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Speak'st, Art Sound: The Material Voice in Early Modern England

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"SPEAK'ST, ART SOUND": THE MATERIAL VOICE IN EARLY MODERN

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that early moderns conceived of speech as a material phenomenon; voice struck out from bodies into environments. Early modern voices thus participate in what sound studies scholars call the soundscape, which I link to current new materialist and ecological theories of network and assemblage. Within this soundscape, I pay special attention to the role of language as a semantic system of meaning. Current ecological criticism takes for granted the utter "flatness" of ontology, and as such discards the question of human language so central to previous deconstructive and discursive scholarship. My thesis attempts to account for the role of human language in ecological thought by turning to the early modern voice, which blended sonic and semiotic properties. I contend that the early seventeenth century was a liminal moment in the history of language, as it had not yet lost its sonic properties nor yet fully become textualized and representational. Thus, early modern speech embedded the human in its environmental context, without separating it as a discrete or superior entity. The first chapter, on *King Lear*, situates the early modern voice in the context of new materialist theory, establishing a "posthuman cosmography" in which humans have no pride of place. The next two chapters refine and even challenge the writ-large generality of their predecessor. The second chapter, on *The Alchemist*, zooms in to the level of the individual, to explore what life might be like for a single person inside this buzzing network. The third chapter grinds an even finer grain, focusing on both the gendered voice and its relation to technological prosthesis in *The Duchess of Malfi*.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who could have persuaded me otherwise, but never did. This is for you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION(S)

"Open your ears, for which of you will stop/The vent of hearing when Rumor speaks?"

– Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*

"The voice is sound, not speech. But speech constitutes its essential destination. What is therefore at stake in any inquiry into the ontology of the voice – where uniqueness and relationality come to the fore – is a rethinking, without metaphysical prejudices, of this destination."

– Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice*

According to Shakespeare, if I had spoken this sentence to you, you would have had no choice but to listen. Ears, as "vents" between the body and its surround, fail to block the inrush of the quite literal noise pouring in. *2 Henry IV* begins with a striking manifesto from Rumor, a character less personified – it is distinctly inhuman, "painted with many tongues" – than animated, as sound itself. "Making the wind [its] post horse," Rumor proclaims that "Upon my tongues continual slanders ride,/The which in every language I pronounce,/Stuffing the ears of men with false reports" (6-8). Rumor flattens ontology with a steamroller, as its sheer force "in every language" refuses to recognize distinctions among its auditors; all ears are "stuffed" alike. We might ask, though, how can the reports be "false"? What makes a true report if, as Rumor claims, "The posts come tiring on,/And not a man of them brings other news/Than they have heard of me" (37-9)? It seems logical that, if all information is tainted by its material transmission, if many tongues supplant a single one, then purity is a moot point. It may be real, but it is certainly inaccessible. In other words, what are semantics doing in this material world?

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Through such vexed enjambment, Rumor poses the question that animates this study: what is the difference between a voice and the sound that comprises it?

My hunch is that the answer has changed over time, as I intend my epigraphs to suggest. Shakespeare seems to be telling us that the material always intrudes on the semantic, blocking (if, importantly, not foreclosing entirely) interpretation. These days, of course, we tend to believe the opposite, that words obstruct our access to things. We've lowered an absolute partition between the two; signs can only point, they cannot go. Yet there still exists a privileged category of language in contemporary thought: the voice. Voice retains a magic connection to the raw essence of a person, whose being is expressed in it. Cavarero invokes this paradox, in which our "metaphysical prejudices" both refuse access to a reality beyond the letter *and* make spoken letters a metonym for identity. Her solution is to return to the material as a way to mind the gap; we can distinguish the "uniqueness" of entities and their "relationality" by paying attention to the sounds they make, without denying the possibility for semantic communication in the process. In essence, Cavarero is restoring the early modern conception of sound. I contend that early moderns did not polarize the voice as we do, as either dead language or living essence. Instead, vocal sound was a material entity with a semiotic overlay that *did not* comprise its essential being. Early moderns viewed language as an affordance, a human use of material sound that did not exhaust its potential. Language was a property of, and not a *telos* for, sound. This conception, as we will see, allows us to gain purchase on an especially hairy problem facing contemporary ecocriticism: how to account for specifically human ways of being-in-the-world without separating us ontologically from

our nonhuman chrysalis. To place the early modern voice in this debate, I will first situate it against contemporary ideas about what speech is, and its relation to self.

On one hand, voice is our synecdoche of choice for identity and agency. "Free speech," "speaking truth to power," "the concert of voices" – liberation is imagined as a spoken password granting entry into the coterie of free selves. But, the linear progressivism of this account overlooks what Wendy Brown has called "the regulatory potential of speaking ourselves" (83). Does speech manifest a latent identity? Or, by contrast, can voice be a kind of constitutive exposure? One need think only of Foucault's history of madness, in which the subject is made to confess his "crimes," to see the pitfalls of identitarian speech. As he puts it, "psychoanalysis doubled the absolute observation of the watcher with the endless monologue of the person watched – thus preserving the old asylum structure of non-reciprocal observation but balancing it, in a non-symmetrical reciprocity, by the new structure of language without response" (250-1). Speech, far from liberating the marginalized subject, renders her accountable to power, as her doctor-priest pathologizes the words into a transgression that merits discipline.[1] In this case, speech does not express, it binds.

At the opposite pole, we find Derrida's critique of logocentrism, the privileging of spoken over written word – the original (pun optional) deconstructed binary. Briefly, Derrida claims that speech has been classically associated with what he calls presence, meaning the pure association of words with the speaker producing them. This is for two reasons: time and space. The words emanate from a living body, and do not escape the moment – what Derrida elsewhere calls the "context," meaning both the temporal immediacy and the speaker's intention – of their origin:

> When I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that *I hear myself at the same time* that I speak. The signifier, animated by my breath and by the meaning-intention…is in absolute proximity to me. The living act, the life-giving act, the *Lebendigkeit*, which animates the body of the signifier and transforms it into a meaningful expression, the soul of language, seems not to separate itself from itself, from its own self-presence. It does not risk death in the body of a signifier that is given over to the world and the visibility of space. (497)

"Self-presence" is here a spatial and temporal discreteness, in which the spoken word never drifts beyond the speaker, who instantly hears her own words in a feedback loop that ensures meaning and truth by virtue of its purity, uncontaminated by "the world." But, even by thinking "the world" I have broken the spell. Since speech's presence draws force only from its radical separation from everything else, the very interrelation of that binary paradoxically ushers the world into the speech act itself, canceling it from within. In his words, "But this pure difference, which constitutes the self-presence of the living present, introduces into self-presence from the beginning all the impurity putatively excluded from it. The living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself" (501). Presence is only present through its "difference" from everything else, is "constituted" as itself by *not being* the world, rendering its claims for purity merely relative. It isn't that speech, after leaving the body, encounters dirt "out there" – a deaf recipient, ambient noise, etc. – that clouds its reception. Rather, speech is always-already multiple, sullied, or, I would add, ecological.

