylie, *Landscape*, 203.

consider “places and landscapes as outcomes of intersecting flows (material and non-material, human and non-human) coming together and coalescing into knowable forms.”¹³⁰ Early modern studies of anatomy and geography also shared formal intersections and commonalities. Within the period cartographic representations of the body and of terrestrial geographies offer correlative methods in their mapping of bodies and space. As Caterina Albano states of the early modern intersection of these forms: “Anatomy and geography function[ed] as reciprocal models for delineating the ‘mental maps’ through which both corporeality and space could be categorised and represented.”¹³¹ Early modern celestial cartography frequently used the terminology and the shapes of its earthly counterpart (e.g. celestial *globes*, star *charts*, etc.) and had its own type of topography, in which it marked and graphed celestial space.

In Angus Fletcher’s latest book on space, *The Topological Imagination*, he emphasises the appropriateness of using topology to approach the complexity of compound bodies in early modern drama, where “there is a constant testing of solidity...through the analytic functions of drama and staging and, above all of the actors manifestly acting.”¹³² Fletcher identifies the topological features of the actors’ body in performance or the imagined body within the dramatic text. His topological application to bodies in plays and on stages is appropriate to the spatial concept, as topology is in its essence a bodily idea. While Steven Connor notes: “Topology grew from the realisation that it was possible to formalise spatial relations mathematically,” he maintains that, “no matter how abstract it may become,

¹³⁰ Owain Jones. “‘The Breath of the Moon’: The Rhythmic and Affective Time-spaces of UK Tides,” in *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature, Place, Mobilities and Bodies*, ed. Tim Edensor (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 193.

¹³¹ Caterina Albano, “Visible Bodies: Cartography and Anatomy,” in *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 104.

¹³² Angus Fletcher, *The Topological Imagination: Spheres, Edges, and Islands* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 28.

topology remains fundamentally bodily.”¹³³ This chapter will use the terminology and techniques of these “reciprocal models” found in cartography, geography, anatomy, and astronomy/astrology to map early modern ideas found within almanacs and plays, arguing that the spatial relationship in both types of writing demonstrates a topological correlation between heavenly bodies and male and female human bodies. Using topology as a tool for approaching the body in space, this chapter will map celestial and terrestrial bodies charting their interconnectivity and operation within early modern drama. Doing so produces a new, spatially informed method for thinking about the body and the creation of character in early modern drama.

The Woman in the Moon: Stolen Materials and Corresponding Parts

“For know that change is my felicity,
And ficklenesse Pandoraes proper forme.”
Lyly, *The Woman in the Moon*

The plot of Lyly’s play, *The Woman in the Moon*, is structured by a series of episodes. Each new scene pivots from the last, not necessarily because of a change of location or an event, but rather due to the quick and stark personality changes enacted upon the female protagonist, Pandora. The dramatic action of the play stems from the planetary control over the material of her fictional body. In 1.1, Utopia’s first woman is designed in Nature’s workshop, where she is more Adamic than Eve-like. She is fashioned directly from the elements, rather than from the previously constructed bodily matter of the rib bone. Unlike the biblical Eden, in which God uses the flesh of a previously created being as a raw, sculptural medium, Nature materially culls Pandora’s body from the classical elements of “purest water, earth, and ayre,

¹³³ Steven Connor, “Topologies: Michel Serres and the Shapes of Thought,” *Anglistik* 15 (2004): 105-17.

and fyre” (I.i.62).¹³⁴ These basic substances of Pandora’s bodily construction are also the elements of the celestial and, more broadly, the universe.

By repurposing cosmic elements for Pandora’s genesis, Nature performs the act of creation using borrowed constituents, and Lyly dramatised Sidney’s “principal objects” theory mentioned in the introduction of this thesis in creating a stage character. Lyly empowers Nature to enact Sidney’s process of aesthetic creation using borrowed heavenly materials. The action looks to the planets less like a creative act and more like theft, and Nature declares to Pandora, “Thus have I robd the Planets for thy sake” (I.i.102). Mars echoes Nature’s admission and notes the bodily embezzlements, detailing distinct parts of the newly created being which “robbe vs Planets of our ornaments” (112). The collision of the spirit (the astral body) and the flesh (the elemental) is performed by Concord, who joins these parts “in league” which “imparteth motion vnto euey limme” (I.i.74-76). Compounding the correlating parts of the heavenly bodies with her form, the fusion of Pandora’s body is a synthesis “compact of euey heauenly excellence” (94). Nature crafts Pandora in “worthy workmanship” (130), fashioned from “matchlesse mould” (63), and she seems to have outdone previous achievements with her patchwork, as she boasts, “*Nature* [hath] gone beyond her selfe” (78). Though Nature is pleased with her bodily collage, the planets take offence as they recognise themselves in the newly produced female body. The planets vehemently resist sharing the limelight and are worried by Pandora’s position as “*Natures* glory and delight” (93). The glory of the female construction causes the heavens to respond in jealousy, eventually leading to a “reuenge” of the planets who “bend [their] forces” against the new creation (132-134).

¹³⁴ John Lyly, *The Woman in the Moon* in *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. R. Warwick Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902).

Nature catalogues Pandora's body part by part in a performance of verbal, anatomical cartography and recalls the origin of each appendage and its corresponding planetary quality. The planetary infusion of the earthly body forms direct parallels between heavenly and human correspondences within the zodiac.

NATURE.

Thou art indowd with *Saturns* deepe conceit,
 Thy minde as hawte as *Iupiters* high thoughts,
 Thy stomack Lion-like, like *Mauors'* hart,
 Thine eyes bright beamde, like *Sol* in his array,
 Thy cheekes more fayre, then are faire *Venus* cheekes,
 Thy tongue more eloquent than *Mercuries*,
 Thy forehead whiter then the siluer Moones.

(I.i.95-101)

Using simile and metaphor, Nature verbally maps Pandora's body to create an index of the planetary properties present within the newly created character. If this description were to be illustrated, it would appear strikingly like the almanac's zodiacal man. The listing of Pandora's body works similarly to the bodily code attached to the almanac figure.

In order to create an immediate association between celestial and terrestrial bodies, almanacs from the period not only included a woodcut of the zodiacal man [Figure 2], but a title usually appeared above the figure, detailing what is found below the representation of the body and its overlaid astrological diagram. This labelling format for the zodiacal man appears consistently above the anatomy figure across the genre with little variation. For instance, Walter Gray's almanac of 1589 shows: "The Anatomie of mans body, as the partes therof are gouerned by the. xii. Celestiall Signes."¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Walter Gray, *An Almanacke and Prognostication, Made for the Yeere of Our Lorde, M.D.LXXXIX* (London, 1589), A2v.



Figure 2: Mounslowe, A2v

In the woodcut, the body is dissected, not only by the exposure of the midsection with the skin and tissue removed to reveal the inner workings of the belly, but also by the anatomisation of the woodcut figure, as it is divided into parts in correlation to the zodiac. The figure represents a spatial model for the ways in which the signs could interact with the body. The lines drawn from the zodiacal characters to corporal regions evidence the overlay of the signs onto the body and its distinctly separated parts. The division of the body directly corresponds to the division of the heavens, forming a parallel body relationship and one that Lyly turns to for the composite creation of Pandora.

Lyly details the creative process of transformation, leading to the final image revealed from behind a curtain. By doing so, he explicitly stresses the correspondence, or the concrescence, between the elements and the humours. Topology defines bodies of various kinds in their relationship to one another. Alfred North Whitehead developed a concept within topology that he termed *concrescence* which pertains to the “process in which many

unities become integrated into a novel unity.”¹³⁶ The premise of humoral theory is that all of the universe is linked. Bodies, in the sense of material objects, share relationships within the cosmos not simply by kind or species, but by fundamental and elemental bonds in material composition. Lyly’s *The Woman in the Moon* employs the parallel relationship of the celestial and the terrestrial in the formation of one of its characters and as a plot device throughout the play. Lyly dramatically mimics these connections, verbally maps the relationship between celestial bodies and Pandora’s body, and creates a female character whose temperament and actions are controlled by external agents (the planets).

By dramatically conceiving and mapping Pandora through rich, extended details about the components of her body, Lyly embeds her character with potential to be positioned and influenced throughout the play. Leah Scragg, in her critical edition of the play, highlights the constituents available for Nature’s masterpiece as being “conceived as Nature’s storehouse and compounded of the four elements...with all their unrealized potential.”¹³⁷ Nature’s workshop, from which the image is revealed, employs the same matter for terrestrial bodies as celestial. In the construction of the human, Nature creates a “merror of the earth” (I.i.60). Lyly’s Pandora is constructed from the “many unities” of borrowed planetary matter and its associated qualities. By using these celestial materials, Nature creatively forms a concrescence—a new body and in it a “novel unity” that would directly relate to the planetary sources.

Throughout the play her body is manipulated by external forces. Pandora is not a stable character moving through a sequence of events in order to create the drama. Instead, Lyly constructs the drama through her alterations. G.K. Hunter highlights the divisibility of

¹³⁶ Sha Xin Wei, *Poiesis and Enchantment in Topological Matter* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013), 119.

¹³⁷ Leah Scragg, ed., *The Woman in the Moon*, by John Lyly (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 54. See note (I.i.5-12).

her body and the effect that causes on her body and her identity: “In terms of idea Pandora is...divisible...as she moves through saturnine, martial, venereal, and lunatic phases she becomes in effect a different person.”¹³⁸ Pandora’s extreme and often violent shifts of character disrupt the idea of a character maintaining a stable form throughout a dramatic fiction. She is the subject, and her alterations give the drama its shape, as the planets bend hers. By experiencing the dawn of Pandora’s creation within Nature’s shop and having access to the report of her assemblage and coming into being, the audience receives clear topographical information that Pandora’s body exists as substantively and spatially linked to the heavenly bodies. The interconnected corpora would have been familiar to the original audience through the almanac. Lyly visually highlights the parallel worlds of heavenly and human by the staging process and aurally maps them through description.

The zodiacal man remained largely the same throughout the early modern period. However, the play, through its non-universalised female character, resists the stasis, predictability, and reproducibility of the almanac’s universal figure. Pandora’s identity is in a sense reprinted as each planet takes a turn controlling her. As Lyly repurposes the almanac figure, he explores the dramatic potential in a zodiacal female to increase the dramatic social and sexual tension of control. Throughout the play, Pandora undergoes a series of diverse temperaments, as the planets alternate reigning over her. In keeping with humoral and astrological dogma, Saturn brings melancholy; Jupiter, “Ambition and Disdaine” (II.i.3); Mars, a fighting and a warlike spirit; Sol, gentleness and kindness; Venus, lust and passion; Mercury, “false and full of slights” (IV.i.9); and, finally, the Moon fosters madness and inconstancy. All the while, Pandora’s stance toward the other human characters vacillates with each planet-induced humour.

¹³⁸ G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 212.

G. K. Hunter emphasises the way Lylian dramaturgy borrows from Ovid in producing transformation or character development in terms of the spatial shape of characters. He suggests: “*The Metamorphoses* shows us ‘changes of shapes’, but...such changes are only the superficial expression of an underlying continuity.” These alterations upon the shapes of character are “responses to the pressures from a perplexing outside world.”¹³⁹ By verbally constructing a character onstage within this cosmological and astrological framework, Lyly provides a nimble and complex creation, not only in Pandora’s decision making, but also in the multi-layered juxtapositions of her character brought on by planetary influence on her body.

By crafting characters within this cosmological framework, Lyly opens up dramatic possibilities, which evolve from earlier allegorical models. Peter Saccio suggests that Lyly in the later plays, particularly *Midas* and *The Woman in the Moon*, “is abandoning...situational form. Each in its own way is a blend of situational drama and narrative drama with a developed plot.”¹⁴⁰ Andy Kesson presents a more originary position on Lylian character creation, development, and dramaturgical styling, where the humours feature as a source for generating the new type of character. He argues: “Drawing on humours theory, itself a theory of the relationship of body and mind, Lyly developed new ways to stage characters who could be transformed by the world around them.”¹⁴¹ Kesson underscores a tendency within late Lylian drama to make visible and explore the creation of a character on stage, as a set piece, whether that be through metamorphosis or elemental construction.

While Lyly’s earlier plays, *Love’s Metamorphosis* and less explicitly *Galatea*, feature external agents who manipulate and transform female characters, as Lucy Munro suggests,

¹³⁹ G. K. Hunter, “Galatea,” in John Lyly, *Galatea; Midas*, ed. G. K. Hunter and David Bevington. The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 13.

¹⁴⁰ Peter Saccio, *The Court Comedies of John Lyly: A Study in Allegorical Dramaturgy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 8.

¹⁴¹ Andy Kesson, *John Lyly and Early Modern Authorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 127.

The Woman in the Moon is “possibly the ultimate expression of Lyly’s interest in change and mutability.”¹⁴² “Ficklenesse [is] Pandoraes proper forme” (V.i.308), and Pandora’s identity, like a waning and waxing moon, emerges as a perpetually unfixed and flexible shape. This flexibility links to the character being female. As Kesson notes: “*The Woman in the Moon* reimagined the possibilities of the onstage representation of subjectivity and femininity.”¹⁴³ The novelty of Lyly’s onstage character transformation arises from the situatedness of the characters within his constructed humoral world, which is filled with female bodies crossing the borders of the celestial and the terrestrial.

Throughout the play, the jealous planets work their sway over the zodiacal woman, manipulating her bodily humors. As each planet brings its zodiacal control to bear on her female body, its body pushes her body to become an extreme expression of their dominant characteristic. Through these dramatic episodes the ever-shifting Pandora confuses her suitors with her planetary-induced inconsistency. She eventually ends her circuit of personality shifts in a final, mad state ruled by Luna. At the end of the play, Nature insists on transferring Pandora out of the terrestrial plane of Utopia and placing her into one of the orbs. By her own agency, Pandora becomes the woman in the moon. Nature alters her bodily shape into the “planet” most associated with inconstancy and change. The multifacetedness and mutability that became Pandora’s condition are at one with the variegated fabric of the universe evoked in Nature’s opening speech, while the myth that Lyly structures of her metamorphosis into the woman in the moon serves to align her, and thus the female sex she ultimately governs, with the operations of the cosmos, the rhythms of nature, and ultimately the process of creation itself, in both its sublunary and its celestial dimensions.

¹⁴² Lucy Munro, “Lunar life,” in *The Times Literary Supplement* 5451, September 21, 2007, 22-23 (22).

¹⁴³ Andy Kesson, “‘It is a pity you are not a woman’: John Lyly and the Creation of Woman,” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 35-36.

However, she does not go into her final form alone, as her husband, Stesias, is banished to reside with her forever. To spite both Pandora and her servant (who, incidentally, metamorphoses into a hawthorn bush), Stesias breaks off a branch to scratch Pandora “if e’re she look back.” With the hawthorn bush in hand, the Man in the Moon takes his place beside her. In perpetuity, Stesias’ male form stands ready to enforce her action by performing a topological cut to her body. The female form in Lyly’s play operates under a state of perpetual flux. Even in her final form as the woman in the moon, she takes the shape of topological bodily inconstancy. However, positioned there with Stesias, her ongoing flexibility is challenged. Referring to didactic literature (such as almanacs) and plays, Anthony Fletcher, observes: “All these genres tell us how men wanted women to see the gender order, their place in it and themselves.”¹⁴⁴ While Nature, a female god, grants Pandora the choice of her ultimate celestial form, Stesias remains as an ongoing threat of bodily alteration. Through the form of a zodiacal woman, Lyly has redrawn the straightforward and stable male figure of the almanac and created a female figure, who declares: “For know that change is my felicity,/ And ficklenesse Pandoraes proper forme” (V.i.301-302).

The Woman in the Zodiac: Cutting Bodies and Changing Orbs

In Dekker’s *Satiromastix*, Celestine’s name signals and anticipates a heavenly character. Unlike Pandora, there are no warring planetary gods manipulating her zodiacal and elemental body. However, the male characters in the play seek to possess and position her for their own political and sexual use. Throughout the play, she is portrayed as a nonpareil woman—a zodiac in herself. Morally chaste, she is considered by the men in the play to be

¹⁴⁴ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xxi.

an unbroken circle of virtue. However, as the play progresses, her body increasingly becomes a locus of anxiety. Celestine's zodiacal body is marked as potentially unstable. The male characters worry over her chastity, and the threat remains of her possibly breaking her honour by succumbing to lust, a prospect that seems avoidable only through death.

Satiromastix is an unusual play of thickly layered satire completing the series of plays which Dekker terms "that terrible Poetomachia" and part of the much-disputed War of the Theatres.¹⁴⁵ The mystery surrounding the "War of the Poets" or "War of the Theatre" has historically diverted attention from *Satiromastix* as a play with characters, plot, and dramatic qualities to *Satiromastix* as a tight focus and commentary on its cultural and historiographical place within the social world of early modern theatre and the intricate and complex network of its dramatists. As Jeremy Lopez has observed: "I don't think that editorial and pedagogical conventions allow the play to seem to be concerned with anything more than the poets' war."¹⁴⁶ While this chapter maintains the importance of the satirical nature of the political and social games within the play, greater consideration is given to the dramatic construction and accompanying elements, rather than speculation on the role of Jonson, Marston, and later Dekker, and what the quarrel may or may not entail. However, it is not surprising to find humoral theory strongly featured within these self-referential plays, which continue in the mould of John Lyly (as seen in the last section), as well as the better-known humour plays of George Chapman and Ben Jonson in the late 1590s. The formula provides a fitting microcosm/macrocosm trope of external and internal, the writing process, and the correspondence between bodies. Though *Satiromastix* is filled with bodies celestial and terrestrial, this section will isolate key events within the drama that demonstrate the

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), vol. 1, 309.

¹⁴⁶ Jeremy Lopez, "The Shadow of the Canon," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2014): 119.

topological correspondence and interplay between personalities, characters, text, and the world of the play.

In Dekker's preface to *Satiromastix*, entitled not "To the Readers" as would be expected but rather "To the World," the reader finds herself immersed quickly in a complex and embroiled cosmos—a contest of words and wit, including cross-referencing between dramatic texts, gestures toward personalities and characters, bodies and resurrections.¹⁴⁷ Coming in at the end of the "Poetomachia," Dekker comments on the place of the banter between the dramatists: "They haue bin at high wordes, and so high, that the ground could not serue them, but...haue stalk't vpon Stages."¹⁴⁸ The elevated stage suits their elevated words, but Dekker's tone is far from commendatory. The gibe gives us a clue about the relationship Dekker sees in terms of words and bodies, beyond the topicality of the volley of stage words bandied between the "poets." In the last section of the preface, Dekker refers to Tucca's ghost "but that hee was raiz'd vp (in print) by new Exorcismes."¹⁴⁹ By identifying the print medium as the site of the "exorcism," Dekker transfers the body to the word and credits print with the ability to resurrect and revivify a ghost. Elsewhere in the preface, he speaks of "limmes of my naked lines" which were "tortur'd on the racke" and the possibility for poetry to be "murdered."¹⁵⁰ The bodily form Dekker grants the text establishes the text of the play as that which possesses bodily characteristics.

In *Satiromastix*, Dekker takes matters into his own hands with a satirical whip of his own, or as the other title *The Untrussing of the Humorous Poet* has it, leaves the "Second Horace," a title self-bestowed by Jonson, not just tongue-tied or tangled up but entirely unfastened and with nothing on at all.¹⁵¹ The correlation between text and body is telling,

¹⁴⁷ Dekker, *Satiromastix*, 309.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 310.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 309-310.

¹⁵¹ Cyrus Hoy, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in The Dramatic Works of*

particularly in the ability of the text to give and to receive abuse, as well as to give life and to take it. While this adds a strong textual layer to this chapter, the purpose here is not bibliographic. It is fitting for Dekker to use words in a bodily fashion—the corpus of a play. But the role of text as body or standing in for a body extends beyond “The World” of the paratext into the body of the play. Horace follows suit:

HORACE.

To see my fate, that when I dip my pen
 In distilde Roses, and doe striue to dreine,
 Out of myne Inke all gall; that when I wey
 Each sillable I write or speake, because
 Mine enemies with sharpe and searching eyes
 Looke through and through me, caruing my poore labours
 Like an Anotomy: Oh heauens to see,
 That when my lines are measur'd out as straight
 As euen Paralels, tis strange that still,
 Still some imagine they are drawne awry.
 The error is not mine, but in theyr eye,
 That cannot take proportions.

(I.i.200-211)

Jonathan Sawday’s pinpointing and classification of the inherent violence embedded in the act of anatomisation during this period helps to classify Horace’s description of his opponent’s acts of critical dissection (“caruing my poore labours/Like an Anotomy”) in terms of posture toward a body. As Sawday notes: “The threat or the reality of violence runs through all Renaissance anatomizations, dissections, partitions, and divisions, whether we encounter the term in a medical sense or in looser metaphorical set of registers.”¹⁵² Sawday’s observation highlights the fact that these forced segmentations of the body always possess potential (“threat”) or actual (“reality”) violence, even if the motive is pure (for instance, in purposes of discovery [on a corpse] or surgery [on an animate body]).

Thomas Dekker, Edited by Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Cyrus Hoy identifies this title as theatrical and *Satiromastix* as the literary one.

¹⁵² Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), 2.

This type of operation opens up, separates, or dissects. Sawday notes the violation of the body, even if the anatomisation is completed by way of imagistic language or as a figure of speech. As apparent in his “To the World,” Dekker uses some of the same diction to inspire or incarnate language by giving it a body. Horace vociferously details the offence to his person of performing such invasive procedures to his words. So Horace, though the caricature of Jonson in Dekker’s parody, describes his own efforts to check himself when “I wey each sillable I write or speake” before coming under the knife of scrutiny. He does so “because mine enemies with sharpe and searching eyes looke through and through me, caruing my poore labours like an Anotomy” (I.ii.194-198).

Though Dekker begins with the world and the body, as human and as text, he sets his sights on another body—the terrestrial character with a celestial name. The name Caelestine or Celestine is an epithet for the way in which she is described. In 2.1, the King, who is already a bit smitten (“Onlie my heart takes measure of thy beautie” [148]), imagines a social and relational solar system model with Terrill as the sun and Celestine as the moon, relating the bride’s body to a world and visualising the notion of human bodies as microcosm of the heavenly realms:

KING.

Thy Bride, thy choice, thy wife,
She that is now thy fadom, thy new world,
That brings thee people, and makes little subiects
Kneele at thy feete, obay in euerie thing,
So euerie Father is a priuate King.

TERRILL.

My Lord, her beauty is the poorest part,
Chieflie her vertues did endowe my heart.

KING.

Doe not back-bite her beauties, they all shine,
Brighter on thee, because the beames are thine,
To thee more faire, to others her two lips
Shew like a parted Moone in thine Eclipse.

(II.i.160-170)

The dialogue between Terrill and the King is essentially an attempt to define her. As Helen Moore observes: “Dekker’s plays place great emphasis on the definition of woman.”¹⁵³ The King designates Celestine as a “new world.” Through her body, she will “people” the dominion of her kingly husband by reproduction. And while Terrill protests he is virtuous and smitten solely by her internal qualities, the King goes further and declares Celestine’s moon-like beauty to be a quality revered, as her shining is sourced in her sun-like husband (“because the beames are thine”). In simile, the King compares the couple to a moon and sun, but his commendation is far from innocent, as he wishes for the bright entity of Celestine to shine in his own sphere. In his expression of his wish for her to join the royal court, the King extends Celestine’s celestial sway beyond the relationship of husband and wife to something more inclusive:

KING.

Thus farre I tend, I wod but turne this spheare,
 Of Ladies eyes, and place it in the Court,
 Where thy faire Bride should for the Zodiacke shine,
 And euery Lady else sit for a signe.
 But all thy thoughts are yellow, thy sweet bloud
 Rebels, th'art iealous *Wat*; thus with proude reuels
 To emmulate the masking firmament,
 VVhere Starres dance in the siluer Hall of heauen,
 Thy pleasure should be seasoned, and thy bed
 Relish thy Bride, But, but thou darst not *Wat*.

(II.i.182-193)

The king fantasises through the ladies’ eyes and plans to turn the perspective of that gaze. He imagines Celestine, who has been located without the court, viewed from within the court. His stated intention is to “turn this spheare,/Of Ladies eyes, and place it in the Court.” By moving the planetary object of Celestine, which currently resides outside of the immediate and intimate relational space of the kingly train, the King reconfigures the dynamic of his female entourage. Celestine triumphs over other ladies in the court, and if the King would

¹⁵³ Helen Moore, “Jonson, Dekker, and the Discourse of Chivalry,” in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, vol. 12, ed. John Pitcher (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1999), 139.

have his way, she would be all-encompassing as the collective whole of the other women's various parts. She will "for the Zodiacke shine,/And euery Lady else sit for a signe." This description recalls the zodiacal man present within the almanacs of the period, in which the various signs corresponded to individual parts of the body. Likewise, as Celestine represents the zodiac in its entirety and the other ladies stand for the signs, Celestine literally embodies the entirety of the zodiac as, in essence, a "zodiacal woman" and encircles all of the other signs (the other courtiers) within her compass.

The context surrounding the King's celebratory remarks of Celestine's heavenly and human self, for which only astral imagery will express appropriate levels of wonder, serves to praise her and contrasts starkly with the King's severe commentary based on his perception of Terrill's own lack of appreciation for his bride. However, the comparison of heavenly and human bodies is not lost on Terrill. He agrees to the King's terms of a moral test over Celestine, which have been pitted not only as a trial of Celestine's chastity and faithfulness but also of Terrill's trust. In defence of his own knowledge of women and his selection of a wife, Terrill too charts Celestine in heavenly terms, returning to the King's own descriptive vocabulary:

TERRILL.

I know I tooke a woman to my wife,
And I know women to be earthly Moones,
That neuer shine till night, I know they change
Their Orbes (their husbands) and in sickish hearts,
Steale to their sweete Endimions, to be cur'd
With better Phisicke, sweeter dyet drinckes,
Then home can minister: all this I know
Yet know not all, but giue me leaue O King,
To boast of mine, and saie that I know none;
I haue a woman but not such a one.

(II.i.205-214)

In Terrill's description, the commonplace transfer of lunar qualities to women's character is not strictly located in a disembodied quality, but connected to "Phisicke" and to keeping the health of the human body. The reason he suggests for women to "change/Their Orbes (their

husbands)” rests not in a fickleness of mind, but in a physical malady or disease. For Terrill, the “sickish hearts” of the woman need to be “cur’d.” The orb refers, not to a spherical body or an orbit, but to the angle between two celestial bodies—the aspect. The orb stands, as can be noted in the parenthesis above, for the husband. Women alter their husbands, shift them out as well as in, changing their “aspect”—a change of positioning toward and against various men. Terrill recalls Endymion, strongly associated with the object of affection for the goddess of the Moon and in the early modern thought particularly connected with Diana. Instead of carrying on with a one-sided metaphor, Dekker shifts between the celestial and human body and affixes the lunar qualities onto a human condition.

Terrill associates the moon-like women’s changeability with a bodily disorder, a lack of wholeness in the human body. Even as Terrill depicts the commonplace notion of women as bodily oriented toward inconstancy, he protests that he possesses in his bride something other than what he has described. “I know I tooke a woman to be my wife,” and yet, “I haue a woman but not such a one.” In other words, Celestine is female, but not moonlike as most women. Terrill suggests that she has a body that is not sick but whole. Celestine possesses a different bodily form. M. C. Bradbrook notes what she calls the “accent of constancy” in Dekker’s heroines, which produces mechanistic products of sameness across a variety of characters and identities: “Dekker’s good women emerge from their trials too often, like some perfect machine, guaranteed mechanically perfect under all conditions.”¹⁵⁴ In the case of Celestine, this “perfect machine” is a celestial one, and as the zodiac that the King wishes will shine in the court, Celestine is contorted by the male figures into the shape of a constant zodiacal female.

¹⁵⁴ M. C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), 124.

Before Celestine transfers to the court to fulfill the arrangement forced upon her, Dekker shifts the verbal focus from the image of Celestine's heavenly body to a strictly human, fleshly one. Though her planetary self continues to radiate in the background, the elemental, humoral, and material come to the fore, emphasising the terrestrial nature of Celestine's human body. The conflict in 5.1 exists not primarily because of the moral dilemma Celestine faces, nor her ability to choose between virtue and vice. Moore notes that Dekker observes the "disparity between the real and the apparent, especially in the context of sexual and familial relationships."¹⁵⁵ The power of matter eclipses the mind and the "illness" of Celestine's not-yet-committed lust exists not in her will but in her blood. When it is time for the test of her chastity and constancy (a brief time of potential vulnerability within the King's court), it seems that Celestine's death is the only foolproof defence against her own inconstancy in that environment. This registers the play's inability to consider a break from the regularity of her expected female form. Her father, Sir Quintilian Shorthose, describes her chastity as an unbroken pure circle established at her birth. "I did charme her soule,/ In the white circle of true Chastity,/ Still to run true, till death" (V.i.91-3). The continuous shape of her cyclical purity anticipated by her father is unending in scope and blessing, so if it shall be broken, it must be broken by death, or the resultant eternal curse becomes enacted.

In *Satiromastix* Dekker uses the zodiac, not as a literal means of planetary control as Pandora, but as a measurement of female prominence and status. Celestine, the zodiacal female, at first appears to be an index for stability within the social universe of the play. She is praised for her starry brightness and zodiac-like stability, and the male characters fantasise about her rotating in their own spheres. But the play slides Celestine's body between notions of absolute celestial brilliance and the possibility of moral collapse under the pressure of sexual temptation. As chapter 3 will argue, the stasis of the zodiacal band provided a fixed

¹⁵⁵ Moore, "Jonson, Dekker, and the Discourse of Chivalry," 139.

celestial space to work against and an opportunity to introduce dramatic tension. In *Satiromastix* Dekker locates that suspense within Celestine's zodiacal body, and through her character, Dekker increases the dramatic tension. While she is fought over because of her stability, the possibility of potential moral failure, through the moral test, complicates the perception of Celestine's constant zodiacal form.

So far, this chapter has explored the dramatic potential of transforming the universalised zodiacal figure found in the almanac into distinctly female characters. It has argued that the change of gender offered an opportunity for complex characterisation. This next section investigates Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, a play with an almost obsessive concentration on its characters' terrestrial bodies whose fates are credited to celestial operations. Webster's central female character is not a Pandora figure, a compilation of elements from the planets put through a course of shifting identities, nor a Celestine, a heavenly creature on earth fraught with the burdens of earthly, fleshly temptations. In his celestially controlled play, Webster reserves the planetary metaphors not for the central female figure but in general commentary about women directed at her foil. Webster creates a much more earth-bound figure in the Duchess, and she remains symbolically tied to the terrestrial. In this way, unlike Dekker and Lyly, the Duchess functions within the play as a universalised human body, like the almanac. Her character, while put through a range of challenges, remains a serial static figure that changes shape but does not develop.

The Woman in the Stars: Substances, Surfaces, and Edges

Near the end of the Malfi narrative, as told by William Painter in one of Webster's source texts, *The Palace of Pleasure*, Antonio composes his own musical lament "upon the discourse of his misfortune."

A cruell Darte brings happy death, my soule then rest shall finde:
 And sleping body vnder tombe, shall dreame time out of minde.
 And yet the Loue, the time, nor Death, lokes not how I decrease:
 Nor giueth eare to any thing of this my wofull peace.
 Full farre I am from my good happe, or halfe the ioy I craue,
 wherby I change my state with teares, & draw full nere my graue.
 The courteous Gods that giues me life, nowe moues the Planets all:
 For to arrest my groning ghost, and hence my sprite to call.¹⁵⁶

Painter's Antonio connects the motions and movements of the "Planets all" with his own progress toward death, the separation or anatomisation of elements of his person: body, soul, and spirit—the "arrest" of his "groning ghost" and the extraction of his spirit from his body. In his song, Antonio not only declares the "Gods" as the givers of life but also as the Prime Mover(s) of the planets, performing the operation of dividing the quickening components from flesh and bone. The action of the planets corresponds to the action of the body, and specifically to its shape. A puncture from the dart, which brings death, also changes the topological shape of the body through creating a puncture, and in the process of death the singer identifies the alteration of his form with "I decrease" and "I change my state." The planets' motion directly alters the form of the body—dividing and pulling the parts of the now-altered shape of the body away from the whole.

