

**“Follow the noise so far as we have quarter”:
sound and the early modern stage.**



Laura Jayne Wright,
University College,
University of Oxford.

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Laura Jayne Wright,

University College, Oxford, August 2019.

Abstract.

This thesis seeks to examine the use of sound on (and often, off-) the early modern stage. While its initial – and primary – focus is sound effects, it also explores the definition of sound itself, according to early modern understandings of the acoustic world to be found in medical manuals, sermons, and academic drama. It develops previous work on sound, such as that by Bruce Smith, Wes Folkerth, and Gina Bloom, while putting pressure on the methodologies used to understand so intangible an effect. Moreover, while existing critical studies favour Shakespeare, this thesis also hears the sounds of non-canonical plays.

Chapter One explores sound effects as “soundbites” (sonic memes) and shows that sound effects can act as an allusion or create nostalgia for older plays. Chapter Two examines Jacobean drama in the light of Schaeffer’s term, ‘acousmatic’ (as used and reconsidered by Brian Kane). It shows that Jacobean playwrights concealed the sources of sound effects in order to create a frightening and uncanny atmosphere on stage. Chapter Three explores the plays of Ben Jonson and their representation of sound and the body, moving between speech and noise, lungs and instruments. It concludes that Jonson’s attempts to define and control sound while making use of sound effects are contradictory. Chapter Four suggests that Shakespeare’s use of sound was often verbal, as “phonographic” (or narrated) sound. It offers readings of “ekphrastic” speeches which describe and conjure sound that is not performed.

This thesis concludes that not only are sound effects an integral unit of early modern play texts, but that attention to their use can offer fresh readings and new understandings of such plays. Blending theatre history and sensory studies, this thesis recaptures the sound of early modern drama and hears the early modern stage amidst its considerable noise.

Conventions.

All dates for the plays discussed here (given as the proposed dates of first performance), all places of performance, and all acting companies referred to within are those proposed in Martin Wiggins (in association with Catherine Richardson), *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, vols. I-IX (OUP: 2012).

Unless otherwise stated, all references to Shakespeare are to *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, revised edition, eds. G.R. Proudfoot, Ann, Thompson, David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2011); and all references to Jonson are to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online* or *CWBJ*, ed. Martin Butler et al. (CUP: 2014).

Unless otherwise stated, all early modern play texts have been accessed via Early English Books Online (EEBO) and have not been modernised.

Introduction.

This thesis begins with the instruction given by Bruce R. Smith in his ground-breaking work on the early modern acoustic world: ‘first we must learn to listen.’¹ The following study is an exploration of sound on the early modern stage, one which listens not only to the sound effects which are cued by early modern dramatists but to their significance. Sound could certainly act as a signal: a bell, for instance, can mark the passage of time, clearly conveying information. But this thesis demonstrates the ways in which sound could *signify* and communicate complex, shifting meanings. Early modern writers were not always so certain of sound’s significance. Sound is frequently to be found in use as a synonym for nonsense. When writing in defense of his own plays, Greene claimed that his verses had been accused of ‘iet[ting] upon the stage in tragicall buskins, euerie worde filling the mouth like the faburden of Bo-Bell...’ (A1).² The term faburden (false bass or drone) suggests the monotony of the sound of struck brass, ringing loudly as the Bow Bell famously did, but without real meaning. Similarly, when a fraught Macbeth hears a sound from offstage in act five, he muses on a life which is defined by sonic emptiness.

Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (V.v.24-28).³

However, this speech, which suggests the insignificance of sound and fury, is soon proved false. The sound that Macbeth has heard in fact signifies an important moment of off-stage action, characteristic of the play’s use of sound to create an imagined off-stage world. It is the sound which signifies the death of Lady Macbeth. Reacting to this unseen ‘cry of women’

1 Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 22.

2 Robert Greene, ‘To the Gentlemen Readers’, *Perimedes the blacke-smith* (London: Iohn Wolfe, for Edward White, 1588).

3 William Shakespeare, ‘Macbeth’, ed. Kenneth Muir in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, revised edition, eds. G.R. Proudfoot, Ann, Thompson, David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2011).

within (V.v.8), Macbeth can only remember a time when ‘my senses would have cool’d/To hear a night-shriek’ (10-11). Sound is contradictory: at once meaningless and weighted with meaning, at once an idiotic tale and a terrifying reality. This is, in short, sound as it is always heard on the early modern stage: affective, uncertain, and full of possible meanings.

This possibility of its multiple interpretations is one of the reasons why sound is regarded with suspicion or with derision in many early modern texts. Classical precedents (Aristotle’s *de Anima* in particular) distinguish speech from sound, affording meaning only to the former.

For, as we have said, not every sound made by a living creature is a voice (for one can make a sound even with the tongue, or as in coughing), but that which even causes the impact, must have a soul, and use some imagination; for the voice is a sound which means something, and is not merely indicative of air inhaled, as a cough is; in uttering voice the agent uses the respired air to strike the air in the windpipe against the windpipe itself.⁴

As chapter three will show, Ben Jonson engaged directly with Aristotle’s work on sound; this complex acoustic theory was played out on stage, in explorations of the difference (and, very often, the similarities) between the spoken word and sound, and between the body and instruments as sound-producers. Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* offered an acoustic model that explored the entrance of sound into the ears and traced its effect on the body.

In the first place, every sound and voice is heard, when creeping into the ears they have struck with their body upon the sense. For we must confess that voice and sound also are bodily, since they can strike upon the sense.⁵

This representation of penetrative, even violent sound, is echoed widely in early modern drama, most readily in the poison which is administered to Old Hamlet via his ear.⁶

Early modern writers would use these classical understandings of sound in their own references to the sonic. In *Basilikon Doron* (1599), King James’s skepticism towards the

4 Aristotle, *On the Soul. Parva Naturalia. On Breath*, trans. W. S. Hett (MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 119.

5 Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, revised by Martin F. Smith (MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 317

6 See discussions in: Tanya Pollard in *Drugs and Theater in Early Modern England* (2005); Peter Cummings, ‘Hearing in Hamlet: Poisoned Ears and the Psychopathology of Flawed Audition’, *Shakespeare Yearbook* (1990); Philippa Berry, ‘Hamlet’s Ear’, *Shakespeare Survey* (1997); and Reina Green, ‘Poisoned Ears and Parental Advice in *Hamlet*’, *Early Modern Literary Studies* (2006).

semantic power of sound is shown in a warning to his son, ‘beware ye wreast not the word to your own appetite, as ouer many doe, making it like a Bell to sound as ye please to interprete.’ (C2v).⁷ If a word is vulnerable to interpretation, then it becomes like sound, which here is symbolic of subjective meaning. Hobbes also tackled the doubtful evidence of the ears in *Leviathan* (1651), arguing that sound was not a fixed phenomenon, but a prompt to the imagination:

as when any thing is *Seen* by us, we reckon not the thing it selfe; but the *sight*, the *Colour*, the *Idea* of it in the fancy: and when any thing is *heard*, wee reckon it not; but the *hearing*, or *sound* onely, which is our fancy or conception of it by the Eare: and such are names of fancies. (C3v).⁸

This sense of sound as subjective, the result not only of what is heard but what is associated with that sound, informs chapter four, which examines Shakespeare’s presentation of sound as a prompt to ‘our fancy or conception of it.’ While the primary focus of this thesis always remains the drama of the period itself, it is useful to acknowledge that other considerations of sound in early modern literature can help to elucidate both the use of sound in performance and debates over sound as they took place onstage and in the paratexts of early modern plays.

We can, after all, find traces of theatrical sound in other early modern literature; and, conversely, traces of the early modern acoustic world can be found on stage. A discussion of the tradition of opening plays with three trumpets, for instance (considered in greater length in chapter one), can be informed by an examination of the wider cultural associations of this sound. Anthony Marten in his religious tract, *A second sound, or warning of the trumpet unto judgement* (1589), uses the sound a metaphor for the arrival of Christ on judgement day. He refers first to the custom of three trumpets which announce the arrival of Queen Elizabeth I.

And for a warning to your officers, and seruants of your Court, you doe cause the Trumpet to bee three seuerall times sounded, against you descende from the higher part of your mansion. But if it happen to bee long before the seconde warning of the

⁷ James I and VI, *Basilikon doron. Or His Majesties instructions to his dearest sonne*, (Edinburgh: Robert Walde-graue, [1603]).

⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or, The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651).

trumpet be giuen, the third is no sooner sounding, but your owne Person is then
comming. Then must all your seruants be readie to waite vpon you: you are the
Souereigne, and not to expect for anie. (A2r-v).⁹

Three trumpets then are not only a signal in the theatre that the play is about to begin; they are a signal in political life, and here, by extension, in religious life. In the same chapter, I discuss the bell which chimes to mark the approach of midnight, as Doctor Faustus awaits the end of his contract and therefore his life. Although such associations are always subjective and depend on the wider experiences of each auditor, this sound, or the warning sound of chimes more generally, might be recalled in Thomas Tymme's *A silver watch-bell* (1605), which uses the sound of twelve chimes to represent the warning bell which must be sounded out to warn unconcerned Christians of the need for reformation.

The consideration hereof moued me (Christian reader) according to my simple art
and skill, to frame this booke, as a *Watch-bell*, to sounde in the eares of all men, not
one stroke alone, but twelue, in twelue seuerall Chapters: which may serue as the
wheeles of a Watch-bell, to inforce it to yeeld forth the more shrill sound, thereby to
awake the most drowsie harted sinners, (*3r).¹⁰

Alternatively, this imagery may be recalled in the minds of audiences who went to see Doctor Faustus in a later performance; *A silver watch-bell* was printed in nineteen editions from 1605 to 1659.¹¹ Sound associations can feed one into another; as Bruce Smith has put it, sound is an "O", a chain of communication: 'The sound-system of the English language resonates in the body. So does the psyche resonate in sound, society in sound, society in psyche.'¹² Early modern auditors would bring such an O of associations with them, even

9 Anthony Marten, *A second sound, or warning of the trumpet vnto judgement* (London: Thomas Orwin for Andrew Maunsell, 1589).

10 Thomas Tymme, *A silver watch-bell The sound wherof is able (by the grace of God) to win the most profane worldling, and carelesse liuer, if there be but the least sparke of grace remaining in him, to become a true Christian indeed, that in the end he may obtaine euerlasting saluation.* (London: T.C. for William Cotton, 1605).

11 Wiggins demonstrates that Faustus was played regularly from c. 1588 to c.1640, noting for instance a revival by the Admiral's Men at the Fortune at 1602, and a performance at the Fortune in 1620, possibly by the Palsgrave's Men. Martin Wiggins (in association with Catherine Richardson), *British Drama, 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, Volume. II, 1567-1598 (OUP: 2012), 426. For editions of *A silver watch-bell* see: English Short Title Catalogue. (London: British Library), STC (2nd ed.), S106042 (1605); S102471 (1606); S95613 (1607); S118808 (1608); S119879 (1609); S119879 (1610); S106867 (1613); S100587 (1614); S102473 (1616); S102048 (1617); S106839 (1619); S105353 (1621); S106946 (1625); S95614 (1627); S100173 (1630); S4947 (1630); S118812 (1634); S101666 (1638); S118815 (1640); R185843 (1649).

12 Bruce Smith, *Acoustic World*, 16.

unconsciously, into the playhouse. As this thesis acknowledges that sounds and noise are culturally contingent, it has been necessary to construct an ‘acoustemology’ (or acoustic epistemology) of the particularities of early modern sound.¹³ My chapters therefore turn to examples from across early modern literature, including medical treatises, sermons, and academic or closet drama, if they can inform our understanding of sound on stage from the first commercial playhouses in the 1570s to the end of the reign of James VI and I in 1625.

Far from treating sound as ‘signifying nothing’, this thesis considers the potentiality of sound: what sounds might mean, and how they might signify meanings beyond their immediate context.¹⁴ It proposes a new way of listening to sound on the early modern stage, one which acknowledges sounds as units of meaning which might recall other plays. This thesis traces sounds as literary as well as practical effects, considering not how one might make a firework – Gwilym Jones, for instance, discusses the mechanics of this effect – but what a firework might signify, how it might influence plot by bursting onstage, and how it might set a scene, or create a soundscape, how it might support the action onstage or undermine it.¹⁵ It considers sounds as integral and integrated units of a play, to be heard and “read” as ironic, intrusive, even imagined. Following Wes Folkerth’s coinage of the phrase ‘signature sounds’, it also aims to develop terminology for sonic events which are features of the early modern stage, and to examine allusions and innovations in the sonic tradition.¹⁶

13 The term was coined by Steven Feld in 1992, to ‘conjoin “acoustics” and “epistemology” and theorize sound as a way of knowing’. Steven Feld ‘Acoustemology’ in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Duke University Press: 2015), 12. See also Ross Brown, ‘Towards Theatre Noise’ in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, ed. Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2011), 2. Brown describes ‘acoustemology’ as a ‘framework of meaning for the word sound which as we can see is far wider than auditory experience.’

14 A wider discussion of the ‘semiological ground of sound effects’ can be found in Tadeusz Kowzan, ‘The Sign in the Theater: An Introduction To the Semiology of the Art of the Spectacle’, trans. Simon Pleasance. *Diogenes* 16.61 (1968), 72.

15 Gwilym Jones, “‘Thus much show of fire’: Storm and Spectacle in the Opening of the Globe”, *The Spectacular In and Around Shakespeare*, ed. Pascale Drouet (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2009), 3-17.

16 Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), 38-41.

The acoustic world of the early modern stage.

Critics have already begun to listen to the early modern stage. Yet, despite the rise of sound studies in media and film departments, and the recent early modern sensory turn, there has yet to be an extensive study of the sound of the sixteenth and seventeenth century stage which encompasses sound as a literary as well as material phenomenon.¹⁷ Bruce R. Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999) sought to map the noises to which early modern listeners were exposed, and, in doing so, traced songs, music, and sounds which were performed on stage. Wes Folkerth's *The Sound of Shakespeare* (2001) combined a historical and material interest in sound effects and music with close readings of acts of receptivity and hearing in Shakespeare's plays. Yet, neither Smith's considerable cataloguing of sounds (of which only chapter eight directly deals with early modern drama), nor Folkerth's closer readings, offer a focused study of how sound effects work as theatrical devices. Wes Folkerth offers a model of reading sound, acknowledging that sound effects not only contribute to the general atmosphere of a scene but often facilitate and create meaning onstage. Yet, Folkerth's study, for all its attentiveness to the cultural associations of particular sounds, limits its scope to the plays of Shakespeare, and discusses speech as often as sound.

What these critical works do show, however, are the various possibilities of interpreting sound.¹⁸ One particularly examined sound effect has been the *shawm* or *hoitboy* (oboe) that is used in supernatural scenes. For Folkerth, shawms suggest audible uncertainty,

¹⁷ For more on sound studies see: Jacques Attali, *Noise : The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Steven Connor, 'Atmospherics', in *Sonic Mediations: Body, Sound, Technology*, ed. Carolyn Birdsall and Anthony Enns (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008); R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. (Rochester, VT: 1993); Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. (Duke University Press, 2003) and *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012). Collected works of criticism include *Sounds and Perception: New Philosophical Essays*, eds. Matthew Nudds and Casey O'Callaghan, (OUP: 2009) and *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, ed. Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld (OUP: 2011).

¹⁸ For other approaches, see: Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Allison Deutermann, *Listening for theatrical form in early modern England* (Edinburgh, 2016); Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and Blackfriars, 1599-1613* (CUP: 2017).

being used by town waits touring the streets to play workers awake, and therefore becoming associated with a haunting effect:

Owing to the particular duties of the waits [town musicians], shawms traditionally would have been heard in the dead of night and in the early morning hours. The sound, coming from outside on the street while one was inside, and often in bed, would have consistently, over generations, accompanied people's transitions from sleep to waking, from unconsciousness to consciousness. The shawm would have been one of the signature sounds of this liminal state of consciousness, and therefore enormously effective at evoking that atmosphere in the theatre.¹⁹

Yet, what this 'signature sound' might mean is not so easily agreed. The 'aura hautboys seem to have created' is discussed by Bruce R. Smith, who foregrounds their use in processional scenes over their otherworldly connotations.²⁰ Both meanings can (and did) exist simultaneously for audiences; such definitions are therefore complementary, not competing. This thesis encompasses a broad range of sounds and suggests that each sound in the theatre can create its own 'atmosphere' as Folkerth would put it, or 'aura' to quote Smith.

These studies of sound have been integral to the work of this thesis; and the material history of Smith's approach, combined with Folkerth's success in situating sound effects as a feature of a script as worthy of examination as its dialogue, have been essential in the construction of my own approach. However, in the twenty years since the publication of these texts, despite the extensive work of early modern theatre historians, who have used practice-as-research to replicate the sounds of performance, and despite the sensory work in early modern literary criticism, which has made something as intangible as sound feel closer than ever before, no critical work has examined the use of sound across the early modern canon.²¹ Where existing studies privilege Shakespeare, I have chosen to listen to the sounds of non-canonical plays alongside more familiar texts. This thesis also puts pressure on the

¹⁹ Folkerth, *Sound of Shakespeare*, 41.

²⁰ Smith, *Acoustic World*, 244.

²¹ For recent sensory criticism, see: *Shakespeare's Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, eds. Farah Karim-Cooper and Tiffany Stern (London: Arden, 2013); Hristomir A. Stanev, *Sensory Experience and the Metropolis on the Jacobean Stage (1603-1625)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); and *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558-1660*, eds. Simon Smith, Jackie Watson, and Amy Kenny (MUP: 2015).

methodologies used to understand and to retrace what evidence of sound effects remain available. Drawing on the critical practises of theatre history and material culture, as well as sensory studies, each chapter takes a different approach and traces a different kind of sound.

My primary method of excavating sound has been to interrogate the playtexts themselves, tracing not only the sounds which are cued by stage directions, but also those which are implied by action or dialogue. The 1647 folio of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Comedies and Tragedies* offers one such example of a sound effect which can be heard beyond its stage direction. Printed in the margin of page 43, *The Spanish Curate*, is a simple, intriguing note: 'Pewter ready for noyse' (G2r).²² Anticipating future stage action, rather than cueing it, the direction gives an unusual insight into the preparation and performance of sound effects on the early modern stage. There is nothing incidental or improvised about this 'noyse': its material has been decided upon, and its performer (an actor? musician?) must get ready for the effect some forty lines in advance. A reader of the folio must turn the page before reaching the sound itself, in the next scenes: 'A great noyse within' (G2v). As the lawyer Bartolus rages in his room, Lopez, Arsenio, Milanes, and Diego discuss the possibilities conjured up by this smashing pewter: he has 'set his Chimney o' fire, or the divell roars there'. Without attending to these acoustic cues, we might miss not only the significance of this sound – here, integral to the expression of Bartolus's anger, as the smashing of metal becomes a sonic shorthand for jealousy – but also the continued effect of its staging as it reverberates around the playhouse. Diego dwells on the noise, which comes not from a monster, but from a lawyer: 'Nothing within but he and his Law-tempest,/The Ladles, dishes, kettles, how they fly all?/And how the Glasses through the Roomes?' This is no throw-away sound: this is Bartolus's own (little and laughable) *Tempest* moment, a sonic storm conjured by smashed glasses and thrown ladles.

²² Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Humphrey Robinson, and Humphrey Moseley, 1647).

The sound, moreover, must be extended, for the longer Bartolus rages, the funnier will be the bathetic revelation that his wife has not been with a lover, but at church. A final stage direction reminds us of the lingering effect of sound, beyond the line that cues it. We are told that there is ‘Noyse still’; the pewter being thrown about backstage must have had quite a hammering. It is important to remember that sounds on the early modern stage are rarely stopped; only attention to the playtexts themselves can suggest moments at which extended sound effects end in silence. The three instructions printed in *The Spanish Curate* (two – if not three – more than are usually found when sound is required) reveal a scene that is not punctured by a sudden noise, but nearly drowned out by the crashing of metal.

In addition to these sound effects, the folio of the *Comedies and Tragedies* held by Wadham College, University of Oxford, show traces of a reader adding sounds of their own to three plays. On page 78 of *Beggars Bush*, a cue ‘for musicke’ is written down as a reminder a scene *before* a song is required for the ‘Beggars Holli-day’ (79), in much the same style as that printed call for ‘Pewter’. The note ‘Drume ready’ is added in large handwriting to page 94, some fifty lines before Van-donk enters with the instrument. And, since Floriz mentions ‘peices’ (guns) in his dialogue, an annotation clarifies: ‘gun’s fire’ (89). The sounds of the stage, so ephemeral and hard to retrace, can nonetheless be excavated from layers of performance history: from the annotations of the 1670s, to the printed directions of 1647, and to performance itself (say, of *Beggars Bush*, played at Whitehall in 1622).²³ We can no longer hear the noise of *Beggars Bush*, but we can be sure that it was noisy.

Records of sound, like this crash of pewter, can suggest the noise that was once performed, although rarely do they offer much detail. As Wilson and Calore point out in their dictionary of music, ‘The unspecific nature of cues for music and sound in the plays of

²³ These dates are discussed in Gordon McMullan, ‘Some Late Seventeenth-Century Annotations in Wadham’s Copy of the Beaumont and Fletcher First Folio’, *N&Q* 35.4 (1988), 496-8.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries may be frustratingly evasive to us, but their vagueness reveals that they were meant to be adapted to venues ranging from the London custom-built theatres to the guildhalls and market squares in the provinces.’²⁴ Directions for sound effects can, as Wilson and Calore suggest, accommodate a range of performance possibilities and meanings. The directions in Marlowe’s *1 Tamburlaine* (1587), for instance, show a range of directions which each suggest the same sound, but in tellingly different terms.

Sound trumpets to the battell, and he runs in. (B6v.).

They sound the battell within, and stay. (C8v).

They sound to the battaile. And Tamburlaine enioyes the victory, after Arabia enters wounded. (E8r).²⁵

We do not know if there is a difference between sounding to the battle or sounding the battle within. In the first direction, trumpets are specified; but we do not know if they were repeated in the other calls for sound. With such variety provoked by stage directions, it is difficult to establish a single meaning for any sound. Directions in print are not all that are left of sound effects. As Alan Dessen has argued, ‘close attention to the surviving manuscripts and printed texts with playhouse annotations has shown how few were the additions or corrections made by the bookkeeper—most commonly to *specify sound effects*, spell out which actors are to play supernumerary roles, and anticipate the introduction of large properties’ (my italics).²⁶ Yet, for all the directions which do remain, there are many which are demonstrably absent (where sound is clearly required or is acknowledged elsewhere, often in dialogue).²⁷

Following the innovative work in the collection *Stage Directions and Shakespearean*

²⁴ Christopher R. Wilson and Michaela Calore, *Music in Shakespeare: A Dictionary* (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005), 6.

²⁵ Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great* (London: Richard Ithones, 1590).

²⁶ Alan C. Dessen, ‘Stage Directions and the Theater Historian’, *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (OUP: 2011), 514. Here Dessen also cites the work of William B. Long; see ‘Stage Directions: A Misinterpreted Factor in Determining Textual Provenance’, *Text*, 2 (1985), 121-37. Dessen discusses manuscript annotations of sound in *Elizabethan Stage Directions and Modern Interpreters* (CUP: 1984), 26.

²⁷ See Suzanne Gossett, ‘When is a Missing Stage Direction Missing?’ in *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (Arden: 2018), 141-162.

Theatre, I have drawn out sounds which might otherwise be overlooked. As Dustagheer and Woods remind us, ‘By lingering on stage directions, rather than skimming over them to reach the less conceptually awkward speeches, we can gain a fuller understanding of how a play works, in both its textual and theatrical forms.’²⁸ Where sound is implied, I have acknowledged it; where sound is possible, I have proposed it; and where it is conspicuously absent, I have noted the silence.²⁹ Without explicit directions, sound becomes a matter of careful conjecture. Brian Walsh, in his study of the Queen’s Men, reminds us that ‘While the texts that have come down to us may be dim reflections of fugitive performances, for the overwhelming majority of early modern plays, the surviving texts are all we have to go on for information about their staging.’³⁰ This thesis then takes the stage directions of early modern drama as evidence for sound, constructing whatever sonic world is possible from the textual traces left behind. This work might be called audiation, a term which suggests imaginative response to sound that is not heard but read; it is used by musicologists and psychologists to describe the way that musicians read written music, “hearing” it in the mind.³¹ This thesis is also indebted to the methodology proposed in Emma Smith’s “Freezing the Snowman”: (How) Can We Do Performance Criticism’, which sounds the call for critics to ‘replace theater archaeology with fantasy’ as a means of imagining early modern performance.³² I have experimented with what sound might mean and with the multiple possibilities of its

28 *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (Arden: 2018), 7.

29 Works discussing silence in early modern literature include Christina Luckyj, ‘*A moving rhetoricke*’: gender and silence in early modern England (MUP: 2002); “*Silent Rhetoric*,” “*Dumb Eloquence*”: *The Rhetoric of Silence in Early Modern English Literature*, ed. Laetitia Coussement-Boillot and Christine Sukič, (Université Paris Diderot: 2007); and Robert N. Watson, *The rest is silence : death as annihilation in the English Renaissance* (University of California Press, 1994).

30 Brian Walsh, *Shakespeare, the Queen's Men, and the Elizabethan Performance of History*, (CUP: 2009), 6.

31 Warren Brodsky, Yoav Kessler, Bat-Sheva Rubinstein, Jane Ginsborg, and Avishai Henik. ‘The Mental Representation of Music Notation: Notational Audiation.’ *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 34.2 (2008): 427-445. See also Stephen Handel, *Listening: an Introduction to the Perception of Auditory Events* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989) and *Auditory Imagery*, ed. D. Reisberg (Hillsdale, N.J ; Hove: Erlbaum, 1992).

32 Emma Smith, “Freezing the Snowman”: (How) Can We Do Performance Criticism’ in *How to Do Things with Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie Maguire (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 283.

performance, wherever the text provokes the chance to speculate with sound.

Soundscapes and playworlds.

Sounds are integral to the creation of dramatic meaning and dramatic place. They are cues for actors and cues to shock the audience back into listening; they set scenes and they unsettle scenes, creating onstage and offstage worlds. Sounds can be at once both diegetic and mimetic: the sound of a rolled cannon ball is the sound of thunder but also the sound of a rolled cannon ball, and when sound effects are performed before our eyes (as, for instance, in the case of musical cues coming from the gallery), we are not able to forget the instruments which construct them. Sound effects are also indicators of location (creating what R. Murray Schafer has termed a “soundscape”).³³ The term soundscape has undergone reconsideration since its first use in 1977. Scholars of sound are increasingly refining this definition, particularly in relation to the cultural context of sound; writing of early modern sound, for instance, Eric Wilson has argued that ‘Soundscapes, like de Certeau’s critique of space, are temporally contingent, fundamentally mobile, uttered by the acoustic entrances, exits, and struggles of its multiple constituents’.³⁴ Although Schafer suggested a particular (existing) location could be known by its sonic markers, when this terminology is applied to spaces constructed textually or onstage, we must allow for a fluctuation of meaning. In the space of two hours, an early modern stage could be a battlefield, court, or city street. This thesis then examines not just the soundscape of a particular scene but the sonic rhythms of a play.

With the theoretical frameworks of the field of sound studies in mind, my chapters each consciously adopt a distinct perspective from which to examine the question of sound onstage. I hope to draw conclusions within these chapters, but also, self-reflexively, to draw

³³ R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977), *passim*.

³⁴ Eric Wilson, ‘Plagues, Fairs, and Street Cries: Sounding Out Society and Space in Early Modern London’, *Modern Language Studies*, 25.3 (1995), 5.

conclusions about the strengths and shortcomings of each approach. Early modern plays are approached through different perceptions of sound: as “soundbite” (a kind of sonic meme), as “acousmatic” (or sourceless) sound, as penetrative and bodily sound, or as “phonographic” (or narrated) sound.³⁵ Each chapter establishes a new way of understanding sound, while acknowledging that most plays will encompass a variety of performed sound effects in varying measures, along with phonographic effects and acousmatic effects.

Chapter One proposes that sounds onstage become “soundbites”, repeated components of theatrical meaning (following Louise George Clubb’s term ‘theatregrams’, of which the ‘core process’ is given as ‘permutation and declension by recombination with compatible units, whether of person, association, action, or design’).³⁶ To trace the effect of the repeated use of sound effects onstage, it narrows its focus to four of the most common (and brash) sounds of the early modern stage: trumpets, gunfire, thunder, and bells.³⁷ Ranging from the 1570s to the 1620s, this chapter proposes that each sound effect accrues meaning as it echoes from play to play. It suggests that certain sound effects become sonic jokes through their over-use. Using early modern commonplaces as a metaphor for this mobility of meaning, the chapter concludes that sounds have a rhetorical power not unlike that of speech, in that they can create literary allusions, as well as humour, irony, shock, and fear.

Chapter Two explores this fear by examining Jacobean tragedy, and considering plays in which sound effects (so often loud and brash, as seen in chapter one) are replaced by more

35 This term as used in my chapter is developed from its use in Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (OUP: 2014). He defines such acousmatic sounds as those which remain unseen: ‘The cause of the noises – whether seismic, chemical, carbuncular, or divine – remains unseen: its sound is an audible trace of a source that is invisible to the listener.’ (3).

36 Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1989), 8.

37 Some critics have already begun to isolate individual sound effects and trace their use. See: Lucy Munro, ‘Alarums: Edward II and the Staging of History’ in *Marlowe, Theatrical Commerce, and the Book Trade*, eds. Kirk Melnikoff and Roslyn L. Knutson (CUP: 2018). There has been work on acoustic events, as in Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare’s Storms* (MUP: 2015); Leslie Thomson, ‘The Meaning of Thunder and Lighting: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations’, *Early Theatre* 21 (1999); Alison Huber, ‘Sound Trumpets’, in *Shakespeare Expressed: Page, Stage, and Classroom in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, eds. Kathryn M. Moncrief, Kathryn R. McPherson and Sarah Enloe (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013); and Katherine Hunt, ‘Jangling Bells Inside and Outside the Playhouse’ in *Shakespeare, Music and Performance*, eds. Bill Barclay and David Lindley (CUP: 2017).

tenuous, complex, and even uncanny noises at the turn of the seventeenth century, in parallel with the increasing use of indoor theatre space.³⁸ This chapter is interested in the sounds of the supernatural, a study which might be traced as far back as Thomas De Quincey's influential 'On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth' (1890), or more recently Frances Shirley's *Shakespeare's Use of Off-Stage Sounds* (1963).³⁹ It expands the focus of such works (which are solely interested in Shakespeare) and offers new arguments which draw on sensory studies and explore a particularly Jacobean scepticism towards the sense of hearing as evidence of the world around us. It also acknowledges recent performance-as-research as a method of engaging with the spatial element of sound. The association of sound with location has been a source of debate for many philosophers of the sonic, following Strawson's claim in 1959 that

Sounds of course have temporal relations to each other, and may vary in character in certain ways: in loudness, pitch and timbre. But they have no intrinsic spatial characteristics: such expressions as "to the left of", "spatially above", "nearer", "farther" have no intrinsically auditory significance.⁴⁰

While contemporary philosophers continue to debate this claim, early modern playwrights are decided. Jacobean tragedies relish the fact that sound *is* spatial, sounding from above or below, echoing around the playhouse, and in doing so encouraging audiences to seek its source. Lucy Munro has also suggested that the increasing use of indoor space, and a shift in theatrical fashion away from history plays, allowed an increase in the use of instrumentation in adult companies.⁴¹ These shifts in sound were not limited to an increasing use of musical interludes; in the first decades of the seventeenth century, Jacobean tragedians exploited the

³⁸ For more on the indoor playhouses, see: Will Tosh, *Playing Indoors: Staging Early Modern Drama in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse* (London: Arden, 2018) and Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599-1613* (CUP: 2017).

³⁹ See: Thomas De Quincey, 'On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth', in *The Collected Works of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. x, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), 389–394; Frances Shirley, *Shakespeare's Use of Off-Stage Sounds* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 191.

⁴⁰ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (New York: Routledge, 1959), 66.

⁴¹ Lucy Munro, 'Music and Sound', *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (OUP: 2011), 549.

possibilities of staging sound by muddling the source of its performance. Sound on the Jacobean stage can come from what Kermode calls “no-places”, ‘constructed by a character’s imagination or by the communal vision of other places’; and they can resound around the playhouse, disorienting an audience.⁴² Tracing sourceless sounds heard from offstage, or ascribed multiple, contradictory sources by those onstage, this chapter examines the soundscapes of *Macbeth* (1606), *Sophonisba or The Wonder of Women* (1605), *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613), and *The Night-Walker or The Little Thief* (1615, revised 1633).

While the first two chapters range across the work of several playwrights and show wider theatrical trends, the second half of this thesis shows that attention to the soundscapes created by individual playwrights can demonstrate their vastly different approaches to the use of sound. Chapter Three offers a detailed study of the plays of Ben Jonson, who shows an interest in sound in the abstract as well as in the form of practical stage effects.⁴³ His use of sound is shown to be contradictory, torn between classical precedent and popular demand, between the power of silence and the difficulty of controlling noise on the early modern stage. His prologues and paratextual material dwell on the listening audience; his poetry expresses an awareness of Aristotle’s and Horace’s sonic theories; and his plays not only use sound effects but draw attention to their own cacophony. The chapter considers plays from across Jonson’s career, examining their interest in the bodily production of sound alongside medical manuals which attempt to define both the voice and the function of the ear. My chapter follows work on the voice as a sonic effect by both Bruce Smith and Gina Bloom, who separately consider the implications of “sounding through”, one possible etymology of

⁴² Lloyd Edward Kermode. ‘Experiencing the Space and Place of Early Modern Theater’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43:1 (2013), 11.

⁴³ This chapter also acknowledges recent work on sound in Ben Jonson including Hristomir A. Stanev, ‘Ben Jonson’s Eloquent Nonsense: The Noisy Ordeals of Heard Meanings on the Jacobean Stage (1609–14)’, *Early Theatre* 17.2 (2014); Briony Frost, “‘O’erwhelmed with Noise”: Sound-houses and Sonic Experiments in Ben Jonson’s *Epicene*.’ *Shakespeare Bulletin* 35.4 (2017); and Christopher D. Foley, ‘Jonson’s Acoustic-Oriented Dramaturgy in the First Folio Playtexts of *Epicoene* and *The Alchemist*’, *Ben Jonson Journal* 25.1 (2018).

the term “persona” from the Latin *per-sonare*. For Smith, a human being is “through-sounding”, defined by the act of hearing the vibrations of external sounds; for Bloom, the term is more firmly associated with the masks of Latin (and Greek) drama that ‘helped amplify the actor’s voice via a resonating chamber in its forehead.’⁴⁴ For Jonson sound is intertwined with bodily functions; indeed, the body of an actor (the dramatic persona) and the body of an instrument are interchangeable means through which Jonson can produce sound.

The final chapter discusses sound in the plays of Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare does employ sound effects (as shown throughout this thesis), the focus of this chapter is on his use of speech to describe and therefore create sound on stage. If we follow Ross Brown’s claim in ‘Towards Theatre Noise’ that ‘Sound is a perceived phenomenon, nothing but subjective interference...’, or that of O’Callaghan and Nudds, who suggests that sound is any ‘intentional object of audition’, it is possible to delineate a soundscape onstage that is created in the minds of an audience, entirely by rhetoric.⁴⁵ This chapter ranges through Shakespeare’s plays and discusses how the description of sound, here called “phonographic” sound, can create complex and even contradictory soundscapes. It examines speeches which serve an ekphrastic purpose in describing sound at length and suggests that the description of sound only emphasizes its subjectivity. I conclude that Shakespeare’s plays ask for sound to be imagined rather than heard, and in doing so suggest that sound is neither fixed nor certain.⁴⁶

Together, the four approaches taken by these chapters demonstrate the complexity of

⁴⁴ Smith, *Acoustic World*, 7; and Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, 58 n86.

⁴⁵ Ross Brown, ‘Towards Theatre Noise’ in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, ed. Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2011), 2. *Sounds and Perception: New Philosophical Essays*, eds. Matthew Nudds and Casey O’Callaghan, (OUP: 2009), 4.

⁴⁶ For more on the sense of hearing in Shakespeare, see: Michael Neill, “‘Noises, / Sounds, and Sweet Airs’: The Burden of Shakespeare’s ‘Tempest’”, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.1 (2008); Jennifer Rae McDermott “Perceiving Shakespeare: A Study of Sight, Sound, and Stage”, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 19 (2009); Jennifer Linhart Wood, ‘Sounding Spaces: *The Tempest*’s Uncanny Near-East Echoes.’ *Shakespeare Studies* 44 (2016). For work on the senses in Shakespeare more widely see Judith Dundas, “‘To See Feelingly’: The Language of the Senses and the Language of the Heart”, *Comparative Drama* 19 (1985) and Benjamin G. Lockherd Jr., ‘Symbolism of the Senses: Discursive and Intuitive Reason in *Much Ado* and *Lear*’, *Ben Jonson Journal* 18.2 (2011).

the use of sound onstage and offer ways of distinguishing different kinds of sound effect. It also traces the use of sound across fifty years of early modern theatre. This thesis therefore encompasses considerable acoustic innovation, from the 1570s to the end of the Jacobean era. As is often the case following over-exposure, the brash sounds of drums and fireworks eventually became unfashionable. Jacobean playwrights began to play with subtle, uncanny sounds; and both Jonson and Shakespeare developed increasingly complex soundscapes, from the explosive laboratory of *The Alchemist* (1610) to the raucous world of *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) or the tempests and storms of *King Lear* (1605) and *Pericles* (1607). Sounds – once dismissed as crowd pleasers and gimmicks – became slippery; speculative; imaginary. These chapters consider the ways in which we can reconstruct theatrical effects as intangible and often untraceable as sound, while acknowledging the complexity of their meanings, and their importance in performance.

Sound, noise, music, speech.

In *The Tempest* (1611), Caliban speaks of ‘noises,/Sounds and sweet airs’ (II.ii.136-7). These sounds are sometimes ‘instruments’ (138) and sometimes ‘voices’ (139).⁴⁷ Prospero’s island is full of different kinds of sound, and for the purposes of this study, it is important to examine the ways in which these kinds of sound differ or are conflated. As chapters three and four are both concerned with forms of spoken sound, through Jonson’s interest in the bodily mechanics of sound and speech, or through Shakespeare’s use of described or “phonographic” sound, it is necessary to explore the parameters of what precisely this thesis will consider to be “the sonic”. The term ‘sound effect’ derives from radio; it traditionally ‘covers everything which comes out of a loud-speaker, except what is usually classed as

47 William Shakespeare, ‘The Tempest’, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, revised edition, eds. G.R. Proudfoot, Ann, Thompson, David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2011). This passage is discussed in more detail in chapter four.

“Music” or “Speech”.⁴⁸ While reference to a loud-speaker shows this definition to be highly anachronistic when applied to early modern drama, its distinctions are nonetheless useful for the purposes of this thesis. Where it is useful to discuss music, song, or speech. I have not hesitated to do so; but the sound effects of the stage remain my focus.

In her study of early modern music, Linda Austern notes that ‘Numerous Renaissance and Baroque thinkers remind us repeatedly that language and music formed an intellectually inseparable continuity of rhetorical persuasion. The former provided rational content and the latter served as an extra-rational channel for memory or affect.’⁴⁹ Yet, while music has been heavily theorized and its rhetorical power acknowledged, sound has not received the same treatment.⁵⁰ This thesis focuses almost entirely on sound rather than music, although it does acknowledge that at moments the two are difficult to distinguish. When Hamlet describes himself using the metaphor of a pipe, he moves fluidly between sound, speech, and music (as well as punning on another meaning of sound, to ‘sound out’ or discover the depths).

You would play upon me; you would seem
to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of
my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note
to the top of my compass; and there is much music,
excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot
you make it speak. (III.ii.367-372).⁵¹

The figure of Music in Barten Holyday’s *Technogamia: or The marriages of the arts* (1618), similarly brings together the terminology of sound and song, without distinction, when he describes a ‘Winde-pipe’,

48 British Broadcasting Company, *The BBC Year Book 1931* (London: Richard Clay and Sons, Ltd., 1931), 194.

49 Linda Phyllis Austern, ‘Nature, Culture, Myth, and the Musician in Early Modern England’, *Journal Of The American Musicological Society*, 51.1 (1998), 5.

50 See Linda Phyllis Austern, *Music in English Children’s Drama of the Later Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1992); David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (London: Arden, 2006); and Simon Smith, *Musical Response in the Early Modern Playhouse, 1603-1625* (CUP: 2017). An examination of song sheets on stage can be found in Tiffany Stern’s “‘I Have Both the Note, and Dittie About Me’: Songs on the Early Modern Page and Stage”, *Common Knowledge* 17.2 (2011), 306-320.

51 William Shakespeare, ‘Hamlet’, ed. Harold Jenkins in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

which when they blew full of winde, and perceiu'd it gaue no sound, they cut many holes in the reed to let it out, and then alternately stopping the holes, they found an admirable varietie of harmony; and as the holes serue for distinction of notes in a Winde-instrument, so doe your frets on a String'd-instrument. (G4r).⁵²

Moving from 'sound' to 'harmony', this description of music is more concerned with the production of a sonic effect than with a strict definition of what the effect may be. In terms of the practicalities of performance, we might think of Dekker's *Blurt master-constable. Or The Spaniards night-walke* (1601) which directs that 'Musicke sodainly plaies, and Birds sing' (F2v), as Lazarillo staggers onstage, 'bare headed in his shirt'.⁵³ It is hard to see how these two effects, one of music suddenly cued, and one of bird song, fall into distinct categories. This thesis takes as "sound" the cued, non-harmonious effects of the stage, but incorporates discussions of both song and incidental music when they cast light on the use of sound.

Similarly, early modern dramatists did not always distinguish between sound and speech. In Middleton's *The Puritan* (1606), the sound of dialogue is compared to sound effects, when Pieboard asks Captain Idle, 'haue you neuer seene a stalking-stamping Player, that will raise a tempest with his tounge, and thunder with his heeles?' (F2r).⁵⁴ Where plays slip between sound and speech, it is important to acknowledge this overlap. Matthew Steggle writes of laughter as it is performed on stage as an effect which is caught between the verbal and the sonic, suggesting that 'ha ha ha' and its variants suggest 'non-verbal noise'.⁵⁵ While speech is not considered sound by this thesis (as it has been by Gina Bloom and Kenneth Gross), chapters three and four discuss ways in which dialogue can describe sound.⁵⁶

⁵² Barten Holyday, *Technogamia: or The marriages of the arts* (London: William Stansby for Iohn Parker, 1618).

⁵³ Thomas Dekker, *Blurt master-constable. Or The Spaniards night-walke* (London: Edward Allde, 1602).

⁵⁴ [Thomas Middleton]. *The Puritaine or the Widow of Watling-Street* (London: G.Eld, 1607).

⁵⁵ Matthew Steggle, *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 28.

⁵⁶ Kenneth Gross combined a reading of noise and 'news' to examine rumour in *Shakespeare's Noise* (University of Chicago Press: 2001).

For more on voice and the early modern theatre see: Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2007) and Sarah Lewis, 'Echoic Liminalities in The Duchess of Malfi', *Stage Directions & Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (London: Arden, 2018).

This thesis, moreover, takes noise effects and sound effects to be one and the same. Modern definitions would separate noise from sound (noise is, as Brown puts it, sound's 'evil twin... raw, chaotic and inappropriate').⁵⁷ Yet the casting of noise as unwanted or intrusive, and sound as cued or deliberate, does not hold sway in early modern stage directions. Sound effects are often cued as noise; noise tends to suggest an unknown sound or one heard from offstage.⁵⁸ Noise is also used interchangeably with sound: Titus Andronicus enters, for instance, with his three sons 'making a noise with hounds and hornes' (II.i.1), which does not differentiate between animal sound and instrumental sound.⁵⁹ The use of noise as a collective noun for musicians – as in Nashe's *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592), 'Enter Sol, verie richly attir'de, with a noyse of Musicians before him' – only intertwines these different sonic events more closely.⁶⁰ Noise and sound are both considered as sound effects throughout this thesis; noise may be 'raw and chaotic', as Brown suggests, but it is not 'inappropriate.'

'the noyse of the drummes and trumpetts'.

Noise may be welcome in this study of sound, but it was not always so welcome in early modern London. Playwrights and anti-theatricalists, players and audience members, would spend the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century attempting to negotiate and control the noise of the theatre. Perhaps the best-known theatrical anecdote pertaining to early modern noise control is that of the petition against the construction of the Blackfriars playhouse in 1596. Its terms are often cited: there were complaints that 'the same playhouse is so neere the

⁵⁷ Ross Brown, 'Towards Theatre Noise' in *Theatre Noise: The Sound of Performance*, ed. Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2011), 2. The OED conjectures that the word has roots in either the Latin 'nausea' (sea-sickness) or 'noxia' (harmful behavior); other candidates for its etymology include the Old French 'nuisance'. "noise, n." OED Online (OUP, December 2018.) Web. 13 Jan 2019.

⁵⁸ See Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A dictionary of stage directions in English drama, 1580-1642*, (CUP: 1999), 151, which suggests that 'the roughly 130 examples [of noise] are linked to sound from within.'

⁵⁹ William Shakespeare, 'Titus Andronicus', ed. Jonathan Bate in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

⁶⁰ Thomas Nash[e], *A Pleasant Comedie, called Summers last will and Testament* (London: Simon Stafford, for Water Burre, 1600), D1r.

Church that the noyse of the drummes and trumpetts will greatly disturbe and hinder both the ministers and parishioners in tyme of devine service and sermons.’⁶¹ Yet, this complaint is not simply the result of Blackfriars residents determined to avoid localized noise pollution.

The complaint is predictive, protesting against sound which has not yet been performed; and it is particular, suggesting not that the sound is problematic per se, but that it will become a problem if it interferes with the church. It also tells us that the general understanding of theatrical sound concentrated on the noise produced by instruments (drums and trumpets), and not the myriad of other theatrical sound effects, from widely used gunshots and thunder, to far more intriguing effects, such as ‘Here let them make a noyse as though they were Marriners’.⁶² If one specific noise, or combination of noises, did indicate beyond all doubt that a mariner had entered the early modern stage, its traces are now lost. Lastly, the Blackfriars petition reminds us that sound is tied to questions of power. Some people (here the Blackfriars residents, the Lord Chamberlain George Carey among them) can silence sound that would otherwise penetrate their streets. They can close their windows; keep their distance; and otherwise order noise to be stopped. Yet while it may have been distasteful to those attending church in the Blackfriars district, noise was not something that any playhouse shareholder would want to avoid. Silence was, after all, the sound of disapproval, the sound of empty seats. In his fifth satire, Everard Guilpin describes a melancholy man roaming the streets of London: he, ‘like the vnfrequented Theater / Walkes in darke silence, and vast solitude’.⁶³ The epitome of silence is an empty theatre, which should, if in proper use, be one of the noisiest places in the city. The simile moves between the building and the body: there is something unnatural about the silence of both.

61 Cited in Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London* (CUP: 1987), 24.

62 *The historie of the two valiant knights, Syr Clyomon Knight of the Golden Sheeld, sonne to the King of Denmarke: and Clamydes the white Knight, sonne to the King of Suauia* (London: Thomas Creede, 1599), D1r.

63 Everard Guilpin, *Skiaetheia or a Shadowe of Truth* (London: I.R. for Nicholas Ling, 1598), ‘Satire V’.

The theatre was a place in which bodies, packed tightly, were all turned towards one source of noise. This is John Webster's image of the playhouse, in 'An Excellent Actor' (1615): 'sit in a full Theater, and you will thinke you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many eares, while the Actor is the Center.'⁶⁴ Yet, despite Webster's hope for a full theatre, with the act of listening so intense as to be almost visible to a spectator, such attentive ears were not always turned in his direction. In his preface to the quarto edition, Webster blamed the lukewarm reception of *The White Devil*, performed at the Red Bull in 1612, not only on the performance space, but on his audience: 'it was acted, in so dull a time of Winter, presented in so open and blacke a Theater, that it wanted (that which is the onely grace and setting out of a Tragedy) a full and understanding Auditory [...]'.⁶⁵ The acoustics of the open theatre were poor; there were not enough people listening to the play; and those who heard it apparently failed to appreciate it.

Sounds also spread beyond the imagined circumference of ears, bleeding out of the playhouses, as the Blackfriars petition warned. Sound effects were substantial sonic events; and even more so for an early modern audience. Bruce Smith has argued that 'the very loudest sounds that a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century listener might encounter – early modern physiologists specify them to be thunder, cannon-fire, and bells – fall within a range of decibel intensities that would nowadays rate as normal events...'⁶⁶ Stage directions could be cued as 'loud', to add more volume to an already considerable sound, as in the second part of Heywood's *Iron Age* (1613), which cues 'Loud Musicke' (G4v, H3v, K1v), as well as 'A loud shout within crying Ajax, Ajax' (K3v).⁶⁷ The playhouse was, in fact, one of the noisiest

⁶⁴ 'An Excellent Actor' in Sir Thomas Overbury, *New and choise characters, of seuerall authors* (London: Thomas Greede for Laurence L'isle: 1615), M5v. This passage is widely attributed to Webster, although not published under his name.

⁶⁵ John Webster, *The white diuel, or, The tragedy of Paulo Giordano Vrsini, Duke of Brachiano* (London: N.O. for T. Archer, 1612), A2r.
⁶⁶ Smith, *Acoustic World*, 49.

⁶⁷ Thomas Heywood, *The iron age* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1632). For other uses of the stage direction 'loud' see: (*Chabot*, 1.1.115), (*2 Iron Age*, 408, also 405, 411); see also *Blurt*, 5.2.38; *Conspiracy of Byron*, 1.2.21; *Malcontent*, 5.5.52; *Sophonisba*, 1.2.236; *Charlemagne*, 151; *Timon of Athens*, 337, 1.2.0; *No Wit*, 4.3.0, 40; *Noble Spanish Soldier*, 1.1.0; *1 Iron Age*, 302; *Love's Mistress*, 108; *Maid of Honour*,

places in London; as chapter three will show, Ben Jonson's Morose is so desperate to avoid his wife that 'he would sit out a play that were nothing but fights at sea, drum, trumpet, and target!' (IV.iv.16-18).⁶⁸ As Matthew Steggle has discussed, the applause contained within, for instance, the Globe theatre, reached a volume to which early modern ears were unaccustomed and which, for the audience, was

probably the loudest noise they ever participated in making. In early modern writing, the sound of a theatre audience applauding is compared to thunder, bells, and sometimes cannonfire. These are the three very loudest reference points available to early modern England, identified (for instance by the physician Ambrose Paré) as the three sounds so loud that they could make you deaf. ⁶⁹

Whether making noise or hearing it, early modern audiences should expect the playhouses to be full of sound, sound so extreme, that as Steggle points out, it might damage the ears.

Just as sound spread outwards, sound also intruded, entering into the playhouses: early modern plays are full of references to nearby sonic landmarks, such as the bells of St Mary Overy's in Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599) or the London streets so noisy they could wake a dead lawyer in Middleton's *Michaelmas Term* (1604).⁷⁰ The streets themselves, during pageants and processions, could become sites not only of performance but of some of the noisiest sound effects available to early modern staging. Dekker's *Troia Nova Triumphans* (1612), for instance, has gunshots masking a vanishing act which might as easily be found on the stage: 'This done, or as it is in doing, those twelue that ride armed discharge their *Pistols*, at which *Enuy*, and the rest, vanish, and are seene no more.' (C4v).⁷¹

4.2.0, 28, 5.2.0; *Broken Heart*, 5.2.0; *Prophetess*, 363; *Emperor of the East*, 1.1.82, 1.2.89, 3.2.0; *King John and Matilda*, 51; *Young Admiral*, K3r; *Bloody Banquet*, 1093; *Landgartha*, E4r; only *Little French Lawyer* specifies "Louder" music (440); on a few occasions loud describes other sounds such as an alarum (*Julius Caesar*, 2473, 5.2.2; *Folio 3 Henry VI*, 1281, 2.6.0) and shouts (*Virgin Martyr*, 1.1.118; *Golden Age*, 12). <http://www.sddictionary.com/newentries.html>, accessed. 10. 06. 2018.

⁶⁸ Ben Jonson, 'Epicoene, or The Silent Woman', *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (CUP: 2014). <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson>.

⁶⁹ Matthew Steggle, 'Notes towards an analysis of early modern applause', *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*, ed. Katharine A. Craik, Tanya Pollard (CUP: 2013), 126.

⁷⁰ Thomas Dekker, *The shoemakers holiday. Or The gentle craft* (London: Valentine Sims, 1600), D2r; Thomas Middleton, *Michaelmas terme* (London: Thomas Purfoot and Edward Allde] for A. I[ohnson, 1607), A3v.

⁷¹ Thomas Dekker, *Troia-Noua Triumphans*. (London: Nicholas Okes for Iohn Wright, 1612).

Middleton's *The Triumphs of Truth* (1613) has a firework at its conclusion which not only demonstrates the use of gunpowder effects outside of the playhouses, but also tells us of the craftsmanship behind the effect:

At which, a Flame shootes from the Head of *Zeale*, which fastening vpon that Cariot
[sic] of *Error* sets it on Fire, and all the Beasts that are ioynde to it.

The Fire-worke being made by Maister *Humphrey Nichols*, a Man excellent in his
Art: and the whole Worke and Body of the Triumph, with all the proper Beauties of
the Workemanship most Artfully and Faithfully performed by *Iohn Grinkin*: and
those furnished with Apparrell and Porters by *Anthony Monday*, Gentleman.⁷²

The effect shows that a firework could be used with precision, cued at a particular moment, and could have spectacular impact – indeed, here, it burns down Error's chariot. There is no sound recorded in this account; we may wonder then if the noise of fireworks is taken for granted, or if the fireworks could not compete with the noise of the crowd. Elsewhere, the noise of fireworks is clear. Harington's translation of Aristo's *Orlando Furioso* (1591) for instance, captures 'fier works' in a scene of battle:

For straight the fier works were kindled all,
Whose sudden flames the clouds themselues surmount
Which sight the Pagans greatly did appall;
And to increase their terror and their wonder,
It made a noise like to continuall thunder. (110, K3r).⁷³

The noise of fireworks is overwhelming; fireworks (here conflated with the explosions of cannonfire) were noisy in the literary imagination at least. Fireworks were, as chapter one will show, associated primarily with the entrances of devils and with battle scenes. Eva Griffith has shown in her work on 'Danish fireworks' at the Red Bull that the Queen's Servants in particular (known for their history plays) offered shows which were 'noisy and bright'.⁷⁴ Fireworks and other sound effects were to be heard coming from the playhouses, and sometimes from the streets themselves. Jonas Barish even draws attention to an anecdote

⁷² Thomas Middleton, *The triumphs of truth* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1613), D2v-D3r. Middleton's references to craftsmen are discussed in Michelle O'Callaghan, *Thomas Middleton, Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh University Press: 2009), 99.

⁷³ John Harington, *Orlando furioso in English heroical verse* (London: Richard Field, 1591).

⁷⁴ Eva Griffith, *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse: The Queen's Servants at the Red Bull Theatre (c. 1605-1619)* (CUP: 2013), 114.

in Heywood's *An Apology for Actors* (1612), in which 'marauding Spaniards off the Cornish coast' were frightened away by what turned out to be sound effects of warfare, 'emanating from a theatrical performance.'⁷⁵ As Barish notes, such claims only 'thrust weapons into the hands of [Heywood's] adversaries', who protested against theatrical noise spreading beyond the playhouses. Nevertheless, it is clear that the walls of the playhouses – its 'gigantic sounding board' – were a porous boundary, taking in and leaking sound.⁷⁶

'let's ha some drums, and some trumpets'.

If audiences received noise, they also created it, both in the form of laughter, weeping, and other vocal reactions, and also as a result their own demands, as the theatre responded to popular preferences for sound, and replicated the effects of noisy smash hits. Prologues in particular negotiated a sonic balance with the audience, walking the tightrope between the necessary quiet required of a listening audience, and the necessary sound of applause and laughter required of a responsive one. Prologues often asked for silence; yet, these pleas for silence are more complex than mere polite reminders. The morality play, *Like Will to Like* (1568), opens with what might seem a conventional prologue, which engages an audience and suggest to them an appropriate response to the play.

It is not my meaning your eares for to wery,
With harkening what is theeffect of our matter:
But our pretence is to mooue you to be mery
Merely to speak meaning no man to flatter.
[...]
Heer in as it were in a glasse se you may:
The aduancement of virtue of vice the decay.⁷⁷

Amidst its twisting, inverted grammar, this speech purports to offer a clear auditory experience. The prologue appeals to the audience's ears, but not for attention. Ears should not

⁷⁵ Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 120.

⁷⁶ Smith, *Acoustic World*, 209.

⁷⁷ Ulpian Fulwell, *Like Wil to Like quod the Deuel to the Colier* (London: Iohn Allde, 1568), A2r.

be turned to close analysis, to ‘harkening what is the effect of our matter’. Auditors need not worry: no close analysis is needed, for what can be heard will be as clear as the image in a mirror. Yet, for all its claims of clarity, the synesthetic shift between the senses of sight and hearing is jarring. An image in a glass is not a true image, but a reflection; sound is likewise mediated and perhaps changed by the act of reflection. We should avoid reflecting upon what we hear, so as not to distort it. Evidently, in a prologue that quotes Cicero and uses the same line for its title – ‘Saying nothing is more desirous then like is vnto like’ (A2r) – we are supposed to take what we hear at its literal likeness and understand words at face value.

Later prologues not only ask for silence, but often draw the boundaries of the soundscape they will offer. As noisy effects became increasingly popular (for instance in the history plays of the 1580s and 1590s), playwrights would justify their choice of silence instead. *The Two Merry Milk Maids* (1619) disavows what were once popular sound effects:

This Day we entreat All that are hither come,
To expect no noyse of Guns, Trumpets, nor Drum,
Nor Sword and Targuet; but to heare Sence and Words,
Fitting the Matter that the Scene affords.
So that the Stage being reform'd, and free
From the lowd Clamors it was wont to bee,
Turmoyl'd with Battailes; you I hope will cease
Your dayly Tumults, and with vs wish Peace. (A4v).⁷⁸

Here the ‘noyse’ of sound effects are held against ‘Sence and Words’, as if sound and sense are mutually exclusive. While this thesis shows that quite the opposite is true – that sounds have considerable significance – the prologue suggests that, by the end of the Jacobean period, ‘loud Clamors’ were avoided by writers of a self-consciously ‘reform’d’ stage.

Thomas Heywood’s *The English Traveller* (1624) similarly insists that it will not be a noisy play, and, in the same breath, calls for silence. The prologue marks *The English Traveller* as a ‘strange Play’ (1), and not because of its generic uncertainty; this sense of

⁷⁸ *The two merry milke-maids. Or, the best words weare the garland* (London: Bernard Alsop, for Lawrence Chapman, 1620).

novelty cannot be claimed for a play written twenty years after the first domestic tragedies.⁷⁹

It is not the plot, but the soundscape, that Heywood defends.