Derrida's other major critique of presence has to do with time – all speech takes place in time, phenomenologically, and gestures both forward and backward, to different contexts than the one that produced it.[2] Taken together, these ideas render the speech act non-self-present:

> Through empirical variations of tone, voice, etc., possibly of a certain accent, for example, we must be able to recognize the identity, roughly speaking, of a

speaking form…this unity of the speaking form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its 'referent,' which is self-evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or of the intention of actual signification, as well as of all intention of present communication…every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say, as we have seen, the nonpresent *remainder* of a differential mark cut off from its putative 'production' or origin (10)

All writing – speech included, which for the reasons given here Derrida refuses to separate – is defined by its "iterability," an amorous reference both to past usages and meanings ("contexts"), and to possible repetitions in the future. If I say "I want an apple," the phrase retains no privileged attachment to "me," as you only understand what I mean by having heard others use the same phrase, in different contexts. Communication is thus invariably "citational," a sliding matrix of intra- and inter-reference that creates endless "différance" – the difference of language from itself and its deferral of meaning onto *other* language – unmooring any stable origin on which we might pin identity. In other words, speech is temporal, and time brings difference, while identity is always static.

For all the salience of Derrida's critiques, they rest on the unquestioned assumption that all speakers *want* to communicate, or that they imagine their speech acts as willed volleys of meaning.[3] In effect, by assuming a singular purpose for speech, he gives it the very transhistorical – acontextual, in his words – self-present *telos* he just taught us was impossible. I will devote my chapters here to the argument that, for early moderns, speech was *not* merely semantic. Instead, speech was – alongside rather than prior to its entrance into various symbolic orders, as in the logocentric tradition – a material force, pure vibrational potential that struck out into, and onto, its environment. Such force sharply diverges from J.L. Austin's illocutionary acts, which are practical in that they make something happen, but that thing is still a social rather than a material

effect – if one is passed the salt on request, it's because the auditor knew what the words meant; likewise a marriage, while "literally" enacted through speech, still refers to ("cites," in Derridean parlance) a social institution that authorizes the words to do their thing. Any approach to material speech thus needs to loosen words from their teleological injunction to mean.

Words were not always thought of as representative; as Margreta de Grazia argues, prior to roughly the seventeenth century, most linguistic thinking was done by humanist rhetoricians, for whom "Linguistic virtuosity requires exercise in wielding the material properties of words: their duration as sound when spoken and their extension as marks when written" (233). Spoken word was supposed to *change* reality, rather than obediently reflect it, for the purposes of persuasion. This change was imagined literally, as a sonic unit impacted its surroundings: "a word is a thing in the sixteenth but a nonthing in the seventeenth century. In the domain of rhetoric, whose purpose was persuasion and not representation, a word was permitted to retain its materiality, for it was the source of this power" (234). Even the word "persuasion" encodes this materiality; it can be both verb and noun, an action taken toward another ("I persuade you to like oranges"), and a state that one possesses ("I have a persuasion toward oranges"). The OED tells us that early moderns imagined persuasion as distinctly literal – as when the priest John Palsgrave says "Perswasion sytteth in thy lyppes" – and not inherently linked to human semantics, as in *Twelfth Night* when Antonio says to Viola, "Is't possible that my deserts to you/Can lack persuasion?" (3.4.314-5). The deserts can speak for themselves. Thus, persuasion for early moderns was akin to Sara Ahmed's idea of an "orientation," an embodied, pre-conscious vector that is constantly being reshaped by its

environment. They *had* persuasions, like we have orientations, which turned them toward certain objects, but they could also *be* persuaded, as we can be oriented, toward new ones. Speech was the literal currency of this persuasive economy.[4]

According to de Grazia, burgeoning empirical science in the seventeenth century coupled with religious crisis increasingly recast the manipulation celebrated by rhetoricians as dangerous artifice. As such, attempts sprang up to revive "Adamic" language, the unqualified harmony between word and thing.[5] In 1668, the Royal Society tried to establish a new language that graphically depicts things and thus restores words' organic connections to them, evincing a generalized crisis of signification.[6] That crisis was ongoing twenty years later, when Locke says of persuasive language, "all such words, however put into discourse, according to the right construction of grammatical rules, or the harmony of well-turned periods, do yet amount to nothing but bare sounds" (214). Locke is talking about "abuses," implying a correct use of words that would restore their plenary connection to things, and indeed he proceeds to urge a pared-down, literal rhetoric: "a man shall take care *to use no word without a signification*, no name without an idea for which he makes it stand" (215). Moreover, Locke distinctly separates matter and meaning. Grammar and syntax, as formal elements of speech, are linked to sound, a kind of brute, meretricious materiality that obscures the "real" content within.

If words are thus things in one century and pesky nonthings in the next, I'm interested in partial thing-ness, the liminal space between the two, when conflicting ideas about how words worked productively mingled the material and semantic qualities of speech. For that reason, I have chosen the first decade (or so) of the seventeenth century (the three plays I read were first performed in 1606, 1610, and 1614) as a focal point. If,

as James Bono asserts, "Renaissance cultural narratives negotiate between the poles of Piconian exultation of man's abilities and Lutheran insistence upon man's limitations," and "Such narratives inculcate views of language that, to varying degrees, regard humans as alternately enabled or disabled by words" (57), these plays depict a tangled skein of linguistic ability, in which speech is used by but not inherently human, interpretable yet distinctly tactile. I write not to resolve but to expand this "polar negotiation," by examining the ways material speech functioned in a world becoming increasingly, but not yet fully, visual and textual.

Intriguingly, the words/things tango in the early seventeenth century finds an echo in the current climate of early modern scholarship; arguably the two "hottest" subfields are the nonhuman and philological turns, both of whose central positions are more or less explicit reactions to the other. On one hand, scholars of the nonhuman – drawing broadly on ecocritical, new materialist, and posthumanist theories – attempt to bypass radical constructivism to better address ecological crisis; it's hard to call an earthquake a grapheme. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost make this pivot clear: "Everywhere we look…we are witnessing scattered but insistent demands for more materialist modes of analysis…We interpret such developments as signs that the more textual approaches associated with the so-called cultural turn are increasingly being deemed inadequate for understanding contemporary society" (2-3). On the other hand, a growing cadre of early modern scholars are returning to the word as the indivisible unit of lived experience. Many of these follow in the wake of Roland Greene's seminal *Five Words*, in which he tells the story of the Renaissance in (what else?) five colloquial words. He calls this an "elemental approach," which tries "not to retell the history of humanism in intellectual,

cultural, or social terms but to capture the elusive character of the movement at the cellular level, where its values and contradictions are embodied in semantics" (3). "Elemental, cellular": this is materialist rhetoric, but with words instead of matter at the core of being. He juxtaposes traditional scholarship – dealing in macro "discourses" – with his own approach, almost a linguistic phenomenology, to single words used by ordinary people. Greene seeks reality *through* the letter, culling the realist approach of materialist theories without endorsing their central claim that ontology precedes linguistics. This approach is taken up by Jeffrey Masten (directly citing Greene as a forerunner), who argues that queer theory should return to philology out of necessity: "There can be no nuanced cultural history of early modern sex and gender without spelling out its terms – for what alternatives of historical access do we have? Comprehension of sex will require philology."[7] Masten takes as self-evident the surprising claim that, to paraphrase Philip Larkin, where can we live but words? Again we detect, however implicit, the rebuke to materialist theories that claim it's possible to talk about reality without linguistic interference. These two groups of scholars – *res* and *verba* – are engaged in classic dialectic, but instead of synthesizing the two positions, or claiming one over the other, I wish to embrace the tension between them as *itself* an accurate reflection of the historical moment I've chosen. And, indeed, our own: if earthquakes aren't graphemes, neither can we think about earthquakes without accounting for the graphemic tint on our lenses.