The Duchess of Malfi, like its source, is full of bodies both heavenly and human, as Webster, like Painter before him, connects celestial and terrestrial bodies in retelling the Malfi story and bringing it to the stage. The Duchess of the play enacts a much more terrestrial figure than the other zodiacally influenced and associated female figures from Lyly and Dekker. She operates in a play that emphasises starry influence and correspondence over human bodies. However, unlike in Lyly and Dekker's plays the men of *The Duchess of Malfi* do not attempt to manipulate her body and identity through planetary control (Pandora) or

¹⁵⁶ William Painter, *The Second Tome of the Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1567), 193.

venerate her as celestially stable (Celestine). Instead they work to break her down to parts and elements, universalising her body and diminishing her influence as ruler and as a female.

In Webster's play human bodies come to the fore as do their disembodied parts—tongues, eyes, bellies, secret parts, and hands (real and wax). The humoral theory present in the play is interlaced with discussions of melancholy, choler, lycanthropy, and lunacy. Associated treatments are mentioned along with the ailments, such as purging sickness and diet (e.g. the apricots for the Duchess and the rhubarb recommended for the choler); they are also used to diagnose the symptoms of unbalanced humours within the body, recognisable in the colour of blood and complexion. *The Duchess* also features the zodiac and the casting of extensively detailed horoscopes. Throughout the play, Webster creates celestially connected characters, or put another way, fictional bodies which are composed of a mixture of the celestial and the terrestrial. Sometimes within the play female bodies are elided into a universalised human form and at other times they remain distinct. Webster constructs his characters with a heightened body consciousness using an early modern understanding of the composite human body and allows for bodies to fit within the category of connected or compound bodies. This section will scan for bodies within *The Duchess of Malfi*, identifying alterations, fissures, and gaps to interrogate how these modifications or separations relate to the overall topological unity of the body.

At the beginning of the play the heavenly bodies are tacitly assumed to be somehow involved, but they have no real agency. Webster's delay in using the heavens' influence earlier contributes to the narrative and developmental stalling embedded into the structure of the play. As Catherine Belsey argues: "The audience is repeatedly invited by the realist surface to expect the unfolding of a situation or the interplay of specific characters, only to find that the actual constantly resolves into abstraction, the characters into figures in a

pattern.”¹⁵⁷ While Belsey is not forming an argument about the topological elements within the play, her description of the play’s narrative progression highlights the topological aspects of its narrative structure. Later, she argues that although the play’s characters seem to possess a “realist surface,” the emblematic imagery halts the motion of the plot: “The effect is a play that presents an anatomy of the world rather than a replica of it.”¹⁵⁸ Belsey’s observation of the emblematic structure explains the placement of the celestial agency near the end of the play, and it captures the alteration within the characters’ development. Webster’s delayed “development” resists realistic interaction, realism, or progression, instead it morphs the characters into serial static shapes that change but do not develop.

In 1.1 as the Duchess describes her own body, she contrasts her substance with that of funeral statuary. Though a mourner for her former husband, she assures Antonio of her own body’s corporeality by saying, “This is flesh and blood, sir:” in contrast to the sculpted bodies in fine stone (I.i.440-455).¹⁵⁹ Dympna Callaghan notes the role the Duchess’ reply serves: “She reminds the audience of the difference between representation and reality—between the effigies of living widows in wood and marble depicting praying for the souls of their departed husbands, and their continued lived reality.”¹⁶⁰ The Duchess separates herself from other objects within the sphere around the dead, by accentuating material differences between the substance of her human body and the substance of other earthly materials. While perhaps similar in shape, the contrast of substances between her body and a human-shaped sculpture renders the two distinct in quality. In similar fashion topologists distinguish between surface

¹⁵⁷ Catherine Belsey, “Emblem and Antithesis in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *Renaissance Drama* 11 (January 1980): 117.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ A similar statement is made by Orland Friscobaldo’s daughter in Dekker and Middleton’s *The Honest Whore* to emphasise her ability to forgive by affirming her bodily material difference from stone, “I am not made of marble: I forgive you.” Orlando replies, “Nay if you were made of marble, a good stone cutter might cut you” (II.i.18-20). *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 2, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

¹⁶⁰ Dympna Callaghan, ed., *The Duchess of Malfi: John Webster*, New Casebooks (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan, 2000), 4-5.

shapes of an object and substances that make up or fill the mass within the object. Donal O'Shea notes the contrast: "By a sphere, we mean the outside skin, or surface, of a ball. We do not include the stuff enclosed by the sphere...we are excluding the bedrock or magma beneath the surface."¹⁶¹ By making the comparison of her body to an alabaster statuary, the Duchess delineates a topological distinction between substance and shape.

Sara Morrison suggests that the surface and substance of the Duchess' body, as the parts that make up her identity, maintain an ultimately fixed form throughout the play. She notes: "Although she dies in the end, the Duchess maintains a continuous, stable identity, which is figured throughout the play as located beneath her flesh—her blood, her soul, her womb—and on its surface, even though her integral body is always under threat of torture and dismemberment."¹⁶² Morrison highlights the cohesion of the Duchess' substance and surface, but recognises the ongoing potentiality or threat of dismemberment. However, Frances E. Dolan renders the Duchess' shape as a progressive hardening and encapsulation: "If anything, the Duchess becomes more enigmatic as she suffers, shoring up her boundaries rather than breaking open," she "ossifies...into the monument she first insisted she was not," and "she becomes hardened into a kind of statue, mute and mysterious."¹⁶³ While Morrison maintains that the Duchess remains stable throughout even with the ongoing threat of dissection, Dolan's picture suggests a bodily metamorphosis of hardening into what becomes an inflexible, bodily substance.

A topological reading absorbs both ideas and allows for the Duchess to possess a stable identity, as well as a transformation. The spatial theory claims that a body maintains its

¹⁶¹ Donal O'Shea, *The Poincaré Conjecture* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 22.

¹⁶² Sara Morrison, "Embodying the Blazon: Performing and Transforming Pain in *Measure for Measure* and *The Duchess of Malfi*," in *Staging the Blazon in Early Modern English Theater*, ed. Deborah Uman and Sara Morrison (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 80.

¹⁶³ Frances Dolan, "'Can this be certain?': The Duchess of Malfi's Secrets," in *The Duchess of Malfi: John Webster*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan, New Casebooks (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan), 130-131.

distinct identity in all forms of mutations, except when cut. In *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, James J. Gibson presents what he terms the *ecological laws of surfaces*. His second law states: “Any surface has resistance to deformation, depending on the *viscosity* of the substance.”¹⁶⁴ The Duchess distinguishes between the sculpture and her own body, which might share shape qualities, such as lines or curves on the surface. Her shape and that of the statuary may be homeomorphic (when two objects possess one-to-one correspondence), but the substance of her fleshy and liquid-filled body is much less viscous than the hard composition of the alabaster statuary. Gibson’s law of resistance states, “the more fluid or flowing the substance, the more penetrable the surface, and the more changeable (less permanent) the layout.”¹⁶⁵ This is not the last time in the play that Webster highlights the difference between a real body and a fake body. Ferdinand’s wax figurines demonstrate the play’s awareness and interest in exploring the contrast of bodied stage characters with artificial prop bodies. While the Duchess considers her own body in relationship to the dead and the surrounding statuary, at the end of the play she is confronted with her “flesh and blood” being threatened with death, the end of her body’s continuous shape.

John Russell Brown suggests that the Duchess dominates the scene through the tension and focus that builds from her extended death:

For the Duchess, Webster’s presentation of death is more sustained and more concentrated than ever before. By reducing the individual interest of other characters and lengthening the presentation of torture and death through two scenes, he has simplified the dramatic focus without loss of subtlety or complexity, and has enlarged the emotional and intellectual impressions of the duchess’ last moments. No other character in Webster’s plays holds the stage so continuously; no other single incident so dominates the whole play.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979; repr. New York: Psychology Press, 2015), 19. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=1864844>.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

¹⁶⁶ John Russell Brown, “Introduction,” in *The Duchess of Malfi*, xxxii.

Whether or not Brown's absolute statement holds for the exclusivity of the Duchess as the "presentation of death...more sustained and more concentrated than ever before," the extent of Webster's prolonged exposure of the Duchess to the potentiality of bodily change through death is pointed and marked in the play. And it is in these moments of "simplified...dramatic focus" and "enlarged...emotional and intellectual impressions" that the Duchess and Bosola converse over the nature of bodies and their spatial properties: the separation of the unified body into parts, the substances, surfaces, and edges, all of which use ideas that are qualitatively accessed through a topological description of bodies. As much as the Duchess' body may be altered, bent, or distorted and not cut, she will continue to possess the properties of her original form.

As signalled at the beginning of this chapter, Mounslow introduced his almanac with terrestrial and celestial glory—heavenly and human bodies. Before killing the Duchess in 4.2, Bosola demeans the glory found in her body and reduces her human physical form to its basic components in the materials of its anatomical structure and chemical composition. When the Duchess asks Bosola to identify her, she asks, "Who am I?" Bosola speaks of her body not her role and in his description transitions away from the specificity of her distinct female body. He, like the almanac's zodiacal man, universalises her body and does not distinguish her female body from his male body. He reduces her to a general human form and answers her question using spatial, topographical terms:

Thou art a box of worm-seed; at best, but a salvatory of green mummy. What's this flesh? A little crudded milk, fantastical puff-paste. Our bodies are weaker than those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in; more contemptible, since ours is to preserve earthworms. Didst thou ever see a lark in a cage? Such is the soul in the body; this world is like her little turf of grass, and the heaven o'er our heads, like her looking-glass, only gives us a miserable knowledge of the small compass of our prison.
(IV.ii.123-133)

In this extended discussion of the frailty and temporality of the body, Bosola compares it to a box, a preservation container, a paper prison, and a cage. His rhetorical act of paring the

Duchess down to a generalised bodily form disparages the glory of the Duchess' title and her position in the world. Her title is all the audience is given for an identification of her character through her character's name. To him, she has lost the position and the power associated with it, as he describes her as a walking corpse about to decay. Her reply reasserts her title and her established identity within the play, "Am I not thy Duchess?" and more confidently, "I am Duchess of Malfi still" (134, 142). Not only does her reply signify her role as ruler, but it also emphasises her gendered identity as Duchess.

The Duchess resists Bosola's attempt to distill her person into a catalogue of material. She opposes Bosola's boxing her in and limiting her identity to the universal form of *only* body and *only* human. Roy Eriksen observes that: "The more she is contained and framed in the physical sense, the more she resists being controlled and retains her moral and personal integrity."¹⁶⁷ By using the spatial containment metaphors within the passage quoted above, Bosola draws attention to the topological edges of the body. While he compares the compositional substance to that of weak, curdled milk, puff paste, and paper, he uses polyhedral or solid shapes to describe the form, emphasising the outer surface of the body in its boundaries and thresholds. As a weak fragile container and food for worms, "this flesh" is the prison of the soul. The microcosm, in terms of a bodied soul, is limited and fragile, but for Bosola the heavens are like a looking glass, offering information and awareness of the limitations of the little kingdom of human bodies as related to the celestial.

Webster echoes the recurring motif within early modern natural philosophy of the human body as microcosm. In John Davies of Hereford's *Microcosmos; The Discovery of the Little World*, the prefatory section, "To the iudicious Reader," describes the gradation of worlds thought to exist:

The *Heav'ns* and *Earth*, do make the greater VVorld;

¹⁶⁷ Roy Eriksen, "Framing the Duchess: Webster and the Resources of Renaissance Art," *Nordlit* 1, no. 2 (1997): 6, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7557/13.2191>.

And *Soule* and *Bodie*, make the *Lesse* (we prove:)
 The *Heav'ns* doe moue the *Earth*, & they are whirld
 By *Him*, that makes the *Soule*, the *Body* moue.¹⁶⁸

Davies' micro/macrocosm works as a model or diagram, a visual of the operation of the heavens and earth, as well as the soul and body by the Prime Mover. By creating the movable mental diagram, Davies elucidates the making and the motion of the hierarchy of worlds and their divisions and operations, categorising the movements of the microcosm in an externally determined course.

Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* turns to the lesser, microcosmic world with gritty portrayals of the body and the flesh. The play emphasises the congenital fragility of the microcosm and questions the potential of human action within the machinations of the macrocosm with its ongoing spiral leading towards death. The echo scene in 5.5 provides a similar ethos and perspective on the body, but extends the idea further and laments the deadness of the body, comparing it to large chambers of emptiness without sound. "We are only like dead walls, or vaulted graves, that ruin'd yields no echo" (97-98). Once the songbird of the soul flies away, the cage-like body becomes a soundless, cavernous space. The Duchess responds to Bosola, but not by railing at him or his impending act of taking her life. The subject changes to funeral arrangements and the "stuff" and "fashion" of the tomb. Bosola speaks of funerary monuments by stereotyping the position of the royal tombs and the focus of the sculpture's eyes. He analyses the artwork, reading the gestural signs of the objects and notes that: "They are not carved with their eyes fixed upon the stars" (159-160). Their gaze is still on the earth. Previously, in 4.1, the Duchess reaches beyond Bosola to the influential stars and declares, "I could curse the stars" (97). Bosola defies her efforts and

¹⁶⁸ John Davies of Hereford, *Microcosmos; The Discovery of the Little World* (Oxford, 1603), A4r. Early English Books Online, accessed 25 September 2017.

retorts “the stars shine still” (99). The heavenly bodies continue without regard for cursing and live on past the point of an individual’s death.

In his diminution of the Duchess, Bosola depicts a universalised body similar to the zodiacal man in the almanac. However, as a foil to the Duchess, Julia is described in much more celestially loaded terms. Following the Cardinal’s questioning of Julia in 2.4 as he enquired into how she came to sneak away to Rome, the subject turns to their own relationship. Julia broaches the topic of constancy, and the Cardinal assumes that her statement reflects her own internal wavering. He suggests that she questions his stability in the relationship due to her own “giddy and wild turnings” (12). In response to the Cardinal, Julia changes topics from the debate of whether such inconstancy exists to his locating the shifts within her. She asks the Cardinal if he’s ever found the feminine alterations that he projects on her. He then suggests that the search for constancy in earthly women is hopeless and compares the activity to the material impossibility of “mak[ing] glass malleable/Ere he should make them fixed” (II.iv.14-15).

The Cardinal toys with a topological comparison of objects: stretching, twisting, and altering. As Theodora A. Jankowski notes: “The female body...is a body in a state of constant flux,” and “the nature of woman’s biology necessitates a flexible image of her body...[which] cannot be confined to a single shape.”¹⁶⁹ While discussing Julia’s earthly body, which is to him troublesome in its inconstancy and in its flexibility, the Cardinal then turns the dialogue to astronomical terms and contemporary findings—the “fantastic glass” of Galileo used “to view another spacious world i’t’h’ moon/And look to find a constant woman there” (16-19). While some critics may view this statement as a simple repetition of the convention that relates women’s inconstancy and the moon, Webster contextualises the trope

¹⁶⁹ Theodora A. Jankowski, “Negotiating the Female Body,” in *The Duchess of Malfi: John Webster*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan, New Casebooks (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan), 94.

into what may now be called a dense topological spatial relationship, and he does so in direct contrast to the Duchess. The play's unease over women's bodies and their potential control finds expression in the terrestrial and celestial spatial metaphors used to describe them.

In Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, qualities highlighted as feminine virtues, such as modesty, chastity, and continence are extolled, but loss of the same is noted as a diminishing of the inherent "brightnesse" within them.

And aboue all, that modestie ought to be kept by women, whome as their race, Noble birth, authoritie and name, maketh them more famous, eue~ so their vertue, honestie, chastitie, and continencie more praise worthy. And behouefull it is, that like as they wishe to be honoured aboue all other, so their life do make them worthy of that honour, without disgracing their name by déede or woorde, or blemishing that brightnesse which may commende the same."¹⁷⁰

Painter plays with the verbal motif of the virtuous female as a luminescent being (virtue attached to brightness), something with heavenly significance. His didactic text, while elevating and commending female virtue, also highlights the contrasting possibility of blemish. Andrew Hadfield suggests that Painter's version of the Amalfi tale "explores the problems of private (specifically, erotic) desire and public life."¹⁷¹ The narrative articulates the dangers of loss that are always present within the female body. Hadfield identifies Painter's characterisation of the Duchess as "indeed a virtuous character, but her position is problematic given the inherent weakness of her sex," particularly as "passion burns...brightly in her."¹⁷² Later in Painter's version, the trope becomes more detailed and specific beyond a luminous glow to make the character possess planetary radiance.

The servant of the Duchess addresses her superior with the oral tradition of femininity and constancy:

¹⁷⁰ Painter, *Palace of Pleasure*, 170.

¹⁷¹ Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 155.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 158.

I haue heard you many times speake of the constancie & force of minde, which ought to shine in the dedes of Princesses, more clerely than amo~gs those dames of baser house, & which ought to make the~ appere like the sunne amid y^t litle starres.¹⁷³

Unsurprisingly, female constancy in Painter's creation stabilises more in women of higher rank and standing than in those of lower status, as constancy in Princesses "ought to shine" noticeably more "clerely" and "appere like the sunne," unlike the "baser house" who are the "litle starres." While Painter distinguishes between classes of women in their topological makeup, in Webster's play, the notion of rank remains undistinguished by the Cardinal. The Cardinal does not use the stability of the sun but the moon to describe women. In his estimation, the constant woman does not exist in earthly spaces even in the higher realms of human society. He suggests that if one does, she must be on the moon, the heavenly body only considered constant in its inconstancy and regular in its alteration.

As Webster's plot thickens, the sense of cosmic control over human bodies grows stronger and statements are made in which the characters ascribe their bodily fate to the workings of planetary bodies. For instance, in 3.2 Antonio speculates: "I will not blame the cause on't; but do think the necessity of my malevolent star procures this, not her humour" (196). His assessment underplays the possibility of the influence of the Duchess over him. As Mary Floyd-Wilson notes, male characters in *The Duchess of Malfi* are "seized with the attendant fear that women's bodies could exercise an uncanny power over their own."¹⁷⁴ In this statement Antonio shifts the cause of his fate from a decided choice emanating from the female, humoral body of the Duchess to the "necessity" of his "malevolent star." While both conduits result in celestial sway, the star's influence is unmediated through a female body and its accompanying humoral makeup. Instead, the malevolent star's potency comes directly to his body.

¹⁷³ Painter, *Palace of Pleasure*, 183.

¹⁷⁴ Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge*, 111.

A similar, but tongue-in-cheek observation comes in 5.4, after Bosola stabs Antonio and traces the immediate violence and outcome of his actions to the stars: “We are merely the stars’ tennis-balls, struck and banded which way please them” (V.iv.54). The celestial body strikes the terrestrial body, as if in a cosmic game—a violent image of being struck, manipulated, and violently directed by celestial caprice. However, the observation refers not only to heavenly sporting with the fate of the human, but also to a concept in early modern astrology known as “planet stroke” or being “planetstruck.” The OED defines it as “stricken or afflicted, as by paralysis or other sudden physical disorder, as a result of the supposed malign influence of a planet.”¹⁷⁵ The planetary effect was thought to cause physical maladies and transformation of the body. This statement also recalls the *axis mundi*, where the heavens and the earth meet, towards which the play has been subtly and slowly inching. In 4.1, the Duchess sees a hopeless conspiracy with no way out and comments on her condition, by saying: “I account this world a tedious theatre, for I do play a part in ‘t ‘gainst my will” (84-5). The Duchess sounds like Lyly’s Pandora—stuck on a stage without control—albeit with differing modes and levels of cosmic control than the earlier play.

As this chapter has argued, early modern dramatists articulated the “connective properties” between celestial and terrestrial bodies using a spatial imagination that may now be mapped using topological concepts and methods. They did so on a spectrum with varying degrees of influence and correspondence. Almanacs provide evidence for the widespread persistence of a dynamic spatial system of interrelated celestial and terrestrial bodies. However, when creating, describing, or manipulating female bodies in these case study plays, dramatists put pressure on the presentation of the universalised male image as a means of symbolising all human bodily forms. While the zodiacal man provided a visual index for

¹⁷⁵ Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. “planet-struck,” accessed September 29 2017, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/145085?redirectedFrom=planetstruck>.

positioning the celestial within the substance and surfaces of the human body, the image's deficiencies provided space in the drama to develop female characters that broke the mould.

The female zodiacal figure is missing from early modern almanacs, but the zodiacal figure in drama from the same period is predominantly female. As Lyly, Dekker, and Webster all trade the zodiacal man for a zodiacal woman in their plays, they redraw the almanac's figure to create complex characters. Lyly produces a character that quite literally embodies a zodiacal figure, as each planet in turn rules over Pandora's body. Her character bends under unavoidable planetary control and vacillates throughout the play, not as an evidence of an independent flexibility through her own agency, but one that is overcome by celestial dominance. In Pandora, Lyly dramatises the zodiac figure in the extreme. Dekker presents Celestine, a seemingly impeccable celestial female. However, the play registers an increasing anxiety over her body's potential sexual and moral collapse. Webster makes the Duchess much more terrestrial. While she is in a play that emphasises starry influence and correspondence, unlike Lyly and Dekker's plays, the men of *The Duchess of Malfi* work to universalise her body. Although the Duchess calls attention to her female identity, Bosola identifies her in a similar way to the almanac's zodiacal man. To him, in the end she is only body material and not a distinct female form.

The zodiacal female figures in these plays suggest that the dramatists found the alteration of the zodiacal man particularly conducive to dramatic effect. Dramatists adapted the figure with varying levels of correspondence to create complex characters. While the almanac generalised the human form in the zodiacal male to the erasure of the female, dramatists made the zodiacal woman a figure that reflects her own dramaturgical composition. Russell West-Pavlov identifies this tension as one of the strategies that early modern dramatists employed for socially resonant narrative effect integral to creating drama:

Drama depends...upon the transgression of extant epistemological topographies in order to make a story in which something happens—a story worth telling. Early

modern drama oscillated between arousing and stilling the fears and the fantasies of both men and women: masculine fear of and feminine fantasies of women's autonomy and mobility.¹⁷⁶

The correspondence between heavenly bodies and distinctly female bodies disrupted the “extant epistemological topographies” found in almanacs and provided a dramatic nexus for alteration. By engaging with and transgressing the pattern of the containable and reproducible zodiacal male found in early modern almanacs, dramatists juxtaposed the expectation of bodily constancy and created female characters that would bend and change shape, only breaking the topological unity of their fictional bodies through death.

¹⁷⁶ Russell West-Pavlov, *Bodies and their Spaces: System, Crisis and Transformation in Early Modern Theatre* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), 148.

Chapter 3

Positioning the Planets: Space and the Spatial Imagination on the Jacobean Stage, 1609-1613

This chapter explores the use of planetary characters within plays printed or performed between 1609-1613 in indoor and outdoor London playhouses. It argues that dramatists developed and defied a convention of planets onstage by using spatial signifying systems, which worked within established and emerging imaginative concepts of planetary motion and positioning. Specifically, the aerial location and subsequent vertical motion of planetary characters functioned as an immediate visual cue for an agent that would influence the dramatic fiction of the terrestrial playworld. *Cymbeline* (King's Men at the Second Blackfriars¹⁷⁷ and the Globe, 1610)¹⁷⁸, Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* (King's Men at the Blackfriars, 1610-11 and at court, 1612-13), and Heywood's *The Golden Age* (Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull, 1611) will be used as case studies to explore the ways in which planets were spatially presented verbally and visually during this period of Jacobean drama.

Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Heywood's *The Golden Age* feature mechanically produced spectacle, which visually and imaginatively maps the trajectory of the planet-god Jupiter. By nature of the stage machine's up and down operations, the planet character moves within a confined vertical orientation, as it ascends and descends within the playing area. Accompanying these motions in *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare simultaneously embeds verbal spatial markers, which imaginatively construct a vertical direction of motion, as the planetary

¹⁷⁷ Referred to hereafter as simply "Blackfriars," as the first Blackfriars does not feature in this chapter.

¹⁷⁸ 1610 is Wiggins' "Best Guess," but he does offer the range of 1609-11. See Wiggins, *British Drama*, vol. 6: 1609-16. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor offer 1610 as well in *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 131-132.

character moves within a rhetorically generated topographia of the celestial spheres. By contrast, Beaumont and Fletcher's lunar character, Cynthia, operates in *The Maid's Tragedy* off the conventional, vertical axis and within an entirely horizontal frame. It may seem that Beaumont and Fletcher failed to replicate the recognisable symbolism of vertical motion, but Cynthia's horizontal movement signals her dramatic role, not as a god from above to alter the outcome of the play but rather as the moon goddess rotating around the kingly sun. This chapter demonstrates that dramatists choreographed the motion of these divine astronomical figures to correspond to their distinct dramatic role.

The plays in consideration coincide with an active period of astronomical activity and change in the natural philosophical community on the Continent and in England. Kepler set forward his first two laws of planetary motion in his *Astronomia Nova* of 1609. Shortly following Kepler's work, Galileo presented his telescopic observations of the moons of Jupiter in his *Sidereus nuncius* in 1610. In England, Hopton's *A Concordancy of Yeares* (1612) provided a compendium of "practical knowledge" on contemporary planetary concepts. These texts, published at the same time as the plays were composed and performed, provide insight into early modern ways of imagining the planetary world and establish the intellectual and popular context for planetary motion and positioning within non-dramatic modes of presentation and communication. The dates also closely follow the significant changes in playing spaces and the accompanying shifts in theatrical practice, including the King's Men taking occupancy of their indoor playhouse, the Blackfriars, in 1608; and the Queen's Men, who performed at the Red Bull by the autumn of 1607. These spaces provided technical resources for positioning planets onstage and producing imaginative fictive worlds within the drama.

The chapter will first explore the spectacle of mechanised planetary characters descending in a vertical movement and will investigate how the perpendicular relationship to

the playing surface worked semiotically. It will then address the choreography of *Cymbeline*'s planetary god and the accompanying dramatic text as a case study and argue for an established and continuing convention of vertical, planetary motion. With the convention firmly in place, Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy* can be seen to work as a contrasting example and as a break from the tradition of vertical planetary movement. Throughout the chapter, suggestions will be made for what the alteration expresses about the dramatic function of planetary motion on stage. Positioning these plays alongside one another allows for an examination of the dramatic significance of spatial directions in the positioning of planetary figures on stage.

Emerging astronomical thought initiated parallel changes in the planetary imagination and its accompanying creative output. As Ladina Bezzola Lambert notes, "The particular situation of cosmology and astronomy in the seventeenth century and its impact on the imagination makes this period...especially suitable for the study of imaginative representations and strategies."¹⁷⁹ Considering the ways in which dramatists spatially manipulated the planets on stage and in the imagination of the audience reveals particular "representations and strategies" and demonstrates the exchange between astronomical theory and its place within aesthetic practice. However, the relationship between astronomy and drama is not unilateral. Harry Berger's "period imagination" suggests a more far-reaching theory for the interplay of thought that sees historical concepts as environmental or ecological, rather than "background" for another cultural object, such as drama.¹⁸⁰

In his dedicatory epistle of the *Astronomia Nova* (1609), Kepler constructs a narrative using theatrical terminology for introducing his astronomical work. His presentation

¹⁷⁹ Ladina Bezzola Lambert, *Imagining the Unimaginable: The Poetics of Early Modern Astronomy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002) 17.

¹⁸⁰ Harry Berger, *Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction-Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 41.

includes a “spectacle,” which he is “exhibiting for the view of the public,” staged “in this theater of nature.” His planetary enquiry takes the stage on the battlefield of a “difficult and strenuous war,” with the actor and “Noble Captive,” the planetary god Mars. By tracking and recording the planetary motion of the mythological god/planet, his observational research and writing confines and sets spatial bounds for the planet who was “captured through my martial efforts.”¹⁸¹ Kepler’s imaginative, spatial, and performative framing of the dedication is not an isolated incident within his volume on the new astronomy. Kepler uses a performance analogy of an orator and an audience to illustrate the motion of the planets in relationship to the sun. It is the imagination he calls upon to assist in presenting the spatial concepts:

Now imagine that some orator in a great crowd of men, encircling him in an orb, turns his face, or his whole body along with it, once around. Those of the audience to whom he turns his eyes directly will also see his eyes, but those who stand behind him lack the view of his eyes. But when he turns himself around, he turns his eyes around to everyone in the orb. Therefore, in a very short interval of time, all get a glimpse of his eyes.¹⁸²

Kepler’s analogy develops a physical connection between the eyes of the performer and those of the audience within the space around them during the exchange. Kepler’s correlation may at first seem strange, but it demonstrates the imaginative usefulness of bringing planets, performers, and spaces into a theatrical and astronomical exchange.

Kepler’s employment of a theatrical model in explaining planetary motion in relation to the sun is not dissimilar to other early modern descriptions of actor/audience relationships in London’s playhouses. Sir Thomas Overbury presents a parallel depiction. In 1616, he writes about “An Excellent Actor” and the spatial arrangement and exchange in his “The Conceited Newes.” Overbury says, “Sit in a full Theater, and you will think you see so many

¹⁸¹ Johannes Kepler, *New Astronomy*, trans. William H. Donahue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 30-35.

¹⁸² Kepler, *New Astronomy*, 386-7.

lines drawn from the circumference of so many eares, while the *Actor* is the *Center*.”¹⁸³ His description works to connect into a circle (or an orb) the physical orientation of the actor and the audience with the actor situated centrally. Though Overbury doesn’t explicitly connect the circularity to planets or planetary motion, the spatial arrangement neatly parallels Kepler’s solar orator. References elsewhere within Overbury’s sketch suggest that the “Excellent Actor” was inspired by the actor Richard Burbage.¹⁸⁴ Upon the death of Burbage, Thomas Middleton used planetary and astronomical imagery to describe the loss of the “Excellent Actor” from the stage:

Astronomers and star-gazers this year,
Write but of four eclipses—five appear:
Death interposing Burbage, and their staying,
Hath made a visible eclipse of playing.¹⁸⁵

Middleton’s depiction of the planetary figure whose death has brought on a “visible eclipse of playing” is the actor likely to be featured in Overbury’s geometric summary of the spatial alignment onstage. The eclipse references the darkening or overshadowing as one object comes between another. Death has “interpos[ed]” Burbage, blocking him from the stage. His acting was of such significance that his death brought about a shadow on the stage, where he once shone. The overlaps between Kepler, Overbury, and Middleton’s account of Burbage help establish the imaginative, spatial connections between the early modern audience and the actor, as well as between planets and players.

¹⁸³ *The “Conceited Newes” of Sir Thomas Overbury and His Friends*. A Facsimile Reproduction of the Ninth Impression of 1616 of Sir Thomas Overbury His Wife. (Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968), 209.

¹⁸⁴ Burbage’s painting skill and popularity as a leading actor from this period makes him a likely candidate for Overbury’s excellent actor, as noted in S. L. Lee, “Richard Burbage (1567?-1619)” in *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1885-1900), vol. 7, 288. While more recent editions (e.g., 2004) do not include this association, Burbage does match the character presented in the earlier edition.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas Middleton, “On the Death of Burbage,” in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor, et al., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 1897.

The examples above demonstrate the analogical association of planetary motion and early modern theatre, connecting what we now think of as “outer space” and playing space. Planets in the case-study plays of this chapter operate within the dynamics of theatrical space and the imaginary space projected by the drama. Each of the plays features planets that are visibly present onstage through spectacle. Verbal spatial markers, stage directions, and available information on the playhouses help reconstruct an understanding of spatial, planetary, and imaginary convention during the early modern period and the specified date range in particular. Charting the movements of these planetary characters sharpens the critical focus on early modern conceptions of astronomical bodies in theatrical space.