A strange Play you are like to haue, for know,
We vse no Drum, nor Trumpet, nor Dumbe show;
No Combate, Marriage, not so much to day,
As Song, Dance, Masque, to bumbaste out a Play;
Yet these all good, and still in frequent vse
With our best Poets; nor is this excuse
Made by our Author, as if want of skill
Caus'd this defect; it's rather his selfe will: (A3v).⁸⁰

Amongst the popular features of professional drama that will not be seen or heard on Heywood's stage are the sound effects of trumpet and drum, song, dance, and masque; even combat, with its clash of swords, might be considered stage noise. The desire for originality, to avoid using a 'flash that's borrowed from an others braine' (12), leads Heywood to eschew the sound effects which had become a familiar part of the dramatic tradition. It seems, then, that neither the fashion for theatrical sound effects, nor the opinion that such noises were unnecessary flourishes, had faded by the 1620s; silence became a sort of theatrical stoicism, an act of 'selfe will' (8) on the part of a playwright. The silence spreads beyond the stage; Heywood asks for the audience's participation in this noise reduction as they 'silent sit' (15). Heywood also suggests that theatrical sound effects appealed to audiences who were presumed to engage less cerebrally with the plays: as Shakespeare would put it in *Hamlet* (1600), those who enjoyed drums and trumpets were likely groundlings, 'who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise.' (III.ii.11-13).⁸¹ This is not the audience to which Heywood appeals; lovers of noise should look elsewhere.

Epilogues might also answer the challenges raised by prologues, bookending plays

⁷⁹ Martin Wiggins notes that domestic tragedy might be considered 'strange' but only decades earlier: 'English drama had seen nothing like it ever before, and as late as 1603, when Thomas Heywood wrote *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, a tragedy without any high politics was still unusual enough to require specific acknowledgement in the prologue....'. Thomas Heywood, Thomas Dekker, William Rowley, John Ford, *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays*, ed. Martin Wiggins (OUP: 2008), vii.

⁸⁰ Thomas Heywood, *The English traoueller* (London: Robert Raworth, 1633).

⁸¹ William Shakespeare, 'Hamlet', ed. Harold Jenkins in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

with sound and silence.⁸² Shakespeare and Fletcher warn in the prologue to *Henry VIII* (1612) that ‘they/That come to hear a Merry, Bawdy Play,/A noyse of Targets’ (13-15) will be disappointed; they appeal instead to ‘gentle Hearers’ (not only those of higher rank, but those of higher tastes).⁸³ The epilogue revisits this claim, and reverses it. While the prologue distances the play from noise, the epilogue seems to revel in it:

’Tis ten to one this play can never please
 All that are here: some come to take their ease,
 And sleep an act or two; but those, we fear,
 We have frighted with our trumpets; so, ’tis clear,
 They’ll say ’tis naught: others, to hear the city
 Abused extremely, and to cry ‘That’s witty!’
 Which we have not done neither: that, I fear,
 All the expected good we’re like to hear
 For this play at this time, is only in
 The merciful construction of good women;
 For such a one we show’d ’em: if they smile,
 And say ’twill do, I know, within a while
 All the best men are ours; for ’tis ill hap,
 If they hold when their ladies bid ’em clap.

(1-14).

Those trying to take a nap (presumably only those who are seated) will have been especially ‘frighted with our trumpets’; the epilogue proves the prologue false in its claim that the play would be quiet. The epilogue suggests that those who are sonically sensitive will not react well to the play and will say ‘’tis naught’ on hearing too many trumpets. The concern that so ubiquitous a sound effect might cause an audience member to dismiss a play entirely is likely to be exaggerated (although, of course, a Morose old man might be in attendance), but the possible scorn associated with noise remains a concern of the playwrights nonetheless. The epilogue also explores what sounds will be made in return, what ‘good we’re like to hear’.

Through a careful needling of male egos, Shakespeare and Fletcher compel men to clap along

⁸² For more on the prologue and epilogue as a call to listen, see Brian W. Schneider, *The Framing Text in Early Modern English Drama: ‘Whining’ Prologues and ‘Armed’ Epilogues* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 71-92. See also Douglas Bruster & Robert Weimann, *Prologues to Shakespeare’s Theatre: Performance and Liminality in Early Modern Drama* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 27-47.

⁸³ William Shakespeare, ‘Henry VIII’, ed. Gordon McMullan in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

with their ladies; this last word, ‘clap’, is a final command in a final couplet. Whether or not the audience make any, the play will end with some form of applause.

Indeed, early modern plays ensured that their endings were noisy. Tiffany Stern argues that endings were always sonically interesting: ‘Other post-play events were, like the opening trumpet call, sometimes part of the fiction of the story, and sometimes not. For instance, in public and private theatre alike, some kind of music followed every drama.’⁸⁴ Until 1612 (when they were banned for inciting ‘tumults and outrages’), jigs were the traditional means of marking the end of the fifth act.⁸⁵ As Erika Lin has discussed, the jig need not match the emotional tone of a play’s ending; as she notes, Thomas Dekker claims in *Strange Horse-Race* (1613) that ‘the Sceane after the Epilogue hath beene more blacke (about a nasty bawdy ligge) than the most horride Sceane in the Play was.’⁸⁶ The jig might often have been a conscious attempt to change the mood, especially after a tragedy. Robert Greene writes, in *The Scottish History of James IV* (1590), of this deliberate shift in emotion. Attempting to lighten the mood, as Oberon demands to be made merry, Bohan insists, ‘To change that humour stand and see the rest,/I trow my sonne *Slipper* will shewes a iest.’ (E4r).⁸⁷ This mid-show jig, with music and dancing, is intended to improve the mood of the audience from ‘sad to better glee’. As Dekker shows, an end-of-show jig did the same, allowing audiences to leave tragedies having heard music and perhaps having clapped along.

Just as prologues repeatedly appeal to their audiences as listeners, epilogues and jigs appeal to them as applauders: the audience are addressed both as receivers and as producers of theatrical sound. Noise is a product of bodies gathered together for a performance. That sound could be popular in every sense is demonstrated by the stage invasion Fletcher created

84 Tiffany Stern, ‘Before the beginning; after the end’, *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (CUP: 2015), 371.

85 ‘An Order for suppressing of Jigges att the ende of Playes’ is cited and discussed in Griffith (2013), 222.

86 Erika T. Lin, *Shakespeare and the Materiality of Performance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 16.

87 Robert Greene, *The Scottish historie of Iames the fourth* (London: Thomas Creede, 1598).

in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607). Within three lines, the prologue is interrupted by a Citizen, whose intrusion moves beyond the verbal to the physical, as he steps onstage. The Citizen (George)'s noisy outbursts, and those of his wife, Nell, change the course of the play as they demand to see what will become *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* instead. Yet, the audience's influence on the play – and on its soundscape in particular – does not end there. With the plot sorted, and costumes found, the next demand is not just for music, but for appropriate music. The Citizen knows that a 'stately part [...] must need have shawnes [sic].' (B2r). His wife, in turn, wants military sounds: 'let's ha some drums, and some trumpets' (D2v). As the play advances, Nell and George not only call for popular music and sound effects but begin to mimic those sounds and make noises of their own. Every sound effect – however seemingly simple – is identified and explained by Nell, and often boisterously performed by George himself, who transforms the sounds of drums into his own noises.

Wife. Harke *George* the drums.

Cit. Ran, tan, tan, tan; ran, tan: O wench an thou hadst but seene little *Ned* of Algate, drum *Ned*, how hee made it rore againe, and layd on like a tyrant: and then stroke softly till the ward came vp, and then thundred againe, and together we go: sa, sa, sa, bounce quoth the guns: courage my hearts, quoth the Captaines: Saint *George*, quoth the pikemen; and withall here they lay, and there they lay: And yet for all this I am heere wench. (I4r).

These verbal approximations of sound – 'ran, tan, tan' and 'sa, sa, sa' – may demonstrate the behaviour of a raucous audience, but they do not suggest the behaviour of an unappreciative one. Perhaps George and Nell ruin the sound effects for others by speaking over them, explaining them, and mimicking them, but they are also contagiously excited when they hear them. It is hard not to follow the pair in their glee over each effect. Each sound triggers a memory or an association: the drums lead George to 'little Ned of Algate', and his drums which did not simply beat but 'thundred'. The audience of *Pestle* might be noisy, but they also appreciate with sheer excitement the dramatic possibilities of sound.

Learning to listen.

Early modern sound emerges from this thesis as a complex and contradictory theatrical device. Far from simple bangs and crashes, sound effects are evocative and eloquent. Throughout the thesis, I combine individual approaches to sound effects with a larger sense of the overall popularity of sound, trends in its use, and moments at which playwrights either revel in the dramatic possibilities of sound or distance themselves from such crowd-pleasing tricks. Across the fifty years that this thesis covers, the reputation of sound remained in flux. Descriptions of sound are contradictory and inconclusive; this thesis does not offer an early modern definition of sound, but rather explores sound in its range of possible iterations.

Like the soldiers in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), from whose dialogue the title of this thesis is taken, audiences of early modern drama must discern sounds from around the playhouses ('i'th'air' and 'under the earth').⁸⁸ These sounds may be imagined by those onstage, or they may be real. The soldiers try to find out: 'Walk: let's see if other watchmen/Do hear what we do.' (22-23). The sound must be followed, if not to its own limit, but to the limit of the watchmen, guarding a small part of the city. This thesis too must negotiate the difficulties of following and retracing sound through stage directions, through the necessities of plot, through sparse records left by audiences. It also acknowledges the work of sound studies which encourages auditory imagination, and reminds us that

We are aware too that there are places where we cannot actually hear any sounds, but where we could potentially hear sounds. So we are auditorily aware of a region of space within which we could potentially hear sounds [...]. There is an auditory space which is just like visual space, except that it is stretched so as to be boundless.⁸⁹

This boundless auditory space begs to be explored. Space (both physical, in the offstage spaces of the theatre, and mental, in the affective response auditors have to sounds) must be

⁸⁸ William Shakespeare, 'Antony and Cleopatra', ed. John Wilders in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

⁸⁹ Matthew Nudds, 'Experiencing the Production of Sounds,' *European Journal of Philosophy* 9.2 (2001), 212.

allowed for potential sound. Listening to the early modern stage requires retracing the connotations that sounds had for early modern listeners, beyond the boundaries of the page or the space of the stage. A single chime might conjure the harmony of the heavenly spheres; the particularly Catholic sound of church bells; Ptolemy's mathematical ratios of music; or the tune of a ballad-seller.⁹⁰ This thesis, then, follows the noise, straining to hear as far as we have quarter; let's see if others hear what we do.

⁹⁰ Stephen Greenblatt discusses the association of Catholicism with the ringing of bells: 'More zealous Protestants wanted to see the custom eliminated as a remnant of popery, and they had a strong case. Traditionally the bells, signaling the passing of a fellow Christian, were a call for prayers that would help speed the newly departed soul through its purgatorial torment.' *Hamlet in Purgatory* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 43. See also W. Harrison, *The difference of hearers. Or An exposition of the parable of the sower* (London: T. C[reede] for Arthur Johnson, 1614) for its mockery of Catholic bell-ringing used to drive away the devil, as discussed in Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), 48.

‘Astonish me more then the midnight clock’: soundbites on stage.

Chrisoganus, the would-be playwright in Marston’s *Histriomastix* (1601/2), claims that sounds can offer him no surprises.

Nor could the ratling fury of fierce warre
Astonish me more then the mid-night clock,
The Trumpetter to Contemplation [...].¹

Chrisoganus may be immune to the shock of theatrical sound, but early modern audiences were not. Sounds, as even Chrisoganus acknowledges, can disturb contemplation; they can interrupt or undermine a scene, prompt a sudden change of thought, or demand attention of an astonished audience. The noise of war (and the sound effects of stage war) are, he insists, no more unexpected, and no more frightening, than the chimes at midnight. Yet, in three lines, a sound shifts between three possible associations: the rattling of war, contrasted against the bells of a clock, which are in turn compared to a trumpet. Sound effects themselves were constantly repurposed and recycled from scene to scene.

These shifting meanings, these theatrical games of sound, would not be possible without an audience’s familiarity with what sounds are *supposed* to mean, without what Sarah Dustagheer has helpfully termed an ‘aural theatrical legacy’ which leads to collective ‘aural memory.’² This theatrical legacy can be traced as far back as the *bronteion* (or thunder-machine) used in Greek tragedies; or, for the individual play-goer, it can be traced simply as far back as the first professional play she had seen. As playwrights re-use sound effects, as noises echo from play to play, they carry with them traces of meaning. Sound, to borrow a term from Marvin Carlson’s *The Haunted Stage*, lingers as a ‘ghost’ of its former iterations; we are haunted by ‘its sense of return’.³ Allusive sounds depend on such ghosts, on an

1 John Marston, *Histrio-mastix. Or, The player whipt.* ([London]: [George Eld] for Th: Thorp, 1610), G4r.

2 Sarah Dustagheer, *Shakespeare’s Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599–1613*, (CUP: 2017), 106.

3 Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 1.

expectation of meaning associated with what is heard. Sounds are familiar enough to create onstage worlds in a moment. Is there a storm? What more efficient way to stage this than with thunder? Is the monarch here? Trumpets can conjure up a court. This chapter examines such ‘signature sounds’, summoned for the right occasion, like a commonplace quotation.⁴

The possibilities of sonic allusion are played out in the bowling alley scene of William Rowley’s *A New Wonder, a Woman Never Vexed* (1624). The joke of this scene depends entirely on a Jacobean audience recalling what ‘uproar’ in the theatre usually signifies: war or devils. It also hopes that they will recall a now nostalgic Elizabethan soundscape which used such uproar to create a theatrical world of war. Newly freed from Ludgate (where he was imprisoned for unpaid debts), Stephen Foster rushes to play at dice. Here, his game is interrupted by a sound below – a sound from the “hell space” of the theatre.

A noyse below in the bowling Alley, betting, rubbing and wrangling.

Host. How now my fine Trundletayles;
My wodden Cosmographers:
My bowling Alley in an uprore?
Is Orlando up in armes? (G2v).⁵

In the insult ‘trundletayles’ (or dogs), there is an onomatopoeic hint at the sound of a ball knocking over wooden pins. The alley is filled not only with the noise of bowling itself, however, but with ‘rubbing and wrangling’, suggesting shouts and jeers from offstage actors. It is a contemporary sound, one that denotes a popular vice for young men in the city.⁶ Yet, here, in his allusion to Orlando (Furioso), the Host of the tavern at once makes the sound both modern and nostalgic. By 1624, Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* had been published for over a

⁴ Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), 41.

⁵ William Rowley, *A new wonder, a woman never vexed* (London: George Purslowe, 1632).

⁶ The association of bowling with rowdy young men is widely discussed in the period. There is a complaint in the anonymous *Certaine aduertisements for the good of the church and common-wealth* ([London]: 1624), that ‘such haue pleaded for libertie, in walking, bowling, carding, and tabling, more then for preaching or hearing Gods Word.’ (F4v). An anonymous account of *The life and death of Griffin Flood informer* (1623), describes how Flood exposed those who were ‘either in Tauerne, Alehouse, Bowling-alley, or Play-house, or else going abroad in Seruice time, when they should haue beene at the Church’ (London: I.T., 1623), A3v.

century; even Harington's translation was more thirty years old, and Greene's play based on same text was only slightly more recent. The allusion to the noise of Orlando's battles reduces the bowling match to the petty game that it is; offstage noise in 1624 is not caused by earnest knights at battle, but by young men in the city, playing at bowls.

The host runs off to quiet the bowls players, but the sound does not stop for long. The allusion to uproarious noise soon continues, this time from the heavens:

A noyse above at Cards.
How now, how now, my roaring Tamberlaine, take
Heede the Soldan comes; (G2v-G3r).

The Host casts himself as Marlowe's Sultan, and the noisy card player as a 'roaring Tamberlaine'; these familiar roles are transplanted into a bathetic, domestic context. If, as Leggatt has proposed, 'No one was writing plays like *Tamburlaine* any more, and you could raise a laugh by quoting it', then you could equally raise a laugh by echoing its old-fashioned 'noyse'.⁷ However, in these sonic quotations, there is a final literary joke. After all, Stephen Foster's game of dice takes place during the reign of Henry III, long before Orlando fought and Tamburlaine roared. Time is deliberately muddled. The allusions are contemporary: anachronistic and deliberately, comically, so. They suggest that playwright and audience share a sound-bank of shared, nostalgic references, that can be called upon even in the wrong context to make a sonic joke, here to martial feats fuelled by rage made even as the theatre, from above and below, is filled with the sound of skittles falling and a raucous card game.

Like all jokes, sonic jokes depend upon a shared set of references: we ask ourselves where we have heard such sounds before. Sound effects are recognisable units of theatre just like visual or verbal effects; they are selected and reshuffled, carrying with them traces of their past uses. Describing and defining such sounds from the traces they leave behind in

⁷ Alexander Leggatt, 'The Companies and Actors' in *The Revels History of Drama in English, 1576-1613*, v. 3, eds. J. Leeds Barroll, A. Leggatt, R. Hosley, and A. Kernan (London: Methuen, 1975), 103.

stage directions (when they are included in directions at all) is nonetheless difficult. Computer scientists use ‘earcons’ to describe aural signals, such as the ping of a received email, that users recognise and understand (much like the icon, or visual symbol). Yet, earcons are sounds that have one invariable meaning. In describing sound effects that carry a semantic backstory of their own, I will instead use *soundbites*, commonly used to mean a snippet of sound extracted from its original context and replayed, but here also encompassing the movement and the possibility of adaptation in meaning that Cooper suggests in meme, or Clubb in theatregram.⁸ If thunder, for example, is an *earcon*, it means a storm; if thunder is a soundbite, it means omens, shipwrecks, madness, *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*.

This chapter will use the idea of the theatrical soundbites to consider the meanings, the misinterpretations, and finally the metatheatrical ironies of four sound effects: trumpets, gunshots, bells, and thunder. These sounds are commonly found on the early modern stage and are particularly associated both with high volume and with intrusion into a scene, interrupting the action or announcing a sudden shift in plot or new arrival. They are sounds which demand attention, sounds which often jolt an audience, quite bodily, into paying attention: yet there is nothing simplistic about these brash stage noises. This chapter therefore proposes that such sound effects are a means of creating both intra- and inter-textual allusions, as sounds echo not only from scene to scene, but from play to play.

Trumpets.

Three trumpets blast: the play is about to begin. We know from Dekker’s *The Gull’s Hornbook* (1609) that trumpets were sounded to settle the audience, who had no doubt

⁸ Helen Cooper has compared tropes or motifs that remain associated with romance in particular with memes: ‘a unit within literature that proves so useful, so infectious, that it begins to take on a life of its own.’ *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (OUP: 2004), 3. I am also drawing on Clubb’s theatregrams, of which the ‘core process’ is given as ‘permutation and declension by recombination with compatible units, whether of person, association, action, or design.’ Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 8.

been enjoying the pre-show entertainment. Indeed, in Dekker, the prologue is the one to signal the trumpeters: ‘Present not your selfe on the Stage (especially at a new play) vntill the quaking prologue hath (by rubbing) got cullor into his chéekes, and is ready to giue the trumpets their Cue that hées vpon point to enter’ (E3v).⁹ This brassy sound silences an audience (temporarily) and marks the start of the show. As the trumpet signals the movement from our world to the play world, the sound marks a blurring of those lines. This use of the trumpet bridged the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatrical experience; for the first three decades of the popular theatre at least, three trumpets would be a familiar start to every show.

Three trumpets blast: someone is about to enter. This same sound gives different but equally comprehensible information. It is, as we read in the stage directions to Greene’s *Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (1587), a signal which draws attention to the beginning of the spectacle, a signal which does not even need to be explicitly named as trumpets: ‘After you have sounded thrise, let Venus be let downe from the top of the Stage.’ (A3r).¹⁰ This sound of trumpets is an aural cue to which audiences would have responded in their own lives. It is, after all, the sound of trumpets that announces the arrival of King James, in the introduction to Dekker’s 1603 pageant, *The Whole Magnificent Entertainment*. Like players answering a cue, the people would (Dekker supposes) be moved at once

by the sound of Trompets that proclaimed King Iames : All mens eyes were presently turned to the North, standing even stone-stil in their Circles, like the poynts of so many Geometricall needles, through a fixed and Adamantine desire to behold this. (A2r).¹¹

When the trumpet is blown, (it is tempting to read two Os of trumpeted notes in the punctuation of the colon that follows ‘James’), those who hear the sound move as if choreographed, swivelling like needles to face North and turning to the spectacle that must surely follow sound. Cued by the trumpet, the nation stops and stares. If we take Dekker’s

⁹ Thomas Dekker, *The guls horne-booke* (London: Nicholas Okes for R. S[ergier], 1609).

¹⁰ Robert Greene, *The comicall historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon*. (London: R.G. for Thomas Creede, 1599).

¹¹ Thomas Dekker, *The whole magnificent entertainment* (London: E. Allde [Humphrey Lownes, et al.] for Tho. Man the yonger, 1604).

description of the pageant as a record of performance, then we receive the sound effect, its purpose, and its effect. The trumpet is therefore also a sound of royal proclamation: there are ten explicit stage directions requiring a trumpet to announce the entrance of a monarch, soldier, or messenger, in the works of Shakespeare alone, which is not to count the many references to trumpets which imply they are sounded without stage directions, and which is not to count sennets or tuckets, which require their own categorization.¹²

Indeed, the Grove Music Dictionary differentiates between trumpet signals by using an example from early modern drama: ‘The flourish and the sennet were not identical, as a direction in Thomas Dekker’s *Satiromastix* (1601) shows: ‘Trumpets sound a florish and then a Sennate’.¹³ In the case of sennets and tuckets, Cowling’s definitions demarcate a sennet as a longer piece of music than a flourish (fanfare), designed to cover the stage business of exits and entrance, and a tucket as a sennet but for those of lesser rank.¹⁴ These distinctions should not be overlooked for, as Christopher Wilson argues, ‘a contemporary audience would be able to identify the various signals; why else would Shakespeare specify them?’¹⁵ The sonic distinction between different trumpet calls may be, as Huber has put it, not unlike the use of sound in contemporary cinema: ‘after a few visits to the playhouses, [they] become accustomed to the trumpet signaling, just as modern film audiences become attuned to the music that warns of approaching sharks or ax murderers. If a theater used a very specific set of signals

12 *Antony and Cleopatra* (II.vi); *Coriolanus* (I.v); 1 *Henry IV* (V.i); 1 *Henry VI* (IV.ii); 1 *Henry VI* (IV.iii); 3 *Henry VI* (IV.iii); *King John* (II.i, of which there are two instances); *King Lear* (V.iii); *Timon of Athens* (I.i). Unless otherwise stated, all references are to *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, eds. Proudfoot, Thompson, Kastan, & Theobald. (Arden: London, 2011, rev. ed.).

13 Michael Tilmouth, “Flourish.” Grove Music Online (OUP: 2001). Date of access 24 Jan 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000009879>.

14 G.H. Cowling, *Music on the Shakespearian stage*. (CUP: 1913), 46-48.

15 Christopher R. Wilson, ‘Shakespeare and Early Modern Music’, *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*, eds. Mark Thornton Burnett, Adrian Street, and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh: EUP, 2011), 124.

consistently, it would only be a matter of time before its audience recognized them.’¹⁶ This, of course, depends on the consistent use of those signals, and, in many cases, these sounds are not repeated with consistency, but with irony and playfulness.

Kyd’s *Soliman and Perseda* (1588), for instance, finds an opportunity for comedy in the use of trumpets. No fewer than six cues for ‘sounds’ – likely trumpets – are required to announce the various tournament duels taking place offstage, as narrated by Basilisco and Piston.¹⁷ The repeated sound becomes a moment of bathos: repeatedly, we hear the hint of a battle that we will not see. We know the meaning of a trumpet – we know that it signals battle – and this is why its over-use prompts laughter. Other playwrights found opportunities to create meaning out of repetition, but not always with a desire for comedy. Amidst the seven calls for trumpets in the stage directions of *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (1586), there are two calls which are almost identical.

The Trompet sounds
Hen. 5. Gogs wounds sirs, the king comes,
Lets all stand aside. (C2r).

The Trompet sounds
Ned. Gogs wounds sirs, the king comes,
Lets all stand aside. (D1v).¹⁸

With the exception of the change of speaker (Henry V, at that time Prince Hal), and Ned, now leaping aside at the approach of his former friend, nothing has changed. While the effect is, at first, one of formulaic writing, or even a printer’s error, if we consider the effect as a soundbite then the sonic echo serves to remind us of Henry’s past – of a time when he stood in awe at the arrival of his father – even as we hear his arrival in the present. The repeated dialogue and sound effect create a mirror image of Henry V as his father Henry IV.

¹⁶ Alison Huber, ‘Sound Trumpets’, *Shakespeare Expressed: Page, Stage, and Classroom in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Kathryn M. Moncrief, et al., (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 257.

¹⁷ Thomas Kyd, *The tragedye of Solymán and Perseda* (London: Edward Allde, [1592]), B2v – B3v.

¹⁸ *The famous victories of Henry the fifth* (London: Thomas Creede, 1598).

Trumpets were, by nature of their association with royal entrances, also associated with pomp and circumstance. In *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), Shakespeare used trumpets as a symbol of pride: as Benedick insists, one must be ‘the trumpet of his own virtues’ (V.ii.78).¹⁹ Of course, here speech takes the place of a sound effect; Benedick is, after all, a cynic about the power of sound. In the same scene he also warns that a man must build his own tomb, for ‘he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps’ (72-73). This, for reference, will last no longer than ‘an hour in clamour and a quarter in rheum’ (75-76). Part of sound’s effect is to draw attention to a moment, whether that moment is a show of power or grief; once the sound is gone, our attention wanders too.

In another turn-of-the-century play, George Chapman’s *An Humorous Day’s Mirth* (1597), the sound of trumpets which usually signal a royal entrance in fact provoke the king to question his sense of self and his role as monarch.

King. Why sound these Trumpets in the Diuelles name.

C. To shew the King comes.

King. To shew the King comes? Go hang the Trumpetters, they mocke me boldly, and euery other thing that makes me knowne, not telling what *I* am, but what *I* seem, a King of clouts, a scarcrow, full of cobwebs, spiders and earewigs, that sets lackdawes long tongue in my bosome, and vpon my head, and such are all the affections of loue swarming in me, without commaund or reason.

(C4v-D1r).²⁰

As the King complains about his royal fanfare, Catalian offers a reasonable answer: the trumpets are doing what trumpets are supposed to do, in announcing the arrival of a king.²¹ The King might attempt to nuance his own identity: he is not a King of France, but a ‘King of clouts’ and now more a lover than a ruler. But here the trumpets do not lie; they signify a simple truth, that both a stage convention and a court convention must be marked as usual.

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. Claire McEachern (Arden: 2016).

²⁰ George Chapman, *An humerous dayes myrth* (London: Valentine Symes, 1599).

²¹ As Edelman notes in his edition, the ‘C’ heading of the quarto could mean Colinet or Catalian, although Catalian is more likely, as he speaks elsewhere in the scene. George Chapman, *An Humourous Day’s Mirth*, ed. Charles Edelman (MUP: 2010), n2, 97.

Still, recognition of what a sound *should* mean does not guarantee what a sound *does* mean. What if the trumpet is used to distinguish plays within plays, as in *Sir Thomas More* (1601): ‘The Trompet soundes, enter the Prologue’?²² In terms of sound, there is no difference between play trumpets and play-within-a-play trumpets; in terms of timing, we know to doubt three trumpets that blast once the play has begun. In this alone can we distinguish aurally between different levels of theatrical reality, as scenes within scenes are cued by the same trumpet. In this liminal sonic space between reality and play, there is the possibility for a slippage of sound. The aural transition of trumpets is imperfect; it bleeds into the sound of the play, rather than beginning it. Examining moments where the processional trumpet and the opening trumpet which announces the play begin to blur, Tiffany Stern discusses the ‘Flourish of Trumpets’ which begins *2 Henry VI* (1591), ‘where it appears that a pre-play flourish turns into a flourish for a king. In these instances, the fictional trumpet is negotiating with the pre-play trumpet or, indeed, melding the two, so that what seemed to be an announcement of the imminent start of the play is in fact the actual start of the play.’²³ Theatre and metatheatrical sound alike, as the trumpet moves between meanings.

Just such a sound echo occurs in *Hamlet*, Q2 (1604/5). Here, a sonic parallel is drawn between Claudius and Gertrude and their counterparts in ‘The Mouse-Trap’. The direction for their entrance, ‘Enter trumpets and Kettle Drummes, King, Queene, Polonius, Ophelia’ (G4v) is soon followed by the entrance of the actors, ‘The Trumpets sound. Dumb show followes’ (H1v).²⁴ The repeated sound of trumpets highlights the artificiality of performance, tying together the regal trappings of Claudius and those of a player at court. In Q1 (1603), the same sounds are associated with the drunken revelry of Claudius’s court:

²² This direction is found in a surviving promptbook, as discussed in W. W. Greg, *Dramatic Documents from the Elizabethan Playhouses* (OUP: 1931), 249.

²³ Tiffany Stern, ‘Before the beginning; after the end: When did plays start and stop?’, *Shakespeare and Textual Studies*, ed. Margaret Jane Kidnie, M and Sonia Massai (CUP: 2015), 365.

²⁴ William Shakespeare, *The tragicall historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke* (London: I[ames] R[oberts] for N[icholas] L[ing], 1604).

‘The kettle, drumme, and trumpet, thus bray out,/The triumphes of his pledge’ (C3r), Hamlet observes as the king keeps wassail.²⁵ The effect is quite different in the Folio. Here, Claudius enters to a ‘*Danish March. Sound a Flourish.*’²⁶ The dumb-show begins as ‘*Hoboyes play*’. The trumpet echo of Q2 is lost, but it is replaced by an equally unsettling effect, the eerie sound of hautboys (see introduction). The soundscapes are different: in Q2, the metatheatrical soundbite of trumpets cast Claudius as a mere actor in the role of king; in F, hautboys associate Claudius and his actor-equivalent with menace and control.²⁷

If we know that a flourish *should* announce the arrival of a monarch, then we also hear a rhetorical point made by the trumpets of the French army in *1 Henry VI* (1592), here emphasized by significant editorial intervention.

Exit TALBOT. Alarum. [The English sound a] retreat [and exeunt. The French
sound a] flourish. (I.v.39 s.d.).²⁸

As Edward Burns has noted, “‘flourish’ here [is] both an answer to the English retreat, and a heralding of Joan’s and the Dolphin’s appearance “above”; it thus forms a link in the action, which makes a scene division unhelpful. As a flourish is normally used to herald royalty, it is a riposte here to English denials of the Dolphin’s kingly status.’²⁹ The sound is part of the conversation; without it, the French counter-move is lost. A similar attempt to claim power through sound takes place in *Richard III* (c. 1593). As Simon Smith has discussed, each monarch in the play enters to a trumpet call: Edward IV (2.1), Edward V (3.1), Richard III (4.2) and Henry VII (5.8).³⁰ The more the trumpet sounds, the less its royal signal is believed; the effect becomes absurd, as the soundbite is repeated for changeable kings.

²⁵ William Shakespeare, *The tragicall historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke* (London: Valentine Simmes] for N[icholas] L[ing] and Iohn Trundell, 1603).

²⁶ <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/text/777>, *The Tragedie of Hamlet*, (1890 sd, 1935 sd), p. 167.

²⁷ Q1 (1603), lacks any reference to sound effects at these particular moments.

²⁸ William Shakespeare, *1 Henry VI*, ed. Edward Burns (London: Arden, 2000).

²⁹ Ibid, n 39, 159.

³⁰ Simon Smith, “‘Flourish. Enter the King sicke’”: Exploring Kingship through Musical Spectacle in *Richard III*’, *Zeitsprünge: Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit* 17 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2013), 101-19.

Yet, while instances of trumpets used to proclaim royalty are ubiquitous, their use is not uniform. When citizens enter in *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (1589), it is because they have been summoned by a royal trumpet: ‘Enter the Kings Herolds with Trumpets to the wals of *Angiers*: they summon the Towne.’ (C4v).³¹ In Shakespeare’s *King John* (1596), which draws on *Troublesome Reign*, the citizens are summoned by trumpets again, but there is no sense of which king has heralded them: ‘Trumpet sounds./Enter a Citizen vpon the walles.’³² “King” itself is a contested category in the play: the citizens must state their preference for Arthur (an elder brother’s son) or John (a younger brother) in this dispute over the English throne. But when the citizen demands the source of the noise, the answer is unclear. Philip has ‘Some trumpet summon hither to the walls/These men of Angiers’ (II.i.203-4); the source of the trumpet itself is disputed. ‘Who is it that hath warned us to the walls?’ (206), asks the representative citizen. ‘’Tis France, for England’ (207) answers Philip; ‘England for itself’ (208) answers John. A trumpet, like the crown, is a signifier of royal status. If its meaning is confused, so is the monarchy. Given the choice between these ‘double majesties’ (489), the ordinary citizen (and ordinary audience member) cannot make an informed decision. Only in the fifth act is a choice made, as the Dauphine claims to have ‘heard these islanders shout out “*Vive le roi*” as I have banked their towns?’ (V.ii.104-5). This shout, however, is only reported – we do not hear it, and cannot verify it.

As the siege continues, French sound is met with a comparable English sound, as the Herald of France ‘enters with Trumpets to the gates’ (II.i.306, s.d.), soon to be followed by the ‘English Herald with Trumpets’ (318, s.d.). If there is a difference in fanfares, or a difference between the claims of Arthur and John, the citizens cannot judge it: ‘Both are

³¹ [*The*] *troublesome raigne of Iohn King of England* (London: Sampson Clarke, 1591).

³² <https://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/text/329>, A3r; all other references to William Shakespeare, ‘King John’, ed. E.A.J. Honigmann in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

For more on Shakespeare’s use of *Troublesome Reign* in *King John* and elsewhere, see Charles R Forker, ‘*The Troublesome Reign*, Richard II, and the Date of *King John*: A Study in Intertextuality.’ *Shakespeare Survey* 63 (2010), 127-48.

alike, and both alike we like.’ (II.i.338). This ambivalence is found again in *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), when divisions between the camps begin to appear increasingly artificial.³³ Achilles’s confident ‘Hark! A retire upon our Grecian part’ (V.ix.15) is met with less certainty by a Myrmidon: ‘The Trojan trumpets sound the like, my lord’ (V.ix.16). Just as an audience cannot know, when a trumpet sounds offstage, whose arrival it will herald, those onstage do not know whose noises of war they are hearing. Here, the confusion is deliberate, for elsewhere in Shakespeare’s works, sound is easily able to signify.³⁴ Alisha Huber argues that trumpets (sennets, tuckets, flourishes) had clear, recognisable meanings: ‘Each trumpet signal carried a wealth of information for the early modern audience member, who could determine – simply from a musical signal – the direction, distance, national affiliation, and success or failure of unseen armies.’³⁵ We hear as much in *All’s Well that Ends Well* (1605), with the clear response, ‘The king’s coming; I know by his trumpets’ (V.ii.49).³⁶ Yet, for all this, simplicity and clear signification is not found at every trumpet sound. This line from *All’s Well* also echoes the concern of the Old Widow, two acts earlier, who fears that ‘We have lost our labour; they are gone a contrary way. Hark! You may know by their trumpets.’ (III.v.7-9). Citizens affected by war must struggle to hear these sounds and to parse their meanings, as they wait under siege. When Bertram and the army enter with ‘Drum and colours’, the widow still knows little of whom the sound has signalled: ‘So, now they come.’ (III.v.75). Sound becomes increasingly indistinct when the powers behind that sound are also tenuous.³⁷

33 Russell West-Pavlov has examined the ‘acoustic semiosis of trumpet calls’ as a means of constructing ‘early modern masculine identity’ in ‘Trumpets and Strumpets: Time, Space, Emulation and Violence in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*’, *Anglia* 2014, 132 (1): 1–22.

34 Christopher Wilson suggests other examples of the trumpet’s clear significance, including ‘The trumpets show the Emperor is at hand’ (*Titus* 5.3.16) and ‘The Moor – I know his trumpet’ (*Othello*, 2.1.177). *Shakespeare’s Musical Imagery* (London: Continuum International, 2011), 71.

35 Alisha Huber, ‘Sound Trumpets’, *Shakespeare Expressed: Page, Stage, and Classroom in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, eds. Kathryn M. Moncrief, Kathryn R. McPherson, and Sarah Enloe (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press: 2013), 258.

36 William Shakespeare, ‘All’s Well That Ends Well’, ed G.K. Hunter in *Complete Works: Revised Edition* (2011). The date cited here is proposed by Suzanne Gossett and Helen Wilcox in *All’s Well That Ends Well* (Arden: 2019), 23.

37 The trumpet might seem to have particular royal significance (rather than military significance) in *All’s Well* because Mars (god of war) is represented as having not his ‘usual trumpet’ but a drum, as noted by G.K. Hunter in his 1959 Arden edition (n 11, p. 81). Hunter notes

In the final act of *King John*, the difficulty of telling trumpets apart is mocked by the Bastard, who scorns Lewis's use of martial noise instead of diplomatic speech.

Indeed your drums, being beaten, will cry out:
And so shall you, being beaten: do but start
An echo with the clamour of thy drum,
And even at hand a drum is ready braced
That shall reverberate all as loud as thine.
Sound but another, and another shall
As loud as thine rattle the welkin's ear
And mocked the deep-mouthed thunder [...]

(V.ii.169-176).

The body of the Dauphine, his ability to speak, is mocked in this comparison, for, being beaten like a drum, he will make the noise of a drum. In the drums 'at hand', there may even be an echo of the French and English trumpets, waiting to compete with one another. Sound has no distinction: sound one drum and another will answer, 'all as loud as thine'. The theatre's own aural limitations are invoked in the 'deep-mouthed thunder' made by drums. Audiences cannot distinguish between drums and drums-as-thunder without explanation.

Cannons and guns.

Gunfire was not common on the early modern stage, but it was not unheard of (or, indeed, unheard). In 1598, Robert Barret still felt obliged to defend the use of the pistol in *The theorike and practike of moderne warres discoursed in dialogue wise*, even though gunfire was established as an integral component of war: 'Sir, then was then, and now is now; the wars are much altered since the fierie weapons first came vp: the Cannon, the Musket, the Caliuier and Pistoll.'³⁸ In the history plays of the 1580s and 90s, cannons or gunshot offstage suggested a battle, taking place out of sight; a single shot might alternatively puncture a scene with a shocking moment of violence. Indeed, in the winter of 1587, a gunshot created a real

that Mars is also portrayed with a drum in *Two Noble Kinsmen* (1.i.202). William Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well*, ed. G. K. Hunter (Arden: 1959). However, as in act 2, the trumpet is just as often associated with the attack of armies as the entrance of a king.

³⁸ Robert Barret, *The theorike and practike of moderne warres discoursed in dialogue wise* (London: William Ponsonby, 1598), 2.

moment on violence onstage in a performance of what Andrew Gurr proposes was Marlowe's

2 *Tamburlaine*.³⁹ In a personal letter, Philip Gawdy (1562-1617) wrote of the incident that

My L. Admyrall his men and players having a devyse in ther playe to tye one of their fellowes to a poste and so to shoote him to deathe, having borrowed their callybers one of the players hands swerved his peece being charged with bullet missed the fellowe he aymed at and killed a chyld, and a woman great with chyld forthwith, and hurt an other man in the head very soore.⁴⁰

The account suggests that the 'callybers' or bullets were borrowed, and that the Admiral's Men did not expect them to have been real. Certainly, the effect of gunfire onstage was supposed to be harmless enough that a 'peece' or gun could be discharged while aimed at a player. When performed correctly, as this effect tragically was not, a gun could be used onstage, at close quarters, allowing for a variety of dramatic assassinations and executions.

In Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) Pedrigano 'Shootes the Dagge' (E4r) he carries onstage, killing Serbine and, with the sound, alerting the waiting watchmen.⁴¹

The Watch.

1 Harke Gentlemen, this is a Pistol-shot.

2 And heeres one slaine, stay the murderer. (E4r).

The sound is recognised at once; the single shot brooks no debate. This murder is all the more ignoble and all the more shocking when considered in the light of the first scene of *The Spanish Tragedy*, which has hinted already at sound of gunshot, before that sound is finally heard. The battle which is recounted in the first scene, and in which the hatred between Balthazar and Horatio is sealed, is initially conjured by descriptions of 'cheerly sounding trumpets, drums and fifes' (I.ii.28). Yet, despite this opening suggestion of cheery sound, the battle becomes a clash of traditional and modern warfare, that of cavalry and artillery, and with it, a clash of traditional sounds: martial music and the atonal gunshots. The battle ranks

³⁹ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (CUP: 1987), 57.

⁴⁰ *Letters of Philip Gawdy, 1579–1616*, ed. I.H. Jeayes (London: Roxburghe Club, 1906), 23.

⁴¹ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish tragedie* (London: Edward Allde, for Edward White, 1592).

are laid out in terms of their weaponry, ‘fenced with wings of shot’ (33); the general moves forward a ‘squadron of our readiest shot’ (35); the cannons roar as ‘our ordnance played on either side’ (38); the Spanish march with ‘our musketeers’ (44). There is a moment of irony in the general’s quotation of the *Aeneid*, following his mention of ‘Thick storms of bullets like winter’s hail/And shivered lances’ (53-54). The famous line *Arma sonant armis* (arms resound upon arms) recalls a sonic environment now lost with the use of modern artillery.

The sound of gunfire became associated with unjustified violence and the perceived pettiness of modern warfare. In *The raigne of King Edward the third* (1593), the convention of suggesting a battle through the use of sound effects is used to undermine the authority of a weak king. As the French King John sits with his son and calls ‘for bread and Wine’, the sounds of warfare surround the stage: ‘*The battell hard a farre off.*’ (E3v).⁴² His son Phillip is no more engaged in the fight, as he remarks, at the sound of cannon fire, ‘O Father how this eckoing Cannon shot/ Like sweete hermonie disgests my cates.’ (E3v).⁴³ The cannon shot is recast as music, a sonic digestif for a prince unconcerned with the violence and death taking place within earshot, as sound conjures up an offstage war we do not see.

The noise of cannon- and gunfire also provides an opportunity for playwrights to shock their audiences. As soon as cannons are mentioned, or guns brought onstage, there is an expectation of a sudden, violent sound. Middleton and Rowley’s *The Changeling* (1622) inverts the association of cannon fire with violence and high volume to offer a moment of silent shock on the stage. In between Acts 2 and 3, DeFlores ‘hides a naked rapier’ (D3v) with which he intends to kill Alonzo.⁴⁴ Swords are silent weapons, as Alonzo will soon find out. DeFlores draws attention to the distant guns of the castle in the moments before he stabs

⁴² *The raigne of King Edward the third* (London: [T. Scarlet] for Cuthbert Burby, 1596).

⁴³ The text would suggest this speech is given by Phillip, as it follows from his dialogue with no new speech heading. However, it is clear not only from context, but from the printer’s mark on the previous page (reading ‘K. Io. Now’) that this speech is the king’s.

⁴⁴ Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1653).

Alonzo in the back. DeFlores has Alonzo look out at the window, where he can see the castle; Alonzo notices its ‘Goodly munition’, and DeFlores seizes the opportunity not only to play for time, but to play with sound.

Def. I, there’s Ordnance sir, no bastard metal, will ring you a peal
like Bells at greet mens Funerals; keep your eye streight, my Lord,
take Speciall notice of that Sconce before you, there you may dwell
a-while. (D3v-D4r).

DeFlores conjures up an imaginary sound of distant shots but transforms that unheard sound into a bell that peals at funerals. DeFlores moves between cannon fire and bells, war and mourning, but neglects to mention the other possible uses of those sounds, especially when heard in the distance: bells might be used as warnings of imminent danger, and cannon fire suggests an attack.⁴⁵ While Alonzo dwells on a sound he cannot hear, DeFlores strikes him from behind, not with a gun but with a sword. We have been thinking of gunshots; now there is no sound effect, no warning, and the silence is all the louder for the talk of cannons.

An absence of sound is also able to create a more comic effect. A delayed shot, or a misfired shot – and the subsequent shock of the sound – is a joke frequently to be found in those plays which make use of stage guns or offstage cannons. In *1 The Fair Maid of the West* (1630) shots are fired at the command of Bess. The ship which she had captained while disguised as a man blasts its way into harbor, as Bess puns on the pieces (coins, or alms) usually owed to a church by replacing them with guns.

Our mourning wee will turne into revenge,
And since the Church hath censur’d so my *Spencer*,
Bestow upon the Church some few cast Peeces,
Command the Gunner do’t.

Goodl.

And if he can to batter it to the earth.

A Peece. (49).⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Dessen and Thomson give examples of warning bells in *Othello* and the *Massacre at Paris*. They also note that in *The Changeling*, DeFlores himself considers a bell to be a warning when he claims ‘The fire-bell rings’. Dessen and Thomson (1999), 28.

⁴⁶ Thomas Heywood, *The fair maid of the west. Or, A girle worth gold. The first part* (London: for Richard Royston, 1631).

At once, the gunshot recalls a tragic sound from earlier in the play. Another man, who shares his name with Spencer, was buried: but the bell that marks his death was marred by misinterpretation, and his death is assumed to be that of Bess's Spencer. Bess replaces Spencer's missing funeral rites with sounds of her own: a 'peece' instead of a peal of bells. Yet, the noise is also made comic by the shocked reaction of Clem, Bess's servant.

Clem.

A pox upon yon Gunner, could he not giue warning before he had shot?

Rough.

Why I prethee?

Clem.

Why? I was sent to the top-mast to watch, and there I fell fast asleepe. Bounce quoth the guns, downe tumbles Clem, and if by chance my feet had not hung in the tackles, you must have sent to England for a bone-setter, for my necke had beene in a pittifull taking, (49).

Here Clem not only offers a bit of comic relief as he describes himself falling from the top-mast at the unexpected gunshot, but also offers the sort of rebuke that cannot be shared by the audience. He may not have expected the shot, but with some three lines of warning from Bess, the audience cannot complain at the shock. Albeit in a shorter space of time, the scene noisily renders literal Chekhov's famous observation about foreshadowing: 'If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired.'⁴⁷

Cannons offer a huge sound of significant military power, but a single gunshot suggests a more targeted murder. For the more than sixty stage directions calling for a pistol (or dag) outlined in Dessen and Thomson's *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama*, the number of scenes in which the gun is actually discharged are few: *An Alarum for London* (1599) and the *Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611) are the two examples given of plays in which pistols are fired onstage.⁴⁸ Yet, gunshots were not so rare as to be limited in number. By 1633, a play

⁴⁷ Donald Rayfield, *Anton Chekhov: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 203.

⁴⁸ Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A dictionary of stage directions in English drama, 1580-1642*, (CUP: 1999), 164.

like *The Launching of the Mary* could call for ‘shooting of guns to the last man: which orderly discharged will be about eleven or thirteen guns’ (2794-8). Typically however, guns offer a single sound effect of one, sudden shot. While guns are often discussed at length before they are fired, their shots nonetheless come as a shock and their cues are often misunderstood.

In *Arden of Faversham* (1590), a play of false starts and false cues, when sound does burst on stage, it comes too late. Yet another attempt on Arden’s life begins with the musings of Black Will and Shakebag on the sensory experience of firing a pistol: ‘the smell of gunpowder’, ‘the noise the dag will make’, ‘the flashing of the fire’ (F2r).⁴⁹ Both criminals express familiarity with the use of such weaponry, and are prepared to discharge their guns; indeed, they reserve particular scorn for those who ‘carry a muscado in their tongue/And scarce a hurting weapon in their hand’ (F2r). As they lie in wait, Arden is intercepted by Lord Cheyne, who invites him to dinner and rides off with him; in frustration, Shakebag decides to ‘discharge my pistol at the sky/For by this bullet Arden might not die’ (F3v). With such a lengthy introduction, the gunshot is not entirely unexpected, but the sound shocks nonetheless – the longer it is discussed, the less likely it seems that the gun will ever be fired. Certainly, the sound prompts Greene to run onstage, assuming murder has been committed.

Yet, while the shock of volume is no doubt part of the appeal of the gunshot as sound effect, it also offers a significant difficulty of staging: the inability to perform it more than once if something goes wrong. This provides the crucial mistake by which the plot of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* (1589) is finally resolved. Acting as stage manager and even as stage hand, Barabas hires carpenters and brings them onstage; the final scene of the play begins with him, hammer in hand, working on the trap within the citadel. The structure he

⁴⁹ *The lamentable and true tragedie of M. Arden of Feuersham in Kent* (London: [E. Alld] for Edward White, 1592).

and the carpenters are working on would, of course, be the structure of the Rose theatre itself, which is being rigged for a sound effect.⁵⁰

Here have I made a dainty Gallery,
The floore whereof, this Cable being cut,
Doth fall asunder; so that it doth sinke
Into a deepe pit past recovery.⁵¹

Barabas intends that, at the cue of a ‘warning-peece’ (V.v.39) from the tower, gunpowder will be lit, blowing up the Turkish ships, while he will cut a cord and plunge the Turkish dignitaries down into a boiling cauldron. Barabas draws attention to the rigging of the building around him: ‘How stand the cords?/How hang these hinges, fast?’ (V.v.1-2). The intention is to destroy the hastily assembled wooden structure at the sound of a gunshot, but Barabas’s performance within the playhouse is not well choreographed. The Governor, revealing Barabas’s double-crossing plan, cues a gunshot too soon. The cord is cut while Barabas is still on the structure and he falls to his death (possibly through a trap door into the hell space below the stage or possibly further still if we take his reference to a gallery at face value). Yet, the sound effect is more complicated still. The gunshot has triggered Barabas’s trap too soon and brought down the house, but it has also triggered the explosions that he had rigged to destroy the Turkish ships. With no means to tell one shot apart from another, the gun’s sound is taken as a prompt for further explosions. If a sound effect is miscued, its effect can be catastrophic: it can, as Barabas puts it, ‘fire the house’ (V.v.50). The effect of a gunshot might well have been enough to fire the house, or make the whole playhouse seem to shake as if it too had suffered an explosion. The fatal confusion is an insight into the

⁵⁰ It is worth bearing in mind the long stage history of the play. Records of performance in Henslowe’s Diary begin after 1592; it is found in print only forty years later. Moreover, as Bruce E. Brandt has noted, ‘The 1633 quarto reflects Thomas Heywood’s revival of the play for performance at Court and at the Cockpit.’ ‘The Critical Backstory’ in *The Jew of Malta: A Critical Reader*, ed. Robert A. Logan (Arden: London, 2013), 3. Throughout these years, and changes of company, and changes of playhouse, it is possible not only that the sound effects of this production set theatrical fashions, but that audiences increasingly heard so noisy a play with familiarity and even nostalgia.

⁵¹ *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, Vol. 4: *The Jew of Malta*, ed. Roma Gill (OUP: 1995), V.v.33-36.

frustration of false cues and missed timing experienced by those in the tiring house and in the gallery, attempting to coordinate their sound effects with onstage action.

Marlowe also uses the device of sound as cue in *Massacre at Paris* (1593), in which sounds – bells and peals of ordnance – are used as a prompt for violent action, marking the beginning and the end of the slaughter, much like trumpets and jigs marking the beginning and end of plays with recognisable sounds. There are two explicit instructions given to prompt this widespread violence. First the sound is introduced so that the audience are forced into a role of complicity, when they hear the bell and know what it signals:

And then the watchword being giuen, a bell shall ring,
Which when they heare, they shall begin to kill:
And neuer cease vntill that bell shall cease,
Then breath a while. (A7r).⁵²

The audience must wait in anticipation until the command comes to fruition, when Guise sets off the shots and bell at the given watchword.

Mountsorrell, goe shoote the ordinance of,
That they which haue already set the street
May know their watchword, then tole the bell,
And so lets forward to the Massacre. (B1v).

When they come, the two sound effects occur in quick succession: ‘*The ordinance being shot of, the bell tolles.*’ Discussing these lines, Evelyn Tribble notes that the bell ringing continues for some 150 lines and ends ‘only when the Guise gives the order’ to ‘stay that bel that to ye devils matins rings’.⁵³ We cannot escape; the act of listening becomes an act of endurance.

Marlowe’s sonic joke – the power of a cue – is recalled by an allusion in Jonson’s *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611). Here, the titular villain instructs his fellow conspirators

To take the charge o’the firing, which must be
At a sign given with a trumpet, done
In twelve chief places of the city at once.

⁵² Christopher Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris* (London: E.A. for Edward White, 1594).

⁵³ Evelyn Tribble, ““Then breath a while”: Compression, Kinesis, and Temporality in *The Massacre at Paris*” in *Christopher Marlowe, Theatrical Commerce, and the Book Trade*. eds. Kirk Melnikoff and Roslyn L. Knutson (CUP: 2018), 66.

The flax and sulphur are already laid
In at Cethegus' house.

(III.iii.141-46).⁵⁴

The explosion will, once again, be set off at the sound of a trumpet, the theatrical cue for action to begin; yet here, the explosion is not forestalled by a misunderstood cue, but by the fact that that cue never comes at all. The explosives of Barabas's trick are threatening, but they do not carry the association of the recent history of the Gunpowder Plot that those triggered by Catiline, not only a villain but a conspirator plotting against the state, inevitably acquire. For Catiline, 'It must be fire, or nothing.' (III.iii.131); as it turns out, the answer is 'nothing'. The trumpets are never cued, the explosion is forestalled, and the conspiracy is cut short. What sounds loudest here is the silence that replaces the promised explosion.

This soundbite is heard again in Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (1621). In *The Island Princess*, unlike in *The Jew of Malta* (1589), the flame left burning does in fact take and the explosion comes at the planned time. The explosion is rigged to bring down a house near the prison where the King is held, so that he can be rescued while the whole island 'shall stand wondring at it/As if they had been stricken with a Comet' (81).⁵⁵ It is into the building's cellar, as Armusia, declares to his 'elected friends', that the explosives have been smuggled:

I have convey'd
And unsuspected too that will doe it;
That that will make all shake, and smoak too. (81).

In this 'Cellar', filled 'unsuspected' with 'Powder', in the proximity of the King himself, it would be hard to miss the reference not only to *Catiline* but to the unexploded gunpowder of 5 November 1605, some fifteen years earlier. Yet, this is not the only possible meaning of the soundbite. Reading the same lines, Michael Neill finds an entirely different sonic connotation: one 'responding to more immediate English experience of the East Indian world; for the danger of fire in the flimsily constructed towns of Java and the Spice islands is

⁵⁴ Ben Jonson, *Catiline His Conspiracy*, ed. Inga-Stina Ewbank (Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online).

⁵⁵ Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Comedies and Tragedies* (London: Humphrey Robinson, and Humphrey Moseley, 1647).

a recurrent preoccupation in the East Indian section of *Purchas his Pilgrimes* – notably in Scott’s *Exact Discourse*, where it acquires nightmare significance.’⁵⁶ Neill mentions, in particular, an episode in Scott in which ‘a group of Javan and Chinese thieves [...] undermined the English factory from a neighbouring house and [...] inadvertently set fire to the building.’ This difference of readings in itself proves the point that sounds offer not one meaning but a variety of connotations, and responses to them will differ based on one’s own sound-bank of memories, depending on the acoustic ‘ghosts’ that remain in one’s mind.

In *The Island Princess*, those onstage are equally unsure of how to define what they have heard. The sound of the explosion suddenly interrupts speech:

What betwixt love and brawling I got nothing,
 All goes in maintenance –
 Hark what was that, *The Train takes.*
 That noyse there? it went with a violence.

Cap.
 Some old wall belike sir,
 That had no neighbour helpe to hold it up,
 Is fallen suddenly. (81).

Amidst the shouts of ‘Fire, fire’ from within, and the ringing of a warning bell, the raised voices offer new speculations of what the noise might be. Here, as the Captain proposes the fall of an old wall as the source of the sound, it seems that such a sound of collapse – of stones dropped, of backstage clattering – may have been employed. For the Governor, the sonic effect is entirely different: the fire is like candles which ‘roar’, an unexpected, even exaggerated sound. What a sound means and how much that sound’s source is manipulated by the suggestions of those onstage varies from scene to scene and hearer to hearer.

An added possibility of interpretation occurs when, as in *The Island Princess*’s explosion, the noise occurs from offstage. Chambers, or short cannons, are typically fired

⁵⁶ Michael Neill, “Material Flames”: The Space of Mercantile Fantasy in John Fletcher’s “The Island Princess”, *Renaissance Drama* 28 (1997), 122.

within.⁵⁷ We hear but do not see them in *The Battle of Alcazar* (1588), which suggests ‘Alarums within, let the chambers be discharged, *then* enter to the battle, and the Moors fly’ (F1r, my emphasis).⁵⁸ They are able to trigger an imaginative response in an audience; and indeed, the subjectivity of such sounds is also hinted at in *2 Henry VI*, ‘Alarums within, and the chambers be discharged, *like as it were* a fight at sea’ (IV.1.0, my emphasis).⁵⁹ Sound allows battles to be suggested not staged, leaving unsettling (and expensive) violence to the imagination. Writing of Marlowe’s *Edward II* (1592), Lucy Munro has proposed that ‘military sounds were perhaps the most important means through which warfare was represented onstage, often used to create the impression of battle in combination with “excursions” or the abrupt entrance of actors “flying” onto the stage, and sometimes doing that work alone.’⁶⁰ Sounds can create an offstage effect which suggests two warring armies; but their use can also be manipulated by those onstage. As Munro notes, Mortimer Junior, for instance, is ‘most strongly associated with military acoustics’ and ‘first to introduce the sounds of war into the play’ (72). ‘Control over the soundscape of *Edward II*... acts as proxy for control over the narrative’ (75); sound can create a sense of battle offstage, but it can also show a battle for personal success in far more intimate power struggles.

Gunshots can even be employed as a signifier of personal power, not unlike trumpets. In *Henry VIII*, or *All is True* (1612), when Cardinal Wolsey is hosting a banquet, sound is used to mark Henry’s entrance. After two hautboys, a third sound effect is used to cue the entrance of the king: ‘Drum and trumpet; chambers discharged.’ In 1613, these particular misfired chambers set the roof of the Globe alight. Some surviving accounts of the fire

⁵⁷ John Smith defines chambers as weaker guns in *A Sea Grammar*: ‘Chambers is a charge made of brasse or iron which we vse to put in at the britch of a sling or Murtherer, containing iust so much powder as will driue away the case of stones or shot, or any thing in her.’ John Smith, *A Sea Grammar* (London: Iohn Hauiland, 1627), K1v. See also Dessen and Thomson, 47.

⁵⁸ George Peele, *The battell of Alcazar* (London: Edward Allde for Richard Bankworth, 1594).