1. The Chapters

  I turn now to an overview of the chapters, the rationales for which make plain the stakes of this argument. Broadly conceived, I imagine my work to rethink the body of

theory collectively referred to as the "new materialism(s)," by pointing to the ways early

modern texts allow us to address some of the biggest critiques made against it. The first

chapter, on *King Lear*, will situate the early modern voice in the context of new

materialist theory, establishing the terms of what Karen Raber calls a "posthuman

cosmography," in which humans have no pride of place.[8] The next two chapters refine

and even challenge the writ-large generality of their predecessor. The second chapter, on

The Alchemist, zooms in to the level of the individual, to explore what life might be like

for a single person inside this buzzing network. The third chapter grinds an even finer

grain, focusing on both the gendered voice and its relation to technological prosthesis in

The Duchess of Malfi. Seen from above, the chapters winnow into a nest, each resolving

problems raised in the last by descending into a lower, tighter orbital:

<div align="center">

Chapter 1: Posthuman Collective
Chapter 2: The Individual
Chapter 3: Gender

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The first chapter sketches the materially-networked voice through the example of

earthquakes, understood by early moderns as the earth's roar, forceful enough to

foreclose the spatial and categorical distinctions necessary to explain its causes by ocular

means. I read various responses to England's 1580 earthquake – and *King Lear* I count

among them – to argue for the radical ontological equivalence established by loud sound,

culminating in Edgar's vocal redemption of his blind father. In so doing I unearth a

counter-discourse of sonic community at the very moment modern scholars contend the

eye ousts the ear as arch-sense, a byword for the empirical reason anchoring subjective

consciousness. This chapter does much of the historical heavy-lifting, shading in the brief

outline made here by establishing a framework for understanding sound as an almost

tactile force in early modern anatomical works. I also chart the concomitant rise of visual

culture, against which a trace of egalitarian, extrahuman orality lingers.

While the chapter primarily uses posthumanist theory to ground the materiality of

sound, an analogue can be found in what Roland Barthes calls "the grain" of the voice,

the problems with which will invite the second chapter. As Barthes puts it,

> The 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it
> performs. If I perceive the 'grain' in a piece of music and accord this 'grain' a
> theoretical value…I inevitably set up a new scheme of evaluation" which is "in no
> way 'subjective' (it is not the psychological 'subject' in me who is listening; the
> climactic pleasure hoped for is not going to reinforce – to express – that subject,
> but, on the contrary, to lose it) (509)

Importantly, the "grain" isn't sheer bodily force, as he locates it in *music*, at what he calls

"the very precise space (genre) of the encounter between a language and a voice" (505).

The Barthian grain is thus more than raw sound; it is the interplay between sound's

material and semantic valences. This is why it attends "voice," and not sound per se, and

is thus germane to a historical moment in which an absolute partition between materiality

and textuality had yet to descend. Although, as he claims, the grain transcends

interpretation, toward a pure Sontagian "erotics of art" (14), we note that in order to

experience this erotic pleasure one must abandon the very "self" that would enjoy it. Here

Barthes invokes *jouissance*, the psychoanalytic drive toward the pure ecstasy that exists

beyond the chain of signifiers, a kind of annihilating negation.[9] A double problem

emerges. First, the very notion of an utterly impersonal theory is a contradiction in terms;

pure dissolution renders accounts of it both irrelevant and, worse (better?), impossible.

Second, it ignores the fact that bodies will invariably inflect voices differently; a single

"grain" supplants a variegated beach. This non-specificity drives Adriana Cavarero's

critique of Barthes: "Although [the grain] gets linked to deep drives and to the vitality of

breath, and although it is seen as subverting or destabilizing the codes of language, the voice still remains a voice in general" (528). Language may not be anyone's in particular, but when animated as voice always stems from singular bodies, affording us a vantage from which to describe the ways specific entities take specific actions with specific effects on others, human and non.

This action-focus gains urgency in the face of recent ecological criticism, which tends to vaunt passivity as the only response to a churning cosmos that swallows the human whole. For example, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert decry "traditional environmental history" for its urgings to humans to help repair the damage they've caused: "To think that the world is ours to ruin or to save are two expressions of the same hubris" (6). Instead, they use Empedocles's ancient elemental theory of the cosmos to naturalize disaster as simply the way things are: "In the wake of tsunamis, earthquakes, and superstorms we know all too well elemental discord, battle, and strife (the work of neikos). In the face of ruin, what invitations do the elements extend?" (6). The threat here is that, in dissolving the human into gooey strife, questions of responsibility and of action go with us. By invoking Empedocles they eclipse the human causes of the Anthropocene, not unlike other Greek myths (*The Republic*'s metals allegory, for example) which anchor in "nature" a specific ideology. Indeed, the grand tone here betrays a hint of masochism, the guilt of complicity in ecological destruction, for which the only cure is a self-canceling fatalism that belies the point of even writing it down. Such doffing of human form also clearly gives pleasure, sheer unmeaning, and un-responsible, pleasure – a Barthian *jouissance*, perhaps?[10] Caverero's critique is again applicable, as is Valerie Traub's timely reminder that "As a radical divestiture of the self, *jouissance* is opposed

to…ego- and identity-affirming gestures" (29). To talk of dissolution is to stop talking. Cohen and Duckert are thus more fiddling Nero than lyrical Orpheus, dancing us into the dark instead of filling a water bucket.