The tradition of mechanical, vertical motion of planetary characters and celestial beings, such as angels and deities, is a longstanding one. Beginning with the Greek invention of *deus ex machina* and continuing through the medieval morality plays, with heavenly visitants coming down from above, theatre practitioners throughout the centuries developed the ongoing stage technique. Royal entertainments, festivals, and masques in early modern London and on the Continent celebrated—in Stephen Orgel’s phrase—the “illusion of power” by staging visually spectacular, mechanical displays of celestial and mythological beings hovering above, descending onto, and ascending from the terrestrially marked space of the stage. Theatre makers from the professional London stages appropriated the tradition and constructed spaces complete with technical apparatus for the purpose of visually intersecting the celestial with the terrestrial. From the very beginning of what is known about the early modern English stage, evidence suggests the presence of mechanical devices in bringing the gods into the play world from the machine. The Red Lion, the first purpose-built playhouse in London, was designed with a 30-foot turret, which, as Scott McMillin suggests, enabled “flying effects.”¹⁸⁶ Playing spaces and performance texts demonstrate the prevalence

¹⁸⁶ Scott McMillin, “The Rose and The Swan,” in *The Development of Shakespeare’s Theater*, ed.

of vertically lowering and raising of celestial characters, though the effectiveness of the spectacle resulting from the stage technique varied.

Stage directions from an Elizabethan play, Robert Greene's *Alphonsus King of Aragon* (1599), underscore the difficulty of fully executing the motion of the planetary goddess. The stage direction for 1.1 provides a similar descent to those found in the case study playtexts: "Let Venus be let downe from the top of the Stage" (I.i.2-3 s.d.). However, the stage direction of the final scene of the play suggests that the resources of the late Elizabethan stage may not have had the same capabilities as that of the mid-Jacobean: "Exit Venus. Or if you can conueniently, let a chaire come downe from the top of the stage, and draw her vp." (2109-2110) Dessen and Thomson label this somewhat humorous stage direction, with its stage effect relying on whether or not Venus could "conueniently" be elevated, to be a "permissive signal" or "what could have been done." The effect was possible, but perhaps not terribly practical. An evidence of the strained staging often overlooked in the critical discussion surrounding the mechanical stage technology of this scene is the inclusion of a line within the epilogue that seems to cover for a less-than-polished spectacle: "Venus is forst to trudge to heaven againe" (Line 1917). The statement seems to offer a symbolically appropriate excuse for the movement back into the stage place of the heavens.

Ben Jonson's well-known critique of the device's clunkiness came just a year before Greene's play in the prologue to *Every Man in His Humour*, in which he mocks the device and suggests that his play will not contain a "creaking throne," which, "comes down the boys to please" (Prol.16).¹⁸⁷ While Jonson criticises the effect, which was produced just prior to the stage direction for *Alphonsus*, his commentary on the staging practice seems to indicate

John Astington (New York, NY: AMS Press, 1992), 164.

¹⁸⁷ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, in *Ben Jonson* vol. 3, eds. C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) vol. 3.

that the spectacle at this moment in stage history may have also lacked sophistication and worked mostly as a cheap trick. Lily Bess Campbell concludes her work on scenography, machinery, and stage spectacle by noting that it was the very disturbance of classical unity theories which led to “the introduction of heavenly...beings on the stage.”¹⁸⁸ Jonson seems to be a part of the negotiation process between classical dramatic theory and how it interacted with theatrical practice during this moment in stage history. Yet, even if the mechanical device had not yet come into its own, Jonson’s mention of the device alongside other common dramatic features, such as a chorus using rhetoric to “transport” the audience to a new geography and special effects such as fireworks to signify the supernatural, highlights the practice as a conventional one.

Theatre historians and critics have argued over the date range of the availability and frequency of flying devices in Elizabethan outdoor theatres. Glynne Wickham argues against a pre-1590s tradition of a machined heavens. He concludes that while the 1570s and 80s are suspect, “by the 1590s the situation had begun to change. Stage plays were becoming more spectacular.”¹⁸⁹ John H. Astington counters Wickham and argues for an earlier tradition, suggesting that the lack of extant plays skews the data.¹⁹⁰ David Mann sets an even later date and contends that: “Until 1613 evidence of outdoor flying is extremely rare.”¹⁹¹ In all of these accounts the increasing employment of the device in later Jacobean outdoor theatre and indoor theatre as a whole is without dispute. However, the case study plays of this chapter all point toward an active mechanical heavens before 1613. The repeated use of the stage effect

¹⁸⁸ Lily Bess Campbell, *Scenes and Machines on the English Stage during the Renaissance: A Classical Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923), 293.

¹⁸⁹ Glynne Wickham, “‘Heavens,’ Machinery, and Pillars in the Theatre and Other Early Playhouses,” in *The First Public Playhouse: The Theatre in Shoreditch, 1576-1598*, ed. Herbert Berry (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1979), 1-15, 12.

¹⁹⁰ John Astington, “Descent Machinery in the Playhouses,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 2 (1985): 119-33.

¹⁹¹ David Mann, “Heywood’s Silver Age: A Flight Too Far?,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 26 (2013): 184.

within the brief timeline of the case study plays of this chapter points not only to the popularity of the mechanical spectacle at this time, but also to the staging capabilities in Jacobean playing spaces. The popularity of the staging device continued and by every indication increased, as theatrical spaces constructed directly following 1613 demonstrate by their improved structures for lowering and raising celestial characters. In 1614, the year following the date range of this chapter, The Hope theatre was completed. The contract for this playhouse provides a rich document for understanding Jacobean theatrical space.

While tracing the architectural design models from one playing space to another, Wickham suggests that The Hope's contract provides "the most detailed and significant instance...of a readiness to alter features of the prototype to improve the model in hand."¹⁹² The specific area of alteration Wickham identifies is that of the heavens. The contract reads: "The Heavens all over the saide stage, [are] to be borne or carried without any postes or supporters to be fixed or sett uppon the saide stage."¹⁹³ This document captures a point of evolution in the stage heavens, as it records the specifications for the construction of the modified heavens area of the new playhouse. As the contract articulates, the weight of the elevated space was to be distributed to a non-stage area of the overall building, further separating the visual connection between the celestial and the terrestrial, as architectural supports for the heavens no longer rested on the "earth" of the stage. More importantly to this argument, the contract suggests by the great effort put into reconfiguring an "improved" model that the prevalence and continuing convention of using this region of the vertical spatial arrangement of the stage warranted a significant design change, in order to be included within an updated business model. The stage was removable to allow for animal sports, yet the heavens were reworked to remain even without the stage below it. If the

¹⁹² Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages, 1300-1660*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2002), 170.

¹⁹³ Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. 2, 466.

convention were dying out, as critics have previously suggested, the playing companies would not have invested in adapting it to suit a more flexible model.

Hollar's "Long View" etching (1647) pictorially illustrates how The Hope's heaven altered the shape of that playing space, and it also demonstrates with its rendering of the Second Globe, that other playing spaces were fortifying the heavens at the same time. The Second Globe, which was completed in 1614, had a dual-peaked semi-roof which covered a large portion of what was fully open on the original Globe. These alterations reveal that the heavens were not only kept in the newer version of the Globe, but they were expanded and altered, drastically influencing the appearance of the space from its predecessor. From the contract of The Hope theatre and the "Long View" etching of London, it is evident that the mechanised heavens used for these vertical spectacles of planetary and heavenly movement formed an integral part of the choreography and stagecraft of the Jacobean stage.

Two plays feature Jupiter in vertical motion: Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* at the Blackfriars and Heywood's *The Golden Age*, performed at the Red Bull, where "the gods would have descended from the heavens thanks to a flying apparatus operated by a winch."¹⁹⁴ Martin Wiggins posits that *The Golden Age* was perhaps a collaboration between the King's Men and the Queen's Men. The suggestion is compelling as it provides a strong reason for the burst of Jupiter appearances across several plays within such a tight timeframe. It also provides a practical, economic solution for the costly materials, such as substantial, ridable eagles.¹⁹⁵ The architectural structure of the indoor space of Blackfriars would have easily housed the equipment necessary for the descent, and recent developments in the material history of the Red Bull provide a compelling case for the theatre's physical space as ideally

¹⁹⁴ Angus Vine, "Myth and Legend," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock and Abigail Shinn (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2014), 110.

¹⁹⁵ Wiggins, *British Drama*, vol. 6: 1609-16, 134.

suited for housing this type of mechanical spectacle. The repertoire of plays performed at the Red Bull is well-known for its widespread use of pyrotechnics and mechanical stage effects. Based on a discovery of a land survey, Eva Griffith offers evidence that the Red Bull was fully made of brick, allowing for “effects requiring heavy machinery.”¹⁹⁶ Griffith makes the case, which is based on a survey sketch, for a turret where “machinery could be installed to lift or lower devices to achieve particular dramatic effects.”¹⁹⁷ The indoor playing space of the Blackfriars and the Red Bull with its particularly suited architecture enabled the planetary god to descend.

As Jupiter descends as the god from the machine in these spaces, his movement on a vertical axis differs from the movement patterns of the other characters onstage, who operate on a horizontal plane. The flying machines unsettle the normal operation of the stage, and his descent bisects the horizontal movement of grounded characters on the stage, cutting across the motion of the terrestrial layer of the playworld. As Jessica Wolfe notes, “Renaissance machines are endowed with a forceful heteroglossia: working in league with competing ethical, political, and aesthetic values, they have the power both to arrange and to disarrange the neat rows of dualisms—reason and passion, art and nature, humanity and inhumanity—that confer order upon the mental world of the Renaissance.”¹⁹⁸ A descending Jupiter, while invested in classical symbolism, in the context of a machine-enhanced character also possesses the potential of dividing the play’s visual world or bringing two distinct regions together.

Peggy Munoz Simonds explores the effect of a perspectival change from regions of movement in *Cymbeline* as “Shakespeare...investigates the potentials of vertical as opposed

¹⁹⁶ Eva Griffith, *A Jacobean Company and Its Playhouse: The Queen’s Servants at the Red Bull Theatre (c.1605-1619)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 563.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 564.

¹⁹⁸ Jessica Wolfe, *Humanism and Machinery in Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241.

to horizontal perspective in *Cymbeline*.” The contrasting vertical movement of the descent intersects the horizontal in a “marriage of heaven and earth, which is symbolized by the descent of Jupiter.”¹⁹⁹ His mechanical descent absorbs and retains the spatial significance of a character positioned “above” and mingles the associations of both regions as the horizontal and the vertical collide. The movement underscores a humanist overlap of categories, as the divine and the planetary intersect with the human and the terrestrial—an incarnation with mythological and astronomical force. Frederick Kiefer notes that, “Through theophanies in [Shakespeare’s] late plays, he creates a sense of wonderment at the intervention of the divine in the realm of the human.”²⁰⁰ Doing so highlights the nearness of the divine through the visual proximity within the spatial cosmos of the theatre, all while it “challenge[d] the spectators to understand the significance of what they see.”²⁰¹ Simonds goes on to say that this perpendicular union also performs a perspectival shift for the spectators. The mechanical device “bear[s] Jupiter down into our visual space. The supreme deity descends from infinity into a finite form that human eyes can see.”²⁰² By scripting the vertical descent or ascent of Jupiter, the playwrights transform the transcendent into the immanent through a spectacle of incarnation, which cuts through the layers of a vertical cosmology through vertical movement. The descent not only affects the interaction of the character with the space, but also the way the spectators’ eyes take in the visual dimension of the play.

Jupiter’s mechanical descent in *Cymbeline* continues to baffle critics. For Furness²⁰³ and Harley Granville-Barker,²⁰⁴ this scene caused enough angst to question Shakespeare’s

¹⁹⁹ Peggy Munoz Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare’s “Cymbeline”: An Iconographic Reconstruction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1992), 79.

²⁰⁰ Frederick Kiefer, *Shakespeare’s Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

²⁰² Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music*, 191.

²⁰³ See 3 above.

²⁰⁴ Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1968-71), vol. 3:

authorship. More recently, Leah Marcus in *Puzzling Shakespeare* suggests a clear path to “read” *Cymbeline*, including the Jupiter scene.²⁰⁵ However, Alison Thorne, in her chapter “To Write and Read” suggests that Marcus’ “transparent allegory” of this scene, along with other attempts to “resolve [*Cymbeline*’s] persistent absurdities and enigmas into clear, univocal meaning” is resisted by the play and is even warned against through the “individual histories” of characters who strive to perform similar readings throughout the play.²⁰⁶ The presence of the Roman god maintains its historical position as misplaced and unfitting, a jarring effect and interpretative perplexity in a larger, confusing whole.

In the contextual structure of this puzzling scene, the gravitation and cyclical concentration escalates, providing a thick atmospheric space for the descent of the god who resides in the celestial spheres. The stage direction of “*They circle Posthumus round,*” detailing the ghosts’ appearance in 5.5, presents the formational shape of the apparitions that surround Posthumous while he sleeps. The circular visitation physically and spatially frames the scene and establishes the ghostly orb as a visible, circular rendering. As Alan Brissenden examines the choreography of the scene, he stresses the importance of the surrounding music and rhythms pulsating in the prayer, emphasising that, “It is clearly apparent that they circle him with regular motion.”²⁰⁷ The cyclical choreography combines with other elements to heighten the visual image of the circular motion. Circular, planetary and orbital signals persist throughout the scene, such as “womb,” “earth,” “world,” and “turned,” tightening the spherical and rotational motif and providing centrifugal, climactic force as the god descends from above. As John Pitcher has demonstrated in his edition of the play, the four figures

Julius Caesar; Cymbeline; The Merchant of Venice, 86-97. “A fair amount of the play is pretty certainly not by Shakespeare.”

²⁰⁵ Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 118-119.

²⁰⁶ Alison Thorne, “‘To write and read/ Be henceforth treacherous’: *Cymbeline* and the Problem of Interpretation,” in *Shakespeare’s Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 177-178.

²⁰⁷ Alan Brissenden, *Shakespeare and the Dance* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 85.

surrounding the planetary god present a dramatised visual illustration of Galileo's recent discovery of the four moons of Jupiter. Pitcher asserts: "It was no coincidence that when Galileo was describing the planet Jupiter, with its four attendant moons, Shakespeare had the old mythological Jupiter come down through fine-cut crystal and hang pendant over four ancient courtly figures."²⁰⁸ It is in this circular, choreographed scene where the presence of a more archaic cosmology manifests itself alongside and in contrast to the nascent natural philosophy from Galileo's telescopic observation.

On initial consideration, one might speculate that continental astronomical writings and their accompanying ideas were somewhat isolated and travelled slowly throughout Europe and even slower across the Channel. But from the evidence of correspondence from the period and the inclusion of astronomical ideas within writings by non-scientific authors, the network of circulation surfaces as dynamically connected and the transference and dissemination of emerging astronomical concepts prove surprisingly rapid. In 1610 Henry Wotton sent a copy of *Siderius nuncius* to King James VI and I through Robert Cecil. The following extended quotation of the correspondence is helpful to see as a whole, as it demonstrates Wotton's detailed understanding of the significance of Galileo's book, and the speed at which Wotton acquires it and sends it to England. Wotton writes:

Now touching the occurents of the present, I send herewith unto his Majesty the strangest piece of news (as I may justly call it) that he hath ever yet received from any part of the world; which is the annexed book (come abroad this very day) of the Mathematical Professor at Padua, who by the help of an optical instrument (which both enlargeth and approximateth the object) invented first in Flanders, and bettered by himself, hath discovered four new planets rolling about the sphere of Jupiter, besides many other unknown fixed stars; likewise, the true cause of the *Via Lactea*, so long searched; and lastly, that the moon is not spherical, but endued with many prominences, and, which is of all the strangest, illuminated with the solar light by reflection from the body of the earth, as he seemeth to say. So as upon the whole subject he hath first overthrown all former astronomy—for we must have a new sphere to save the appearances—and next all astrology. For the virtue of these new planets must needs vary the judicial part, and why may there not yet be more? These

²⁰⁸ John Pitcher, "Introduction," in William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. John Pitcher (London: Penguin, 2005), lxxiii.

things I have been bold to thus to discourse unto your Lordship, whereof here all corners are full. And the author runneth a fortune to be either exceeding famous or exceeding ridiculous. By the next ship your Lordship shall receive from me one of the above-named instruments, as it is bettered by this man. Now to descend from those superior novelties to these below, which do more trouble the wise men of this place.”
13th of March, 1610 ²⁰⁹

Wotton communicates his own perspective on the work, points out that the book itself is “annexed,” and that he will quickly complete the gift with a telescope for royal experiments and a chance for the astronomically curious English king to see for himself. Wotton not only promises a genuine instrument of high specification (probably in contrast to the cheaper toy-like models starting to be sold across the continent), but also one calibrated and enhanced by Galileo. Though the level of interactivity with the printed book is a fascinating study in itself, what is particularly telling for the question of access is the timing of the purchase of the book with its acquisition on the same day as it became available in Venice. Albert Van Helden suggests the book’s journey to “distant England” took close to one month,²¹⁰ and G.B. Harrison speculates that April 1, 1610²¹¹ would be a date by which “the event [was] likely to have been known in London by one with good access to general information.”²¹²

Shakespeare uses verbal pointers to frame and underscore the pictographic signification of the mechanical descent. The description of Jupiter’s movement verbally constructs the environment surrounding the planetary god within a broader sign system by employing what Keir Elam calls a “pseudo-iconic descriptive role in figuring the dramatic scene.”²¹³ This method of forming models of space builds what Honzl calls “acoustic scenery”²¹⁴ or in the nomenclature of classical rhetoric “topographia.” These terms

²⁰⁹ Henry Wotton, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), vol. 1, 485-487.

²¹⁰ Albert Van Helden, “Conclusion,” in Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus Nuncius*, trans. and ed. Albert Van Helden (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 87.

²¹¹ G. B. Harrison, *A Second Jacobean Journal: Being a Record of Those Things Most Talked of during the Years 1607 to 1610* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 189.

²¹² *Ibid.*, viii.

²¹³ Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 21.

²¹⁴ J. Honzl, “Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre” in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School*

categorise the type of semantic construction used to visually stimulate the mental construction of an imaginative architecture through auditory means. By including the verbal description of a vertical descent through the celestial spheres, in semiotic terms Shakespeare is “pointing” toward and accenting the mechanical descent already being visualised on stage.

Arthur Hopton proposes in *A Concordancy of Yeares* (1612) that “MAN, with the penceill of imagination hath traced out in the 8 spheare, 6 great circles.”²¹⁵ Hopton postulates that the development of a spherical cosmology was one in which the imagination and observation worked together to create models of the cosmos. Shakespeare, working in reverse of what Hopton describes, pencils in the established model of the spheres to create definable areas of celestial architecture to be decoded by the imagination. By doing so, he replicates the recognisable, symbolic space of the celestial spheres, through which the mythological planetary god descends. In *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, the only recognised source for *Cymbeline* that includes Jupiter as a character,²¹⁶ Mercury mentions that Jupiter “restles rules in his continuall Sphere, wherby all thinges in perfect course abide.”²¹⁷ Shakespeare intensifies the image with a detailed description, giving verbal cues to locate Jupiter’s positioning within the celestial spheres.

Heywood’s Jupiter in *The Golden Age* also recognises the role of thought in fashioning a mythological deity (“Opinion, that makes gods”). Instead of descending, Heywood’s Jupiter ascends and becomes a god. However, before the visual spectacle, Jupiter’s endgame is measured within a particular placement or a spatial altitude, an ultimate plane of hierarchy. He wishes not only for opinion to make him a god, but to have the usual method of deification excel the standard position and “style us higher.” His “pride of

Contributions (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1976), 75.

²¹⁵ Arthur Hopton, *A Concordancy of Yeares* (London, 1612), Chapter XI.

²¹⁶ Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University Press, 1957-75), vol. 8, 36-37, 90. Bullough labels *Rare Triumphs* a “probable” source.

²¹⁷ Anon., *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, I.i.74-75.

mortality” complete, he ascends to a degree of power that excels existing gods. Positioned through thought into a height of dominance, “The next you see us we in state must shine.” The character of Homer fittingly recalls the power of the poetic (“how these (first born mortal) gods were made, By virtue of...poesy”) at work in the creation of planet gods within the popular imagination. Vine suggests that: “In making the argument here that Homer is the creator of the divinity of the Greek gods, Heywood was also transmitting another widespread learned belief about classical myth: that the gods were originally mortal men and historical persons, who were only later elevated to their divine status.”²¹⁸ The verbal positioning elevates Jupiter to a new, heavenly height and transitions him from the realm of mortality into that of the divine. The dumbshow that follows, which includes the mechanical spectacle, visually emphasises the positional change from Jupiter’s earthbound mortality to his ascendant dominance.

Employing a similar method to Heywood, Shakespeare uses verbal images in *Cymbeline* to identify the celestial placement of the planet within the imagination. Shakespeare situates the planetary god—in keeping with Jupiter’s place in ancient mythology—in an older cosmological model, which includes the celestial spheres beyond what was considered to be the realm of the fixed stars. Using verbal, spatial signs to accompany the visual spectacle, the mythical god descends from a commonly held place in the decaying cosmological framework clearly demarcated in the chart from Peter Apian’s *Cosmographia*,²¹⁹ where heavenly bodies are placed within rings with the earth as the centre.

Beyond the ring or sphere of the fixed stars exist three outermost spheres: the crystalline heavens, the Primum Mobile and the Empyrean. It is in these outermost spheres—part of the eclipsing cosmology—where Shakespeare, through his description, places Jupiter.

²¹⁸ Vine, “Myth and Legend,” 111.

²¹⁹ Peter Apian, *Cosmographia*, B3r.

In 5.5, Posthumus' familial ghosts give insight into Jupiter's heavenly realm. They detail the material substance of Jupiter's kingdom, proffering a metaphorical glimpse through "the marble pavement" and under the god's "radiant roof."

SICILIUS.

Thy crystal window ope; look out;
No longer exercise
Upon a valiant race thy harsh
And potent injuries...

JUPITER.

And so away. No farther with your din
Express impatience, lest you stir up mine.
Mount, eagle, to my palace crystalline.
(V.v.175-207)

Crystal and *crystalline*, specifically the "crystal window" and "palace crystalline," denote the elements used in the composition of Jupiter's palatial dwelling and this first outer sphere of the Ptolemaic system. By using these highly specific terms, Shakespeare precisely positions Jupiter as having descended through the first outer sphere, which is the crystalline heavens of Peter Apian's chart. In this scene, the ghosts and Jupiter himself verbally fabricate an imaginative visual entrance into regions beyond the limited theatrical space and the physicalised "heavens" of Shakespeare's stage: an entrance into the heavens crystalline.

It is often stated that on the early modern stage the permanent set design of "the heavens" helped establish spatial boundaries and enabled the players to mark their characters through establishing a sense of place. In *Cymbeline*, however, the stage area of "the heavens" could only take the listener so high in the celestial world. By using *crystal* and *crystalline*, Shakespeare writes in a cosmological description of Jupiter's home, launching the audience into the outer spheres and allowing the imagination of the playgoers to take over. Shakespeare traces the pencil sketch of the spherical and spatial imagination that Hopton recalls, manufacturing dramatic spheres with verbal images. Rather than florid decoration and imagination-inducing depiction, these verbal components spatially mark the astrological placement of the origin of Jupiter's descent and the destination of his ascent within the

cosmological model of the spheres.

Shakespeare's word choice and portrayal of the home's makeup connect with the circular and spherical motifs throughout the play, relating and combining the planetary with the reign of the gods. The OED helps associate the crystal window and the crystalline palace with the planetary spheres. The first entry for *crystalline* provides a history of science note and definition, labelling the use of *crystalline* as the following: "designating a sphere held to exist beyond the sphere of fixed stars, usually accounted the ninth sphere and located between the fixed stars and the primum mobile[.]"²²⁰ The crystalline material from *Caelum Crystallinum*, the crystalline heavens, suggests more than the quality, characteristics or aesthetics of the celestial structure. The word establishes the spherical nature of Jupiter's dwelling, repeating and reinforcing the orbital pattern present elsewhere, charting the precise placement of Jupiter's palace, and placing Shakespeare's enigmatic scene into a cosmologically dense sphere.

With *crystalline*, the audience is pulled back to a pre-Copernican, Ptolemaic model with the substantive spheres. William Caxton in *The Myrrour of the Worlde* of 1481 takes his readers past the fixed stars into the sphere beyond, "Aboue this...ther is another heuene...lyke as it were of the colour of whyte crystall...And is called the heuen crystalyn."²²¹ Shakespeare continues this tradition and, though referencing contemporary revolutionary concepts, appropriates varying elements or fragments of the scientific milieu as the stuff of dramatic creation. He blends old and new natural philosophy to create the dramatic material for planetary space and motion within the play.

In *Planets, Stars and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos*, Edward Grant notes, "Until the seventeenth century, when the effects of Tycho's authoritative repudiation of the existence of

²²⁰ Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "crystalline," accessed 29 September 2017, <http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2355/view/Entry/45393?redirectedFrom=crystalline>.

²²¹ Caxton, *Myrrour of the Worlde*, iii.xxii, 184.

solid celestial spheres began seriously to affect scholastic thought, almost all scholastic authors assumed the existence of real, physical spheres of the heavens.”²²² The spheres were actual and provide a literal and tangible locus for the celestial beings. Though the model was becoming antique, it is formulaically useful in a play that transcends genre and employs anachronism as a developmental plot device. While often noted of *Cymbeline*, anachronism creates a technical formula that presents itself in the drama of the period. In *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*, Leo Salingar gives such multiform treatment a place in the tradition of romance and argues that Shakespeare’s use in *Cymbeline* bespeaks the play’s “resemblance to the whole species of dramatic romance.”²²³ Butler counters but adds the following, “Yet *Cymbeline* does partially renew the older conventions, and it uses their technical freedoms to create a dramaturgy at once simple and sophisticated. It exploits the unpredictability of the romances and their telescoping of time and space.”²²⁴ Motion between old and new and the “telescoping” in and out of eras, traditions and identifiable time markers dominate *Cymbeline*’s dramatic landscape.

Although the critics above are looking towards anachronism as a generic indicator, the extensive *Cymbeline* genre debate is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the anachronism proves helpful, as Shakespeare employs it in *Cymbeline*’s dramaturgy with his evocation of Jupiter connected through verbal spatial markers to the outer spheres of the divine. Butler elucidates the “problematic” anachronistic elements in *Cymbeline* and puts them forward as common technical conventions that build up dramaturgical layers. With Jupiter’s descent, the anachronism of the Roman mythology (compared with other time-sensitive elements within the play) sits nicely with an older cosmological trope like the

²²² Edward Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs: The Medieval Cosmos, 1200-1687* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 274.

²²³ Leo Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 38.

²²⁴ Butler, “Introduction,” in *Cymbeline*, ed. Butler, 14.

crystalline heavens and adds an established—if not antique—feel, matching the time warp of Jupiter’s presence on stage. The imaginative positioning of Jupiter parallels the physical, mechanical motion of his descent.

Beyond the crystalline sphere, Jupiter reigns from an even higher position in the vertical, celestial regions of the old cosmology. Again, Shakespeare provides the necessary spatial markers to chart the god’s exalted position, this time in the sphere of the divine—the Empyrean. Jupiter’s visitation leaves a lingering sensation amongst those in his presence. He wields lightning and thunder, striking the eyes and clapping the ears with visual and aural potency, but perhaps unexpectedly leaves a lingering olfactory memory. It is this sensation that Shakespeare uses to push the audience to the outermost sphere of the Ptolemaic spherical system. Sicilius immediately reports his sensory response, “His celestial breath was sulphurous to smell” (V.iii.178-79). Noting the type of spectacle, including lightning and thunder, helps explain the added presence of smell within the description. In his article on smell in *Macbeth*, Jonathan Gil Harris posits the presence of sulfur in producing the visual and aural stage effects. For Harris, the presence of smell creates what he calls a transtemporal palimpsest of memory, using polychronicity as his term of choice.²²⁵

What is suggested here borrows from Harris’ argument and moves from his associations of time and memory to that of place and space and the linking of a specific scent with a particular location—a translocational placement, sniffing out the positioning of Jupiter using the described smell as a pinpointing apparatus and locating Jupiter’s original positioning within the outer spheres of the heavens before his descent. The odour described as celestial yet sulfurous enthrones Jupiter beyond the crystalline heavens, past the sphere of the Primum Mobile, and in the highest heavenly sphere—the Empyrean. Again, in Peter

²²⁵ Jonathan Gil Harris, “The Smell of *Macbeth*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (Winter 2007), 465-486.

Apian's chart of the spheres, the Empyrean is labelled the dwelling place for the gods, "Habiticulum Dei" (the plural here referring to the Triune) and the elect. The word is often defined as a place of pure fire and intense light, and despite the quibble between Albertus Magnus and Aquinas over the elemental presence of fire within the outer sphere, the immobile orb has fire built into its very name with a pyre in the centre.²²⁶

Shakespeare also borrows breath from Scripture and theology and assigns it to the Roman god dwelling in the Empyrean. In a sermon from 1631 called *Mr. Boltons Last and Learned Worke of the Foure Last Things*, Robert Bolton's discussion of Hell contrasts the place of eternal torment with the Empyrean, as a place to behold "unapproachable Light" and "Iehovah's face in glory."²²⁷ From the dwelling place of Deity, the Divine prepares the torments of Hell with "the angry breath of the great GOD, which burnes farre hotter than ten thousand rivers of brimstone." The archaic brimstone (sulfur) originates with the breath of the God from the Empyrean, whose "fearefull fire then is that which is blowne by a breath dissolved into brimstone".²²⁸ Bolton's sermon echoes Isaiah 30:33, "The pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a streame of brimstone, doeth kindle it." Jupiter's breath hints at his deity and powers of judgment, but it also identifies his celestial dwelling as that of the god of the Empyrean in that fiery orb—part of the structured system of thought that would be overturned by new developments in astronomical theory and discovery. By dramatising the celestial spheres in specific terms, Shakespeare employs an older cosmological model and one that was, at the time of *Cymbeline*'s composition, recently challenged.

In 1609, Kepler notes in his introduction to *Astronomia Nova*, "That it results from

²²⁶ Grant, *Planets, Stars, and Orbs*, 372-373.

²²⁷ Robert Bolton, *Mr Boltons Last and Learned Worke of the Foure Last Things* (London, 1632), 96.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

this that there are no solid orbs, Brahe has demonstrated most firmly,”²²⁹ and, similarly, in a later section, “Brahe has recently eliminated solid orbs.”²³⁰ Kepler next suggests that, “If there are no orbs, the conditions under which the intelligences and moving souls must operate are made very difficult.”²³¹ William Donahue, who provides the English translation, includes a notational commentary, pointing out Kepler’s omission of the word “solid.” He suggests that Kepler “implies that if there are any orbs, they must be solid (that is, hard and impenetrable).”²³² There seems to be no middle ground for Kepler, though Donahue recalls the ongoing argument about the substantive spheres. But it appears that something else might be going on, at which Donahue hints. *No* orbs. Kepler has gone to great lengths to set up Brahe’s established fact of the lack of solid orbs. Now, as usual, he is taking a step further from Brahe, in that he suggests the possibility of orbs not existing at all. This absence brings Kepler to state how the earth and other planets’ movement happens—through “physical rather than animate faculties, namely, magnetic ones.”²³³ Kepler’s truly new astronomy transitions from the orbs to the orbital.

Tracing the movement of Jupiter through the spheres by analysing the verbal spatial markers within the drama and identifying the motion of a visual, mechanised descent demonstrates the convention of a vertical orientation of planetary motion. So far this chapter has worked to establish the longstanding convention of vertical movement of planetary characters, identifying the symbolism and the spatial sign system, as well as the relationship between these dramatic effects and their relationship to antiquated and emerging astronomy and cosmological systems. The case study plays use mechanical methods for creating visual, vertical descents. Shakespeare enhanced the spectacle in *Cymbeline* by embedding an aural,

²²⁹ Johannes Kepler, *New Astronomy*, trans. William H. Donahue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 51.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 414-415.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*, 52.

symbolic descent through the architecture of the celestial spheres. As these celestial characters moved up and down upon the stage, their movements traversed along a vertical axis, which symbolically indicated the intersection of the celestial world and the terrestrial. The planets move vertically on stage, whether realised in a visual or imaginative register. During the same time period, Beaumont and Fletcher break the convention and create a contrasting planetary choreography in *The Maid's Tragedy*. As this next section will argue, Cynthia does not descend, but moves on a horizontal plane, as her dramatic role differs from the planetary god out of the machine.