⁵⁹ The Folio reads ‘Alarum. Fight at Sea. Ordance goes off.’ (IV.1.0). <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>.

⁶⁰ Lucy Munro, ‘Alarums: *Edward II* and the Staging of History’ in *Christopher Marlowe, Theatrical Commerce, and the Book Trade*. eds. Kirk Melnikoff and Roslyn L. Knutson (CUP: 2018), 71.

suggest an awareness not only of the sound effect but of the way in which it was used. A letter written by a young merchant, Henry Bluett, and rediscovered by Maija Jansson Cole in 1981 notes that when ‘the play was almost ended the house was fired with shooting off a chamber which was stopped with towe [straw] which was blown up into the thatch of the house and so burnt down to the ground.’⁶¹ A letter by Henry Wotton, describing ‘what hath happened this week at the Banks side’, notes that ‘King Henry making a Masque at Cardinal Wolseys House, and certain Canons being shot off at his entry, some of the Paper, or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the Thatch’.⁶² While it is not a particularly sophisticated stage effect, the basic technical knowledge of the letter-writers make clear their awareness that the sound was associated with the entry of the king, and that the cannon was actually lit, albeit to fire ‘Paper, or other stuff’.

Cannons are not always sounded at entrances, however – as we hear at the end of *Hamlet*, when the silence of death is interrupted by the noise of war. The Folio *Hamlet* ends instead with ‘*Exeunt Marching: after the which, a Peale of Ordenance are shot off.*’ (3780, s.d.).⁶³ Here, gunshots end a play that might more readily have ended with a mournful silence. Shakespeare demonstrates an awareness of what the expected sound might have been, as peals not of passing bells but of ordnance sound as the play ends.

For. Let foure Captaines
 Beare Hamlet like a Soldier to the stage,
 For he was likely, had he beene put on
 To haue prou'd most royally:
 And for his passage,
 The Souldiours Musicke, and the rites of Warre
 Speake lowdly for him.
 Take vp the body;
 Such a fight as this
 Becomes the field, but heere shewes much amis.
 Go, bid the Souldiers shoote. (3771-3780).

61 Letter (Henry Bluett to Richard Weeks, 4 July 1613), quoted in Maija Jansson Cole, ‘A New Account of the Burning of the Globe.’ *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32.3 (1981), 352.

62 Letter (Henry Wotton, 2 July 1613), quoted in William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, ed. G. McMullan (Arden: London, 2000), 59-60.

63 <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/text/791>.

Fortinbras changes the soundscape, imposing the martial sound of ‘Souldiours Musicke’ as Hamlet’s body is carried ‘like a Soldier to the stage.’ The final sound shifts from the dead march of tragedy to the drums and guns of a history play. History will march on: the guns that end the play remind us of the military might of Fortinbras, and also of the lack of martial response from Hamlet, who tended, instead, to the corruption of his own court. With Hamlet’s desire for silence quite forgotten, the sounds of war announce Fortinbras even as he claims the crown not from a fallen foe on the battlefield but from a young man who has been killed in a duel. Instead of Horatio telling Hamlet’s story, now ‘the rites of Warre/Speake lowdly for him’ (3776-77). The sound of guns is offered without explanation or endorsement; it is heard once the stage is empty, coming after ‘Exeunt’. Noise replaces action; the play does not end in the promised silence.

Thunder and lightning.

On the early modern stage, thunder, for all its noise and its accompanying flashes of lightning, was a matter of debate. Its meaning was unfixed: thunder was often used metaphorically, in stage directions which call for clamor or noise but not necessarily for thunder itself. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613) cues a vague sound: ‘Here they fall on their faces, as formerly, and there is heard clanging of armour, with a short thunder, as the burst of a battle, whereupon they all rise and bow to the altar.’ (V.i.62, s.d.).⁶⁴ If the thunder is ‘as the burst of a battle’, then the thunder is here more a thundering of weapons than thunder from the sky – but, perhaps both sound the same, and are produced by the same methods. Indeed, a slippage between sounds and their connotations can often be part of an acoustic joke. In *Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597), Falstaff calls for a storm, to allow him to shelter from the rain with Mistress Ford, as Aeneas once sheltered with Dido – and, amongst his demands he

⁶⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter (Arden: 2002), 291.

cries, ‘let it thunder to the tune of “Greensleeves”’ (V.v.19).⁶⁵ Music is mixed with noise, love songs with thunder. No thunder or music comes. Instead, we hear ‘A noise of horns within’ (a joke for a reader as much as a playgoer, as it announces the husbands that Falstaff would have cuckolded).

In Lodge and Greene’s *A Looking Glass for London and England* (1589), in which the tropes of the medieval morality play linger, thunder has a far more explicit meaning, although those hearing the effect onstage do not necessarily agree. The incestuous marriage of Rasni and Remilia (drawn from the Book of Jonah) is cut short by divine intervention: ‘Lightning and thunder wherewith Remilia is strooken.’ (C2v).⁶⁶ Here, the stage direction (that very deliberate ‘strooken’) tells a reader more than either an audience member, or indeed a character onstage, can yet know about this divinely sent thunderbolt.⁶⁷ King Rasni questions the sound: ‘What wondrous threatning noyse is this I heare?/What flashing lightnings trouble our delights?’ (C2v). Radagon, his courtier, assures him,

Dread not O King, at ordinary chance,
These are but common exalations,
Drawne from the earth, in substance hote and drie,
Or moist and thicke, or Meteors combust,
Matters and causes incident to time,
Inkindled in the firie region first.
Tut be not now a Romane *Angurer*,
Approach the Tent, looke on *Remilia*.(C2v).

Thunder is a common exhalation of the earth; to attribute further meaning to it would be to act as a pagan Roman, predicting the future as if through augury. Of course, Lodge and Greene offer, in their dramatization of this Old Testament book, a clear morality, with an intervening God. We already know that the lightning has struck Remilia as the king and courtier debate the meaning of thunder; yet only after this dismissal of divine justice, does

⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. Giorgio Melchiori (Arden: 2000). Melchiori notes that this particular sound is only cued in Q (n 29 SD), 277.

⁶⁶ Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene, *A Looking Glasse for London and England* (London: William Barley, 1594).

⁶⁷ Charles Read Baskervill discusses a copy of Q4, which is heavily annotated with additional stage directions, including those for thunder. ‘A Prompt Copy of “A Looking Glass for London and England”’, *Modern Philology* 30.1 (1932), 29-51.

Rasni '[draw] the Curtaines and [finde] her stroken with Thunder, blacke.' (C2v). Even if thunder is not heaven-sent (and we are left in little doubt that it is), it has consequences and meaning beyond that of exhalations from the earth, as Rasni discovers behind the curtain.

The association of thunder with judgement (already familiar from the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*, as well as from Exodus), allows for Lodge and Greene to signal the moral agenda of their playworld.⁶⁸ The question of thunder is played out again in Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1610). Unlike the biblical framework of *A Looking Glass*, Tourneur's tragedy openly challenges the possibility of divine intervention in the revenge plans of humankind. Thunder is met with three descriptions, as it rings forth after D'Amville has murdered his brother, startling his servant Borachio (and no doubt the audience).

Thunder and Lightning.

[D'am]. What! Doest start at thunder? Credit my beliefe, t'is a meere effect of nature. An exhalation hot and dry, inuolu'd within a watrie vapour i'the middle religion of the ayre. Whose coldnesse congealing that thicke moysture to a cloud: the angry exhalation shut within a prison of contrary qualitie, striues to be free; and with the violent eruption through the grossnesse of that cloud; makes this noyse we heare.

Bor. T'is a fearefull noyse.

D'am. T'is a braue noyse. And mee thinkes graces our accomplishid proiect, as a peale of Ordnance does a triumph. It speakes encouragement. (E3v).⁶⁹

At first, D'Amville offers a description of the climate that produces thunder, in language which closely echoes *A Looking Glass*: it is 'An exhalation hot and dry'. In 'exhalation',

⁶⁸ 'Then himself he thundered aloud from Ida, and sent a blazing flash into the army of the Achaeans; and at the sight of it they were struck with wonder, and pale fear seized them all.' (Homer, *Iliad*, trans. A.T. Murray, revised by William F. Wyatt (MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 8.75-77.

'Then the Father omnipotent, angered that any mortal should rise from the nether shades to the light of life, himself with his thunder hurled down to the Stygian waters the finder of such healing craft, the one born of Phoebus.' (Virgil, *Aeneid: Books 7-12. Appendix Vergiliana*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, revised by G.P. Goold (MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), VII.770-773.

'Then Mosés stretched out his rod toward heaven, and the Lord sent thundre & haile, and lightening vpon the grounde' (Exodus 9:23). *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament*, trans. William Whittingham, Anthony Gilby, Thomas Sampson (Geneva: Rouland Hall, [1560]), giiir.

⁶⁹ Cyril Tourneur, *The atheist's tragedie: or The honest man's reuenge* (London: [Thomas Snodham], 1611).

D'Amville also, metatheatrically, catches something of the smoke produced by the squibs required for lightning.⁷⁰ D'Amville, who openly professes his atheism, cannot attribute the thunder to a god in whom he does not believe. As Gwilym Jones points out in his study of storm effects, 'Thunder might be the result of an exhalation trapped in a cloud, but that same thunder could equally be interpreted as the voice of God or the work of a witch, depending on the vested interest of the interpreter.'⁷¹ We hear, in short, what we want to hear.

Both religious auditors, however, and those familiar with theatrical practice, will have more faith in the thunder's source. The joke depends upon thunder as a soundbite: the audience must know that thunder connotes divine punishment, in order for D'Amville's meteorological interpretation to seem so laughably weak. If audiences happen to recall the debate over thunder in Lodge and Greene's play, and its ultimate conclusion of the divine justice of thunder, this is all to the better. In a play which pivots on the idea of divine punishment – which rewrites the conventions of revenge tragedy by arguing that vengeance should belong to God alone – the interpretation of thunder as a sign of heavenly wrath is crucial to the moral world constructed by Tourneur. D'Amville willfully misunderstands a sound so familiar to theatrical audiences as to need no explanation.

Yet, the irony of this misinterpreted sound is not just moral but also metatheatrical. D'Amville hears the thunder, and immediately replaces it with another sound, one that better reflects what he wants to hear, for he believes that the thunder 'graces our accomplishid proiect, as a peale of Ordnance does a triumph.' In her reading of these lines, Leslie Thomson asserts that 'Both of D'Amville's explanations depend on what much of the audience believed or at least accepted as stage convention: that thunder and lightning was a sign of

⁷⁰ For discussion of the further sensory implications of the use of fireworks and explosives, and the lingering smell of sulphur, see Jonathan Gil Harris, 'The Smell of Macbeth,' *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 58.4 (2007), 465-486.

⁷¹ Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare's Storms* (MUP: 2015), 29.

intervention in human affairs by the demonic or divine.’⁷² This is undoubtedly true, but the idea might be pushed further – for here D’Amville is not just asserting divine intervention, but playing with those very stage conventions which thunder should recall. Thunder effects were created by the sound of gunshots (accompanied by drums, or the rolling of a cannon ball).⁷³ The sound of thunder is the sound of a peal of ordnance, or something very like it; sound effects are every bit as interchangeable as D’Amville would have them be. Sound effects, D’Amville teasingly suggests, can also be cued at a time appropriate to the progression of the plot: it is a good job, after all, that Nature thought ‘to forbear this noyse when wee set forth, because it should not terrifie my brothers going home; which would haue dash’d our purpose’ (E3v). Rather than hearing the thunder as a consequence of his murderous actions, D’Amville finds in it a helpful coincidence of timing: this thunder has been well-staged. D’Amville places his finger precisely on how sound effects work and are interpreted, but in his own interpretation misses the point entirely. In this, he is not alone. In *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606), Vindice hears the thunder in theatrical terms, insisting that ‘When thunder-claps, heaven likes the tragedy’ (I3v) – a willful mishearing, but one which still associates thunder with heavenly judgement, and with audience applause.⁷⁴

The association of thunder with moral or divine judgement is found throughout early modern drama. The sound of thunder can, like a common-place quotation, be sententious. Writing of *The Tempest* (1611), a play ‘as much a revenge play as it is a “late romance”’, John Kerrigan notes how, ‘Entering the scene to punish, Ariel arrives (like the masquing Vindice) against a background of ‘*Thunder and lightning*’, and claims the authority of

⁷² Leslie Thomson, ‘The Meaning of Thunder and Lighting: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations’, *Early Theatre* 21 (1999), 14.

⁷³ Gwilym Jones contributes to the debate by offering Martin Spevack’s note on thunder in his edition of *Julius Caesar* as a typical example. ‘Thunder was produced by rolling a cannon-ball down a wooden trough, the “thunder-run”, by drums or cannon-fire; lightning, by some kind of fireworks’. Disputing David Daniell’s assertions, however, Jones suggests that the thunder-sheet postdates Shakespeare ‘by at least several decades’. *Shakespeare’s Storms*, 33 and note 6, 159.

⁷⁴ [Thomas Middleton], *The reuengers tragaedie* (London: G. Eld, 1607).

providential retribution.’⁷⁵ It is in that brief comparison – ‘like the masquing Vindice’ – that the mimetic, meme-etic, power of sound can be detected. For Kerrigan, the sound recalls another scene from another play (with all the potential such an allusion might offer for bathetic humour or very real fear). However, when Allison Deutermann cites Vindice’s lines, thunder is understood as a specific marker of genre (revenge tragedy), much like the black cloth that hangs at the back of a playhouse to mark tragedy.⁷⁶ Although for one the allusive connotations are specific to one play, and for the other generic, or associated with a genre, both critics agree that theatrical sound carries a weight of remembered meaning.

For all that thunder might be divine, it is just as often demonic. Stage devils tend to enter with a bang, a heart-stopping shock of thunder and lightning or fireworks. They themselves can add to the volume, as for instance in Lupton’s *All For Money* (1577), which directs that, whilst in debate with Sinne, ‘Here Satan shall crie and roare’ and – for variety – later instructs ‘Here he roareth and crieth’ (B3r).⁷⁷ The tradition of divine and devilish noise was a well-established one. In medieval mystery plays across Europe, large sums were spent on elaborate sound effects, such as ‘a volley of shots imitating Heaven’s thunder’ (from a 1439 performance in a Florentine church).⁷⁸ There are records of payments for ‘cannone and flaming fireworks necessary for the devil-scene’ as well as ‘a new thunder barrel’ and ‘12lbs of powder for the guns and thunder’.⁷⁹ Moving closer to the playhouses of early modern London, Philip Butterworth has discussed the association of devils with flames and explosions: actors often entered with bangs, smoke, or even actually on fire, according to

⁷⁵ John Kerrigan, *Revenge Tragedy: Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 212.

⁷⁶ Allison K Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England* (Edinburgh Critical Studies in Renaissance Culture: Edinburgh, 2016), 132. For black cloth in performances of tragedy, see Tiffany Stern, ‘Early Modern Tragedy and Performance’, *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, eds. Michael Neill, and David Schalkwyk. (OUP: 2016), 490.

⁷⁷ Thomas Lupton, *All for money* (London: Roger Warde and Richard M[...]dee, 1578).

⁷⁸ John E. Tailby, ‘Theatre spectacles in Florence’, *The Medieval European Stage, 500-1550*, ed. William Tydeman (CUP: 2001), 455.

⁷⁹ *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation*, ed. Peter Meredith, John E. Tailby, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1987), 104.

Thomas Hyll's 1586 treatise on stage tricks which includes an account entitled, 'How to make a man to appeare on a flame burning without any harme.'⁸⁰ We can also trace the use of fireworks as sound effects from a reference in *Astrologaster, or, The figure-Caster* (1620) which claims that at the Fortune,

a man may behold shaghaired devils run roaring over the stage with squibs in their mouths, while drummers make thunder in the tiring-house and the twelve-penny hirelings make artificial lightning in their Heavens.⁸¹

In this description, we find several noises at once: the roaring of devils (and the firing of squibs in their mouths) as well as thunder made by drums. The noise comes from everywhere: the tiring house, the heavens, and across the stage itself. Yet, the effects do not work to create an immersive soundscape. In fact, even as the visual sign of 'lightning' is described as artificial, the aural sign of thunder is also subject to the scrutiny of the listener, as it clearly comes from the drummers in the tiring house, and therefore cannot be believed.

The noise of devils threatens to spread beyond the bounds of the stage in more than one early modern text. We might think of Middleton's prose work *The Black Book* (1604), which parodies the conventions of stage devils by beginning with 'Lucifer ascending, as Prologue to his owne Play.' (B1r).⁸² There is no specific cue for sound, but there may be explosives for, as Lucifer himself points out, '[...] where Hell rises there must needs be fire' (B1v). Lucifer takes his noise out from 'the Stage-rayles of this earthen Globe' (B1v) and spreads it into the streets of London. His first act is to wake up the household of a brothel.

With that, the dreadful watchmen, having authority standing by them, thundered at the door whilst the candle lightened in the chamber, and so between thund'ring and light'ning the bawd risse, first putting the Snuffe to an vntimely death, a cruell and a lamentable murther, [and], lay reeking out at the window, demanding the reason why they did summon a parley. (B3r-v).

⁸⁰ Thomas Hyll, *A Briefe and Pleasaunt Treatise, Intituled: Naturall and Artificiall Conclusions* (1586) in Philip Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special effects in early English and Scottish theatre*. (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1998), 29.

⁸¹ Sir John Melton, *Astrologaster, or, The figure-Caster* (London: Barnard Alsop, 1620), E4r.

⁸² Thomas Middleton, *The blacke booke* (London: T.C. for Jeffrey Chorlton, 1604).

Here, not a devil, but the bawd herself rises with thunder and lighting, and a cloud of smoke. Amongst the jokes, however, is some truth about the conventional presentation of stage devils. They enter from below the stage, they generate a great deal of noise, and they are perfectly aware of their own theatricality. The use of noise at the entrance of devils (and other supernatural entities) was, by the seventeenth century, so commonplace as to beg for parody. In her discussion of the thunder that accompanies witches onstage, Leslie Thomson describes the sound as ‘a staging convention that in time came to be treated comically and ironically... even as it continued to be effective spectacle.’⁸³ Audiences both fear the thunder, and laugh at it; they may find it tired, and even silly, but they still jump at the sudden sound.

Sometimes, however, devilish thunder forms the soundscape of plays which in fact offer us no stage devils at all. In *The Puritan* (1606), Middleton uses the tricks of the theatrical trade to implicate Puritan characters in the very sort of dramatic performance that Puritans openly loathed. Captain Idle, as conjurer, promises to summon a devil to unearth Sir Godfrey’s missing chain (which has been stolen by Nicholas and will easily be found). Reading an almanac, disguised as fortune-teller, his co-conspirator Pieboard discovers that the weather is conveniently forecast to offer a helpful soundscape of thunder for this staged act of conjuring. Yet, there is nothing particularly meteorological about the thunder that accompanies the arrival of this “devil”. The language throughout the conjuration scene ties sound to theatrical space (the arras and boards) and to sound effects (fireworks).

Trying to stifle his laughter, Pieboard realises that something has gone wrong with the sound cue; the thunder has started before Idle has pretended to conjure. Idle must seem to be casting spells, and should now do so in unison with the thunder, as far as is possible. Meanwhile, quite convinced by the effect, Sir Godfrey praises the conjuration through the keyhole, while his sister and her son Edmond shout in terror from within. Amongst this wave

⁸³ Leslie Thomson (1999), 15.

of voices, coming from within and without, we also have further sonic confusion in the description of the thunder itself. For Sir Godfrey, the sound is of ‘roaring tempests’ (G2v); the Widow shouts of ‘what a tempests ith’ [sic] (G2v).⁸⁴ Of course, the thunder and lightning has been no natural phenomenon; it has been made – demonstrably – by backstage firecrackers. The Captain goes so far as to allude to the source of the sound effect, so we are left in no doubt that this is, of course, not just an allusion, but the trick of a con artist.

Pieboard. [...] You were much beholding to
thunder and lightning at this time. It graced you well,
I can tell you.

Captain. I must needs say so, George. Sirrah, if we could
ha’ conveyed hither cleanly a cracker or a firewheel,
’t’ad been admirable. (G3r).

The metatheatrical joke serves to explicitly involve the Puritans onstage in the performances they have deemed immoral. In refusing to play, but agreeing to intermeddle (or, elsewhere, swearing never to steal but only to rob), the Puritans create divisions between the theatre and other so-called crimes which cannot be upheld; the sound effects that come both from the heavens and the heavens of the playhouse ceiling blast through these arbitrary distinctions.

Such metatheatrical tricks of sound become increasingly common in comedies of the early seventeenth century. Here Faustian devils are vastly outnumbered by immoral cardinals, late-night thieves, and cheating wives. If the source of devilish noise is revealed not to be a devil at all, the fear created by those sound effects suddenly seems funny, instead. It’s just such a bathetic revelation that is staged in Robert Davenport’s *A New Trick to Cheat the Devil* (1626). In a comic reworking of the Faustus plot, the lovers Slightall and Anne are reunited by her father, Master Changeable, who dresses as a devil to trick his way to success. Accompanied by thunder and fireworks, his disguise is not revealed until the end of the play.

⁸⁴ [Thomas Middleton], *The Puritaine or the Widow of Watling-Street* (London: G.Eld, 1607).

Changeable obliges, with music and a masque.

With the music comes a show, ending with a devil who enters ‘like a Gentleman, with glasse eyes.’ The gentlemanly disguise should be a warning that this apparition is more man than demon but Slightall believes what he sees, even as he hears the inexplicable music of what might be a hellish masque, coming, unsettlingly, from an untraceable origin in the playhouse.

there's a noise,
That troubles the whole house of howlings, shriekes,
Fire-workes and Crackers, as if the great squib-maker
Were new come from beyond Sea. (G2r).

85 Robert Davenport, *A new tricke to cheat the Divell* (London: Iohn Okes, for Humphrey Blunden, 1639).

The noise of devils sound in sinister ways around a playing space; and sometimes this sonic mischief isn't created by devils at all, but by criminals (and, of course, playwrights.)

Bells.

Bells offer a range of meanings, all of which sound distinctly: the message announced by a hand bell, the time telling of an overhead bell, the slow toll of a death bell, the ringing of marriage bells. Each category can be considered a soundbite, but each type of bell is distinct from the others. As Katherine Hunt has put it, 'bell sounds were encoded within the plays not as straightforward aural cues and signals but as complex networks of resonance and meaning; they were also used richly as metaphor.'⁸⁶ Bells themselves, as 'universal carriers of auditory information', offered a language that was to be interpreted and understood by those who were familiar with their various sounds.⁸⁷ Perhaps because of this multiplicity of uses, bells on the early modern stage are often offered with a verbal explanation as to their particular meaning.

Dekker and Webster's *Sir Thomas Wyatt* (1607) shows the possibility of misreading a bell – rung in times of celebration and mourning – as a means of masking an untimely and unmourned death with the trappings of sincerity. After Edward VI's death, Guilford hears in the sound of funeral bells the political maneuvering which will compel his unwilling wife to claim the throne (in place of Edward's half-sister, Mary).

The flattering belles that shrilly sound
At the Kings funerall with hollow heartes,
Will cowardly call thee Soueraigne:
For indeed thou wouldst prooue but an Vsurper. (A3v).⁸⁸

The bells that ring to mark Edward's death are taken as a sign of loyalty to the dead king, and not to his apparent successor. Even when a dead march fills the stage with sound, a few

⁸⁶ Katherine Hunt, 'Jangling Bells Inside and Outside the Playhouse' in *Shakespeare, Music and Performance*, ed. Bill Barclay and David Lindley (CUP: 2017), 77.

⁸⁷ David Garrioch, 'Sounds of the city: the soundscape of early modern European towns', *Urban History*, 30:1 (2003), 12.

⁸⁸ Thomas Dekker and John Webster, *The famous history of Sir Thomas Wyat* (London: E.A. for Thomas Archer, 1607).

moments later, Guilford is not happy with the ritual power of sound: ‘We are led with pompe to prison’ (A4r). Sounds may have typical associations; but those associations can have a significantly differing effect, depending on the predisposition of the listener. Jingling bells, for instance, unlike somber church bells, can be the sounds of morris dancers, as in *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621). Cuddy and his clowns enter, arguing over bells: ‘Double bells? Double coxcombs! Trebles; buy me trebles, all trebles; for our purpose is to be in the altitudes’ (II.i.45-47). Later, when Old Carter asks, ‘Whom tolls the bell for?’ (III.iii.77), we return to the proverbial gloom of a death bell.⁸⁹ Both types of bells are familiar; there is no way to control which soundbite is conjured. To hear bells is to think of festivity and of funerals.

Bells can also have a sudden, even intrusive, effect on the early modern stage. When a pancake bell rings out to mark the beginning of the end of Thomas Dekker’s *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1599), the comedy pivots suddenly into a state of festivity. The sound announces the Shrove Tuesday feast and its effect, described in 1620 by John Taylor, is instantaneous: ‘there is a Bell rung, call’d The Pancake Bell, the sound whereof makes thousands of people distracted, and forgetfull eyther of manners or humanitie.’⁹⁰ When the bell rings in Dekker’s comedy, all onstage turn to the task of eating pancakes and being merry. Yet, despite the play’s frequent references to the impending holiday, the audience’s knowledge of the bell’s meaning is not taken for granted. The pancake bell itself rings alone, onstage, immediately recognised by the shoemakers and citizens of Dekker’s London. Yet, in London itself (and in the playhouses, where noise could enter from the streets outside), this bell would compete with parish bells calling worshippers to church, with clock bells tolling the hour, and with hand bells rung in the streets to announce public proclamations. As Tiffany Stern has recently discussed, chimes from church towers throughout the city would

⁸⁹ Thomas Dekker, John Ford & William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton*, ed. Lucy Munro (Arden: 2017).

⁹⁰ John Taylor, *Jack a Lent*, 1620, sig. 32. cited in Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, ed. R.L. Smallwood and S. Wells (Manchester: Revels, 1979), 177 (note 53).

overlap with such frequency that Londoners would be accustomed to ignoring or heeding them, according to their own parish and their own concerns.⁹¹ Certainly, in the Rose theatre, where the play had its first performances, the sound of the Pancake bell could not necessarily be isolated, as is possible in the controlled acoustic spaces of many modern theatres, but rather must have jostled against the very real sounds of bells heard across Southwark. Indeed, as Erika Lin has argued, the comparison between real sound and play sound is made directly:

Hodge. Portugues thou wouldst say, here they be Firke, heark, they gingle in my
pocket like S. Mary Overies bells. (D2r).⁹²

Here, Lin explains, ‘In comparing the earnest money to the sound of bells, Hodge’s figure of speech draws attention to the location of the play’s performance: the Rose Theatre, a scant five-minute walk from Saint Mary Overy (now Southwark Cathedral) and well within that Bankside church’s acoustic radius. Any actual church bells that audience members may have heard are here incorporated *into* the fictional world of the play.’⁹³ Sounds slip between the real, the theatrical, and the consciously metatheatrical, as we listen for sounds we cannot hear, like coins jangling on a noisy stage, and, despite the fact that Hodge alludes to them, try to ignore the sounds that intrude, like the bells of the nearby Saint Mary Overy.

Just like the parish bells that Londoners came to recognise as their own, the stage bell itself may have sounded different to each audience. In 1598, as Michael Hattaway notes, the Admiral’s Men, who performed *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* the following year, owned ‘ij stepells, & j chime of belles & j beacon’: probably clock bells, hand bells for music effects, and an alarm bell respectively.’⁹⁴ Hattaway suggests that ‘more lavish playhouses’ probably had ‘at least one large bell, possibly equipped with a rope that could be pulled from the

⁹¹ Tiffany Stern, ‘Time for Shakespeare: Hourglasses, sundials, clocks, and early modern theatre’ (Shakespeare Lecture, read 21 May 2014), *Journal of the British Academy*, 3: 1-33, esp. 18.

⁹² Thomas Dekker, *The shoemakers holiday. Or The gentle craft* (London: Valentine Sims, 1600).

⁹³ Erika T. Lin, ‘Festivity’, *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (OUP: 2013), 221.

⁹⁴ Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1982), 32.

stage.’ The effect of a large bell, ringing overhead (the reconstructed Globe houses its bell in its attic space, above the stage itself), offers a different aural experience to that of a hand bell, rung by a player onstage. Ringing above, a large bell offers a loud sound and, what is more, a communal sound, a sound that seems at least to have the potential to travel some distance. A hand bell is lower in volume and therefore local, a call to those nearby, not to all of London. From indoor theatres to outdoor spaces, the size of the bell determines for whom it tolls.⁹⁵

The bell was also a means by which cacophony – and by extension, chaos or social disharmony – might be represented. Dekker’s *Blurt master-constable* (1601) uses the sound of bells to suggest sheer noise, by echoing the sounds of its ringing in a speech, given as Simperina scolds and shoos Curvetto from the window. Curvetto has already fallen foul of a bell. When pulling on a rope from the window to ring what he hopes will be ‘A peal, a lusty peal, set, ring love’s knell’ (F2r), Curvetto instead pulls down a bucket of water upon his head.⁹⁶ Simperina responds without sympathy, replacing the sound of a bell with noise of her own:

A Rat by this hempe, and you could ha smelt; harke you, heer's the bell, ting, ting, ting; would the clapper were in my bellie, if I am not mad at your fopperie; I could scratch, fie, fie, fie, fie, fie, (as my Mistris saies) but goe, hye you home; (F2v).

Amongst the ‘ting’ of her vocally constructed ringing, Simperina replicates and dismisses the power of a bell as signal. Here, rather than causing a bell to chime, pulling on a rope causes a maid to chime instead, as ‘ting’ becomes ‘fie’, and the bell/woman sounds out a complaint. Dekker had a particular ear for bells: we might think of his pamphlets *The Belman of London* (1608) and *Lanthorn and Candle-Light, or, The Bell-Mans Second Nights Walke* (1608), and of a lost play, *The Bellman of Paris* (1623) which we can speculate was

⁹⁵ Wiggins notes that the play was performed at the Rose in the summer of 1599 and at Richmond Palace on January 1st 1600. *British Drama (1598-1602)*, vol. IV, 116.

⁹⁶ Thomas Dekker, *Blurt, Master Constable, Or The Spaniards night-walke* (London: Edward Allde, 1602).

interested in the sounds of the night-watchman or bell man.⁹⁷ Dekker's *The Wonderful Year* (1603) offers a sonic overload in which the plague bells are heard from all sides: 'And to make this dismall consort more full, round about him Bells heauily tolling in one place, and ringing out in another' (C4r).⁹⁸ The bells only signal death; Dekker makes this meaning clear, stating that 'To some, the very sound of deaths name, is in stead of a passing bell' (C4r).

While bells could be the signals for pancakes and secret trysts, they also rang with a more sinister sound. The sound of bells was laden both with the sonic associations of Catholicism and, therefore, with a reactive disavowal of "popish" music from Puritan quarters. We hear as much from the Anabaptist Ananias in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610): 'Bells are profane. A tune may be religious.' (III.ii.61).⁹⁹ Heywood's *The Captives* (1624) suggests that this association lingered into the last years of the Jacobean stage. Its extant manuscript (MS Egerton 1994) shows a clear association of the bell with Catholic matins; another hand has added 'Bell Ring' to make sure of the sound effect.

Scribon	no other wee expect it	Bell Ring
Abbott,	guide them In, Bewty and youth to pittie tis no sinne.	
	The bell ringes to mattens. enter the Lord de Auerne and his Lady etc (Dennis and others	
ff Ihon	Harke the bell ringes to mattens:	(57v). ¹⁰⁰

The conversation between the Abbott and Father John makes clear that this bell does not just interrupt the action, but also propels those onstage towards a specifically Catholic ceremony.

97 See Wiggins, *British Drama, 1617-1623*, VII, 488. Wiggins suggests the play was written collaboratively with John Day.

98 Thomas Dekker, *The wonderfull yeare*. (London: Thomas Creede, [1603]). For more on Dekker's soundscapes, see: Eric Wilson, 'Plagues, Fairs, and Street Cries: Sounding Out Society and Space in Early Modern London', *Modern Language Studies*, 25.3 (1995), 1-42.

99 Ben Jonson, 'The Alchemist', eds. Peter Holland and William Sherman, *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*.

100 London, British Library, Eg. MS.1994.

The bell marks time, as bells often do on the early modern stage, but in this case, it is the time for matins and for the lecherous Friar John to seduce his patron's wife, the Lady of Averno.

(It is worth remembering that the bell in *Massacre at Paris* 'to ye deuils mattins rings').¹⁰¹

These monks are sensitive to the chimes which call them to a church service, but less so to other sounds. The cloisters offer no shelter to those suffering the spectacular storm effect which rages for most of the first act; John dismisses them as 'singinge beggers' at the gate.¹⁰² The bell can mark the passage of time, but all other sounds are roundly ignored.

In Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595), the sounds of time become bodily as well as instrumental. Counting the hours in prison, Richard II is suddenly offered music, music which becomes, for him, a marker of time. The complexity of music is reduced to the (apparently) clear significance of bells, counting each hour. The second half of a lengthy soliloquy is quoted here, not just because every single line is of sonic interest (until, strikingly, the music stops, and Richard changes metaphor at once), but because it demonstrates how long the stage is held by two sounds simultaneously: music, and the description of that music's effect.

[*The music plays*].

Music do I hear?
Ha, ha! keep time – how sour sweet music is
When time is broke and no proportion kept!
So is it in the music of men's lives.
And here have I the daintiness of ear
To check time broke in a disorder'd string;
But for the concord of my state and time
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke:
I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;
For now hath time made me his numb'ring clock;
My thoughts are minutes, and with sighs they jar
Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,
Whereto my finger, like a dial's point,
Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears.
Now sir, the sound that tells what hour it is

¹⁰¹ Christopher Marlowe, *The Massacre at Paris* (London: E.A. for Edward White, 1594), B4r.

¹⁰² Thomas Heywood, *The Captives; Or, The Lost Recovered*, ed. Alexander Corbin Judson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), II.i.119.

Are clamorous groans which strike upon my heart,
 Which is the bell – so sighs, and tears, and groans,
 Show minutes, times, and hours. But my time
 Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy,
 While I stand fooling here, his Jack o' the clock.
 This music mads me. Let it sound no more;
 For though it have help madmen to their wits,
 In me it seems it will make wise men mad.
 Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me!
 For 'tis a sign of love; and love to Richard
 Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.

(V.v.41-66).¹⁰³

The pun on time bounces backwards and forwards between music and bells: the musicians must 'keep time', but Richard's time is 'broken in a disorder'd string'. Richard himself has become a clock, counting minutes and marking them with sighs. His body acts as an automaton: 'clamorous groans' strike 'my heart/Which is the bell', and he is left a 'Jack o' the clock.' Thoughts of harmony are triggered by the music, and end only when Richard calls, 'let it sound no more'. The comfort of music (indeed, as Richard claims here, the belief that harmonious music might sooth 'madmen') only reminds the king of what he has lost.¹⁰⁴ Richard has internalised the sonic markers of time: the bell and the striking hammer of a Jack. Perhaps he has also internalised the sound of music: indeed, his first mention of music is not a statement but a question, 'Music do I hear?'. The sound – clearly cued in both quarto and folio – is treated with doubt, a sensory pleasure which cannot be entirely trusted.¹⁰⁵

In the final scene of *Doctor Faustus* (1588), the sound of time itself cannot be trusted. As Faustus waits for his inevitable death, a bell repeatedly rings. Its ostensible purpose is to move the scene closer to midnight, but here the sound is clearly not representative of real time – ringing as it does every few moments in the playhouse, while ostensibly counting the hours that pass for Faustus. As time races on, even the stage directions are explicit in their

¹⁰³ William Shakespeare, 'Richard II', ed. Peter Ure in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

¹⁰⁴ For more on the belief that music could both cure and trigger madness, see Samantha Bassler, 'Madness and Music as (Dis)ability in Early Modern England' in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, eds. Blake Howe, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus (OUP: 2015), 529-538.

¹⁰⁵ In quarto, 'the musicke plaies'. William Shakespeare, *The tragedie of King Richard the second* (London: Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wise, 1597), I4r. In the folio, there is 'Musick' (d4v): <https://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/text/368>.

count of the hour: ‘The clocke strikes eleauen (F2r), ‘The watch strikes’ (F2v) and ‘The clooke striketh twelue’ (F3r).¹⁰⁶ At last, the sound of the clock is replaced by thunder and lightning. The clock bell draws attention to the breaking of the dramatic unity of time, the years of Faustus’s life which have been encompassed in a few hours of performance. Brian Walsh has noted that ‘Time up until the end of the play has moved uncertainly through the initial, dreamlike scenes of incantation and interviews with Mephistopheles through the episodic middle vignettes. When the scholars exit and leave Faustus alone at the end, the twenty-four hours now expire, and the movement of time becomes, for an instance, terrifyingly precise.’¹⁰⁷ Throughout this scene we are privy to Faustus’s own narration of the passage of time, although not, tellingly, of the final stroke of midnight, where Faustus cries, ‘O it strikes, it strikes, now body turne to ayre’ (F3r), without articulating the time that the bell has tolled. As Faustus falters in his attempt to count the time aloud, we pass beyond the realm of what we might call usual time, as the stroke of midnight marks the opening of a threshold between earth and hell. The bell is at once a tolling of time and a death toll. Moreover, after Marlowe, any player counting out the passage of time onstage is recalling, however faintly, that famous final scene of *Doctor Faustus*. The bell marks theatrical time, not only in passing hours, but in its creation of nostalgia for older plays. In fact, the twelve o’clock bell is itself the symbol of nostalgia in *2 Henry IV* (1597), when Falstaff reminisces ‘We have heard the chimes at midnight, Master Shallow’ (III.ii.214-15).¹⁰⁸ Having shared late nights with Shallow, Falstaff now shares the memory of the sound of passing time.

That the toll of a bell offers this signal of the passage of time allows for an ironic use of this familiar soundbite at the conclusion of Middleton’s *A Mad World My Masters* (1605).

¹⁰⁶ Christopher Marlowe, *The tragicall history of D. Faustus* (London: V. S[immes] for Thomas Bushell, 1604).

¹⁰⁷ Brian Walsh, ‘Marlowe and the Elizabethan theatre audience’, *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (CUP: 2013), 76.

¹⁰⁸ William Shakespeare, ‘2 Henry IV’, ed. A. R. Humphreys in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

Follywit, who has disguised himself as an actor in order to make off with valuable props – a chain, a jewel, and a watch – is exposed in the final scene of the comedy when the watch that he has concealed makes a damning noise. Sir Bounteous recognizes the sound at once: ‘Hearke, hearke gentlemen, by this light the watch rings alarum in his pocket’ (I1r).¹⁰⁹ The ring of the watch is magnified to that of an alarum, alerting those onstage to danger as an alarum warns of impending war; the joke is all the funnier, of course, if the small bell of the watch can barely be heard, or indeed comes quite obviously not from Follywit’s pocket but from an offstage musician. The sound effect reveals the crime through a noise that surprises its hearers as an alarum would, and it moves the play to its resolution.

The placing of soundbites within the course of a play (such as the eleventh-hour alarum of the watch) is also part of the comic effect. In *The Merry Devil of Edmonton* (1603), Peter Fabel is *introduced* with details which make the allusion to the end of *Doctor Faustus* perfectly clear:

Comes now to claime the Scholler for his due.
Behold him heere laide on his restlesse couch,
His fatall chime prepared at his head,
His chamber guarded with these sable slights,
And by him stands that Necromanticke chaire,

(A3r).

The ‘fatall chime’, then, with which *The Devil of Edmonton* begins, recalls the play which *Devil* will then parody; moreover, by placing that famous, final chime at the beginning of the play, it offers the kind of inversion that mirrors the play itself, which turns the Faustian Peter Fabel into a figure of fun. Fabel makes much show of reacting to the sound: ‘*The Chime goes, in which time Fabell is oft seene to stare about him, and hold vp his hands.*’ (A3r). The soundbite, suffering from over-exposure, has become more comic than frightening.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Middleton, *A mad world, my masters* (London: H[enry] B[allard] for Walter Burre, 1608).

This soundbite only continued to acquire associations, and its use continued for decades. The bell of *Faustus* is parodied in Dekker's *Match Me in London* (1621), when the striking of the bell both begins the play, drawing the noisy audience's attention towards the start of the action, and also sets the scene. Its chimes, counted painstakingly by Malevento, '1.2.3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.11.12' (B1r), tell both actors and the audience that this is 'The dawne of Midnight'.¹¹⁰ Malevento counts aloud, no doubt to make sure that the witching hour is not missed by anyone. Against the competing noises of the city and most likely the audience itself, Dekker leaves no room for uncertainty in his use of sound effects to convey essential information, but the count is not just a matter of practicality; it is a way of conjuring devil plays of the past, and of aligning Malevento with other early modern conjurers.

Especially after the famous final scene of *Doctor Faustus*, the bell was associated not only with death but with judgement. Both meanings are carried by the bells in Webster's *The Devil's Law Case* (1618), in which the supposed deaths of Ercole and Contarino, which prompt the trial scene on which the plot turns, are conveyed not by the report of a messenger or the reading of a scroll, but by a bell, ringing a death knell. Here, the sound is not so easily interpreted, and Romelio and Leonora pass its meaning backwards and forwards:

[*Sound of a bell ringing repeatedly*]

Rom. So sir: how now?

Enter Leonora.

Are the Scritch-owles abroad already?

Leon. What a dismall noyse yon bell makes,
Sure some great person's dead.

Rom. No such matter,
It is the common Bell-man goes about,
To publish the sale of goods.

Leon. Why doe they ring before my gate thus?

¹¹⁰ Thomas Dekker, *Match mee in London* (London: B. Alsop and T. Fawcet, for H. Seile, 1631).

Let them into'th Court, I cannot vnderstand
What they say.

*Enter two Belmen and a Capouchin. (D4v).*¹¹¹

The sound of bells is a sound of death, like the ominous call of a screech-owl – or else it is the sound of a common bellman, trying to make a sale. Unlike the counting of the chimes that lead to midnight, Leonora and Romelio cannot simply lay out the meaning of this bell.

During this brief moment of stage noise, heard in the distance, there can be no clear answer; sound leads only to speculation, and it is not until the Bellmen enter and speak, that their purpose can be known – although speech can hardly be more trustworthy than sound, when their report of Ercole and Contarino's deaths is false. In her vengeful state of grief, Leonora, still believing that Contarino is dead, once again thinks that she is hearing the bells: 'Do not the bells ring?/I have a strange noise in my head: O fly in pieces!' (G1v). Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) similarly uses bells as both sound and metaphor, mixing their possible associations. Brachiano uses bells as a curse: 'Ile giue you the bels/And let you flie to the deuill.' (G4r).¹¹² Flamineo warns that 'Bels nere ring well, till they are at their full pitch' (F3v) and dies with the wish, 'Let no harsh flattering Bels resound my knell,/Strike thunder, and strike lowde to my farewell. (M2r). We are allowed no single meaning, no single interpretation. As the bells move from the performed to the imagined or described, their misunderstood meaning lingers. A bell should be simple; a short noise, with a unnuanced meaning. However, during this brief moment of stage noise, heard in the distance, there can be no clear answer; sound leads only to speculation.

'Noisier texts'.

For more store and variety of matter, to haue Common place books (as I said for the Theams) therein at least to haue references wherby to turn of a sodaine to matters of

¹¹¹ John Webster, *The devils law-case. Or, When women goe to law, the Deuill is full of businesse*. (London: A.M., 1623).

¹¹² John Webster, *The white diuel, or, The tragedy of Paulo Giordano Vrsini, Duke of Brachiano* (London: N.O. for Thomas Archer, 1612).

all sorts, in the most exquisite and pure Poets: to haue some direction both for matter
and imitation; whether for Gratulatory verses, Triumphs, Funerals, or whatsoeuer.
(196, Cc2v), *The Grammar Schoole*.¹¹³

Soundbites, like commonplaces, are taken from their original textual sources and replayed for new effect. Once noted, they can be used again and again to convey the ‘Theams’ at hand while bringing with them a weight of allusions. Like a text that is mined for quotations, each play adds its own sonic world to the selection, to the ‘store and variety of matter’. At a sudden – ‘sodaine’ – thought of a storm, a playwright can turn to a mental sound-bank of sonic signals and find a suitable effect under “Thunder”, perhaps cross-referenced with “Fireworks” or “Devils”. The playwright can be confident that the audience will also recognise these sounds, for they too are making unconscious notes of what they have heard, not unlike playgoers who copy down particularly striking lines.¹¹⁴

The use of soundbites, however, goes beyond quotation, or imitation. Recent work on commonplaces can be helpful in thinking through the possibility and new potentials of transferring one sound to another situation. Ann Moss has called the act of commonplacing ‘a mode of improvisation within a set of norms’; Adam Smyth describes ‘active, even creative, acts, rather than straightforward mechanisms of duplication.’¹¹⁵ These are the paradoxes of commonplaces and of soundbites: both encompass the acts of making allusions while constructing new material and of pulling choice moments out of context, even while acknowledging that something of their former meaning lingers. Laurence Manley has described early modern London’s theatres as ‘haunted houses, heterocosmic spaces where rival traditions, values, and generic expectations acted as spectral antagonists, undermining the claims of any play or repertory to represent or interpret society with authoritative

113 John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius: or, The Grammar Schoole* (London: Thomas Mann, 1612).

114 Tiffany Stern discusses auditors taking notes in ‘Sermons, Plays and Note-Takers: Hamlet Q1 as a ‘Noted’ Text’, *Shakespeare Survey* 66 (2013), 1–23.

115 Adam Smyth, ‘Commonplace Culture: A List of Sixteen Traits’. *Women and Writing, c.1340-c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, eds. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillippa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 96.

force.’¹¹⁶ These ‘haunted houses’ – like any haunted house – are possessed by sounds as much as by sights. Like the leitmotifs of opera, soundbites recur with a continually increasing sense of familiarity: we feel that we have heard this before, somewhere else.

Soundbites offer novelty and nostalgia, reinvention and recollection; they ask us to remember past plays, and to marvel at new ones. This dual sense is perhaps best captured in a moment of both sonic and textual quotation in the shared sounds of Middleton’s *The Witch* (1616) and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, and in Jonson’s *Masque of Queens* (1609). *Macbeth* was written in the second half of 1606, revised by Middleton in or after 1616, and published in the First Folio in 1623.¹¹⁷ Scholars have treated the songs inserted from *The Witch* into *Macbeth* as a later addition – and, of course, they are.¹¹⁸ But what has not been examined are the theatrical customs which allow, and encourage, such sonic transfer between plays.

Middleton offers a range of music and noises, both described and performed, which are typical of the early modern presentation of witches onstage. *The Witch* makes full use of theatre space in order to create dissonant and distant sounds in the darkness. The sounds of witchcraft are spoken, or sung, by Hecate, in dialogue with both Malkin (a spirit like a cat) and with offstage voices, heard from around the playhouse.

They are aboue the Steeple alredy, flying
over your head with a noyse of *Musitians*

Hec. they are indeed: help: help me: I’m too late els.

Song: Come away: Come away: *in ye aire.*
Heccat: Heccat, Come away

¹¹⁶ Laurence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (CUP: 1995), 437.

¹¹⁷ *Macbeth*, ‘Background’ in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, eds. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (OUP: 2016). doi:10.1093/actrade/9780199591152.book.1. The date of 1616 for Middleton’s *The Witch* is noted by Elizabeth Schafer in her edition of the play. She notes that ‘The manuscript states that the play was ‘long since acted, by his majesty’s servants at the Black friars’ but that this ‘long since’ is in relation to the manuscript which she suggests post-dates 1619 and ‘the first recorded dramatic transcript by Ralph Crane.’ (Thomas Middleton, *The Witch*, ed. Elizabeth Schafer (London: A & C Black Publishers Limited, 1994), xi. Wiggins discusses Middleton’s revision in *British Drama*, V, 285.

¹¹⁸ Of particular interest here is Tiffany Stern’s work on the portability of songs, ‘I Have Both the Note, and Dittie About Me’: Songs on the Early Modern Page and Stage’, *Common Knowledge*, 17.2 (2001), 306-320.

Hec. I come, I come, I come, I come,
 with all the speed I may.
 with all the speed I may.
 wher's Stadlin?
 Heere

in ye aire. (1328-37).¹¹⁹

In *Macbeth*, the same song is prompted by 'Sing within. Come away, come away, &c', with that *et cetera* suggesting a continuation into the full lyrics.¹²⁰ Gary Taylor's edition has the reworking of *Macbeth* by Middleton following only months after his writing of *The Witch*, which would make the echo all the more resonate.¹²¹ What has not been properly noted, however, is that the sound is replicated not only in the lyrics of the song, but even in the eerie voices heard specifically from 'within'. Shakespeare's play re-uses not only the song, but the sonic and spatial effect of a disembodied voice (for more on this, see chapter two).

In these three dramatic texts, a soundscape of witchcraft emerges. Witches are usually associated with noise, but in Middleton the witches fly above the reach of sounds traditionally associated with the supernatural:

No ring of bells, to our ears sounds;
 No howls of wolves, no yelps of hounds.
 No, not the noise of waters' breach
 Or cannon's throat, our height can reach.

(IV.i.69-72).¹²²

Even as these sounds are mentioned, the witches appear to transcend them. This unexpected distancing between witches and their usual noises is evident not only in *The Witch*, and in *Macbeth*, but in Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, which famously portrays witches through a

119 Thomas Middleton, *The Witch*, Malone Society Reprint, eds. F. P. Wilson, and W. W. Greg (OUP: 1950), 57.

120 <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ff/mac/3/5>, *Macbeth*. Laurie Maguire has written on the various possible meanings of '&c.' including this kind of abbreviation in play texts which implies more is performed than has been recorded, 'saving the compositor repetitive typesetting labour.' (539). Of acoustic directions in particular she notes, "We can supply sound. In John Day's *The Isle of Gulls* (1606) a marginal direction instructs, '*Musicke of Bels &c.*'; Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600) invites the extension of human sound: '*They passe over the stage, Rafe fallies in amongst them, Firke and the rest cry farewell, &c. and so Exeunt.*'" (538). 'Typographical Embodiment: The Case of *etcetera*', *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Embodiment: Gender, Sexuality, and Race*, ed. Valerie Traub (OUP: 2016).

See also: John P. Cutts, 'Jacobean Masque and Stage Music', *Music and Letters*, 35 (1954), 193.

121 'Works Included in this Edition: Canon and Chronology', *Thomas Middleton, Vol. 2: Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Work*, eds. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (OUP: 2007), 335.

122 Thomas Middleton, 'The Witch', *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, eds. Gary Taylor, and John Lavagnino (OUP: 2007).

‘hollow and infernall musique’ (A4v) that is undone when the queens themselves arrive.¹²³

These sonic associations feed into one another in a circular fashion, from *Macbeth* to *The Masque of Queens* to *The Witch* and back to *Macbeth* with additions from *The Witch*.¹²⁴

Ewbank resists the idea of this sonic echo in her introduction to Gary Taylor’s edition of *Macbeth* in Middleton’s works. While citing Brooke and Cutts, who argue that another musical moment in *Macbeth* (the witches’ dance in IV.i) may have been drawn from *The Masque of Queens*, Ewbank insists that the reuse of sound would mean little: ‘If there was a sameness, it would be lost on an audience at the Globe, though effective at a court performance.’¹²⁵ In fact, playhouse audiences were exposed regularly to soundbites and need not have seen *The Masque of Queens* to associate ‘hollow’ music with witchcraft.¹²⁶ How similar the songs in these scenes of witchcraft were is impossible to know: but there is no need for direct replication, so much as creative allusion.¹²⁷ Ewbank’s idea of “sameness” is not easily traced, not least because the music for Middleton’s song does not survive; but nor should it be so easily dismissed. What is *not* lost is the soundscape shared by these plays.

123 Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Queenes* (London: N. Ores for R. Bon[?]an and H. Wally, 1609).

124 Diane Purkiss addresses this complex cycle of influence: ‘It might seem odd to treat *Macbeth* after *The Masque of Queens*; traditional literary histories see Shakespeare as Jonson’s inspiration and not vice versa, since *Macbeth* was certainly on stage at the Globe in 1606. However, the version of *Macbeth* which survives is the product of later revision; attempts to bring the text back to the putative purity of its first staging can only be conjectural. What survives is a play reworked for the witch-fashion set by Jonson’s masque; in this Borgesian sense, Jonson is Shakespeare’s precursor and not vice versa.’ ‘The all-singing, all-dancing plays of Jacobean witch-vogue: *The Masque of Queens*, *Macbeth*, *The Witch*’ in *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (Routledge: 1996), 207.

125 Inga-Stina Ewbank, ‘*The Tragedy of Macbeth*: A Genetic Text’, *The Collected Works 1602-1607*, ed. Gary Taylor & John Lavagnino (OUP: 2007), 1167.

126 It is also significant that *Macbeth* continued to be performed into the 1610s, as it continued to gather sonic associations with other contemporary witch plays. The ‘Background’ to the play in *The New Oxford Shakespeare* notes that ‘The play may have been staged at the court of James I as well as at the Globe. Simon Forman described a performance at the Globe on 11 April 1611.’ Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (eds), *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, doi:10.1093/acrade/9780199591152.book.1

127 David Lindley notes that ‘The music for two witches’ dances survives. It is impossible to be certain that these were actually used in *Queens*, though it would seem likely. The first alternates long notes with quicker movement; the second, in one surviving version, is marked by extraordinary alternations of metre in a way which seems to accord with the description of the ‘*strange and sudden music*’ of the ‘*magical dance*’.’ ‘Introduction: The Masque of Queens’, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (CUP: 2014). <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson>.

Both Middleton's song (recalled again in *Macbeth*) and Jonson's antimasque create the same soundscape, if not precisely the same sounds, of discord.

These shared soundscapes, these portable soundbites, offer insight into both early modern stage effects and into a literary culture of textual allusion. Smyth urges critics to acknowledge commonplace books as 'messier texts', and to avoid expecting to find neat categorization under their headings; I extend this to plays, which are 'noisier texts' than we have acknowledged previously.¹²⁸ The early modern stage was a sounding board, not only in the acoustic and resonate meaning captured by Bruce Smith in his use of the term, but in a more literal sense: a sounding board for new ideas about stage effects, which echo from play to play.¹²⁹ We can collect sounds and catalogue them, use and reuse them, but sound effects should not resound from scene to scene without examination, any more than a pun can be manipulated in dialogue without begging exploration of its meanings. The lines with which this chapter began, 'Nor could the ratling fury of fierce warre/Astonish me more then the mid-night clock', beg a final shift of meaning of their own: a sound effect may astonish, but its meanings can also surprise. Soundbites invoke the ghosts of other sounds; and, as chapter two will show, the sounds of ghosts can in turn become their own unsettling soundbites.

¹²⁸ Smyth (2010), 90.

¹²⁹ Bruce R. Smith (1999), 209. I employ instead the sense used by Inga-Stina Ewbank, who writes that, 'Incorporating into *Macbeth* parts of *The Witch* meant returning them to a play which had acted as a sounding board for *The Witch*. I use this image, rather than 'source', for while Jacobean plays are generally full of more or less conscious echoes of each other, Middleton has a way—particularly pronounced in the tragicomedies he was writing in this period—of using intertextuality with a difference: of drawing on audiences' reminiscence of another play or plays.' *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, 1168.

‘things are not as we see’: unsound effects in Jacobean tragedy.

Day that giue's place to night, night full of feares,
Thus all things alter, still all things decay. (C3v).

Croesus (1604).¹

The night is full of fears, Solon tells Croesus, in William Stirling's closet drama. The midnight world of early modern England is a place of terror, and that terror, as this chapter shows, is primarily created by unknown noises. Noises in the darkness offer an imaginative prompt for fear, suggesting danger even if that danger is never to materialise. As Croesus himself acknowledges, fear can be created by the mind: 'credulous suspition too too wise,/To fortifie my feares doth meanes inuent' (D4r). A guilty conscious, or a tired brain, can place faith in omens or jump at noises, imagining their sources to be more sinister than they are. We hear as much in Mary Sidney's *The tragedie of Antonie* (1590), in which sounds conjure up an unsettling fear, because the means of producing them cannot be traced:

Yea euen this night while all the Cittie stood
Opprest with terror, horror, seruile feare,
Deepe silence ouer all: the sounds were heard
Of diuers songs, and diuerse instruments,
Within the voide of aire: and howling noise,
Such as madde *Bacchus* priests in *Bacchus* feasts
On *Nisa* make: (B4r).²

Amidst the silence of the night, we hear the report of sounds in the air, 'divers' songs and music which cannot be easily explained by Philostratus, who attributes these noises to the gods, or speaks tentatively to make comparisons ('such as'). Sonic omens are heard throughout Alexandria, with the Roman fleets waiting in the harbour to overthrow Cleopatra.

¹ William Alexander, 'Croesus', *The Monarchicke Tragedies* (London: Valentine Simmes for Ed. Blount, 1607).

² Robert Garnier. *The tragedie of Antonie. Doone into English by the Countesse of Pembroke* (London: William Ponsonby, 1595).

Of course, in closet drama, the sounds of the night are imagined, not staged.³ While *Croesus* and *Antonie* capture the association of darkness and fear that is so widespread in early modern literature, they do not offer the possibility of performing nocturnal noise. This chapter is concerned with the fears that can be conjured by the sound effects associated with staging the night. It is concerned with the supernatural, the demonic, and the criminal sounds that can be heard in the otherwise quiet darkness, and, more particularly, with sounds that have no clear sources. Where, for instance, does the sound originate in the song, discussed as a soundbite in chapter one, that *Macbeth* and *The Witch* share?

<i>Song: Come away: Come away:</i>	<i>in ye aire.</i>
<i>Heccat: Heccat, Come away</i>	
<i>Hec. I come, I come, I come, I come,</i>	
<i>with all the speed I may.</i>	
<i>with all the speed I may.</i>	
<i>wher's Stadlin?</i>	
<i>Heere</i>	<i>in ye aire. (1328-37).</i> ⁴

As mentioned previously, this song is heard as a disembodied voice ‘in the air’ in *The Witch*, presumably sung either from within or from a concealed part of the musician’s gallery. The same sonic dissonance is implied in Act 3, Scene 5 of *Macbeth*, where the song is cued, ‘Sing within. Come away, come away, &c’ (1387, s.d.), although ‘within’, at least, hints at the location of the sound within the tiring house.⁵ ‘Within’ is not inherently eerie (Dessen and Thomson find some 800 uses of the direction to indicate either a sound or the presence of a figure out of sight); but when what is within is not eventually revealed, the effect of the

³ While my emphasis here is on the importance of the act of reading, rather than hearing, sounds, as a means of creating an imaginative response, I use ‘primarily’ here to acknowledge the work of Marta Straznicky: ‘“Rather, closet drama or “dramatic poetry,” the nearest equivalent Renaissance term, was a label that could be applied to *any* play – whether performed or not – that was or sought to be inscribed in literary culture, a culture that, informed as it was by ideas of reading as social practice and print as engagement with the public sphere, was not in stable opposition to “public” forms of theatricality.’ ‘Closet Drama’, *A companion to Renaissance drama*, ed. A. Kinney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 417.