Daniel Stout has recently taken Levi Bryant to task for a similar failure to consider the problem of action, which for Stout rests on the ability to *isolate* individual entities in order to trace their specific doings:

> No matter how intensively we remind ourselves, as Bryant thinks we should, 'that humans occupy no privileged place within being' and 'that objects of all sorts and at all scales are on equal ontological footing,' there's no way to avoid stepping on the spirit of that recognition as soon as we start to describe, as Bryant also thinks we should, the actual 'collectives and entanglements' that exist 'between a variety of different temporal and spatial scales.' Ontology may be flat; descriptions, however various, never are. (175)

Graham Harman makes a related point, describing Latourian actor-network theory as too chameleonic for practical use: "by overidentifying an actor with its sum total of relations in any instant, ANT does not really allow for the existence of 'the same' object over time. In the strict sense, Latourian actors…last only for an instant, and are replaced in the following instant by a similar but not identical actor" (105). Ecological criticism needs to account for *my* unique impact on the planet, just as it does that of my trash, my cat, or my ideas. Specificity that yet is not *identity* is the name of the game.[11] Stout's designations and Harman's withdrawn essences ultimately point to the same problem: a flat ontology of promiscuous and aleatory actors turns everything into soup. While that may deal the killing blow to liberal humanism (isn't it dead yet?), at this point we arguably need less paranoid critique and more reparative action – to paraphrase Eve Sedgwick, "How TV-starved would someone have to be to not know that the earth is in trouble, or that humanity is a toxic construct, or that we're all made of matter?"[12] As such, the remaining

chapters focus on individual humans, to move toward a sonic praxis of engagement with the nonhuman that affords a kind of legible specificity to the actors involved – a differential equation or exploded-view of speech acts – that also does not *de facto* reify the human as a privileged user of sound, or its linguistic yield.

In this spirit, my second chapter suggests that early modern England was producing a slew of new soundscapes that allowed for fresh conceptions of the human individual, as a kind of sonic node. I argue that in Jonson's *The Alchemist*, newly-metropolitan London concentrates a din that overwhelms each character's attempt to distinguish him or herself by visually-legible signs of identity. In response, Face, Doll, and Subtle, the "alchemists," cheat their marks through a series of collaborative vocal disguises and improvised responses to knocks at the door of their master's house. These fleeting sonic poses become makeshift subject positions from which to conduct the orchestra of people flowing through the house, effective precisely due to their short duration and sensitivity to the circuitry of sound. Thus, while most scholarship on London's rapidly expanding cityscape charts the crises of individuality produced by sensory overload, I read those crises instead as opportunities.

Finally, the third chapter narrows the aperture yet further, by considering the problem of gender. This is another notorious blind spot for new materialist theory – doesn't saying "it's all just matter" amount to the same thing as saying "it's all just language," for which the deconstructionists were (rightly) critiqued for ignoring political reality?[13] Jennifer Munroe has pointed to the dangers of "speaking for": a seemingly egalitarian "flat ontology" not only ignores the lived experience of patriarchy (among other differentiations) but renders women-made-objects subject to the puppeteering

voices of others, both within and without the texts. Again, we're back to Stout and

Harman: the problem is specificity. On a related note, others have asked if we can just

abandon humanism if it was never complete in the first place. How much privilege does it

take to divest ourselves of liberal autonomy when that autonomy has never been enjoyed

by people of color, or queer people, or women?[14] Rosi Braidotti notes humanism's vexed

history, "Complicitous with genocides and crimes on the one hand, supportive of

enormous hopes and aspirations to freedom on the other" (16). Sure, "humanism" as

conceived always meant white male European humanism,[15] but does that stop us from

expanding its conception of self outward? Well, *yes*, we might say, because humanism

encodes a fundamental anthropocentrism that has killed the planet. But, as Joseph

Campana and Scott Maisano show, such exultant autonomy is actually *Enlightenment*

humanism, unfairly cathected backward onto the "straw Vitruvian man" of the

Renaissance.[16] The original humanism, far from unilaterally championing self-definition,

concerned the rediscovery of classical texts, which offered various, even conflicting,

cosmological models; Kenneth Gouwens notes that "if the revival of antiquity

bequeathed to Renaissance intellectuals the building blocks for their own master

narratives, it also equipped them with some powerful tools and techniques for

dismantling and arguably at times transcending those very narratives" (51). Such a

syncretic, collage effect opens a conceptual space for the lived specificity of categories

like gender, race, and sexuality to be charted, again without uncritically posing the human

as the motive counterpart to material dross. This specificity is best revealed through

affinities that certain kinds of humans shared with certain nonhuman objects or entities.[17]

 As such, the third chapter traces an association between early modern women,

voice, and technology, crystallized in the echo. I argue that early moderns understood echoes as *technological* phenomena: voices bounce off a nonhuman resonator to reverberate in new contexts. While nothing ties women inherently to such mediated sound, they – from Ovid's myth on – were disproportionately troped with echoic sound as a kind of dissembling artifice, thus indexing male anxieties about control of truth and origin. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, female speech escapes male control through technological projection beyond the manageable body. While most critics claim the Duchess roots a feminist challenge to patriarchy in bodily autonomy, only to lose it after her murder, I argue she is from the beginning an echoic character, drawing power by *distributing* self into surroundings – husband, classical precedent, hearsay, even nonhuman matter like stones. This distribution is always linked to the portability of speech. Throughout, echoic sound finds kinship with that other great Renaissance artificer: the theater. Readers will have noticed that this project exclusively focuses on drama, a conceit thematized directly here. Staged sound overlays the material and the semantic, as both real and representational. It is thus always echoic, a literal version of Derrida's "citational" writing.

Throughout I try to channel the collage aesthetics of Renaissance humanism in my invitations to thinkers from many critical, historical, and philosophical positions to help make this case. While this may seem slapdash alchemy, or worse, postmodern pastiche that cherrypicks glitzy surfaces, I believe that escaping the twin solipsisms of language and matter entails redirecting thought beyond the sedimentation of genre. Bringing disparate traditions together is therefore crucial; it is my purpose here, after all, to make introductions. The semantic and the material entwine to tell the story of the early

modern voice, in which, as the old Depeche Mode song goes, "words, like violence,

break the silence."

I. INCONTINENT CONTINENTS: THE ACOUSTIC ECOLOGY OF EARTHQUAKES IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

"In the beginning is the noise; the noise never stops. It is our apperception of chaos, our apprehension of disorder, our only link to the scattered distribution of things. Hearing is our heroic opening to trouble and diffusion"

– Michel Serres, *The Parasite*

Let's follow Serres through these words. Reframing the Genesis account where God's spoken fiat tames the cosmic void, Serres recasts "noise" as a democratic agent, upsetting inside and outside, there and here, our divinely-ordained human claims to dominion and distance. To hear is to passively "open" to "scattered distribution," to become "heroic" precisely by becoming nothing at all, a conduit for heteroglossic Otherness. To hear is to dwell in a perceptual ecology wherein *things* speak. Inhabiting as we do a postmodern epoch in which, as Rachel Carson has noted, "no birds sing" to unsettle or distract what Fredric Jameson calls "the culture of the image,"[18] the eye has muffled the "noise." This eye spatially partitions human and environment – indeed, *creates* such a thing as environment by rendering it an object *over there* to be perceived. It affords control: one cannot stop one's ears in the same way one may blink or turn away. By contrast, sound plays on the body; its immediacy is *felt* as sound waves rend the air, warping the adamantine lines of separation between inwardness and ambience.