Positioning the Horizontal Moon: Cynthia's Motion in *The Maid's Tragedy*

The Maid's Tragedy opens *in media res* as preparations for a bridal masque are well under way. Though a marital union is expected, as the play progresses it becomes clear that something is awry. Amintor and Aspatia are in love and are promised to one another. However, the King commands that Amintor marry Evadne, who is the sister of a military hero, Melanthius. Evadne is also the King's mistress, and he is eager to have her married as a cover for their secret relationship. The nuptial event is preceded by a wedding masque the night before. The entertainment works as an ironic prelude to the rest of the play, and the sequence of the movement within the masque underscores that irony through the spatial relationships of the planetary characters. This section of the chapter will trace Cynthia's celestial path and investigate the visual appearance, properties, and movement of the moon in the indoor theatres of the Blackfriars playhouse and at court.

One of the defined spatial limits present within the play is the border between those who enter to see the masque and those who are kept outside. Lindsay Ann Reid sees the division as part of what she labels Rhodes' political "paranoia," which influences the

admission and denial of entry into the masque.²³⁴ Those in charge of the entry points worry about unimpeded access into the royal space. As Calianax says, “Look to the doors better, for shame! You let in all the world, and anon the King will rail at me!” (I.ii.1-2). The heated conversation between Diagoras and Calianax about who is allowed in and who is not highlights the strictness of the border and the potential for the space’s porousness. As such, the masque takes place in what Foucault terms a *heterotopia*, a place which “always presuppose[s] a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at one and the same time. Usually, one does not get into a heterotopian location by one’s own will...One can only enter by special permission and after one has completed a certain number of gestures.”²³⁵ Through this boundary framework, Beaumont and Fletcher emphasise the limited access to the space, the rites of passage to gain admittance, and the rules to keep once in.

Not only are the entry points of the space worried about and guarded, but once the guests gain access and move to the interior, their positions within the space are given much attention. The arrangement of the spectators highlights an acute spatial awareness within the play, as the masquers negotiate the areas of the room/stage. Seating is of special importance, and guests are instructed to “make room there for my lord!” (I.ii.54-55), allocating space to those of higher rank. The anxiety surrounding the position of the lady and her nearness to the king performs part of what Martin Butler calls the “vertical discriminations” of the masque’s performance space and corresponds to social entertainment conventions within the court. As Butler notes, “Access to the limited seating in the halls was hotly contested and was policed by court officials who sometimes enforced the line between ins and outs with brute force.”²³⁶

²³⁴ Lindsay Ann Reid, “Beaumont and Fletcher’s Rhodes: Early Modern Geopolitics and Mythological Topography in *The Maid’s Tragedy*,” *EMLS* 16, no. 2 (2012): 4. URL: <http://purl.org/emls/16-2/reidrhod.htm>

²³⁵ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 355.

²³⁶ Martin Butler, “*The Masque of Blackness* and Stuart Court Culture,” in *Early Modern English*

While the audience can see for themselves where the actors are positioned, the dialogue of the play carefully maps the spatial arrangement of the spectators of the masque-within-the-play, who are then watched by the audience proper.

By overlapping the audience/actor spatial dimensions, through the masque's metatheatrical moments and the characters' verbalisation of being watched, Beaumont and Fletcher remove a barrier between the real and the fictional and emphasise what Russell West calls "the essential porosity of the audience/actor division."²³⁷ The dramatists alert the audience to a focused spatial awareness of what will be seen and experienced, limiting boundaries of the playing area and carefully positioning those who are onstage. The consciousness and attentiveness to the arrangement of the masquers and audience within the play highlights the importance of positioning within the masque. The masque-within-a-play allows the spectators proper to view a fictional world, which is also viewing another fictive world, which the spectators proper also see. Gay McAuley observes that the combination forms "the constant dual presence of the physical reality of the performance space and the fictional world or worlds created."²³⁸ The metatheatrical mixture and the duality of fiction and realism, not altogether dissimilar to a play-within-a-play, produce layers of spatial and imaginative significance. Cynthia comes onstage and appears within this context of spatial awareness and metatheatricality. In a similar method to making an astronomical observation, tracing her movements within this spatial context can be accomplished by contrasting her brightness to the shadow of Night. Her bright appearance and her movement work together in a choreographed, planetary "dance."

Drama: A Critical Companion, ed. Garrett A. Sullivan, Patrick Cheney and Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 154.

²³⁷ West, *Spatial Representations*, 37.

²³⁸ McAuley, *Space in Performance*, 28.

“Enter Cynthia”. The stage direction that brings the moon goddess onstage simply states that she enters and approximately when she does so (evidenced by the placement of the stage direction in the monologue), but not how. An early editor, Alexander Dyce, includes a footnote attached to the movement prompt in the stage direction, which suggests “Descend” as a possibility instead of the “Enter,” and by that footnote proposes that Cynthia’s appearance would have been performed by a mechanical entrance from above.²³⁹ Dyce’s footnote provides evidence of the editorial intuition to align Cynthia’s movement with the convention of planetary motion on a vertical axis. The previous section of this chapter demonstrates the conventional mode of entrance for other planets during the period. However, there is no record that offers evidence for Cynthia’s entrance as a descent. To the contrary, it seems that the surrounding text points more toward Andrew Gurr’s suggestion that she “enter[s] normally.”²⁴⁰

While the nature of Cynthia’s entrance and the beginning of her movement is absent from the stage direction, the dramatic text offers clues for the moon’s specific entry point within the stage space and the directional orientation of her appearance. The character of Night calls for Cynthia to come onstage: “Appear; no longer thy pale visage shroud, / But strike thy silver horns quite through a cloud.” Night calls Cynthia to show herself, and by doing so, exposes the moon’s pre-entrance position. The location of Cynthia before her entrance and the “striking through” would suggest that she enters from behind the curtain of the “discovery space.” Before Cynthia appears on stage, her moonlight (“pale visage” and “silver horns”) is veiled, shrouded, and clouded. The shroud hints at Cynthia’s waiting

²³⁹ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, with Notes and a Memoir*, ed. Alexander Dyce (London: Edward Moxon, 1843-46), vol. 1, 333. While Dyce’s staging suggestion is footnoted with a question mark and he avoids emending the text, modern editor T. W. Craik finds that this suggestion was prompted by plays such as *Cymbeline* and Heywood’s. It seems that the convention of planetary divinity entering from “the heavens” prompted Dyce’s editorial choice.

²⁴⁰ Andrew Gurr, note on I.ii.118 in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid’s Tragedy*, ed. Andrew Gurr, Fountainwell Drama Series (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1969), 113.

behind a curtain or a cloth covering, most likely the curtain which is also called the arras.²⁴¹

This “discovery” space was often used as a revelatory one, which covered for a time and then exposed objects or characters to the view of the audience.

The stage space at the Blackfriars would keep her on the main playing level of the stage rather than in a higher position, and she would not descend. In the first quarto of *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1619), the title page provides clear evidence to the play’s staging at the Blackfriars.²⁴² The play also formed part of the courtly entertainment programme for the royal wedding in 1613. Beaumont and Fletcher use the site-specific assets of the indoor stages to create the lunar appearance and movements of Cynthia within the masque, enabling a nuanced contrast of light and darkness and a system of planetary movement. However, their positioning and choreography of the lunar character differ from the planetary motion found in the other case study plays from this period.

Rather than moving on a vertical plane, as Jupiter in *Cymbeline* and *The Golden Age*, Cynthia traverses the stage on a horizontal one, and the dramatic text includes a directional clue which positions Cynthia on a lateral axis. Once Cynthia comes on stage through the curtain, Night then commands her to return to the place whence she came: “Back my pale servant” (133). This backward motion never takes place, as Cynthia remains on stage, but the command illuminates Cynthia’s potential for a specific directional movement. Because Night instructs her to go “back”, she would have previously come on stage with a forward motion and not a downward one from above. “Back” suggests a reversing motion, rather than an upward direction.

²⁴¹ Gurr positions the stage “rock” in the curtained area. Though he envisions Cynthia entering on the main stage level, and not from above, the dramatic text seems to offer compelling clues about her entrance behind the curtain.

²⁴² As Roslyn Knutson notes, “The first quarto from the repertory of the King’s Men to carry a title-page advertisement of the Blackfriars was *The Maid’s Tragedy* in 1619.” See Roslyn Knutson, “What if There Wasn’t a ‘Blackfriars Repertory’?” in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 57.

In his *Astronomia Nova*, written one year before the play's earliest estimated date of composition, Johannes Kepler theorised that light was an "instrument" of the process of planetary motion and that the "motive power" behind celestial movement held a strong "kinship with light." He then clarified the relationship between planetary motion and light, developing his concept of instrumentality, as he theorised that light is not the force that moves heavenly bodies but could be the carrier of that force. Kepler continued, "Although this light...cannot be the moving power itself...light may perhaps be so constituted as to be, as it were, a kind of instrument or vehicle, of which the moving power makes use."²⁴³ Light and planetary motion function similarly within *The Maid's Tragedy's* masque, and the Blackfriars playhouse provided an optimal space to integrate choreography and lighting. As Sarah Dustagheer has noted: "Playwrights...writing for the conditions of indoor performance...seem especially attentive to the dynamics, possibilities and effects of controlled lighting."²⁴⁴ This chapter later explores in more detail the specific technologies at work in lighting Cynthia's body, but at this point in the argument it is especially helpful to note that for Beaumont and Fletcher light is more than a way of seeing Cynthia's motions onstage. Light functions causally, as it influences her movements.

In the play's richly cosmic masque, one of the characters which seems oddly missing is the Sun. Following patterns of courtly entertainments, the miniature in-set masque opens up possibilities for the planetary movement of the *The Maid's Tragedy* to operate within a register of political performance commonplaces. One of these is the king-as-sun motif, an ongoing convention within the Jacobean masque and broader political rhetoric. In Jonson's *Masque of Oberon* of 1611, James is hailed as he "that in his owne true circle, still doth runne; / And holds his course, as certayne as the sunne" (ll. 350-3). D. J. Gordon notes the

²⁴³ Kepler, *New Astronomy*, 380.

²⁴⁴ Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 2.

widespread symbolic associations of James with the sun: “That the place of the King in the social system is analogous to the place of the Sun among the stars was a commonplace of writers on political and social theory, and images drawn from this were part of the stock in trade of every eulogist.”²⁴⁵ In 1607 Kepler sent a copy of his book *De stella in pede serpentarii* to King James with a personal letter. Later, in 1619, Kepler also dedicated his *Harmonices mundi*, the volume which sets out his third law of planetary motion, to the British king. In the dedication Kepler not only noted James’ interest in astronomy, which would have been known at court, but also related the heavenly harmony of his title to the planets when he expressed a hope for “harmony and unity in the ecclesiastical and political spheres” during James’ reign. The epistolary correspondence between King James and Kepler and a subsequent book dedication provide examples of the analogy between the monarch’s movement and the celestial motions.

The symbolism of James as the sun and his planetary sway as the source of movement is reflected in John Hampden’s celestial commentary on the monarch: “He is the first mover among these orbs of ours, and he is the circle of this circumference, and he is the centre of us all, wherein we all as the loins should meet. He is the soul of this body, whose proper act is to command.”²⁴⁶ Hampden’s heliocentric positioning of the king combines Kepler’s understanding of the solar generation of planetary motion with the astronomer’s rhetorical conveyance of cosmic-like power to the solar monarch. Russell West identifies the masque in the Jacobean court as “essentially a centripetal system with the King as its centre.”²⁴⁷ Beaumont and Fletcher, using the courtly tradition, position the king of their play as a stationary, movement-generating sun in their inset masque within *The Maid’s Tragedy*.

²⁴⁵ D. J. Gordon, “The Imagery of Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Blacknesse* and *The Masque of Beautie*,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 6 (1943), 129.

²⁴⁶ Roy Strong, *Art and Power: Renaissance Festivals, 1450–1650* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1984), 159–60.

²⁴⁷ West, *Spatial Representations*, 64.

Although the planetary king may seem absent, he is, however, altogether present and active throughout—visibly on stage, considered in the discussion amongst the players, and active in his originating and overseeing the masque. While Night and Cynthia are onstage, the masque in its direction and dialogue presents a continual awareness of the Sun.

The Sun is the “first mover” setting in motion the cycle of the masque, even one which entertained the possibility of another cosmic hierarchy and an eclipse of his power. The King summons the masque to begin with a decree, “Begin the masque” (I.ii.106). The sun king initiates the masque, including the planetary character of the moon, propelling the entertainment by his power of royal command over the masque. Roy Strong notes the “long tradition of princely homage that formed the choreographic motivation of any group of characters in space in a court entertainment. Both allegorical chariots and participants always wound their way towards the throne to render tribute.”²⁴⁸ Beaumont and Fletcher choreograph Cynthia’s movement by inserting her into the masque form with its gravitational pull toward the king. In this way, the Sun and its partner of temporal duration, Day, work as silent, but present, characters in the masque.

Cynthia’s motion joins with the movement of others, as she is moved by the rhythms of the Sun and influences and interacts with the vicissitudes of those onstage. It is important then to see how she would have shone on the stage and then track her position within that sphere. As astronomers observed and catalogued celestial bodies, they calculated planetary positioning by gauging brightness and movement, noting the orientation and operations of luminescent objects in relationship to other bodies and in contrast to the darkness of the night. In Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy*, the dramatists use the resources of indoor performance spaces to create a contrast of light and darkness and choreograph a

²⁴⁸ Strong, *Art and Power*, 35.

planetary diurnal cycle,²⁴⁹ arguing that the interplay of brightness and shadow directly corresponds to the movement of the moon, her surrounding characters, and the audience.²⁵⁰

No stage direction supplies a description of Cynthia's planetary costume or what props she may have carried. However, there are clues elsewhere within the text which work as visual markers to indicate her appearance on stage. Night calls on Cynthia to show herself and reports the lunar goddess' features:

NIGHT.

Bright *Cynthia*, hear my voyce; I am the *Night*,
For whom thou bearest about, thy borrowed light.
Appeare, no longer thy pale visage shrowde,
But strike thy silver hornes quite through a cloud,
And send a beame upon my swarthie face,
By which I may discover all the place
And persons and how many longing eies,
Are come to waite on our solemnities.

(I.ii.114-121)

Though reflecting a "borrowed light," the moon is "Bright Cynthia." If she would reveal her "pale visage" from its cloud-like cover, her lumens would be bright enough to "send a beam" shining with enough strength to "discover all the place/And persons." Night's wish for Cynthia to move and present her light onstage either reflects a realistic lighting scheme or provides an example of telling the audience what to imagine. With such an emphasis on Cynthia's brightness and relationship to light throughout the masque, as well as the resources available for contrasting light and darkness in the indoor theatres, it would have been strange for these qualities to not have been marked with some form of portable light. If Night's

²⁴⁹ In the publication of its first quarto in 1619, the title page gives strong evidence to the play's staging at the Blackfriars. The play also formed part of the courtly entertainment programme for the royal wedding in 1613. While *The Maid's Tragedy* may have been performed at the Globe, as Wiggins and Richardson and Gurr alike suggest (Wiggins with Richardson, *British Drama*, vol. 6: 1609-16, 183: "probably performed at the Globe"; Gurr calls it a Globe play in *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. Gurr), the masque section in particular possesses characteristics of being created specifically for an indoor theatre space.

²⁵⁰ I use the phrase "stage audience" to refer to those players performing as audience onstage and "theatre audience" to refer to the audience proper. "Theatre audience" would include those seated on stools on the stage and those in boxes or gallery, but a clear distinction in this case would belie the blurred boundaries of this facet of the indoor playhouse.

chronicling is an accurate account of Cynthia's appearance, it is likely that Cynthia either wore or carried a light-emitting device. While the details for the costuming and mode of lighting for Beaumont and Fletcher's Cynthia is unspecified, another moon in a full-length masque receives the following description and provides a potentially similar costuming:

*The Moon was discover'd in the upper part of the house,
triumphant in a Silver Throne, made in figure of a Pyramis.
Her garments White, and Silver, the dressing of her Head an-
tique; and crown'd with a Luminary, or Sphere of light:
which striking on the clouds, and heightned with Silver, reflected
as natural clouds do by the splendor of the Moon. The Heaven,
about her, was vaulted with blue Silk, and set with stars of
Silver, which had in them their several lights burning.*
(186-192)

Jonson's character of Moon from his 1605 *The Masque of Blackness*, which was also performed at court, wore a lighting feature built directly into her costume, as she was "crown'd with a Luminary, or Sphere of light."²⁵¹ It could be that this very costume was repurposed for *The Maid's Tragedy*. Noting the fashion for Jacobean dramatists to include "miniature inset masques as part of their representation of the court," Martin Wiggins suggests that the entertainment in *The Maid's Tragedy* "may also have been written in with a view to using costumes from recent court shows."²⁵² Cynthia in *The Maid's Tragedy* could have looked strikingly similar to Jonson's moon goddess onstage and may have even worn the same costume including the lighted headdress. The evidence is compelling, especially for the court performance, as Inigo Jones was in charge of costuming for both *Masque of Blackness* and the wedding entertainments of 1613, which included *The Maid's Tragedy*.

Even if Cynthia were not arrayed as lavishly as in the full masque, a simpler example of representing the moon through lighting devices is found in transforming Robin Starveling

²⁵¹ Ben Jonson, *The Queen's Masques: The First, of Blackness* in *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques*, ed. Stephen Orgel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

²⁵² Martin Wiggins, *Shakespeare and the Drama of his Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 117.

into Moonshine in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.²⁵³ Through the mechanicals' production, Shakespeare provides a visual entry point into what was considered visually necessary, at least by the mechanicals, to transform a tailor into a figure called Moonshine. As the Prologue introduces the characters in 5.1, he describes the props necessary for the moon in the opening dumb show: "This man, with lantern.../Presenteth Moonshine" (134-5). Though the signifier and signified are humorously muddled in the mechanicals' play, the example demonstrates how a character like Cynthia in *The Maid's Tragedy* could have held a lantern as a simple and recognisable sign to designate herself as the lunar goddess. Whether Cynthia wore an elaborate illumination as in *The Masque of Blackness* or simply carried her light as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both contemporary examples demonstrate conventional lighting props and costuming associated with the moon and present potential staging options for contrasting Bright Cynthia, the goddess of the moon, and Night, the Queen of Shadows.

Cynthia's brightness inspires Night to call for the cessation of established light-based patterns of celestial movement. Night calls on Cynthia to appear and move into view, in order for the moon goddess to "send a beame upon my swarthie face,/ By which I may discover all the place and persons..." (I.ii.118-9). Night's exploration and understanding of her spatial surroundings and the others who occupy the space is dependent upon Cynthia's beams to illuminate the area and expose its occupants by moving into view. Night's description (quoted in full above) allows for the metatheatrical observation of the audience, who would have been more visible due to Cynthia's literal light, which would have either been worn or carried as a prop. Upon Cynthia's bright arrival, the theatre audience comes clearly into view with a surprising, reflective glow as "mortals, that appeare/ Brighter then we" (132-3). While

²⁵³ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells et al., 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

the reference undoubtedly served to flatter the paying guests, commentary on the shining of the audience would have had a literal and visual counterpart.

Cynthia's light would have scintillated as she made her entrance. Farah Karim-Cooper highlights the influence of candlelight on the audience as, "The spectators sitting on the stage...would also be glittering in their own rich apparel." Karim-Cooper notes elsewhere that spectators at the Blackfriars used a range of cosmetics, specifically mixed to give off a glow. They also wore jewels, chosen especially for their interaction with light. The makeup and the jewellery produced a brightness that emanated from the faces of the audience and their flashy attire.²⁵⁴ Tiffany Stern likewise finds that the theatre audience's clothing and the candlelight would have contributed to the glittering effect: "The playhouse's extravagant use of candles also encouraged the well-dressed audience, always conscious of the effect that candlelight would have on their garments, to wear their richest colours and most sparkling jewellery."²⁵⁵ As argued above, Cynthia would have carried some form of light to signify her own light. Her brightness accentuated the reflective qualities of the audience and was the source of their reflecting light.

Night enlists these shining audience members as co-conspirators in a celestial coup. Their brightness adds to Cynthia's light, and Night hopes that by joining forces they could eclipse the Day, permanently establishing her reign. "Then let us keep 'em here, / And never more our chariots drive away, / But hold our places and out-shine the day" (133-135). Cynthia's stage lighting directly corresponds to her movement. By remaining in place and continuing to occupy their place on the stage, Night wishes to stop the diurnal cycle of night giving way to day. The takeover involves the cessation of the normal rhythms of planetary

²⁵⁴ Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

²⁵⁵ Tiffany Stern, "'A ruinous monastery': The Second Blackfriars Playhouse as a Place of Nostalgia," in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse*, ed. Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 109-110.

motion. Night participates in a shared desire with the audience in wishing that the revels will not end. By observing, verbally recognising, and bringing the theatre audience into her scheme, Night capitalises on the spatial relationship afforded at the Blackfriars and at court. As Mariko Ichikawa notes, “In the theatre where the stage was almost entirely surrounded by the audience and where the boundaries between the stage and the auditorium were not clear and sharp, the distinction between the dramatic fiction and the physical reality could become similarly blurred.”²⁵⁶ The interactive nature of a traditional masque, outside the framework of a play, relied upon participation from the court. While the masque is abbreviated in *The Maid’s Tragedy*, the audience would have been aware of the level of engagement expected at court performances.

Yet this disruption of planetary motion and usurpation of the Sun is “more than may be done” (143). Cynthia recites the celestial catechism: “We many not breake/ The gods decrees, but when our time is come/ Must drive away and give the day our roome” (137-39). Cynthia concedes the regular pattern of exchange with the Day and the Sun that must not be disturbed as the limits of her occupation within the space. Though her position may seem as one without agency, Cynthia works from her horizontal plane and moves those underneath her, such as Neptune. However, this is a different Cynthia from the Cynthia of Jonson’s *Cynthia’s Revels* performed during the reign of Elizabeth I (1600-1). Jonson’s Cynthia, undoubtedly reflecting the monarchical moment of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, is as Inga-Stina Ewbank names her, the “presiding goddess” over the masque and quite unlike Beaumont and Fletcher’s more passive moon.²⁵⁷ Their Cynthia is also different from Hymen in Chapman’s *The Widow’s Tears* (1609), who likewise presides over a wedding celebration, but unlike the

²⁵⁶ Mariko Ichikawa, *The Shakespearean Stage Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 27.

²⁵⁷ Inga-Stina Ewbank, ““These pretty devices”: A Study of Masques in Plays,” in *A Book of Masques*, ed. T. J. B. Spencer and S. Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

Beaumont and Fletcher Cynthia, descends. In her vertical descent, Chapman positions Hymen to operate within the vertical axis of intervention within the drama. Hymen declares that her purpose is to “delight,” and “help to celebrate,” but the descent is also to “restore this palace.” Her vertical movement not only provided a visual spectacle, but the descent also functioned as part of the restorative act within the drama.²⁵⁸

Cynthia’s exit from the stage completes the diurnal cycle. Her departure and the return of the playworld to Day has been anticipated throughout the masque. Once again, it is the Sun’s light that prompts the motion of the moon, and Cynthia observes, “Hold up thy head dead *Night* seest thou not day?/ The East begins to lighten, I must down/ And give my brother place” (I.ii.263-265). The sight of light cues Cynthia’s movement from the stage. Her giving place to her brother sun suggests a shift of movement in the place of rule, as well as a spatial shift of presence onstage. When it becomes clear that movement is inevitable, Cynthia’s worry pertains to the direction of the exit, and she asks night, “Say which way wilt thou go?” (I.ii.276). Night returns the same way she came and disappears, most likely, through the trap and “into mists” (277). Cynthia says that her vanishing will be “into day” (277.) This statement, combined with “I must downe” that is quoted in context above, presents a movement possibility that aligns with the planetary relationship between the sun and the moon. If the Dyce footnote about a vertical, mechanical descent and ascent is correct, Cynthia would have to move downward in her ascent into day. Alternatively, following Night into the trap would fulfil the downward motion, but that space was reserved in the imaginative construction of the stage for beings and locales, such as devils and the underworld, which would not suit Cynthia.

T. W. Craik’s edition presents an option that satisfies the directional signposts within the text surrounding Cynthia’s exit. “She may make a deep obeisance at the foot of the

²⁵⁸ Also acted at the wedding celebrations in 1613.

King's chair, thus figuratively losing herself in his light;"²⁵⁹ Cynthia's return to the sun parallels the overarching movement conventions of the masque. Roy Strong explains what he calls the "choreographic motivation" that was part of an ongoing court entertainment tradition of stage movement. The orbit of the figures was one in which "participants always wound their way towards the throne to render tribute."²⁶⁰ The pull of the sun served as the focal point of the eye of the observers and the movement centre for the bodies of the participants. To complete the masque the moon charts her imperative movement that she describes as "downe." As Night vanishes into mist, so Cynthia vanishes into the daylight of the solar monarch. Helen Cooper observes the cyclical and orbital patterning surrounding the king: "The action emanates from the chair of state—it begins when the King takes his place, and describes the conditions brought about by his presence; and it is also presented to him, in terms of dramatic focus and as a kind of homage."²⁶¹ Cynthia's movement brings the masque full circle. The king of the play began the masque, his presence is constant and his light controls motion, and the final action is the presentation and the "homage," as the moon abdicates and is absorbed into Day.

The kingly sun's rule and his oversight and influence correspond to emerging ideas of planetary motion. In *Astronomia Nova* Kepler argues for the influence of the sun over planetary bodies as part of his presentation of what are now considered to be his laws of planetary motion. He describes the motive force which governs the planets' movements: "a power that is extended from the sun to the planets moves them...around the immovable body of the sun."²⁶² The motion is animated from within the celestial bodies, as they relate to one another. In the same work Kepler traces the motion of the moon as being "swept around the

²⁵⁹ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T. W. Craik (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 79.

²⁶⁰ Strong, *Art and Power*, 35.

²⁶¹ Helen Cooper, "Location and Meaning in Masque, Morality, and Royal Entertainment," in *The Court Masque*, ed. David Lindley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 137.

²⁶² Kepler, *The New Astronomy*, 385.

sun by the sun.”²⁶³ While it is clear from the context that Kepler clearly understood the relationship of the moon to the earth in respect to lunar motion, he regarded the sun as the magnetic controller of the earth’s movement, which then in turn is the moon’s mover.

Cynthia does not descend in the pattern of *deus ex machina* figure, as in *Cymbeline*, nor does she ascend into mythological deity, as in *The Golden Age*, but enters the stage, as a reflective planetary figure moving within the horizontal plane of the stage. The consistency of vertical stage motion for planetary characters causes any deviation from the pattern to be considered an anomaly, as the dramatists contradict the convention to create an alternative index of signification. Unlike other moons appearing from a height, Cynthia enters on the level of earth—the level of the players, the king, and the audience. She moves under the sway of the king. The king, as the centripetal centre, controls the masque and, by extension, her planetary movement. Cynthia’s choreography reflects her dramatic role, not as a goddess from the machine, but as an ironic figure in an ironic masque. While it may seem that Beaumont and Fletcher missed a trick in leaving the convention to pursue another axis of motion, Cynthia’s horizontal movement corresponds to her function, not as a mythological deity solving problems but as a satellite masquer drawn to the monarchical sun.

Between the years 1609 and 1613, dramatists positioned planets on stage and choreographed the accompanying movements using verbal, visual, aural, and sometimes olfactory means to situate the celestial beings within the spatial and planetary imagination. They simultaneously (and sometimes within the same action) eclipse cosmological ideas, which were being recalibrated and redrawn by Renaissance natural philosophers yet proved dramatically functional as still-legible and compelling signs. The reproducibility of the theatrical mechanics of vertical motion not only extended from play to play, but also functioned as a repeatable effect by more than one dramatist in multiple playhouses.

²⁶³ Ibid., 380.

The presence of a vertically moving Jupiter demonstrates a widespread capability amongst the companies and the playhouses (both indoor and outdoor) to achieve similar technical and mechanical staging effects. Theatre spaces constructed after this period showcase the importance of the convention of celestial characters descending and ascending to and from the stage. Using visual cues and verbal markers within *Cymbeline* and *The Golden Age*, Shakespeare and Heywood develop the mechanically produced spectacle of Jupiter's vertical descent and ascent. In *The Maid's Tragedy* Beaumont and Fletcher defy the convention, choreographing the movements of their planetary character to operate on a horizontal plane.

In each of these plays and in each of these playing spaces, the dramatic performance of planets in motion reflects early modern imaginative concepts of these bodies and their celestial movements. To borrow from Sidney's *Defense* reference in the Introduction to this thesis, as astronomical and cosmological concepts of planetary movement shifted in the early modern period, nature bestowed new "objects" or resources for the theatre to absorb and appropriate for the making of theatrical art. Borrowing old and new planetary thought materials, the dramatists of the period demonstrate a flexible method—an erasable and alterable sketch for the construction of imaginative space, where planetary deities interact with the terrestrial world of the stage.

Chapter 4

(N)ever-fixed Mark: Constellations As Figures of Change

“The first and highest of all is the sphere of the fixed stars, which contains itself and all things, and is therefore motionless.”

Copernicus, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*

In Sonnet 116, Shakespeare develops a conceit to represent his love, declaring that love which is truly love is a star. Defying alteration, the metaphor develops and narrows with the lover declaring the star-like love to be an “ever fixèd mark/ That looks on tempests and is never shaken;/ It is the star to every wand’ring barque,/ Whose worth’s unknown although his height be taken” (5-9).²⁶⁴ The convention repeats itself in dramatic texts, attaching the expectation of the fixed characteristics of stars to identify other stable objects or beings within the sphere of the fixed stars. In 3.1 of *Julius Caesar* the eponymous ruler ironically attaches the stable star concept to himself, declaring moments before his murder that he is as “constant as the Northern Star” (60). He asserts his self-proclaimed changelessness to be just like the star which is “unshaked of motion” (70).²⁶⁵ The perception of the changelessness of the stars stems from Renaissance astronomical theory, cosmography, and visual representations in both pre-Copernican and Copernican models. While both paradigms projected the stasis of the stellar region of the heavens, Copernican theories further solidified the idea. Copernicus’ conclusion in Book I of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*

²⁶⁴ Sonnet 116, *The Oxford Shakespeare*, 793.

²⁶⁵ Admittedly, Julius Caesar contrasts the “true fixed and resting quality” of the Northern Star with other stars, which held a uniform motion within the pre-Copernican model. However, the sphere was considered fixed, as the motion was relative to the rest of the firmament.

was that this heavenly region was indeed “motionless,”²⁶⁶ locking the “fixed” sphere even more firmly into place by the end of the sixteenth century.

As the fixed stars are represented in constellations within early modern playtexts, they typically carry the same stasis predicted by astronomical texts. In *I Henry IV*, Shakespeare uses the predictability of the constellations, such as “Charles Wain” (II.i.2) and the “seven stars” (I.ii.14), as reliable means of telling time and of navigating. Although obscured by the storm, the “the burning Bear” in *Othello* is considered a focal point for navigation by those at sea (II.i.14). Ursa Major, as a fixed constellation figure within the zodiac, also forms part of the discussion of judicial astrology in *King Lear* (I.ii.127).²⁶⁷ The stars and their constellation groupings work in these cases to provide clues about the timing of characters’ actions, to direct or explain the way in which characters move from place to place, or to justify a character’s lack of motion. In each of the examples above, the constellations perform as one might expect within the prescribed order of the fixed spheres. They are stable entities upon which the characters can base time, travel, and even destiny.

However, two plays printed within one year of each other feature a different treatment of constellations. In Heywood’s *2 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1606) and Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon* (1607), the constellations perform a contrasting dramatic function to that employed in the plays mentioned above. Rather than being stable and reliable reference points, the starry figures fall from the sky or are refigured by the addition of new stars. This chapter argues that these plays resist received astronomical expectation primarily by using constellations as a metaphor for wider societal or dramaturgical instability and alteration. In doing so, it will chart the verbal cataloguing of constellations within these plays,

²⁶⁶ Nicolaus Copernicus, *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres: A New Translation from the Latin*, trans. A. M. Duncan (London: David and Charles, 1976), 49.