⁴ Thomas Middleton, ‘The Witch’, *Malone Society Reprint*, eds. F. P. Wilson, and W. W. Greg (OUP: 1950), 57.

⁵ <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ff/mac/3/5>, *Macbeth*.

absence is jarring.⁶ We are unsure of what was happening offstage, as this action is never revealed to us. Both *Macbeth* and *The Witch* make clear that the source of the sound – performers singing – should be hidden from the audience. The audience are asked to trust a sound without a source and – perhaps more importantly – to trust their own senses when sight and sound are forcibly disconnected.

Audiences could not easily believe their ears. Intertwining questions of imagination and faith are raised again and again in Jacobean tragedy. What matters is not what sounds *are*, but what sounds are *believed to be* – and this, of course, is the central concern of the production of theatrical sound effects, where a drum must serve as thunder, and a peal of ordnance must signify an entire army. An audience, then, must either suspend its disbelief, or question the artifice of what it has heard, as, indeed, it was often asked to. In Webster's *The White Devil* (1612), Vittoria Corombona, falsely accused of murder, calls upon the 'auditory' in her trial scene. When asked to respond in Latin, she appeals on behalf of her listeners, half of whom do not speak the language and so require the trial (and scene) in the 'usual tongue' (E2v).⁷ Those listening in the Red Bull are cast as jury members, for whose benefit verbal testimony must be given clearly and in the vernacular. This audience is required to hear critically and with some skepticism. Listening was an act of questioning and qualifying what was true: in the words of Lorna Hutson, 'Sixteenth-century developments in the participatory justice system involving the taking of written examinations by Justices, and the need for jurors to evaluate evidence at the bar, were directly engaging the very same questions of probability and likelihood with which dramatists were beginning to be concerned.'⁸ Webster presents trials that are predicated upon false testimony, which must be weighed by the

6 Alan Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A dictionary of stage directions in English drama, 1580-1642* (CUP: 1999), 253.

7 John Webster, *The white diuel, or, The tragedy of Paulo Giordano Vrsini, Duke of Brachiano* (London: N.O. for Thomas Archer, 1612).

8 Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion; Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (OUP: 2007), 6.

audience, and which are not necessarily given a fair hearing. What we hear, then, is to be scrutinised; and if speech is to be sifted, and heard with caution, the same is true of sound.

Jacobean playwrights expect that verbal testimony will be scrutinised and ask the same of the aural. Far from attempting to create a realistic sonic atmosphere onstage, tragedians revelled in the artifice of sound effects, frequently drawing attention to the act of performance, to the possibilities of misinterpreting sounds, and to the superstitious traditions that cast some sounds as bad omens. The association of sourceless sounds with fear is expressed by, and exploited by, Stuart playwrights. As late as 1636, in *Claracilla*, Thomas Killigrew made the effect of this sonic phenomenon very clear: ‘noyses/Fright onely when we are ignorant of the cause’ (D6v).⁹ The tragedies discussed in this chapter deliberately use the aural to unsettle, revelling in this liminal state of knowing and not knowing: sounds can be made utterly without context, or else are given not only one possible source but rather two or three. It is in this duplicity, this space between what is heard and what is imagined, what is true and what is trusted, that sonic anxiety lies.

This chapter will begin by examining the nocturnal sounds that were widely understood to be sources of fear in early modern England, in order to demonstrate the wider cultural interest in nocturnal noises that fed into the staging of night time scenes. This chapter will then consider the disorienting soundscapes of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606), Marston’s *Sophonisba* (1605), and Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613).¹⁰ The sound effects of these plays are continually thrown into doubt, offering no clear answers as to their sources through the staging of what we might call the audible unseen. It will finally turn to Fletcher and

⁹ Thomas Killigrew, ‘Claracilla’, *The prisoners and Claracilla*. (London: T. Cotes, for Andrew Crooke, 1641). Wiggins discusses the play’s staging in *British Drama*, IX, 430.

¹⁰ This chapter uses Webster’s own description (“madmen”), recognising these characters as caricatures, not constructions, of mental illness. For discussions of terminology, see Lindsey Row-Heyveld, ‘Antic Dispositions: Mental and Intellectual Disabilities in Early Modern Revenge Tragedy’, *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England*, ed. A.P. Hobgood and D. Houston Wood (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2013), 73-87.

Shirley's *The Night-Walker* (1615, revised 1633) to examine how such sound effects can be turned into a comedy that is dark in every sense. First, however, it will consider the aural legacy of Elizabethan literature which led to a distinctly Jacobean use of sound effects.

Nocturnal noise.

Now the hungry lion roars,
And the wolf behowls the moon;
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
All with weary task fordone.
Now the wasted brands do glow,
Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,
Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), V.i.365-372.¹¹

Robin Goodfellow begins the final moments of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with an invocation of the sounds of night. The sounds range from the roars and howls of wild beasts to the snoring of a ploughman, and, while there is something comic in this juxtaposition, there is also something sinister, for the sounds prompt sorrowful imaginings. The screech-owl, the most prevalent sonic omen of danger at night, spurs the memory of death in a grieving mind. Certain sounds are repeatedly associated with the soundscape of the early modern night, and those noises are almost always thought to be sinister (the screeching of owls or ravens, the howling of wolves) or supernatural (the laughter of devils, the rustling of ghosts). George Chapman's 'Hymnus in Noctem' (1594) employs these familiar nocturnal sounds: 'Foxes shall barke, and Night-rauens belch in grones,/And owles shall hollow my confusions' (B3r).¹² Here animal sounds reflect the speaker's own 'confusions' in the night, just as adders, like displeased theatre-goers, 'hisse the world for hating me'. Chapman uses the same sonic imagery in *The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron* (1608).

¹¹ William Shakespeare, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', ed. Harold F. Brooks in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

¹² George Chapman, 'Hymnus in Noctem' in *Skia nyktos, The shadow of night* (London: R[ichard] F[ield] for William Ponsonby, 1594).

bee assurde,
 His hants are omenous, not the throtes of Rauens,
 Spent on infected house; houles of dogges,
 When no sound stirres, at mid-night; apparitions,
 And strokes of spirits, clad in blackmens shapes:

(F1v).¹³

In this play, night is a soundscape of raven cries and dog howls, puncturing moments of silence. Dangerous sights (themselves unsure ‘shapes’) go hand in hand with ominous sounds. Susan Wiseman has framed her discussion of the night in Chapman and Donne as an examination of early modern skepticism, in which the two writers ‘take the night, light and particularly shadow as prompts to thought.’¹⁴ Shadows allow for doubt and, by extension, equivocation; sounds that are shadowed become part of this presentation of skepticism.

Doubt is the defining feature of sounds in the darkness. Nocturnal noises are often proved to be illusory; which is to say that the noises themselves are real, but the sources attributed to them in the night are not. Moreover, sound effects used by dramatists carried with them a weight of cultural associations which associated sounds with doubtful sources. Ghost stories, for instance, featured sound prominently. The popular ghost manual written by Lewes (Ludwig) Lavater (translated into English in 1572, and reprinted in 1596) makes the connection between the supernatural and the sonic clear from its title: ‘Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght, and of strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forewarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the death of menne, great slaughters, & alterations of kyngdomes’ (A1r).¹⁵ Early modern ghost stories not only offer noise as a primary trigger for fearful reactions, but also place heavy emphasis on the imaginative responses of those listening. In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Reginald Scot discusses noise and its unsettling effects

¹³ George Chapman, *The conspiracie, and tragedie of Charles Duke of Byron* (London: G. Eld for Thomas Thorpe, 1608).

¹⁴ Susan Wiseman, “‘Did we lie downe, because ‘twas night?’: John Donne, George Chapman, and the senses of night in the 1590s” in *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558-1660*, eds. Simon Smith, Jackie Watson, and Amy Kenny (MUP: 2015), 131.

¹⁵ Ludwig Lavater, *Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght and of strange noyses, crackes, and sundry forewarnynges* (London: Henry Benneyman for Richard Watkyns, 1572). The original title also makes note of noise: *De spectris, lemurbus et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus* can be translated as ‘Of ghosts, the departed, and of great and unexpected crashes’.

at length. Scot draws much of his argument from Cardanus (Gerolamo Cardano, †1576), who writes not only of ‘strange noises’ but also of how, because of such sounds and their unknown sources, ‘counterfeit visions grow to be credited’.¹⁶ Scot writes of mental disorders which might make one hear noises that others cannot: ‘Many through melancholy doe imagine, that they see or hear visions, spirits, ghosts, strange noises, &c’.¹⁷ Scot, in his skepticism towards witchcraft, argues that every noise must have a rational explanation, whether it is made innocently, with an intent to trick, or whether it is created by the mind. Yet, Scot cannot deny that, despite this reasoning, sounds in the dark frighten their hearers.

Nashe’s *The Terrors of the Night* (1594) discusses the power of sound to influence a sleeping listener, demonstrating the mind’s capacity to transform a noise into more than it is: ‘As for example; if in the dead of the night there be anie rumbling, knocking, or disturbance neere vs, wee straight dreame of warres, or of thunder.’¹⁸ In May 2017, a reading of *Terrors* was staged in the candlelit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, to underscore the connection between dramatic sound effects and the acoustic unease conjured up by Nashe’s descriptions. The text was divided between two overlapping voices, one sometimes speaking from the gallery, as music sounded from around and under the stage itself.¹⁹ As Kate De Rycker, who adapted the script, has put it, Nashe’s noises are integral to his work: ‘you can almost hear the crunch of bones as he describes an execution.’²⁰ We cannot overlook the effect of acoustic descriptions in early modern prose, and their relationship to sound produced onstage. Both prose sounds and dramatic sound effects work on the imagination of their audiences. What Nashe describes as an ‘echo’ of sound in *Terrors* is not a sound that reverberates back

¹⁶ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: Henry Denham for] William Brome, 1584), 35.

¹⁷ Scot (1584), 333.

¹⁸ Thomas Nashe, *The terrors of the night* (London: John Danter for William Jones, 1594), C4v.

¹⁹ Thomas Nashe, (script additions by Kate De Rycker, and Jason Morell), ‘The Terrors of the Night, or, a discourse of apparitions: The first public reading, 20th May 2017, Sam Wanamaker Playhouse’, *The Thomas Nashe Project*, Globe Symposium & Terrors of the Night Performance, <https://research.ncl.ac.uk/thethomasnasheproject/performanceevents/globesymposiumterrorsofthenightperformance/>.

²⁰ Ibid, 2.

perfectly but a sound that becomes a mutation or shadow of itself when heard by the unconscious mind. Philemon Holland's translation of Plutarch, printed in 1603, also suggests that the mind creates fear out of unknown sounds. He writes that 'there is no object of the eye, nothing that we taste or touch that causeth such extasies, so violent troubles or sudden frights, as those which enter and pearce into the soule, by the meanes of some noises, sounds and voices, incident to our hearing.' (E3r).²¹ Classical authority supports the early modern suspicion that nothing is more frightening than noise in the night. It is in just such an acoustic culture that audiences would attend the playhouses and hear its sound effects.

Onstage, the same set of sounds found across early modern writings are associated with fatality, with fear, and with tragedy. Indeed, these are the sounds mentioned by the figure of Tragedy herself in *A Warning for Fair Women* (1597).

The ugly Screechowle, and the night Raven,
With flaggy wings and hideous croking noise
Do beate the casements of this fatal house,
Whilst I do bring my dreadful furies forth,
To spread the table to this bloody feast.
[...]
Harke how the gastly fearefull chimes of night
Do ring them in: and with a dolefull peale
Here some strange solemne musike like belles is heard within.
Do fill the roofe with sounds of tragedie. (C4v-D1r).²²

It would be tempting then, to consider these as the generic sounds of tragedy (and certainly, as Allison Deutermann has discussed, Comedy and History make their own distinct sonic claims in the play's prologue).²³ Here, while no doubt frightening, the sounds are not sourceless: indeed, the word 'peale' seems to directly cue the 'strange solemne musike of belles'. In a later scene in the same play, the murderer Browne, realising the consequences of

²¹ Plutarch, *The philosophie*. trans. Philemon Holland (London: Arnold Hatfield, 1603), 53

²² *A warning for faire women* (London: Valentine Sims for William Aspley, 1599).

²³ Allison K. Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England*. (Edinburgh: EUP, 2016), 54.

his attack on Saunders, seems to hear noises that he does not want to attribute to the body that now lies in front of him.

San. Jesu receiue my soule into thy handes.
Bro. What sound was that? it was not he that spake,
The breath is vanisht from his nostrils,
Was it the other? no, his wounds are such,
As he is likewise past the use of speech.
Who was it then that thundred in mine eares,
The name of Jesu? Doubtlesse 'twas my conscience,
And I am damn'd for this unhallowed deede. (F1r).

A guilty conscience can create a sound in the mind or make an existing sound into more than it truly is. Yet here, whether imagined by Browne or whether spoken by the dying body (or ghost) of Saunders, we know the source of the sound is the corpse on stage. In this way, Elizabethan tragedies offer a consistent soundscape of fear, but not of the uncanny.

Just like a guilty conscience, a sleeping mind or an unguarded mind is also able to make a sound seem more than it is. In *Arden of Faversham* (1590), nocturnal noises transform into bad dreams. The disturbance in the night (the very real threat of murderers knocking at the door) seeps into Arden's subconscious, as his friend Franklin diagnoses:

This fantassie doeth rise from Michaels feare,
Who being awaked with the noyse he made,
His troubled sences, yet could take no rest.
And this I warant you procured your dreame. (E2v).²⁴

A noise can be transformed in the mind and can manifest itself in sleep as a nightmare – another danger to be found in the night. Yet, the power of dreams to conjure images and even meaningful narratives out of sounds in the night is reflective of the theatre, as those onstage construct accounts of sound based on the limited proof of unseen noises. In Heywood's *Edward IV* (1599), an offstage noise marks the murder of the young princes, and while other sounds are offered as similes, the source of the sound initially remains known.

²⁴ *The lamentable and true tragedie of M. Arden of Feuersham in Kent* (London: [E. Allde] for Edward White, 1592).

Me thinkes the bodies lying dead in graues,
Should rise and crie against us O harke, harke,

A noyse within.

The Mandrakes shreeks are musicke to their cries,
The verie night is frighted, and the starres,
Do drop like torches, to behold this déed: (K1r).²⁵

The imagined screams of risen bodies are replaced by the actual screams of the princes, which in turn are compared to the shrieks of mandrakes. The noise is heard from within, and therefore does not remain sourceless; it is clear that the cries belong to the princes, and while the supernatural is conjured up through comparisons, it is never really believed to hold sway in this night-time scene. In this case, the reality of murder is perhaps more frightening.

The unseen and the uncanny.

Jacobean playwrights revelled in nocturnal noises, in sonic tricks, in offstage echoes and voices, and in the association of sound with darkness. The acoustics of the playhouses were used to support this sonic confusion (sounds could be performed from all over the playhouse, creating a deliberately unsettling acoustic effect). This was the case in the outdoor as well as indoor performance spaces. Mariko Ichikawa has written of the movement and of the sonic confusion conjured by Harpax, the devil of *The Virgin Martyr* (1620), who is heard laughing within, at one end, at the other end, and at the middle.²⁶ Building on Gurr's discussion of the same play, Tim Fitzpatrick proposes that there may have been a lattice or grate over the doors of the Globe to allow 'acoustic flow' from backstage.²⁷ Supernatural noises were tricks of space as much as of sound. Thomas Heywood's *The Silver Age* (1611) calls for 'fire-workes

²⁵ Thomas Heywood, 'The Second Part' in *The first and second partes of King Edward the Fourth* (London: F[elix] K[ingston] for Humfrey Lownes and Iohn Oxenbridge, 1600).

²⁶ Mariko Ichikawa, "'Maluolio Within': Acting on the Threshold between Onstage and Offstage Spaces.' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005), 124-5.

²⁷ Tim Fitzpatrick, *Playwright, Space and Place in Early Modern Performance : Shakespeare and Company* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 267. See also: Andrew Gurr, 'Stage Doors at the Globe', *Theatre Notebook* 52 (1999), 8-18.

all over the house', and, while this is described by John Cox in *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama* as 'remarkable', noise all over the playhouse is not remarkable at all.²⁸ The arrival of the ghost in *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604), for instance, is heralded when the whole performance space is imagined to be full of sound, as D'Ambois imagines his own (play)house shaking under the noisy effects associated with stage ghosts.

What violent heat is this? me thinks the fire
Of twenty liues doth on a sudden flash
Through all my faculties: the aire goes high
In this close chamber, and the frighted earth!
Trembles, and shrinkes beneath me: the whole house
Crackes with his shaken burthen; blesse me, heauen. (H4r-v) .²⁹

Here, we are caught between the imaginary ('me thinks' signals, of course, that there are no flashes, trembles, or cracks outside of D'Ambois's head) and the very real memory of past performances in which such effects signalled the approaching arrival of a spirit.

The effect of sound to unsettle our sense of the boundaries of the playing space has been proposed by Peter Womack, who uses Marston's *The Insatiate Countess* (1610) as an example.³⁰ Writing of the stage direction 'A trampling of Horses heard', he notes that, as Rogero and Isabella depart on horseback, 'there must be a moment when the stage is empty and the audience is listening to an off-stage sound effect.'³¹ Womack captures the unsettling effect of off-stage sound: 'It provokes a distinctive frisson: staring at the silent furniture, we listen to the sound of decisive action elsewhere, unable to see what is happening, but knowing only too well. They've gone; they're not coming back.' Jacobean tragedies play

²⁸ John D. Cox, *The Devil and the Sacred in English Drama, 1350–1642*, (CUP: 2004), 190. Wiggins notes that Silver Age was performed at the Red Bull by Queen Anne's Men, who specialised in fireworks. *British Drama*, V1, 158. See Eva Griffiths, *A Jacobean Company and its Playhouse: The Queen's Servants at the Red Bull Theatre (c. 1605-1619)* (CUP: 2013), 114.

²⁹ George Chapman, *Bussy d'Ambois* (London: William Aspley, 1607).

³⁰ As Womack notes, the tragedy was 'left unfinished by John Marston on his enforced retirement from the stage in the summer of 1608, and completed by William Barksted and Lewis Machin for performance by a children's company at the Whitefriars some time between 1609 and 1613.' Peter Womack 'Off-stage' in. *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (OUP: 2017), 71.

³¹ Womack (2017), 72.

with the boundaries of their own playhouses, moving our minds offstage, with characters no longer seen but still heard, as they travel into an unknown place, or an imaginary night.

Moreover, indoor playhouses offered the possibility of darkness. In lieu of artificial or controlled lightning in daytime performances at outdoor theatres such as the Globe, props were required to show the night. Candles held aloft, and a few well-placed lines of dialogue, might quickly establish a scene. As Jeremy Lopez has put it, in his study of stage craft,

It is not that spectacular effects on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage occur only in dark scenes, but that dark scenes tend to be crowded with spectacular effects. When the language of the play most insists on the invisibility of characters, objects, and locations, the action works most vigorously to call our attention to these things: dark scenes tend to fill the stage with characters, to use all of its levels, to underscore the importance of props, to maximize the potential of visible, physical space. The dark scene is a convention that, like the aside, changes the way we see the stage.³²

A dark scene also changes the way we hear the stage, with sounds serving the same role as prop candles held aloft, reminding us that it is dead of the night. The effect of darkness on the sense of hearing is discussed by Shakespeare during the extended night scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Hermia claims that

Dark night, that from his eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense. (III.ii.177-180).³³

Darkness limits vision while isolating and, in Hermia's words, doubling the sense of hearing. But where an outdoor play like *Dream* asks us to imagine night, indoor plays can offer an artificial night instead.³⁴ As Martin White has pointed out, Blackfriars could be closed off to outside light, as suggested by Thomas Dekker's simile in *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606), which describes private playhouses 'when the windowes are clapt downe, as some

³² Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, (CUP: 2002), 106.

³³ William Shakespeare, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', ed. Harold F. Brooks in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

³⁴ Sukanta Chaudhuri notes that the play was acted 'publickely' according to the Q1 title page, and suggests the play was performed at the Theater or Globe. Chaudhuri also suggests later performances (possibly in January 1604) at court, and also at Blackfriars. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Sukanta Chaudhuri (Arden: 2017), 3-5.

Nocturnal, or dismall *Tragedy* were presently to be acted...'³⁵ Night scenes raise the question of what we are supposed to be able to see, and in doing so challenge what we can hear.

Jacobean drama makes extensive use of acousmatic sounds, which is to say sounds without visible or known sources, or, to use Schaeffer's definition: 'Acousmatic, adjective: a sound that one hears without seeing what causes it.'³⁶ Sound and sight are separated from one another, with the ears forced to interpret a sound that is not paired with an image. As Brian Kane has noted in his study of acousmatic sound, the lack of a visible source for a sound is precisely what generates our fascination with the sound itself: 'Because the source of the noises remains obscure, the desire to uncover it generates much of the interest in the sounds themselves.'³⁷ We want to know, in large part because we are not told. This delight in the unknown and the uncanny is a particular feature of Jacobean drama, which Pascale Aebischer has described (using George Puttenham's terminology) as "preposterous", in that it can be defined by its interest in temporal and spatial displacements. Although her work is concerned with 'contemporary Jacobean' drama on film, her description of its venality and its interest in the unnatural is useful when thinking of staged sound. Indeed, she notes that

The preposterous is thus a transgressive trope that disturbs temporal, social, sexual, and gendered order. No wonder that Puttenham ranks it alongside other "figures Auricular working by disorder" under the general name "*Hiperbaton*" or "the Trespasser," intimating that the preposterous is close to modes of speaking "so foule and intollerable" as to be downright "vicious."³⁸

35 Martin White, 'Light and Darkness in the Indoor Jacobean Playhouse', in *Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire in the Jacobean Playhouse*, ed. Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper (CUP: 2014), 117. See Thomas Dekker, *The seven deadly sinnes of London* (London: E[dward] A[l]lde and S. Stafford] for Nathaniel Butter, 1606), D2r.

36 Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 91. Translation from Brian Kane, *Sound unseen: acousmatic sound in theory and practice* (OUP: 2014), 4.

37 Kane (2014), 4.

38 Pascale Aebischer, 'Shakespearean Heritage and the Preposterous "Contemporary Jacobean" Film: Mike Figgis's "Hotel"', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 60.3 (2009), 284.

The foul, the intolerable – these are features not just of figures of speech (figures Auricular) but of sound. The acousmatic allowed Jacobean playwrights to stage sonically the transgressive themes with which their plays were concerned, with a disordered sensory effect.

The term acousmatic, however, requires some nuancing when used in regard to the early modern playhouses. It is possible – even likely – that audiences in Blackfriars might be able to see the instrument used to make a sound (such as a drum for thunder), but whether that sound is *meant to be* the sound of a drum, a military march, thunder, or something else entirely, can only be confirmed by dialogue. “Acousmatic” will then be used to describe a sound with no clear source, even if its literal source is visible in performance. Even the sight of an instrument, moreover, is no guarantee of tracing the sound through the playhouse. In her work on off-stage sound, Frances Shirley noted that the hautboys in *Antony and Cleopatra*, which are cued to sound from below the stage, are particularly effective in creating sonic unease.³⁹ In their research on *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, Will Tosh, Simon Smith, and Claire Van Kampen confirmed that the ‘origin of the sound was not immediately apparent, as the wooden interior of the playhouse worked like a resonating chamber to diffuse the sound through the house, creating an appropriately eerie musical effect’.⁴⁰ Simon Smith claims that early modern music was a ‘fundamentally multisensory phenomenon’ and writing of *Antony and Cleopatra* suggests that ‘music’s visual experience is suppressed in order to convey a dramatic world beyond the stage.’⁴¹ Playwrights did not hesitate to draw attention to the sonic potential of the playhouses to both hide or reveal music. In Webster’s *The White Devil* (1612), it is no coincidence that the conjurer is the one to draw music up from beneath the stage:

39 Frances A. Shirley, *Shakespeare's use of off-stage sounds* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press: 1963), 118-19.

40 Will Tosh, *Playing Indoors: Staging Early Modern Drama in the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse* (Arden Shakespeare: London, 2018), 176.

41 Simon Smith, “‘I see no instruments, nor hands that play’: *Antony and Cleopatra* and visual musical experience” in *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558-1660*, eds. Simon Smith, Jackie Watson, and Amy Kenny (MUP: 2015), 168, 174.

Strike louder musicke from this charmed ground,
To yield, as fits the act, a Tragicke sound.

(D4v).⁴²

The tragic sound of acousmatic music is associated with the black magic of conjuring; it is part of the illusion, a sound that cannot be enjoyed visually, or even identified properly.

In discussing the acousmatic, it is also necessary to create a distinction between sounds without visible or acknowledged sources and sounds without sources at all. Sound effects can be diegetic, which is to say that they are created within the world of the play and heard by those within the play. This distinction has been more frequently discussed in film studies, in which non-diegetic sounds such as voice-over narration or background music cannot be heard by those on-screen (the screeching violin strings of the shower scene in Hitchcock's *Psycho*, 1960, remain a familiar example).⁴³ Such sounds can be heard only by the audience, and might be considered dramatically ironic, or information imparted, as Klas Dykhoff has put it, directly from the director to the audience.⁴⁴ In the plays discussed below it is not the case that sound effects exist outside of the world of the play, or are layered on top of it like a background accompaniment; it is rather that, real and diegetic as they are, sounds are not easily located in the playhouse and are not recognised by those who hear them.

In the case of sounds that are not seen in the darkness, this doubt creates a sense of what we might call the acoustic uncanny and is exploited again and again in Jacobean drama: familiar sounds are heard and repeated in unknown or unexpected contexts. The uncanny is, to paraphrase Freud's essay on the subject, a feeling of unease aroused by the resurfacing of the familiar in an unfamiliar form, 'something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light.' (113). Through the figure of the 'Sand-man', with his threatening eye-glasses, Freud's essay on the uncanny centres memorably on the sense of

⁴² John Webster, *The white diuel, or, The tragedy of Paulo Giordano Vrsini, Duke of Brachiano* (London: N.O. for Thomas Archer, 1612).

⁴³ *Psycho*. dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Original Music by Bernard Herrmann. Shamley Productions/Universal. 1960.

⁴⁴ Klas Dykhoff, 'Non-diegetic sound effects', *The New Soundtrack*, 2.2 (2012), 169-179.

sight.⁴⁵ Critics have traditionally emphasised the visual in discussions of the uncanny, but to assume that only sights can create discomfort is to ignore Freud's definition of that particular anxiety, when he asks, 'whence come the uncanny influences of silence, darkness and solitude?'⁴⁶ Darkness and silence enhance our fear because, by taking away our vision and heightening our hearing, they increase our sense of uncertainty. Jacobean tragedies are littered with images of the uncanny, 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.'⁴⁷ Yet, visual spectacles are only half of the chilling sensory experience they offer. Freud's examples of the uncanny might at every turn apply to sound: fears about castration or loss of limb (or fear of sensory deprivation); doubling and repetitions (sonic echoes), a dread of the "evil eye", the envious gaze (or overheard gossip) of the community; and finally madness itself (shown so often in Jacobean drama by a loss of control over sound). Beliz Güçbilmez has proposed the separation of the body and the voice in the off-stage space as a means of creating this sense of the uncanny.

Every time the body/voice or sight/sound unity disintegrates, it becomes almost impossible to recognize or identify the voice. A voiceless body is acceptable as silence, but a 'bodyless' voice – especially when presented in a theatre art which defines itself through mere presence – is completely uncanny. Thus sound/voice without an entity/body (sound/voice without a home) is a primal source of the uncanny. The stage embodies both sound/voice and entity/body. But the offstage, bearing 'then' and 'there', is the hearth for the incorporeal, for the immaterial. The dematerialized sound/voice causes bewilderment on the part of the audience.⁴⁸

Like the disembodied voice in *The Witch* with which this chapter began, the echo creates confusion. We expect to see what we can hear; we expect a voice to have a body; and when our senses are disconnected, the contradiction of sight and sound creates a sense of the uncanny. What we hear is at once known and unknown; offstage, but not unheard.

45 For more discussion of doubt, sight, and the role of Sand-Man, see: Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The "Uncanny")', trans. Robert Denomé, *New Literary History*, 7.3 (1976), 525-48.

46 Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. D. McLintock, introduction H. Haughton (London: Penguin, 2003), 153.

47 Ibid, 124.

48 Beliz Güçbilmez, 'An Uncanny Theatricality: the Representation of the Offstage', *New Theatre Quarterly* 23.2 (May 2007), 155.

‘every noise appals me’: *Macbeth* (1606).

Macbeth scrambles the senses. Its sounds and its sights lie to us; as Macbeth falls into guilt and madness, we follow him, hearing noises in the night. It is a night that never ends, as the characters on stage repeatedly complain. Daylight is not coming and noises in the night cannot be identified. The theatre leaves us vulnerable to this confusion, for we cannot always see the source of sound effects from offstage, and even if we could, there would - without explicit dialogue - be no way to tell whether those onstage can hear that sound, or whether we share it with Macbeth alone. If we cannot be sure that a sound has been heard at all, then we cannot be sure of its meanings. As Evelyn Tribble has suggested, Shakespeare ‘exploits the association of sound and fear, the capacity of sound to startle, to stir a physical response and to prompt an orienting response, a search for the source of the sound.’⁴⁹ *Macbeth* does not allow an audience to orient themselves, for the rules of its soundscape keep shifting, and the meanings of sound are continually called into contradiction. Most famous amongst these is the knocking at the gates of Macbeth’s castle, to which the Porter responds with dark humour.⁵⁰ This sound is integral to the sense of justice that rises throughout the play to the crescendo of Dunsinane, and its ironic misuse of the medieval Harrowing of Hell scenes of the mystery cycles only underscores the horror of what is happening inside the Macbeths’ hellish home. In their research into *Macbeth*, Emma Whipday and Sarah Lewis found that ‘The audience are led to ponder the location and source of the offstage sound, to imagine where the knocking might be coming from, and in the moment of the knocking they are

49 Evelyn Tribble, “‘When Every Noise Appalls Me’: Sound and Fear in *Macbeth* and Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*.” *Shakespeare* 1.1-2 (2005), 79.

50 See Thomas De Quincey, ‘On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*’, in *The Collected Works of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. x, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), 389–394; also Glynne Wickham, *Shakespeare’s Dramatic Heritage: Collected Studies in Mediaeval, Tudor and Shakespearean Drama* (London: Butler & Tanner Ltd, 1969), 214-224; see also Kurt Schreyer, “‘Here’s a knocking indeed!’: *Macbeth* and the Harrowing of Hell’, *Upstart Crow* 29 (2010), 26-43.

perhaps just as likely to envisage the tiring house as they are to imagine another part of the castle.’⁵¹ Sound offers no sense of space, no sense of fixity, no way of orienting ourselves.

Most editors add up to four cues for knocking into some twenty-five lines of II.ii. At each instance, the sound is remarked upon by either Macbeth or Lady Macbeth - not both; in fact, Lady Macbeth seems surer of the sound, as she locates it to the ‘south entry’ (65). Macbeth is less certain that the sound is not either in his mind, or exaggerated out of all meaningful proportion: ‘Whence is that knocking?/How is’t with me, when every noise appals me?’ (56-57). It is not until the following scene, at which the porter hears a knock at his gate, that we begin to be sure that the sound is not imaginary, and, even then, we are still bombarded with a sound another six times (to follow the Arden editors), which is not to count eleven uses of the word “knock” itself in the porter’s short speech. Sound and speech, sense and nonsense blur. The word knock and the sound knock seem to echo one another, with onomatopoeic words acting as sound effects, and sound effects seeming to be transformed into words. It is not just sound that appears to have broken down, but the sensory acts of speaking and hearing. Macbeth can no longer pronounce a sacred word, ‘Amen’ (II.ii.30); he imagines that ‘I heard a voice cry, “Sleep no more!”’ (34). There is also a temporal slip, as the linear movement of the scene seems challenged by repetition of the same sound. Tiffany Stern has proposed that the slippage of time is facilitated by the slippery use of sound when Lady Macbeth counts the hours of night:

In her somnolent state, Lady Macbeth relives the night when Duncan was murdered: ‘One: Two: Why then ’tis time to doo’t’ (TLN 2127–8). Yet in the scene she remembers, to which the audience was witness, no clock chimed 2 a.m. Instead, a bell rang twice, once putatively signalling that Macbeth’s drink was ready (but really signalling that it was time for action), and once raising the alarm because Duncan was dead. Lady Macbeth has conflated the two jangling bells into two strikes of the

51 Emma Whipday, *Shakespeare's Domestic Tragedies: Violence in the Early Modern Home* (CUP: 2019), 193.

clock, as though no sooner had the murder been heralded than it had been done, and the time for regret had already slipped away.⁵²

In much the same way, the knocking at the gate seems to last far longer than is possible; indeed, we are given an entire scene as the Porter decides whether or not to answer. Sound – a marker of guilt – is heard again and again, as Macbeth remains caught in a sonic nightmare.

Clear sonic signals are few and far between in *Macbeth*. Hautboys, for instance, suggest supernatural danger; but there is no clear indication in the stage directions or in the dialogue of *Macbeth* as to whether those onstage hear this sound at the entrance of Duncan, or whether we are hearing them instead of trumpets, as a foreboding, musical hint of what is to come when Macbeth becomes king.⁵³ In turn, Lady Macbeth associates trumpets not only with Duncan but with his murder, as she fears his ‘virtues/Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu’d’ (I.vii.18-19). Those trumpets are once again invoked in V.vii, but now are ‘clamorous harbingers, of blood and death’ (9-10), called upon by Macduff as battle begins. The meaning of sound shifts; trumpets speak, sound is conflated with speech. This confused sound creates a plurality of meanings, as the soundscape begins to unravel, hidden in darkness and worsened by *Macbeth*’s presentation of the effect of ‘pester’d senses’ (V.ii.23).

One such confused sound effect, acknowledged by those onstage, is the sound of the bell, cued by the Macbeths as a means of marking their act of murder, and discussed above by Tiffany Stern. Of course, the servant onstage takes a very different meaning from the bell than a more complicit audience: ‘Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,/She strike upon the bell’ (II.i.31-2), instructs Macbeth, although we know that the bell calls for more than refreshments. In fact, as audience, we are asked to analyse its significance, to ‘listen

⁵² Tiffany Stern, ‘Time for Shakespeare: Hourglasses, sundials, clocks, and early modern theatre’ (Shakespeare Lecture, read 21 May 2014), *Journal of the British Academy* 3, 20.

⁵³ Tribble discusses the supernatural association of hautboys (especially in *Macbeth*) in “‘When Every Noise Appalls Me’: Sound and Fear in *Macbeth* and Akira Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*.” *Shakespeare* 1.1-2 (2005), 78. See also: Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002), 41.

strenuously for the possibilities of earthly and unearthly agency'.⁵⁴ *Macbeth* is complicated by its own sensory confusion, its frequent attempts to make those experiencing the play doubt their own critical faculties. Between Macbeth's call for the cue bell and the sound of the bell itself is Macbeth's famous soliloquy, 'Is this a dagger, which I see before me' (33). From this musing on the veracity of sight - 'Mine eyes are made the fools o'th'other senses' (44) - Macbeth turns in the second half of his soliloquy from what he may or may not see, to the dangerous complications of sound, and more specifically sound in the darkness of night.

wither'd Murther,
 Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
 Moves like a ghost. - Thou sure and firm-set earth
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
 Thy very stones prate of my where-about [...]

[*A bell rings.*]

I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.
 Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
 That summons thee to Heaven, or to Hell. *Exit.*

(II.i.49-64).

Macbeth slips between the sounds of words and sounds themselves: Hecate's offerings (off-rings?); the wolf howl that serves as an alarum; and the wolf's soft pace that becomes Tarquin's strides, which themselves then become ghostly and inaudible, as in turn Macbeth's will be. In this darkness and silence, amidst these 'wicked dreams', there is a fear that the 'very stones prate', that the earth itself will reveal Macbeth as he walks. At the cue of the bell, sound interrupts the imaginary soundscape that Macbeth is creating (see chapter four). As Tribble argues, 'Act Two Scene Two is full of sounds "heard" only internally by the Macbeths, creating the impression of a powerful and horrifying inner sonic environment unavailable to the audience.'⁵⁵ Yet, we do have some small sense of this private soundscape:

⁵⁴ Andrew Hiscock, '“Enter Macduffe, with Macbeths Head”: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Staging of Trauma', *Stage Directions & Shakespearean Theatre*, eds. Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (London: Arden, 2018), 255.

⁵⁵ Tribble (2005), 81.

the bell is cued, and we hear it, although we cannot be sure if we are hearing the sound inside Macbeth's head. No one other than Macbeth is on stage to verify the bell's sound.

The slippage of sonic meaning does not stop with Macbeth. Lady Macbeth enters with her own response to the bell, which echoes the hallucinatory musings of her husband.

LADY MACBETH	Hark! - Peace! It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman, Which gives the stern'st good-night. [...]
MACBETH	I have done the deed. - Didst thou not hear a noise?
LADY MACBETH	I heard the owl scream, and the crickets cry. Did you not speak?
MACBETH	When?
LADY MACBETH	Now.
MACBETH	As I descended?
LADY MACBETH	Ay!
MACBETH	Hark! (II.ii.1-19).

Just as the wolf's howl had become an alarum, a call to battle, now Lady Macbeth hears the owl as a bellman, shrieking out (as a shadow of Duncan's supposed cries). As Coleridge observed in his fourth lecture on Shakespeare, guilt affects Lady Macbeth's trust in her own senses immediately: 'Once the deed is done or doing—now that the first reality commences, Lady Macbeth shrinks. The most simple sound strikes terror, the most natural consequences are horrible, whilst previously every thing, however awful, appeared a mere trifle'.⁵⁶ In fragmented, fractured lines, the Macbeths attempted to ascertain what they have heard, and what noises they have made, but with the murder of Duncan, what little hold they had upon sound is lost. When the bell is finally rung again, in II.iii, it is used by Macduff as an 'alarum

⁵⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge: Lectures on Shakespeare (1811-1819)*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: 2018), Lecture IV, 160.

bell' (73) to wake the sleeping household and report the murder; it is an 'alarum bell' again at V.vii, when it is used by Macbeth to rally a final stand, marking another approaching death.

The sound effects that have been heard in the first half of *Macbeth* are heard again in the second, but not as performed effects. Instead, sounds are recalled through jarring and unexpected comparisons, as the faint buzz of a beetle is stretched sonically and cast as the noisy peal of a bell.

Ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight; ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-born beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath rung Night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note. (III.ii.40-44).

The dreadful 'note' of Macbeth's next murder does not need to be cued by a bell; finally, it seems, nature itself (or rather the supernatural influence of witches) has made the world itself ring out with peals. Scotland is left in a chaos of sounds: 'sighs, and groans, and shrieks' (IV.iii.168). Now there is no end to the chiming of bells: 'the dead man's knell' (170-71) is now ubiquitous. *Macbeth* ends with a fifth act full of drums and colours, the supernatural horror of nocturnal noise replaced by the very real horror - the 'great clatter' (V.ii.21) - of battle. Imagined sound moves towards more firmly diegetic sound, and the noise that once manifested (perhaps even only in Macbeth's mind) as a sign of guilt becomes the sound of the retribution that the play's final battle will bring down upon Macbeth's head.

'thou god of sound': *Sophonisba* (1605).

The Wonder of Women, or the Tragedy of Sophonisba is a play that is at once anxious about the capabilities of sound, and indulgent in its own use of it. The play, which sees Sophonisba forcibly remarried to Syphax when her husband is thought dead, presents their relationship of a battle of sound and silence. Before a word of dialogue is spoken, the stage of Blackfriars is filled with the noise of bodies and rattling weapons, 'targets and Iauelines' (I.i.s.d). Pages

light the wedding procession, as soldiers, Syphax among them, ‘armd from top to toe’, troupe behind. When the Prologue speaks, it is to break what tenuous silence this nocturnal scene held:

For now the night
Yields loud resoundings of the nuptial pomp;
Apollo strikes his harp, Hymen his torch,
Whilst louring Juno, with ill-boding eye,
Sits envious at too forward Venus. Lo,
The instant night! (Prologue, 14-19).⁵⁷

In the ‘instant night’ (19), the false darkness guaranteed by the indoor playhouses, we can hear (or imagine we are hearing) the harps of this ‘nuptial pomp’ (15). The sound of music which resumes after the prologue recalls the cornets of the dumb show; the night is surrounded and made loud by the marriage ceremony of Sophonisba and Massinissa.

The play is accompanied – we might almost say scored – by instrumental music which recurs both in and inbetween acts. At the beginning of *Sophonisba*, the cornets, music, and sound itself, is still a source of communication: sensible and comprehensible. Act 1, scene 2, marks itself as a dark scene, for Nycea, Sophonisba’s waiting woman, enters with tapers; and Sophonisba herself enters ‘in her night attire’ (1-2, s.d). Into the darkness bursts the music of a marriage masque, ‘four Boys, antiquely attired, with bows and quivers, dancing to the cornets a fantastic measure’ (36-7, s.d). This is no wedding-night charivari, but the hymeneal music that should suggest a harmonious union. Sophonisba, however, cannot see its source, for she has hidden herself in her bed, with the curtains closed. Even at this first, and seemingly most promising use of sound, there is disunion between the senses. It might seem, by this staging, that the sound of marriage is something for Sophonisba to hear, but only at a remove. Yet, amidst a chorus of ‘cornets, organ and voices’ (42), Sophonisba defies the expectation of ‘A modest silence’ (43) and insists ‘What I dare I boldly speak’ (47).

⁵⁷ John Marston, ‘The Wonder of Women or The Tragedy of Sophonisba’, *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*, ed. Peter Corbin & Douglas Sedge (MUP: 1986). All subsequent references are to this edition.

She is not the only interruption to this marriage scene; within moments, Carthalo enters to the undressed Massinissa, 'his shield struck full of darts (62, s.d). It is a noisy bit of stage business, with a soldier, 'sword drawn' (61, s.d.), staggering into the bedchamber in the wake of the marriage masque. The leisure of music is replaced with the business of battle sounds: 'Th'alarum beats necessity of fight;/Th'unsobber evening draws out reeling forces' (85-86). What follows, however, is not a battle scene, but a promise to the audience of the noise of battle that is to come. In a lengthy speech, Carthalo describes the battle he has just escaped, where 'Shouts are raised/That shook the heavens' (109), and 'arms thundered as they closed' (112). In a sudden disruption both to the marriage music and to the tentative speech of Sophonisba, Carthalo brings descriptions of the noise of battle into their bedroom.

It is an intrusion soon echoed by the entrance of Gelloso with the commissions of the senate, who brings news into this darkened bedroom of further fighting: 'Beat loud/Our Afric drums!' (148), comes the command. This disruption of sound is underscored by Gelloso's scathing description of Scipio, their enemy, who 'snores on his unlaced cask all faint' while they will 'strike fresh alarms.' (149-50). The confusion is apparent: Scipio snores on the battlefield while Massinissa must strike up alarms in his bedroom. This bedroom discussion of warfare has something of the effect that modern audiences will recognise as a sound delay, when an actor's lips are moving on screen, but the sound of their dialogue is not in sync. The scene and its sound are almost right, but the delays, the feedback, the echoes, unsettle us.

By the time 'that glorious lamp' (229), the sun, rises on this night scene, the cornets of the masque have begun to sound a march. Here, where before four boys entered, dancing, and dressed in antique clothing, now two pages enter with targets and two with torches, in a travesty of the earlier celebration. Massinissa, no longer dressed for bed, is now 'armed cap-a-pie' (182-3, s.d.). Having heard Sophonisba's claims of outspokenness with affection, he now interrupts her, apparently unable to endure her words in times of war: 'Peace, my ears

are steel./I must not hear thy much-enticing voice' (208-9). That his ears are steel – not stone, as is much more commonly idiomatic – is telling; we have shifted from a soundscape of peace to a soundscape of war, and there is no place for music or conversation.

When we return to a night scene, Sophonisba has been forced into marriage with Syphax, who does not enter in triumphs, with cornets, but who drags her onstage in her 'nightgown-petticoat' to the sound of 'Organ mixed with recorders' (III.i, 1-3, s.d.). Cornets and organs combine in Massinissa's funeral rites, just as Sophonisba is forced to marry the two husbands respectively associated with these instruments. Not only has the musical soundscape drastically changed, but the representation of sound itself is challenged. Where Sophonisba had rejected conventional, feminine silence in a teasing conversation with Massinissa, her silence now becomes a protest against Syphax. In return, she is faced with the cruel reality of Syphax's refusal to listen. Here, in Syphax's threat of rape, we have the sonic motto of the play: 'All appetite is deaf; I will, I must' (III.i.25-6). It is the 'god of sound' (119) to whom Sophonisba first addresses her prayers as the altar is prepared for the rites she owes to Massinissa, whom she believes dead; and yet, these prayers explicitly reject sound: 'Yet hath my constant tongue/Let fall no weakness' (131-2). Who this god of sound may be – there is no classical equivalent – is unclear. Perhaps she has no god in mind but Sound itself, the music that winds through the play and leads her to the danger of Syphax's chambers.

Sound, in *Sophonisba*, if not divine, is magical. As Sophonisba and then Syphax descend through the vault (or trapdoor) of the stage and re-emerge, 'as out of a cave's mouth' (IV.i.s.d) into a darkened grove, a transition occurs in Marston's use of sound. Now *Sophonisba*, a play full of sound and devoid of sound effects, inverts all of its own sonic rules. Sophonisba herself, defined by her stoic, faithful silence, suddenly finds herself able only to express herself through noise, as she threatens to 'Cleave my stretched cheeks with sound, speak from all sense,/But loud and full of player's eloquence' (IV.i.25-6). It is the

violence of volume that Sophonisba seeks in her despair, a volume particularly associated with a particular type of voice: an actor's voice.⁵⁸ Sophonisba will never return to the silence with which she had attempted to bear her forced marriage to Syphax. Although Syphax insists that the 'forest's deaf/As if my lust' (46-7), and that the 'Night and the god of silence/Swells my full pleasures' (47-8), sound – supernatural sound - will soon win out. In these opposing invocations of the gods of sound and silence, Sophonisba and Syphax each establish their own world as one governed by what is heard or one defined by what falls on deaf ears.

In this opposition of sound and silence, volume and deafness, there must, then, be found some balance of acoustic resolution. Although the figure of the witch, Erictho, who bursts into the silence of the forest scene, has often been dismissed as an unnecessary interpolation that cashes in on the recent success of *Macbeth*, the witch also serves another purpose.⁵⁹ Through her unrestrained voice, vile as her words may be, Erictho finally speaks as if for Sophonisba and silences Syphax. Interrupted in a half-line of pentameter, Syphax is stopped short by the only call for 'Infernal music' (IV.i.100, s.d.) that is found in play texts that are known to have been performed by the children's company.⁶⁰ The music is tied explicitly to Erictho: it 'plays softly whilst Erictho enters and when she speaks ceaseth.' This means that the music continues from its cue until Erictho interrupts Syphax: it accompanies more than twenty lines in which Syphax describes the witch as she slowly approaches through the darkness. Erictho's speech itself is perverted, breathed into the mouth of those who are dying.

But if she find some life
Yet lurking close, she bites his gelid lips,
And sticking her black tongue in his dry throat,
She breathes dire murmurs which enforce him bear

⁵⁸ For more on early modern actors' voices, see Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2007).

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Anthony Harris, *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth Century English Drama* (MUP: 1980), 65.

⁶⁰ This cue is discussed further in Linda Phyllis Austern, *Music in English Children's Drama of the Later Renaissance* (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach, 1992), 60.

Her baneful secrets to the spirits of horror.
To her first sound the gods yield any harm,
As trembling once to hear a second charm.
She is –

Erictho. Here, Syphax, here. (IV.i.118-125).

In this grotesque description of the anatomical process of speech, which runs disconcertingly backwards from the black tongue to the dry throat to the breath itself, Syphax both describes Erictho's capacity for speech and yields at once to its power, even as the gods yield before her sound. It is 'a charm, which Jove dare not hear twice' (167), or, as in Lucan's *Pharsalia*, from which this passage is drawn, 'At the first sound of her petition the gods grant every horror, dreading to hear a second spell'.⁶¹ Her breath and her speech are cast as a tainted kiss.

Erictho invokes sounds of the supernatural in particular: 'the daw and crow,/The ill-voiced raven and still-chattering pie' (149-50), who 'Send out ungrateful sound and loathsome filth' (151). Sound itself will carry her spell, as she will 'force/The air to music, and the shades of night/To perform sweet sounds' (176-8). This is no idle threat, for in the darkness of Blackfriars, the theatre comes alive with strange noises. The music of the play has so far either been performed onstage, as part of a procession, or has been heard as part of the aural paratext of the play, as opening trumpets or music between acts. With the arrival of Erictho, this changes at once. Suddenly, sound comes from a variety of hidden sources: twice, *within*, Erictho chants her own name as an echo; a treble viol and bass lute 'play softly *within the canopy*' (198, s.d.); and there is a 'short song to soft music *above*' (209, s.d., my italics). Simon Smith argues that this is in part a matter of practicality, as 'offstage sound conveys events that would be problematic to stage in a commercial playhouse' (here, a 'hidden treble viol and bass lute' represent sex between Syphax and Erictho).⁶² It also creates an uncanny

61 'Omne nefas superi prima iam voce precantis/Concedunt carmenque timent audire secundum.' Lucan, *Civil War*, trans. J.D. Duff (MA: Harvard University Press: 1928), VI. 527-8.

62 Simon Smith, *Musical Response in the Early Modern Playhouse, 1603-1625* (CUP: 2017) 86.

Now that Erictho has taken control of the sound of this play, her bass lute and treble viol replace the cornets for the fifth act musical interlude (V.i, s.d.). Yet, her bedroom trick does not last for long, and once this interlude is over, a different sound returns. In an echo of the bedroom scene that begins the play, this second “wedding night” between Syphax and Erictho disguised as Sophonisba is interrupted by martial cornets. Here, sound once again proves the wilfully deaf Syphax’s undoing, as Massinissa raises the volume.

Sound,
Stern heart’ners unto wounds and blood. Sound loud,
For we have namèd Sophonisba!

Cornets, a flourish.

So!

Cornets, a march far off.

Hark, hark, he comes! Stand blood, now multiply
Force more than fury. Sound high, sound high, we strike
For Sophonisba! (V.ii.27-32).

The call for sound is a call for power, and it is one to which Syphax must yield simply by the act of listening; in Massinissa’s words, he must ‘Hear a most deep revenge’ (49). Although Erictho and Massinissa are able to make noise, Sophonisba’s dream of cheek-splitting sound is fleeting, and, when Scipio demands her life as payment for the defiance of the Carthaginians, she is left ‘Only an unashamed death and a silent grave’ (27). To save her husband from Scipio’s wrath, Sophonisba drinks poison, and the cornets of her wedding masque are heard once more, now as the march of Scipio’s triumph through Carthage. Massinissa is left in grief, where ‘deep gulfs silent flow’ (V.i.57), where sound has failed.

All ends with a flourish of now-familiar cornets. The music between acts that echoes and recalls earlier action; the infernal music of Erictho, and the power of her spoken spells; the martial violence of Massinissa, who wins his duel with Syphax to the accompany of cornets; all of these act not only as a background of sound, but as an underscore to the action

itself, far closer to the atmospheric musical score of films than we might expect. Sound is no longer diegetic; it is heard below the action, not as part of it. Like this music, sound itself fluctuates throughout a play that has no easy answers, with the virtue of silence, the power of listening, and the danger of sound changing and shifting association with characters throughout. Sophonisba's silence, her defining feature in her marriage to Syphax, is heard all the more clearly over a play that revels in its own noise.

‘Tis very like my wife's voice': *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613) .

Duchess has troubled its audiences since 1613, when it was first performed at Blackfriars and then at the Globe.⁶⁴ Its wilful uncertainties, its fluctuation between the real and the represented, its unanswered questions: all work to create a sense of doubt in the minds of its audience as they grapple with what to believe. Webster revels in all of the tropes of what we would now call the Gothic: in the words of the 1830 edition of *The Works of John Webster*, his ‘imagination had a fond familiarity with objects of awe and fear. The silence of the sepulchre, the sculptures of marble monuments, the knolling of church bells, the cearments of the corpse, the yew that roots itself in dead men's graves, are the illustrations that most readily present themselves to his imagination’.⁶⁵ From the wax bodies used to represent the supposed corpses of the Duchess's husband and children to the severed hand with which she is presented in the dark, the sights of *The Duchess of Malfi* are deceptive. Yet, if the visual is not to be trusted, what faith can we have in the aural: the ‘silence of the sepulchre’, the ‘knolling of church bells’ – neither of which, of course, are called for in the play text? Webster's plot hinges not only on tricks of sight but on tricks of sound; in a play in which, as

⁶⁴ John Webster, *The tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy* (London: Nicholas Okes and John Waterson, 1623), A1. *The Duchess of Malfi* was, as its title page attests, presented both privately and publicly by the King's Men.

⁶⁵ For further discussion, see *Gothic Renaissance: A Reassessment*, ed. Elisabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (MUP: 2014); Alexander Dyce, ‘The Introduction to The Works of Webster (1830)’ in *Webster: The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. R.V. Holdsworth (London: Macmillan, 1975), 38.

Leah Marcus has put it, ‘the audience is hard pressed to distinguish clear originals from contaminated copies’, what is heard is not to be trusted.⁶⁶ By the time an echo resounds in the final act, we should not trust any representation, whether of sight or sound, body or voice.

Faith certainly cannot be placed in an unseen sound. An integral sound effect, the one noise most crucial to the play’s plot and to the Duchess’s downfall, is not heard onstage. Bosola enters in act two, scene three, claiming to have heard a scream: the sound of the Duchess’s labour pains. If Bosola has heard such a noise, he must know the truth of the Duchess’s pregnancy. Her marriage will be exposed. Yet, Bosola immediately doubts what he has heard, at the sound of a second noise: ‘List again!/It may be ‘twas the melancholy bird...’ (6-7). The exhortation ‘List again!’ suggests that at least one scream (and possibly two) has been heard and can be heard by the audience. Yet, we are no better informed than Bosola. Antonio enters, apparently with the answer: he asks Bosola directly if he heard a scream from the Duchess’s chambers. Yet, even this seeming proof is immediately undermined; Antonio second-guesses himself – perhaps it was only a dream, or the sound of the wind. Perhaps Antonio recognises the sound all too well but attempts to hide its source to protect the Duchess. There are no stage directions calling for either the first or second “scream” to be performed; it is possible that the audience also hear nothing, and must trust Bosola, who describes a sound that he himself does not quite believe he has heard.

By offering two explanations for the source of this sound, both the Duchess’s screams and those of the screech-owl, Bosola leaves us in confusion. This confusion unsettles the soundscape of the play: the ears cannot be trusted, one sound cannot be differentiated from another and, most shockingly of all, the female voice cannot be definitely distinguished from the animal sound of an owl. The owl in particular was an omen of fatality, as invoked by Bosola, who himself is the ‘Bellman’ (IV.ii.166) who will ring in the Duchess’s death: ‘The

⁶⁶ John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Leah S. Marcus (London: Arden, 2009), 59; all references to this edition.

screech owl and the whistler shrill,/Call upon our dame aloud' (172-73).⁶⁷ The soundbite is found frequently in Jacobean tragedy (we might think of D'Amville in *The Atheist's Tragedy*, 1611, who uses the same insult: 'Thou art a Scrichowle; and dost come i'night/To be the cursed messenger of death.')⁶⁸ The comparison between voices and owl cries also holds a longer stage history: we find it in *3 Henry VI* (1591), for instance, as a clear harbinger of doom; the insult in *Duchess* carries with it the weight of these former uses.

Bring forth that fatal screech-owl to our house,
That nothing sung but death to us and ours:
Now death shall stop his dismal threatening sound,
And his ill-boding tongue no more shall speak. (II.vi.56-59).⁶⁹

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, however, the sound of an owl signifies not death, but the possibility of new life. Sound effects are reinvented in Jacobean tragedy; what should be clearly ominous is given new meaning. What should be clear proof of the Duchess's pregnancy is never fully explained, and while later events and the arrival of the child onstage later make matters clear, the source of this scream in the night is never revealed, and Bosola's suspicion of the pregnancy is only confirmed by a letter dropped by Antonio. Since the publication of Q4 of *The Duchess of Malfi* (1708), editors have often incorporated its stage directions, which give Bosola a 'dark lantern' and have Antonio enter 'with a Candle his sword drawn'.⁷⁰ Such props demonstrate, especially on an outdoor stage like the Globe's, that the scene is taking place in darkness, and that the sounds heard are not only invisible to an audience, but also to those onstage. Through its unsettling and uncanny sound effects, the "shriek scene" forces its audience to think critically about the representation of sound, and whether it can be

⁶⁷ The owl as omen is discussed in John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Leah Marcus (Arden: 2009), 221, n99.

⁶⁸ Cyril Tourneur, *The atheist's tragedie: or The honest man's reuenge* (London: [Thomas Snodham], 1611), D3r.

⁶⁹ William Shakespeare, '3 Henry VI', ed. A.S. Cairncross in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, revised edition, eds. G.R. Proudfoot, Ann, Thompson, David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2011).

⁷⁰ Marcus (2009), 189, n9.

trusted, both at the court of Malfi and in the theatre itself. As the play progresses and noise becomes a form of torture, we must learn the lesson of the shriek scene: not to trust our ears.

The Duchess alone in this tragedy is immune to the unsettling effects of sound. While imprisoned in the dark by Ferdinand, the Duchess is forced to endure a masque of so-called madmen, who perform a song and a dance to jarring music, composed by Robert Johnson, with high notes that echo the sound of a wolf's howl.⁷¹ The use of sound in the dark to dismay and even torture a victim is not unprecedented on the early modern stage – we might think of Malvolio, trapped in a dark house, unable to recognize the voice of Feste/Sir Topas – but here it is at its most harrowing.⁷² Our instinct is, then, to shrink with horror from this sound, and to stage the scene as tragedy. Yet, if we take Ferdinand at his word, these performers were sent to entertain the Duchess; a similar performance, 'Being full of change and sport, forced [Ferdinand] to laugh' (IV.ii.40-41) and cured a bout of melancholy.