The paradigmatic shift from aural to ocular regimes has been traced to the late-sixteenth century. The classic account by Lucien Febvre claims "The sixteenth century did not see first: it heard and smelled, it sniffed the air and caught sounds. It was only

later, as the seventeenth century was approaching…that *vision* was unleashed in the world of science as it was in the world of physical sensations" (432). Febvre juxtaposes the passive receptivity of "catching sounds" with the violent activity of vision "unleashed."[19] Martin Jay pieces out Febvre's assertion, foregrounding the rediscovery of perspective in Renaissance art as a crucial catalyst for this visual turn: "the medieval assumption of multiple vantage points from which a scene could be painted…was replaced by one, sovereign eye" (54).[20] Again, the potential inclusivity of "multiple viewpoints" gives way to a rigid subject/object demarcation. Moreover, this exempts the body of the subject, whose "view*point* was just that: a monocular, unblinking fixed eye…This assumption led to a visual practice in which the living bodies of both the painter and the viewer were bracketed…in favor of an externalized eye above temporal duration" (54-5). Time and the body, guarantors of contingency and imbrication, are vacated in favor of a panoptic eye spatially outside and thus president over the canvas of static, pliable objects.[21]

This paper turns back the clock, attempting to recuperate the ecological potential of the early modern conception of sound, in order to frame a more inclusive model of environmental thinking than our current ocular regime offers. This requires attentiveness both to the porousness of the human ear, and to the material power of the more-than-human voice. Early modern theories of the voice treat it not only as an almost tactile object emanating from and affecting bodies, but also as an *autonomous* entity that resists singular fixation in any one source. This is imagined less as *dis*embodiment and more as a kind of *trans*embodiment which forges connections across seemingly discrete entities, living and non, offering a potent vehicle for re-thinking the human as always-already

imbricated in its surroundings. As such, I'll pay special attention to the spatiality of sound, its ability to upset notions of depth, orientation, and perspective within what Wes Folkerth, after R. Murray Schafer's famous coinage, calls the "soundscape."[22] In his words, "While we generally experience and therefore regard landscapes as objective entities, as existing 'out there,' the soundscape is more specifically situated at the interface between the 'out there' and the perceiving subject's involvement in its constitution" (15). Sound thus blurs the lines between epistemology and ontology, not naïvely jettisoning the subject entirely, but foregrounding rather the assemblage of bodies that recast space as less a void that precedes action and more a collaborative heterotopia of emergent effects.[23]

Towards this end, I'll focus my analysis around a very particular acoustic phenomenon: the earthquake. Early moderns experienced earthquakes as a kind of forceful speech, a material and auditory exhalation that ruptured their settled ontologies of being, forcing them to reevaluate all sorts of received truths, from the efficacy of representation, to gender hierarchy, even to the very nature of God. Earthquakes rearrange space, shifting bodies and tumbling topography, resisting the reduction of place to mere backdrop. Such a violent and sudden disaster is also *noticeable*, sending tremors through the complacency of human dominion, provoking vehement responses thus fertile for study. And indeed, the material rift often sparks a cultural one; I wish to shake the ocular episteme from its throne by contextualizing it as one option among many, rather than a teleologically superior means of knowing. As such, I imagine this paper as *itself* a kind of earthquake, shaking loose old ways of being-in-the-world from their status as quaint relics. As Foucault described his archaeology of science, "In attempting to uncover

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the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws; and it is the same ground that is once more stirring under our feet" (xxiv). Quite simply, this is quake-speak; Foucault invests the "soil" of seemingly-ossified truth with both sound and fury, a vibrant motion that exhales the trapped vapors of bygone cultural forms.

This paper claims that earthquakes offered early moderns a kind of makeshift sound laboratory, acutely concentrating and amplifying the contemporary struggle between visual and aural regimes. They were experienced first and foremost, I argue, as vocal phenomena, most decidedly in the way spatial distances and partitions – maintained by visual perspective and dissolved by loud, immediate sound – were violently disrupted. Moreover, the extreme trauma earthquakes wrought provoked reactionary attempts to reimpose empirical certainty onto the events, through *visual* practices such as scientific measurement and appeals to textual tradition. The catastrophic failure of these attempts ultimately left no alternative but a vocality reconceived as inclusive and porous, thus staging in spectacular fashion the more gradual elision of the oral, and then reversing its progress. Towards this claim, I'll first contextualize the early modern voice, emphasizing the ways in which its messy materiality troubles notions of individual agency and human primacy. I'll then turn to a pair of texts that parse the 1580 earthquake in England, which will serve as my test case: an eyewitness account by Thomas Churchyard, and Gabriel Harvey's letter to Edmund Spenser. These attempt to corral the roiling chaos of the quake into tidy textual accounts, setting up – and, I insist, collapsing – the eye/ear binary that will prepare us for a reading of *King Lear* as quake-text. There, I argue that Lear's attempt to splice his kingdom literally rends the land, unleashing an all-consuming polis-

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quake that not only accounts for the apocalyptic weather,[24] but also the queasy spatial movements – Lear's pinballing from Goneril to Regan, Cornwall usurping Gloucester's home – and most importantly the utter abnegation of the eye, from Gloucester's "vile jelly" to the absurdity of Lear's attempt to measure himself "Every inch a king." However, these hollow sockets then become the very doors to another kind of perception, the embodied plenitude and communal potential of sound, as Edgar shepherds his blind father to Dover and vocally conjures a cliffside deliverance. Throughout each section, I foreground the un- and re-settling potential of the earthquake, as its voice fissures both topography and taxonomy.

Gina Bloom erects a thoroughly materialist framework for the early modern voice, contending that all manner of sources "represent vocal matter as taking on a variety of forms (breath, seed, and so on) that are alienable from the speaking subject" (3). First, note her phrasing: "vocal *matter*." Voice isn't some ethereal spirit, but a substance, a particulate. To highlight voice's status as "breath" sutures it firmly to an exhaling body, dissipating its metaphorical potential as some sort of animating spirit or unambiguous guarantor of agency. Also, its material status renders it an actant in the sense elaborated by Bruno Latour, "something that acts or which activity is granted to it by others. It implies no special motivation of human individual actors" (7).[25] Finally, emphasis is laid on the air *itself* as packaging medium, a potentially troubling means of transport that inflects and refracts the messages sifting through it. The air is not so much blank void conveniently affording beings their differentiating space, but occupied territory. Bloom is primarily interested in the gendered voice, particularly the potential afforded to women by embracing highly unstable discharges of voice, but my concern is

broader, stressing the equivalence between Bloom's model of the human voice, and its counterparts in larger bodies, namely the earth itself.