²⁶⁷ The Folio text in *The Oxford Shakespeare*.

exploring the violations of the anticipated fixity of the celestial figures and the use of constellations as movable and alterable phenomena.²⁶⁸

Heywood and Dekker select and manipulate their source materials configuring dramatic episodes, characters, and plots. As they violate the expectation of stellar equilibrium, they create dramatic effects which prompt alteration and motion. This chapter examines astronomical and cosmological texts, as well as armillary spheres, to compare the assumption of constellations' stasis and the dramatic deviation from established early modern understanding. It proposes that the disturbances of the stars are an integral part of Dekker and Heywood's dramaturgy. Critics have found it difficult to categorise both *2 If You Know Not Me* and *The Whore of Babylon*. The plays' unconventional use of constellations can be seen as part of their exploration and innovation. As Dekker and Heywood deviated from established conceptual positioning within Renaissance cosmological thought and the commonplace use of constellations within other plays, they created performance texts that played against common understanding and an audience expectation of starry stasis. The stellar violation stimulates dramatic action and alters narrative time, which reinforces the playwrights' experimental dramaturgy using varying forms.

The Expectation of Stasis

In the Renaissance the celestial sphere of the fixed stars was an area of marked stability. If any motion existed within it, such alteration was considered gradual and the sphere was moving together without fluctuation. Though differing as to whether or not the stars in their

²⁶⁸ The term "constellation" is used variously in the period, often referring to any type of conjunction of celestial bodies, which includes the alignment of wandering planets, as well as the fixed stars. These temporary figures are in constant motion and such alterable patterns are widely discussed, particularly in theoretical treatises about judicial astrology (for instance, Stephen Hobbes' use of the "euill constellation" as a cause for pestilence [A2v]). This chapter is not concerned with this type of moveable conjunction, but rather with the longstanding fixed figures established as patterned images from antiquity which continue into the early modern period.

spheres moved only slightly or not at all, both pre-Copernican and post-Copernican theories projected the notion of stasis within this region of the heavens, at first in relative terms and then in absolute. Instruments from the period worked as cosmological replicas, demonstrating the precise areas of the heaven which were thought to move and which not. Early modern armillary spheres visually represented the stellar region and show how stars and their groupings as constellations were thought to have operated. As demonstrative models, these instruments establish the stars as immovable, stable bodies within early modern thought and give insight into the way in which the starry region was perceived as immobile.

In *Instruments of Science* Sara J. Schechner Genuth defines the armillary sphere and asserts that the objects “serve as a model of the universe.”²⁶⁹ Likewise, Thomas L. Hankins and Robert J. Silverman explain in *Instruments and the Imagination* that armillary spheres were aesthetic objects of display which showcase the understanding of the universe.²⁷⁰ The spheres, therefore, possessed intrinsic properties which showcased cosmological ideas in three-dimensional form. Derek J. Price suggests that the models work as readable objects, standing in as visual signifiers of astronomical and cosmological ideas. He proposes that “each armillary sphere may be considered as a document that illustrates the history of our cosmological ideas.”²⁷¹ Interpreting the signifying system of armillary spheres by investigating their visible and motive mechanical qualities uncovers what is considered animated and unanimated within the Renaissance sky and provides the standard Dekker and Heywood used for creating their alternative system for the movement of stars in their plays.

In order to provide a “reading” of these objects, this chapter considers two examples, the first of which is what J. D. North calls “one of the finest armillary spheres to have

²⁶⁹ Sara J. Schechner Genuth, “Armillary Sphere,” in *Instruments of Science: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert Bud and Deborah Jean Warner (New York: Garland, 1998), 30.

²⁷⁰ Thomas L. Hankins and Robert J. Silverman, *Instruments and the Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11-12.

²⁷¹ Derek J. Price, “A Collection of Armillary Spheres and Other Antique Scientific Instruments,” *Annals of Science* 10, no. 2 (1954): 176.

survived from Elizabethan times.”²⁷² The sphere features an “unusually complex system of armillae,”²⁷³ part of which North suggests demonstrates the Copernican system for precession.²⁷⁴ The sphere belonged to Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland, who owned an Italian-made, armillary sphere from c. 1580, which was known to be in England by the 1590s. It is now part of the Bodleian Library collection and is currently displayed in the Museum of the History of Science, Oxford (Figure 3). The rigid details of its construction indicate the solidity of the conception of stasis within the sphere of the fixed stars.



Figure 3: Anonymous, “Italian Armillary Sphere,” c. 1580, metal, Museum of the History of Science, Oxford. Lent by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Inv. 70229.

²⁷² J. D. North, *The Universal Frame: Historical Essays in Astronomy, Natural Philosophy and Scientific Method* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1989), 134.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., (see note 91).

The Earl's sphere (Figure 3) details the intersection point between the zodiacal band, known as the ecliptic, and the other loops or rings, called armillae. The band aligns and connects precisely with the measuring armilla to form a solid, stationary outer layer to the sphere. These pieces come together in an interlocking joint and represent the starry region as an unanimated element within the armillary model, reinforcing the fixity of the band and the hard and fast nature of the sphere of the fixed spheres. An even more punctuated example of the mechanical construction of immobility is found on the armillary sphere (Figure 4), which provides the ecliptic fastened to the armillae with rivets.



Figure 4: Anonymous, "Italian Armillary Sphere," c. 1500, metal, Museum of the History of Science, Oxford. Inv. 12765.

The armillary sphere strikingly illustrates in a three-dimensional model the expectation of stasis for the area of the heavens which housed the constellations. On the armillary sphere, the ring which represents the sphere of the fixed stars is anchored fast and motionless, while the other rings are animated and possess the mechanical option of movement. The visually apparent fixity of the stars within the sphere suggests the ironclad and unbending immobility of the starry region within the cosmological framework of the period.

In Maurice Daumas' treatise on scientific instruments from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this type of model is listed in the category of machines, which were "created solely to demonstrate physical laws."²⁷⁵ Such a distinction makes their function even more apt to this study, as they were intended to visually showcase cosmological theories. The period's conception of the role of the armillary spheres as portable models of the universe establishes a connection between the motions of the model and Renaissance ideas about the motion or stasis of the universe. It follows that the movements or absence of movement within the objects highlights the period's understanding of the motion which was thought to have occurred within the region the instruments portrayed in their parts.

Renaissance cosmological and astronomical texts reiterate the theory of stellar equilibrium that is demonstrated in the mechanical, armillary models of the universe. Pre-Copernican cosmology considered the region of the celestial heavens which contained the stars to be in a state of extreme slow motion. In this model the "fixed" quality of the sphere and its starry bodies comes not from a complete lack of motion but from the uniform distance of the stars from one another even in the sphere's slight alteration. In other words, when the stars move, they do so together in a communally fixed way. Though chronologically following Copernicus' *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* of 1543, Robert Recorde relays

²⁷⁵ Maurice Daumas, *Scientific Instruments of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries and Their Makers*, trans. Mary Holbrook (London: B.T. Batsford, 1972), 4.

the pre-Copernican idea in *The Castle of Knowledge* of 1556, as he describes the reason why the heavenly location attached to the place of the stars is labelled as “fixed.”

His explanation is one of relationship and distance between the celestial bodies, rather than absolute fixity and lack of motion. He notes, “all those starres, which be in the firmament, do stande and continue in one forme of distaunce eche from other, and chaunge not their places in their spere, and therefore be they called Fixed stares.”²⁷⁶ So it is the unity of formation and the way in which the stars are unalterable in their positioning which makes them fixed. As detailed by Recorde, the pre-Copernican concept of the security of the “fixed spheres” is one of collective non-alteration where the stars remain in a slow-moving body. The placement within the sphere is fixed, as the stars “stande and continue” within it, but the sphere itself is not entirely motionless. The idea is repeated three years later in the first cosmography written in English, William Cuningham’s 1559 *The Cosmographical Glasse*: “This heauen compasseth the viij. heauen, called in greke ἀπλανής because the sterres kepe one uniforme distance in mouing, and for that cause are namid fixid.”²⁷⁷ Unlike the planets, also known as “wandering stars,” which alter in pronounced visible motions, the stars move in uniformity as a fixed formation within the sphere.

While the pre-Copernican model presented the sphere of the fixed stars in relative stillness, the Copernican one adjusted the transit from slight motion to a complete halt with fixed stars in a fixed sphere. Copernicus labelled the sphere of the fixed stars as “*imobilis*,” tightening down the celestial sphere and further solidifying the concept of stability and fixedness connected to the stellar region.²⁷⁸ In *Mysterium cosmographicum* of 1596, Johannes Kepler provided two plates which are accompanied by his own notes, distinguishing the

²⁷⁶ Robert Recorde, *The Castle of Knowledge* (London, 1556), 8.

²⁷⁷ William Cuningham, *The Cosmographical Glasse* (London, 1559), 10.

²⁷⁸ Denis E. Cosgrove, “Images of Renaissance Cosmography, 1450-1650,” in *Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward, *The History of Cartography* 3 (Part 1) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), Fig. 3.21, 89.

motion between what Kepler calls the “theory of the ancients” and that of the Copernicus.²⁷⁹ While in the Copernican plate the “the Fixed Stars...are completely motionless,”²⁸⁰ in the older order, “the Fixed Stars complete a period in 49,000 years.”²⁸¹ Kepler distinguishes between the relative motionlessness of the pre-Copernican model and the absolute stationary quality of the Copernican.

The minute movement of the older model came as a result of the attempt to account for the phenomenon of *precession*, which is the astronomical term associated with the slow changes of a body indiscernible to the naked eye, by allowing for a moveable mass of stars. With the Copernican model, however, the stability of the sphere of the fixed stars became even more refined and established with Copernicus’ accounting for precession by altering the reference point for measuring the fixed stars. Because the stars were immovable in his theoretical framework, he suggested working from a constellation, rather than the equinox, when determining the placement of the stars. In Book II of his *De revolutionibus*, Copernicus details his project of referencing the position of stars:

As we consider that the positions of the stars should not be referred to the equinoxes, which change with time, but the equinoxes should be referred to the sphere of the fixed stars, we can easily base the map of the stars on any other unchanging starting point. This we have decided to take as the Ram, as the first sign of the zodiac...so that the configuration of the stars may remain always the same and perfect, as they shine as if perpetually fixed and fastened once their abode is grasped.²⁸²

The alteration in measurement stemmed from Copernicus’ theory in which the stars were immobile objects, thereby providing a stable reference point for calculating other movements within the heavens. In the new system the moving equinox was replaced with the “unchanging starting point” of the zodiacal Ram. In his explanation of the method,

²⁷⁹ Johannes Kepler, *Prodromus dissertationum cosmographucarum, continens mysterium cosmographicum* (Tubingen, 1596), Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Savile Y 15 [fold-out, inset sheets positioned between regular pages] 18-19. Johannes Kepler, *Mysterium cosmographicum* = *The secret of the universe*, trans. A. M. Duncan (Norwalk, CT: Abaris Books, 1999), 227.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 228.

²⁸² Copernicus, *On the Revolutions*, 106.

Copernicus uses confident terms of stability and stasis to describe the result within the sphere. He declares that the adjustment to a new reference point within the zodiac secures the region's starry configuration as one which is "always the same and perfect" and "perpetually fixed and fastened." By measuring the equinox against the standard of the constellation, rather than the other way around, Copernicus refined the cartographic accuracy of the celestial map.

Giovanni Paolo Gallucci, in his *Theatrum Mundi* of 1588, builds from Copernicus' system of identifying stellar positioning using a tighter system of regularity. In *The Mapping of the Heavens*, Peter Whitfield expounds on the significance of the new Copernican referencing system on Gallucci's celestial map, noting that Gallucci's celestial cartographic work founded its celestial longitude from the constellation, so that "the movement of the entire celestial sphere leaves all coordinates constant in relation to each other."²⁸³ Thomas Digges, the English astronomer, captures the essence of the increasing fixedness of the fixed sphere. In the 1578 preface of *A Perfit Description of the Caelestiall Orbes*, Digges describes the difference between the perception of fixedness of the ancient model and the immobility of the Copernican. To do so, he states that perception of motion belies stasis as the "great Globe of fixed stares seeme to swey about and turne, albeit indeede they remaine fixed."²⁸⁴ Later, in the body of the work, he states: "The first and highest of al is the immoueable sphere of fixed stares conteining it selfe and al the rest, whereunto the motions and positions of al inferiour spheres are to be compared."²⁸⁵ Moving the point of reference from the equinox to a star within a constellation demonstrates the absolute fixedness of the stellar region within the new cosmological framework. The animation of armillary spheres and the theories of the fixed

²⁸³ Peter Whitfield, *The Mapping of the Heavens* (London: British Library, 1995), 75.

²⁸⁴ Thomas Digges, "A Perfit Description of the Caelestiall Orbes," in *A Prognostication Euerlastinge*, M1r.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, N3r.

stars within astronomical texts suggest a fundamental assumption of stellar stability and equilibrium in the Renaissance. While the fixity of this starry region is assumed within natural philosophical texts and instruments of the period, the theatre, by contrast, provided a flexible space characterised by movement that defied the expectation of stability and enacted a dramatic dissolution of the fixed sphere within its drama.

Dropping Constellations: Falling Stars in *The Whore of Babylon*

Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* failed to make a good first impression on the stage at The Fortune. At least by Dekker's assessment, the performance left much to be desired. When the play came to print, the dramatist presented his perspective on the false start in performance, excusing the work by declaring in his prefatory *Lectori* that the play had been "made lame" and "made a cripple" by the "bad handling of them to whome it is put to learne to goe." He then suggested that the printed version would be in his own natural voice, and the patient reader would be rewarded with the opportunity to "heare now how himselfe can speake."²⁸⁶ However, as the critical tradition suggests, the print version still seems to limp along and the play continues to be critically unacclaimed. *The Whore of Babylon* has long evaded critical concurrence as scholars have attempted to make sense of its disparate parts. Commentary surrounding the play endeavours to connect, and in many ways untangle, the topical symbolism of political and religious identities, allegorical figurations, and apocalyptic emblemata.

While these efforts work to reveal the hidden layers underneath the symbolism, the play's combination of elements continues to resist a true synthesis. Larry S. Champion

²⁸⁶ Thomas Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 491-592 (498).

identifies the play's unconventional construction as part of an attempt by Dekker to develop a new form of epic drama. As others before and after him have done, Champion associates the elements Dekker uses with the play's major source, Spenser's epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*. However, Champion calls Dekker's attempt "a relatively grand experiment that fails" and "a failure in architectonic cohesion."²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Julia Gasper locates the play within a "rare genre which may be called the *comoedia apocalyptica*," which "organizes events by means of allegory."²⁸⁸ By doing so, Gasper situates Dekker's play within a generic and organisational model, which allows for the unusual construction as an innovative dramatic strategy, rather than a strategy that failed.

Dekker's allegorical organisation has not only been recognised as a structural method, but also as a functional means of producing dramatic action. Kathleen E. McLuskie connects the action of the play with Dekker's choice of following an allegorical model. She describes the play's allegorical characteristics, as they relate to the overarching action of the play, highlighting that: "The action moves in and out of allegory" using the allegorical elements as a stimulus to perpetuate the action of the plot.²⁸⁹ As this section will argue, Dekker disrupts traditional patterns of celestial stasis by using spatial metaphors and figuratively dislocating constellations from their ancient moorings. These disintegrating motions do not physically take place on stage like other astronomical elements in this thesis. Instead, they operate within the spatial imagination, and the downward motion of the fixed stars accentuates the allegorical structure and helps articulate apocalyptic themes.

²⁸⁷ Larry S. Champion, *Thomas Dekker and the Traditions of English Drama*, American University Studies: English Language and Literature, vol. 27, no. 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 1985), 80.

²⁸⁸ Julia Gasper, *The Dragon and the Dove: The Plays of Thomas Dekker* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 62.

²⁸⁹ Kathleen E. McLuskie, *Dekker and Heywood: Professional Dramatists* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1994), 50.

Dekker begins *The Whore of Babylon* with the Empress delineating a cosmological frame for the expanse of her power using cartographic symbolism:

EMPRESS.

That we, in pompe, in peace, in god-like splendor,
 With adoration of all dazeled eies,
 Should breath thus long, and grow so full of daies,
 Be fruitfull as the Vine, in sonnes and daughters,
 (All Emperors, Kings, and Queenes) that (like to Cedars
 Vprising from the breast of *Lybanus*,
 Or Oliues nurst vp by *Ierusalem*)
 Heightened our glories, whilst we held vp them:
 That this vast Globe Terrestriall should be cantled,
 And almost three parts ours, and that the nations,
 Who suspiration draw out of this aire,
 With vniuersall Aues, showtes, and cries,
 Should vs acknowledge to be head supream
 To this great body (for a world of yeares:)
 (I.i.1-14)

The Empress of Babylon heralds her authority and widespread fame using expansive spatial metaphors, which extend in all directions. Mapping her glories, she chooses the object of a “Globe Terrestriall,” as a means of highlighting her dominion and sway over its three-part division. The presence of these globes within the playtext suggests an awareness by Dekker of the cosmological importance and symbolism attached to globes and the object’s dramatic usefulness for the Empress’ imperial designs. In the sixteenth century globes were often sold in pairs, a celestial globe and a terrestrial globe, and as Denis Cosgrove notes they were “sometimes accompanied by a third, the armillary sphere that modelled their cosmographical relationship.”²⁹⁰ The significance of this cartographic practice manifests itself in later scenes, as the Empress seeks to expand her territory beyond the terrestrial sphere and wishes to be set into the firmament of the celestial.

As Adam Max Cohen has argued: “the globe was such a useful tool with so many metaphorical associations,” and “even the technical manuals describing the globe’s

²⁹⁰ Cosgrove, “Images of Renaissance Cosmography,” 67.

usefulness recognized its metaphorical power.”²⁹¹ One such manual is Hues’ 1594 *Tractatus de Globis*, in which the metaphorical potential associated with the globe rested not only in its spherical shape, which Hues declares as “forme expressing the Sphaericall figure,” but also in its “analogical representation” of proportion and distance.²⁹² Dekker’s use of globes as objects identified with the Empress reinforces her illegitimate craving for power and desire for the literal “upward mobility” of her political and religious domination.

Theatrical evidence suggests that the globe was present within the play as a visual property on the stage, as well as a rhetorical device within the dramatic text. An inventory list from a lost manuscript, which seems to be by Henslowe, records a props list and what would have been available not only for the players to use on stage, but also for the dramatists to construct as essential items to convey narrative situations and build theatrical environments. The list details: “the Enventary tacken of all the properties for my Lord Admeralles men, the 10 of Marche 1598.” The Admiral’s Men mentioned in the inventory would eventually become Prince Henry’s Men, who played *The Whore of Babylon* at the Fortune. According to the document, among the props available to the company was an “Item, j globe.”²⁹³ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson note that a globe was used as a prop at least nine times in the period. Particularly important to this argument is that a globe is prescribed in plays connected with the Admiral’s Men and by Dekker, including the anonymous play *Look About You* (1598-1600) and Dekker’s *Old Fortunatus* (1599).²⁹⁴ The globe was available for the Admiral’s Men, and the company had used the prop in at least two plays before *The Whore of*

²⁹¹ Adam Max Cohen, “Englishing the Globe: Molyneux’s Globes and Shakespeare’s Theatrical Career,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 977.

²⁹² Robert Hues, *Tractatus de Globis et euorum usu: A Treatise Descriptive of the Globes Constructed by Emery Molyneux... (1594)*, ed. Clements R. Markham (London: Hakluyt Society, 1889), 19.

²⁹³ J. Payne Collier, *The Diary of Philip Henslowe from 1591 to 1609: Printed from the Original Manuscript Preserved at Dulwich College* (London: Shakespeare Society, 1845), 293.

²⁹⁴ Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 101.

Babylon. Though the company changed patrons and venues between 1598 and 1607, there is no reason to doubt that the globe property would have stayed with the company at the time of Dekker's play. As a dramatist who had included the prop in previous plays for the company, Dekker would have known the props which were available and would have used what he needed. In *The Whore of Babylon*, the repetition of the verbal imagery within the dialogue reinforces Dekker's positioning of the Empress as one intent on absolute, imperial domination. By combining the prop of the globe with the rhetoric of the Empress, Dekker introduces a powerful spatial effect to further establish the takeover intended by the Empress and her wish to exceed the geographical domination of Titania's rule.

Early modern representations of Queen Elizabeth I used the globe as a symbol of spatial control and an "icon of empire."²⁹⁵ In 1590 George Peele used the globe in this way in a poem he wrote to celebrate Elizabeth's Accession Day:

Elizabeth great Empresse of the world,
 Britanias Atlas, Star of Englands globe,
 That swaies the massie scepter of her land,
 And holdes the royall raynes of Albion.²⁹⁶

The title "Empresse of the World" is assigned to Elizabeth in conjunction with images of atlases and globes, as well as an affirmation that she is the star of that globe, hinting at celestial as well as terrestrial globes and the expansive range of her influence. In what has become known as the "Armada Portrait" of circa 1588, Elizabeth is pictured with her hand placed on top of a miniature globe. Roy Strong highlights the imperial theme of the portrait with a "special significance" attached to the position of the globe underneath a crown. He notes the importance in Tudor iconography of the particular crown being a closed, imperial

²⁹⁵ Andrew Belsey and Catherine Belsey, "Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I," in *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, c. 1540-1660*, ed. Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (London: Reaktion Books, 1990), 34.

²⁹⁶ George Peele, *The Life and Minor Works of George Peele*, ed. David H. Horne (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952), 232.

one and argues that this was a bold statement in the positioning of England's monarch in relationship to Continental rule, as it "reflect[s] the equality of status of the King of England with the Holy Roman Emperor."²⁹⁷ As Andrew and Catherine Belsey note: "In the 'Armada' portrait Elizabeth appears not only as the ruler of the victorious realm but also as aspiring Empress of the world."²⁹⁸ The portrait, therefore, offers insight into the visual symbolism used within act 1 of *The Whore of Babylon*. By featuring a globe onstage as a rhetorical device and a stage prop, Dekker transfers the image of conquering Empress, which was strongly associated with Elizabeth I, onto the Whore. Following the example of Spenser's Duessa, the reversal vividly captures the extent of the identity theft attempted by the Empress of Babylon through her counterfeiting Elizabeth's historical image and robbing the Fairie Queene of her title of Empress. Dekker uses the association of the globe as a means of immediately establishing the Empress as the antagonist to the Fairie Queene. As the play unfolds, however, the Armada in the background of the portrait will come to the dramatic foreground, and the proper hand resting on the globe in the portrait will be restored.

The Empress of Babylon's inflated sense of global empire filters down to her subjects. In the following scene when Titania asks the three kings of their origin, each king in turn charts his allegiance in keeping with the Roman Empress' cartographic symbolism. The First King speaks of his allegiance to his Empire's "sole soueraigntie/Of this Globe vniuersall" (I.ii.5-6). By attaching "vniuersall" to the globe, the First King increases the Empress' territory from terrestrial rule to universal sovereignty. The globe marks not only her earth-bound territories, but also her place within the broader universe. In the same scene the Empress details how her offspring have "heightened [her] glories," as they have multiplied and spread upward like tree branches demonstrating an ascending supremacy. Yet after her

²⁹⁷ Roy Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 132.

²⁹⁸ A. Belsey and C. Belsey, "Icons of Divinity," 14.

self-declaration of greatness and the extension of the boundaries of her domain, she laments the possibility of being pulled down and declares: “Our greatnesse hangs in the ballance” (I.i.19). Her account of the degradation and potential downfall is met with religious terms of desecration. The Third King begins his response to the Empress’ catalogue of “blasphemy” against her person with an expression of surprise:

THIRD KING.

Can yonder rooffe, that’s naild so fast with starres,
 Couer a head so impious, and not cracke?
 That Sulphure boyling o’re celestiall fires,
 May drop in whizzing flakes (with scalding vengeance)
 On such a horrid sinne!
 (I.i.39-43)

The Third King emphasises the fixity of the sphere of the fixed stars of the starry “rooffe” which is “naild so fast” into place. It is expected to be a solid entity unsusceptible to alteration, but the “impious” treatment of the Empress prompts the Third King to express his impassioned outrage using metaphors of heavenly self-destruction which threaten the security of the fixed sphere. Dekker uses violent, unsettling terms of instability, breakage, and falling (“boyling,” “scalding,” and “cracke”). The fracturing of the fastened starry roof into a downward fall, as the sulfurous materials of the heavenly bodies “drop,” counters the solidity of the starry heavens with a collapse. The Third King’s use of these destructive images forms a catalogue of disintegration with catastrophic and apocalyptic associations. In expressing what is an impossibility, as it goes beyond the laws of the fixed stars, the King calls down the architectural roof of the sphere in forms contrary to expected stasis. His rhetoric defies the received workings of celestial bodies and space, and the image breaks the established assumption that the stars should remain fixed in their spheres.

Dekker also uses the constellation image as a means of communicating the Empress’ wish for even more power.

EMPRESS.

why is not Babilon

In a contorted chaire made all of stares,
 Wound vp by wheelles as high, nay boue the thrones
 Supernall, which with Ioues owne seate stand euen,
 That we might ride here as the Queene of heauen.
 And with a spurne from our controwling foote,
 That should like thunder shake th'etheriall floore,
 Of life and heauen them both at once bereaue,
 That thither vp dare clime without our leaue.
 (IV.iv.7-11)

The Empress questions why Babylon, which is her seat of power, is not placed within a constellation. The starry chair refers to the constellation Cassiopeia, which was also known as The Lady of the Chair. By assimilating the Cassiopeia figure, the Empress rhetorically extends her control beyond the globe of act 1, and by doing so converts the comparatively low-level prominence of her terrestrial power into that of divine rule. In order to emphasise her demand for the highest possible position in cosmological thought, Dekker conflates the traditional spheres or at least gives her power within the metaphor to verbally move through them. The Empress, as Cassiopeia, resides “as high” in the sphere of the fixed stars, but then says that she wishes to move even higher “nay boue the thrones/ Supernall” which is the Empyrean. In her upward shift, what was once the roof of stars has now become “th’etheriall floore.”

Dekker uses the starry region to demonstrate the height of honour that the Empress offers. She imagines the spatial potential for herself and proposes starry positions for those under her manipulative sway. In 3.1 the Empress promises real estate within her royal, celestial retinue, declaring the grand prize: “Weele erect ladders for you strong and high,/ That you shall climbe to starrie dignitie” (178-9). By her estimation the fixed sphere is easy for her to access and is flexible enough to house those who serve her well. This is a spatial change from the underground, mole-like position she previously decreed her ambassadors to assume, as they were to bury themselves in the earth to make any attempt to trip Titania and “make her stumble” (III.i.153). The Empress offers the elevated, stellar positions as rewards

for her emissaries' lowly work, and she tenders the favours based on her faulty sense of terrestrial and celestial sovereignty. In her perception of space, the starry region is accessible to those of her choosing, and the sphere of the fixed stars can be altered by her determination and decree. The Empress' fiat reflects her arrogance in its bold declaration of her ability and right to adjust the heavens, further establishing her character as the antagonist to the rightful ruler.

Throughout the play Dekker constructs a layered, visual apparatus emphasised by rhetorical repetition and stage props. From the Empress' use of the globe in act 1, she robs the image of the Fairie Queene. Dekker builds his drama based on these symbols and forms in order to increase the dramatic tension. The terrestrial and celestial takeover, an offensive stance against the true queen, builds until the merciful but just queen decides to act. Through Titania's issuing of the decree, the constellations of her enemies collapse, and the rightful ruler brings down the heavens:

TITANIA.

In neither of these seas, spread we our sayles,
 But are the impartiall beame between both scales;
 Yet if we needs must bow, we would incline
 To that where mercy lies, that scale's diuine:
 But so to saue were our owne breast to wound,
 Nay (which is more) our peoples: for their good,
 We must the Surgeon play, and let out blood.
 Euery Peeres birth stickes a new starre in heauen,
 But falling by *Luciferan* insolence,
 With him a Constellation drops from thence.
 Giue me this Axe---how soon the blow is giuen? *writes*
 Witnesse: so little we in blood delight,
 That doing this worke, we wish we could not write.
 (IV.ii.24)

4.2 features in nearly every critical account of the play, as it has been the source of much textual, political, and allegorical debate. Champion labels this scene as “the most striking example of Dekker's structural juxtapositioning.”²⁹⁹ Efforts have been made to identify

²⁹⁹ Champion, *Thomas Dekker and the Traditions*, 79.

topicalities, in the form of political and religious parallels, particularly the historical figures behind the moon (from Fideli's report in IV.ii.2-9) and the Luciferan star, which is part of the constellation of enemies.³⁰⁰ This section of dramatic text moves with the ebbing, allegorical action, which has been noted above. But it is this scene which Susan E. Krantz notes: "proves problematic in its allegorical identification."³⁰¹ These difficulties of identification have created a critical barrier and have yet to reach a critical consensus. Rather than proposing another candidate for identification of the topical referents within the allegorical frame, this chapter considers the dramaturgical role of the starry section's collapse. What is important to this argument is that the dramatic significance of the scene may have less to do with identifying the historical individual behind the figure of the star and the moon and more to do with the role of the starry disturbance in stimulating dramatic action.

Conover includes this scene with three incidents in the play which "have no effect upon the actions of the rest of the play." However, he goes on to say: "These incidents were more meaningful to their original audience than they are to the modern reader."³⁰² Although Conover somewhat disparages the scene due to, as he proposes, the loss of significance through the erasure of symbolic association in the modern audience or reader, he continues: "The second scene of the fourth act, however, seems to be some sort of focal point in the structure of the play. Here, Titania does just as she does in the rest of the play—she upsets Babylonian threats."³⁰³ Conover's observation provides a key to the recognition of Dekker's

³⁰⁰ Key sources for considering the topicalities of the image include: Cyrus Hoy, *Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries*; Frederick Gard Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559-1642*, vol. 1 (London, 1891); and Mary Leland Hunt, *Thomas Dekker: A Study* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911).

³⁰¹ Susan E. Krantz, "Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in *The Whore of Babylon*," *Studies in English Literature* 35, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 282.

³⁰² James H. Conover, *Thomas Dekker: An Analysis of Dramatic Structure* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 127.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 137.

use of the disruptive stellar activity. The “upsets” of the cosmological worldview of the Empress coincide with the stellar disruption and the violation of the constellation’s stasis.

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, constellations were expected to be secure and motionless. Any transgression of that expectation communicates an upheaval, an overturning, or a disturbance. What happens in this scene is a working out of what has been established as a possibility looming throughout the play. It is the beginning of the end for the antagonist. Though the starry roof was intended by the Third King to fall on Titania, and the Empress wished to affix herself in a constellation throne, these eventualities never take place. Until this scene, the unfixing of the constellations has only been prophetic and futuristic. This event enacts previous pronouncements of the destabilisation of the heavens against the realm of Fairie Land and begins the process of the punishment of what Dekker condemns as the true blasphemy. Once the Fairie Queene produces the sentence, the action quickly follows. What was once only potential turns into immediate action, as the signing of the decree shifts the imminent to the immediate and confidently marks the swift destruction of Titania’s enemies. Dekker uses the symbolism of the fixed stars, which exist within traditions of constancy, security, and stability, as verbal images of instability and transition points of dramatic motion.

No matter how the moon and the stars are topically identified, whether as Mary Stuart, Exeter, or Howard, the starry roof with its crushing judgment is coming down; and Cassiopeia, the “Luciferan” star, and his constellation, will plummet to their destruction.³⁰⁴ Each stellar instance prepares the audience for heavenly collapse and breakdown with accompanying tension, surrounded by a collective sense of justice, apocalyptic dread, and

³⁰⁴ Krantz, “Thomas Dekker’s political commentary in *The Whore of Babylon*,” 282-284.

political opposition. Dekker creates a systematic clearing of the drama's sky, pulling down the collective enemy from the firmament. Titania's pen, described as an axe, wields a decree which will chop the constellation from the sphere. While this scene has been suggested to be unrelated to the rest of the play, by examining its place within Dekker's strategy of building dramatic tension through celestial expectation and release, it becomes apparent that the scene is not only a cohesive part of the drama, but it is also integral to the plot and the Fairie Queene's reestablishment of her full reign over Fairie Land.