Unlikely as it may seem to an audience today (the scene is now rarely played as anything other than unsettling tragedy), critics have proposed that the song and dance of the madmen is in fact darkly comic. Leah Marcus has suggested that the dance echoes the *Lord's Masque* composed by Thomas Campion and performed on 14 February 1613, in which lovers and madmen are cured as they dance to increasingly harmonious music.⁷³ Inga-Stina Ekeblad has noted that anti-masques, popular at court from 1608, were 'often danced by "antics"' and that the song in *The Duchess of Malfi*, which Ekeblad describes as a 'charivari-like antimasque of madmen, developing into a masque of Death' is typical of court entertainments.⁷⁴ Yet, one thing is certain: however funny it is meant to be, the song does not

⁷¹ Ibid, 402.

⁷² John Astington notes that whether the stage direction 'within' refers to the tiring house or trap door space below the stage, Malvolio himself is not visible, but only able to be heard: 'Malvolio and the Dark House', *Shakespeare Survey* (1989), 41, 55-62.

⁷³ Marcus (2009), 403.

⁷⁴ Inga-Stina Ekeblad, 'The "Impure Art" of John Webster', *The Review of English Studies*, 9.35 (1958), 257, 267; see also Louis B. Wright, 'Madmen as Vaudeville Performers on the Elizabethan Stage', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 30.1 (1931), 48-54.

make the Duchess laugh, as she demonstrates what Gina Bloom has called ‘disruptive deafness’: a powerful, often gendered refusal to listen.⁷⁵ Her silence is all the more stark against the noise of the madmen. Inappropriate noise and laughter were both indicative of mental instability in the seventeenth century. Describing the patients of physician Richard Napier, Michael MacDonald explains that ‘Their moods could be changeable as quicksilver and they noisily expressed them in weird laughter, horrible screams, continual babbling, and furious raving. Laughter was the special token of antic madness.’⁷⁶ Karin Coddon has noted a shift in the performance of madness from Elizabethan interiority to Jacobean spectacle, against which personal sanity – here the Duchess’s sanity – must remain firm.⁷⁷

Despite her restraint and her silent death, the Duchess is heard again. Outside the ruins of an old monastery, Antonio and Delio discuss the legend of its echo, ‘the best echo that you ever heard’ (V.iii.5). Almost immediately, an echo begins to repeat back the last few words of their own lines, sometimes even adapting those words in a manner that unsettles us: this resounding noise appears to have agency of its own. Although Delio maintains that the sound might have one of many sources, ‘A huntsman or a falconer, a musician/Or a thing of sorrow’ (23-24), Antonio insists ‘’Tis very like my wife’s voice’ (26) and the echo itself seems to answer, ‘I, wife’s voice’ (26). The shared line of pentameter seems to act both as an affirmation (Aye, wife’s voice) and a declaration of self (I, your wife’s voice), itself an echo of the Duchess’s famous assertion of selfhood at the point of her execution, ‘I am Duchess of Malfi still’ (IV.ii.137). Writing of the voice of Old Hamlet’s ghost, Bruce Johnson has noted that ‘The sounding dead is a particularly disturbing embodiment of the liminal. It dismantles one of the most obdurate of all phenomenological certainties: the distinction between life and

⁷⁵ Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion* (2007), 116.

⁷⁶ Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, anxiety and healing in seventeenth-century England* (CUP: 1981), 139.

⁷⁷ Karin S. Coddon, ‘The Duchess of Malfi: tyranny and spectacle in Jacobean drama’, *Themes in Drama: Madness in Drama*, vol. 15, ed. J. Redmond (CUP: 1993), 1-17.

death, the literal vitality of vocalisation and the profound silence of the grave.’⁷⁸ In the seventeenth century, a familiar voice heard after death, now a well-known experience as songs and recordings endure beyond the death of their singers and performers, could only have supernatural sources. Death was defined by its lack of sound; the rest, as we know, is silence. On killing the Duchess, Ferdinand emphasizes that ‘Strangling is a very quiet death’ (V.iv.34). Even her children, the offspring of her forbidden marriage, have not yet learned to ‘prattle’ (III.v.112) when they are murdered: they will never speak. But the Duchess is not entirely silenced, for a woman in silence would be understood as a woman in tacit obedience; as Christina Luckyj shows, the early modern view on silence was often that ‘man is delivered from anarchic silence into the order and civility of speech (and its corollary, eloquent or active silence)... woman is delivered from uncontrolled language and garrulity into the subordination of silence.’⁷⁹ Instead her lingering voice, her echo, becomes a protest.

The question of the echo’s source is answered far more explicitly, however, if the Duchess herself is present onstage. Antonio does claim to have seen a ghost: ‘I marked not one repetition of the echo/But that, and on the sudden a clear light/Presented me a face folded in sorrow’ (V.iii.42-44). Yet, we cannot assume that an audience shares in this spectacle; for Delio, it is ‘Your fancy, merely’ (V.iii.45) and perhaps an audience must likewise take Antonio at his word. As Clifford Leech has put it, in his discussion of the deliberate distancing effects employed in *The Duchess of Malfi*, ‘Webster does not need her ghost – he is content to make a dubious echo speak for her...’⁸⁰ Dubious is a telling adjective; Leech seems to suggest that the echo will serve the purpose of a ghost, but in fact the echo complicates any sense of the Duchess’s lingering agency or continuing life after death. Like

⁷⁸ Bruce Johnson, ‘Hamlet: voice, music, sound’, *Popular Music* (2005) 24.2, 264-65.

⁷⁹ Christina Luckyj, ‘*A moving rhetoricke*’: *gender and silence in early modern England* (MUP: 2002), 44.

⁸⁰ Clifford Leech, ‘Distancing in *The Duchess of Malfi*’, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. N. Rabkin (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 89.

all uncanny sounds, the voice exists in doubt. The echo may speak *for* the Duchess, but there is nothing at all to confirm that the echo spoken *by* her. An echo is, after all, merely reflected sound; a replica, or, as in Nashe (see above) a mutation of past sound; a sonic ghost.

In the echo, we also find an echo of another play; a soundbite which recalls another tomb, and another woman wrongfully murdered.⁸¹ In 1611, *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* staged a night-time scene in which Govianus visits the tomb of his betrothed Lady, 'his page carying a Torche before hym' (1878).⁸² Death is associated with silence, and silence is what Govianus expects to find.

Chamber of peace
wher wounded vertue sleepes lockt from the world,
I bringe to be acquainted wth thy silence
sorrowes that loue no noyze, they dwell all inward, (1883-86).

The page offers a mourning song; but otherwise, Govianus wishes to stand alone, quietly. As he addresses his dead Lady, a voice is heard 'With in', saying 'I am not here' (1923). Like Antonio, Govianus's first instinct is to doubt: 'I'me forc't to question it;/some idle sowndes the beaten vaults sende forth' (1924-5). Here, unlike the silence and the single voice of the echo with which the Duchess seems to appear, the stage is filled with noise:

On a sodayne in a kinde of Noyse like a Wynde, the dores clattering, the Toombstone flies open, and a great light appeares in the midst of the Toombe; His Lady as went owt, standing iust before hym all in white, Stuck with Jewells and a great crucifex on her brest. (1926-31).

In addition to this noise, which is partly supernatural (the wind), and partly a practical result of the theatre space being used to its sonic potential (clattering doors), an additional hand has added a marginal note to the extant manuscript: 'ENTER LADYE/RICH ROBINSON'.⁸³ It is clear then that the actor steps forward: he is seen as a ghost, and therefore the voice of the

⁸¹ The association between the plays is no doubt helped by the fact that both were performed by the King's Men, at the Blackfriars, within two years. See Wiggins, *British Drama*, VI, 199 and 346.

⁸² *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, Malone Society reprints, ed. W.W. Greg. (London: Malone Society, 1909), 59.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 61.

speaking Lady is not disembodied. Even if *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* is frightening (and a ghost bursting from a tomb with the noise of high wind is likely to be), only *The Duchess of Malfi* is truly uncanny. *Duchess* offers not a ghost but a trace of sound. We cannot know for certain that the Duchess was not also onstage; but her presence would undo much of the fourth act's eeriness. In her work on this scene, Sarah Lewis reminds us that 'This sense of dislocation is key'.⁸⁴ In short, not to see the echo is an essential part of this acousmatic trick.

After all, Delio's rational insistence that the echo is merely a trick of the 'dead stones' (35) casts this supernatural voice into doubt. This may be the wishful fantasy of a grieving husband or it may be a trick of acoustic. It may be that Delio cannot hear the echo, or rather that only Antonio can. Can we? An anxiety is imposed upon the listening audience: are we also hearing voices? On this point, Webster offers little comfort. If we were still unsure about some supernatural source for this sound, Bosola claims in his dying speech that 'We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves/That, ruined, yields no echoes' (V.v.95-96). A ruined building cannot yield an echo; broken stone does not reflect sound, but rather allows it to escape; the echo cannot have occurred at all. Having made much of the ruined cloisters in which the Duchess's echo is heard, Webster undoes what comfort has been given by this apparent voice from beyond the grave; or, perhaps, he simply denies the possibility of eternity to Bosola. This uncertainty defines Webster's unsettling use of sound effects: in every scene unseen, in every sense obscene. Rupert Brooke captures this sense of obscenity in his despondent lines on Webster: 'Human beings are writhing grubs in an immense night. And the night is without stars or moon. But it sometimes has a certain quietude in its darkness; but not very much.'⁸⁵ Quietude suggests both quiet and its apparent corollary,

⁸⁴ Sarah Lewis, 'Echoic Liminalities in The Duchess of Malfi', *Stage Directions & Shakespearean Theatre*, ed. Sarah Dustagheer and Gillian Woods (Arden: 2018), 267-8.

⁸⁵ Rupert Brooke, *John Webster & Elizabethan Drama* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1916), 158.

peacefulness, and this is not the soundscape offered by *The Duchess of Malfi*. There are moments of quiet in the darkness, perhaps, but not many, and none of them peaceful.

‘harke, de’e heare nothing?’: *The Night-Walker* (1615).

With the rising popularity of acousmatic sound, we might almost inevitably expect to find an equal and opposite reaction: a parody of acousmatic sound. Late Elizabethan plays had already begun to parody familiar sonic tropes. In *Antonio’s Revenge* (1600), for instance, the soundbite of ghostly voices from the hell space is exaggerated to the point of absurdity. Here, three voices are heard from above and below the stage, filling the space with sound from three separate sources, as three different voices say the same line.

And. Murder.
Fel. Murder.
Pa. Murder.

From aboue and beneath.
(F1v).⁸⁶

Antonio agrees easily, without so much as mentioning these three voices: ‘I, I will murder’. But the sounds parodied are sounds that are present; far more complex yet are the Jacobean comedies that parody not only sound itself, but acousmatic or even imaginary sound.

The terrifying effect of unnamed sounds is subject to comic treatment in Fletcher’s *The Night-Walker, or, The Little Thief*. Due to its revision in 1633, *The Night-Walker* spans decades of theatrical history and innovation; it was performed at the Hope around 1615, and indoors at the Cockpit in the 1630s.⁸⁷ In Algripe, a miserable old man who detests noise, Baldwin Maxwell has also noted Fletcher’s debt to Morose in Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene*, staged in 1610 by the Children of the Whitefriars (see chapter three).⁸⁸ *The Night-Walker* is a play which turns repeatedly from light to dark, moving from wedding day to tormented wedding

⁸⁶ John Marston, *Antonios reuenge. The second part* (London: Thomas Fisher, 1602).

⁸⁷ These playhouses and dates are based on proposals made by Martin Wiggins, *British Drama*, VI, 455-6.

⁸⁸ Baldwin Maxwell, *Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, (London: Cass & Co, Ltd., 1966, 2nd. ed.), 49-50.

night, and continuing this fluctuation until a third day, when the chaos of the previous nights literally comes to light.

With night comes deception, and a confusion of noises; but with day comes... deception, and a confusion of noises. The play begins with a noisy house, a house full of celebration, following the marriage of Justice Algripe and the unwilling Maria. Soon after his first entrance, Maria's true love Frank Hartlove is complaining about the noise, as the guests 'grow lowder' (B3r) in a manner that little suits his melancholy spirits.⁸⁹ For Tom Lurcher, however, the noise is a very welcome distraction: if Wildbraine can 'keepe but his ancient revells/And breede a hubbub in the house I am happy' (B4r), he confesses. Seeking his fortunes as a thief, Lurcher needs the cover of noise as he makes his way through the house.

The plot is made up of four tricks of noise, which unfold simultaneously. The first is the sound of ghosts and devils, suggested (and sometimes performed) by Lurcher and Snap as they seek to rob the house, accidentally taking not a chest of valuables but the coffin containing Maria instead. The second is the use of books and ballads to create song and noise in the street, drowning out the cries of Justice Algripe as he is robbed by Lurcher and Snap. The third is a series of bells rung first to mark the moment of marital consummation and heard again as Lurcher and Snap trick Toby and Wildbraine out of their possessions in a dark church. The fourth is a trick of voice, through which Lurcher, the trickster himself, is tricked.

At first, Wildbraine appears to hold the reins of the trick that will see Maria saved from a wedding night with the 'walking rotten tombe' (B3r) that is Justice Algripe. He encourages Hartlove to sleep with Maria instead, and arranges their meeting in the darkness of the wedding night, just as he encourages Lurcher to begin the life of crime that will prove his own undoing. The darkness that would allow for a meeting between the lovers is also

⁸⁹ John Fletcher, *The Night-Walker, or The Little Theife* (London: Tho. Cotes, for Andrew Crooke, and William Cooke, 1640).

darkness that is well suited to the nocturnal crimes of Lurcher and his new apprentice, Snap. It is also well suited, as those in the darkness discover, to the tricks of devils.

The fear of supernatural sounds begins with only a slight confusion, as Hartlove hears Maria at the door, thinking that ‘Something comes this way, wondrous still’ (C3r). He in turn must reassure Maria, who hears only his voice in the dark night, that he is ‘no Devill’ (C3v). It is a little moment of confusion, a charming misunderstanding between star-crossed lovers; but soon, this fear escalates. As the Justice (and a gleeful Wildbraine) begin to search for Maria in the darkness – a darkness emphasized by frequent calls for torches and candles – the noises of others creeping around in the night, the thieves Lurcher and Snap amongst them, soon frighten the household into sincere fears of the devil. In silence, every sound, however innocent, is magnified. Now that Maria is thought dead, having fainted with shock, the revels have faded to ‘A silence as if death dwelt there’ (D1r). The night becomes ever more sinister, as ‘the light burnes blew’ (D2r) and there is a ‘thing that walkes’ in the darkness (I3r). Wiggins suggests that the play’s original title was ‘unambiguously’ *The Night-Walkers*, and notes that ‘One of the play’s distinctive features is the amount of the action that takes place in the dark, and the number of characters who are out at night: there is no one figure who can be called *the* night-walker.’⁹⁰ The ‘thing that walkes’ remains unnamed and unknown.

The fear that noises of the unseen can create are outlined at length in a soliloquy given by Wildbraine as the house descends into chaos.

What thousand noyses passe through all the roomes?
What cryes and hurries? [...]
harke still
In every roome confusion, they are all mad,
Most certaine all starke mad within the house [...]
I heard a hundred cryes, the Devill, the Devill,
Then roaring and then tumbling, all the chambers
Are a mere babell, or another bedlam.
What should I thinke? I shake my self too:
Can the Devill finde no time, but when we are merry,
Here’s something comes. (D3r).

90 Wiggins *British Drama*, VI, 455

The ‘thousand noyses’ are, of course, the sounds of other, equally frightened members of the household, also running from imaginary sounds (or rather, sounds which suggest imaginary sources). The household *becomes* the noise it fears, as the thieves sneak out amongst the confusion. Although Wildbraine knows the others are ‘all mad’ with fear, although he knows the sounds are the ‘hundred cryes’ of the rest of the house, as they run from room to room, he still cannot shake his doubt. The madness of unruly noise, seen explicitly in the masque of madmen of *The Duchess of Malfi*, is suggested here, as those who cry out and create sounds in the darkness create within the household ‘another bedlam’. It is then not only the act of hearing sounds that makes one mad, but also the act of creating one’s own indecorous noise.

Amongst this chaos of described sound, there is only one performed sound, a ‘Noise within’ (D2v), which might mean anything, but which to Toby is proof that ‘The Devills among em in the parlour sure’ (II.ii.6). Whatever the noise may be, Toby has not only his own frightened interpretation, but appears to actually hear sounds which do not exist, sounds that suggest the devil has captured the nurse and is ‘boyling of her bones now, harke how she whistles’ (8). There is also a consciousness of the theatrical power of the darkened stage in Wildbraine’s interest in the creation of a fictional world – the sounds, after all, begin as his own trick. Having created a dream and seen where it would take him, Wildbraine is distressed to learn that, after all, ‘this whole night is nothing but illusion,/ Here’s nothing comes, all they are mad’ (D3v). Wildbraine finally admits, ‘I am no Conjurer.../ I was like to be stolne away my selfe’ (E3v). Those onstage also repeatedly, self-consciously, remind us that the night is an illusion: ‘Lend me thy Lanthorne, I forgot ’twas darke’ (E4r). The audience, like the household, know the sound is not real and are frightened nonetheless.

For Toby, the danger of the dark is not just physical harm, but the risk of delusion, as he is ‘led up, and downe like a tame asse, my light’s out’ (D3v). Searching in the dark, ‘grop[ing] up and downe like blind-man buffe’ (D3v), he finds nothing. Like participants of

the childhood game, the audience encircle the actors who cannot see, laughing as they search blindly for something they will never find. Yet, this is not a play in which the threat of ghosts and spirits is never fulfilled. In a moment that echoes *The Duchess of Malfi*, Maria speaks from beyond the grave – or seems to. Hartlove has gone to the graveyard in the hope of seeing her ghost; Wildbraine has taken to walking in a melancholy mood near the graveyard; Justice Algripe, who has stormed in anger to his own house, must also pass through the graveyard. For Hartlove, the dangers of the night have done their worst in leading to Maria's death, and now 'all the evils the night covers,/The Goblins, Haggies, and the blacke spawn of darknesse/Cannot fright' him (E4r) To the Justice, however, ghosts seem real: 'They say Ghosts walke sometimes, harke, de'e heare nothing?' (E2r), he asks a nearby servant.

Justice Algripe, a hater of noise, in fact turns to his ears for proof. Here, Lurcher and Snap enter, clumsily carrying the coffin, so for the audience at least the sound is explained; for the Justice, however, the source is not revealed, and he must instead dismiss the sound with the doubtful theory, 'Perhaps 'twas my imagination' (E2r). Here, Algripe has hit the nail on the head: for a brief moment in this sonic confusion, the possibility is raised that the source of danger might not be a devil, ghost, or even thief, but a confusion of the mind. Moments later, when Hartlove begins to fight with Wildbraine, Maria (who has crawled from her coffin), steps forward to part them, using their superstition to her own advantage. Speaking as a "ghost" in the darkness, she warns the men that 'The mischief you are forward to commit/Will keepe me from my grave' (F1r). Her speech is interlaced with asides to the audience. Unlike the duelling men and the shaking Justice, we are never under an illusion, never truly frightened, because the source of sound is never concealed. Instead, watching those onstage panic, early modern audiences see the reflected image of a typical audience, frightened by squibs and rolling cannon balls, eerie instruments and backstage bangs.

After Lurcher and Snap make the most of the cover of darkness and the distraction of imagined noises, they turn to two rather more deliberate misuses of sound. The extended “bell trick” of the play begins with Toby, the coachman, who has made up the bridal bed with ‘a bell/Hung under it artificially’ (C1r). When, by the motion of the bed, it begins ringing, the guests will know to celebrate the marriage’s consummation. While Maria’s mother is quick to remove it, this first misuse of the bell is the beginning of a series of verbal and sonic references to the power of the bell to inform, whether as church bells, harness bells, or the warning bells that ring out dangers across the city. It is to the latter that Maria’s mother compares the rogue marriage bed bell: ‘Must we have larums now?’ (C1r). For Toby, such an alarum is but ‘A little warning/That we may know when to begin our healths’; or else the bells are harness bells well suited to the Justice, who is ‘a kind of old Jade Madam,/That will goe merriest with a bell’; or else the bells are the celebratory church bells that ring out for a ‘day of Jubile’. The slippage of meaning between different bells is continued throughout the play. Women crowded outside Maria’s bedroom door offer the threat of a ‘new larum’ (C3r), should they see her and cry out. Even the clinking of coins in Wildbraine’s purse are ‘delicate bells’ (G2v) to Toby’s ears. Bells are subject to the sort of semantic satiation that leads familiar words to lose their meaning if they are repeated too often. To describe almost any sound, those onstage turn to bells, until, finally we hear them in the culmination of a trick.

The next night, Wildbraine and Toby plan to meet at the church for some sociable exercise, and invite Lurcher along to ‘tosse the bells, and make the steeple/Rore’ (G4r), a popular pastime amongst young men.⁹¹ At last, the ‘Bells ring’ (H1v), and with this single sound effect we finally hear the sound to which those onstage have alluded. Wildbraine and Toby are competing over the ringing of steeple bells, with the quality of their ringing to be

91 For more on bell-ringing as exercise, see Katherine Hunt, ‘The Art of Changes: Bell- Ringing, Anagrams, and the Culture of Combination in Seventeenth-Century England.’ *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 48.2 (2018), 387-412.

judged by the Sexton, but Snap adds another wager to this noisy game, on behalf of Lurcher.

Bell-ringing was considered a youthful lark; in 1602, Philip Julius, Duke of Stettin-

Pomerania, noted that

On arriving in London we heard a great ringing of bells in almost all the churches going on very late in the evening, also on the following days until 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. We were informed that the young people do that for the sake of exercise and amusement, and sometimes they lay considerable sums of money as a wager, who will pull a bell the longest or ring it in the most approved fashion.⁹²

Even before the trick backfires, the act of bell-ringing for a bet marks the two as foolish young gallants. While Wildbraine and Toby bicker over the bells – ‘Handle a bell, as you were hauling timber; Grosse, grosse, and base, absurd’ (H2r) – Snap offers a new criteria for judgement, claiming that his master has bet ten pounds that the bell-ringers are led in their ringing by their ears not their eyes. Toby assures him that his master has won the bet, for ‘the Ear’s our onely instrument’ (H2r), but, having seen the chaos of the previous night’s acts of mishearing, it is difficult not to feel a sense of foreboding as Snap takes pains to make sure that these gentlemen trust their ears and ‘can ring ith’ darke so?’ (H2r). If they can, he will bring them half the money won in the wager. To prove it, the men ring their bells with the candles out, at which point Lurcher and Snap gather up Wildbraine and Toby’s discarded valuables. In punishment for the “bell trick”, the little alarum bell hung by Toby under Maria’s bed, into which Wildbraine had planned to send Hartlove, both are tricked through an act of sound, or, more frighteningly, by a deliberate division of sound and sight.

At last, with the supposedly haunted house in uproar, and with Toby and Wildbraine punished during their bell ringing, there is an end to Lurcher’s tricks of sound. Yet, having watched these ‘lime-twigges’ (H1r) play out so successfully, the audience unwittingly find themselves stuck to a branch too. Throughout the play, discussions of the voice have refused to acknowledge any audible difference between male and female speakers, nor indeed any

⁹² *London in the Age of Shakespeare: An Anthology*, ed. Laurence Manley (Kent: Crook Helm, 1986), 41. See also *Acoustic World*, 53.

recognisable feature to a voice at all. Hearing Wildbraine in the darkness of the wedding night and thinking him to be the devil, Toby describes the voice as having ‘a kinde of tone like crickets’ (D4r). When faced with what seems to be the ghost of Maria, Justice Algripe cannot discern her voice from Snap’s; the Justice in turn cannot be clearly distinguished over the singing of a ballad. Those onstage never identify the voices they hear, familiar as they may be: Maria’s ‘I heare some voyces this way’ (F1r) is typical of the discussion of unseen speakers. Maria’s own disguise as a Welsh maid is dependent upon her adoption of a Welsh accent; ‘change but her tongue’ (G1r), Hartlove claims, and she would be just like Maria.

This trick of the voice, however, might come to nothing, were it not for a final trick which proves that a mistrust of the aural is essential not only for listeners at night but for those hearing a play. Snap, the little thief, has become mixed up in the various, overlapping subplots of the play, because *she* was originally engaged to and abandoned by Algripe, who has just married Maria. This revelation of Snap’s gender is yet another joke upon the trusting ears of an audience. As Gina Bloom has written in *Voices in Motion*, since only male actors performed on the early modern professional stage, gender could not be discerned by the sound of a voice but rather by costume and character. All voices were male, and low or high voices were not, as Bloom puts it, ‘stable indicators of gender identity’.⁹³ Even if a young actor’s voice “cracked” onstage, it was only a reminder that the actor was male, not that the character might or might not be. Snap plays on this sonic difficulty of the theatre; we have not guessed her true identity, because she has sounded as she should have sounded, which is like a boy (actor). The frequent disparagement of female voices throughout the play is finally undermined by the fact that the female voice cannot be distinguished from the male, and that

⁹³ Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion* (2007), 58. For an opposing view, see Jodi Mikalachki, who argues that representations of gender are shown (and heard) not only through costume but through “cross-talking.” ‘Gender, Cant, and Cross-Talking in The Roaring Girl’, *Renaissance Drama* 25 (1994), 119. See also, Jennie Votava, “‘The Voice That Will Drown All the City’: Un-Gendering Noise in “The Roaring Girl””, *Renaissance Drama* 39 (2011), 69-95.

an actor is able to perform both, without demonstrating significant difference between the two. Just as the playwright uses sound effects to terrify his audience, who cannot truly know what waits offstage, the rogues of *The Night-Walker*, and Snap in particular, use sound to manipulate their unwitting victims. And of course, through male actors, feigning female voices, playwrights are manipulating their audiences too.

‘paranoid listening’.

Jacobean acousmatic sound effects put pressure on what the theatre can make us believe. The question of belief is tightly tied to questions of sound, both in and out of the theatre. On the eighth of July 1610, Robert Abbott, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, preached a sermon, in which, amidst his exegesis of Jeremiah 6:16, he warned that

if the diuell should appeare and shew himselfe in his owne likenesse, and should professe himselfe a deceiuer and a destroyer, euery man would abhorre him and flie from him, but therefore he dealeth like the Moth, *Which doeth the harme*, as Gregorie saith, *and maketh no noyse or sound of it*.⁹⁴

It is a moment of sound in a sermon otherwise unconcerned with the sonic (as far as sermons, one of the major acoustic phenomena of the early modern period, can ever be unconcerned with the sonic).⁹⁵ Here, the devil comes quietly, like a moth: silence is far more treacherous and seductive than the bangs and smoke that were the *soundbites* of demonic entrances.

The same warning is to be found in Thomas Adam’s *Mystical Bedlam* (1615), in a sermon which cautions that

2 [A theefe] makes no noyse in comming, lest the family of our reuiued thoughts wake, and our sober knowledge discerne his approach. This *theefe* takes vs, as it tooke *Demas*, napping: terrifies vs not with noyse of tumultuous troubles, and

⁹⁴ Robert Abbot, *The old waye* (London: Eleazar Edgar and Ambrose Garbrand, 1610), C3r-v.

⁹⁵ Works which consider the acoustics of sermons include: Bryan Crockett, *The play of paradox: Stage and sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Laura Feitzinger Brown, ‘Brawling in Church: Noise and the Rhetoric of Lay Behavior in Early Modern England’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 34.4 (2003), 955-972; Arnold Hunt, *The art of hearing : English preachers and their audiences, 1590-1640* (CUP: 2010).

alarum of persecutions; but pleasingly giues vs the musicke of gaine, and lappes vs
warme in the couch of lusts.⁹⁶

This chapter has been concerned with those “moths”, those sounds and silences – offstage, unseen – which trick their hearers like thieves by catching them unaware. But sounds that are staged remain more sinister still than those invoked in a sermon, for once they have heard a moth, or a devil, or a thief in the night, theatre audiences must choose what to trust.

By the end of the 17th century, discourse around sound became increasingly (although, of course, not exclusively) interested in the real, empirical sources of noise, yet the anonymous A.B., in a tract against atheism, could turn to the fear of sound as proof of faith:

History tells us, how some of the *Roman* Emperors were wont to be frighted with the noise of Thunder; as thinking it to be the voice of God: We read how *Caligula* us'd to creep under a Bed at the sound of it, taking it for a sign of the anger and displeasure of Heaven; [...] Men are not wont to be affrighted with Bugbears of their own making, or to tremble at that which they know to be a mere scarecrow [...] ⁹⁷

Of course, as Jacobean tragedy shows with a detached, metatheatrical irony, men are very likely to fear ‘Bugbears of their own making’. Sounds are transformed into omens by the prick of a guilty conscience; even sounds known to be sound effects, known to be ‘mere scarecrows’, are able to frighten hearers who are both onstage and in the audience.

The use of sound in *The Night-Walker*, for instance, while blackly comic, also raises fundamental questions of fear, faith, and identity. We cannot know who we are hearing – even by the familiarity of their voice – and we cannot know *what* we are hearing, for sometimes ghosts do seem to speak. Noises too can be weighted with dangerous connotations. Even the trick of the bells is not as frivolous as it might appear. As Katherine Hunt has noted, bells themselves were associated with popery: ‘The use of jangling as an

⁹⁶ Thomas Adams, *Mystical bedlam, or the world of mad-men*. (London: George Purslowe for Clement Knight, 1615), C3r-v.

⁹⁷ A.B., *The mystery of atheism, or, The devices made use of to countenance and propagate it together with the evil and danger of them* (London: A and J Churchill, 1699), ‘Letter VII’, 62-63. For more on the development of scientific theories of sound see Penelope Gouk, *Music, Science and Natural Magic in Seventeenth-century England*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999).

anti-Catholic metaphor began to incorporate the sound and significance of bells into the jibe.’⁹⁸ When Wildbraine is questioned about his night-time bell ringing, his first defence is to joke about the connection of this sound to Catholicism.

Lur. You keepe your exercise, i'the old Church?

Wi. No other,
There is no musicke to the bells, we wo'd
Have bonefires if we durst, (G3v-G4r).

So long as the bells are noisy and atonal, no harm can be done, and no musical (or spiritual) meaning can be construed. But the joke is more subversive yet; the bonfires are not merely metaphorical. Wildbraine creeps through the house as a ‘Guido Faux with my darke Lanthorne,/Stealing to set the towne a fire’ (E4v), or else a ‘William o’ the Wispe’ or ‘Robin Goodfellow’. Even here, in Wildbraine’s thoughts of nightly terrors, the possibilities of dreams and fairies are mixed with the real and recent threat of the Gunpowder Plot. Not all sounds in the night are imaginary; those onstage are caught, not knowing if the danger is real. In her work on the uncanny, Beliz Güçbilmez describes the offstage as ‘limbo’, writing that it ‘softens the sharpness between the fictional and the real world: it is related to both but possessed by neither.’⁹⁹ We are frightened by the suggestion of sound in this sonic limbo.

Despite its privileged position as the sense that allowed access to the word of God, there was something uncanny about hearing. In *The Audible Past*, Jonathan Sterne discusses a theory of sound that has dominated scholarship, following the post-Reformation movement towards Protestantism that brought with it a preference for the word over the image.¹⁰⁰ He describes an ‘audiovisual litany’ within criticism which ‘idealizes hearing (and, by extension, speech) as manifesting a kind of pure interiority. It alternately denigrates and elevates vision:

⁹⁸ Katherine Hunt, ‘Jangling Bells Inside and Outside the Playhouse’ in *Shakespeare, Music and Performance*, ed. Bill Barclay and David Lindley (CUP: 2017), 80.

⁹⁹ Beliz Güçbilmez, ‘An Uncanny Theatricality: The Representation of the Offstage.’ *New Theatre Quarterly* 23.2 (2007), 154.

¹⁰⁰ See Walter Ong, *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word* (London: Methuen, 1982) and B. Crockett, *The Play of Paradox: stage and sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

as a fallen sense, vision takes us out of the world... We do not need to assume that sound draws us into the world while vision separates us from it.’¹⁰¹ Far from idealizing the act of listening, we must then consider the presentation of hearing on its own terms, as a corrupted faculty that cannot be entirely separated from sight. Imagination is required in the theatre: we are compelled to enact what David Toop has called ‘paranoid listening, that fragile boundary between auditory hallucination and objective sound’.¹⁰² This phrase was spoken by Toop on a radio documentary, *The Noisy Page*, itself sounding out as a disembodied voice in the air.

Recorded sound has now led to a familiarity with what R. Murray Schafer has termed “schizophonia” or ‘the splitting of sounds from their original context.’¹⁰³ For Jacobean audiences, the sources of an unseen sound were very likely to be sinister and were never fully verifiable, not least because stage sounds themselves were not actual sounds (such as bird song) but reproduced sounds (such as bird song mimicked by a whistle). They must be heard only with the ‘agreed pretence’ that is undertaken in the theatre: ‘Whether creation of the sound is seen or unseen by the audience, its imagination is required to complete the illusion through acceptance of verisimilitude.’¹⁰⁴ The fear incited by unseen sound cannot be underestimated, even amongst auditors now used to acousmatic sound. Adding his thoughts thirty years after Frank Napier’s guide to sound effects was first published, its editor Christopher Ede noted both the possibilities and confusions inherent in electronic sound: ‘The sounds and sights in the theatre must have some correlation in the minds and feelings of an audience, for unless they do this they are, *ex hypothesis*, meaningless.’¹⁰⁵ The conjunction

101 J. Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 15-18.

102 Cathy Fitzgerald, ‘The Noisy Page’, 11:30 20/12/2018, BBC Radio 4, 30 mins.

<https://learningonscreen.ac.uk/ondemand/index.php/prog/126E09DE?bcast=128135625> (Accessed 21 Feb 2019). See also: David Toop, ‘Chair Creaks, Though No One Sit There’: Decomposition and Liquidity’, *New Formations* 66 (2009), 138.

103 R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Destiny Books: Rochester, 1993), 88.

104 Philip Butterworth, *Magic on the Early English Stage* (CUP: 2005), 111.

105 Christopher Ede, ‘The Tape Recorder’ in F. Napier, *Noises Off: A Handbook of Sound Effects*, ed. C. Ede (London: J. Garnet Miller, 1962), 129.

of sight and sound is considered prerequisite for the conveyance of meaning; unseen sounds are then able to communicate little beyond the confusion of the uncanny and a sense of fear.

It is this potential for fear, as the mind tries to explain unseen sounds, on which the sound effects of Jacobean tragedy are dependent. As auditors, we are required to listen carefully, even while considering the various possibilities of sounds and their sources. We must revel in the acoustic frisson, the enjoyment and the fear, that comes from hearing a sound that is never quite present; that may, in fact never have been at all. The tension is captured by Thomas Bateson in the lyrics for a madrigal (printed 1618) in which a listener longs for proof.

I Heard a noise, and wished for a sight, I lookt aside, and did a shadow see, a
shadow see, Whose substance was the sum of my delight, It came vnseene, and so it
went from me, and :||: from me, (D1v).¹⁰⁶

Written to be sung by five voices, the song plays upon the impossibility of tracing a single voice back to its source, even as it articulates the imaginary effects of acousmatic sound.

The sounds of these Jacobean tragedies cannot be traced back to their sources. Dangers that should be noisy, stark, and obvious, are instead concealed and silent. In this way, the Jacobean plays discussed enact the sensory confusion that anti-theatricalists such as Stephen Gosson associated with the theatre itself. Gosson wrote scathingly of the temptations of the sonic world of the theatre, and of its sugary and melodious speech in particular.

Because the sweete numbers of *Poetrie* flowing in verse, do wonderfully tickle the
hearers eares, the deuill hath tyed this to most of our playes, that whatsoeuer he
would haue sticke fast to our soules, might slippe downe in suger by this intisement,
for that which delighteth neuer troubleth our swallow [...].¹⁰⁷

Gosson warns against the acoustic tricks of the Jacobean stage, which frighten us by the art of suggestion. It is not possible, he insists, for playgoers to properly sort one sound from

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Bateson, *The second set of madrigales to 3. 4. 5. and 6. parts apt for viols and voyces*. (London: Thomas Snodham for Matthew Lowne and John Browne, 1618).

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in fiue actions* (London: Thomas Gosson, 1582), D8v-E1r.

another; speaking here of moral judgement, Gosson suggests that, despite being given by God ‘a couple of eares that both partes might be heard, both equally weighed’, not all people have the capacity to use them.

At Stage Plaies it is ridiculous, for the parties accused to reple, no indifferency of iudgement can be had, because the worst sort of people have the hearing of it, which in respect of their ignorance, of their fickleness, and of their fury, are not to be admitted in place of iudgement. (C8v).

The same might be said of all moments at which audiences are asked to use their ears and fail to discern one sound from another. Yet, far from avoiding ignorance or fickleness amongst their hearers, Jacobean playwrights encouraged this anxiety over the interpretation of the aural, gleefully playing into the hands of anti-theatricalists by proving that the acoustic world of their stage very much had the power to seduce. Sound in the Jacobean theatre then becomes a judgement required of those who do not have enough proof; it is a question of theatrical faith, a willing suspension of disbelief that trusts in the evidence of things not seen.

Noise control: fighting with sound in Ben Jonson.

Ben Jonson held a contradictory theory of sound, one outlined in his poetry and critical writing, but not necessarily followed in his own plays; a theory that devalued sound effects while employing them with devastating precision; and a theory that dismissed sound in favour of speech while casting speech itself as noisy nonsense. While Edmund Wilson's 1948 portrait of a "Morose Ben Jonson" no longer holds sway in critical discourse, his often-disputed categorisation of the writer as "anal erotic", a poet obsessed with the apparent filth of the body, should be repurposed at last to cast Jonson as "aural erotic", a poet fascinated not just by sound effects but by the complicated bodily mechanics of producing sound.

In the prologue to *Every Man In His Humour*, published in his 1616 *Workes*, Jonson claims that the noise and spectacle (or, as Jonas Barish puts it, 'theatrical claptrap') of the public playhouses were to be swept aside, in place of 'deeds, and language, such as men do use' (21).¹ Jonson's disdain is directed especially towards the sounds of the stage: the 'creaking throne' (16) descending on wires, the 'nimble squib' (17) that frightens gentlewomen, the 'rolled bullet' (18) of thunder, and the 'tempestuous drum' (19) used to create storms.² Here, Jonson criticises not only the sounds of the stage, but the overused and overly theatrical tropes with which they are associated. In his attack on the 'creaking throne', Jonson might have had the heavenly descents in any (or all) of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (B-text, 1616), Greene's *Alphonus, King of Aragon* (1587), or even the far earlier *Christus Triumphans* of John Foxe (1556) in mind.³ Sound effects, appealing as an audience may find them, are cheap acoustic tricks; or at least, this is Jonson's retrospective position in his

1 Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 135.

2 All references, unless otherwise stated, are to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online* (hereafter CWBJ).

3 Alan C. Dessen. 'Early modern staging of throne scenes', *Theatre Notebook* 71.3 (2017), 190-193; for Foxe, see Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (CUP: 2001), 144.

prologue of 1616.⁴ Jonson draws attention to the martial sounds associated with history plays: creaking thrones, thunder, drums. This is not, however, a sign that his plays will lack violence: sound itself has the capacity to destroy and speech, as we will see, can be toxic.

In *Every Man In*, Jonson not only distances himself from the ‘ill customs of the age’ (4) in the form of sound effects, but also rejects some elements of speech, in the form of meaningless ‘foot-and-half-foot words’ (10). In using this phrase, coined by Horace (*sesquipedalia verba*), Jonson establishes this prologue as his own aural *Ars Poetica*: a more nuanced treatment of acoustic theory than has yet been acknowledged.⁵ Horace (whose *Ars Poetica* Jonson would publish in translation in 1640) dismisses bad poetry as ‘all fine noise/Of verse mere matterless, and tinkling toys’; for Horace, inexpressive words should be equated with mere sound.⁶ In Jonson’s *Poetaster* (1601), the ineffectual breath of spoken words is recast as ‘terrible, windy words!’ (5.1.441); ‘A sign of a windy brain’, Gallus concludes (442). In *Poetaster*, words are poured forth or actually vomited (those foot-and-half-foot words finally proving too hard to stomach). Moreover, these ‘windy’ words do not end in performance. A printed dialogue dedicated to the Reader follows *Poetaster* in the 1616 *Workes*, in which the Author scorns his critics,

Who, after all their waste of sulphurous terms
And burst-out thunder of their chargèd mouths,
Have nothing left but the unsav’ry smoke
Of their black vomit to upbraid themselves, (21-24).⁷

From thunderous mouths (mouths producing words that sound like sound effects) come sulphurous words. The same dismissal of nonsense speech is found in *Every Man Out* (1599),

⁴ David Bevington, ‘Introduction’, in *Every Man in His Humour*, points out that while the prologue need not necessarily have been written at the same time as other revisions to the 1601 quarto text, it gains especial prominence by its inclusion in the 1616 folio: ‘it makes sense as a manifesto for the volume as a whole. It stands in pride of place at the head of the volume ... It could well be Jonson’s brief summation of his literary creed after he had written *Volpone*, *Epicene*, and *The Alchemist*.’

⁵ Horace, *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 458.

⁶ Horace *His Art of Poetry*, CWBJ Online, lines 459–60. F2 gives “all fine noyse / Of empty Verses, and mere tinckling toyes.” Q. *Horatius Flaccus: his Art of poetry. Englished by Ben: Jonson. With other works of the author, never printed before* (London: J. Okes, 1640), 19.

⁷ ‘Apologetical Dialogue’, ed. Gabriele Bernard Jackson, CWBJ.

when the drunken Carlo claims ‘’Twill heat the brain, kindle my imagination; I shall talk nothing but crackers and firework tonight.’ (V.iii.37-8). When speech is nonsense, it might as well be noise. As with a sudden bang, there is nothing left behind but smoke.

In Jonson’s plays, sounds are withheld (and their omission is accompanied by self-conscious narration of the missing sound); sounds are reproduced in speech, which itself can be as intrusive as any ‘rolled bullet’ or ‘tempestuous drum’ might be; and finally sound effects are heard, often in the fifth act, and almost always in an act of destruction. For Jonson, sound is violent: it cuts the air, pierces the ears, and damages the stage.⁸ In *The Case is Altered* (1597), the word “only” is enough to cause injury, as it ‘Hath with his strong and repercussive sound/Struck my heart cold, and given it a deep wound’ (I.v.143-4). Both speech and sound can be destructive: a poor speaker can be a ‘two-penny teare-mouth’ (*Poetaster*, III.iv.106); and a sound effect can leave ‘all rent down’ (*The Alchemist*, IV.v.67).

Throughout Jonson’s work, the division between sound and speech is broken down; the nonsense of weak words cannot be distinguished from the noisiness of sound. Hristomir Stanev has highlighted the difficulty of this conflation: ‘To be meaningful, articulated sounds would ... need to avoid qualification as ‘noise’, but did Jonson specify when speech would be particularly effective?’⁹ For Jonson, speech is rarely, if ever, effective. Jonson struggles with sonic paradoxes: the meaninglessness of the spoken word, the ineffability of expression. This chapter tackles Jonson’s equivocality on sound. His plays are – whatever *Every Man In* might suggest – full of sound effects; but these sounds, like carefully chosen words, are deployed sparingly. The prologue to *Every Man In* must not then be read simply as a disavowal of all sound effects, any more than it is a disavowal of all speech; it is rather a

⁸ Steven Connor has drawn attention to the inherent violence of Aristotle’s understanding of sound: ‘For sound to occur, there must be, as Aristotle points out in his *de Anima*, II.8, impacts, blows, impingements; there must be, however minimally, pathos, suffering.’ Steven Connor, ‘Sound and the Pathos of the Air.’ <http://stevenconnor.com/pathos/>. Accessed 20 Sep. 2018.

⁹ Hristomir Stanev, *Sensory Experience and the Metropolis on the Jacobean Stage (1603-1625)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 138.

distinction between the indecorous and the decorous, or between what appeals to the crowds at the playhouses and what is well suited to a scene that is properly understood. This chapter will explore these apparent distinctions, and the contradiction to be found in Jonson's acoustic world, which was at once fiercely policed and radically inventive. The tension is found not only in the efficacy of sound effects to shock and interrupt (Jonson's sounds are far from the nostalgic creaky throne, but instead more often an offstage explosion). Tension is also to be found in the role of the body as producer of sound. Alongside sound effects produced by instruments (squibs, drums, rolled bullets of thunder), Jonson uses the bodies of actors to produce both nonsense words and noise. The body itself becomes an instrument upon which Jonson can play (but one which might also retain agency of its own). This chapter examines Jonson's representation of sound, and his use of sound effects, in light of the relationship between sound and the body. It develops the work of critics such as Bruce Smith and Hristomir Stanev who have begun to note Jonson's interest in sound, by focussing particularly on his interests in the body as a material vessel for producing sound, and in the anatomical practicalities of sound production. It also acknowledges that in Jonson's elision of sound and the body there is often an opportunity for violence. Jonson seeks to control the use of sound – in print, as well as in performance – and his characters equally exert a power over the sonic, which often results in the threats of bodily harm.

Justifying sound.

Sound was used by Jonson in a complex and deftly controlled manner: through it he created offstage worlds of laboratories and hellscapes, shipwrecks and divinely-sent thunder storms. Yet, for all this, Jonson explicitly criticised the use of sound, especially (and of course, ironically) for their effect at the end of plays. When the Stage-Keeper who introduces *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) tells us what is to come, he promises a relatively quiet affair.

Opportunities for making noise (amongst them the jig that traditionally ended a play and that was increasingly considered crass) have been passed over, opportunities that other writers would have snatched at as a quick and painless way to make the audience cheer.

No, and some writer (that I know) had had but the penning o' this matter, he would
ha' made you such a jig-a-jog i' the booths, you should ha' thought an earthquake
had been i' the Fair! (20-22).

The Stage-Keeper is not to be trusted, not least because he, in the same speech, offers us a play that will be 'merry, and as full of noise as sport' (71). The point of this contradiction is that some noises have been selected and others – the raucous jig amongst them – have been cast aside. After all, a playwright seeking to avoid representing noise of all kinds would hardly set a play in Bartholomew Fair. Jigs are also used as a shorthand for unwanted noise in the prefatory material for *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611). It is with an ear to decorum that Jonson dedicates the play to the Earl of Pembroke. Pembroke is addressed as one who dares, 'in these jig-given times, to countenance a legitimate poem' (4-5). Again, popular misunderstanding is reduced to 'all noise of opinion' (5); the words of the crowd become 'crude and airy reports' (6) and are held against 'that great and singular faculty of judgement in your Lordship, able to vindicate truth from error' (6-7). Some, it seems, can discern sense from nonsense, sound from noise; others will have to be content with the easy thrill of a jig.

For Jonson, the power of sound is always in doubt; throughout his plays, the aural is dismissed as frivolous or doubted as untrustworthy. Hristomir Stanev has written on 'corrupting speech and on damaging aural reception' in the comedies of Ben Jonson, suggesting that, for Jonson, 'the only valuable words appear to be those attached to a piece of paper, rather than to the often defective ears of his contemporaries.'¹⁰ If speech is corrupting, and ears defective, then sound effects themselves are potentially dangerous. Their corruption

¹⁰ Hristomir A. Stanev, 'Ben Jonson's Eloquent Nonsense: The Noisy Ordeals of Heard Meanings on the Jacobean Stage (1609–14)', *Early Theatre* (2014), 96, 112.

is no different from that of language. The noisiness and nonsense of words cannot be separated from the apparent nonsense of sound; or rather, Jonson refuses to make this distinction. This contradicts both the theoretical models (primarily Aristotle's *de Anima*) and anatomical treatises (chief amongst them Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia*) that were used to define sound at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹¹ In a hierarchy of sound laid out by Crooke, the human voice was ranked above the nonverbal sounds of animals, which was in turn above the music that could be made on instruments, which finally surpassed the mere noise of (for instance) struck brass.¹² By blurring this distinction, Jonson challenges the meaning of sound, conflating the human voice with noises no different from the sound effects that he mocks in his prologue. Helen Barr has traced this early modern distinction between noise and speech to Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1553), and, writing of *The Masque of Queenes* (1609), finds signs of Jonson's acoustic theory in the contrast between the harmony associated with Fame, and the cacophony of the witches' antimasque. She writes that,

While Baldwin made no distinction between animal noise and human words, poetry and brabble, Jonson preserves the oppositions only to polarise them – as he must do for his occasion – between the masque and antimasque.¹³

In this masque, whatever cacophony can be made by the witches can be reversed into the harmony that is associated with entrance of the Queens; but if that is true, then surely harmony can also be reversed into cacophony. Throughout his plays, Jonson does not hold firm the distinctions between speech and sound. All is noise; all is nonsense.

¹¹ Although not published until 1615, after the date of performance of many of Jonson's plays (although before his collected *Works* of 1616), *Mikrokosmographia* is considered 'a general treatise on human anatomy and physiology based upon the two anatomical works of greatest repute at that time, those of Bauhin and Laurentius' that was 'set forth clearly, but without original observations' (Norman Moore, 'Crooke, Helkiah, M.D. (1576–1635), physician', *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1888), cited in ODNB).

¹² Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia a description of the body of man*. ([London]: William Iaggard: 1615), 514–516; for more on this distinction, see Smith, *Acoustic World* (1999), 99.

¹³ Helen Barr, *Transporting Chaucer* (MUP: 2014), 200.

Jonson offers sound (whether verbal or non-verbal) as the embodiment of nonsense. In *Timber, or Discoveries* (1641), critiques of literature go hand in hand with accusations of noise, excess, and illness, of which the following are merely a selection (my emphasis):

What a sight it is, to see writers committed together by the ears for ceremonies, syllables, points, colons, commas, hyphens, and the like! Fighting, as for their fires and their altars, and *angry that none are frightened at their noises, and loud brayings under their asses' skins!* (156-59).

For *what is so furious and Bedlam-like as a vain sound of chosen and excellent words, without any subject of sentence or science mixed?* (245-47).

Others there are that have no composition at all, but a kind of tuning and rhyming fall in what they write. It runs and slides, and *only makes a sound.* (513-14).

The excess of feasts and apparel are the notes of a sick state, and the *wantonness of language, of a sick mind.* (685-87).

Which was as to tell him he could not write a verse. I have met *many of these rattles that made a noise and buzzed.* They had their *hum*, and no more. (1749-50).

Sound is something that lesser poets use; the work of a noisy, rattling poet will fade into obscurity. As well as its aesthetic function in poetry, for Jonson, speech is integrally tied to the body; its communicative powers cannot be replicated fully by sound. Jonson's description of language in *Timber* – memorably beginning 'Language most shewes a man: speake that I may see thee' (1439) – presents language as a body. The passage describing speech casts the use of language in terms which would not be out of place in an anatomical textbook; a marginal note marks the '*Cutis sive cortex*' (skin or husk) of language.

The third is the skin and coat, which rests in the well-joining, cementing, and coagmentation of words; whenas it is smooth, gentle, and sweet, [...] not horrid, rough, wrinkled, gaping, or chapped: after these, the flesh, blood, and bones come in question. (121, Q3r).

Jonson explains that sound is connected to the body both literally (depending on their physical size, men pour out words that are 'all grave, sinewy, and strong') and metaphorically. Speech in the 'fleshy style' is described with 'fat', 'blood and juice'; it is *arvina orationis*, the sort of greasy speech once thrown up in Jonson's *Poetaster* (1601).

These body parts are not chosen at random as a metaphor. For Bruce Smith, ‘Jonson’s three factors – stature, skin, and structure, are anything but arbitrary: they are actually part of the mechanisms that produce speech.’¹⁴ The body is an instrument, the component parts of which can be worked upon to produce certain types of speech. Jonson’s desired plain style, his chosen literary aesthetic, is compared to a body that is, for all its detailed fleshiness, decorous and regulated. This body is emphatically ‘not horrid, rough, wrinkled, gaping, or chapped’, but whole. Yet, not all bodies are instruments which can be properly worked upon. Unruly bodies must surely produce unruly sounds and Jonson, as he himself insists, had no desire to hear unruly sounds on the stage.

‘Loud and unlooked for’.

For Jonson, sound is not to be used lightly, without thought, comment, and often wry subversion of the sonic conventions of the early modern stage. In Jonson’s plays, sound is often withheld from us, lingering at the edges of the stage but not entirely present; when it is present, sound is sudden and controlled, employed sparingly and with precision. Where sounds are heard, they are often mediated by bodily sound (speech) in the form of description or compared to the sounds of the body themselves. Chapman, Jonson, and Marston’s *Eastward Ho!* (1605), for instance, written for the Children of the Queen’s Revels and performed at Blackfriars, withholds its most significant sonic event. The storm which begins act 4 is wilfully underwhelming. Despite being warned of the bad weather, Petronel, Quicksilver, and the disguised Winifred set sail for Virginia. Of course, this comedy has no intention of taking its audience to America; the voyage ends before it leaves London, as the sailors are washed ashore at Cuckold’s Haven. We could have seen or heard the storm through lavish and compelling sound effects; the Blackfriars playhouse was more than

¹⁴ Smith, *Acoustic World*, 97.

capable of staging shipwrecks.¹⁵ However, the storm is neither shown nor heard, but is instead reported by Slitgut, who climbs to the balcony (or perhaps even climbs a pillar) in order to “see” it taking place. As Suzanne Gossett has argued, ‘the play deftly blends satire on prodigal gallants and the Jacobean court with subtle parody of plays for the public theatres that glorify citizen life, such as *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (1599), *The Four Prentices of London* (1602), and the second part of *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1604).’¹⁶ If *Eastward Ho!* is a satire of popular theatre (it mockingly invokes both *Richard III* and *Hamlet*), then it is also a satire of the methods of staging popular theatre. Slitgut hovers, high above the stage, shouting the details of an impressive storm scene to a patiently listening audience, who may hear nothing at all.

The lengthy stage business of the newly introduced Slitgut dangling from some raised platform, meticulously narrating a storm that might have been suggested by sound effects alone, errs towards the ridiculous. The fact that he has gained this higher ground in order to fix horns to the top of a pole is more absurd yet.

Up, then! [*He climbs the pole.*]

Heaven and Saint Luke bless me, that I be not blown into the Thames as I climb, with this furious tempest! ’Slight, I think the devil be abroad in likeness of a storm, to rob me of my horns. Hark how he roars! Lord, what a coil the Thames keeps! She bears some unjust burden, I believe, that she kicks and curvets thus to cast it. Heaven bless all honest passengers that are upon her back now! For the bit is out of her mouth, I see, and she will run away with ’em. (IV.i.6-12).

The overt theatricality of the scene, the consciousness of narrating and describing sound effects at length while we see nothing of the storm, subverts our expectations of what listening to a play should offer us. When Security enters, ‘*wet, without his hat, in a nightcap, band, &c.*’ he does not know where he has been cast ashore. He is bedraggled by a storm that, as Chapman, Jonson, and Marston have made sure, has never materialised in

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of such scenes, see Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare’s Storms* (MUP: 2016)

¹⁶ Suzanne Gossett, ‘Collaborative Playwrights and Community-Making’, in *Community-Making in Early Stuart Theatres: Stage and Audience*, ed. Anthony W. Johnson, Roger D. Sell, Helen Wilcox (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), 102-3.

performance. It is fitting that a voyage that does not happen, ending not in the “New World” but back where it began in London, should not actually be staged. The silence, only emphasized by Slitgut’s lofty descriptions, is no accidental lacuna, but rather a hole in the play where an adventure should have been created by sound, and, comically, isn’t.

Elsewhere, Jonson is as likely to describe sounds as make them. In *Bartholomew Fair*, the hobby-horse seller Leatherhead includes sounds amongst his wares, and makes plenty of sound as he sells them, repeating his offerings again and again: ‘Rattles, drums, halberts... Fiddles o’ the finest’ (II.ii.28-29). His voice rings out, but the rattles and drums that he offers appear to be silent. No stage direction calls for these instruments to be played, nor does any character comment explicitly on their use. This is not to say that an actor playing Leatherhead, carrying rattles and drums, would not intuitively know to rattle and beat them: perhaps Jonson saw no need to proscribe when and where. There is, however, the possibility that these noises are merely suggested by Leatherhead’s description of them, with the sounds created out of words. Leatherhead could not carry all of the instruments he mentions: he simply offers too many objects for sale. These noisy toys may not be present on stage at all, or else might be held in his hands, or placed for display on a stall. They may be shown, but never played. Throughout *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson names noises rather than cueing them; sounds arrive at our ears mediated by description. It is a distinction made by Daniel Karlin in his discussion of street noise in Proust: human voices are transcribed but sounds are evoked. This to say that human sound is written out in full (as dialogue) but the sound of a whistle, for instance, is not written out in full (“toot”) but simply as ‘the whistle’.¹⁷ Leatherhead’s words act as sonic symbols, prompting us to remember a noise we have heard before and then to fill the silence with our own recollections of sound.

¹⁷ Daniel Karlin, *Clarendon Lecture 2: Proust’s enchantment: the crisis de Paris*, 10 November 2016, University of Oxford.

When sound does come, it is often accompanied by a self-consciousness of how sound works in the playhouses. In *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611), the theatrical Catiline, who is persuading Aurelia to adopt her own performance of seeming goodwill towards their enemies in the senate, is interrupted by a sound:

and will as soon,
When things succeed, be thrown by or let fall
As is a veil put off, a visor changed,
Or the scene shifted in our theatres –
(A noise without.)
Who's that? It is the voice of Lentulus. (I.i.182-6).

As Catiline compares the sudden revelation of his true motives to a ‘scene shifted in our theatres’, the scene shifts at once due to the intrusion of a sound effect. Catiline and Aurelia make their exit; and Lentulus and Cethegus enter. Sound creates a sudden break; but it is not a break that Jonson will allow to pass without comment. What we hear must be parsed, and the sound effects that we experience must be controlled by Jonson’s careful commentary.

When a voice is heard from offstage a hundred lines later, it is a far more ominous sound: ‘*A groan of many people is heard under ground*’ (I.i.315). Jonson uses the space beneath the stage – the hell space – to echo and multiply the sound of a distant voice that so recently interrupted Catiline. Just as Cethegus tries to dismiss the groan as a fantasy, another sound appears, followed by a ‘fiery light’ held out from the hell space by a bloody arm. Sight and sound work together to create a series of omens that Catiline takes as encouragement for his conspiracy. Catiline, who moves through the play with a tight control of its soundscape, instructs his followers to hold themselves still and silent before the sudden onslaught.

Meanwhile, all rest
Sealed up and silent, as when rigid frosts
Have bound up brooks and rivers, forced wild beasts
Unto their caves, and birds into the woods,
Clowns to their houses, and the country sleeps;
That, when the sudden thaw comes, we may break
Upon them like a deluge, bearing down
Half Rome before us, and invade the rest
With cries and noise able to wake the urns
Of those are dead, and make their ashes fear.
The horrors that do strike the world should come

Loud and unlooked for. Till they strike, be dumb.

(I.i.518-529).