It was a Renaissance commonplace that the human body was a microcosm of the universe at large. There are striking similarities between the period's meteorology and its anatomy. Rebecca Totaro notes that "Subject to this macrocosmic system of influence, human bodies largely conformed to the rules governing all sublunary bodies" (191). These "rules" include the need for balance among all constituent elements, and the fundamental fluidity and motion of all bodies, cosmic and local. Earthquakes are thus explicable as eruptions or purges from an earth trying to restore balance, the same way bloodletting might for human illness: "the physiological symptoms of rising heat and ignition that were also believed to give rise to the comets, earthquakes, and thunderbolts of early modern meteorology" (192). "Macrocosmic" traces phenomena *outward* from the human, while the microcosmic model I'm positing decenters the human as locus of understanding, establishing us as a copy of and not a pattern for these larger forces.

English anatomist Helkiah Crooke makes the human-cosmic linkage quite plain in the title of his 1615 treatise on the human body: *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man.*[26] Its explication of the origin of voice stresses the very interdependence of bodies I've been positing:

> the voyce is the Ayre strucken, and a sound is the percussion of one body against another *in* some other. There be therefore three things required to the effecting of a sound, to wit, two seuerall bodyes which doe mutually strike one another, & the ayre in which the purcussion is made, which ayre is beaten and broken betwixt the two bodies (645)

Voice is here what Jane Bennett has called (following Deleuze) an assemblage, "ad-hoc groupings of diverse elements" whose effects are "emergent in that their ability to make

something happen…is distinct from the sum of the vital force of each materiality considered alone" (23-4). Crooke's passage is rife with non-hierarchical interconnection: the larynx must combine with the glottis *inside* the human body to produce sound, which has tangible effects on the air, itself rendered almost solid as it is "beaten and broken" (Figure 1).[27] The aggressive diction is also notable; sound is no polite thing, "striking" in ways that foreclose the critical distance offered by visual phenomena.

Such violence colors not merely the production but the *reception* of voice, as a thoroughly embodied and interdependent activity: "those things which be heard, take a deeper impression in our minds, which is made by the appulsion or arrivall of a reall voyce. But those things which are seene are alwayes intentionally imprinted, & therfore the Act of Seeing is sooner ended and passeth more lightly by the Sense then the Act of Hearing."[28] "Appulsion," the OED tells us, is "a driving against," here explicitly naming the voice *itself* as active entity, forcefully "impressing" the mind in ways the objects of vision cannot, because they are "intentionally imprinted," watered down by the mediating subject. Voice thus becomes less a lazy metonym for individual agency and more a fully autonomous force both requiring and establishing a rich assemblage of bodies in its communicative arc. Finally, note the eye's elision with reading and textuality, "imprinting;" these mediating forms that promise empirical human certainty will recur throughout the following sections. Having sketched the terms by which early moderns think the voice, I'll now turn to some primary texts, to see the ways in which earthquakes are figured as speech acts, and the challenges to human dominion they pose.
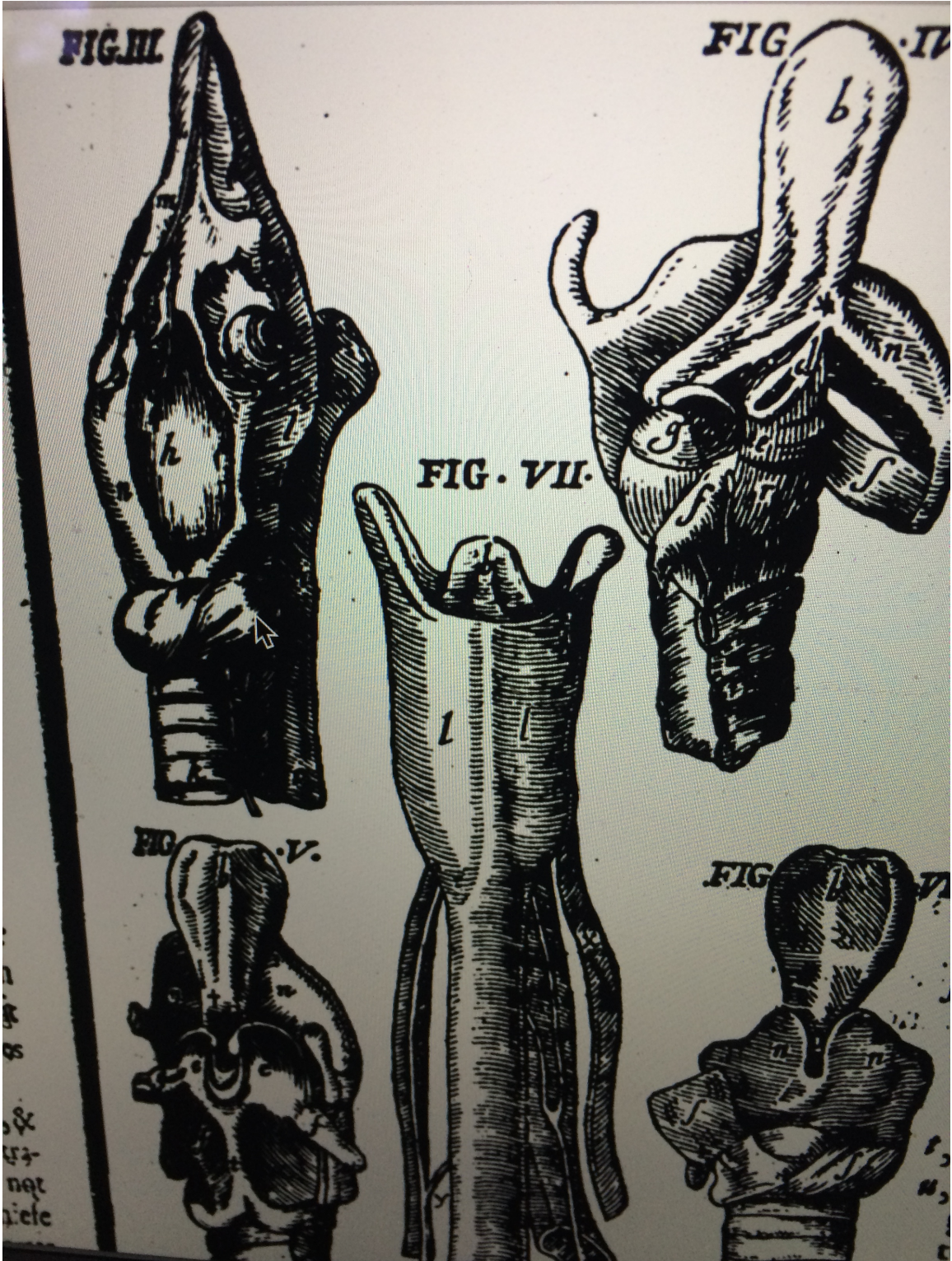
Figure 1. Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, 635: the larynx. Over ten individual parts are labeled, all collaborating in the collective and thoroughly material enterprise that is voice, thus worrying the notion of a singular and discrete "individual" producing it.