Dekker's play explores the potential of constellations as surprising dramatic images of collapse and stimuli of dramatic action. By replacing the received notion of stellar equilibrium with motion, Dekker crosses established thought boundaries of starry stasis; and, by pulling the constellations down, the play features dramatic moments of surprise, as it counters traditional expectations of stability within the sphere of the fixed stars. In *2 If You Know Not Me*, Heywood unsettles constellations quite differently. Rather than pulling down the stars, Heywood refigures the constellation by inserting stars and creating a new pattern. Although the motion is additive rather than subtractive, it similarly transgresses the perception of the immutable fixed stars, defies expectations, and introduces an astronomical dramaturgical method into its experimental form.

Refiguring Constellations: Inserting Stars in *2 If You Know Not Me*

Often noted for its stage spectacle of the "blazing star," *2 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* helps to establish the understanding of the Red Bull as a playing space which regularly featured pyrotechnics. Early modern playgoers may have connected the outdoor playhouse with special effects from its inception, as this play could very well have been the

first on its boards.³⁰⁵ Lucy Munro identifies the particular category of dramaturgy often found at the Red Bull. She suggests that the elements of spectacle staged in the space demanded a particular set of interpretative methods from its audience. She notes: “Much Red Bull dramaturgy depends on an audience which is theatrically literate and able to ‘read’ spectacle correctly.”³⁰⁶ As an opening, or at least an early play, *2 If You Know Not Me* pioneered the tradition which would not only establish the Red Bull as a playhouse strongly associated with spectacle but also, as Munro suggests, identify it as a space in which the visual display produced symbolic elements available for interpretation by its audience.

An earlier chapter in this thesis explores the role that comets play within early modern drama as objects which create wonder on stage. The cometary spectacle from Heywood’s play is given more attention there, yet this chapter builds from that work and addresses what directly follows the immediate, wonder-inducing appearance, in that the “star” does not burst onto the scene and fade. It lingers and holds its position within the constellation of Cassiopeia, upending the established understanding of the way the sphere of the fixed stars worked in Renaissance cosmology and simultaneously altering the direction of the play. This section will argue that in a play often recognised for disruptions in plot and structure, Heywood uses the disturbance within the constellation as one of many devices to experiment with dramatic form. The presence of the astronomical phenomenon as a plot device of upheaval underscores Heywood’s experimental dramaturgy and establishes astronomical material as a useful tool to work against the status quo of theatrical genre and audience expectation.

³⁰⁵ While there is room for speculation, *2 If You Know Not Me* may have been the first play put on at the Red Bull. See Griffith, *A Jacobean Company and Its Playhouse*, 49, note 53.

³⁰⁶ Lucy Munro, “Governing the Pen to the Capacity of the Stage: Reading the Red Bull and Clerkenwell,” *Early Theatre* 9, no. 2 (2006): 102.

In his prologue to *The Royal King and the Loyal Subject*, Heywood recalls the visual delights produced within plays of his era. He celebrates what he calls the “dramatic plenitude of the time,” including astronomical features from particular plays in his commentary of dramatic events. By listing celestial elements appearing on stage as a testament to the variety and wealth of the output of the stage, the playwright demonstrates the theatrical significance associated with the celestial and the role those fantastical elements and effects played in the product of the theatre.³⁰⁷ Unlike his “Ages” plays, which are filled with astronomical allusions, allegory, and gods descending, in *2 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Heywood presents a playworld which is distinctly horizontal in its themes and plot. As such, most of the critical history surrounding the play focuses on economic, social, and political motifs. However, Heywood includes one scene which momentarily shifts the perspective of the play away from its everyday workaday world. It is a strange moment which appears out of nowhere, as a new star appears and positions itself within a constellation. This section will explore the place of the starry scene, considering Heywood’s experimentation with genre, the episodic structure, and the borrowing from historical materials, all of which chart new dramatic territory and defy dramatic expectations.

Like Dekker’s play, Heywood’s “city comedy,” or perhaps more precisely “chronicle comedy,” presents a distinct challenge to the modern scholar. The play’s critical tradition labels the play a conglomeration of disparate pieces, “a ragbag of different plots and styles,” full of “structural incoherence,” which fails “to conform to a structural logic of character, motive and action.”³⁰⁸ Allan H. Gilbert, in his study of the influence of classical sources on Heywood, also suggests that Heywood’s borrowing from these sources “had little effect on his ideas of dramatic structure,” specifically stating that *2 If You Know Not Me* was a play

³⁰⁷ A. M. Clark, *Thomas Heywood: Playwright and Miscellanist* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1931), 209.

³⁰⁸ McLuskie, *Dekker and Heywood*, 66.

full of “rambling.”³⁰⁹ The play’s exclusion from modern repertoire perpetuates the difficulties of understanding how the play functions in performance. Richard Rowland observes that: “The difficulty of establishing the relationship between text and performance is perhaps more acute with Heywood than it is with any of his contemporaries.” One reason he gives is that there is “virtually no modern performance tradition from which to learn about the mechanics of realizing on stage the texts Heywood left to us.”³¹⁰ One of the hurdles to modern performance is the play’s difficult structure which continues this cycle of confusion and avoidance among producers and critics alike.

Heywood’s chosen structure makes assigning a generic category to the play difficult. As Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein note in their introduction to *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, *2 If You Know Not Me* differs from the “canonical” city comedies of Jonson, Marston, and Middleton. They label Heywood’s play as “a genre apart.”³¹¹ Most critics seem to agree that the play is part of a distinct subgenre of “city comedy.” In this generic position, the play has been viewed more positively as a segue into a new type of theatre. Simon Morgan-Russell considers *2 If You Know Not Me* to be one of the “dramatic texts that occupy the temporal and thematic transition between the chronicle history play and the city comedy.”³¹² And it is the unorthodox structure of the play, unlike the broader genre, which allows for what Jean Howard labels “bold generic experimentation,” in which Heywood “finds a dramatic form in which to express and manage

³⁰⁹ Allan H. Gilbert, “Thomas Heywood's Debt to Plautus,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 12, no. 4 (1 October 1913): 608.

³¹⁰ Richard Rowland, *Thomas Heywood's Theatre, 1599-1639: Locations, Translations, and Conflict* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 3.

³¹¹ Angela Stock and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, ““Our scene is London...” in *Plotting Early Modern London: New Essays on Jacobean City Comedy*, ed. Dieter Mehl, Angela Stock, and Anne-Julia Zwierlein, *Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 3.

³¹² Simon Morgan-Russell, “How Far Is It, My Lord, to Berkeley Now?: English Chronicle History and the Rise of London City Comedy,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2001), 248.

the consequences of change.”³¹³ The unpredictability of Heywood’s structure, in itself a highly altering form, works to underscore a type of narrative expression that is concentrated on alteration. By constructing the drama in this way, Heywood builds an underlying pattern of change into the play’s structure.

As Anita Gilman Sherman suggests of this play: “[Its] comedy arises from a desire to rattle assumptions and other entrenched systems of expectation. This play generates laughter by setting systems of expectation concerning the proper distribution of money on a collision course.”³¹⁴ Sherman is discussing expectations about money, but the sense that Heywood produces a dramatic effect by colliding “systems of expectations” is an important one to this argument. However, the pattern of Heywood colliding an expectation with an outcome is not limited to comedic effect. The appearance of the blazing star and its stasis in the constellation is an example this section will explore at length. Another meteorological event, the storm scene, provides a case study for establishing how Heywood uses episodic structure as a structural device to prompt dramatic action.

Doctor Nowell, the Dean of St Paul’s, is working as an intermediary to reconcile Master Thomas Gresham and Sir Thomas Ramsey. Even after an extended legal battle, the two have failed to come to terms over the property rights on the land which will become the site for the Exchange. In order to end the longstanding conflict, Nowell proposes a solution which proves acceptable to both parties. However, the moment of peace is short lived. Directly following the men shaking hands and solidifying the agreement, Heywood quickly disturbs the placidity of the restoration scene with a bit of bad weather and inserts the stage direction, “*A storme*” (I.iii.541). The storm not only prompts the immediate search for cover,

³¹³ Jean Howard, “Competing Ideologies of Commerce in Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody Part II*,” in *The Culture of Capital: Property, Cities, and Knowledge in Early Modern England*, ed. Henry S. Turner (New York: Routledge, 2002), 167.

³¹⁴ Anita Gilman Sherman, “The Status of Charity in Thomas Heywood’s *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody II*,” in *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 12 (1999): 99.

but it also increases Gresham's determination to construct the Exchange as a public place for protection from the elements.

The storm scene forms one of the set symbolic scenes, which Michelle M. Dowd labels as "episodic."³¹⁵ McLuskie includes the storm scene as a clue to the dramatic structure of the play, as she identifies two scenes in which Heywood "reduc[es] the narrative to set symbolic scenes" which "limits the scope of its dramatic action."³¹⁶ While the storm is limiting in the sense that it appears unconnected to the events of the rest of the play, Heywood constructs the scene as an impetus to develop the primary element in the play—the building of the Exchange. As Richard Rowland has noted, "Heywood was well versed in the theories, ancient and modern, underpinning tragicomedy, and he was both willing and able to extend the generic boundaries those theories propounded with subtlety and skill."³¹⁷ Comparing Rowland's assessment of Heywood's dramaturgical technique and the structure of these distinct moments clarifies Heywood's decision to create dramatic action using this episodic method.

Later in the play, Gresham recalls the storm and its effects, saying: "I did not forget/ The troublesome storme" (I.viii.1245-6). Rain continues to be an impetus for the building, as Gresham remarks: "when Heauen giues comfortable rain vnto the earth,/ For that I will haue couered" (I.viii.1216-7). While the storm scene does provide a simple method of producing the action, it is not an entirely isolated episodic event, as Gresham picks up on it as a point of reiterating and reinforcing his choice. Even in the repetition the storm possesses a tendency to be forgotten, and Gresham has to say aloud that he has not forgotten the event. Just as Heywood moves the plot from peaceful agreement to disturbance with the episodic storm, he

³¹⁵ Michelle M. Dowd, "A Gentleman May Wander: Inheritance, Travel, and the Prodigal Son on the Jacobean Stage," *Renaissance Drama* 42, no. 1 (Spring 2014), 131.

³¹⁶ McLuskie, *Dekker and Heywood*, 64-5.

³¹⁷ Rowland, *Thomas Heywood's Theatre, 1599-1639*, 6.

uses the same method to shift from everyday events and propel the play into a level of deeper significance. One episodic event transitions into another, and directly following Gresham's remembrance of the storm, the comet appears. The abruptness is striking, as the blazing star appears without any preparation, and those viewing the phenomenon quickly seek to uncover its significance. They ask Nowell, who has already proved adept at solving problems, to "judge of these things" and work out the meaning of the sign:

D. NOW.

Art may discourse of these things none can iudge
 Directly of the will of heauen in this,
 And by discourse thus far I hold of it.
 That this strange starre appearing in the North,
 And in the constellation of *Cassiopey*,
 VVhich with three fixed starres commixt to it,
 Doth make a Figure Geometrycall,
Lozengewise cal'd of the learned *Rombus*,
 Conducted with the houely Moone of heauen,
 And neuer altred from the fixed sphere,
 Fore-tels such alteration that my friends,
 Heauen grant with this first sight our sorrow ends.
 (I.viii.1267-1278)³¹⁸

Like the storm, the symbolic scene of the new star prompts action in those who view and respond to the phenomenon. Unlike Dekker in *The Whore of Babylon*, Heywood is not developing an ongoing conceit of starry and astronomical imagery, where the collection of stars naturally forms into or emerges out of the environment of the play. The appearance of the starry section in *2 If You Know Not Me* is almost as perplexing as the appearance of the comet is to the characters. The description is out of place in a play which is so horizontal in its perspective, focusing on the affairs of trade, construction, and interpersonal dealings of finance.

³¹⁸ Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody Part II*, ed. Madeleine Doran, The Malone Society Reprints (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934 [1935]).

The presence of the phenomenon of the “strange starre” reroutes the trajectory of the play. The new star defies expectations, as it disrupts the perception of constellations as stable heavenly objects. This time, the destabilisation is not achieved by pulling down stars as in Dekker, but rather by the addition and insertion of a new star into an old constellation. Its trespass into the constellation disrupts the plot and slows the dramatic action. Due to its position, it now forms what could be thought of as a new asterism, whose shape is given particular emphasis as a “Figure Geometrycall” forming a “*Lozengewise...Rombus*.” The appearance of the new celestial body disrupted the stability of the mythological image of Cassiopeia and created new geometric patterns. For the characters the stellar positioning demands an interpretation of the emerging star formation. Though Nowell inserts the caveat that “art may discourse of these things none can iudge/ Directly of the will of heauen in this.” The newly formed unity of the new star and the emerging constellation figure presages that something is going to change. It is the stability and the lack of motion, the fact that the star “neuer altred from the fixed sphere,” which engenders confidence in the alteration of the anticipated circumstances of the drama. By including the star’s stationary characteristic, Heywood captures the importance of the lack of motion in establishing a star as a true body in the sphere of the fixed stars. As such, the new star breaks a barrier, as it transgresses ancient boundaries and established natural philosophical and cosmological theory.

The disturbance in the sky of the play corresponds to an equally disturbing historical event, as Heywood’s play brings a recorded phenomenon to the stage. When the real, new star that Heywood references appeared in 1572, it similarly broke convention. In Hood’s 1590 *The Vse of the Celestial Globe in Plano*, he argues, using pre-Copernican terminology, that the star strangely maintained the “selfe same situation”:

The chieftest Astronomers alwayes noted this starre to haue one and the same situation with the rest of the starres next adioyning vnto it, without any diuersitie either in time, or place. The best Astronomers therefore concluded thus, that that new starre, whatsoeuer it was, had his place in the firmament, being thereto induced by this

argument: because none of them could observe in it any other motion then that, which usually they observe in all the fixed stars. For it kept a most certain and constant motion and the selfe same situation, and distance from other fixed stars.³¹⁹

As Francis Johnson observes: “The appearance of the supernova in Cassiopeia in 1572 provided the occasion for Dee to publish his method...for finding the parallax of circumpolar objects.” However, this would prove not to be the opportune moment, as “observations conducted throughout the months during which this star shone in the sky failed to reveal a perceptible parallax.”³²⁰ The new star provided potential for measurable and identifiable stellar relationships in registering movement of the phenomena in spatial distances or parallax. Thomas Digges provides a snapshot into what natural philosophers were hoping to glean from the phenomenon:

By this method it would be not at all difficult, if this remarkable Phenomenon should persist for a long time, to discern by exact judgment...whether that huge mass of moving and fixed Orbs rotates in a circle by a most rapid course in the space of 24 hours, or rather that the immense sphere of fixed stars remains truly fixed and that apparent motion occurs only from the circular rotation of the Earth with reference to the celestial Poles themselves.³²¹

After the period Digges assigned to the task of observing and measuring, the star was found to be without any perceptible motion. Johnson notes that: “Although astronomers had the opportunity of observing it for over a year and a half, they were unable to detect any annual parallax.”³²² Without parallax the star seemed to be firmly ensconced within the sphere of the fixed stars, which was a violation of the constellation in its locked area of the sky.

The historical significance of the star is evidenced by Camden’s remarks in 1630, as he suggests commentary on the event might be unnecessary as: “I know not whether it bee

³¹⁹ Thomas Hood, *The Vse of the Celestial Globe in Plano, Set Foorth in Two Hemispheres* (London, 1590), F1v-F2v.

³²⁰ Francis R. Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England: A Study of the English Scientific Writings from 1500 to 1645* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1937), 154.

³²¹ Thomas Digges, *Alae seu Scalae Mathematicae*, quoted in Johnson, *Astronomical Thought*, 159.

³²² Johnson, *Astronomical Thought*, 174.

worth the labour to mention that which all Historiographers of our time haue recorded.”³²³

Indeed, as Johnson notes, this was “one of the most important events in the history of astronomy.”³²⁴ The hotly discussed “new star” challenged natural philosophical expectations of celestial regions, evidenced through the cluster of publications by prominent English and Continental astronomers on the occurrence and how the star could be motionless. Within the same year of 1573 came Dee’s *Paralliticae Commentationis Praxeosque Nucleus quidam*, Thomas Digges’ *Alae seu Scalae Mathematicae*, and Kepler’s *De nova stella*, with each natural philosopher attempting to make sense of the phenomenon which challenged the fixed sphere. Yet the observation of the stability of the “new star” in its positioning within the constellation was not limited to those with professional interest or sophisticated instruments, but was such that “even the casual observer...could see that its position remained unaltered with respect to the other fixed stars.”³²⁵

With the appearance of the blazing star, the character’s gaze turns momentarily upward and away from the affairs of the Exchange and the trade. Although the “construction of the Exchange is the dramatic centerpiece,” Sherman suggests that: “the play, however, distances itself from Gresham’s status-conscious celebration,” and “[it] remains uneasy about Gresham’s wealth.”³²⁶ The uneasiness within the play about Gresham’s wealth and his preoccupation with commercial space is vividly captured in the star’s structural role in redirecting attention. Disturbances of other kinds were a regular feature of the market space, and the star echoes the disruption of the Exchange. Jean Howard notes that: “The Exchange was...connected with forms of disorder.”³²⁷ Social structures were in perpetual states of

³²³ William Camden, *The Historie of the Most Renowned and Victorious Princesse Elizabeth....* trans. Robert Norton (London, 1630), Book 2, 53. Early English Books Online. Accessed 28 November 2015, http://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2175/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:7561:106.

³²⁴ Johnson, *Astronomical Thought*, 154.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Sherman, “The Status of Charity,” 105.

³²⁷ Jean Howard, *Theater of a City: The Places of London Comedy, 1598-1642* (Philadelphia:

morass, and chaos seemed normal for the space. Though Howard particularly references types of social disorder, including prostitution and thievery, the presence of astronomical phenomena and the alteration of the sky coincides with the upheaval of the marketplace, figuring the socio-political unrest into celestial markers.

The structural position and placement of the unexpected scene in relationship to its context, including the dialogue before the phenomenal event and its subsequent commentary, makes the breakdown of the expectation of the starry event strategically positioned to fulfil its dramatic role of moving the attention away from the buildings and affairs of the marketplace and placing the focus on war elsewhere. In both the storm scene and Nowell's description of the star and its significance, Heywood employs serial bursts of activity as a formulaic plot device in part of his measured scheme of disturbance and quick alterations. The storm scene prompts Gresham to construct the building, and the star's appearance and placement in the constellation initiates the plot's change in positioning which directs the gaze away from the urban marketplace of London to the international marketplace and the ensuing battle. The structural episodes shift the perspective focus in the play from a horizontal sense of local space to an expansive, vertical one. After Nowell's description and interpretation of the star's positioning, the perspective quickly shifts back to the horizontal but with an expanded sense of global positioning and place.

In keeping with the changeability of the play's structure and subject, Heywood redrafts historical content using an equally altering method by adjusting timelines, events, and details to produce the plot. *2 If You Know Not Me* presents, as Sherman notes, "scenes in which Heywood stages impossible fantasies that conspicuously contradict the historical record."³²⁸ The degree to which Heywood manipulates his sources is indicative of the type of

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 37.

³²⁸ Sherman, "The Status of Charity," 99.

drama he attempts to produce. Howard suggests that the historical contradictions are part of a particular form of generic experimentation. She proposes that “Heywood falsifies the historical record,” but in so doing he “helps to create another new kind of London play.”³²⁹ Heywood deviates from the chronicle record in his treatment of historical material while borrowing from its storehouse of historical information and creating a different category of drama. One such example is the knighting of Gresham, an honour that was bestowed, according to the historical record, not for the construction of the city edifice but for watching over the finances of the crown.

Where Heywood does follow his historical source, he inserts the material with little deviation. It does not seem that the connection has been made before, but Heywood’s dramatic passage possesses striking similarity to the record of the 1572 appearance of a new star found in Holinshed’s Third Volume of his *Chronicles* of 1586. Below is a comparison of the two texts. The black words denote the exact word relationships between the two documents, and the bold gray captures words with closely related meanings.

³²⁹ Howard, *Theater of a City*, 54.

Doctor Nowell

That this **strange**
starre appearing in
 the **North**,
 And in the
constellation of
Cassiopey, VVhich
with three fixed
starres commixt to it,
 Doth make a **Figure**
Geometrycall,
Lozengewise cal'd of
 the learned **Rombus**,
 Conducted with the
 hourelly **Moone** of
heauen, And **neuer**
 altred from the **fixed**
sphere, Fore-tels such
 alteration that my
 friends, Heauen grant
 with this first sight our
 sorrow ends.

Holinshed's Chronicle

The eighteenth of Nouember in the morning was
 seene a **star** northward verie bright and cléere, **in**
the constellation of Cassiopeia, at the backe of hir
 chaire, **which with three cheefe fixed stars** of the
 said constellation made a **geometricall figure**
losengwise, of the learned men called
Rhombus...Also the said starre **neuer** changing his
 place, was caried about with the dailie motion of
heauen, as all **fixed starres** commonlie are, and so
 continued (by little and little to the eie appearing
 lesse) for the space of almost sixteene moneths...And
 one thing is herein cheefelie to be noted, that (by the
 skill and con|sent of the best and most expert
 mathematicians, which obserued the state, propertie,
 and other circum|stances belonging to the same
 starre) it was found to haue beene in place celestiall
 far aboue the **moone**...Therefore it is supposed that
 the signification therof is directed purposelie and
 speciallie to some matter, not naturall, but celestiall,
 or rather supercelestiall, so **strange**, as from the
 beginning of the world neuer was the like.

The similarity between the documents strongly suggests Holinshed as the source for Heywood's description of the new star. The precision and elevated level of astronomical detail with which Heywood works through this appearance highlights his debt to a historical source. In referencing the new star in the constellation, Heywood introduces an event which "fore-tels such alteration."

The historical appearance produced surprise and a sense of strangeness, because it violated the expectation of a stable sphere of the fixed stars. From the context of Holinshed's record, the strangeness stems not only from the star's sudden appearance, but also its absorption into the place of fixedness within the constellation and its sphere. As the star stabilises and continues, it appears to be fixed in the circumpolar constellation of Cassiopeia. It is clear that Holinshed records the event in terms of a pre-Copernican model, so there is some minimal level of rotational motion. However, in the Holinshed and in Heywood's appropriation of the record, the supernova becomes attached, somehow embedded into the sphere of the fixed stars and in constant equidistance to other stars within the constellation.

This is unexpected within the historical chronicle and equally so within the drama. Heywood borrows the material from Holinshed to create his second episode, disrupt and reorient the plot, and manipulate the play's narrative time.

As Doctor Nowell is charged to interpret the significance of the event, he launches into a highly technical observation. By "cutting and pasting" this historical monologue from the chronicle history, Heywood elongates the narrative time by transferring the chronicle's perspective of the phenomenon's duration to the play. As Nowell deciphers the "new star" using Holinshed's record as his script, he distils months of observation into a moment. Knowing that a star is in the fixed sphere and does not move would take months to determine, but he does so within seconds of the appearance of the celestial anomaly. The extended timeframe is an impossible one in the context of the play, whereas Holinshed possessed the luxury of time between the event and the publishing of his documentary volume, allowing him the interval necessary to receive results of the phenomenon gathered through reports from the natural philosophical data. Heywood's use of the Holinshed details, which immediately follows the spectacle on stage, compresses the time necessary to make such observations and measurements about the motion of the heavenly body.

Heywood altered narrative time in other plays. In *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, he initiates a stretching of time in what Martin Wiggins identifies as a "structural device" that is used by Heywood to layer the isolation of the rural community, distinguishing the sub-plot from the main plot. Wiggins suggests that: "The sub-plot of Mountford and Acton seems to develop faster than the Frankford story." He notes that Heywood constructs the structural time warp "to create a sense of sleepiness, the slow pace of life in Frankford's household compared with the outside world."³³⁰ Wiggins identifies the device in *A Woman Killed*

³³⁰ Martin Wiggins, "Introduction," in *"A Woman Killed with Kindness" and Other Domestic Plays*, ed. Martin Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xiv.

(1603) and *The English Traveller* (c. 1625), and from the use of similar tactics in *2 If You Know Not Me* it appears to be a career-long technique. While, initially, the choice seems strange, Heywood uses the Holinshed details to establish the verisimilitude of the new star in the constellation, adjust the passing of narrative time, and provide an impetus for plot redirection.

Dekker and Heywood, composing two unorthodox, experimental plays at the Fortune and The Bull, construct plays which feature constellations in flux, including asterisms which collapse and those which receive new stars. Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* presents an allegorical structure with apocalyptical verbal images. The Empress rhetorically charts her expansiveness using imperial symbols of globes and installs herself within a stellar throne as a counterfeit sovereign. The play features constellations and starry heights, which all hang in precarious positions of potential collapse throughout the play. The figures anticipate the constellation of opposing forces falling in swift judgment, initiating a key motion in defeating the antagonist. In Heywood's play, *2 If You Know Not Me*, the presence of the constellation is a compact, isolated episode, which Heywood copies nearly word for word from Holinshed. The addition of the historical immovable star into the constellation creates a new pattern, disturbs the figure, and compresses the narrative time. The appearance of the new star and its positioning within the constellation work against established cosmological expectation and develop dramatic conflict within the episodic chronicle.

As evidenced in natural philosophical texts and astronomical instruments, the early modern expectation for stars and their collective constellation figures was one of pronounced stability and stasis. Copernican theories received increasing acceptance among late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century mathematicians and natural philosophers, making the assumption for the lack of motion in the sphere of the fixed stars absolute. Models of the universe, such as the armillary sphere, feature stars unanimated within their potentially

moveable structures, representing in miniature the immobility of the firmament. While stasis is the period's expectation, Heywood and Dekker, in their experimental plays of *The Whore of Babylon* and *2 If You Know Not Me*, explore the dramatic potential of altering constellations and unsettling the anticipated role of the fixed sphere. By pulling stars down from constellations or inserting them into the figures, both dramatists violate the expectation of stasis established through early modern natural philosophy and its demonstrational models. Doing so alters the trajectory of their plays through innovative and unexpected means.

Chapter 5

“Do ye not hear?” The Music of the Spheres as Sound or as Silence

“For it is not only in sounds and in human melody that they yield their charm, but also in
things which are soundless.”
Johannes Kepler

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ Are sweeter.”
Keats

Adrian Noble’s 2002 RSC production of *Pericles* rang with the sound of the spheres. The play’s celestial music provides the climax of the recognition scene. Pericles slowly identifies his daughter, Marina, as she sings and retells the events of her survival. Once Pericles understands who she is, the moment is marked by his hearing the music of the spheres. With the production’s innovative use of handbells to intone the sounds of celestial motion, Noble surrounded the audience with an aural realisation of Pericles’ internal experience in hearing the workings of the heavens. The atmospheric “surround sound” of the bells provided an aural pathway into the phenomenon, enabling the audience to hear along with Pericles. The theatre’s soundtrack combined with other elements produced an “affecting reunion scene, movingly accompanied by the clear tone.”³³¹ The music sets the mood. Performances such as Noble’s parallel the critical tradition of providing an aurally available musical soundscape to grant the audience sensory and emotional access to what Pericles is experiencing. In an age when the music of the spheres is a strange and distant idea, theatrical choices like Noble’s provide a solid bass on which to build the emotional chord of the scene.

While the RSC’s stage music created a score that became an acoustic index for an

³³¹ Emma Smith, *The Cambridge Shakespeare Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 145.

emotional response to Pericles' experience on a twenty-first century stage, the play's first published text in 1609 gives no indication that any perceivable music is available to the audience or the characters, apart from Pericles. In fact, there is no early modern stage direction for an audible sound effect in any early modern text of the play. Neither Q1, its many subsequent quarto reprints, nor the Third or Fourth Folio supply any instruction for heard music to represent the celestial sound. While the text remains silent, editors have long supplied what is thought to be missing by inserting stage directions that call on music to be played. Theatre directors regularly stipulate an aurally rich piece of sound design that the sounding of the spheres provides. However, this chapter will argue that the decision to emend the text is misplaced, and the absence of stage music within *Pericles*'s celestial music scene would have created an affecting silence on the early modern stage. Overlaying sound onto the musically silent moment overloads the scene with spatial and material significance that the text does not provide and dissipates the singularity of focus from Pericles' individual emotional experience.

Pericles is one of at least four professional plays from 1609-1623 that seem to stage the music of the spheres. Chapman's *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron* (Children of the Queen's Revels at the Blackfriars, 1607-8) contains music that tricks characters into thinking they hear the music of the spheres or prompts them to discuss the phenomenon. Fletcher and Massinger's *The Prophetess* (The King's Men at the Globe and/or Blackfriars, 1622) provides explicit stage directions that specify heard music to represent the celestial sound. *The Double Marriage* (The King's Men at the Blackfriars and perhaps at the Globe, 1620-3), by Fletcher and Massinger, while previously used as an example for the conventional use of *musica mundana* on stage, does not stage the phenomenon. Shakespeare and George Wilkins' *Pericles* (King's Men at the Globe, 1606-8) describes the phenomenon being experienced but does not give direct evidence for it being represented by staged music.

This chapter compares these plays as case studies in order to reconstruct the ways in which early modern dramatists used the phenomenon, to question whether or not sound was always available to the audience, and to suggest how receiving or being denied access to the sound altered the effect of the phenomenon in the theatre. Unlike the celestial phenomena elsewhere in the thesis, this chapter considers a phenomenon that, although discussed at length and used within plays as metaphor and as dramatic event, the audience had never experienced directly through the senses. The supposed sound resounding from the spheres was never heard. The chapter asks what Pericles asks when no one else on stage experiences the music of the spheres: “Do ye not hear?”

Celestial harmony’s relationship to sound in the early modern period is complex and multi-faceted and operates within a broader understanding of universal harmony. Natural philosophers from the early modern period received the theory of the music of the spheres from a range of classical and medieval sources.³³² These inherited cosmologies were “embedded within a supernature, an enchanted cosmos of divine, immutable essences.”³³³ The origin of universal harmony was often credited to Pythagoras’ “discovery” of intervallic relationships that was made when he heard the strike of a blacksmith’s hammer. After determining that the sound and pitch depended on the ratios of the materials he observed being struck, Pythagoras suggested that all elements in the universe corresponded to all other material through numerical and tonal relationships. Natural philosophers within the Ptolemaic tradition applied this theory of consonance to the celestial spheres.

Montaigne describes the sound production of the celestial music as “the bodies of its circles, being solid smooth, and in their rowling motion, touching and rubbing one against

³³² John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 20-43.

³³³ Daniel K. L. Chua, “Vincenzo Galilei, Modernity and the Division of Nature,” in *Music Theory and Natural Order: From the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 18.

another,” and states that the workings of the spheres “must of necessity produce a wonderfull harmonie.”³³⁴ For him the friction produced by the motion of the celestial spheres generated the harmony. While neo-Platonic natural philosophers assumed the presence of celestial harmony, it was often presented as an “ideal, unheard order,” and the musical sound produced was considered barred from human senses.³³⁵ Explanations for the blockage ranged from the physiological categories of distance and familiarity to the theological or mystical in the inadequacy of human flesh in its unglorified state and its separation from the divine to successfully receive the sound emanating from the heavens.