In these twelve lines, Jonson's acoustics are captured. To be sealed up and silent – to allow no sound in or out – is necessary to stay safe; yet, it is to be restricted, frozen, and enclosed. To be silent is like sleeping. Noise comes with a 'sudden thaw', a 'deluge'; the cries and noise of the conspirators will wake the dead. Most of all, sound is a violent action that can 'strike the world'; it comes as a shock, 'Loud and unlooked for'. In turn, when the conspiracy is revealed and the thunder of heaven sounds 'violently on the sudden' (III.v.41), it comes 'With so much swiftness and so sudden rising?' (46). We see this sudden use of sound again and again in Jonson's plays: from the building thunder of *Sejanus* (1603), which does not strike, to the sudden explosions of *The Alchemist* (1610) and *The Devil is an Ass* (1616).

Throughout *Sejanus*, the threat of thunder looms overhead. We "hear" it, or hear of it, even before the play itself: the anticipation of thunder is the theme of Strachey's dedicatory poem, which discusses how a man might be distracted by lightning flashing, before the true danger of 'thunder from comparison-hating heaven' (11).¹⁸ Thunder was a soundbite with connotations of divine judgement (see chapter one); but here, thunder is remarkable for being often invoked, and ultimately never heard. The physician Eudemus advises Livia to marry Sejanus in a speech that mixes metaphors of sound.

Some will think
Your fortune could not yield a deeper sound
Than mixed with Drusus; but when they shall hear
That and the thunder of Sejanus meet,
Sejanus, whose high name doth strike the stars
And rings about the concave, great Sejanus [...].

(II.i.94-99).

Is fortune sounding a depth (and reaching Sejanus's heights); or does sound here have acoustic value (when doubters hear of the marriage, they will also hear the 'thunder' of Sejanus, and the ringing of his name)? Thunder might align Sejanus with the power of Jove:

¹⁸ William Strachey, 'Upon Sejanus', *Commendatory Poems*, *CWBJ*.

but thunder, elsewhere in the play, is clearly associated with retribution. As Sejanus himself warns, ‘thunder speaks not till it hit’ (II.i.205); when justice comes, it will come without warning. The tragedy draws attention to this sound, each time raising an expectation that it might be heard onstage. For four acts, the sound of thunder, and the flash of lightning which accompanies it, exists only in dialogue: ‘His steep fall,/By how much it doth give the weightier crack’ (II.i.291-2); ‘Which would be to his head as hot as thunder’ (III.i.122); ‘He hath so fix’d himself in Caesar’s trust/As thunder cannot move him’ (IV.i.60-61); ‘Which Jove beholds, and yet will sooner rive/A senseless oak with thunder than his trunk’ (IV.i.408-9); ‘Till/I see Sejanus struck, no sound thereof strikes me’ (504-5); ‘When I do fear again, let me be struck/With forked fire and unpitied die’ (V.i.397-98). The cumulative effect of these references to a thunder somewhere in the distance is to make us almost certain that justice will be served. After all, this is *Sejanus His Fall*; a tragic ending will not come as a surprise.

Yet, the sound effect – a clear signifier of the wrath of god – does not arrive. Again, as in *Eastward Ho!*, noisy stage business is described but never noisily staged. The only scripted sounds in the play are those of music, between the acts, and of the votive sounds of trumpets and flutes as the Roman priests carry out their augury work in act 5. These *tubicines* (trumpeters) and *tibicines* (flautists) sound while the *flamen* (priest) enters and ‘takes of the honey with his finger and tastes’ (V.i.181-82). The lengthy stage business of the dumb show is accompanied by music; the closest we get to a divine sound onstage. Here, Jonson’s stage direction suggests a greater interest in classical allusion than in the practicalities of performance: the use of Latin offers more to a reader than to a player (the marginal note here leads readers to Roscius, who notes that such instruments were commonly present at all sacrifices).¹⁹ Promptbook keepers and musicians would require more practical, vernacular

¹⁹ The note reads ‘Hi omnibus sacrificijs interesse solebant. Ros. Ant. Rom. lib. 3. Stuch. de Sac. pag. 72’. Ben Jonson, *Sejanus His Fall* (London: G. Eld for Thomas Thorpe, 1605), K3v.

instructions. The 1616 Folio is less specific still; ‘Tub’ and ‘Tib’ (V.i.) sound while the priest washes; and ‘they’ sound again during the dumb show which accompanies the ritual.²⁰

Music, however, is not the only sound by which Jonson can demand attention. It is not a recognisable trumpet call but a violent, sudden explosion that almost grinds *The Alchemist* (1610) to a halt. As the mysterious machine that transforms metal into gold is revealed to Sir Epicure (if not to the audience), Face is given a new anatomical nickname: “Lungs”. The outward signs of human sound (the face: mouth and ears) are replaced by the inward mechanics of sound production. “Lungs” is tasked with working the bellows. The furnace, however, produces not vaporous fumes but violent sound, exploding with ‘(A great crack and noise within)’ (IV.v.). The machine that produces the sound remains unseen; the sound of the explosion is heard from offstage. It is left to us to imagine the destruction, with help from Face, who describes how ‘every glass is burst./Furnace, and all rent down!’ (IV.v.66-67). Yet, Jonson cannot resist a final joke. Despite the destruction it represents (and its impact, no doubt, on the nerves of an unsuspecting audience gathered around a Blackfriars stage), the explosive sound effect has muddled meaning. It is ‘As if a bolt/Of thunder had been driven through the house’ (IV.v.67-68). Jonson demonstrates the difficulty of creating subtle, specific effects; he suggests that the sound of this explosion is made through the same means as the “rolled bullet” of thunder against which he railed in *Every Man In*. The joke blends sound effects together, suggesting that, in practical terms, the sound of a furnace exploding is no different to the sound of a thunderclap. With limited means of driving sound through the house, Jonson scathingly suggests that one sound effect fits all.

²⁰ In her introduction to this play, Inga-Stina Ewbank argues that ‘Ample press-corrections observable from extant copies of [the 1611] quarto attest to Jonson’s characteristic interest in ensuring that the printed text represent his dramatic genius as accurately as possible’. She later notes that the folio of 1616 is a ‘revised copy of the quarto’ including ‘interpretive marginal stage directions in mid-scene which are sometimes literary in flavour’ (‘Introduction’, *CWBJ*).

The sonic shock of an explosion is also heard in Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass* (1616). Pug, the would-be Mephistopheles who is finally sent to London, has not been taken seriously as a devil. It is only at the last possible moment in this day-long comedy that his true identity is finally revealed. Having moved around London without a trace of thunder, Pug's exit is followed immediately by a 'great noise' (V.vii.1, s.d.) – in other words, a considerable bang from backstage, which turns out to be the sound of part of Newgate prison exploding. The Keepers discuss the jarring sound effect that has been heard from offstage and – tellingly – joke about the smoke from the squib which is teasingly repurposed as the 'steam of brimstone' (V.vii.2). The smell of explosives lingered in the playhouse and could be used to remind audiences of Pug's demonic past; in fact, the scent must have remained in the air at least long enough for a second joke. Shackles, the Keeper of Newgate, enters in the next scene, and still feels the effects of the explosion:

But withal, sir,
Such an infernal stink and steam behind
You cannot see St Pulchre's steeple yet.
They smell't as far as Ware, as the wind lies
By this time, sure. (V.viii.131-35).

The moment is, like early modern stage devils themselves, both comic and frightening: the shock of the explosion is countered by jokes about the stench. The sound effect is also self-referential: it recalls *The Alchemist* (also performed by the King's Men at the Blackfriars) and the shared, explosive soundbite casts Face as a devil, or Pug as a con man, or both. Sound effects can recall past performances and create offstage worlds: Jonson uses them to do both.

'the seal of silence'.

Despite the fact that he used sound effects with precision, Jonson cultivated a public hatred of noise in his professed artistic aims. His apparent hatred of sound effects did not go unnoticed amongst his fellow playwrights. If we take seriously the suggestion that the playwright

Chrisoganus in Marston's *Histriomastix* (1601/2) is a parody of Jonson, then we can find in Chrisoganus's rants a dislike of sound effects that matches Jonson's own. Chrisoganus is partial to a misophonic complaint:

Who was the authour of this store, but *Peace*?
That common-welth is neuer well at ease,
Where Parchment skinnes, whose vse should beare records,
Must head their brawling Drummes and keepe a coyle,
As if they threatned *Plenty* with a spoyle. (B4r).²¹

In war, paper (parchment skins) is repurposed as the head of drum, sounding out information instead of offering it to be read. The author, Peace, is praised for avoiding such noises; indeed, noise is, by contrast, violent and warlike, a sound of 'brawling Drummes' and 'coyle', just as Jonson would later describe rolled bullets and drums.

Yet, the terrible play that Post-haste has penned is full of songs and sound effects, including an overloaded 'roaring Diuell' who carries 'the Vice on his back Iniquity in one hand; and Iuventus in the other' (C4r). The players of Sir Oliver Owlet's company sing an improvised song that rails against (and reproduces) the sounds of the city during term time:

*But when the terme comes, that with trumpets and drumes,
Our play houses ringe in confusion,
Then Bacchus me murder, but rime we no further,
Some sacke now, vpon the conclusion.* (C4v).

If the first couplet suggests that sound (and particularly the playhouse effects of trumpets and drums) are synonymous with confusion, then the second also dismisses the value of speech (rhyme) – even as, of course, the line rhymes and the verse concludes with 'conclusion.' The ditty in itself suggests an uneasy use of sound, which is criticised even in the very sort of attention-grabbing, noisy song of which Jonson (and Chrisoganus) appear to disapprove.

Even Chrisoganus does not find the easy distinction between the printed and spoken word, or even a 'clear preference for the printed text', which critics of Jonson would like to establish, as he shouts, 'Write on, crie on, yawle to the common sort/Of thickskin'd auditours'

²¹ John Marston, *Histrion-mastix, Or, The player whipt* (London: Th. Thorpe, 1610).

(D4r).²² Here, thick skin serves as both a metaphorical and literal barrier, guarding the body from the sounds in the air that might penetrate it. As Jonson would in *Timber*, Chrisoganus associates indecorous sound and speech with fatty food, ‘such rotten stuffs,/More fit to fill the paunch of Esquiline,/ Then feed the hearings of iudicial eares’ (D4r). Listening becomes an act of consumption; we can be nourished by what we hear, or else eat for gluttony’s sake.

Those ‘thickskin’d auditors’ cannot be properly reached through plain words; only greasy words or sounds themselves can break through. This is the criticism laid at the feet of a garrulous acquaintance in a translation of Horace that may be Jonson’s own work:

Shun an enquirer, for his tongue will break
The seal of silence and an open ear
Never retains; what trust reposest there? (4-6).²³

Colin Burrow includes this poem, ‘Part of Horace ‘Epistles’ 1.18 Translated’, amongst Jonson’s *Dubious Verse* in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson* but notes that ‘If the poem is not by Jonson it is the product of someone in his milieu and under his influence.’²⁴ The translation includes what Burrow calls an addition, the reference to a ‘seal of silence’, which develops the sense of the original line. *nec retinent patulae commissa fideliter aures*, warns Horace; more literally, ‘Open ears will not keep secrets loyally’.²⁵ In both the original and translation, there is a fear that spoken words will break through the body, either entering the accessible port of the ears that cannot be properly closed, or escaping from the seal of the mouth that is, in this translation, broken by the tongue. Bodies in Jonson are vulnerable to sound; they are always dangerously open, and unable to be sealed against the attack of noise.

Nobody (and no body) is more determined to keep out sound than Morose. The first scenes of *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman* (1610) catalogue the many noises that Morose

²² Ben Jonson, ed. Richard Dutton (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 12.

²³ Collin Burrow, ‘Commentary’ for Part of Horace ‘Epistles’ 1.18 Translated in *Dubia*, CWBJ.

²⁴ Ibid, n 5.

²⁵ Horace, *Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (MA: Harvard University Press: 1926), 375.

finds abhorrent. These are primarily human “noises”, those of fish-wives, orange-women, chimney-sweepers, broom-men, costermongers, smiths, hammer-men, braziers, armourers, pewterers (their ‘prentices in particular), the cries of the bear-keeper, and city waits. The waits, however, irritate Morose with the assistance of their instruments – trumpets and hautboys being notable offenders. The onslaught of noise is mainly accidental, although one boy, present in the first scene, apparently does target Morose, having ‘practised on him one night like the bellman, and never left till he had brought him down to the door with a long sword, and there left him flourishing with the air.’ (I.i.130-132). Carla Mazzio has noted, in relation to *Hamlet*, that cutting the air with swords was ‘long considered, according to Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), a form of exorcism, one much ridiculed in Protestant polemic.’²⁶ Here, Morose is ridding himself not of spirits, but of the noisy city-dwellers who haunt his threshold; in fact, he is exorcising the air itself of sound. This violent reaction highlights both the power and the ephemerality of sound, able to provoke Morose and invade his house and his head, whilst leaving him fighting with nothing.

Yet, while Morose’s hatred of the human voice (and his hatred of the female voice in particular) has formed the basis of many critical studies, it is not merely voice – that is to say, sound made by breath and human agency – that offends him. Firstly, as Dryden wryly observed, Morose does not hate *all* human voices: Morose is ‘an old Man, to whom all noise but his own talking is offensive.’²⁷ The list of his irritations, moreover, includes ‘coaches nor carts nor any of these common noises’ (I.i.134), a fencer’s drum, bells of all kinds, creaky shoes, ordinances from the Tower, and the ‘knack’ (I.ii.32) of barber’s shears. These too, however, are ultimately sounds made by humans; human actions and human noise are conflated. Indeed, in an unpleasant collision of the bodily and the instrumental, Truewit adds

²⁶ Carla Mazzio, ‘The History of Air: *Hamlet* and the Trouble with Instruments’, *South Central Review*, 26.1 (2009), 157.

²⁷ John Dryden, ‘An Essay of Dramatic Poesy’, *Sources of Dramatic Theory 1: Plato to Congreve*, ed. Michael J. Sidnell (CUP: 1991), 287.

to the curses that Morose is levying against the barber and suggests that he might ‘Eat ear-wax, sir. [...] Or, draw his own teeth and add them to the lute-string’ (III.v.73-74). Eleanor Decamp has suggested that the references to barbers in *Epicoene* have a sonic resonance, as the barber’s shop was a ‘sound-marked, cultural site of acoustic performance’, full of snapping scissors and gossip.²⁸ Jonson creates deliberate confusion between the mouth and the mechanics of an instrument, between the ears with their wax (which Decamp shows would be picked out at a barber’s shop), and the walls of a house which might seal out sound.

To further conflate mouth and instruments, speech and sound, Jonson does not offer us a cacophony of sound effects, although he easily could (ringing bells, drums, and gun fire all being common enough on the early modern stage); he offers lists of sounds, not sounds themselves. For the most part, Jonson names noises rather than cueing them. Yet, this is not to say that *Epicoene* is without sound effects. Most famous amongst them is the uproar of horn-blasts and merry-making that marks the start of Morose’s courtship and marriage, which Ian Donaldson has proposed as a kind of *charivari*, in which noise would be used to mock deeds considered shameful (in this case the marriage of a young woman to a much older bridegroom).²⁹ Commonly this rough music would come from the street below in a feigned serenade; here, the house itself is breached and Morose’s privacy is likewise invaded.

For Morose in the role of misanthrope, noise comes to represent dreaded human contact.³⁰ It is an assault on the senses and a means of contamination, passed from mouth to ear, from one body to another. Donaldson’s reading of Jonson’s use of onstage space is also illuminating in considerations of Morose’s isolated body: ‘The house in which Morose has

28 Eleanor Decamp, ‘“Thou art like a punie-Barber (new come to the trade) thou pick’st our eares too deepe”: barbary, earwax and snip-snaps’ in *The Senses in Early Modern England, 1558-1660*, eds. Simon Smith, Jackie Watson, and Amy Kenny (MUP: 2015), 75.

29 Ian Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 37-45.

30 Jonson is widely agreed to have drawn material from ‘Dyskolos’, one of the *Declamations* of Libanius, in which a miserly man would rather drink hemlock than endure his wife’s voice (for a summary of this position, see Ben Jonson, *Epicoene or The Silent Woman*, ed. R. Dutton (MUP: 2003), 42).

shut himself remains a thing of bricks and mortar and quilted doors, lacking in life and vitality [...] Morose's own desperate confession of physical impotence [...] retains its symbolic appropriateness as a characterization of his total way of life, shut up within his own house.'³¹ Morose does not merely fortify his house against sound; he also fortifies his body, 'with a huge turban of nightcaps on his head, buckled over his ears' (I.i.130-31). The ear as a threshold to the mind is made literal, as Morose defends his house and head against noise.

Morose avoids not merely sounds but their unpleasant associations, as Anne Barton has discussed in her reading of Morose's soundproofed house, which is also explicitly closed to the plague, or, in Truewit's words, 'now, by reason of the sickness, the perpetuity of ringing has made him devise a room with double walls and treble ceilings, the windores close shut and calked, and there he lives by candlelight' (I.i.165-68). For Barton, the noise that Morose despises and the plague that he fears are much the same thing:

Those plague bells sounding through the infected streets had a message in them. Thomas Nashe spelled it out clearly: 'Come, come, the bells do cry./I am sick, I must dye.' Morose has shut out this reminder, along with a good deal else, by way of his double walls and treble ceilings.³²

Morose's retreat from sound is also a retreat from what he sees as infection, and, in isolating his body from this risk, Morose demonstrates the privilege of his wealth. Like Lovewit in *The Alchemist*, retreating from London to the isolation of a country house to avoid the plague, Morose locks himself away to avoid the invasion of sound. In Brian Woolland's terms, it is 'the anally retentive desire to control what we have come to think of, rather possessively, as our very own late twentieth-century problem: the invasion of personal space by noise.'³³ Morose then might be considered *aurally* retentive; his desire to control space is connected to his desire to shut out noise and to shut out the infection he associates with that noise.

³¹ Ian Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 72-73.

³² Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson: Dramatist* (CUP: 1984), 124.

³³ Brian Woolland, 'The gift of silence', *Ben Jonson and the Theatre: Performance, Practice and Theory*, ed. R. Cave, E. Schafer, B. Woolland (London: Routledge, 1999), 147.

The physician Philip Barrough connected the entrance of sound into the ear with the entrance of disease into the body; hearing unusual noises was a symptom of illness.

NOYSE and tinckling in the eare, for the most parte is engendred of a windy vapour, or of grosse & clammy humours. Also many times it is caused through an exquisite tardinesse of the sense of hearing. It is also caused through weakenes of the members, when as it chaunceth in the recouering of a disease, some humour is taken into the sinowes of the eares. (E1r).³⁴

Here the ‘windy vapour’ that Jonson holds synonymous with nonsense words creates noise; it is placed beside ‘grosse & clammy humours’ as a cause of illness. Noise that is only heard by the sufferer is, for Barrough, either a result of weakness following disease, or else the result of violence (such as a blow on the head). The sonic sensitivity of the body to windy vapours entering at the ears, to disease, and to violence is evident throughout *Epicoene*, as Morose attempts to guard himself against the penetrative effects of noise. Shutting out sound (and the bodies that make sound), Morose wilfully inflicts upon his own home what the plague had inflicted on the homes of victims and on the theatre itself: barred doors and deathly silence.

Yet the silence that Morose seeks in his own house is utterly unlike his conception of the playhouses: he is so desperate to avoid his wife that ‘he would sit out a play that were nothing but fights at sea, drum, trumpet, and target!’ (IV.iv.16-18). The noise of sound effects that Jonson so viciously dismissed is held against a far worse prospect: the utter silence of closed playhouses. Noise cannot be excluded: there is no ‘seal of silence’. The vulnerability of the ear, ‘not only, nor even primarily, as a gateway to the mind, but as a troublingly unclosable entrance to the body’ was a frequent concern of seventeenth century preachers (and physicians).³⁵ In Thomas Tomkis’s *Lingua*, an academic play first performed

34 Philip Barrough, *The methode of phisicke* (London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1583), 49.

35 Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theatre in Early Modern England* (OUP: 2005), 123 (and ‘Vulnerable Ears: Hamlet and Poisonous Theater’, *passim*). See also: Jennifer Rae McDermott “Perceiving Shakespeare: A Study of Sight, Sound, and Stage”, *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 19 (2009) 5.1-38.

in 1606, Auditus, a figure representing the sense of hearing, describes his home on the mountain Cephalon (a name derived from *kephalos*, the Greek word for head),

The doers whereof in hospitality,
Nor day, nor night are shut, but open wide,
Gently invite all commers; whereupon
They are named the open ears of Cephalon. (H3r).³⁶

The pinna, or outer flaps, of the ear, are portrayed as porches, external waiting areas for attendant words. Yet, this antechamber does not have doors that can be shut; they lie ‘open wide’ in a gesture not simply of ‘hospitality’ but also vulnerability. The problem is not so much that ears do not have lids (‘eare lidde’ features in Huloet’s dictionary of 1572 as a term for the outer ear), but that those ear-lids, unlike eyelids, cannot be closed at will.³⁷ Christof Wirsung wrote of the ears in 1605 that ‘men as beasts have alwayes twaine, on each side of the head one, that alwayes stands open.’ (103).³⁸ For Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), doors and ears are equally vulnerable to sound:

But stop my house’s ears—I mean my casements—
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house.³⁹

The sounds of drum and fife from the street below are alluring and only the casements can be closed against them. If a head (here, Jessica’s) is thrust outside of the house, little can be done to fortify it against the onslaught of sound. The house becomes a closed fortress in a way that the head never can be, its material structure acting as a means of combatting sound. William Basse makes a riddle of the subject in *A helpe to discourse, Or, A miscelany of merriment* (1619), when he asks,

Q. Wherefore haue our eyes liddes to shut them, when our eares are alwayes open,
our eares fixed, and our eyes moueable?

36 Thomas Tomkis, *Lingua, or, The combat of the tongue, and the five senses for superiority* (London: G. Eld for Simon Waterson, 1607).

37 Richard Huloet, *Huloets dictionarie newely corrected*, (London: Thomas Marsh, 1572), P1r.

38 Christof Wirsung, *The General Practise of Physicke*, trans. Jacob Mosan (London: Richard Field, 1605), G4r.

39 William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. J. Drakakis (Arden: 2010), II.v.33-35.

A. Our eares are open to heare the prooue of euery tale, and vnmoued to the ende
that though they quickly heare, they be not quickly moued to censure ouer rashly,
and these two are the chiefe intelligencers, and seruants of the soule, the other three
attend vpon the body. (114-15).⁴⁰

Ears that ‘quickly hear’, Basse claims, are not ‘quickly moved’; but Jonson would not agree.

For Jonson, the ear is vulnerable: open to hear proof, but not able to filter fact from fiction.

Ears are unguarded thresholds. Richard Brathwaite wrote in *Essaies Upon The Five Senses* (1620) that the Eare is ‘open to recive, ministering matter sufficient for the minde to digest’ (A7v).⁴¹ As Wes Folkerth has shown, ‘Among the associations ears have in the early modern period is that they are pregnable, and therefore potential targets of violent attack.’⁴² Sounds can sometimes be ignored, but not because of any anatomical ability to close the ears; in *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611), the Chorus fears ‘new airs our ears invade’ (IV.vii.30); although, later ‘the mind’s fear/Keeps all brave sounds from ent’ring at that ear’ (V.iv.8-9). In *Every Man Out of his Humour* (1599), Puntarvolo orders a hunting horn blown, and, once it has sounded, commands ‘Enough! By this, the sound hath touched the ears of the enclosed.’ (II.ii.2). Even those ears enclosed within the castle walls can be penetrated. The conflation of the house and head, both vulnerable to sound, is found again in *The Magnetic Lady* (1632), in which Interest asks,

Hear you this, sister?
And hath your house the ears to hear it too?
And to resound the affront? (V.x.35-37).

The ears are not sealed, but might “resound”, or send back the sound which is figured here as an assault. In *The Devil is an Ass* (1616), Jonson would stage this movement of sound into the ears quite literally, as Mistress Fitzdottrel attempts to speak with Wittipol through a window. The scene requires proximity (helpfully provided by Wittipol’s friend Manly, who

⁴⁰ William Basse, *A helpe to discourse. Or, A miscelany of merriment* (London: Bernard Alsop for Leonard Becket, 1619).

⁴¹ Richard Brathwaite, *Essaies Upon The Five Senses* (London: E.G. for Richard Whitaker, 1620).

⁴² Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (2002), 73.

has lodgings just across the street); as the stage direction tells us, the scene is ‘acted at two windows, as out of two contiguous buildings’ (II.vi.36).⁴³ Wittipol is close enough to sing to Mistress Fitzdottrel (as well as being close enough to touch her). The window is a permeable barrier on both sides; Wittipol can reach in, and Master Fitzdottrel in turn ‘speaks out of his wife’s window.’ The window is a representation of the ways in which Mistress Fitzdottrel may be penetrated: her body is open sexually and aurally. The window, like the open ear, grants access to her body; although, unlike the ear, a window can be slammed shut.

Zeal-of-the-Land Busy rails against the vulnerability of the body to sound in *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). His hatred echoes complaints against noise and music featured in Puritan sermons and pamphlets as a main source of contention against the theatre.⁴⁴ Busy instructs his companions to avoid the aural onslaught of the fair: ‘Look not toward them, harken not... the whole Fair is the shop of Satan!’ (III.ii.34). The ears, Busy hopes in vain, might be sealed against such noise: ‘the heathen man could stop his ears with wax, against the harlot o’ the sea: do you the like, with your fingers, against the bells of the Beast’ (III.ii.37-39). These defences against sound are not derived from Biblical passages or sermons, even though sermons on resisting the words of the devil abounded.⁴⁵ They evoke classical (pagan) myths: that of Orpheus, leading Eurydice from the underworld – the Fair is regularly likened to hell – and that of Odysseus’s crew, resisting the sirens’ calls. In both cases, the hero cannot resist the lure of listening: Orpheus, unable to tempt his wife to talk,

⁴³ This stage direction is taken from *The Devil is an Ass* in Jonson’s second folio, the 1641 *Workes* (London: John Beale, James Dawson, Bernard Alsop and Thomas Fawcett for Richard Meighen [and Thomas Walkley], 1641), R1r.

⁴⁴ John Northbrooke, for instance, traces the origins of drama to so-called pagan rituals which combined music and plays; ‘Arnobius sayeth: The Heathens supposed to haue pleased and pacified their Gods from their wrath and displeasure, when as they dedicated to them the sounds of Instruments and Shalmes. &c. Stage playes and Enterludes.’ *A Treatise against Idlenes, Idle Pastimes, and Playes* (London: H Bynneman for George Byshop, 1577), K4r-v.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, John Donne’s *Lent Sermon Preached at White-hall, February 12. 1618* which meditates on Ezekial 33:32, ‘And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely Song, of one that hath a pleasant voyce, and can play well on an Instrument; for they hear thy words, but they doe them not’, *The Oxford edition of the sermons of John Donne. Vol. 1, Sermons preached at Lincoln’s Inn, 1615-1619*, ed. P. McCullough (OUP: 2015), 113.

turns back for ocular proof, just as Odysseus, desperate to hear the siren song, ties himself to the mast rather than stopping his ears. Moreover, the other, more explicit reference to Orpheus in the play reminds us of his role as the fabled musician, when his name is ironically given to the peddler of instruments, Leatherhead: 'Here's Orpheus among the beasts, with his fiddle and all!' (II.v.6-7). The stories that Busy employs in fact prove the ineffectiveness of trying to avoid sound; it is human nature to want to listen. We are warned of the danger of invasive sound from the outset of the play, when Wasp berates Cokes 'Would the Fair and all the drums and rattles in't were i' your belly for me: they are already i' your brain' (I.v.83-84). We are warned again when Edgeworth pickpockets Cokes by tickling him in the ear with a straw to draw his hand from his purse: listening to idle sounds leaves the body vulnerable.

Speaking violence.

Listening – the penetration of sound into the body – exposes the body to violence. *Sejanus His Fall* (1603) opens with the damage that speech can do. Satrius Secundus and Pinnarius Natta, Sejanus's allies, can 'cut/Men's throats with whisp'ring' (I.i.30-31); Tiberius in turn insists that 'We must make up our ears 'gainst these assaults/Of charming tongues' (I.i.389-90). In the common mouth (perhaps the most dangerous mouth of all), are 'Fears, whisp'rings, tumults, noise, I know not what' (II.i.493). These nouns are thrown together, with no distinction between fighting and speaking: fear and whispers, tumults and noise. The metaphor does not rest: even in act 5, when the power Sejanus once wielded has been turned against him, he must face 'ten thousand tongues and voices/Employed at once in several acts of malice' (V.i.794-5). These violent acts of speech are replicated on the page. As Ian Burrows has suggested, Tiberius's power is undermined as his speech meanders, and these moments of weakness are marked by parentheses; moreover, as the stage directions frequently emphasize, many conversations in *Sejanus* take place in private, even while the

stage is full of characters.⁴⁶ In print, Jonson retains the power that is given to the spoken word; we might think of the long dashes in Jonson's *Workes* (1616), marking the words vomited forth in *Poetaster*, or that cut through the air just as Morose's sword does in *Epicoene*.

The epistle to *Volpone*, which was performed by the King's Men in 1606, offers a commentary that also looks backwards on *Sejanus*, and casts both plays as vicious children. Critics of *Sejanus*, Jonson claims, will say that 'not my youngest but hath come into the world with all his teeth' (37-8). The expected cries of the child, incomprehensible sounds as they may be, are replaced by 'sharpness' (36) as its young mouth, fully stocked with teeth, can unexpectedly bite. Although referring to *Sejanus*, the image is suited to *Volpone*, a play in which words are consumed and mouths are used to attack.⁴⁷ It is also a play in which characters attempt to silence one another with acts of violence, as suggested by the epistle, in which Jonson claims 'my special aim being to put the snaffle in their mouths, that cry out, we never punish vice in our interludes, etc.' (87). The snaffle or bridle suggests a vicious control over the mouths of others, recalling the scold's bridle that has endured in our own popular imagination as a symbol of violent constraint over the mouths (and freedoms) of women.⁴⁸ In act four, Celia, accused in court by her husband, is dismissed as one who 'Neighs like a jennet' (4.5.119) and is given a mere line of speech on her own behalf in the scene. The comparison makes her mouth less than human, to be reined in as a horse's might be.⁴⁹

46 Ian Burrows, '[Overhearing]: Printing Parentheses and Reading Power in Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*', *Early Theatre* 20.2 (2017), 99-119. See also Christopher D. Foley, 'Jonson's Acoustic-Oriented Dramaturgy in the First Folio Playtexts of *Epicoene* and *The Alchemist*', *Ben Jonson Journal* 25.1 (2018), 82-3; and Peter M. Wright, 'Jonson's Revision of the Stage Directions for the 1616 Folio "Workes"', *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 5 (1991), 271.

47 Richard Dutton proposes *Sejanus* as this well-toothed first play, although he notes that 'every surviving play since EMO (1599) had offended someone or other, so he may be bemoaning a recurrent fact of life.' (CWBJ, n. 37).

48 See Lynda E. Boose, 'Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42.2 (1991), 179-213.

49 The slippage between human and animal in *Volpone* is underscored by its beast-fable motif and the animal names given to its characters. For more on the beast fable plot, see Richard Dutton, 'Volpone and Beast Fable: Early Modern Analogic Reading', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67.3 (2004), 347-370. For a discussion of the use of animals as representative symbols of the senses, see Steven Connor, 'The

The violence of sound and its effect on the body is apparent throughout *Volpone*. Through Mosca's first speech we learn that Volpone loathes widows and orphans whose 'piteous cries/Ring in your roofs, and beat the air, for vengeance' (I.i.50-51). While this understanding of sound as a blow against the air is found in Aristotle, here it is no mere unsettling of the airwaves but rather an act of aggression. That Jonson both knew this theory of sound and engaged with it is apparent in his poem 'A Panegyre on the Happy Entrance of James ... to His First High Session of Parliament' (1604), which draws on Aristotle's work.⁵⁰ Boethius in turn wrote that 'air that is struck creates sound'; his image of hearing is of a stone thrown into water.⁵¹ For Jonson, this striking of air becomes a striking of the ear, as the beaten airwaves enter the body. Throughout *Volpone*, sound is associated with bodily harm. The 'everlasting voice' (III.v.4) of Lady Politic, for instance, is compared to aural warnings of impending death or violence: the 'bells, in time of pestilence' (5) and the 'cockpit' (7), famous for its noise and for its blood. Elsewhere, damage to the ears through sound is compared to torture, which, in many cases, did cause physical damage to the ears. Fearing arrest, Volpone cries:

Hark, who's there?
I hear some footing — officers, the Saffi,
Come to apprehend us! I do feel the brand
Hissing already at my forehead; now
Mine ears are boring. (III.viii.17-20).

As Richard Dutton has noted, "boring" is less usual a punishment for the ears than cropping, yet the act of boring captures the fear of penetration that is so present in discussions of the

Menagerie of the Senses', *The Senses and Society*, 1:1 (2006), 9-26

⁵⁰ This is discussed in further detail in Laura Jayne Wright, "'Red Silence': Ben Jonson and the Breath of Sound", *Ben Jonson Journal* 26.1 (2019), 40-61.

⁵¹ Boethius, 'How We Hear', *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. Calvin M. Bower, ed. Claude V. Palisca. (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989), I.xiv, 21. For a more extensive discussion of the philosophy of sound and sight, see: Olivier Darrigol, 'The Analogy between Light and Sound in the History of Optics from the Ancient Greeks to Isaac Newton. Part 1.' *Centauros*, 52 (2011), 117-155.

ear.⁵² It is a phrase that, in his consideration of the feminized ear, Wes Folkerth traces via the title of Stephen Egerton's *The Boring of the Eare* (1623) to Exodus 21:6, in which, as he paraphrases, 'God announces to Moses that the piercing or penetration of the servant's ear will be the sign of a life-long voluntary servitude and obedience.'⁵³ The ear is then not simply invaded by sound but penetrated in what is comparable to an act of torture. That act of torture is suggestive of enforced obedience; and, caught in his web of words, Volpone is ultimately punished not by torture but by scolding words and a life-long obedience to the law.

The torture threatened by Corvino against his wife is more vicious yet: he claims that he will 'Cry thee a strumpet through the streets, rip up/Thy mouth unto thine ears, and slit thy nose,/Like a raw rotchet!' (III.vii.97-99). Again, like Volpone, imagining a hot poker entering at his ears (as his lies have entered the ears of others), Corvino finds a punishment that he believes will fit the alleged crime: he will use his own voice to shame his wife, while tearing apart her faculties of both speech and hearing. If the ears are the sites of punishment, then the tongue is the instrument used to carry it out. Language is twice compared to a noose, becoming both the cause of punishment and the means by which it is carried out. Volpone is 'caught/I'mine own noose', which is to say lies of his own making; Voltore is threatened with a similar fate.

Co-halter,
Hang him! We will but use his tongue, his noise,
As we do [*Indicating Corbaccio*] Croaker's here. (IV.iv.10-12).

This sentiment (indeed, this very metaphor) is developed from its first use in *The Case is Altered* (1597), in which mouths are also seen to be infected, although with less drastic

⁵² These kinds of torture are also, Dutton notes in the *Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson*, mutilations with which Jonson himself had been threatened: 'Jonson told Drummond that when he and Chapman were in prison over East. Ho!, 'The report was that they should then had [sic] their ears cut and noses' (*Informations*, 209-10).' (III.vii.99n and III.viii.17-19n).

⁵³ Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (2002), 47.

consequences than we find in the threat of the noose in *Volpone*.⁵⁴ In act five of *The Case is Altered*, Paolo rails against Angelo's betrayal:

What, canst thou speak to me, and not thy tongue,
Forced with the torment of thy guilty soul,
Break that infected circle of thy mouth,
Like the rude clapper of a crazèd bell? (V.iv.58-61).

Angelo's mouth is infected; his tongue is not just the clapper of a bell (reduced to the base form of instrument), but the clapper of a crazed or broken bell. In *Volpone*, this insult is played out on a far grander scale. The mouth is made an instrument, a means by which the designs of characters is carried out. Mosca becomes the tongue of his master, the 'very organ to express my thoughts' (V.i.116), but the metaphor is made literal in Volpone's description of teeth. Disguised as Scoto of Mantua, Volpone, as Anne Lake Prescott has discussed, 'claims he can cure teeth so loose they dance like virginal jacks [...] just as Rabelais proffers the pseudomedical advice in his prologue to Pantagruel that teeth leaping like virginal keys have been helped by the application of dung and a chapbook about Gargantua.'⁵⁵ Heywood's *The Captives* (1624) echoes this line in a sonic insult that draws heavily on this portrayal of sound. Sarleboys rails against his host Mildew (a procurer) with the same sonic insults:

Justly punisht,
Thou that hast all thy lyfe tyme dealt in fyrewoorkes,
Stoves and hott bathes to sweet in, nowe to have
Thy teethe to chatter in thy head for cowld
Nimble then virginnall jacks. (II.iii.48-52).⁵⁶

In both cases, the mouth becomes an instrument, its teeth the staves of a virginal, moving when a key is struck. At once the body is at its most vulnerable and destructible, its flesh exposed to the damage of torture, and also at its most regulated and mechanised, a sound-producing instrument which can be mended (and, of course, therefore be broken).

⁵⁴ Wiggins notes that the extant text may more closely resemble a c.1600 production at the Blackfriars than the 1597 production by the Pembroke's Men at the Swan. *British Drama*, III, 285.

⁵⁵ Anne Lake Prescott, 'Jonson's Rabelais', *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson*, ed. J. Hirsh (London: AUP, 1997), 43.

⁵⁶ Thomas Heywood, *The Captives; Or, The Lost Recovered*, ed. Alexander Corbin Judson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 73.

This is much the same as the contradictory body demonstrated by Volpone's pretence of illness, for his ailing body (its deafness most prominently) can simply be returned to health with the end of his tricks. His ability to hear can be switched on and off, in pretence at least. Attempting to appear close to death, Volpone lies in bed and considers ways in which to appear ill. Prompted by the elderly Corbaccio, who has just been hurried out of the door, Volpone contemplates the failings of the faculties associated with age and illness:

Their senses dull, their seeing, hearing, going,
All dead before them; yea, their very teeth,
Their instruments of eating, failing them:
Yet this is reckoned life! (I.v.148-51).

From this catalogue of the senses, however, it is hearing alone that Volpone chooses to use as a means of gulling his would-be heirs. Merely hearing of Corbaccio's deafness, he takes on its attributes himself and then performs them for the gullible Corvino. This deafness seems to suggest a new trick to Volpone, but it also hints at the type of imagined contagion that will come to affect his body. Later, Volpone imagines an illness, fearing that he 'feel[s] the fever/Entering in at mine ears' (III.iv.8-9), recalling the heat associated with the torturous device of boring. Volpone suffers first a hypochondriac's illness in which he begins to exhibit the symptoms he has falsely claimed to possess, and then as a fitting punishment, a real illness: 'Thou art to lie in prison, cramped with irons,/Till thou be'st sick and lame indeed' (V.xii.123-24). Descriptions of diseases, rather than diseases themselves, infect Volpone, as he is made ill – first in his own mind and then literally – by the effect of his own words.

For the present, however, Volpone is merely pretending to be dying. Deafness, it seems, is easy for him to feign; the process of listening is, of course, internal, and only the one listening can prove whether or not they have heard. Mosca is at hand to demonstrate, shouting abuse in his master's apparently unhearing ear, and encouraging Corvino to do the same. Once again, we see in Jonson's plays a blurring of meaning between words themselves and what the words represent. Mosca pretends to curse his master, 'The pox approach and

add to your diseases,/If it would send you hence the sooner, sir' (I.v.54-55). The ear, so often shown as a gateway for diseases, is entered not by the pox itself but by the word "pox". This speech act represents the act of infection, with "pox" acting as pox itself would by entering Volpone's body through the ear. For a body like Volpone's, vulnerable to imagined diseases, the word alone is a threat. Yet, if language is the disease, it is also, paradoxically, the cure.

In his reading of Jonson's use of language, James Hirsh compares words to an elixir: 'language itself is an instrument by which knaves manipulate fools [...] A writer who seeks to cure incurable foolishness by means of writing is a naïve fool, whereas a writer who believes that foolishness is incurable but claims to be able to cure foolishness is a con artist, a mountebank selling a phony elixir.'⁵⁷ The *body* of language (following the metaphor used by Jonson in *Timber*) has, like the physical body of Volpone, grown ill as a result of its own trickery. Language, or a failure of language, is, after all, Volpone's first resort in his attempts to gull those who must believe him sick, as his words collapse into non-verbal groans: 'He comes; I hear him. Uh! uh! uh! uh! Oh —' (I.ii.128). It is in language, moreover, that Volpone, as con artist, trades: even the oil that Volpone promises as a quick-fix medicine while in disguise as Scoto of Mantua recalls the only other mention of oil in the play, the oil of flattery that Mosca will pour, as instructed, into the fortune-hunters' ears: 'Follow your grave instructions; give 'em words;/ Pour oil into their ears' (I.iv.141). In disguise, Volpone insists upon 'the miraculous effects of this my oil, surnamed *oglio del Scoto*, with the countless catalogue of those I have cured of th'aforesaid, and many more diseases' (II.ii.117-18). Here we find an example of what Foley has called 'Jonson's long-running associations between noise pollution and epidemiological anxieties'.⁵⁸ Sound can infect, and, sometimes,

⁵⁷ James Hirsh, 'Cynicism and the Futility of Art in *Volpone*,' *New Perspectives on Ben Jonson* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997), 106.

⁵⁸ Christopher D. Foley, 'Jonson's Acoustic-Oriented Dramaturgy in the First Folio Playtexts of *Epicoene* and *The Alchemist*', *Ben Jonson Journal* (2018), 25.1, 84.

can even quite literally make one ill. Of course, here, the potion is powerless, its efficacy created only by Volpone's persuasive speech. It is Volpone who will be a 'sharp disease' (V.iii.117) to those he has tricked, his lies poured in at the ear like oil.

Much the same dismissal of sound is found in Jonson's letter 'To the Reader' at the opening of *The Alchemist*, but the gimmickry of the theatre which was a mere irritation at the beginning of Jonson's career has now become something far more pervasive and sinister: a disease. Jonson is still determined to rid the stage of 'dances and antics' (5) but now his scorn has spread to language itself. It is, he insists, 'only the disease of the unskilful to think rude things greater than polished: or scattered more numerous than composed.' (28-31). A preference for verbosity and noise, dances and antics, is not just an inclination but an illness; deviant and meaningless sound (which to Jonson includes meaningless speech) is represented as the source of infection and disease. The body of an auditor is vulnerable to nonsensical words and pointless stage noise; and, it seems, so is the body of the Reader.

'The best is silence'.

If dangerous speech, then, is infection, if the act of listening itself can make one vulnerable, then listening audiences cannot even heed Jonson's warnings without risk. Sound itself could be contagious, not only in the sense of disease, but in its ability to spread affective response through a crowd. Even today, a staged gunshot in a theatre will make half the audience jump; adrenaline shoots through their bodies; many will laugh with relief or embarrassment. We react to sound, in short, as a crowd, whether with raucous applause or with silence.⁵⁹

Jonson is interested in the act of silence as a response: it might suggest consent or passivity, careful listening or a lack of engagement. In *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599),

59 Discussing Jonson's representation of the crowd as a 'great beast', Matthew Steggle suggests that audience reaction of laughter and weeping take place 'on the shifting borders... between animal and human, individual and crowd.' *Laughing and Weeping in Early Modern Theatres* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 17.

Jonson rehearses the questions of silence and power he would play out in *Epicoene*.

Fastidious claims to know the ideal woman, one who embodies both silence and speech.

You shall

see sweet silent rhetoric and dumb eloquence speaking in her eye; but when she speaks herself, such an anatomy of wit, so sinewized and arterized, that 'tis the goodliest model of pleasure that ever was to behold. Oh, she strikes the world into admiration of her – Oh, oh, oh! – I cannot express 'em, believe me.

MACILENTE Oh, your only admiration is your silence, sir. (III.i.89-95).

Silence is not only gendered but determined by social status. Those more powerful can demand the silence of others. The difficulty of controlling the incidental and extraneous sounds of the playhouse, especially those made by the audience, is captured by the prologue to *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), which offers sound (the typical trumpet) as a means of quieting a listening crowd, who are then asked to remain silent.

The third sounding.

PROLOGVE.
IF gracious silence, sweet attention,
Quicke sight, and quicker apprehension,
(The lights of iudgements throne) shine any where;
Our doubtfull author hopes this is their sphere. (1-4).

Here the instruction that this is to be the 'third sounding' shows the reality of the well-known system of three trumpets (discussed in chapter one) to silence a waiting audience. Silence, as well as being polite or 'gracious', allows for comprehension: 'sweet attention,/Quicke sight, and quicker apprehension'. Of course, having the power to control noise – to silence others – is not something that a playwright (or indeed, a character onstage) could take for granted.

We see the difficulty of establishing silence in *The New Inn* (1629). The Host loses control of the proceedings as musicians enter. No longer safely tucked away in the gallery, they are now onstage, with their instruments. Music appears to be coming from all directions; when the Host orders Jug and Trundle to 'Take down the fiddlers too' (III.ii.6), he also reveals another source of music: 'Silence that noise/Deep i'the cellar, safe.' (6-7). When,

moments later, he tries to chastise Lovel and Lady Frampul, who are sitting on opposite sides of the stage, it is hard not to imagine the host as a desperate stage manager:

Return unto your seats. – Crier, bid silence.

TRUNDLE Oyez, Oyez, Oyez. (III.ii.47-48).

The tavern becomes a makeshift court, with Trundler as the Crier, but no one heeds the threat of punishment: ‘Every man or woman keep silence, pain of imprisonment.’ (54). Silence, it seems, is not something that can be guaranteed, or imposed upon an audience.

On the other hand, there were situations in which silence in the playhouse signalled a theatrical disaster. The sound of human bodies most important to the playwright is not one that he can prompt or choreograph amongst his actors: it is the applause of his audience. This did not stop Jonson from attempting, like many playwrights, to elicit a positive reaction: Truewit asks the audience, ‘now Morose is gone in, clap your hands. It may be that noise will cure him, at least please him’ (V.iv.224). Yet, in the case of *Epicoene*, this cruel final joke upon Morose, a *contrapasso* of loud applause, fell flat in performance. In his *Conversations with Ben Jonson*, William Drummond noted that ‘When his play of a silent woman was first acted, there was found verses after on the stage against him, concluding that that play was well named The Silent Woman: there was never one man to say *plaudite* to it.’⁶⁰ Morose, in fact, found the silence in the theatre that he desired, but Jonson did not find the applause.

For Jonas Barish, Morose is ‘a satirist himself the butt of satire, and a living object-lesson in the absurdity of looking for perfection in a corrupt world.’⁶¹ It is tempting then to read Morose as a figure of the playwright, railing against noises that are ultimately unavoidable – and, indeed, integral to any career in the theatre. Just as sound can be a disease, the sound of applause, at least, can be a cure. Watson, dismissing the view of Morose

⁶⁰ ‘Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden’, 565-7, *CWBJ*.

⁶¹ Jonas Barish, *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 148.

as satirist, insists that ‘Delight in silence, and withdrawal from society are hardly Jonsonian traits...’⁶² It would seem more accurate to say that these are not traits in which Jonson allows himself to indulge. Sound effects may risk theatrical chaos, but it is a risk Jonson is willing to take. As we see in *Epicoene*, a pathological need for silence is nothing to be desired.

That silence is passive, or at least unproductive, is made clear in Jonson’s unfinished *The Sad Shepherd, or A Tale of Robin Hood* (pr. 1641). The witch Maudlin approaches Robin, disguised as Marian, and he does not quite trust what he hears.

ROBIN HOOD I pray you, friends, do you hear and see as I do?
Did the same accents strike your ears, and objects
Your eyes, as mine?

ALKEN We taste the same reproaches.

LIONEL Have seen the changes.

ROBIN HOOD Are we not all changed,
Transformèd from ourselves?

LIONEL I do not know;
The best is silence.

ALKEN And to await the issue.

ROBIN HOOD The dead or lazy wait for’t; I will find it. [*Exeunt.*]
(I.vii.32-38)

Robin trusts his senses, but seeks proof from his friends: do the ‘same accents strike your ears?’ While Lionel parodies *Hamlet* in ‘The best is silence’, however, Robin Hood will not succumb to the fate with which silence is associated: death or sleep. The rest will not be silence; Robin Hood will not ‘wait for’t’, but will find the answer. Silence, it seems, is an easy, lazy alternative to action: another Jonsonian equivocation on the subject of sound.

Yet, while Jonson’s characters might take action against silence, Jonson was clear that those offstage should not. The greatest threat to the ears was the possibility of audience

⁶² Robert N. Watson, *Ben Jonson’s Parodic Strategy: Literary Imperialism in the Comedies* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 108.

interruption. On 19 January 1623, Ben Jonson's masque, *Time Vindicated to Himself and to His Honours*, was performed at court. At its first sound (a Trumpet announcing both the beginning of the action and the arrival of Fame), the three primary senses enter, embodied by actors with eyes and ears on their chests.⁶³ While all three senses jostle for supremacy, it is with Hearing that the play begins, as we are asked to 'Give ear' and 'hear'. However, as we should expect of Jonson's approach to theatrical acoustics, the act of listening is not so simple. 'Ears', 'Eyes' and 'Nose' are figures which represent 'the Curious'; Fame addresses herself to 'the worthy'. Some, it seems, are worthy to listen; and some overstep, trying to hear what they should not. For Jonson, interest in the senses lies not in a question of sensory supremacy but in sensory perception itself, and in the potential for misunderstanding.

Sound in this masque is used carefully; it is controlled; it is restricted. When the satyr Chronomastix enters, he is excluded from the full effects of sound: 'Fame doth sound no trumpet/To such vain, empty fools' (77-78). Even those who are included in the sounds of the masque do not seem to fully appreciate it. The Curious, who play the part of the audience onstage (even while mocking those who are actually watching the performance), call for nothing but noise. Nose calls for 'a rare black sanctus' (184) or, as Martin Butler puts it in his notes, a 'burlesque masque' with 'all things out of order'.⁶⁴ Eyes suggests that the Man in the Moon should dance to a popular song by John Dowland: 'and his dog piping *Lachrimae*.' (187). Ears's suggestion, however, has nothing to do with music.

Or let's have all the people in an uproar,
None knowing why or to what end, and in
The midst of all, start up an old mad woman
Preaching of patience. (188-191).

⁶³Illustration 88: Inigo Jones, costume designs for the Curious: the Eyed, the Eared, the Nosed', *Time Vindicated to Himself and to His Honours*, ed. Martin Butler, *CWBJ*.

⁶⁴ Martin Butler, 'Time Vindicated to Himself and His Honours', *CWBJ* n 184. Butler cites Fletcher's *Mad Lover*, 4.1.101-2: 'Let's sing him a black sanctus, then let's all howl, / In our own beastly voices.'

The noise that Ears imagines is that of people in an uproar (and worst of all, an ‘old mad woman’ (190) who stands up, out of place, and tries to bring an end to the chaos). Noise is as much spoken babble as it is horrid music. When Nose later describes a ‘Babel of wild humours’ (193), Ears adds, ‘Ay, all disputing of all things they know not —’ (194), and Eyes adds ‘And talking of all men they never heard of —’ (195). As the two senses continue to interrupt one another, they prove their point in overlapping, cacophonous sentences. Frivolous speech (speech disputing of ‘things they know not’) is rendered by Jonson as sheer noise. Jonson is less concerned with the sounds of his own work (Fame’s Trumpet and an antimasque of tumblers and jugglers amongst them) as with the fear that an audience might make sounds of their own, instead of listening to the masque.

For all his demonstrative listening, Ears tells us less about the sounds of the stage than the sound of the audience. At Fame’s mention of Time’s great spectacle, to be staged that night, Ears imagines the sounds of the observers:

And hear the passages and several humours
Of men, as they are swayed by their affections:
Some grumbling and some mutining, some scoffing,
Some pleased, some pining; at all these, we laughing. (37-40).

Imagining the sounds of performance, Jonson turns not to the play itself, but to the audience’s responses: grumbling, scoffing, pining, and, as the Curious respond in kind, laughing. The Curious do not serve as commentators for long, however. Halfway through the masque, and before the arrival of Jupiter, they are driven from the stage, not to return.

The rest of the masque is concerned with the dances of Jupiter, Venus, and Cupid; perhaps with the dismissal of the Curious, we are supposed to rest easy, believing that all idle criticism has been quashed. Certainly, this is Fame’s conclusion, who distinguishes between two kinds of audience member: the ‘ill-natured’ (220), and the ‘sound’ (222). It is a division that Jonson had proposed as early as 1597 in *The Case is Altered*, in which Valentine proposes that there are two types of person ‘infectious’ to the wider audience:

one is the rude, barbarous crew, a people that have no brains
and yet grounded judgements. These will hiss anything that mounts above
their grounded capacities. (II.vii.51-53).

The other troublesome audience members are ‘capricious gallants’ that

have taken such a habit of dislike in all things that
they will approve nothing, be it never so conceited or elaborate, but sit
dispersed, making faces and spitting, wagging their upright ears, and cry,
‘Filthy, filthy!’ (57-60).

Jonson’s primary fear here is the noise of the audience, which will, perhaps, drown out his play. Interruption recurs throughout Jonson’s plays as an unforgivable sin. Bodies in the theatre that cannot be controlled – either actors or audience – threaten Jonson’s sonic world.

Bodies of sound.

As this chapter has shown, for Jonson sound was always bodily. Morose shuts up his house and his ears against sound; Crispinus vomits words in *Poetaster*; Face becomes Lungs to fill the Blackfriars house with the smoke of an explosion; Volpone pours flattery in at the ear, like oil. Jonson described speech in *Timber* by using an extended metaphor of skin. Bodies can be played upon, made to produce sound: actors are instruments, producing the noises that their playwright has scripted. Yet, in Jonson, instruments do not always do as they are told, any more than audiences can be trusted to fully understand what they hear. To find the chaos of noise in performance, we need only visit the puppet show which ends *Bartholomew Fair*.

Bartholomew Fair (1614) marks the heights of Jonson’s use of sound, as the bodies of those in the fair consume songs and street-cries, add their own noise to the fair by railing against it, and, finally, gather around to watch a puppet show, a rowdy, noisy double of the show they have themselves offered as we have watched them travel around the fair. For all its vulnerability, the human body in *Bartholomew Fair* is not merely exposed to the dangers of penetrating noise; it is also a means of producing such noise. In defiance of Aristotle, Jonson compares the inanimate noise of instruments to the supposedly meaningful sounds of the

human body. For Aristotle, breath is not enough to ensure that a sound will have meaning: ‘Voice is the sound produced by a creature possessing a *soul*; for inanimate things never have a voice; they can only metaphorically be said to give voice, e.g., a flute or a lyre, and all the other inanimate things which have a musical compass, and tune, and modulation’ (2.8, my emphasis).⁶⁵ This theory is echoed in early modern medical texts such as Wirsung’s *The General Practise of Physicke* (1605, 1617) in which we are told that the term “voice” is

onely proper vnto all those liuing creatures that haue lungs: for although fishes and some other beasts séeme to haue a voice, yet it is nothing else but a noise; for a true voice procéedeth of an open breast. Also the voyces of all females are much lesse (except the Cow) then of males. But it is not our intent to speake of any other voyces, but onely of the humane voyce.

Amongst all liuing creatures you shall hardly find any thing more changeable and inconstant than the voyce.⁶⁶

The voice is human but inconstant; on the other hand, that which is not true voice is ‘nothing else but a noise’. The distinction is clear: humans breathe out their voices, but, while instruments may be breathed through, they do not have the agency of their own breath and therefore produce no sound that is their own. They do, of course, produce sound, nonetheless.

Bartholomew Fair plays out the debate between these two kinds of sound: human speech, and animal or instrumental noise. Often, it elides the two; a comparison between bodies and instruments is begun by Busy, who sees the devil in the trappings of the Fair.

Lea. Or what do you say to a drum, sir?

Bus. It is the broken belly of the Beast, and thy bellows there are his lungs, and these pipes are his throat, those feathers one of his tail, and thy rattles, the gnashing of his teeth.

(III.vi.59-63).

⁶⁵ Aristotle. *On the Soul*, trans. W. S. Hett (MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 117.

⁶⁶ Christof Wirsung, *The General Practise of Physicke*, trans. Jacob Mosan (London: [J. Legat] for Thomas Adams, 1617.) (Originally printed in 1605). With thanks to Christ Church College, University of Oxford. (MS d.3.43,185), whose copy I consulted and found bound, serendipitously, with fragments of Marston’s plays sticking up from its pasteboards.

Yet, the relationship between these instruments and the body is not clearly defined. In almost the same breath, Busy claims that the ‘profane pipes, the tinkling timbrels’ make up ‘A shop of relics!’ (83-84), but if this is true then instruments are merely representations of the body, either preserved like the body parts of saints or else recreated artistically like icons. If the body is an instrument, however, then words become simply another kind of noise. The lungs that fill words with breath and meaning are reduced to mechanical bellows, pumping air.

If Busy cannot defend his ears from the sounds of the Beast, he must try to dismiss or ignore what does reach his brain. This, however, is not easy, and when Busy is finally confronted with the noise of the theatre, represented in miniature by Leatherhead’s puppet show, he is unable to resist. Busy turns on the head of a pin, suddenly endorsing the sound that he has so desperately attempted to keep out of his own head, but we should not be surprised. At the beginning of the play, faced with the question of whether or not pork can be eaten at the Fair, Busy, as Peter Lake puts it, ‘in the space of a minute or so, comprehensively reversed himself’.⁶⁷ The question of consumption, of what can be put into the body, first answered definitely (food from the Fair is idolatrous) is revised (food from the Fair is idolatrous in the mouths of the ungodly, but can be soberly and humbly consumed by a reformed mouth). The same can be said of idolatrous words taken in by a reformed ear. Roast pork aside, it is into the mouth of Busy that Jonson puts a paradox of the kind later used by Milton in his *Areopagitica*: one must first be exposed to the material one would censor, in order to work out what should be kept.⁶⁸ One must listen, Jonson argues, before one can decide what is worth hearing. Sound cannot therefore ever be satisfactorily filtered.

⁶⁷ Peter Lake, *The Anti-Christ’s Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and players in post Reformation England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 586.

⁶⁸ ‘And in their name I shall for neither friend nor foe conceal what the generall murmur is; that if it come to inquisitioning again, and licencing, and that we are so timorous of our selvs, and so suspicious of all men, as to fear each book, and the shaking of every leaf, before we know what the contents are, if some who but of late were little better then silenc’t from preaching, shall come now to silence us from reading, [...]’. John Milton, *Areopagitica; a speech of Mr. John Milton for the liberty of vnlicens’d printing, to the Parlament of England*. (London: 1644), D2r.