1. Tremor: Quake Texts

On the 6th of April, 1580, a positively Biblical earthquake struck England, killing two people in London and registering tremors all the way to the young James I's residence in Scotland. The responses to it, while various, hinge on a single problem: how to slot the quake back into a tidy moral ledger where the sins of man are punished in a one-to-one ratio by God's literally quaking wrath. This task, I argue, is carried out by juxtaposing an account of the quake itself as *spoken word*, with the *written* language humans use to make sense of it, and thus render it safely under control. As Steven Connor has claimed, "In literate or, so to speak, 'sighted' cultures, words are thought of as forms of record, signs capable of capturing bits of the world and of experience, and holding them in place. In aural-oral cultures, words are events" (15). Lurking just beneath the surface of these accounts, however, indeed as their animating premise, is the suspicion that the vocal quake might be extra-human, mere material excess, potentially bearing no inherent link to the sins – and thus the influence – of people. Writing, as I will show, in these accounts is not the passive reflection of an obvious moral truth, but its active *creation*, a desperate toss of the visual regime's normalizing lasso around the noise – and white noise – of the quake's indiscriminate carnage. This section thus extends my critique of the nascent ocular culture by emphasizing both its contingency and its frailty.

Just days after its ravages, Thomas Churchyard penned one of the most well-known verse accounts of the 1580 earthquake. It subscribes to the idea that God is punishing the sins of wicked men by sending the quake, and draws the speech/writing binary discussed above. He justifies the tract by lamenting that "man thinkes no longer on a wonder than a dreame, and makes no more accompt of a merualie, than if a trifle had

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bene *tolde* him. Yet my hope is (good *Reader*) that the wise will be warned" (emphasis mine). Transient hearing and permanent writing are juxtaposed here; reading a written admonition against sin is supposed to impress on the mind in ways an ephemeral spoken account cannot.[29] Of further interest is the bipartite structure of the tract. The account of the earthquake *itself* is in prose, registering only the facts, a chaotic jumble of destruction and fright. Following this, though, is a verse account, which explicitly moralizes the quake as divine punishment for human sin. Such form structures the events, shaping them into a pattern of clear meaning that in themselves they seem to lack. Crucially, this meaning is *human-mediated*, even if it originates from God. The first poem ends, "From him [God] you do good warning take,/and weigh these wordes of me." The implication is that God's speech, ventriloquized through the earthquake, cannot be registered by feeble human bodies, who resort instead to writing as their sole means of comprehension.[30]

The problem here is that Churchyard's attempt to art-ificially suture meaning onto chaos is belated; it can only happen *after* the fact, and offers nothing in the way of explaining the event, or repairing the damage. In terms of the actual representation of the quake, the account falters to figure anything at all. It records that "the Abbey Church at Westminster was therewith so shaken, that one of the Pinacles of the same, loste above one foote oh his toppe…Also the steeple in the Pallace so shoke, that the bel of the great Clocke sounded therewith, as though it hadden bene striken with some tamer." The immediate impulse is to wrangle these events into a human-centered metaphor: the church falling must signal the sin of its congregation, the palace's destruction some political judgment. But a strictly factual account offers none of this, merely following an aleatory doom as it traipses through the streets at will. The bell is struck, but by no

human hand. Rather than knowledge, then, a space opens for the urgent immediacy of sound, an affect short-circuiting the eye and the impotent comfort offered by its belated writing.[31]

Cambridge scholar, self-appointed wit, and poet Gabriel Harvey moves in this direction in his own account of the 1580 earthquake; his letter to Edmund Spenser figures the vibrancy of earth's motion as *both* God's doing *and* thoroughly material: "God himself…whose only *voice* carrieth such a reverend and terrible majesty with it that the earth again and highest mountains quake & tremble at the *sound* and *noise* hereof" (11, emphasis mine). Air is far more than spirit, or life, ethereally tendered; it is itself a transport mechanism, acquiring its own agency in the process as part of the assemblage of vocal communication. In this way, it collapses the artificial life/matter binary Karl Steel finds inherent in the Christian Creation myth, where God's voice invests inert matter with vibrant spirit: "All living things are tethered by this voice to the order inaugurated and controlled by the Divine Father…this divine force also imagines the heavy earth as needing something extra to liven it up" (213). The earth *itself* is resituated as the speaking body in Harvey's account; rather than merely receiving God's voice, it is *ventriloquized* by him, rendering the process entirely material and folding the breathing earth and thick air into the collaborative event of communication.[32]

Leaving aside the ultimate *cause* of the earthquake, we may still attend to its *mechanism*. The letter casts the quake as the violent exhalation of an unstable corporeality, or breath from a body:

> The earth, you know, is a mighty great huge body, and consisteth of many divers and contrary members & veins and arteries and concavities, wherein, to avoid the absurdity of vacuum, must necessarily be very great store of substantial matter…either good or bad or mixed…Which evil working in the parts, and

maliciously encountering the good, forcibly tosseth and cruelly disturbeth the whole…that it must needs (as well, or rather as ill, as in men and women's bodies) burst out in the end (8)

First, note the parallels between human and cosmic bodies: both operate under the Galenic model of humors, requiring balance of various inner elements. Next, a gloss on the "absurdity of vacuum:" the letter avers that non-being is impossible; even the spaces *between* matter are material.[33] For all the usefulness of Harvey's material turn, he still ultimately tries to distance the disinterested observing scientist from the seeming incontinence of the earth's body, by casting both in gendered terms. The letter equates women and earthquakes as mutually fractious, ungoverned bodies: "Good Lord, quoth I, is it not wonderful strange that the delicate voices of two so proper fine gentlewomen should make such a sudden terrible earthquake?" (7). The feminine virtues of "delicacy" and "properness" are a thin crust concealing the noisy and noisome entrails beneath. However, the women of Harvey's party boldly challenge this paradigm, not by denying the equation but by flipping its value judgment, *reclaiming* their unruly corporeal voices against the dead language the male scientists use to ground their authority. Such interference is a prime example of the vocalic agency Gina Bloom contends early modern women could attain. This is grounded not in the traditional sense of control, prerogative, or platform to speak. Instead, "female characters that embrace breath's volatile attributes – calling attention to its unpredictability and transience – are able to practice a subtle but robust form of vocal agency" (68). In other words, these women thwart male fantasies that they know and govern themselves, by emphasizing the sites and means by which autonomous bodies produce independent voices that upset stable regimes of management

and care. Notice also the focus on "breath" as the building block of voice, a stubbornly material phenomenon that severs the bonds between voice and individual sovereignty.[34]

Harvey tries to have it both ways when gendering the quake, contradicting his earlier equation of female incontinence with the roiling soil by pontificating that he is "*flatly* of opinion the earth whereof man was immediately made, and not woman, is in all proportions and similitudes liker us than you…and I believe *reason and philosophy* will bear me out in it, it only moveth with the very impulsive force of the malady, and not trembleth or quaketh for dastardly fear" (9, emphasis mine). Here the same gender binary is sketched, but with the roles reversed, male mechanism and rational responsiveness against female emotion, established by a *written* record, "philosophy." Harvey constantly cites *classical texts* (Aristotle, Ovid) as wellsprings of authority: classical as opposed to Christian (linked as we've seen with the inaccessible vocality of God), and texts as opposed to the embodied immediacy of sensory perception. Moreover, he believes "flatly," the adverb suggesting the two-dimensionality of paper, here inflexible and resolute.