Robert Anton proposed a simple solution of volume. He suggested that the problem of hearing celestial music rested in the vast distance between the spheres and human ears in that they were too far apart from one another:

To moue those *orbes* aboue as some propound
With *rauishing musicke*, or such *heauenly sound*,
As that great *distance* of those *rowling spheares*,
Barres from the *organs* of all *humane eares*.³³⁶

Others proposed that the familiarity of hearing the planetary music thrumming since birth conditioned the hearing mechanism to ignore or consider as silent the constant ringing. Ongoing exposure to a kind of celestial tinnitus desensitised the ear to registering the sound. The idea echoed from Cicero’s explanation, found in his *Somnium Scipionis* (better known in English as *The Dream of Scipio*), and is one that resonated and found reception in the early modern period.³³⁷ He compares the lack of sensory awareness to the condition of those born in Egypt who grew up hearing the river Nile, whose ears have grown accustomed to the sound, and who no longer sense its rushing.

³³⁴ Michel de Montaigne, *Essayes Written in French by Michael, Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (London, 1613), 106.

³³⁵ Karina Williamson, “From Heavenly Harmony to Eloquent Silence: Representations of World Order from Dryden to Shelley,” *Review of English Studies* 55, no. 221 (2004): 527-544.

³³⁶ Robert Anton, *The Philosophers Satyrs* (London, 1616), B3r.

³³⁷ This is described as a “well-known passage” in Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, 3.

This type of sensory stalwart features in the academic drama, *Lingua*, a popular play performed at Cambridge and published in English in 1607, two years before *Pericles*, but performed at the same time (1602-7). In this play, the abstracted sensory character Auditus revels in his hearing of the music of the spheres. The characters debate over Auditus' claims. As Erin Minear notes: "Only Phantastes, his overactive imagination inspired by Auditus's rapturous account of this inaudible sound, fantasizes that he can hear it."³³⁸ Communis Sensus, who is frustrated throughout by not being able to hear the celestial music while non-human characters are enjoying the sound, asks Memory, "How comes it we cannot hear it now[?]" Memory replies, "Our eares are so well acquainted with the sounde, that we never marke it. As I remember the Egiptian Catadupes neuer heard the roringe of the fall of Nilus, because the noise is so familiar vnto them."³³⁹ Montaigne articulated this theory by stating that: "The hearing senses of these low worlds creatures, dizzied and lulled asleepe...by the continuation of that sound, how loud and how great soever it be, cannot sensibly perceive or distinguish the same."³⁴⁰ Cicero's concept of deafening through overexposure also rings clearly in Philip Sidney's analogy, which positioned the unsympathetic ear and "earth-creeping" mind of those that cannot hear the sound of planetary music beside those that remained oblivious to poetic power and delight.³⁴¹ For Cicero, Montaigne, Sidney, and the character Auditus, the sound emanating from the spheres was too constant and its tone too persistent, so that it dulled the senses, making humans incapable of hearing the music around them.

Overexposure and distance provided physiological explanations for why humans do not generally hear the sound produced by the spheres. However, some early modern

³³⁸ Erin Minear, *Reverberating Song in Shakespeare and Milton: Language, Memory, and Musical Representation* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 54.

³³⁹ T. Tomkis, *Lingua*, Old English Drama Students' Facsimile Edition (London, 1607) Reproduced 1913. G3v-G4r.

³⁴⁰ Montaigne, *Essayes*, trans. Florio, 106.

³⁴¹ Sidney, *Miscellaneous Prose*, 121.

examples provide a more mystical reason for a lack of hearing. Lorenzo's speech from *The Merchant of Venice* remains the *locus classicus* for metaphorical literary use of *musica mundana* of the period. The play assumes the sound of the spheres within its fictional universe but works to explain why it is not heard. In 5.1, the final scene of an unsettling and cacophonous play, Shakespeare invests the drama and its theatrical space with theoretical and experiential auralities. However, Kristin Rygg identifies the scene as a combination of "the harmony of the spheres lingering in our silence, and the harmony which we can no longer hear."³⁴² The phenomenon is materially present as it "creeps along the banks" but cannot be aurally perceived. Lorenzo envisions it moving in the space and surrounding the characters, but it cannot be heard. While to the ear the sound remains inaccessible, an underlying "lingering" soundscape pervades the scene. Lorenzo does not identify the reason for not hearing with either distance or the incessant aural presence, but with the human inability to access the sound, due to fallen nature or the boundaries of the flesh. Lorenzo finds the harmony of the soul trapped within "muddy vestures of clay," and the internal *spiritus* of the soul is unable to interact with the transmitted sound outside of the body. He locates the breakdown of aural sensation within the material composition of the human.

In the quarto text of *Pericles*, the protagonist is granted access beyond these blockades into an aural experience of celestial sound. Pericles' sensory perception of *musica mundana* is only described within the dialogue. While the quarto leaves the moment without a stage direction, editorial practice follows a longstanding tradition beginning with Dyce to insert a stage direction calling for music to be sounded on stage. Critics of the play follow suit. J. P. Brockbank suggests in a critical aside that the music of the spheres is a stage effect "that Pericles (and the theatre audience) alone can hear."³⁴³ Tiffany Stern posits that

³⁴² Kristin Rygg, *Masqued Mysteries Unmasked: Early Modern Music Theater and Its Pythagorean Subtext* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2000), 82.

³⁴³ J. P. Brockbank, "Pericles and the Dream of Immortality," *Shakespeare Survey* 24 (1971):

instrumental music was “used to enhance” and “bring about” celestial music in *Pericles*,³⁴⁴ while Gary Taylor confidently states that in the play “the ‘music of the spheres’ heard...would have been polyphonic vocal music, like a Catholic choir.”³⁴⁵ This chapter follows Alan C. Dessen’s approach to reconstructing early modern staging practice. He argues that “any attempt to deal with the original staging or stage conventions must...build almost exclusively upon the evidence within the plays themselves,” and cautions that inferences drawn “from dialogue and from the apparent requirements of a given scene...can easily be conditioned by the assumptions and expectations of the investigator.”³⁴⁶ Conclusions based on these kinds of assumptions, which result in implied stage directions rather than explicit stage directions, are central to the editorial history of heard music as the means of representing the music of the spheres in *Pericles*.

Recent editions, such as the 2004 Arden 3, prove more cautious and provide appropriate caveats.³⁴⁷ The editor, Suzanne Gossett, initially leaves the staging ambiguous. She notes: “Whether the ‘music of the spheres’ that Pericles hears should be played on stage is uncertain.”³⁴⁸ Although Gossett takes care to point out the open nature of the feature and maintains a sceptical stance toward the effect, the emendation of a stage direction is still made within the edition. The stage direction “[Music]” is inserted, calling for stage music to represent the music of the spheres. A longer note in the appendix provides the reason behind

115-116.

³⁴⁴ Stern, “The Second Blackfriars Playhouse As a Place of Nostalgia,” 107.

³⁴⁵ Gary Taylor, “Divine []sences,” *Shakespeare Survey* 54 (2001): 25.

³⁴⁶ Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 19-20.

³⁴⁷ Roger Warren’s Oxford edition is one exception: William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, *A Reconstructed Text of “Pericles, Prince of Tyre”*, ed. Roger Warren (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). The *New Oxford Shakespeare*, while not inserting a stage direction, provides a long detail of crescendoed sound: William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2718 (note on xxv.219).

³⁴⁸ William Shakespeare and George Wilkins, *Pericles*, ed. Suzanne Gossett, Arden Third Series (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004), note on V.i.212.

the editorial decision for inserting the sound marker. In the appendix, Gossett shifts from a historical and bibliographic footing to a performative one. She suggests that the final decision toward hearing or not hearing the music is to be made on the modern stage: “Whether the ‘music of the spheres’ that Pericles hears should be played on stage is ultimately up to a director.”³⁴⁹ For Gossett the effect then becomes a present performance concern and one to be best handled by current theatre makers. While directors rightly celebrate the elasticity of theatrical texts for continued performance, the originally silent effect offered a unique set of meanings for the audience as presented in the quarto and subsequent editions.

The Arden series is one example, but other modern editions provide similar sound suggestions that recommend music on a varying scale. For instance, the 2016 *New Oxford Shakespeare* takes care to equally present the performance options of hearing and not hearing as possible choices.³⁵⁰ While terms remain ambiguous throughout, the edition produces a detailed elaboration on the volume levels and provides an almost score-like notation of crescendo: “It is easier to assume that music begins playing very softly...[and] it increases in volume.”³⁵¹ Although not all editions embrace the need to represent the music of the spheres with heard music, the performance potential for doing so remains viable as a historically informed choice. The reasoning provided in critical editions and other materials on the topic can be distilled into three categories: stage convention, character verisimilitude, and theatrical opportunity. This chapter will address each of these reasons by challenging what constitutes the “stage convention,” contrasting a potentially deluded Pericles with another character created within a year of *Pericles*, and examining the ways in which inserting or excluding sound emotionally, materially, and spatially affects the plays.

The examples used to suggest a convention and, therefore, to justify the insertion of

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 411.

³⁵⁰ Taylor et al., eds, *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, 2717 (note on xxv.211).

³⁵¹ Ibid., 2718 (note on xxv.219).

the heard music into *Pericles* comes from two plays: *The Double Marriage* (1620-1) and *The Prophetess* (1622), both of which, though included in the Beaumont and Fletcher first folio of 1647, are now widely considered to be Fletcher and Massinger collaborations.³⁵² Critics have appropriated the stage directions from these post-1620 plays to form a universal template for the presence of *musica universalis* within the early modern period.³⁵³ While stage directions for celestial music in these later plays have been used as the touchstone for an early modern convention of staging the music of the spheres, a distinction should be made in chronology. Like *The Prophetess*, *The Double Marriage* operates under later theatrical strategies, but even more importantly it does not provide an authentic example of the phenomenon.

The assumption remains that *The Double Marriage* provides a convention-establishing example of the phenomenon being heard on the early modern stage. However, the play does not make any claim to be staging the music of the spheres. Considered in context, the verbal reference to celestial music functions as a means of exaggeration and flattery. Instead, heard music prompts dialogue about the music of the spheres, but it does not provide an example of the music of the spheres being staged. In 1.2, after the plot to overthrow the tyrant king has been established, Villio and Castruchio enter. Villio, the king's fool, finds Castruchio, labelled "A court Parasite" in the *Dramatis Personae*, in a state of rapture. Castruchio has been daydreaming about what it must be like to be the king. "O the King, the happy King!" (I.i.6). The fool unsuccessfully attempts to bring Castruchio out of the clouds and directs his attention to the burdens borne by the monarch. Castruchio scoffs at the mention of the weightiness of the crown and focuses on the adoration, the delicacies, and

³⁵² Dating and authorship of *The Double Marriage* discussed by Cyrus Hoy, "Introduction" to *The Double Marriage*, ed. Cyrus Hoy, in Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966-96), vol. 9 (1994), 97.

³⁵³ John P. Cutts, "Pericles' Most Heauenly Musicke," *Notes and Queries* n.s. 7, no. 5 (May 1960): 172. See also Gossett, ed., *Pericles* (2004), 412.

the power he thinks the king ought to enjoy. While the two are conversing, music starts playing.

It is instructive for the argument to see the rest of the scene in its entirety in order to understand how the stage music corresponds to the music of the spheres:

Still Musick [within].

CASTRUCHIO.

The Celestiall Musick,
Such as the motion of the eternall spheares
Yeelds Jove, when he drinks Nectar—

VILLIO [*aside*].

Here's a fine knave,
Yet hath too many fellowes.

CASTRUCHIO.

Then the beauties,

These [ladies] passe o're [the stage].

That with a variety of choyce embraces,
Renew his age.

VILLIO [*aside*].

Help him to crouch rather,
And the French Cringe, they are excellent Surgeons that way.

CASTRUCHIO.

O Majesty! Let others think of heaven,
While I contemplate thee.

VILLIO [*aside*].

This is not Atheisme,
But Court observance.

Flourish.

CASTRUCHIO.

Now the God appears,
Usher'd with earth-quakes.

VILLIO [*aside*].

Base Idolatry.

Enter Ferrand, Guard, Women, Servants.

FERRAND.

These meates are poisoned, hang the Cookes;
[*To the musicians within*] No note more, on forfeit of your fingers;
Doe you envy me a minutes slumber...

(I.ii. 21-34)

Throughout this scene, not only do Fletcher and Massinger contrast Castruchio, a fawning member of the court, with Villio, the king's wise fool, but the scene vividly separates the cosmic and divine ideal of monarchy that Castruchio envisions from the earthbound reality

portrayed by the tyrannical Ferrand. With every phrase of Castruchio's humorously elevated and exaggerated adulation, Villio's contrasting cynical asides bring the heightened perception into a satirical frame for the audience.

The overlap of speculative and practical music within the narrative is part of this ironic scene. Castruchio interacts with the regular court activities around him, and when he hears earthly music the sound prompts him to comment on the music of the spheres. The power to wield celestial sound, which Fletcher and Massinger later dramatise in *The Prophetess*, is missing in this scene and the mention could not be taken seriously. *The Double Marriage* presents an untrustworthy and laughable character and uses heard music as a mental trigger to prompt his analogy. The stage direction provides heard music near the mention of the music of the spheres, but unlike Delphia in *The Prophetess*, Castruchio has no control over the scene. As his name suggests, he is emasculated and powerless. The music at court stimulates Castruchio's commentary on the monarchy and celestial harmony. The play's fictional world has no room for a Castruchio that could control, conduct, or hear such otherworldly music. By suggesting that this is an early modern example of the music of the spheres onstage, critics convert the allusion to the music of the spheres into an illusion and in the process grant Castruchio far too much power. The court music then becomes more cosmologically significant within the fictional playworld than Castruchio's character will allow.

One of the arguments that has gained traction for audible music in scene 21 of *Pericles* posits that the trustworthiness and believability of the protagonist depends on the musical effect. F. D. Hoeniger articulates the idea in his Arden 2 edition by suggesting that staging the sound is essential for the audience, as hearing the music removes any "absurd impression of Pericles being deluded."³⁵⁴ The Arden 3 continues the tradition and contends

³⁵⁴ William Shakespeare, *Pericles*, ed. David F. Hoeniger, Arden Second Series (London:

that: “If no music is played, the audience may share the scepticism of Pericles’ companions about his claim.”³⁵⁵ The argument proves plausible enough on its own and combined with a perceived stage convention of later plays by Fletcher and Massinger offers a coherent and convincing paradigm. However, there is evidence from another play that has not been previously considered that unsettles this claim.

George Chapman’s *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron*, published in 1608 and within a year of *Pericles*, provides a more chronologically relevant text for understanding how the staging of music of the spheres worked on an earlier stage. *Byron* was performed by the Children of Blackfriars just before the King’s Men took over playing in the space. On its first quarto title page of 1609 and in subsequent printings, *Pericles* was advertised as a Globe play, but as Tiffany Stern has noted, the play was “written before the company acquired Blackfriars but at a time when they knew they would do so.”³⁵⁶ Such closeness in publication, the sharing of theatre space, and the similarity in subject advocates the usefulness and appropriateness of comparing the two plays. Examining *The Conspiracy* alongside *Pericles* suggests that an aural representation of the music of the spheres was not an essential sensory effect needed to prove a character to be sane. Rather, the only example of hearing the music of the spheres during this time in stage history was one in which the presence of sound provided a means of delusion.

In Chapman’s two-part play the tragic figure, Charles Duke of Byron, is a war hero who finds himself out of place in a time of peace. Removed from his proper sphere, the qualities that would recommend him in battle become blights in court. The action of the plot of the *Conspiracy* follows Byron’s temptation by his enemies, who work to dismantle his

Methuen, 1963; repr. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), line 225 (note), 153.

³⁵⁵ Gossett, ed., *Pericles* (2004), 411.

³⁵⁶ Tiffany Stern, “Taking Part: Actors and Audience on the Stage at Blackfriars,” in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 39.

character by exploiting the social weaknesses that accompany his military strengths. Early in the *Conspiracy of Byron*, Byron's tempters, Savoy and La Fin, use stage music as a simulation of the music of the spheres and as bait to their political trap. The music is used in a sensory duet with the visible and tactile Catiline carpet, to manipulate Byron and prompt his response. John Margeson identifies the core tension in the play as a "tragic struggle for the hero between his own nature and view of himself and a world which grows increasingly hostile and eventually crushes him."³⁵⁷ The way in which Byron responds to the earthly sound confirms his overreaching perception of himself to the other characters and to the audience.

Critics have long noted that Chapman, in creating Byron, not only developed a *de casibus* tragedy, but did so through a figure who seems misplaced and out of his element. In her time-tested work on Chapman, M.C. Bradbrook noted that Chapman's heroic figures never quite belong: "Chapman's tragic heroes tower up as colossal, filled with divine afflatus, so that they seem to have descended into the world of time and space from some larger world."³⁵⁸ His heroes possess longings and characteristics that transcend the established fictional worlds of his plays, as if they were transplanted from elsewhere. Byron's mental flight of fancy into the celestial region by means of the artificial music of the spheres corresponds to this otherworldly DNA that Bradbrook identified as characteristic of Chapman's tragic figures. Gunilla Florby argues that in Chapman's plays: "The imagery is often markedly visual, but what is visualized is more often than not to be found elsewhere, in some blazing universe where everything has heroic dimensions."³⁵⁹ The music works as a

³⁵⁷ John Margeson, "Introduction," in George Chapman, *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, ed. John Margeson, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 24.

³⁵⁸ M. C. Bradbrook, *George Chapman*, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert (London: Longman for the British Council, 1977), 37.

³⁵⁹ Gunilla Florby, *Echoing Texts: George Chapman's "Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron"* (Lund: Lund University, 2004), 45.

means of transporting him to the “blazing universe” of “heroic dimensions,” where with the slightest suggestion, Byron returns to the imaginative space where he is most at home.

When heard music is in a stage direction representing the music of the spheres, it works to exacerbate Byron’s own self-delusion and highlight his hamartia that will eventually lead to his downfall in the sequel play. The sensory information of the staged sound available to the audience does not verify the sanity of the character; instead, the aural access exposes the character’s experience of the phenomenon as an imitation. They know that it is all a ruse. The audience and Byron hear the same music. However, unlike Byron, the audience has heard the conspiratorial dialogue before the scene. The audience’s ability to transcend the delusion also comes from its position in the theatre, as it can perceive where the music originates. Martin White suggests that the “musicians could...play on the front area, visible to the audience.”³⁶⁰ The audience at the Second Blackfriars could easily identify the sound with its origin, as the musicians in the gallery could easily be seen. By orchestrating the artificial music of the spheres with the visual Cataline carpet as a plot to trap the protagonist, Chapman doubles the deceptive effect of the trick.

The “music of the spheres” in *Byron* has not yet been considered against that in *Pericles*. The chronologically relevant comparison frees *Pericles* from the constraints of requiring staged music to represent *musica mundana* in order to preserve the protagonist’s credibility with the audience, as previously suggested. The other characters may think Pericles delusional for hearing sounds that they do not, but the audience at this time on the other hand had good reason to think that staged music, rather than its absence, could have meant delusion.

³⁶⁰ Martin White, *Renaissance Drama in Action: An Introduction to Aspects of Theatre Practice and Performance* (London: Routledge, 1998), 158.

The next section investigates the effects of the music of the spheres with special attention to the emotional effect of the phenomenon and the material and spatial ramifications of musical sound. After stage convention and verisimilitude of character, the final reason given to support heard music in *Pericles* is perhaps the most unspoken but nonetheless assumed—that of theatrical effect. It is for this reason that editors shift the agency of the decision from bibliographic and historical arguments to performance choices made on the modern stage. Working against that assumption, this next section uncovers how sound or the lack of sound altered the emotional, material, and spatial results of the dramatic representation of the music of the spheres. It then argues that the decision to include a musical or silent staging of the phenomenon was not a decision of preference but one that produced differing results within the drama and subsequently within its theatrical reception in the early modern period.

Pericles hearing the music of the spheres is the emotional climax of the play, as it marks the end of his journey of loss, the reunion with his daughter, Marina, and the beginning of his restoration. Brockbank highlights the elevated emotional moment as one in which “his affections wholly reawakened and restored, [he] hears the music of the spheres.”³⁶¹ C. L. Barber finds Pericles’ emotional state the gateway to his hearing: “the ecstasy of recognizing her leads Pericles to hear the music of the spheres.”³⁶² Comparing the trajectory of emotional material in *Pericles*’ source and related texts to the play’s treatment of the music of the spheres reveals the emotional import invested in the figure. Although the music of the spheres is a significant feature of the restoration scene in the play, the celestial event is not present within comparable moments of either Gower, Wilkins, or Twine. As he reworks from his sources, Shakespeare modifies the narrative to include the phenomenon when transposing

³⁶¹ Brockbank, “*Pericles* and the Dream of Immortality,” 112.

³⁶² C. L. Barber, ““Thou that beget’st him that did thee beget’: Transformation in *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 22 (January 1969): 61.

it into a dramatic context.³⁶³

Bibliographers continue to be compelled by the overlaps between George Wilkins' prose version of 1608, *The Painful Adventures of Pericles Prince of Tyre*, and the play's text. Though the textual history is fraught with complexity and challenges, it is now generally accepted that the play was a collaboration between Shakespeare and Wilkins. In what MacDonald P. Jackson has dubbed "a novel of the play,"³⁶⁴ *The Painful Adventures* stakes its authoritative claim and positions itself in relationship to the play in its title, as "Being the true history of the play of Pericles, as it was lately presented."³⁶⁵ Wilkins "intreat[s] the Reader to receiue this Historie in the same maner as it was vnder the habite of ancient *Gower* the famous English Poet, by the Kings Maiesties Players excellently presented." Wilkins requests a similar reception for his prose, but is positioning his prose as "the true history." The title and this request position the prose as not only following the play's creation and performance, but also as a work that is deeply conscious of the play and its performance. This textual relationship makes the differences between the play and the prose versions of the narrative valuable for uncovering theatrical elements.

Wilkins' story articulates Pericles' emotional ecstasy or euphoria at the discovery of his daughter's survival and presence with him. In Wilkins' "argument of the whole history" he summarises the events of the plot as a preface to the book and describes the emotional effects of the restoration scene:

His daughter (though of him vnknownen so) is by the Gouvernour sent for, who by her excellent skill in Song, and pleasantnesse in discourse, with relating the story of her

³⁶³ I say Shakespeare here, because it is still widely held that the music of the spheres scene was Shakespeare's contribution.

³⁶⁴ MacDonald P. Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: "Pericles" as Test Case* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 58.

³⁶⁵ All quotations from George Wilkins, *The Painfull Aduentures of Pericles Prince of Tyre: Being the True History of the Play of Pericles, as it was Lately Presented by the Worthy and Ancient Poet Iohn Gower* (London, 1608). EEBO:http://ezproxyprd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2175/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:99840233.

owne mishap, shee so winnes againe her fathers lost sences, that hee knowes her for his childe, shee him for her father; in which ouerjoy, as if his sences were nowe all confounded, *Pericles* falles asleepe.³⁶⁶

As Wilkins summarises the events of the narrative, he verbally marks Pericles' emotional overload at the discovery of his daughter in terms of "ouerjoy" in that his "sences...nowe [are] all confounded." Later, in the body of the prose the narrator informs the reader of the heights of emotion that the protagonist is experiencing:

O my Marina cryed out Pericles, being stricke into such an extasie of ioy that hee was not able to containe himselfe! willing her agayne to discourse vnto him the storie of her misfortunes, for hee could not heare too much. Which she obeying him in, and he knowing her to be his childe, seeing that the supposed dead was risen again, he falls on hir necke, and kisses her...so one while weeping at others ioying, and his senses being masterd by a gentle conquerour, in that extremitie of passion, he fell into a slumber.³⁶⁷

Wilkins is describing Pericles as being so caught up in an "extasie of joy that he was not able to contain himselfe." The sensorial and emotional experience overtakes him to the point that in this state "his senses being masterd" he reaches an "extremitie of passion" and "he f[alls] into a slumber." This emotionally charged scene corresponds to the moment when Pericles hears the music of the spheres in the play. The prose narrative neatly parallels the drama, except that the play compresses and translates the description of Pericles' emotional response into an elevated emotional experience—his hearing of the music of the spheres.

In Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, the Middle English poem that was the source for early modern versions of the tale, there is no mention of the music of the spheres in the corresponding narrative.³⁶⁸ However, in its place are unprecedented levels of joy: "Bot such a joie as he tho made/ Was nevere sen; thus be thei glade" (8.1733-8.1734). While both the Wilkins and the Gower contain music, neither one uses the music of the spheres. However,

³⁶⁶ Ibid., A3r.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., J1r? The page signature is unclear.

³⁶⁸ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, in *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G.C. Macauley, vol. 3 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1901),

they do contain extravagant displays of emotion in the verbal description at the sight and hearing of the Marina figure. The music of the spheres is unique to the drama and registers as a dramatic and symbolic means of communicating the elevated emotion associated with the reunion experience.

Richard Meek and Erin Sullivan note that in the early modern period, “all attempts to articulate inward feelings involve a certain degree of translation or metaphorical conceptualisation.”³⁶⁹ Efforts to represent Pericles’ emotional state in prose and drama endeavour to capture the extent of his experience but use different types of emotional “conceptualisations” and communicative strategies to do so. Comparing source and related texts to the play highlights the music of the spheres as an attempt by the dramatist to make Pericles’ feeling available to the other characters and to the audience. In *Pericles*, Shakespeare exchanges a descriptive account of feeling for an experience of feeling. The audience is not explicitly told about Pericles’ feelings, but those feelings may be observed by the audience in the character’s reaction to what he hears. The music of the spheres then becomes a cipher for emotional response. Theorists such as Zarlino, who were developing new ways of thinking about music, addressed the tradition of the emotional effects of celestial music found in the writings of classical philosophers. Ann Moyer calls the topic one of the “issues of greatest general interest to [Zarlino’s] contemporaries.”³⁷⁰ Shakespeare used the established system of knowledge of natural philosophy with its queries over the emotional power of celestial music as a means of demonstrating Pericles’ intensity of feeling.

As Shakespeare dramatised this section from Gower, he translated extreme expressions of feeling into another form of heightened experience. By doing so, he turned the verbal description of the prose into a palpable effect in the theatre. The play uses the music of

³⁶⁹ Meek and Sullivan, eds, *The Renaissance of Emotion*, 2.

³⁷⁰ Ann E. Moyer, *Musica Scientia: Musical Scholarship in the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 212.

the spheres as a means of emblematising the emotional ecstasy. When returning the narrative to prose, the process is reversed. Wilkins, working to repurpose the popular play into *The Painful Adventures*, distilled the ecstatic feelings of the protagonist back into an emotional description. The emotional residue from Gower that Shakespeare had embedded within the staged phenomenon carried into the next prose iteration. If Wilkins was indeed Shakespeare's collaborator, as is now supposed, then the strength of the argument increases, as he would have understood the role of the phenomenon in the play. The transmission from emotional description to the music of the spheres and then back again highlights the emotional role of the figure in the drama.

The phenomenon's absence in the prose iterations of the story suggests that the music of the spheres operates within the play as a means of translating the exposition of emotional feeling into an observable staged experience that has absorbed those feelings. The theatre audience can watch first-hand how the actor playing the character responds to hearing celestial sound. Warren has noted the emotional burden of the scene on an actor: "The actor of Pericles needs to encompass the extremes both of joy and pain in this demanding scene."³⁷¹ The recognition scene is loaded with emotion partly because Shakespeare concentrated emotional description into a single "privileged experience."³⁷² What emerges from comparing *Pericles* with its sources is that *musica mundana* provided a legible index for translating emotional prose into a dramatic effect.

In order to interrogate the claim that hearing the music of the spheres rewards a heightened emotional audience response, this next section engages with Barbara Mowat's performance analysis in *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances*. Mowat, while expressing remorse at skipping over *Pericles* in her study, notes: "Much that I have

³⁷¹ Warren, ed., *A Reconstructed Text of "Pericles, Prince of Tyre,"* 58.

³⁷² F. Elizabeth Hart, "Cerimon's 'Rough' Music in *Pericles*, 3.2," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn, 2000): 331.

discovered... is obviously applicable.”³⁷³ Her study into performance conventions of the genre and the late period of Shakespeare’s creative output offers a helpful method for approaching the question of audience response, as it relates to stage effects. Using Edward Bullough’s theory of aesthetic distancing, Mowat articulates the spectrum of dramatic tactics within dramaturgical practice and the role of those tactics in directing and stimulating the audience’s emotional response. The tactics are divided into two categories: representational, that is the tactics that disguise as much as possible the theatrical nature of the play (illusion-creating); and presentational, tactics that highlight the theatricality of the play (illusion-breaking). The latter breaks the illusion, in the sense that it presents “a stage world rather than the representing of an illusively ‘real’ world.”³⁷⁴ This is the domain of the metatheatrical, such as asides, soliloquy, and dumbshow, which alert the audience to the theatricality of the play. It is also the realm of the spectacular, mythical, and preternatural, such as *deus ex machina*, ghosts, visions, and fairies. Dramatic tactics working on a spectrum of distancing effects influence the way in which audiences emotionally engage with the play’s narrative events and characters.

The recognition scenes in *Pericles* are filled with examples of both kinds of tactics: Marina’s song, exposition and dialogue, Pericles’ hearing the music of the spheres, the vision of Diana, the role of Cerimon’s music, and the reunion dance with Thaisa. Diverse elements like these combine to form a complex mixture of dramatic tactics occurring in close proximity to one another. Our efforts to distinguish the mode of these tactics when they appear in the Romances are impeded by the tendency of that genre to blend or quickly switch between them. Mowat suggests that this is one reason why these plays have received such diverse critical treatment. Without recognising the way the tactics operate, the plays’ stage

³⁷³ Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s Romances* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1976), 2.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

effects and episodes can seem strange and cobbled together. However, as Mowat argues: “In Shakespeare’s Romances, presentational and representational styles exist side by side, and a complex tactical dramaturgy is the result.”³⁷⁵ Dramatists’ ability to increase or decrease the emotional focus for the audience depends on the tactic used, allowing the audience an opportunity to subjectively “enter into” the fictional world or be kept outside as an objective spectator.

As demonstrated in the comparison above between the play, its sources, and its related texts, Shakespeare used the music of the spheres to signify the height of emotional experience. The narrative intuition to be drawn closer rather than be separated from the protagonist at this moment corresponds to the emotional import of the phenomenon within the drama. However, the stark contrasts in aesthetic distance produced by hearing or not hearing has not yet been considered in arguments for or against the use of staged music as the music of the spheres. Instead of drawing the audience into the experience, the aural presentational tactic of heard music would work as a spectacle sound effect in this instance. It would break down the representational illusion and bring the audience out of the fictional world and “overdistance” them from the dramatic action.³⁷⁶ “Seen from within, and in the present, the events of our lives are to us significant, sometimes overwhelming, sometimes terrifying; yet distance them by time, by a sudden vision of how they appear [or sound] to another or how they look in a larger context, and they seem suddenly trivial, perhaps a bit comic.”³⁷⁷ Using stage music as an aural effect to stand in for the music of the spheres separates the audience from Pericles’ experience. Leaving the phenomenon to be accessed through Pericles’ description, a representational rather than a presentational tactic, removes the “overdistance” and brings the audience into closer emotional proximity to the character.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 36.

³⁷⁶ Mowat’s term.

³⁷⁷ Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s Romances*, 33.

One of the most famous examples of a production that resisted the tradition for inserting stage music into the music of the spheres scene provides an example of the correspondence between not hearing the music and emotional effect. Robert Speaight documents how in Terry Hands' 1969 RSC production, Ian Richardson played Pericles to great emotional effect: "In the recognition scene, played with a kind of agonized ecstasy, it was a brilliant touch to make 'the music of the spheres' audible to no one but Pericles and Marina."³⁷⁸ The review, through Speaight's response, highlights the ability of the soundless dramatic moment to create an elevated emotional scene through a representational mode. While Speaight does not make explicit claims for causation, Richardson's "agonized ecstasy" coincides with the lack of presentational music. The soundlessness lent an emotional focus to the scene which, as this chapter argues, is lost when heard music is playing. In the same volume, Robert Speaight notes that in Tony Richardson's 1958 production with Richard Johnson as Pericles, there was potential for the sound to take over: "Richard Johnson's Pericles held the last great scene firm in face of the director's virtuosity; no other music drowned 'the music of the spheres'." From Speaight's review it appears that Johnson "held the scene." It seems like this firmness of focus was doggedly maintained in spite of the music and not because of it, as if he were fighting against the music's overpowering presence for control of the scene.³⁷⁹

Overlaying Mowat's concept of aesthetic distance provides new insight to the ongoing debate about the music of the spheres. Spectacle is used within theatre as a means of distancing. The effects place the audience emotionally farther away from a character, rather than bringing them closer. However, without the sound, the focus tightens. Hearing the music of the spheres along with Pericles overdistances the audience from the dramatic moment and

³⁷⁸ Robert Speaight, *Shakespeare on the Stage: An Illustrated History of Shakespearean Performance* (London: Collins, 1973), 293.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

limits their emotional connection with him and with the scene. It collapses the effect rather than expanding and emphasising it, as previously thought. With a heard music of the spheres, the scene loses the emotional focus that Shakespeare embedded into the dramatic fiction by including the music of the spheres for the particular purpose of emphasising Pericles' emotional ecstasy.