With words presented as both meaningless noise and the only sources of true meaning, we are compelled to sift one sound from another. As Leah Marcus argues, in a play pervaded with legal terminology, the audience is asked to sit in judgement. This judgement, however, is not granted without reservation: '[o]ne of the play's overriding themes is the *tu quoque* – let him who is without sin cast the first stone.'⁶⁹ Following this logic, it seems that for Busy's objection to noise to be undermined, he too must be proved noisy: Busy himself speaks the damning line, 'The sin of the fair provokes me, I cannot be silent' (III.vi.68). By equating Puritan preaching (repetitive, ranting, and ridiculous as it is made to be in the play) with the noise of instruments and toys, Jonson forces Busy either to make himself a hypocrite by fighting the sound of the Fair or to abandon his judgement as a fellow sinful noisemaker. Indeed, Quarlous makes it clear that those complaining about the noise (Puritans) are by far the noisiest of the fairgoers. Imagining life with a zealous wife he claims that,

Afore I would endure to hear fifteen sermons a week for her – and such coarse and
loud ones as some of 'em must be – I would e'en desire of fate I might dwell
in a drum, and take in my sustenance with an old broken tobacco-pipe and a straw!
(I.iii.64-68).

Sermons are noisy (and this is something Quarlous observes even amongst talk of going to the fair); life would be quieter inside a drum. He cannot 'brook the noise made in a question of predestination' (71). We therefore cannot take Busy's complaints about the fair seriously when, apparently, Puritan preachers are noisy themselves. The audience, likewise, can only condemn *Bartholomew Fair* if they have not enjoyed a visit to it in their own lives or in the course of this very play; if they condone it with applause, they willingly add to its volume.⁷⁰

The same sorts of instruments that are devilish to the Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy become firm friends of Bartholomew Cokes, who sits as a representative figure of the

⁶⁹ Leah Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 40.

⁷⁰ Marcus extends this argument to the theatre itself: 'Since Londoners cannot manage to curb the vices of their own fair, they are disqualified as censors of its equivalent, the theatre.' *Politics of Mirth* (1986), 59.

audience, commenting on Leatherhead's puppet show and comparing its puppets to instruments. Yet, this is more than a comparison, it is a direct substitution: 'Cokes's childish resilience finds compensation by linking his lost toys arbitrarily with the puppets.'⁷¹

Coke. Hero shall be my fairing: but, which of my fairings? (Le' me see) i' faith, my fiddle: And Leander my fiddle-stick: then Damon, my drum; and Pythias, my pipe, and the ghost of Dionysius, my hobby-horse. All fitted. (V.iii.111-15).

The puppets replace Cokes's instruments and toys by making their own noise; actors, by extension, take the place of instruments and sound effects on the stage, offering words instead. The theatrical bodies of actors are just like prop whistles and drums, played upon for sound effects and ventriloquized like Leatherhead's puppets: 'They are actors, sir, and as good as any, none dispraised, for dumb shows: indeed, I am the mouth of 'em all!' (V.iii.63-64). Yet, while puppets can be controlled (for the most part), actors make noises of their own; puppets 'offer not to flee, nor jeer, nor break jests, as the great players do' (V.iii.79-80).

The puppet show, or motion, offers in miniature an example of the noisy, special-effects driven theatre – the term "motion" itself suggests action, not dialogue – that Jonson held as the opposite of his own theatrical aims. Leatherhead literally drums up customers, attracting an audience with sheer volume. His biggest earner is 'The Gunpowder Plot', a show that is sure to offer explosions (V.i.9-10). This may even refer to a real, licensed puppet show of the same name, possibly associated with the puppeteer Captain Pod.⁷² In Jonson's cynical view of the theatre, this kind of noisy performance is all that audiences demand: actors, going through the motions, ventriloquized by playwrights who play their bodies like instruments. Yet, when such criticisms are openly laid against the theatre (even in the form of puppet shows), Jonson is quick to defend it. When *Busy* begins his final tirade, it is *his* words, not those of the puppets, which are dismissed: 'You cannot bear him down with your

⁷¹ 'Bartholomew Fair', *CWBJ*, ed. J. Creaser (n V.iii.101-4).

⁷² See discussion of 'The Conspiracy of Gunpowder Treason under the Parliament House', Wiggins, *British Drama*, V, 273.

base noise, sir' (V.v.59-60) warns Leatherhead. Busy hears damnation in the puppet's squeaky voice: 'Nor he me, with his treble creaking, though he creak like the chariot wheels of Satan.' (V.v.61-62). Yet, it is only when Busy intervenes that the puppet, straying from the script in order to argue back, develops a voice of his "own", at all. Jonson himself may mock the noise of the theatre; but he will defend against all attacks the theatre's right to make it.

The crude dialogue of the puppet show (which does not offer the sound effects that its audience demands) suggests that words themselves can be considered noise. The overlap between sound and sound effect is demonstrated by Knockem's hope for the puppet-show, 'Shall we have fine fireworks and good vapours?' (V.iv.18). Vapours have been read as an extension of Jonson's humoral theory: they are also, however, used in *Bartholomew Fair* as a symbol of nonsense words, the word itself being something of a nonsense.⁷³ Here, vapours is a catch-all noun used by Knockem (as James Robinson puts it, it is an 'all-inclusive word: as a noun it means tobacco smoke, conceits, actions, appearances, and ideas; as a verb it is a sort of transitive active version of to be.')⁷⁴ Yet, vapours also suggest the smoke that accompanies fireworks, the lingering smell of sulphur that follows an explosive sound effect.⁷⁵ The sounds of *Bartholomew Fair* are then both vaporous words, produced by the agency of human lungs and mouths, and smoky sound effects, mechanical noises produced by instruments.

The slippage between speech and sound is most apparent in a scene in which the "vapours game" is played. The stage directions read: 'Here they continue their game of vapours, which is nonsense. Every man to oppose the last man that spoke: whether it concerned him, or no.' (IV.iv). The word nonsense itself is here a kind of nonsense; John Creaser's note reads: 'The first recorded use of this word. Presumably because of its novelty,

⁷³ See Gail Kern Paster, 'Bartholomew Fair and the Humoral Body', *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, ed. Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., Patrick Cheney, & Andrew Hadfield (OUP: 2006), 260-71.

⁷⁴ See James Robinson, "'Bartholomew Fair': Comedy of Vapors", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 1.2 (1961), 71.

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the imagery of sulphur and its connection to the body, see: Andrew Moran, 'The Apotropaic and Sanctified Marriage of Sulfur and Mercury in *The Alchemist*', *Ben Jonson Journal* 20.1 (2013), 1-19.

it is in roman in the italic type of the F2 SD.’⁷⁶ In print, Jonson controls the way in which the word is read, highlighting this unfamiliar word that stands for meaningless words. Indeed, in the vapours game, speaking matters more than what is said. Like vapours, these nonsense words are breathed out, and it is breath that, in Aristotle, gives words any semantic possibility at all. Yet, here the breath and the body are not the sources of human agency so much as opportunities for crude jokes: Quarlous describes the game as ‘such belching of quarrel’ (IV.iv.66), a crass expulsion of nonsense. When nonsense (and alcohol) overwhelms the players, they do not merely fight but ‘fall by the ears’ (IV.iv), the sonic jokes turning violent.

The association between breath, meaning, and the human voice is played out again in *Bartholomew Fair*’s puppet show. Puppets, to state the obvious, have neither breath nor vapours; but they do have voices. Laura Weigert suggests that ‘Human, sculpted, woven, or painted figures were all seen within a similar set of circumstances.’⁷⁷ The puppets move between body and instrument. As Kristina Caton has noted, ‘We can see this oscillation between agency and materiality when Puppet Cole beats his ‘mouth’ over the head with a stick. The puppet’s ‘mouth’ is actually the human puppeteer, Lantern Leatherhead’.⁷⁸ Puppets can signify, can interact with an audience, can simply *mean* as actors do: but this depends on suspended disbelief, something Jonson does not allow us as he refers to the mechanics of producing a voice for an inanimate puppet and draws attention to its artificiality.

When a puppet show is played out again at the end of *A Tale of a Tub* (1633), the voice of the ‘motions’ is Medley, who narrates the five acts, accompanied by loud music. Before the show begins, he tells Clench, To-Pan, Scribe, and Squire Tub about the mechanism by which he will perform the show. The device is operated as such:

Now, sir, this tub I will have capped with paper,

⁷⁶ CWBJ, n. IV.iv.25.

⁷⁷ Laura Weigert, ‘Stage’ in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (OUP: 2013), 39.

⁷⁸ Kristina E. Caton, ‘Shared Borders: The Puppet in Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*’, *Early Theatre* 16.1 (2013), 52. See also Nicole Sheriko, ‘Ben Jonson’s Puppet Theater and Modeling Interpretive Practice’, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 59.2 (2019), 281-304.

A fine oiled lantern paper that we use.
 [...]
 Which in it doth contain the light to the business
 And shall with the very vapour of the candle
 Drive all the motions of our matter about,
 As we present 'em.

The device may be more a light show than a puppet show, but nonetheless it is clear that the 'motions' which end the play by replaying its five acts in miniature are driven not just by heat, but by the 'very vapour' of the candle: its air (its almost breathy "exhalations").⁷⁹

Jonson offers bodies that can be broken down into instruments, and puppets that seem, almost, to breath. The contradiction of his desire for silence and his innovative use of sound, his movement between automata and actors, is captured by Dekker, suggesting that his peers and fellow playwrights were also conscious of this equivocation. Jonson's Horatian persona is lampooned by Dekker in *Satiromastix* (1601), his rebuttal to *Poetaster*, in which Jonson is cast as 'Horace the second' (A3r).⁸⁰ In his preface, 'To the World', Dekker mocks Jonson's desire to silence others, and perhaps, in a reference to puppetry (some twelve years before Jonson would actually stage a puppet show in *Bartholomew Fair*), suggests Jonson's need to ventriloquise, to script the speech of his actors with meticulous care.

Hor. O holde most sacred beauties.

Sir Vau. Hold, silence, the puppet-teacher speakes (I3r).

In order to speak, Jonson demands silence; his voice must be heard, whether that voice is ventriloquized and performed by actors, instruments, puppets, or the sudden sound effects of the very rolling bullets that he once disdained. Plays that are noisy are out of control; but Jonson himself can use sound effects to create this carnival atmosphere deliberately. Bodies that speak carelessly create nonsense; but instruments and puppets are no easier to control. In

⁷⁹ Scott Cutler Shershow suggests the motions are not quite puppets but 'flat cutout figures that the heat of the candle moved' or 'shadow figures'. *Puppets and Popular Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 107.

⁸⁰ Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix. Or The vntrussing of the humorous poet* (London: Edward White, 1602).

Aristotle, theories of sound found comfortable binaries: the human against the animal; the musical against the tuneless; the complex voice against the apparently simple signification of sound. Working in the cacophonous theatre as well in the silent medium of print, Jonson found these distinctions unsustainable. While Aristotle and those of the peripatetic school compared the human voice to the noise of inanimate objects (reeds, pots, anvils), and Helkiah Crooke, amongst other early modern anatomists, had begun to describe the inner ear in terms of hammer, anvil, stirrup, and drum, great care was taken never to conflate the two.⁸¹ Jonson wilfully slips between instruments and bodies, objects and ears, voices and sheer volume.

In this anxiety about the meaning of words (and about controlling that meaning), Jonson is not alone, but in the early modern theatre, at least, there was no other playwright so consciously wrestling with both the philosophical and anatomical meaning of sound. Sound, no matter what agency it is given through human breath, is out of our control as soon as it is out of our bodies. In Gina Bloom's study of the voice on the early modern stage, she asks

when breath leaves the speaker's body, does it still belong to its producer? [...]
What accounts for the ability of this vaporous current to transmit voiced sounds
from speaker to listener? In short, can matter as transient and ephemeral as breath be
choreographed?⁸²

Meaning, it is feared, lies in the ear of the auditor, sent from the playwright – through the lungs of the actor or the instruments of the theatre – to the audience, no doubt being confused on its way. After all, the meaning of a sound is subjective: as Crooke put it, 'so the Hearing when it hath apprehended the sounde of an audible thing carrieth it to the Soule, and then the Reason or the intellectuall or sensitive Soule comprehendeth and taketh knowledge of that which maketh the sound to be a Bell or a Drum, or any other thing.'⁸³ Sound (even in the apparently meaningful form of the human word) is subject to interpretation; sound effects are

⁸¹ Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia a description of the body of man*. (London: William Iaggard, 1615), 514-516. For more on the popular distinction between speech and sound, see *Acoustic World* (1999), 99.

⁸² Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 67.

⁸³ Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615), 612.

particularly vulnerable, which suggests why Jonson chose to describe sounds more often than stage them. His instruments are, for the most part, the bodies of actors, and, later, the parentheses in which his published stage directions are “heard” by readers. The stage had great communicative power but also a great potential for misunderstanding. As Crooke’s treatise insisted, ‘those things which are published in bookes are made vulgar and common, and therefore are not so curiously nor with so much delight read ouer; but good Actors are more rare.’⁸⁴ Perhaps this is both the problem and the source of fascination with sound on Jonson’s stage: it is a question of what makes a sound body and what sound a body makes.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 698.

‘Unheard’ and ‘untold’: the promise of sound in Shakespeare.

Or sleep I now and think I hear all this?
What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?
Until I know this sure uncertainty,
I'll entertain the offered fallacy.

The Comedy of Errors, 1592 (II.ii.183-186).¹

Finding himself recognised by strangers and married to a woman he has never met, the Syracusan Antipholus (confused for his twin brother in *The Comedy of Errors*) resolves to suspend his disbelief. What he hears may be imagined, in a dream; it may be confused, as in error. In the ‘sure uncertainty’ of the play’s confusion, Antipholus can do no better than to play along. ‘What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?’ is a question that draws those listening in the theatre into Antipholus’s confusion. We too must ‘entertain’ Shakespeare’s ‘offered fallacy’: the artifice of plot and dialogue but also of theatrical effects. Antipholus fears that the ears are easily mislead, and he maintains this even in the final act of the play: ‘If this be not a dream I see and hear’ (V.i.376). Just as words can be uncertain, sound onstage can be a fallacy, as much of an error that might drive ears amiss as speech can be. The blurred boundaries between speech and sound that can be found in *descriptions* of the aural can only serve to complicate this already doubtful sonic meaning.

Description can be considered one step removed from reality, a shadow of the Platonic truth or, as Heywood put it in *An Apology for Actors* (1612), ‘only a shadow receiued by the eare but not perceiued by the eye’.² This fragility of meaning is also captured by Shakespeare, who describes the fleeting inclination of lovers as both sound, shadow, and dreams: ‘Making it momentary as a sound,/Swift as a shadow, short as any dream’ (I.i.143-44). However, even if sound is momentary, and shadows are swift, the description of sound

¹ All references to Shakespeare’s works in this chapter are to the *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, revised edition, eds. G.R. Proudfoot, Ann, Thompson, David Scott Kastan (London: Arden, 2011), unless otherwise stated.

² Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors* (London: Nicholas Oakes, 1612), B3v.

lingers. Described sound is vivid; affective; subjective; subject to manipulation. If we follow George Puttenham, who termed the description of counterfeit time “cronographia”, the description of counterfeit place “topographia”, and the description of counterfeit action “pragmatographia”, the description of counterfeit sound can be termed phonographia. Phonographic sound is sound (re)produced by the spoken word (*phonos* meaning both sound and voice), or rather sound that is not performed but rather conjured up in speech.

The use of rhetorical terms to describe a vivid form of description is early modern in itself; as Katrin Ettenhuber has written,

Susenbrotus’s observations on pragmatographia (the description of an action or object), for instance, place the reader in the position of theatrical spectator (“uelut in teatro”; Susenbrotus 1560, 92), while Puttenham’s definition of the same figure as “counterfeit action” (1589, 2D2v) plays on the idea that the evocation of action in the mind might complicate the experience of interpretation and add a somatic component to the cognitive negotiations of the reader.³

The idea that ‘evocation [...] in the mind’ would complicate interpretation is essential to understanding Shakespeare’s use of sound. Shakespeare offers extensive phonographic descriptions of the acoustic world in which his scenes take place: these are required to conjure the play world, and to complicate our understanding of that world. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595), sound takes us beyond the limits of even the most extravagant staging, as Oberon recalls hearing

a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music. (II.ii.148-154).

³ Katrin Ettenhuber, "How to Do Things with Rhetoric in Early Modern English Writing." *Oxford Handbooks Online*. November 12, 2015. . <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935338-e-13ty>

Descriptions (or memories) of sounds can also be used to evoke off-stage action. In *Othello* (1604), the arrival of the fleet at Cyprus is recounted by Montano, not staged as a storm (we might compare this to the storm scene in *Eastward Ho!*, discussed in chapter three) .

Methinks the wind hath spoke aloud at land;
A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements:
If it hath ruffian'd so upon the sea,
What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,
Can hold the mortise? What shall we hear of this? (II.i.5-9).

Amidst the details of the description – the wind speaking ‘aloud’, its ‘blast’, the shaking battlements – the audience is challenged to hear more. The question, ‘What shall we hear of this?’, serves within the play as Montano’s concern over the safe arrival of Venetian ships amongst a hostile Turkish fleet; but outside of the play, metatheatrically, Shakespeare also engages his audience in the sonic debate, prompting imaginative work. We are required not simply to receive descriptions of unheard sounds, but to conjure them in our minds.

Extended descriptions of sound can be considered as phonographic ekphrasis (a term I have developed from Lydia Goehr’s work on musical ekphrasis). Goehr applies ekphrasis, a term more commonly associated with descriptions of art, instead to descriptions of music. She notes that ‘One way in which music and ekphrasis join hands is when a piece of descriptive speech or writing brings an image or scene of music before the imagination (the ‘mind’s eye’).’⁴ This same imaginative sense is integral to Shakespeare’s description of sound. Ekphrasis is the description of a work of art, the visual put into words; ekphrastic sound, therefore, can be considered a description of the sonic, one that elicits audience interpretation. Ekphrasis is a passage or digression that appears to step out of the narrative thrust of dialogue or plot, in order to offer description; as such, it is not a term to be applied to quick asides or lines of dialogue which acknowledge a single sound. It is, however, more than description: it is, as Claire Preston has put it, ‘distinctive amongst figures and related

⁴ Lydia Goehr, ‘How to Do More with Words. Two Views of (Musical) Ekphrasis’, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 50.4 (2010), 389.

devices in yielding a particular kind of interpretive result. [...] Poetic Ekphrasis capitalises on its court-room origin by insisting on interpretative responses from the reader.³ As Webb has written of ekphrasis, ‘Such passages, far from constituting “narrative pauses” (and consequently demanding interpretation) were often an intensification of the narrative, introducing a degree of detail which would involve the audience both imaginatively and emotionally’.⁵ What ekphrasis suggests here is a deliberate provocation to an imaginative and emotional response; it allows the playwright to manipulate the audience’s response to sound.

Shakespeare’s own use of ekphrasis, as most clearly demonstrated – and theorised – in *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), grapples with the representation of sound in a way that has been overlooked by critics. Lucrece’s own response to the painting of Troy’s fall is rendered in sound, as sonic ekphrasis follows this famous visual ekphrasis.

Here feelingly she weeps Troy’s painted woes:
 For sorrow, like a heavy-hanging bell,
 Once set on ringing, with his own weight goes;
 Then little strength rings out the doleful knell:
 So Lucrece, set a-work, sad tales doth tell
 To pencill’d pensiveness and colour’d sorrow;
 She lends them words, and she their looks doth borrow. (1492-8).

Behind Lucrece’s weeping, we are encouraged to imagine the sound of a bell, ringing behind the ‘pencill’d pensiveness and colour’d sorrow’ (1493). It is a sound that is not there, a sound that exists only in simile, but a sound that can nonetheless both represent and produce an emotional response. Leonard Barkan writes of ekphrasis that ‘like all tropes it is a lie. The specific figural activity is akin to prosopopoeia, that is, the bestowing of a voice upon a mute object; and the larger lie is that these pictures have a prior existence independent of the poet, who is ostensibly merely “describing” them.’⁶ In his work on ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *The Winter’s Tale* (1611), Richard Meek challenges Barkan’s loaded claim and

⁵ Ruth Webb, ‘Ekphrasis ancient and modern: The invention of a genre’, *Word & Image* 15:1 (1999), 14.

⁶ Leonard Barkan, ‘Making Pictures Speak: Renaissance Art, Elizabethan Literature, Modern Scholarship’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 48.2 (1995), 332.

goes on to debate the nature of ekphrastic mimesis – ‘Ekphrasis asks us to consider a specific question about our suspension of disbelief: namely, the extent to which the interplay between different types of mimesis within literary texts complicates the reader’s ability to tell the difference between art and real’.⁷ Even here, in arguing against Barkan, Meek inevitably returns to questions of artistic reality (or truth). Shakespeare often turns to metaphors of visual art to negotiate the difficulties of rendering the aural with any verisimilitude. Farah Karim-Cooper claims that painting was considered ‘an organic as well as a mimetic exercise, imitating and uncovering not only the appearance of the figures painted, but also the very details on their faces inspired by their imagined psychological and emotional conditions.’⁸ Paint both conceals and reveals; mediating between “truth” and “lies”, visually rendered sound is heard at one remove, but may nonetheless reveal the inner state of the listener.

The description of a painted and noisy Troy offered by Lucrece is echoed in the speech given by the First Player in *Hamlet* (1600), which moves fluidly between sound, performance, and paint. Polonius interrupts this speech on the fall of Troy and praises the player for being ‘well spoken’ (II.iii.404), but his ‘good accent’ (405) is not where the strength of his words actually lies. His speech is in fact able to conjure up a storm of sound.

So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death - anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus’ pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new awork;

(II.ii.418-426).

The fall of Troy was associated with silence and then a shock of noise; we hear as much in 2 *Henry VI* (1591), when Eleanor observes the conjuring work of Bolingbroke and Margery

⁷ Richard Meek, ‘Ekphrasis in *The Rape of Lucrece* and *The Winter’s Tale*.’ *Studies In English Literature 1500-1900* 46.2 (2006), 392.

⁸ Farah Karim-Cooper, *Cosmetics in Shakespearean and Renaissance Drama* (Edinburgh UP: 2006), 5.

Jourdain, in the hope of knowing the future. The magic must take place in the right acoustic setting.

Patience, good lady; wizards know their times.
Deep night, dark night, the silent of the night,
The time of night when Troy was set on fire,
The time when screech-owls cry and ban-dogs howl,
And spirits walk, and ghosts break up their graves;
That time best fits the work we have in hand. [...]

*Here do the ceremonies belonging, and make the circle;
Bolingbroke or Southwell reads: 'Conjuro te', etc. It
thunders and lightens terribly; then the Spirit riseth.* (I.iv.15-20, 22 sd.).

Here, silence can be evoked by a description of Troy, by the creation of phonographic sounds. In *2 Henry VI* the invocation of nocturnal sounds (see chapter two), both the silence of night, and the piercing noise of owls, howling dogs, and spirits, is confirmed by the presence of performed stage effects: 'It thunders and lightens terribly'. In *Hamlet*, however, sound alone suffices to conjure the scene. Quite apart from the silence of that abbreviated line ('Did nothing' requires seven beats of nothing to complete the pentameter), the fall of Troy is performed through speech. The sounds are both present and absent: a spoken 'silence in the heavens', 'bold winds speechless' conjured up by speech. The static quality of paint (the 'painted tyrant' Pyrrhus stands 'neutral', like silence in a storm) is belied by the spoken noise of the scene; Pyrrhus himself has been struck stationary by sound, the 'flaming top' (413) of a tower of Ilium, which 'with a hideous crash/Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear' (414-15). We hear the 'dreadful thunder', not in sound effects, but in a player's speech; like Pyrrhus, the audience is still, listening to the sounds surrounding them in the form of words.

The representation of sound is, as the Player King demonstrates, able to replicate the affective power of sound itself. Questions of interpretation are raised in moments of sonic ekphrasis in Shakespeare's plays, where there is a tension between the fleeting nature of sound and the fixity of paint. In *Cymbeline* (1610), the expression of a sigh (something between speech, sound, and breath), is subject to analysis, as Imogen questions Pisanio.

Wherefore breaks that sigh
 From the inward of thee? One, but painted thus,
 Would be interpreted a thing perplex'd
 Beyond self-explication: put thyself
 Into a havior of less fear, ere wildness
 Vanquish my staid senses. What's the matter? (III.iv.5-10).

Even painted (and therefore, implicitly, silent), the sigh that Pisanio offers could be (mis)interpreted. Again, a tension is found between what is performed as sound (the actor's sigh) and what is described as sound ('Wherefore breaks that sigh/From the inward of thee?'). The tension troubles (here, may even 'Vanquish') the senses. The sound moves from a sigh, to Imogen's spoken record of the sigh, to her imagining of a painted sigh. The representation of a sigh in either paint or performance is able to convey a sense of wildness; while phonographic and performed sound are different, both can unsettle an audience.

Yet, the imaginative response offered by Imogen (and hopefully an audience) is not to be taken for granted, especially when offering sound in the form of speech. Shakespeare's sonic rendering draws on a wider concern about the representation of sound in early modern literature. The difficulty of representing sound in any media is staged in the additions to the 1602 quarto of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, the authorship of which may belong to Shakespeare, and the content of which is echoed in Shakespeare and Middleton's *Timon of Athens* (1607).⁹ Here, Hieronimo questions a painter who has knocked at his door. His demands challenge the limits of what art can do in terms of representing sound.¹⁰

Hie. Art a Painter? canst paint me a teare, or a wound

⁹ Marston and Jonson have also been proposed as authors. Amongst the debate are: Donald H. Reiman, 'Marston, Jonson, and the "Spanish Tragedy" Additions,' *Notes and Queries* 7.9 (1960), 336; Warren Stevenson, *Shakespeare's Additions to Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy: A Fresh Look at the Evidence regarding the 1602 Additions*. (Lewiston, N.Y.; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008); Douglas Bruster, 'Shakespearean Spellings and Handwriting in the Additional Passages Printed in the 1602 *Spanish Tragedy*,' *Notes and Queries* 60.3 (2013), 420-4; Brian Vickers, 'Shakespeare and the 1602 Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*: A Method Vindicated,' *Shakespeare* 13.1 (2017), 101-06; Adrian Blamires, 'Ben Jonson's Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* as the Subject of Ridicule,' *Notes and Queries* 61.2 (2014), 265-68.

¹⁰ In his edition, David Bevington notes that 'Renaissance artists and theorists were fascinated by the idea that painting is a speaking picture ('ekphrasis'); of course, here, Hieronimo doubts that a painting can produce any kind of acoustic effect. *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. D. Bevington (MUP: 2006), 139.

A groane, or a sigh? canst paint me such a tree as this? (H3v).¹¹

Hieronimo wants the painter to capture his wife's 'speaking looke' (H3v), a 'dolefull crie' (H4r) and 'some violent noyse' (H4r), the thought of which leads Hieronimo's memory back to the scene of his son's death. Words themselves must be rendered in paint: '*What noyse is this? Who call's Hieronimo?*' (H4r). The sounds of the scene rise to a horrible crescendo of traditional nocturnal and supernatural sounds before at last Hieronimo reveals the image of a body which is to be painted.

Let the clowdes scowle, make the Moone darke, the Starres
extinct, the Windes blowing, the Belles towling, the
Owle shrieking, the Toades croking, the Minutes ier-
ing, and the Clocke striking twelve.
And then at last, sir, starting, behold a man hanging: (H4r).

Hieronimo's descriptions may not match the scene of his son's death as we have seen it staged; he recalls it with a heightened, proto-Gothic imagination, accompanied by the sort of sounds that he imagines should have been present and which would have been prescient of death (see chapter two). In the scene of Horatio's death as it is staged, Horatio speaks of singing birds before his tryst with Bel-Imperia is interrupted; Bel-Imperia 'cried for help' (D2v); Hieronimo must speak the dirge, for 'singing fits not this case' (D4r). These are not the sounds as Hieronimo would have them painted: the sounds he remembers are those of winds and bells and shrieking owls, recalled as soundbites in the minds of the listening audience as well as in his own. In fact, Hieronimo's later recollection of the scene, recounted after his act of vengeance in act five, is one of 'pitchie silence', broken only by screams.

He shrikes, I heard, and yet me thinks I hear,
His dismall out-crie eccho in the ayre (L3v).

Ekphrastic sound, like sound rendered visually, must be interpreted by its speaker or artist, and can be lost on the ears of its audience who must receive the sound secondhand.

11 Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedie* (London: WW for T. Pavier, 1602).

The scene parodies Marston's *The history of Antonio and Mellida* (1599), in which the absurdity of painting sound becomes the material for a comic exchange between Balurdo and a painter. At the beginning of act 5, Balurdo asks, 'Can you paint me a driueling reeling song, & let the word be, Vh.' (H2v).¹² Of course, 'uh' is a word (or sound) that is difficult to convey in speech let alone in paint; the Painter mistakes his 'uh' for 'A belch.' When Balurdo persists, the Painter returns, not unexpectedly, to the visual: 'It can not be done sir, but by a seeming kinde of drunkenesse.' The demand is raised a third time: at last, at this new request for a painted song, the Painter must insist 'O Lord, sir, I can not make a picture sing.' Sound simply cannot be captured in a static form (and this might even be extended to print), and those who would want it to be are demanding fools like Balurdo.

Both moments – of Balurdo and of Hieronimo questioning the power of paint – are recalled in Shakespeare and Middleton's *Timon of Athens* (1607). The opening lines see a Poet and Painter discussing their wares. The Poet praises the Painter's skill:

Admirable. How this grace
Speaks his own standing! What a mental power
This eye shoots forth! How big imagination
Moves in this lip! To th' dumbness of the gesture
One might interpret. (I.i.28-32).

Unlike the scenes in *Spanish Tragedy* and *Antonio and Mellida*, it is taken for granted that painting can capture sound: a silent lip and a dumb gesture provoke 'big imagination', or a subjective response, as speech is imagined. Of course, 'big imagination' is also the praise of a poet, who may also be suggesting to his rival that there is need for significant mental work on the part of the observer, in order to create meaning out of a visual image. Unlike Hieronimo and Balurdo, Timon does not commission sounds which are impossible to render: he is content to claim that 'these pencill'd figures are/Even such as they give out.' (162-63). Of course, the picture offered to Timon is flattering; it is unlikely he would complain. Yet, the

¹² John Marston, *The history of Antonio and Mellida. The first part*. (London: Matthew Lownes and Thomas Fisher, 1602).

discussion between two kinds of artist foregrounds the debate about the representation of a living, noisy body in the static, visual medium of a painting that ‘speaks’.

Sound and subjectivity.

If sound is a painting, meaning lies in the mind of the beholder, or the listener (‘One might interpret’, to quote the Poet in *Timon of Athens*). For Shakespeare, a description of sound is always mediated by the subjectivity of the listener, who in turn relays the sound to the audience.¹³ This act of mediation is staged in *Richard III* (1593). Sleeping in jail under the arrest of his brother, Richard, Duke of York, Clarence hears the sounds of his own death in a dream and describes them to his keeper.

O Lord, methought what pain it was to drown,
What dreadful noise of waters in my ears
[...]
a legion of foul fiends
Environed me and howlèd in mine ears
Such hideous cries that with the very noise
I trembling waked, and for a season after
Could not believe but that I was in hell,
Such terrible impression made my dream. (I.iv.22-23, 60-65).

Here, we hear of sounds which exist explicitly in (and seem indicative of) Clarence’s sleeping mind. The imagined sound is enough to wake Clarence; it is persuasive enough to convince him, momentarily, that he is in hell itself; when it is repeated in phonographic ekphrasis, coloured by Clarence’s recollections and present fears, that ‘impression’, the affective power of the audible imagination on the mind and on the body can spread to the audience, who must similarly conjure the sounds described in their own minds.

The sound that is imagined proleptically by Clarence is not heard in the moment of the dream; but is it staged later, when that dream proves a reality. There is no stage direction

¹³ Harry Berger proposes that readers of Shakespeare must employ a kind of creative, internal listening, in which to ‘pick out [...] interlocutory play, fix one’s attention on it, and interpret it is to practice imaginary audition.’ *Imaginary Audition: Shakespeare on Stage and Page* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 75.

for the sounds of drowning (although an absence of stage directions does not necessarily mean an absence of sound); still, as is often overlooked, when Clarence is dragged offstage to be drowned, he has already been stabbed and may no longer be capable of struggling. The staging is clear - the first murderer insists 'I'll drown you in the malmsey butt within' (I.iv.282) – but what can be heard from within is not clear at all. The Lord Chamberlain's Men may have produced in performance the sort of sounds that Clarence has conjured up in his narration of his dream: the noise of drowning. Yet, Clarence's description of sound may equally have been followed by the horrible silence of an offstage death.

Imaginary sounds are able to affect those constructing them; even the awareness that these sounds are imagined and not heard is not enough to lessen their power. In *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), Juliet, imagining waking up in her family's crypt, constructs with an increasing sense of panic not only the sights and smells of death, but its sounds. She thinks of shrieks, 'like mandrakes torn out of the earth,/That living mortals, hearing them, run mad' (IV.iii.47-48).¹⁴ The Jailor's daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (co-written by Fletcher, 1613), similarly torments herself with imagined sounds. She fears for Palamon, as she imagines noises and considers responding with sounds of her own. The fear, 'Hark, 'tis a wolf!' (III.ii.4) escalates quickly to the need for sonic intervention:

What if I hallowed for him?
I cannot hallow. If I whooped, what then?
If he not answered, I should call a wolf,
And do him but that service. I have heard
Strange howls this livelong night; why may 't not be
They have made prey of him? (8-13).¹⁵

An imagined sound of howling might become real, if the daughter adds her own howls to the silent night. She constructs 'the jangling of his gyves' (14) which 'Might call fell things to listen' (15). She uses sound as a means of deterring danger: 'Be bold to ring the bell' (20)

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, 'Romeo and Juliet', ed. Brian Gibbons in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

¹⁵ William Shakespeare, 'The Two Noble Kinsmen', ed. Lois Potter in *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* (2011).

may serve as a resignation of death noted by a death knell, or as a warning that exposes Palamon's escape. As she descends into madness, spurned by Palamon, those bells recur again and again in her words, as she seems to speak a sort of noisy music.

Raise me a devil now and let him play
Chi passa o'th' bells and bones. (III.iv.86-87).

Her idea of hell is, moreover, one defined by noises: 'Alas, 'tis a sore life they have i'th' other place – such burning, frying, boiling, hissing, howling, chattering, cursing: oh, they have shrewd measure; take heed!' (IV.iii.31-34). Those noisy verbs – hissing, howling, chattering, cursing – associate sound with torment, and as much with the Daughter's own mental torment as with any thought of an afterlife. As the Doctor remarks, 'How her brain coins!' (40). Sound is something that she fashions herself, inside her own head.

Yet, we cannot make the Daughter an exception to the rule. Hers is an extension of the kind of sonic imagining that also afflicts Emilia. Unlike the Daughter, who is anguished by love, Emilia attempts to stay aloof from Palamon and Arcite. This removal does not lessen the emotional effect of the sounds that she hears as the final duel takes place.

each stroke laments
The place whereon it falls and sounds more like
A bell than blade. (V.iii.4-6).

The sound is changed from the clashing of swords to the bell that signals death, the very sonic symbol, in fact, to which the Jailor's Daughter turned when imagining the death of Palamon: 'Be bold to ring the bell' (III.ii.20). As imagined sound frightened the Daughter, now sound transformed by imaginative powers into something else frightens Emilia.

The imaginary effect of sound is not limited to listeners onstage. Audiences too are explicitly asked to engage in creating sound in their own minds. In the famous prologue from *Henry V* (1599), which is so often quoted as a call to the imagination, sound has been overlooked, despite the fact that it is specifically invoked (and evoked): 'Hear the shrill whistle which doth order give/To sounds confused' (9-10). This is not to say that all the

sounds of *Henry V* are imagined: there are alarums, flourishes, and chambers fired. Yet, the Chorus's request that we add our own minds to these sound effects suggest that they are mere starting points, a suggestion of what it might sound like when 'the blast of war blows in our ears' (III.i.5). Even if sounds are supplied, they must be supported by the imagination, just as a single shrill whistle must conjure up war noise. The sonic instruction from the Chorus belies W. J. Lawrence's sweeping but long-lasting critical argument that sounds on the early modern stage could never be referred to and remain unheard:

Not all sights seen in the course of the action by the characters were (or could be) shown to the audience, but all the sounds heard by the characters could be, and were, heard by the audience. In other words, sights were sometimes imagined, but sounds, never.¹⁶

The argument here is that we must trust to characters for our own sensory experience. From the invisible Ariel (whom we see), to the pie in *Titus Andronicus* (that we absolutely do not taste), the idea that our sensory experience aligns with those onstage is demonstrably untrue.

Moreover, Lawrence is discussing sounds *heard by the characters*, by which he appears to mean sound effects - that is to say performed, *actual* sounds. But this is far too homogenous an interpretation of sound. Some sounds that are described were performed, and where they are not recorded in stage directions, it is often good practice to consider that this is because they are cued implicitly by the text itself. As Linda McJannet has put it, 'the voice of Elizabethan stage directions [...] is one of many voices in a polyvocal script.'¹⁷ There are other places to listen for sound, beyond stage directions. However, there are also sounds that are conjured up by lengthy description, with no suggestion that they should be performed.

Lawrence turns to the prologue of *Henry V* to tackle the question of sound and imagination. He notes that sound must be heard in the chorus that begins act 2 of *Henry V*:

¹⁶ William J. Lawrence, *Pre-Restoration Stage Studies* (MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 200.

¹⁷ Linda McJannet, *The Voice of Elizabethan Stage Directions* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1999), 10.

where an alarm is given and chambers go off just as the speaker reaches the word “touches”, a highly effective accompaniment of the lines:

the nimble gunner
With linstock now the devilish cannon touches,
And down goes all before them.¹⁸

Lawrence is not wrong in his claim that stage directions cue a sound in this speech, even though it begins with the line ‘Thus with imagin’d wing our swift Scene flyes’ (1017). The folio shows the sound effect not just as an accompaniment but as an intrusion into the speech.

the nimble Gunner
With Lynstock now the diuellish Cannon touches,

Alarum, and Chambers goe off.

And downe goes all before them. Still be kind,
And eech out our performance with your mind. (1048-52).

The sound is carefully cued: it is precisely timed to interrupt a sentence. Yet, Lawrence omits the final parts of these lines: ‘eech out our performance with your mind’. The call to imagination, which does not suit Lawrence’s argument, is left out. To insist, as Lawrence does, that one (cued) sound means that all sounds mentioned are heard is to argue *ad absurdum*. There is nothing to suggest that the Chorus, who calls upon the imagination of an audience (Lawrence calls the prologue ‘a needless moan over the poverty of theatrical resource’) is accompanied by every sound that he mentions.¹⁹ In fact, the shock of the cannon would be effective only if the audience did not expect correlation between speech and sound. They would be unlikely to: the Chorus otherwise operates in a world separate from the rest of the play, and only at this moment do the events of the plot intrude upon its speeches.

Lawrence’s second example is equally selective. He adds in writing of *Henry V* that

Shakespeare has been credited here with a new device, but I am inclined to believe it was an old convention. If new, it established a precedent, since in *The Travaillies of the Three English Brothers*, a Curtain play of circa 1605, “a chamber” is “shot off” near the close of the chorus. (213).

¹⁸ Lawrence (1927), 213.

¹⁹ Ibid, 211.

John Day's *The Trauailles of the Three English Brothers* (1607) does have a similar effect, in one of its choruses.

This latter warning me from speech doth breake, *a Chamber*
 Suppose him landed heere himselfe to speake. *Exit.* *shot of.* (D2v).²⁰

However, far from echoing the content of the speech, the chamber in fact acts as a marker of the exit, sounding out as the Chorus leaves the stage rather than 'near the end' as Lawrence has it. The line 'Suppose him landed heere himselfe to speake' wryly casts the chamber as the first words of the newly landed Thomas Shirley as much as it marks the exit for the Chorus: the problem lies not in offering multiple potentials for the use of sound but in limiting those potentials, as Lawrence seeks to do. Lawrence's example also ignores the heavy emphasis on imagination to be found in *Three English Brothers*. No doubt this chorus requires a shot of chambers, but elsewhere the Chorus begins with the imperative 'Imagin now', and lists not only sights of the seas but sounds: 'Thinke you haue heard his curteous salute / Speake in a peale of shot, the like, till now / Nere heard at *Casbin*' (A2v). There is no need to assume that because sounds are sometimes performed, they must always be performed: in fact, this Chorus makes clear that the 'curteous salute' must only be constructed in the mind. The opposite of course is also true: just because a sound does not have a stage direction, does not mean that silence was intended. We need only think of the cock crow in *Hamlet*, cued by a stage direction in Q2 (1604/5) and not in Q1 (1603) but clearly essential to the stage action of both, and acknowledged in both scenes by Guard 2/Barnardo: 'It was about to speake when the Cocke crew' (Q1, B3v) and 'It was about to speak when the cock crewe' (Q2, B3r).²¹

²⁰ John Day, *The trauailles of the three English brothers* (London: John Wright, 1607). Lawrence calls this a Curtain play (213), and while Gurr argues that it is more likely to have been staged at the Red Bull in *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (OUP: 1996), 322, Wiggins supports the idea of early performances at the Curtain (before June 29th, 1607).

²¹ William Shakespeare, *The tragicall historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke* (London: N[icholas] L[ing] and Iohn Trundell, 1603); William Shakespeare, *The tragicall historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke* (London: I[ames] R[oberts] for N[icholas] L[ing], 1604).

Moreover, it is necessary, despite Lawrence's assertion, to examine the use of spoken sound not as opposed to performed sound but in conjunction with performed sound. Inga-Stina Ewbank offers this critical view in her work on the visual. She notes that Shakespeare 'had available a verbal poetry which makes us see, in our imaginations, more than is or ever could be shown on stage; but he also had a theatre which could show, to our outer eye, more than man can find words to express.'²² The theatre, then, is a place *both* of telling and of showing, or, perhaps, a place of telling and of sounding. Described sound can evoke a scene even as performed sound can. Sound is suggestive, offering not a concrete meaning, but rather a sense of atmosphere or a collection of soundbites. Described sound can offer a more proscriptive use of sound, controlled by the playwright who tells us how to hear it; but it can also suggest multiple aural possibilities that unsettle the 'offered fallacy' of the stage.

Auricular assurance.

Verbal descriptions of sound are subject to the manipulation of their speakers. What is spoken can be false; and what is heard can also be misheard. To borrow a phrase from Bruce Smith, 'Hearing is a physiological constant; listening is a psychological variable.'²³ The aural is something heard, but not necessarily something understood. When Samuel Johnson defined 'auricular' in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) he turned to Shakespeare for an example of its use:

AURI'CULAR. *n. f.* [from *auricula*, Lat. the ear]

1. Within the sense or reach of hearing.
You shall hear us confer, and by an *auricular* assurance have your satisfaction. *Shakesp. K. Lear.*²⁴

²² I. Ewbank, "'More Pregnantly than Words': Some Uses and Limitations of Visual Symbolism." *Shakespeare Survey* 24 (1971), 13.

²³ Smith, *Acoustic World* (1999), 7.

²⁴ Samuel Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language* (London: W. Strahan, 1755), vol. 1, 190.

In the scene to which Johnson refers, the second scene of *King Lear*, Edmund offers his father a kind of auricular proof. Gloucester will overhear a conversation between his sons and will therefore have ‘satisfaction’: proof of Edgar’s treachery. Of course, what Johnson’s chosen quotation is not given space to demonstrate is that, in this scene, ‘auricular assurance’ – that which is ‘Within the sense or reach of hearing’ – is not to be trusted. Edmund stage-manages what is overheard; his father is tricked into believing that Edgar has betrayed him. We are closer to Shakespeare’s sense, in fact, in Johnson’s second definition, in which the auricular is associated with secrets and with oral reports:

2. Secret; told in the ear; as *auricular* confession.

3. Traditional; known by report.

The alchymists call in many varieties out of
astrology, *auricular* traditions, and feigned testi-
monies.

Bacon.

Together, the three facets of the same word can encompass the kind of proof that Edmund is able to offer: proof that reaches inside the ear, that is secret, that is known by report, and, most importantly here, that is false, like Bacon’s ‘feigned testimonies’. What we hear spoken on stage is not necessarily to be trusted; and the same can be said of sound.

Shakespeare plays with the idea of sensory proof across his canon, much as Descartes would later challenge the belief in sensory infallibility. The sounds described by those onstage in Shakespeare are certainly not empirical proof of what should actually have been heard. In his *Meditations*, Descartes claims that

I certainly *seem* to see, to hear, and to be warmed. This cannot be false; what is called “having a sensory perception” is strictly just this, and in this restricted sense of the term it is simply thinking.²⁵

²⁵ René Descartes, ‘Meditations On First Philosophy’, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, *The Philosophical Writings Of Descartes* (CUP: 1984), vol. 2.19.

‘Sensory perception’ is simply thinking; that which is heard has more influence on the mind than any real effect on the body. A Cartesian approach of sensory skepticism can help to illustrate Shakespeare’s use of sound. Shakespeare offers what we might call a ‘sonic perception’, a doubtful sense of hearing that may or may not be constructed through thought or imagination. We cannot trust what we are told about sound onstage any more than we trust every word of dialogue in one of Shakespeare’s plays to be spoken without irony or deceit.

Shakespeare often withholds sonic proof – or, to put it another way – ‘auricular assurance’. In *Cymbeline* (1610), when Caius Lucius demands, ‘Let proof *speak*’ (III.i.1494, my emphasis) there is some hint of the aural, but elsewhere proof lies in the material (rings, letters, or Iachimo’s description of Imogen’s bedchamber) or is equated with the written word (‘By history, report, or his own proof’, I.vi.685). Report – a spoken account – is given some weight here but reported sound in Shakespeare is not always so reliable. Accounts can be muddled. As we know from *Othello* (1604), ‘ocular proof’ (III.iii.366) is easily manipulated. Evidence like Desdemona’s handkerchief can be planted, as Thomas Rymer suggested in 1693 when he claimed that the play was ‘a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical, the proofs may be Mathematical.’²⁶ But despite extensive and effective work written on ocular proof (mathematical or otherwise), few critics have examined the aural as a means of offering proof.²⁷ Sounds can provide evidence; but their veracity becomes more questionable when they are not heard but rather reported.

When Iago stage-manages a fight between Roderigo and Cassio, for instance, he also works as sound designer, drawing an audience’s attention to one noise after another. The question ‘But, hark! what noise?’ (II.iii.140) is false – Iago knows all too well that the cry of

26 Thomas Rymer, *A short view of tragedy it’s original, excellency and corruption: with some reflections on Shakespear and other practitioners for the stage* (London: Richard Baldwin, 1693), 89.

27 These include Maurianne S. Adams, “‘Ocular Proof’ in *Othello* and Its Source.” *PMLA*, 79.3 (1964), 234–241; Michael C. Andrews, “‘Honest Othello: The Handkerchief Once More.’” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 13.2 (1973) 273–284; Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare’s Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2009).

help within comes from Roderigo. It is a sound that he has directed. Moreover, it is Iago's own feigned cries for help that prompt the watch to signal danger with the sound of a bell. At once, Iago castigates the night-watchmen whom he has only just called to his aid:

Help, masters! - Here's a goodly watch indeed!

Bell rings.

Who's that which rings the bell? – Diablo, ho!
The town will rise: God's will, lieutenant, hold,
You will be shamed for ever! (II.iii.156-159).

Hypocritically conflating the bell (the signature sound of civil policing, and of churches) with the devil, Iago underscores his own misuse of the night watch's authority.²⁸ In the ensuing lines – some fifteen, taking easily a minute to speak onstage – the sound of the bell overshadows Othello's words, as (we assume), he shouts to make himself heard. Othello must actually call for the sound to stop: 'Silence that dreadful bell: it frights the isle/From her propriety' (171). In both Othello and Iago's calls for quiet, the fear of noise is that it will alarm the wider city, and rouse the citizens; and, indeed, it does, as Desdemona enters, having been awoken by the noise outside. The sound Iago has summoned has the ability to spread fear. At Othello's cue, the bells do stop; but his power over sound is blunt and limited.

Later, in his account to Othello, Iago will much more subtly manipulate the noises of the stage and will rewrite the sounds just heard by the audience.

Myself the crying fellow did pursue,
Lest by his clamour – as it so fell out –
The town might fall in fright: he, swift of foot,
Outran my purpose; and I return'd the rather
For that I heard the clink and fall of swords,
And Cassio high in oath; which till to-night
I ne'er might say before. (II.iii.226-232).

²⁸ For more on bells as signifiers of religious and state authority, see: David Garrioch, 'Sounds of the City: The Soundscape of Early Modern European Towns.' *Urban History* 30.1 (2003), 5-25; Philip Hahn, 'The Reformation of the Soundscape: Bell-ringing in Early Modern Lutheran Germany.' *German History* 33.4 (2015), 525-45.

There is an obvious discrepancy in this account of the sounds of the fight, caught in that tentative ‘as it so fell out’. For a nail-biting moment, Iago realises the flaw in his story: he seems to have known already that Roderigo’s cries would turn into the noise of shouts and screams. ‘As it so fell out’ may also simply mean as it happened anyway: the shouts did, after all, stir up a fright in the town. Iago continues to outline sounds as he did not hear them – next are the ‘clink and fall of swords’ heard from afar. This detail would suggest that Iago left the scene to find Roderigo and returned to find Montano and Cassio fighting. In fact, Cassio chases Roderigo on stage, and then fights with Montano, all while Iago watches. Still, the changes here are almost imperceptible; Othello does not question this sonic evidence.

This rhetorical twisting of sound as it is rendered into a speech is disorienting; it is hard to keep track of the order in which sounds take place, and easy to believe Iago here. After all, the sounds he mentions are cued; they do take place; and when Othello enters to the clanging bell, it becomes even more difficult to separate one noise from another. Add to this that the fight is initiated and ended in a matter of minutes, and it becomes almost impossible to disprove the sounds as Iago has (re)created them. Those onstage can narrate the sound of their world and mediate it with their own descriptions. If we hear accompanying sound effects, we can question their account – but often have no ‘auricular assurance’.

Illusion: *The Tempest* (1611).

The Tempest gives little auricular assurance, even though the sound effects we hear are often repeated, and those which we do not are carefully described. Instead, *The Tempest* stages the act of sonic recognition, as the same sounds are played back, each time with less certainty than before. In a play about memory and revenge, we should not be surprised to hear a soundscape which turns back on itself, repeating the same sounds, with little sense of progression. As Michael Neill has put it, even dialogue turns back and back to memories of

former journeys: 'Prospero's didactic narrative is filled with the remembered noise of the sea'.²⁹ What sounds the play does cue also come from Prospero, through the interventions of Ariel. Ariel is, no doubt, *The Tempest's* musician, but Prospero is its sound-designer.

The Tempest moves between both performed and described sounds, but its sub-plot (the attempted insurrection of Caliban) depends on the magical properties, and manipulative effect, of imagined sound. Of the eight sound effects found in the stage directions of *The Tempest*, six call for a specific sound. Five cue thunder; one calls for the 'A noise of hunters heard' (IV.i.256); but two ask, far less precisely, for 'A confused noise within.' (I.i.61) and 'a strange, hollow, and confused noise' (IV.i.138). Whether the 'confused noise within' is the cries of panicked sailors within the ship, or a ruckus of clashing sounds from within the tiring house, its cause is still the same: the storm created by Prospero. The 'strange, hollow, and confused noise' is also created by Prospero, who stands and speaks to dismiss the dancing nymphs he has brought forth for an epithalamic masque. The 'noise of hunters' that follows is also an illusion: 'Enter diverse spirits in shape of dogs and hounds, hunting them about, Prospero and Ariel setting them on.' Since all five cues for thunder are associated with the storm that Prospero has had Ariel conjure, every single sound that is cued onstage is a direct result of Prospero's magical sound design. The sounds of *The Tempest* are not precisely acousmatic – while Ariel is invisible to those onstage, we are able to see him as he sings and as he conjures the noise of the storm – but the sources of sound are not seen by those onstage.

In *The Tempest*, it seems that every listener makes something different of the same mysterious sound. This subjectivity of sound is apparent in the contradictory reports of Sebastian, Alonso, Antonio, and Gonzalo. As they sleep, Ariel sings ('in Gonzalo's ear' in particular). Sebastian hears 'a hollow burst of bellowing,/Like bulls, or rather lions.' (II.i.312-13). Alonso 'heard nothing' (314). Antonio heard sound enough 'To make an

29 Michael Neill, "'Noises, / Sounds, and Sweet Airs': The Burden of Shakespeare's 'Tempest'", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 59.1 (2008), 48.

earthquake!’ (316), and, taking Sebastian’s prompt, proposes: ‘Sure it was the roar/Of a whole herd of lions’ (316-7). Gonzalo ‘heard a humming,/And that a strange one too’ (318-19). The four accounts are contradictory; the only conclusion appears to be that ‘There was a noise,/That’s verily’ (321-22). Even this is not accurate. At a quick count, there has been not *a* noise, but at least three different noises (and if we listen to Alonso, also one vote for silence). Moreover, we are forgetting the fifth auditor in this scene: the audience itself, who have – we assume – been awake and listening while the shipwrecked men were sleeping. The audience has not heard the sound of animals, but a song.

While you here do snoring lie,
Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take.
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber and beware.
Awake, awake!

(II.i.301-306).

How the song has transformed in the ears of Sebastian, Alonso, Antonio, and Gonzalo is never made clear. What is apparent, however, is that sound on the island has no fixed meaning. Sound shifts its significance: each hearer hears something different.

Less than ten lines after this debate, Caliban enters, *solus*, and seems to pick up the conversation. He speaks of the noise of Prospero’s spirits and, just as Sebastian compared their sound to like that of bulls or lions, he finds in their noises something animalistic: they appear ‘Sometimes like apes that mow and chatter at me’ (II.ii.9) and sometime like adders, who ‘with cloven tongues/Do hiss me into madness.’ (14). Caliban is tormented by sounds which are not heard onstage; there is a horrible paradox to his sonic ekphrases, which bring onstage that chattering and hissing, but in the form of his own descriptions of them. Caliban now replicates the sounds which have tormented him in the form of his own speech.

Caliban’s soliloquy is soon interrupted and the confusion of Gonzalo and the others is replicated by the confusion of Caliban, as Ariel’s song is replaced by the drunken tune of Stephano:

I shall no more to sea, to sea,
Here shall I die ashore. (II.ii.41-42).

Caliban appears to associate the act of singing with the magical powers of the island, for his reaction is 'The spirit torments me! O!' (II.ii.63). It is Caliban who, as has so often been observed, is attuned to the soundscape of the island. His description of its uncertain sound in Act 3 moves between the real and the imagined, between consciousness and sleep.

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
The clouds, methought, would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again. (III.ii.135-143).

The Tempest offers us a 'monster' (134) who is more attuned to the sounds of the island than any of its other inhabitants prove to be and – as has not been properly emphasized – who describes hearing sounds in a liminal world, between waking and sleep. He hears no difference between 'noises,/Sounds and sweet airs', or between a 'thousand twangling instruments' and 'voices'.³⁰ The sound surrounds – it 'Will hum about mine ears' – and in this sense, Caliban is alluding not only to the island, but to the acoustics of the playhouse itself, as sound comes from (as Bruce Smith has put it) 'Within, Without, Withinwards'.³¹

Critics, like Gonzalo and his companions, have also many different kind of noise on the island. We have inherited from critics such as John Cutts the insistence that the music of the play is 'music in the air', although many would dispute this assertion that this music is

³⁰ Vaughan and Vaughan find that *twangling*, rather than Pope's emendation of *twanging* 'connotes more clearly the sound of stringed instruments'. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan, and Virginia Vaughan, (London: Arden, 2014), n 137, 254). I would argue the opposite: 'twangling', like 'instruments' is deliberately vague; onomatopoeic, perhaps, conjuring up a sense of music, but not certain in its meaning. It connotes no sound 'clearly', and that is the point. (See the later use in Ford's *Perkin Warbeck*: 'the rare discord of bells, pipes and tabors,/Hotchpotch of Scotch and Irish twingle twangles' (London: TP for Hugh Beeston, 1634: E4v).

³¹ Bruce R. Smith, 'Within, Without, Withinwards: The Circulation of Sound in Shakespeare's Theatre', in *Shakespeare's Theatre and the Effects of Performance*, ed. Tiffany Stern and Farah Karim-Cooper, (London: Arden, 2013), 171-94.

harmonious, let alone ‘equivalent to the music of the spheres.’³² Instead, more recent work has found something both decidedly earth-bound and at the same time unearthly about these airborne noises. For Michael Neill, the sounds of *The Tempest* can be found in contemporary travel writing: ‘Strachey’s [*True Repertory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates* (1625)] is the same “strange hollow and confused noise” with which Shakespeare fills his Mediterranean island’.³³ Jennifer Linhart Wood has written of the “Othering” effect of *The Tempest*’s sonic world, with its many ‘Near East resonances’. She writes that

the music and sounds audible in *The Tempest* offer confusing – if not downright contradictory – clues about the location of its island. Because its sounds ring uncannily familiar and foreign at once, this play calls into question its own geographic location as constructed through sonic phenomena.³⁴

We cannot find answers about the island in its sounds; in fact, for Wood, the sounds of the play are ‘uncanny’, offering ‘sonic disorientation’.³⁵ The sounds of *The Tempest* are not only “Othering”, creating the strange and unknown world of the island, but also alienating. They confuse and distance an audience, who are sometimes well aware of the magic (we see, for instance, the invisible Ariel) and who sometimes are not able to trust the confused and contradictory descriptions of Caliban and Gonzalo. When Stephano claims so confidently, ‘This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I shall have my music for nothing’ (144-45), he captures the play’s sonic tension. Music in the air is given for free; but, for those who cannot see Ariel, it also comes from nothing (the ‘picture of Nobody’ as Trinculo puts it).

Of course, disorientingly, even when it appears to have no source, the music of *The Tempest* recurs again and again. Like the revenge plot which structures the play, the sound of

32 John P. Cutts, ‘Music and the Supernatural in “The Tempest”’: A Study in Interpretation.’ *Music and Letters* 39.4 (1958), 347.

33 Michael Neill, “‘Noises, / Sounds, and Sweet Airs’: The Burden of Shakespeare’s “Tempest””, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.1 (2008), 47.

34 Jennifer Linhart Wood, ‘Sounding Spaces: The Tempest’s Uncanny Near-East Echoes.’ *Shakespeare Studies* 44 (2016), 173. While this use of ‘uncanny’ differs from my use of the phrase in chapter two in my discussion of the acousmatic, the effect of unease that is suggested is much the same. *The Tempest* does not offer the audience sourceless sounds, but it revels in the possibility of the acousmatic by having those onstage express their uncertainty about the origins of the noises and music.

35 Wood, 177.

the wrathful storm also recoils back upon itself. Fearing that he will get wet again, Trinculo laments that there is ‘another storm brewing; I heare it sing i’t’h’ winde’ (II.ii.19-20).

Although another storm does not appear, its sounds are hinted at again, when Prospero relinquishes not only his ‘rough magic’ (V.i.50) but his ‘heavenly music’ (52). Yet, the sounds which begin *The Tempest* nonetheless return to bring it to an end. Much has been made of the sudden noise of the opening scene, in which a storm is already underway. Yet, critics have so far overlooked the eeriest sounds of all: the sounds which undo the storm in act 5. The Boatswain and crew, thought drowned, are woken (just as Gonzalo, Sebastian, Antonio and Alonso were) by a strange noise. Somehow now safely under the hatches of the ship, they lie, ‘dead of sleep’ (V.i.230), and listen to

strange and several noises
Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling chains
And more diversity of sounds, all horrible, (V.i.232-234).

Sound is given an unsettling regenerative power; it rouses men from sleep or (perhaps) from death. Prospero undoes the destruction of the storm by dragging the ship back up to the surface, and, in doing so, plays out its sounds in reverse. Shakespeare plays with the possibilities of the theatre, offering an eleventh-hour resurrection of a crew thought dead for most of the play – and he signals this by sound, not heard, but reported by the boatswain. The ‘chiastic design’ of the play has been acknowledged, but in searching for a mirroring of narrative, critics have overlooked that this passage marks a reversal of the storm.³⁶ It is integral to a play which ends with doubtful forgiveness, that some attempt should be made to undo the damage of the opening scene, the storm which brings Antonio back to his brother.

The storm is also heard again, albeit in a way Trinculo (and Shakespeare) could not have anticipated. *The Tempest* prompted further sonic jokes, as heard in *Anything for a Quiet*

36 William E. Engel, *Chiastic Designs in English Literature from Sidney to Shakespeare* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); see also Mark Rose, *Shakespearean Design* (MA: Harvard University Press: 1972).

Life (1622), in which Chamlet dreams of peace on a remote island, and describes not only its sound but the magical and marvelous origins of that sound: ‘the place I speak of has bin kept with thunder, with frightful lightnings, amazing Noises, but now (th’inchantment broke) ’tis the Land of Peace, where Hogs and Tobacco yield fair increase.’ (G3v).³⁷ The magic may be broken at the end of *The Tempest*, but, Middleton and Webster joke, Prospero’s island is still somewhere out in the sea, now full not of ‘frightful lightnings’ but of tobacco. In 1622, Fletcher and Massinger’s *The Sea-Voyage* offered a far more extended version of the same joke. As *The Sea-Voyage*’s Captain Albert admits, it has been a while since a famous shipwreck soaked the stage: ‘I never saw, since I have known the Sea,/(Which has been this twenty years) so rude a tempest.’ (1).³⁸ Such comic allusions are complemented by the allusive use of sound, because *The Sea-Voyage* starts just as *The Tempest* does: with ‘A *Tempest, Thunder and Lightning*’, the sound of a storm (1). The stage direction seems almost to quote the direction found in the First Folio, ‘A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard’ although Shakespeare’s adjective seems now to have hardened into a noun, if not a name, in ‘A Tempest.’ As mariners run across the deck, audiences find themselves in the middle of a recognisable scene (and soundscape): a storm that ‘spits against the clouds’ (1).

The parody, of course, refuses to take such sounds seriously; certainly, it is hard to read the Master’s painfully obvious explanation of his crew’s shouting – ‘The storm is lowd,/We cannot heare one another’ (1) – as anything other than a way to ensure that this storm is met with laughter. Even the captured Aminta’s fearful cries, ‘Nothing but horror sounding in mine eares,/No minute to promise to my frighted soule’ (1) are dismissed with an easy sideswipe of misogynistic humour from the captain’s righthand man Tibalt: ‘Peace woman,/We ha storms enough already; no more howling.’ (1). Unlike *The Tempest*, which

³⁷ Thomas Middleton, *Any thing for a quiet life* (London: Tho. Johnson for Francis Kirkman, and Henry Marsh, 1662).

³⁸ ‘The Sea Voyage’ in Beaumont and Fletcher, *Comedies and Tragedies* (London: 1647), Aaaaa1r or page 1.

begins with the real risk of shipwreck before revealing itself as a comedy, *The Sea-Voyage* parses its own use of sound from the beginning, breaking its theatrical spell at once. Fletcher and Massinger hint at a sonic cliché (a far too familiar soundbite) that they will sweep aside. ‘Heaven has no Storm in store, nor earth no terror,/That can seeme new to us’ (2) sighs Nicusa, who has waited with his uncle, Sebastian, on this island since their own shipwreck, and now plays the weary observer, an audience to the storm with which the play begins.

Even sounds which might be complicated are resolved with comic simplicity. There is, as Captain Albert notes, no language barrier amongst these variously shipwrecked groups: ‘We understand em too: pray marke ’em Gentlemen’ (4). With linguistic difficulties conveniently swept aside, those on the island can concentrate instead on the aural mystery of the noises heard from afar.

Nicusa. Yes, we have sometimes seen the shaddow of a place inhabited;
And heard the noyse of hunters;
And have attempted to finde it, so far as a River,
Deep, slow, and dangerous, fenced with high Rocks,
We have gone; but not able to atchieve that hazard,
Returne to our old miseries.
If this sad story, may deserve your pitties [...] (4).

Separated from the ‘noyse of hunters’ not only by the river but the mystery of its source, the Portuguese are unable to unearth its secrets. The sounds of *The Tempest* are evoked but rewritten to a practical purpose: here the barrier is not magic, but the geography of the island. Albert, hearing the same sounds, comes somewhat closer, but fails to realise that these sounds of hunting horns do not come from ‘the breath of men’, but from the female hunters of the island (who, nonetheless, are played by men).³⁹

<i>Alb.</i>	ha, if my sence	<i>Hornes within.</i>
Deceive me not, these notes take being		
From the breath of men; confirme me my <i>Aminta</i> ;		
Again, this way the gentle wind conveyes it to us,		
Heare you nothing?		

³⁹ Claire Jowitt has written more extensively on gender roles in *Sea-Voyage*: “‘Her Flesh Must Serve You’: Gender, Commerce and the New World in Fletcher’s and Massinger’s *The Sea Voyage* and Massinger’s *The City Madam*.” *Parergon* 18.3 (2001), 93-117.

Amint. Yes, it seemes free hunters Musicke;

Alb. Still 'tis lowder; and I remember the Portugals
Inform'd us, they had often heard such sounds,
But ne're could touch the shore from whence it came [...] (5).

The noise recalls *The Tempest*, in which act four offers ‘*A noyse of Hunters heard. Enter diuers Spirits in shape of Dogs and Hounds, hunting them about: Prospero and Ariel setting them on.*’ (IV.i). Gordon McMullan suggests that this moment of sonic revision reflects the wider concerns of the play, because, ‘rejecting the magical aspects of Prospero’s “art”, Fletcher and Massinger choose to concentrate on the problem of practical government by human resources.’⁴⁰ McMullan shows that the ‘absence of magic must be deliberate’, and certainly, if we recognise the noise of hunters as an aural echo of *The Tempest*, then we would expect it to have a magical source. What we do not expect is the revelation that the sound of hunters in *The Sea-Voyage* is made by, of all things, hunters making sounds.

There is no Ariel aflame, no Prospero watching from the wings. The island is a prosaic place, its sounds and sights far from magical. Rita Banerjee proposes that *The Sea-Voyage* in fact challenges *The Tempest*’s silence on the real dangers of ocean travel, such as piracy.⁴¹ The sounds of *The Sea-Voyage* undermine the magic of *The Tempest*, replacing its otherworldly noise with “real” or at least more earthly sounds at every turn. The island is full of invisible sounds; but the sounds are ultimately made by human voices and are not invisible but merely out of sight. Finding the women whose presence is revealed by the noise of hunting proves easy for Albert, who stumbles upon them in a matter of scenes. The handsome Albert himself becomes a Ferdinand figure in the eyes of unworldly Clarinda, and a Caliban in the eyes of her mother Rosella, who hears in this ‘monster’ (7) nothing but danger: ‘every

⁴⁰ Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1994), 241.

⁴¹ Rita Banerjee, ‘Gold, Land, and Labor: Ideologies of Colonization and Rewriting *The Tempest* in 1622.’ *Studies in Philology* 110.2 (2013), 291-317.

word he speakes, a Syrens note,/To drowne the carelesse hearer'. There are no sirens here, of course, only manipulative speakers. Even thunder is divine but not magical: to Aminta it is the voice of heaven (2), and to Tibalt the sound of devils that 'quarrell in the clouds' (2), but this is not the conjured storm of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, created by the power of Prospero.

And yet, just when the soundscape of *The Tempest* has been thoroughly mocked, it is suddenly, frighteningly, evoked. The threat of death is real as Rosella leads the men she has captured towards an altar, preparing to execute them in what seems closer to a sacrifice than an exactment of justice. The altar scene is accompanied by music which is designed to create an atmosphere of fear, not just for the audience but even for those onstage who are acting as unwilling participants in the performance of this ritual.

<i>Enter severally, Raymond, Albert, Aminta.</i>	<i>horrid Musicke.</i>
<i>Ray.</i> What dreadfull sounds are these?	
<i>Amin.</i> Infernall Musick, Fit for a bloody Feast.	
<i>Alb.</i>	It seemes prepar'd
To kill our courages, e're they divorce	
Our soules and bodies.	(18).

The cue for music is remarked upon by those led towards their execution; it is intended to 'kill our courages'. Sound and music are chosen for their affective power, their ability to unsettle those onstage (and those in the audience). The 'horrid Musicke' that is cued becomes 'Infernall Musick' in Aminta's description, in turn recalling the 'solemn and strange music' fit for a feast in *The Tempest*, as Ariel prepares a banquet for Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo. *The Tempest*'s banquet, frightening as it is with its invisible sounds, does not compare to the hellish banquet of *The Sea-Voyage*, a bloody feast with infernal music.⁴²

⁴² I question Neill's assertion that 'uniquely among the plays of its time, *The Tempest* is equipped with an elaborate sound track, in which episodes of violent, discordant, and chaotic noise are set against the harmonious songs and instrumental music performed by Ariel and his consort of spirits.' (36). However, there is much of value in his reading of the use of thunder and music alternatively throughout the play: 'The contrast here between thunder and music belongs to the pattern of alternating discord and concord around which the play is structured.' Michael Neill, "'Noises, / Sounds, and Sweet Aires': The Burden of Shakespeare's 'Tempest'", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59.1 (2008), 43.

The sounds of *The Sea-Voyage* are heard as a crescendo of what has come before in *The Tempest*: enhanced, exaggerated, and certainly more dangerous even than those offered by Prospero. The final cue, given by Rosella – ‘bid lowd Musick sound/Their fatall Knels’ (18) – confirms that this frightening sound is not mere atmosphere, but the accompaniment to a very real act of murder, an act that is only stopped at the last possible moment by the return of Rosella’s shipwrecked husband, Sebastian (who shares a name with two shipwrecked Shakespearean characters). In a parody play, whose comic structure is dependent upon allusions, we might expect such jokes – shared names, plot echoes, references to other playwrights – but the use of sound effects, not only as a point of allusion but as the anchor of meaning which holds down *The Sea-Voyage* and ties it to *The Tempest*, is a funny and often frightening surprise. In the performed sound effects of *The Sea-Voyage*, the spoken sound of *The Tempest* is stripped of its mystery.

‘without the noise’.

This chapter has so far been concerned with phonographic sound, with the description of sounds as they have been heard. It must now address a more complex use of sound in Shakespeare: a description of sound that never existed. “Ekphrasis” describes an image (or sound) that is absent from our sight; but it does not describe something that has never existed at all. Yet, Shakespeare often describes sounds which *cannot* have been heard. The war noise of *Richard II* (1595), for instance, is conjured in III.iii only by what is not actually audible.

Let’s march without the noise of threat’ning drum,
That from the castle’s tatter’d battlements
Our fair appointments may be well perused. (III.iii.49-51).

The silence does not speak for itself; the traditional drums of warfare scenes are explicitly called upon, only to be dismissed. Sound becomes something like the negative space in visual art, conspicuous in its absence. However, Shakespeare’s absent sounds are not to be conflated

with silence, not least because by commenting on sound, Shakespeare brings it into the scene.

Richard II is otherwise noisy: Bolingbroke has already cued the sounds of a trumpet.

Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;
Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parley
Into his ruined ears (III.iii.32-34).

Here, the windows of the castle (and, by extension, the ears of the king) are subject to sound that is not only the product of a 'brazen' trumpet but is brazen in its presence: loud and demanding. The silence of the drums is no less deliberate on Bolingbroke's part: it draws attention away from the aural to the visual of the army's 'fair appointments' (51), while, seemingly, preventing an escalation into violence when Bolingbroke meets Richard. Richard threatens the possibility of such sound while leaving it unperformed and unheard.

It is in the word 'unheard' that the difficulty of this described but absent sound can be captured: 'unheard' suggests something that *might* be heard, something more than silence. Only once does Shakespeare use the word 'unheard' in relation to sound. Elsewhere, it is used to describe speech that will be ignored: in *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), Octavius promises that Cleopatra 'shall not sue unheard' (III.12.24); in *Coriolanus* (1608), Cominius is sent back 'unheard' (V.i.43). In *King John* (1596), it is indicative of ignorance: the Bastard curses 'let the worst unheard fall on your head' (IV.ii.136). But in *Pericles* (1607), 'unheard' refers to the specific sound of a whistle, drowned out by the storm:

The seaman's whistle
Is a whisper in the ears of death,
Unheard. (III.i.8-10).

This is not a simple evocation of sound: it is tempered by that delayed participle, 'unheard.' The sound is conjured up over three lines, before it is dismissed. We are left unsure of what our reaction should be to this aural evidence: we have imagined it, before being told that it cannot be heard. Of course, it cannot be: a whisper itself can barely be heard, let alone in a storm, let alone in the ears of death, which cannot hear anything. (Malone notes in his edition of *Pericles* that there is a parallel moment in *2 Henry IV*, in which the wind 'With deaf'ning

clamours in the slippery clouds' can wake death itself).⁴³ In the twisted syntax of this speech, given by Pericles as he stands on deck in the middle of a storm, we hear the whistle before its lack of sound is revealed. Malone amends the line from 'a' to 'as', making it a simile: 'The seaman's whistle/Is *as* a whisper'. The two versions of this line expose the distinction that this chapter seeks to draw: that of performed sound ('is a whisper') and of spoken sound ('is as a whisper'). It unwittingly captures the sonic difficulties of speeches such as this one, which do not explicitly cue sound, which even dismiss sound, but which respond to it.

Pericles's speech takes the form of an invocation or prayer. It calls upon the god of the sea to control the storm, and, in naming each element that should be stilled, Pericles of course draws our attention to it.

The god of this great vast, rebuke these surges
Which wash both heaven and hell, and thou that hast
Upon the winds command, bind them in brass,
Having called them from the deep. O, still
Thy deafening dreadful thunders; gently quench
Thy nimble sulphurous flashes! O how, Lychorida!
How does my queen? – Thou stormest venomously;
Wilt thou spit all thyself? (III.i.1-8).

The sound which is described is occurring in Pericles's present: 'Oh, still/Thy deafening dreadful thunders!' implies that there is sound left to be stilled. The description also tells us much about the theatrical performance of sound ('Gently quench/Thy nimble sulphurous flashes!' implies an act of dousing firecrackers to lessen their noise and the lingering smoke). We hear a similar but less technically precise command in the storm of Act 2 (generally attributed to Wilkins), which begins, 'Yet cease your ire, you angry stars of heaven!' (II.i.1).⁴⁴ For all this metatheatre, however, if we were to list the stage directions for sound effects in *Pericles*, it would appear to be a remarkably quiet play. Apart from three cues for

⁴³ *Supplement to the Edition of Shakspeare's Plays Published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*. (London: 1778), ed. E. Malone, vol. 2, 75. The Arden edition makes no mention of this variation and uses 'as a'; however, neither Q or F supports this.

⁴⁴ Gwilym Jones has written a detailed comparison of the two storms in chapter 8, 'Pericles: storm and scripture' of his *Shakespeare's Storms* (MUP: 2015).

music (1.1, 3.2.101 and 103), there are no cues for sound at all – and this in a play that requires at least two storms to cause two shipwrecks. Far from being absent, however, storm effects are cued implicitly in the dialogue of those onboard scenes, and sometimes created by it, as Pericles describes his sonic world down to the ‘humming water’ (III.i.63).

The questions of sound do not end in the storm scenes of *Pericles*. The revelation scene of the play, its crux in act 5, as Pericles is at last reunited with his lost daughter, Marina, is dependent upon sounds which may well not be there. Pericles hears the sounds of universal harmony: ‘The music of the spheres’ (217). He alone hears this music: neither Helicanus, nor Lysimachus, nor Marina herself, share the sound. The sensory dissonance that is staged – the difference between what Pericles can hear and what those around him can hear – has been played out in turn by editors of Shakespeare, some of whom have added a cue for music (siding with Pericles) and some of whom (siding with Helicanus) have not.

The 1609 quarto has no cue for music in either of its two editions; the 1611 reprint of the quarto has no cue for music; the Pavier quarto of 1619, the fifth quarto of 1630, the sixth quarto of 1635 and the play as published in the second impression of the Third Folio (1664) have no cue for music; and yet, modern editions often add this direction. The Arden edition, for instance, plays out this debate at length. While adding a direction of ‘Music’, Suzanne Gossett argues that ‘Whether the “music of the spheres” that Pericles hears should be played on stage is ultimately up to a director. It is important to avoid the “impression of Pericles being deluded”. If no music is played, the audience may share the scepticism of Pericles’s companions about his claim.’⁴⁵ Gossett follows her former Arden editors in defending Pericles’s sanity (and therefore the validity of his claim that there is music); but this is to omit from the text a fruitful and necessary moment of doubt. The performed sound of music gives a concrete answer to the question. To hear only Pericles’s query and no accompanying music,

⁴⁵ William Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, ed. S. Gossett (Arden: 2004), n V.i.212, p. 390.

to have the sound constructed only phonographically, compels an audience to waver. Pericles may be mad, or he may be attuned to a more divine sound. It's an essential moment of uncertainty, born of Pericles's own doubt that Marina might be his daughter.

If the sound of the spheres were not supposed to be in question (if music were meant to be performed), then the scene would not place such emphasis on the confusion of the other listeners onstage. In response to Pericles's question, 'But hark, what music?' (V.i.212), Helicanus answers, 'My lord, I hear none' (216). Lysimachus does not quite answer: 'Music, my lord? I hear —' (220). Marina says nothing at all. To resolve the question with music is to ignore the importance of the doubts that have been raised in this exchange and throughout *Pericles*, a play which begins with a riddle and ends with the unlikely recovery of a family thought dead. Music and sound are markers of these moments of doubt. Earlier in the scene, on discovering his daughter, Pericles turns at once to the sonic: 'Down on thy knees, thank the holy gods as loud/As thunder threatens us, this is Marina!' (V.i.189-90). Pericles woos Thaisa (and wins over her father Simonides) with 'sweet music' (II.v.25) – again, described after the fact but not actually performed. When Pericles returns to Mytilene, before finding Thaisa at last, we again must imagine music. This is Gower's instruction as Chorus:

That you aptly will suppose
What pageantry, what feasts, what shows,
What minstrelsy and pretty din
The regent made in Mytilene
To greet the king. (V.ii.5-8).

We must suppose the pretty din of *Pericles*. Music, in Shakespeare's later plays, is often associated with redemption and even re-animation; as Simon Smith writes of *The Winter's Tale*, 'In 5.3, music is given the apparent diegetic power to compel life into an inanimate statue.'⁴⁶ (To this, we might add the horrible noise of the boat resurfacing in *The Tempest*, discussed above). When he is first reunited with Marina, Pericles hears her singing (V.i).

⁴⁶ Simon Smith, "'Pleasing Strains': The Dramaturgical Role of Music in *The Winter's Tale*." *Shakespeare Survey* 67 (2014), 376.

Like Marina, who does not answer her father's question about the sound of the spheres, the audience is better positioned somewhere between silence and sound. We must be able to doubt, or the return of Marina (or Hermione) would seem too easy to believe.

The desire for the music of the spheres also suggests a desire for harmony, for a unison of plot that can be offered by the romance form of the late plays which circle back upon themselves to offer completion: daughters and wives are found once again. Seth Lerer has argued that, in *Pericles*, music offers this sense of renewal: 'As in the other late plays, music comes to arouse and vivify.'⁴⁷ After all, in this crucial question of sound, at his reunion with Marina, Pericles does not hear just any music, but the music of the heavenly spheres. In *The Untuning of the Sky*, John Hollander wrote that Shakespeare's 'unheard music is related to immortality'.⁴⁸ Here he is referring to *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), in which Lorenzo speaks of the 'silent *harmonia mundi*'.⁴⁹ This speech both creates and dismisses sound: 'Soft stillness and the night/Become the touches of sweet harmony' (V.i.56-57); we cannot speak of silence without breaking it. The spheres are supposed to be beyond human hearing: 'whilst this muddy vesture of decay/Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it' (64-65). We can, later in the same scene of *Merchant*, hear the very earthly sound of song: 'Mark the music' (88). *Pericles* then offers a particular phonographic challenge. If directors offer music, they undermine the meaning of the spheres, which is that they are beyond our senses; if they do not, we are left to wonder whether Pericles has been granted some peculiar access, whether he is deluded, or whether his imagination is powerful enough that he can *suppose* sound.

Delusion: *King Lear* (1605).

⁴⁷ Seth Lerer, *Shakespeare's lyric stage: myth, music, and poetry in the last plays* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 191.

⁴⁸ John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), 152.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 151.

The doubt of sound, the desperate question of *Pericles*, is played out at a greater length still in *King Lear*. In Act 4 of *King Lear*, the King's loyal counsellor, Gloucester, is brutally blinded by the king's daughter, Regan, and her husband, Cornwall. Gloucester's own son, Edgar, has been forced to leave court and hide, disguised as the mad beggar-man "Poor Tom". Gloucester and Edgar are at last reunited, but since he is blinded, Gloucester is unable to recognise his son (who has also changed his voice as part of his disguise). In despair, Gloucester asks "Poor Tom" to take him to Dover Cliff, where, he hints, he will be able to throw himself to his death. What follows is a scene that toys not only with Gloucester's sense of what is real, but with an audience's. While Edgar leads his blinded father, he describes sights and – for our purposes, more importantly – sounds, which suggest that they are at the top of a cliff. His father Gloucester is not easily convinced and, as the scene takes place without cued sound effects, neither is an audience.

GLOUCESTER	Methinks the ground is even.
EDGAR	Horrible steep. Hark, do you hear the sea?
GLOUCESTER	No, truly.
EDGAR	Why then, your other senses grow imperfect By your eyes' anguish.
GLOUCESTER	So may it be indeed. Methinks thy voice is altered and thou speak'st In better phrase and matter than thou didst. (IV.vi.3-10).

Here, Gloucester repeatedly questions his guide – he thinks the ground is even, not steep, and he cannot hear any sound of the sea. He thinks he has recognised a slight slip in Edgar's vocal disguise as Poor Tom. But Edgar persists in his description. Having asked his father just a moment earlier if he hears the sea, Edgar now changes his tune.

Come on, sir, here's the place. Stand still: how fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low.
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles.
[...]

The murmuring surge
That on th'unnumbered idle pebble chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

GLOUCESTER

Set me where you stand.

(IV.vi.11-23)

Perhaps we take Edgar at his word that we are too far from the sea to hear it, but, even so, Edgar's persistent negation of sounds, which are 'present by their very absence', as Richard Fly has put it, can only fracture any possible faith in this scene.⁵⁰ The trick does not stop there. Even as Gloucester doubts the cliff scene with which he is presented, Edgar insists that audible markers of proof are at once both present and absent: 'the shrill-gorged lark so far/ Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.' (58-59). Of course, Gloucester reminds Edgar with painful bathos, 'Alack, I have no eyes' (60), but sight would be no solution; the lark can neither be seen nor heard, both its body and its song existing in their absence. We cannot look at what Ewbank has called 'Edgar's verbal painting'; here vision has little to offer us.⁵¹

It has become a critical truism of the Dover Cliff scene that it is initially impossible to tell whether or not Edgar's scene is actually in front of us.⁵² Most scenes on the early modern stage were created not by scenery but by description, and, at least until Gloucester falls from the cliff and in fact suffers no harm, we cannot be sure whether Edgar is lying, or whether he is simply setting the scene by appealing to our imaginations and describing sounds. These sounds are not only imagined, but they are perceived differently by the three characters onstage who hear them. Not only Edgar and Gloucester offer their own version of what is heard, but Lear himself enters, with an entirely different auditory experience again.

The scene begins with Edgar's claim that 'The murmuring surge/... Cannot be heard so

⁵⁰ Richard Fly, 'Revelations of Darkness: The Language of Silence in "King Lear"', *The Bucknell Review* 20.3 (1972), 78.

⁵¹ Inga-Stina Ewbank, "'More Pregnantly than Words'" (1971), 18.

⁵² See Jonathan Goldberg, 'Dover Cliff and the Conditions of Representation: "King Lear" 4:6 in Perspective.' *Poetics Today* (1984), 537-47; Winfried Schleiner, 'Justifying the Unjustifiable: The Dover Cliff Scene in *King Lear*.' *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1985), 337-43

high.’ (IV.vi.20-21). The sound is evoked and then revoked, existing in the mind for a line and a half of pentameter before it is dismissed. This lack of sound troubles Raphael Lyne: ‘The negative component is challenging: the sound of the waves is part of the picture but it cannot be heard. Most importantly, we are faced with a sighted man bearing false witness to what is not really there, and an unsighted man believing it. Whose imagination earns our credit?’⁵³ The absent sounds of Edgar’s description compel the audience to trust, however briefly, in a sound they cannot hear, as Gloucester must. Whether or not he believes in Edgar’s cliff for a moment, Stephen Orgel discusses the persuasive power of the trick. The scene creates, for Orgel, ‘something the Renaissance would have recognized as an argument. This is what critics from Horace to Castelvetro and Sidney mean when they say that mimesis is only the means of drama, not its end. Its end, they assume, is the same as the end of poetry and the other verbal arts, to persuade.’⁵⁴ The invocation of a sound that cannot be heard – the replacement of sound by speech – shows sound in the early modern theatre to be dependent upon the powers of rhetoric. The Dover Cliff scene is constructed around the need to imagine sounds based on what we are told about them, work that we already do in the theatre.

A description of sound is suggestive, offering not a concrete meaning, but a sense of atmosphere that is open to interpretation. Edgar’s speech has the power not to explain but to evoke, to act as a refrain, interruption, or underscore to the speech and action onstage. In her description of early modern sound, Penelope Gouk has discussed the use of written musical notation, from which music might be imagined in the mind and then actually performed: ‘The earliest forms of musical notation were only an aide-mémoire, enabling the reproduction of sounds that were already “impressed on the memory,” but after the invention of staff notation in the early eleventh century it eventually became possible not only to read music at sight –

⁵³ Raphael Lyne, ‘Shakespeare, Perception and Theory of Mind.’ *Paragraph* 37.1 (2014), 83.

⁵⁴ Stephen Orgel, ‘Shakespeare Imagines a Theatre’, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, eds. Stephen Orgel and Sean Keilen (New York: Garland, 1999), 22.

that is, to sing or play a composition you had never heard – but also to compose music “virtually” without performing it first.’⁵⁵ Musicologists today would call this audiation: the act of imaginatively recreating music in the mind.⁵⁶ This promise of sound is very much what description onstage in *King Lear* offers: a score of words from which an audience may create a mental composition of sound effects they have never heard, as we imagine what is missing.

We have already heard Edgar’s question, ‘Hark do you hear the sea?’ (IV.vi.4). Gloucester’s rebuttal is that his hearing is not lacking, for he can recognize the change in Edgar/Poor Tom’s voice. Gloucester trusts his hearing, and when he dismisses Edgar, it is sound on which he relies for proof: ‘Bid me farewell and let me hear thee going’ (31). As to whether or not Edgar feigns departure, his feet stamping heavily against the wooden boards of the stage, we have no direction, although his farewell to his father is suggestive of a false exit. Neither sounds not heard, like the murmuring surge, or the imagined song of the lark, nor sounds actually heard, like footsteps stamped onstage, have any trustworthy meaning.

Gloucester then falls, or, of course, appears to fall, and at once Edgar turns to sound – now the blinded Gloucester’s primary sense – as a means of testing his father: ‘Alive or dead?/Ho, you, sir! Friend, hear you sir? Speak! – ’ (45-46). The ability to make sound and to receive it becomes the primary definition of being: ‘thou dost breathe,/Hast heavy substance, bleed’st not, speak’st, art sound’ (51-52). The ability to make words, the ability to vocalize, to make sound, and the wholeness of being that is implied by the pun on sound itself, become the criteria for human existence: to be sound in health, and to *be* sound. It is sound, after all, that brings this scene into being, and the ability to hear is the ability to ascertain reality.

55 Penelope Gouk, ‘In Search of Sound: Authenticity, Healing and Redemption in the Early Modern State’, *The Senses and Society*, 2:3 (2007), 304.

56 Warren Brodsky, Yoav Kessler, Bat-Sheva Rubinstein, Jane Ginsborg, and Avishai Henik, ‘The Mental Representation of Music Notation: Notational Audiation.’ *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 34.2 (2008), 427-45.

Gloucester's relationship with sound is his last hold on selfhood, on autonomy. By refusing to pretend that he can hear something that he cannot, Gloucester allows the audience, also, to question the description of sound that Edgar is presenting. It is useful here to think of Bruce Smith's two approaches to what is heard on stage: '...there are two quite distinct ways of attending to sound: one that focuses on the *thereness* of the sound, on the sound-producer; and one that focuses on the *hereness* of the sound, on the physiological and psychological effects of sound on the listener.'⁵⁷ If Edgar offers the there-ness of sound, the creation of an imaginary sound of waves, then Gloucester is its here-ness, or rather, its not-here-ness, as sound becomes his one proof of the world around him. Indeed, for all this acoustic confusion, the ability to distinguish sounds remains with Gloucester. As Lear enters, Gloucester knows the king at once, even though the king does not recognize his former counsellor. 'I know that voice' (95), Gloucester insists, in an agonizing proof of sound.⁵⁸

Lear brings with him to the Dover Cliff scene the lessons he has learned about listening. The play begins with Cordelia's refusal to express her love for her father with a showy, rhetorical flourish; her plain truth, however, is soon proved far superior to her sisters' flattering speeches. *King Lear* is in many ways a play about listening – and not listening – and traces of this regret are to be found in Lear's more or less lucid speeches to Gloucester. Gloucester and Lear speak in similar terms of the ability to perceive what is heard, rather than what is seen.

LEAR	Read.	
GLOUCESTER	What? With the case of eyes?	
LEAR	Oh ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light, yet you see how this world goes.	
GLOUCESTER	I see it feelingly.	(139-145).

⁵⁷ Bruce Smith (1999), 7.

⁵⁸ We might also consider *Measure for Measure* (V.i): 'I remember you, sir, by the sound of your voice' (2745), <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>.

Gloucester may perceive through touch (feeling) or by intuition (feelings), but neither will suffice for Lear, who turns to the sense of hearing.

What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes
with no eyes. *Look with thine ears.* See how yon justice
rails upon yon simple thief. *Hark in thine ear:* change
places and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is
the thief? Thou hast *seen a farmer's dog bark* at a
beggar? (146-151, my emphasis).

Three times, Lear invokes hearing as the primary means of understanding the world. Three times the senses are combined and sight, the clarity of vision, is associated with listening. In fact, as Lear suggests, although a quick glance at a thief and a judge might make it clear who is who, if you closed your eyes and listened, then the roles might seem to be reversed. His speech is a deliberate conflation of the senses. A.C. Bradley famously suggested that *King Lear* ‘not only refuses to reveal itself fully through the senses but seems to be almost in contradiction with their reports.’⁵⁹ The scene seeks to confuse us, and it does so by breaking its promise, and never performing the sea sound on which the Dover Cliff scene pivots.

So far, the Dover Cliff scene has offered a lack of sound; the second half of the scene, however, turns Edgar’s trick on its head. Into the sensory and semantic game that is being played out between Lear, Gloucester, and Edgar, three gentlemen enter. This intrusion establishes a second aural game, not only with Gloucester, but now also with Edgar, who asks the newcomers, ‘Do you hear aught of a battle toward?’ (198). Here, the quarto and folio texts offer two readings.

EDGAR	Do you hear aught of a battle toward?
GENTLEMAN	Most sure and vulgar; everyone hears that That can distinguish sense. (Q1 and 2)

and

EDGAR	Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?
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⁵⁹ A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. (London: Macmillan, 1904), 200.

GENTLEMAN

Most sure and vulgar; everyone hears that
Which can distinguish sound. (F).

Sound or sense? Is Edgar asking the gentleman whether he has heard a rumour of a battle, only to be answered that anyone with any sense would know war is looming; or is Edgar asking the gentleman if he has heard signs of a nearby skirmish, only to be told with surprise that such sounds are all too audible? With no stage direction calling for military sounds, we are, temporarily at least, unable to tell whether Edgar's own hearing is failing; whether he is lying, once again, about what he can and cannot hear; or whether the sound of war itself will appear only rhetorically, like the sound of the sea, *which cannot be heard so high*. Of course, sounds of a skirmish are approaching more rapidly than Edgar can appreciate; within moments, Oswald enters, only to fight Edgar and be killed. And, after this fight, there is finally a sound cue for: 'Drum afar off' (IV.vi.278, s.d.). Absent sound is replaced by ever approaching sound, and with this sound, Edgar finally acknowledges what he hears, and the danger it may represent: 'Far off methinks I hear the beaten drum' (279). The intrusion of violence ends Edgar's rhetorical use of sound; his description of absent sound now must turn into a tentative statement of perceived sound, so that he can take his father to safety.

Indeed, for all its phonographic speculation, *King Lear* seems continually to gravitate towards the safety of concrete sounds. Its sound effects are surprising in their consistency. There are seven trumpets in acts 1 and 2; then seven cues for a storm at the end of 2 and in 3; nine alarums and drums (in 4 and 5); and then, in the second half of act 5, seven trumpets. Unlike the varied sounds effects customary for early modern plays, the play seems to move in sonic "acts", from the regal, to the wild, to the military, and back, it seems, to the sound of trumpets we once associated with a stable court, now in the hands of Goneril and Regan. The last sound, then, after those trumpets have once again been established, is a particular shock; again, we must learn not to take comfort in what we hear. The final sound effect of *King Lear*

is a dead march; finally, sound offers us a horrible proof. The slow drums unravel the play's final doubt. Here, unlike Gloucester's feigned fall, it is certain that Cordelia is dead.

There is, at least sonically, no room for comfort at the end of *King Lear*. The sonic confusion of the Dover Cliff scene can also shed some light on the final scene of *King Lear* in which Lear seems to believe that his daughter is still alive, against all obvious sensory proof: 'Look on her, look, her lips,/Look there, look there!' (V.iii.309-10). In his final speech in the Dover Cliff scene, Gloucester draws together sound and sanity, desiring to lose the sense to which he has been so desperately clinging.

The King is mad. How stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrows? Better I were distract;
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
And woes by wrong imaginations lose
The knowledge of themselves. (268-273).

It is this 'wrong imagination' that Gloucester now seeks: a sense of illusion, or delusion, that hides the truth – the very sort of sound that Edgar had offered him, as he described an imaginary sea, hid his own voice, and pretended to stomp away. But 'wrong imagination' is only a step away from hallucination, from madness. Early modern "madness" was defined by sensory deprivation, the inability to perceive the world as it is generally accepted to be. Edgar, who disguises himself as a caricatured madman, describes bedlam beggars who feel nothing and push pins into their own numbed arms. Lear himself, in his own description of madness, refers not to being overwhelmed but to being removed from his feelings because of the distraction of imaginary turmoil (and, in the tempest, perhaps imaginary sound).

This tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there: filial ingratitude. (III.iv.12-14).

Yet, if sanity means conformity to a shared sensory experience, it is troubling that we as audience fail to hear the very sounds that Edgar promises us. We also do not hear the sea. We, momentarily, share Gloucester's blindness, Lear's madness. Lear's instruction to

Gloucester, 'Look with thine ears', is not a call to blend the different senses, nor an attempt to favour one sense over another. It is rather about a lack of sense, the emptiness of reality, and it is an emptiness that the audience share when we listen to the play and hear nothing.

The scene is noisy without noise. Its tension between sound and silence, its interest in what is not there, is perhaps best summed up by Derek Walcott's poem, 'Missing the Sea'. Like *King Lear*, the poem wrestles with the difficulty of describing a sound which is not there; of capturing in words the memories of a sonic experience; of not hearing waves.

Some sound like the gnashing of windmills ground
To a dead halt;
A deafening absence, a blow.⁶⁰

Gloucester hears a deafening absence; the sounds promised in *Lear* are never performed, leaving the audience caught between sound and silence. Across his works, Shakespeare plays with such hypothetical sound: imagined in both the minds of the audience and of the onstage speaker, who creates an artificial soundscape. We are able to hear sounds which are not performed; this imaginary capability is in fact a feature of the aural with which critics of sound continue to grapple. As Matthew Nudds has argued,

We can imagine a world of sounds which is dissociated from the world of material objects; we can imagine, too, the sounds we actually hear apart from the things that we see and touch. There appears to be nothing intrinsic to the sounds that we actually hear to connect them with the world of sight and touch.⁶¹

In Shakespeare, sound is not always material; it can be imagined, 'apart from the things that we see and touch.' We often do not hear any sound effects (we do not hear the sea at Dover Cliff or the heavenly spheres of *Pericles*); and yet, in Shakespeare's speeches, we hear a great deal of sound. What phonographic speeches offer is a liminal space, with room for interpretative listening. We listen to Shakespeare as one might view a painted scene amidst the shadowy effect of chiaroscuro: straining for sound because we are promised it, conscious

⁶⁰ Derek Walcott, *The Castaway and Other Poems* (London: Cape, 1965).

⁶¹ Matthew Nudds, 'Experiencing the Production of Sounds.' *European Journal of Philosophy* 9.2 (2001), 215.

of sound because of the lack of it. Far from finding silence in the absence of scripted sound effects, we can find possible noises. Like Lear, we should look with our ears; like Gloucester, we must trust in sounds unheard.

Conclusion.

On March 9th, 1615, students of Trinity College, Cambridge, members of the court, and King James I and VI were introduced to a revolutionary piece of sound technology, the *otacousticon*. Featured in Thomas Tomkis's academic drama, *Albumazar*, this wearable, portable (and imaginary) piece of machinery - 'an Instrument that multiplies/Obiects of hearing' (B4v) - allowed users to hear sounds at an unprecedented distance.¹ Five years earlier, with the publication of *Sidereus Nuncius*, Galileo had suggested that the human eye could see the stars in once unimaginable detail.² Like Galileo's telescope (not yet widely known as the telescope, but as the *perspicillum*), the *otacousticon* opened not only the ear but new possibilities of knowledge and communication. Of course, users might have been deterred by the fact that the device was not easy to wear, even for the least fashion-conscious of Jacobeans, being 'a pair of Asses eares, and large ones' (B4v). In this, the *otacousticon* also suggests a classical joke, recalling the donkey ears with which Midas was punished for claiming that his own music rivalled that of Apollo. The *otacousticon* was (at least in the outlandish claims made for it) a joke, a parody of the telescope but also of the desire to extend the senses beyond human limits that the telescope had come to represent. It suggests a wider scientific and literary straining for sounds beyond the boundaries of the human ear; an interest in the possibility of extending the hearing in unknown directions. In this way, quite accidentally, the *otacousticon* serves as a symbol for the work of sound studies itself, which seeks to find traces of distant sounds once performed and, if possible, turn up the volume.

In this thesis, the use of sound onstage is shown to be both creative and innovative. The plays discussed range across fifty years in which the nature and meaning of sound were radically redefined, both on and off stage. In 1579, Stephen Gosson's anti-theatrical pamphlet

¹ Thomas Tomkis, *Albumazar* (London: Nicholas Okes for Walter Burre, 1615).

² Galileo Galilei, *Sidereus nuncius* (Venice: Thomas Baglionum, 1610).

The Schoole of Abuse disdained the use of instruments in the theatre, and did so with classical precedent: ‘*Maximus Tyrius* holdeth it for a Maxime, that the bringing of instruments to Theaters & plaies, was the first cup that poisoned the common wealth’ (10-11). The sound effects of plays are enough to corrupt society. Yet, Gosson does not dismiss hearing altogether; instead, he strives for something more, opposing “man-made” music in favour of that found in God’s creation:

Pythagoras bequeathes them a Clookebagge, and condemnes them for fooles, that iudge Musicke by sounde and eare. If you will bee good Scholers, and profite well in the Arte of Musicke, shutte your Fidels in their cases, and looke vp to heauen: the order of the Spheres, the vnfallible motion of the Planets. (8-9).³

This is no casual engagement with sound; Gosson cites Pythagoras and appeals to scholars of music. Not only is sight given precedence above hearing (‘looke vp to heauen’) but hearing is weighted with immorality. There is sound to be found, but only if one searches the Spheres.

Medical texts took an entirely different approach to sound, reveling in its possibilities and in the increasingly advanced knowledge of the ear. In 1615, Helkiah Crooke’s *Mikrocosmographia* drew together current thinking on the intricate structure of the ear (discussed in chapter three).⁴ In 1621, Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* described hearing as that ‘most excellent outward sense, by which wee learne and get knowledge.’ (C1v).⁵ Sound itself, Burton argued, requires three components: ‘a body to strike, as the hand of a Musitian’, ‘the body stroken, which must be solide and able to resist; as a bell, lute-string, not wooll or sponge’ and ‘the *Medium*, the aire’. Moreover, the ear-drum itself is not only understood but described in a particularly musical fashion as ‘little skinne formed like a drumme head, and strucke vpon by certaine smal instruments like drum-stickes’. Here, the ear itself becomes an instrument, a little drum that can be heard playing inside the head.

³ Stephen Gosson, *The schoole of abuse* (London: Thomas Woodcocke, 1579), A8r.

⁴ Jennifer Rae McDermott discussing Crooke work in summarizing existing anatomical knowledge of the ear in ‘Perceiving Shakespeare: A Study of Sight, Sound, and Stage’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 19 (2009) 5.1-38.

⁵ Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy what it is*. (Oxford: Iohn Lichfield and Iames Short, for Henry Cripps, 1621).

Neither Crooke nor Burton moved from anatomical knowledge into speculation. Yet, Bacon's incomplete work *New Atlantis*, published posthumously in 1626, moved beyond the limits of sound as they were understood, into the kinds of potential, imaginary sound that had long since been explored on the early modern stage.⁶ Bacon wrote not only of sound but of the technological innovations that were associated with the production of sound.⁷ The invented 'modell' college of Solomon's House (A2r), discovered on the island of Bensalem, offers the voyagers who have stumbled upon it access to a world of *new* sound:

Wee haue also *Sound-Houses*, wher wee practise and demonstrate all Sounds, and their *Generation*. Wee haue *Harmonies* which you haue not, of *Quarter-Sounds*, and lesser *Slides of Sounds*. Diuerse *Instruments of Musick* likewise to you vnknowne, some sweeter then any you haue; [...] Wee haue certaine *Helps*, which sett to the *Eare* doe further the *Hearing* greatly. Wee haue also diuerse, *Strange* and *Artificiall Eccho's*, *Reflecting* the *Voice* many times, and as it were *Tossing* it: And some that giue back the *Voice Lowder* then it came; some *Shriller*, and some *Deeper*; Yea some rendring the *Voice*, *Differing* in the *Letters* or *Articulate Sound*, from that they receyue. Wee haue also meanes to conuey *Sounds* in *Trunks* and *Pipes*, in strange *Lines*, and *Distances*. (F3r).⁸

Like the otacousticon, these 'certaine *Helps*, which [...] further the *Hearing* greatly' are the imagined technology of, in the case of Bensalem, an imagined country. The *New Atlantis* becomes what Doina-Cristina Rusu & Christoph Lüthy have called a 'paper laboratory', a space for experimentation.⁹ It is a place for Bacon to play with sounds which are not only novel in their pitch or volume, but in the way they can be transmitted 'in strange Lines'.

The playhouse too is a laboratory. The early modern stage is also a site at which we can investigate the technology of sound. In Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589), a sonic experiment is staged, as Bacon constructs a brass head which appears to speak of its

6 For a reading of *Epicoene* which also explores Bacon's sonic theories, see: Briony Frost, "O'erwhelmed with Noise": Sound-Houses and Sonic Experiments in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene*, *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 35.4 (2017), 541-574.

7 Penelope Gouk, 'Music in Francis Bacon's Natural Philosophy', *Number to Sound: The Musical Way to the Scientific Revolution*, ed. Paolo Gozza (London: Kluwer Academic, 2000), University of Western Ontario Series in Philosophy of Science, v. 64. 135-152. See also Penelope Gouk, *Music, science and natural magic in seventeenth-century England*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

8 'New Atlantis' in Francis Bacon, *Sylva sylvarum: or A naturall historie In ten centuries*. (London: W. Lee, 1626).

9 Doina-Cristina Rusu & Christoph Lüthy, 'Extracts from a paper laboratory: the nature of Francis Bacon's *Sylva sylvarum*', *Intellectual History Review*, 27.2 (2017), 171-202.

own volition: ‘With this a great noise./The Head speakes.’ (G2v).¹⁰ The figure of the automaton represents, to borrow a phrase from Steven Connor, ‘The drive to give visibility to the invisible voice’.¹¹ Here, voice, which by any early modern definition belongs to humans alone (see chapter three), is disassociated from a human source as it speaks its three simple lines. ‘Time is’, ‘Time was’ and ‘Time is past’ (G2v) ring out like a clock or church bell to chime the passage of time, even as Friar Bacon sleeps through its speech. Despite his efforts, Bacon does not hear the almost human voice; only the noise of the head’s destruction by a mystical hand wakes the sleeping friar. The final words spoken by the head are accompanied by ‘thunder and lightning, as in great choller’ (G3r), which, as chapter one has shown, clearly links the destruction of the head with demonic action: ‘*Heere the Head speakes and a lightning flasheth forth, and a hand appeares that breaketh down the Head with a hammer.*’ (G2v). The sheer noise of the effect jars against the short monosyllables of the speaking head.

The fact that the sound effect of the talking head was most likely performed by an actor only adds to the uncanny resemblance between the automaton’s voice and a living voice. The actor’s voice was most likely to have been projected from under the stage, in the “hell” space, making the voice otherworldly simply through its spatial origin within the theatre. While also associated with the prose source for Greene’s play, the woodcut printed on the title page of *Friar Bacon* in its 1630 edition comes to reflect this multiplicity of sonic locations, as the head’s famous three pronouncements each sound out in different directions.¹² It is for an auditor to choose whether this “acousmatic” voice is to be understood as a devilish voice or as the voice of a complicated machine (see chapter two).

10 Robert Greene, *The honorable historie of frier Bacon, and frier Bongay* (London: [Adam Islip] for Edward White, 1594).

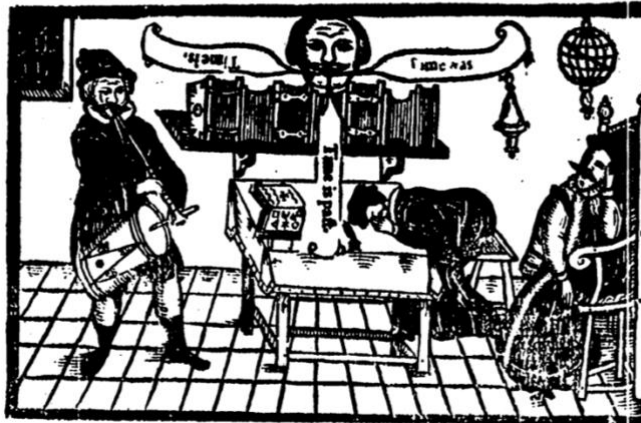
11 Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (OUP: 2000), 353.

12 Robert Greene, *The honorable historie of Frier Bacon, and Frier Bongay* (London: Elizabeth Allde, 1630). The woodcut is also found in *The famous historie of Fryer Bacon* (London: E[dward] A[l]lde] for Francis Groue, 1629).

THE HONORABLE HISTORIE OF FRIER BACON, AND FRIER BONGAT.

As it was lately plaid by the Prince Palatine his Servants.

Made by Robert Greene, Master of Arts.



LONDON,
Printed by ELIZABETH ALDE dwelling
neere Christ-Church. 1630.

Robert Greene, *The honorable historie of Frier Bacon, and Frier Bongay* (London: Elizabeth Alde, 1630), A1r.

As Richard Levin has noted, the figure at the left of the woodcut (who resembles customary renderings of Tarlton) adds his own sounds to the scene, by playing drum and tabor.¹³ The woodcut shows sound upon sound, from all directions, and the inventor of this sound, asleep.

Like Friar Bacon, Greene and his fellow playwrights strove for greater and more inventive sounds. They also sought to perfect and control them. In *Epicoene* (1610), Morose uses a speaking tube that might be used to reach more distant sounds (not unlike the otacousticon). Yet, here it is repurposed as a means of filtering sounds. The speaking tube mirrors the anatomy of the ear itself; unable to trust to his own ears, Morose uses a fashioned extension of the ear canal as a means of controlling the sound that enters his body.

¹³ Richard Levin, 'Tarlton in the *Famous History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*,' *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, 12 (1999), 84-98.

Theoretically, the tube channels the disparate sounds spread through the air and passes them into the ear, acting as a kind of port or door. The speaking tube as a prop demonstrates the mechanics of hearing onstage; the audience can see the process, as we watch the act of listening. Yet, the tube has more than anatomical connotations. Writing of early modern deafness, Emily Cockayne suggests that even by the 1720s (more than a century after *Epicoene* was first performed) such “ear-spectacles” would have been ‘beyond the means of all but the wealthy.’¹⁴ Morose uses his wealth to control the sound around him; he also uses his power to misuse another communication aide intended for those with impaired hearing or speech. Morose’s servant must use a form of sign language dictated by his master: ‘But with your leg, your answer, unless it be otherwise’ (II.i.11-12). The art of sign language, discussed by Plato and expounded by John Bulwer in *Chirologia* (1644), is both parodied (shaking the leg is a crude indicator of meaning when compared to complex hand and finger gestures) and misappropriated.¹⁵ Like the speaking tube used by Morose to lessen sound rather than improve it, Mute’s sign language is used to limit rather than allow communication. Morose uses sound technology not to support his own body, but to control the bodies of others.

What emerges from early modern accounts of sound, and from the sound effects of the early modern stage in particular, is a desire to hear more. Chapter One of this thesis suggested a continual trend of shifting and reinventing soundbites on the early modern stage, allowing sound to emerge as a protean theatrical unit. Chapter Two concentrated on off-stage and unseen sounds, sounds just beyond the limits of comprehension. It suggested that to deny audiences knowledge of the source of a sound only created greater interest in that sound. Chapter Three showed Jonson’s determination to understand and fix the meaning of sound,

¹⁴ Emily Cockayne, ‘Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England’, *The Historical Journal*, 46.3 (Sep. 2003), 499.

¹⁵ See Plato, *Cratylus*: ‘Answer me this question: If we had no voice or tongue, and wished to make things clear to one another, should we not try, as dumb people actually do, to make signs with our hands and head and person generally?’ *Plato IV*, translated by H.N. Fowler (MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 133. See also John Bulwer, *Chirologia: or The naturall language of the hand*: (London: Tho. Harper for R Whitaker, 1644).

even while acknowledging the possibilities of bodily sound as well as the instrumental. It would, after all, be two centuries before the invention of the stethoscope would allow unimagined access to the internal sounds of the body, but the body itself could still be heard. We hear as much in Sharpham's *Cupid's Whirligig* (1607), in which Peg and Nan discuss the sound of a heart:

Peg. See, see how a lookes, doe you not perceiue his heart beate hither?

Nan. I, for all the world like the Denmarke Drummer. (D1r).¹⁶

The heart becomes an instrument, sounding out audibly from another body. Jonson strained to hear the bodily mechanisms of sound, as sound penetrates the ear and emerges from the lungs. In Chapter Four, Shakespeare was shown to construct the lavish soundscapes of a magical island and strain to capture the harmony of heavenly spheres which remain just beyond the reach of the human ear. Audiences too must strain to unpack the truth of his soundscapes from the rhetoric in which they are presented. Together, these chapters suggest that early modern playwrights were conscious simultaneously of the material practicalities of producing sound effects and of sound's inherent immateriality and intangibility.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the otacousticon would be repurposed as shorthand for both a ludicrous invention and for the act of eavesdropping or overhearing sound. In 1621, Robert Burton considered what the philosopher Democritus might say if faced with

some rare perspective glasse, or *Otacousticon*, which might so multiply *species*, that a man might heare and see all at once, Cuckolds hornes, forgeries of Alcumists, the Philosophers stone, &c. and all those workes of darknesse, foolish vowes, hopes, feares, and wishes, what a deale of laughter would it haue afforded? (C4r).¹⁷

The otacousticon is listed amongst 'forgeries' and 'foolish vowes': the possibility of hearing beyond the limits of the human ear is no more plausible than the philosopher's stone. In 1630, the device was a throw-away joke in Thomas Randolph's 'strange show', *The*

¹⁶ Edward Sharpham, *Cupids whirligig* (London: E. Alde for Arthur Iohnson, 1607).

¹⁷ Robert Burton, *The anatomy of melancholy what it is* (1621).

Conceited Pedler. Beside ‘foxe furre’ hats for sophisters, the pedlar has a nightcap bequeathed by Actaeon, to which ‘*Albumazers Otacousticon* was but a Chamberpot in comparison’ (F1v).¹⁸ Actaeon’s horns (gained through his transformation into a stag at the hands of Diana) are set beside ass’s ears: the joke here is largely about outrageous headware (including cuckold’s horns), but the conflation between Actaeon and Albumazar may contain a second sonic pun. Stags were often used as a pictorial representation of the sense of hearing; Actaeon’s horns could outshine the otacousticon in their ability to pick up distant sound.¹⁹

The otacousticon is heard again, as the ‘out-lying Eares, and the *Otacousticon* of the Spirit’ through which a plot is overheard in John Cleveland’s *The character of a London diurnall* (1644).²⁰ It is used as a metaphor for boasting (that ‘*Otacousticon*,/That would *demonstrate* his new ta’ne degree’) in Erastophil’s *An apology of lovers* (1651).²¹ In a sermon given by William Bell in 1661, the omnipresence of God is held against the limitations of humans, who must delegate and depend upon one another to keep the rule of law, and must ‘*hear by the Otacousticon of others ears*’ (B4r).²² And in 1683, the meme shifts back towards both the sonic innovation – the ‘paper laboratory’ – of Albumazar’s invention, and the mystical or even magical associations of so outlandish an object as the otacousticon. The witches of Robert Dixon’s *Canidia* (1683) recall the instrument amongst a list of now nostalgic treasures:

Fusil Marble, Glass malleable,
Aurum Potable and Friable;
The Rare Inventions that are lost,
We recover without cost.
Otacousticon’s Screws and Springs;
Automaton’s Self-moving Gins:

¹⁸ Thomas Randolph, *Aristippus, or, The Ioviall philosopher presented in a priuate shew: to which is added, The conceited pedler*. (London: Robert Allot, 1630).

¹⁹ Steven Connor, ‘The Menagerie of the Senses’, *The Senses and Society*, 1.1 (2006), 6.

²⁰ John Cleveland, *The character of a London diurnall* ([London]:1644), A2v.

²¹ Erastophil, *An apology for lovers, or, A discourse of the antiquity and lawfulnessse of love by Erastophil, no proselyte, but a native of that religion*. (London: 1651)

²² William Bell, *City security stated in a sermon preached at St. Pauls August 11th, 1661* (London: John Baker, 1661).

The Oil of Everlasting Lamps,
The Art of killing, killing Damps.

(D4r).²³

Like the automaton's 'self-moving gins' (we might think of the brass head in Greene's *Friar Bacon*), the otacousticon is at once advanced and uncanny.²⁴ Yet, for all the magical properties of sound that it promises, the otacousticon remains unrealised, more at home in mythology and magic than in the practicalities of studying and expanding the scope of sound.

After all, even in *Albumazar*, the device is not quite finished:

Pan. A Cousticon?

Why 'tis a paire of Asses eares, and large ones.

Ron. True: for in such a forme the great *Albumazar*
Hath fram'd it purposely, as fit'st receiuers
Of sounds, as spectacles like eyes for sight.

Pan. What gold will buy't?

Ro. Il'e selt you when 'tis finish't:
As yet the Epiglottis is vnperfect.

Pan. 'Soone as you can, and here's ten crownes in earnest. (B4v-C1r).

The promise of sound can be offered only with a down payment, not only of the cost of a new hearing device, or the cost of a seat at the Globe, but also of the intellectual payment required of audiences, to filter, interpret, and even construct sounds. 'Il'e selt you when 'tis finish't,' Ronca promises, but, like the otacousticon, the search for sound is never really completed.

This thesis acknowledges the work of early modern playwrights to negotiate the limits of sound. It also acknowledges the role of an audience, in mapping soundbites and in constructing phonographic soundscapes. This thesis offers a far more extended engagement with the sounds of the early modern stage than has so far been heard; and it encourages audiences of early modern drama to listen *between* its dialogue. It also encourages readers of

²³ Robert Dixon, *Canidia, Or The Witches. A Rhapsody. In Five Parts*. (London: S. Roycroft, for Robert Clavell, 1683).

²⁴ For more on the head as automaton, see: Todd Andrew Borlik, "'More than Art': Clockwork Automata, the Extemporizing Actor, and the Brazen Head in *Friar Bacon* and *Friar Bungay*' in *Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity: The Automaton in English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Wendy Beth Hyman (Ashgate: Farnham, 2011), 129-144.

early modern drama to “hear” sound on the page. Admiring the technical advancements of sound, shown on stage before Cambridge scholars and before the king himself, the hoodwinked Pandolfo waxes lyrical, praising the skill of Albumazar:

As thou respects thy life, looke to thy tongue,
Albumazar has an *Otacousticon*.
Bee silent, reuerent, and admire his skill,
See what a promising countenance appears:
Stand still and wonder, wonder and stand still. (C1v).

To return to the call to listen with which thesis began, completing what Smith would call the O of sound, Pandolfo’s wide-eyed instruction can be replaced with a wide-eared one. Pandolfo demands wonder, and wonder is no doubt part of the imaginative, imaginary sonic world of the early modern stage: but as listeners we are asked to do more than simply ‘Bee silent, reverent, and admire.’ We can ‘Stand still and wonder, wonder and stand still’; but we can also search for sound in unexpected places, and see what promise appears.

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