“Invisible Fiddlers”: Locating Celestial Sound in Theatrical and Imaginative Space

Approximately one year after staging *The Double Marriage* in 1620-1, Fletcher and Massinger turned again to the music of the spheres for their play, *The Prophetess*. This time, however, instead of stage music prompting an ironic speech from a fawning court figure, the dramatists empowered a sorceress to pull out all the universal stops and provide direct access to the sound of celestial harmony. Delphia, the eponymous character and prophetess, decrees that the sound be created: “Strike Musick from the Spheres,” a command that is directly followed by the stage direction “*Musick*” (II.iii.49).³⁸⁰ Due to the play's explicit stage direction following her specific order for the music of the spheres to sound, *The Prophetess* stages the most emphatic example of the phenomenon in aurally perceivable form on the early modern stage. The drama elucidates the role that heard music played when symbolising celestial music. When aurally available music represents the phenomenon, those scenes contain material and spatial verbal markers. To further illustrate the point, this section will look again to *Charles Duke of Bryon* and the play's misheard musical sound. Although *Byron* stages an imitation music of the spheres, the musical sound was a bona fide sensory effect. The play helps illustrate the point that musical presence influences the spatial and material

³⁸⁰ All quotations taken from Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, vol. 9 (1994).

consciousness of the play. *Pericles* will also be compared in order to contrast the effects of musical sound versus the effects of musical silence.

Early modern musical theory, while complex and not without variant, largely followed the main division of music: speculative (theoretical music and the category of *musica mundana*) and practical (that of *musica instrumentalis*). When the music of the spheres becomes aurally accessible that action alters its theoretical position. To be true to natural philosophy's categories, the stage may only accommodate the purity of *musica mundana* through verbal utterance, rather than musical sound. However, by orchestrating stage music into the drama to represent the music of the spheres, dramatists substitute theoretical music with practical, and as heard music, it is impossible for *musica mundana* to retain its theoretical properties. Replacing assumed sound with aurally available sound alters the characteristics of the music of the spheres. *Musica mundana* takes on all of the properties associated with *musica instrumentalis*. One of the properties connected to *musica instrumentalis* is its physical operation within space.

In reference to music's movement from the quadrivium to the trivium, Ann Moyer notes: "Music did not simply undergo a transition from scholastic mathematics to humanist art; it also was increasingly studied as a physical, natural phenomenon."³⁸¹ Music's physicality finds its way into the spatial metaphors that surround its sounding within these plays. This section specifically examines the play's expression of the origins of sound within fictional and theatrical space and the awareness of air, the material or medium of sound. While these items are usually briefly mentioned in the drama, their presence suggests an awareness of space when musical sound accompanies other elements of the play onto the stage.

The Prophetess presents the social, political, sexual, and moral tensions of what Cyrus

³⁸¹ Moyer, *Musica Scientia*, 5.

Hoy calls “a triangular romantic plot.” Fletcher and Massinger explored similar conflicts in *The Double Marriage* and return to them in *The Maid of Honour*. Russ McDonald documents similarities between *The Prophetess* and *The Maid of Honour* and then contrasts the different types of agency used within the plays to untangle the relational webs. In *The Prophetess*, Delphia manipulates Diocles, the love of her niece, Drusilla, using what McDonald calls “supernatural machinations” to control the fictional world.³⁸² From the beginning of the play the music of the spheres is considered an integral set piece in Delphia’s supernatural strategy for keeping Diocles focused on her niece. Earlier in the play, she reveals that her plan includes controlling the music of the spheres. In 2.1 she tells Drusilla:

DELPHIA.

It shall be done, as fits my skill and glory:
 To break thorow bolts, and locks, a Scholar's prize
 For Theeves, and Pick-locks! To pass thorow an Army
 Cover'd with Night, or some disguise, the practice
 Of poor and needy Spies! No, my *Drusilla*,
 From Ceres I will force her winged Dragons,
 And in the air hung over the Tribunal
 (The Music of the Spheres attending on us).
 (II.i. 65-72)

In this scene Delphia informs Drusilla how she will perform in the coming scene, and what she will affect. The prophetess uses disruptive terms and phrases of penetrating power including, “break,” “pass thorow,” and “force,” to describe her spatial mastery over the world around her. In the midst of her claims that threaten to tear through the material world, she drafts her own spatial positioning and that of the music of the spheres. Delphia will be “in the air hung over” the scene, where the music “attend[s]” her from her elevated position. Katrine K. Wong notes: “To say that certain music is ‘in the air’ often indicates that the music is coming from the sky.”³⁸³ The air does signal a direction for the production of the sound

³⁸² Russ McDonald, “High Seriousness and Popular Form: The Case of *The Maid of Honour*,” in *Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment*, ed. Douglas Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 90.

³⁸³ Katrine K. Wong, *Music and Gender in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Routledge,

within the fictional universe and within the stage space. It also functions as a spatial and material indicator of the musical sound. Later in 2.3 when the music of the spheres sounds on stage, Diocles speaks of air on both sides of the sound:

DIOCLES.
 Shine clear, my Stars,
 That usher'd me to tast this common aire,
 In my entrance to the world, and give applause
 To this great work.
 DELPHIA.
 Strike Musick from the Spheres. *Musick [above]*.
 DRUSILLA.
 O now you honour me.
 DIOCLES.
 Ha? in the air?
 ALL.
 Miraculous.
 (II.iii.47-51)

"In the air," provides spatial information about the fictional and stage locations for the music's point of origin. The phrase also alerts the audience to the substance of the sound and the material that carries it. Early modern neo-Platonic theorists posited that sound was material, and the substance by which sounds transferred from the point of origin to the human soul was *spiritus*. As Penelope Gouk explains, Agrippa's codification of musical theory "underpinned such key concepts as the doctrine of sympathy, the correspondence between the macrocosm and microcosm, and the conception of a world soul or *spiritus* mediating between matter and intellect."³⁸⁴ Other natural philosophers of the period, such as Marsilio Ficino, echoed neo-Platonic ideas which connected the World Soul of the universe to the human soul through the air.

The airy medium of sound is also evident in *Byron*. Throughout the play, Chapman constructs an atmospherically sensitive playtext, one in which the audience is repeatedly

2013), 2.

³⁸⁴ Penelope Gouk, *Music, Science and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 71.

alerted to the quality and metaphorical usefulness of the air: “And see in his revolt how honour’s flood/ Ebbs into air, when men are great, not good” (Prol. 23-24). The heard music Byron mistakes for *musica mundana* is used as a sensory device in a duet with the visible and tactile Cataline carpet. The aurally available sound manipulates Byron and prompts his apothecotic response. The combination trick is intended to draw out Byron’s heroic “spirit.” Richard S. Ide connects this section in particular to Chapman’s familiarity with “Ficino’s system... wherein man’s spirit (*musica humana*), physiologically motivated by precise tonal impressions (*musica intrumentalis*), vibrates in sympathy with the music of the spheres (*musica mundana*), thus creating an aerial/aural conduit for celestial influence.”³⁸⁵ The air between the spirit and the soul functioned as the conduit or vehicle for transporting sensory information between the two locations. As Gary Tomlinson notes: “Because of similarities to man’s *spiritus*, the subtle and airy substance that... linked body and soul... conveyed sensory impressions between them.”³⁸⁶ Sixteenth-century Italian music theorists such as Fogliano thought of air as the active medium for sound. He proposed that “sound... proceed[s] from the violent and rapid motions of air.”³⁸⁷ As plays verbally mark the air, the inclusion of the medium of sound into the text indicates the play’s subtle awareness that aurally available music is sounding onstage.

To suggest that plays carry these material markings from the performance of sounded music may seem overstated, but the examples from the above plays are not isolated incidents. The same verbal signals appear elsewhere when *musica instrumentalis* sounds onstage. In *The Merchant of Venice*, when Lorenzo switches from his monologue on speculative music to calling on practical music to be played, he instructs the musicians to come out into the air:

³⁸⁵ Richard S. Ide, *Possessed with Greatness: The Heroic Tragedies of Chapman and Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 136.

³⁸⁶ Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 87.

³⁸⁷ Quoted and translated in Moyer, *Musica Scientia*, 144. (Moyer’s translation).

LORENZO.

Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect their coming.
 And yet no matter. Why should we go in?
 My friend Stefano, signify, I pray you,
 Within the house your mistress is at hand,
 And bring your music forth into the air.
 (V.i.49-53)

In *Pericles*, in scene 12 when Cerimon is reviving Thaisa, the music plays and as it gives its therapeutic treatment, the air and breath soon follow:

CERIMON.

The still and woeful music that we have,
 Cause it to sound, beseech you.
Music
 The vial once more.
 How thou stirr'st, thou block! The music there!
 I pray you give her air.
 (xii. 86-89)

While it is difficult to argue in the absence, it is suggestive that each of these plays using heard music play upon the air, but *Pericles*, which this chapter suggests does not engage a physicalised musical sound to intone the celestial harmony, in the music of the spheres scene does not mention sounds' material at all.

Bruce Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* connects sound to the physical and spatial experience of the auditor. Sound enables the hearer to imaginatively orient him or herself within a space. As Smith notes: "Sound immerses me in the world: it is there and here, in front of me and behind me, above me and below me. Sound moves into presence and moves out of presence: it gives me reference points for situating myself in space and time."³⁸⁸ Aural stimuli create the sensory information necessary for developing spatial awareness and help establish the "facts" of space within the hearer's cognitive renderings of his or her surrounding world.

However, in the "music of the spheres" scene in *Charles Duke of Byron* (1.2), the

³⁸⁸ Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 9-10.

sound deceives Byron, and he is not where he thinks himself to be. This chapter has worked through Byron's experience with musical sound and the role of the imitation music of the spheres as a trap that his conspirators set for him. Aside from Byron's inflated opinion of his own virtue, the other reason he falls for the trick is that he is aurally and spatially confused by where the sound is coming from. Byron's first words of the play, uttered after stepping into the character-vacated but music-filled space, are questions about space and his position within it. The sound of stage music prompts Byron to comment, not on the aesthetic qualities of the music, but on the spatial environment: "What place is this? What air? What region?" (I.ii.83). These questions underscore Byron's disorientation throughout the *Conspiracy* and the *Tragedy*.

The stage direction "*Loud music*" corresponds with "*and enter BYRON.*" Prior to his entry, all other characters have exited, and Byron enters alone. The music simultaneously sounds with his entrance and comes from offstage. As no one else is onstage, Byron does not have a reference point for the origin of the musical sound. Wes Folkerth's observations of Shakespeare's characters might be adapted here: they "routinely engage sound in an epistemological capacity, as a way of orienting themselves in physical space, in a society at large, and with respect to other individuals."³⁸⁹ Without an identifiable, onstage, and visual origin for the music, Byron assumes that the sound is coming from the celestial spheres. He then works to understand the dislocated and dislocating sound. The music has been orchestrated by the conspirators to coincide with Byron's entrance, and its sound is unidentifiable within the playing space. This leads Byron to immediately associate its sounding with celestial harmony. The stage music sounds another time with the stage direction "*Music again*" (I.ii.44). He responds with imagery that connects his motions with musical sound:

³⁸⁹ Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), 106.

BYRON.

Here too? They follow all my steps with music
 As if my feet were numerous and trod sounds
 Out of the centre, with Apollo's virtue
 That out of every thing his each part touched
 Struck musical accents: wheresoe'er I go
 They hide the earth from me with coverings rich
 To make me think that I am here in heaven.

(I.ii.45-51)

In keeping with Chapman's sculpting of Byron's character, the tragic hero begins to think not only that he has been granted access to celestial harmony, but also that the heavenly sound vibrates from his touch. Byron's engagement with the sound underscores the spatial role of practical music and how music shapes perception of space and human interaction within that space.

As argued earlier in the chapter, the audience is not disoriented. They have the narrative information to know that the sound is not emanating from the celestial spheres within the established illusion of the play nor is it issuing from Byron's touch. At the Blackfriars the audience would be able to see the consort musicians playing above the stage. With access to the same heard music as Byron, but with the spatial and narrative information that he does not have available to him, the sound does not deceive them. The irony is established through sound and space, and the tragic hero eventually falls due to a mixture of his own weakness combined with his inability to place the sound. *Byron* demonstrates the spatial qualities that are embedded within *musica instrumentalis*. In the trick, cosmic sound, which was part of speculative music, is feigned using humanly produced music, which was considered practical music. While that may seem like an obvious and necessary choice, all representation of *musica mundana* replicated through *musica instrumentalis* shifts the celestial harmony out of a theoretical model of speculative music and, by putting material sound to the idea, immediately alters the way in which the audience might place the music within the spatial imagination.

The Prophetess establishes spatial and sensory elements and images throughout the scene and at other points in the play when the music of the spheres is discussed. Like *Byron*, the characters on the stage do not know where the sound is coming from, and like *Byron* the music of unknown spatial origin registers celestial harmony. Although the audience is very much aware of the “Throne drawn by Dragons” suspended above the stage (II.iii.s.d.), for Delphia’s plan to work, the visual spectacle must remain unseen by the other characters. She emphasises their invisibility: “For though all things beneath us are transparent. / The sharpest sighted, were he Eagle-ey’d./ Cannot discover us” (20-21). The comment about the “sharpest sighted” is tongue-in-cheek and directed at the audience who can indeed see them. While clearly visible to the audience, Delphia and her train are invisible to the eye of the characters below. In Act Three, when explaining what happened to Diocles, she reiterates that she could not be seen:

DELPHIA.

Thou hast full need of blessing.
 'Twas I that, at thy great inauguration,
 Hung in the air unseen; 'twas I that honour'd thee
 With various musics, and sweet-sounding airs;
 (III.i.28)

Delphia takes pains to point out that she, Drusilla, and the Dragon-powered throne are invisible. The admiration expressed from the characters on stage cannot be a mixed reaction to visual *and* aural wonders, because the characters are not able to see the visual effect.

Massinger and Fletcher complicate the notion of a unified source for the sound. There is a separation of understanding and experience between the audience and the stage characters. From the point of view of the characters, the sound lacks a visible origin, but the audience can see the entire process of musical production. Geta asks the following: “Would I could hire/ These fine invisible fiddlers to play to me/ At my instalment.” His comment highlights the theatricality of the effect, namely, that the aurally available music of the spheres in the stage space, while “invisible,” is an instrumentally represented sound. The

musicians are out of sight from the characters, but Geta's metatheatrical statement draws attention to the fact that there are musicians present who are producing the sound. The characters register the miraculous within the effect, but then step in and out of the fictive world to underscore where and how the sound is made within the stage space. Working together with the stage spectacle this presentational dramatic tactic distances the audience from an emotional connection to the sound and the scene.

The spatial markers found in *Byron* and in *The Prophetess* are not present in *Pericles*. Pericles does not ask where he is or the material condition of the air. He asks, "What music?" and nothing about, "Where am I?" Pericles' questions about what he hears tend toward the qualities of sound that he hears or why the others cannot hear. He exclaims throughout the scene, "The music of the Spheres!", "Rar'st sounds. Do ye not hear?", and "I hear most heav'nly music." Pericles is experiencing the rapture of hearing the celestial sounds and verbally relays that sensory experience to the other characters and the audience. After noticing that Helicanus has not heard, he asks Marina, who he assumes has heard the sound, to tell Helicanus. He then repeats, "But what music?" As speculative music, there is no physical or spatial information that is evident in the text. It may seem counterintuitive to argue that a play which is so full of audible music would stage the ultimate symbol of harmony, the music of the spheres, silently and without a musical representation. However, the music of the spheres was theoretical, rather than practical. It is through the effect of the phenomenon that Pericles "wakes from ordinary human recognition."³⁹⁰ He enters into the paranormal, the metaphysical, or the spiritual. The play seems to grant access only to him. Without editorial additions in the music of the spheres scene, *Pericles* contains no stage directions for music, no description of spatial/material alteration, no suggestion that other

³⁹⁰ Peggy Ann Knapp, "The Orphic Vision of Pericles," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 15, no. 4 (1974): 615-26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40754285>. (625).

characters hear the music, and no metatheatrical reference to the production of sound—the experience is entirely for Pericles and no one else is granted access to the aural experience.

Pericles' experience is irregular, singular, and particular. The individuality of his experience corresponds to the period's understanding of the aural limitation of speculative music. William A. McIntosh notes: "It is Pericles' singular ability to hear and respond to the music of the spheres...Pericles hearing the music of the spheres sets him apart from all others in the play."³⁹¹ As Roger Warren observes: "Sometimes in performance the audience hears the music, sometimes not. If they do not, that emphasizes the traditional belief and the rarefied state of mind Pericles has achieved."³⁹² Warren identifies the effect that the particular performance choice of hearing has on the audience. This chapter has emphasised that one of the major implications of the "traditional belief" is that the sound was typically blocked from human perception. It operated within a category of theoretical music. Warren's commentary combines this with a "rarefied mind" emphasising that singularity or specialness that comes from the audience not hearing the music. This suggests that the audience's hearing the sound along with Pericles jeopardises the basis of the climactic moment—Pericles' individual experience of restoration. Hearing also generalises the specific focus and spreads it out. Warren continues: "If they do [hear the sound], audible music acts as a theatrical externalization of that state of mind."³⁹³ Externalising diffuses the point of focus and spreads it throughout the theatre, making the background music the point of wonder, rather than Pericles' emotional ecstasy.

Pericles remained a popular play well past the era of *The Prophetess* and stage history shows the opposite is true of the later play. While there are many factors that determine a play's longevity onstage, perhaps one reason that *Pericles* succeeded and *The Prophetess* did

³⁹¹ William A. McIntosh, "Musical Design in Pericles," *English Language Notes* 11 (1973): 106.

³⁹² Warren, ed., *A Reconstructed Text of "Pericles, Prince of Tyre,"* 58.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

not rests in the treatment of the music of the spheres. While Eugene Waith identifies *The Prophetess* as “An elegant and spectacular play,” he notes that emotionally it falls flat, as “it contains little to arouse pity or terror.” He suggests that one of the reasons for this is that Delphia’s “supernatural powers enable her to play the part of a didactic providence” through a range of “improbable situations.”³⁹⁴ One of the ways that she does so is through the aurally available music of the spheres. In *Pericles*, the audience receives a different experience entirely. Unlike the miraculous aural and visual spectacle of *The Prophetess*, the sound is not marvelled at onstage by the other characters but is only questioned. “For yet he seems to doubt”, “My Lord, I hear none.”, “Music, my Lord?” (212-218). The wonder is directed at the protagonist, not at an elaborate masque-like show. The goddess, Diana, is not yet on stage and the characters are all human (while the prophetess is human, she wields super-human powers). The play contains the aural experience of the music of the spheres but maintains the phenomenon as an internal presence within the character of Pericles. The audience’s access is through his telling not through visual or aural spectacle.

While usually considered an example of the convention, *The Prophetess* is a digression from the established convention that came before it. Unlike the individual experience in *Pericles*, the sound is available to every character and the audience, and unlike the gimmick in *Byron* or the satirical use in *Double Marriage*, the music is meant to represent *musica mundana* on stage. Perhaps it is the explicit use of sound that makes up part of the reason for its critical position. Waith finds *The Prophetess* to be “so dominated by the conventions of pastoral and masque that it lacks the emotional intensity of a typical Fletcherian tragicomedy. It is unabashedly remote and fantastic from beginning to end.”³⁹⁵ Mowat is again useful. Using her theory of dramatic tactics offers a way to see how a more

³⁹⁴ Eugene M. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1969), 129.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

“realised” sound could “overdistance” an audience to the play. Using Mowat’s terms, the music of the spheres in *Pericles* is dramatised in a representational rather than a presentational dramatic tactic, which allows the audience to emotionally connect with the protagonist.

The introduction of heard music into the plays that contain explicit stage directions to represent the music of the spheres alters the way characters interact with and orient themselves within the spatial environment of the play’s fictional universe and the theatre space. *The Prophetess*, the one play that explicitly calls for musical sound to represent *musica mundana* within stage directions, uses distinct material and spatial markers to articulate the role of musical sound in its fictional cosmology. But in *Pericles*, Shakespeare works to establish this experience as solely available for Pericles. While the sound is ringing in Pericles’ ears, the text remains eerily quiet without any spatial markers to indicate that musical sound should be there.

This chapter has reconsidered the early modern staging of *musica mundana*. It has argued that some early modern plays staged the phenomenon of the music of the spheres through musical sound and others staged it silently. By using case study plays from two chronological groupings that stage the phenomenon of the music of the spheres in different ways, the phenomenon reemerges from behind what has been traditionally treated as a single homogenous convention that spanned the period into a much more nuanced and varied figure within early modern drama. The mixed use parallels the complexity of cosmic harmony in the period. As Gary Tomlinson suggests about the ideas surrounding the music of the spheres in the early modern period: “For all their power and fascination, these musical beliefs have never proved easy to grasp. Their prehensile grip on the western imagination has not allowed them to develop as neat, unitary doctrines but rather has fostered rich traditions of more or

less divergent elaboration on their original musical insights.”³⁹⁶ Early modern dramatists used the messy doctrines surrounding the music of the spheres to explore the possibilities of emotional, spatial, and material effects through the music of the spheres.

In *Pericles* the speculative music was staged according to a set of earlier expectations than previously assumed. The template over the staging of the music of the spheres in the early modern period breaks down when the play is compared to the more chronologically related *The Conspiracy of Byron*. The argument for a deluded Pericles fades when submitted to this comparison, as heard music representing *musica mundana* registered as a deceptive trick in *Byron*, rather than as evidence of a realistic experience. Reconsidering *Pericles* through *Byron* provides a helpful way for understanding how plays that seem to use the music of the spheres in a mimetic, representational way operated under a different set of expectations than previously proposed. This chapter has also demonstrated that *The Double Marriage* should not remain within the category of plays that stage *musica mundana*. In this case study *The Prophetess* emerges as the only play that explicitly uses heard music as a stage effect for the music of the spheres. Its dramatic strategy, narrative role for the phenomenon, and spatial and material differences all signal that this play was using the music of the spheres differently to *Pericles*.

After exposing the diversity of staging practices surrounding the phenomenon in these plays, this chapter argues that staging heard and unheard music of the spheres are distinct practices with defined spatial characteristics. While the distinction between fictional sound and aurally available sound may seem of small matter, it was in fact of material and spatial significance within early modern acoustic, natural philosophy, and musical theory. The differences between the two dramatic strategies present not only an aesthetic or atmospheric digression from one another, but the effects of the aural choice is also embedded within the

³⁹⁶ Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic*, 67.

spatial and material consciousness of the drama. Each play is operating under a separate dramaturgical method for its use of the music of the spheres.

Performed more than a decade later than *Pericles*' first printing, *The Double Marriage* and *The Prophetess* use the music of the spheres differently and under different conditions than Shakespeare does in *Pericles*. Back-projecting from the Fletcher and Massinger plays onto earlier drama requires problematic, ahistorical tuning and bends these earlier plays into a later style on a later stage. Doing so assumes a unified stage effect throughout the period and anachronistically distorts our perception of how the music of the spheres was staged in these plays in their own time. Overlaying the later performance text onto the earlier one reductively minimises the range and alteration of musical effects for this phenomenon. As these distinct uses affect the emotional, material, and spatial presentation of these plays within their own theatrical and historical contexts, it is important to leave the moments separate and not conflate the much later dramatic strategies with earlier and separate effects. When *Pericles* asks, "Rar'st sounds. Do ye not hear?" maybe the answer is no.

Conclusion

Early modern dramatists manifest an alertness to ancient and contemporary astronomical ideas. By extracting and exploiting elements from a range of natural philosophical sources, dramatists transformed the phenomena into composite astronomical shapes and figures and produced a mixed cosmology in their dramatic fictions and on the stage. More than reflecting these ideas, they modified and repurposed celestial materials to create complex and flexible characters, stimulate wonder, increase dramatic tension, communicate through choreographed symbolism, and focus responses of emotional empathy. This thesis elucidates the dramatic role of astronomy as a strategic and flexible tool in early modern drama, the spatial imagination, and on the stage. It does so by examining a range of case studies from across the early modern period along with astronomical natural philosophy and spatial theories. Though making no claims of being exhaustive, this thesis begins to fill the critical gap and establish astronomy as an integral catalyst within early modern dramatic strategy.

The premise of this thesis is not bound by the samples within it. Having investigated the dramatic role of astronomy in a limited number of plays and having considered a limited number of astronomical phenomena this thesis leaves much territory yet to explore. However, it opens a galaxy of possibilities for applying its propositions across other plays and other types of celestial events and ideas. The concepts transfer to other dramatists, companies, and stages. I have only featured five phenomena; but eclipses, aurora borealis, the rising and setting of the sun, and other types of astronomical bodies and occurrences offer scope for further enquiry into the topic.

While several of the plays that I have considered within the thesis are unfamiliar, one final example demonstrates the transferability of the project. Shakespeare repeatedly returns to one astronomical figure, and it is the celestial phenomenon that first piqued my interest in

this project. In *Troilus and Cressida*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *All's Well that Ends Well*, Shakespeare uses the retrograde motion of planets as a rhetorical and spatial tool to mark a change of motion and redirect dramatic elements within the plays. The retrograde motion of planets refers to the appearance that a planet could slow down or reverse the direction of its motion in relation to other bodies. Shakespeare engages the complex astronomical idea and renders it into a dramatic mechanism for registering character change and direction.

In *All's Well that Ends Well* Shakespeare creates planetary and star-like human characters that move prograde and retrograde within the drama's fictional solar system. The play operates under a mixed providence with lucky stars, planets, classical gods, and the Christian God all contributing to the actions and events of the play. Its characters perform similarly to Lafeu's ballad in their "showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor" (II.ii.24-5). Following Bertram's exit from the stage in 1.1, Helen speaks of him in glowing, astral terms. "Twere all one/ That I should love a bright particular star" (84-5). Helen esteems him to be a scintillating figure, but he remains at a distance from her: "in his bright radiance and collateral light/ Must I be comforted, not in his sphere" (87-88). She is near enough to experience Bertram's "comfort[ing]" effulgence, but the stellar metaphors indicate an observational distance rather than a participatory union.

Socially and spatially removed from him, Helen remains separate from her admired star. She basks in his "radiance" but not in his touch, receives the "collateral light" but not his direct contact, and revolves around him but "not in his sphere." Helen distinguishes herself from the superiority of Bertram's social rank and attributes her lower-class status to the rule of common stars. "We, the poorer born,/ Whose baser stars do shut us up in wishes" (178-9). In 1.3, she also uses the sun to mark the difference and distance between Bertram and herself. "Religious in my error, I adore/ The sun that looks upon his worshipper/ But knows of him no more." (201-3). As a deified sun, Bertram is transcendent and remote; and, as the sun

worshiper, Helen only receives a glimpse from him without further and more intimate knowledge. When Bertram eventually leaves without consummating their marriage, he echoes Helen's starry metaphors and says that his "course" is not fitting, since it "holds not colour with the time" (II.v.59). However, Bertram's starry orbit may not be as established or as self-directed as his excuse projects. The King despises Bertram's dismissive treatment of Helen and threatens him to a life comprised of "staggers and the careless lapse of youth and ignorance" (II.iii.163-167). The king's statement maps Bertram's natural motion and the expected trajectory resulting from it. While Bertram is the star that Helen admires, the King threatens to allow him to take the course he is on and spin out of the royal orbit of the court, where he will plummet into a backward and downward motion.

Bertram shares similar inconstancy to his friend, Paroles, the character who is most explicitly retrograde in his motion. In 1.1 Helen and Paroles converse alone and disagree over the topic of virginity and sexual behaviour. Before they part ways, the conversation turns to planetary influence over the action and fate of those born under prescribed positions and patterns of the heavens.

HELEN. Monsieur Paroles, you were born under a charitable star.

PAROLES. Under Mars, I.

HELEN. I specially think *under* Mars.

PAROLES. Why '*under* Mars'?

HELEN. The wars hath so kept you under that you must needs be born under Mars.

PAROLES. When he was predominant.

HELEN. When he was retrograde, I think rather.

PAROLES. Why think you so?

HELEN. You go so much backward when you fight.

(I.i.186-96)

As Paroles takes the opportunity to establish his martial birth, the two debate his positioning. While Helen emphasises his subjection under the planet, Paroles counters by proudly asserting that his birth took place at the height of Mars' cyclical pattern in its "predominant" position within the zodiac. Helen grants that he was born when Mars was the ascendant, but clarifies in her retort that it must have been "when he [Mars] was retrograde." Her

astronomical supposition stems from his actions, as he fights backward and runs away rather than toward a fight. She concedes that his tendency to find himself in battle is in keeping with his martial birth, but his tendency to move backward from the fight must be the result of the retrograde motion of the planet reigning at his birth (I.i.177-225).

Unlike the retrograde and vacillating men within the play, Helen is a constant North Star, and she declares, “My intents are fixed” (I.ii.225). With determination and resolve she operates as a stabilising figure throughout the play. Shakespeare juxtaposes her star-like stability against her male counterparts’ retrograde motions. But the movement she must make to eventually consummate her marriage and come into her husband’s sphere are extreme. She performs a bed trick and deceives Bertram in order to consummate their marriage and make him “doubly won” (316). So many winding paths must be followed, actions retraced, and rings sorted before he will admit his wrong and alter his course. In his final monologue the King suggests that “all yet seems well...if it end so meet” (V.iii.334). While the errant path of her husband may seem returned to a prograde motion, the play uneasily straddles a sense of resolution and incompleteness. *All’s Well* hints in its title and throughout its plot that through all of its wanderings the narrative may yet finish “well.” However, the final scene is filled with conditions based on a series of “if then” statements that never fully resolve. For Helen in particular the humiliating means of securing her erring husband has taken its toll. Her brightness has dimmed throughout the demeaning process of sexual conquest. The King questions the authenticity of truly seeing her, and her response darkens the resolution of the scene:

KING.

Is’t real that I see?

HELEN.

No, my good lord,

’Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,

The name and not the thing.

(V.iii.308-10)

At the end of the play, Helen seems to achieve a position in Bertram's starry sphere, but even this is not final. Bertram considers the union conditional: "If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly/ I'll love her dearly, ever ever dearly" (317-18), and Helen follows suit: "If it appear not plain and prove untrue,/ Deadly divorce step between me and you" (319-20). The consequence of her attempts to secure relational closeness is not guaranteed. The play ends with Helen still outside the sphere of her husband. She received the "name" or title of wife without the accompanying relational substance. When the King asks if she is truly who he thinks she is, she replies unequivocally with "no." She is not herself but an empty shadow. Once a true, though humble star she is now reduced to a silhouette, dimmed from chasing the retrograde motions of a counterfeit sun.

The attention I have given to astronomy throughout this thesis enables us to revisit familiar plays with a new mode of observing and appreciating their dramaturgical energies. Shakespeare uses the spatial features of astronomical phenomena as flexible material for his drama. In *All's Well That Ends Well* he constructs characters using astronomical concepts that enable them to rotate and reverse in each other's spheres. By using planets in retrograde, Shakespeare alters dramatic situations and character through the spatial operation of retrograde motion. The concepts of this thesis are transferrable across the period and applicable to a range of plays and stages, as early modern dramatists modified astronomical concepts as part of an integrated and strategic system of spatially conscious astronomical dramaturgy.

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