Harvey's pompous surety is mocked by his female interlocutors, who remark, "I can neither pick out *rime nor reason* out of anything I have heard yet. And yet methinks all should be *gospel* that cometh from you doctors of Cambridge" (9, emphasis mine). Here, male authority as rooted in tradition is explicitly challenged, with "gospel" suggesting first that these men presumptuously ape God in their explanations of His work, and second that patriarchy itself manifests as written record, a "gospel," a "rime," and a Cambridge degree being equally papery – and paper-thin – assurances of knowledge and power. Against this, the ladies pose an *ad hominem* attack, questioning

the men's ability to keep their abstract reasoning free of their vibrant bodies: "believing as the learned believe, and saying, It is so because it is so) is nigh enough to cast you both into a fit or two of a dangerous shaking fever" (9). Dependence on tradition is mere tautology ("it is because it is"), and bodily needs will out. Hammering this home, the discourse ends with a supremely ironic touch, as the very desires of those round bodies – as opposed to flat words – forestall further discourse: "Being set, and new occasion of speech ministered, our supper put the earthquake out of our minds, or at the leastwise, out of our tongues" (14). Throughout this section I've introduced a set of tensions – body and text, eye and ear, self as closed and autonomous or porous and receptive, the slippery couplings of gender and species with sound and the body – that I mean as a primer for *King Lear*, where these same tensions reach their nadir. That is where I turn next.

2. Eruption: *King Lear*

"The following Generations…saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters"

-Jorge Luis Borges, "On Exactitude in Science"

The gyrating vortex of nullity that is the England of *King Lear* is the aftermath of an earthquake. I stake this claim, large as it is, on the premise that Lear's initial splitting of his kingdom quite literally enacts a rupture of the land, unleashing the purgative vapors within. As such, the land *speaks*, in just the ways we have already traced through Churchyard and Harvey. Moreover, the same dichotomy between a visual regime of distance and control and an aural regime of inclusive imbrication obtains; the play's ubiquitous motif of blindness clashes against and cedes to the thunderous sound – the

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"eyeless rage" (III.1.8) – of the play's weather, which bypasses Lear's attempts to harness its force. However, despite the play's blistering assault on anthropocentric "visions" of tame and responsive nature, I maintain that in the rift left by the violated, gaping earth of England's body, and the oozing sockets of its denizens' eyes, a space has been cleared for the material voice, which offers perhaps the play's only model of successful communication and partnership – Edgar and Gloucester's reconcilement. Thus, while most critics gravely pronounce *King Lear* Shakespeare's most nihilistic vision of cosmic entropy, I attempt to salvage a potential praxis of being-in-the-world from the churning cacophony of the play's soundscape.

The link between the 1580 earthquake in England and the play has recently been forged by Karen Raber, who highlights the extensive reparations made to Dover after the quake. The town is thus "a location associated both with the aspirations of English technology, but also with the catastrophic effects of earthquakes and storms, and thus assaults on the premise that human industry could tame nature and make it serve human ends" (2). Resurgent here, then, is the question of which direction the arrow points in the human/cosmos, micro/macrocosmic model – are we shepherds of nature, or fellow sheep? Morgan Souza, who traces parallels between the 1580 earthquake and Edmund's eruptive villainy, by contrast roots responsibility squarely in human morality: "natural disasters are a reactionary force to the sins of men, as Edmund's havoc is on the noble families of Lear's kingdom" (8). Such reasoning is useful towards a critique of human abuses of the natural world, but I'd suggest it *also* has the potential to overstate the degree to which human enterprise can sway and bend the biosphere, and the accuracy of a balance-based model of the cosmos, as Raber has suggested. Steve Mentz goes further,

arguing not just for the impotence of humanity in the face of nature, but its instability as a discrete category: "The storm scenes in *King Lear* represent what I shall call…'strange weather': neither receptive to nor reflective of human desires, this version of the elements re-draws the boundaries between self and the world and puts the body-nature relationship in crisis" (140). If Mentz severs the link between human intention and natural behavior, he still frames the dissolution of the human/nature binary as a "crisis," something entirely lamented in the world of the play, even if no longer by us. By attending to the play's acoustic ecology, however, I argue we may recognize the earthquake within bodying forth a voice that fully situates the human amidst the ambient.

Grandly heralded into the room by resounding trumpets, Lear proclaims to his hotly anticipating subjects, "Give me the map there. Know that we have divided/In three our kingdom" (I.1.37-8).[35] From these, almost his first words of the play, the trouble springs. What he has done, so much more than the mere political gaffe of dividing power, is to literally wrench the land apart. He has reduced a unified *oikos*, or house, the root word of ecology, to division and exposure. The disastrous symptoms that follow are consistent with those of earthquakes as we've explored them so far. A plague seeps forth from the gouged earth; Lear calls Goneril "A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle/In my corrupted blood" (II.4.223-4), as though human relations have become diseased and impure, a parasitic contagion that puts neat categories like family and nation at risk. Gloucester's stumblings on the way to Dover, and the play's cluster of references to "shaking" – nine times, from Lear's "fast intent/To shake all cares and business from our age" (I.1.38-9) to Gloucester's exhortation, "This world I do renounce, and in your sights/Shake patiently my great affliction off" (IV.6.35-6) – crack selves loose from the

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"lendings" that constitute them, and shunt bodies off their thrones onto the earth,

exposed. Most centrally, the great storm that torments Lear on the heath would've been

understood by early moderns to have a terrestrial origin. Following Aristotle's

Meteorologica, the standard cause of earthquakes was held to be the uneasy confluence

of wind and water in the body of the earth, as seen previously in Harvey:

> Now it is clear, as we have already said, that there must be exhalation both from
> moist and dry, and earthquakes are a necessary result of the existence of these
> exhalations. For the earth is in itself dry but contains much moisture because of
> the rain that falls on it; with the result that when it is heated by the sun and its
> own internal fires, a considerable amount of wind is generated both outside it and
> inside, and this sometimes all flows out (205)

The storm is thus understandable as the "exhalation," or breath – the material voice, in

other words – of the land itself.

Significantly, the breath-taking presumption required to splice the body of the

kingdom comes from a map. Lear accomplishes his breach of the earth by aspiring to a

godlike, panoptic perspective over his lands, as though the ability to view them from on

high constituted absolute sovereign power.[36] And indeed, Lear consistently tropes his

authority with lines of sight. When Kent speaks out against his unfair treatment of

Cordelia, Lear imagines banishment as the removal from his gaze: "Hence and avoid my

sight" (I.1.125). And again, when Cordelia offends him by refusing to flatter his vanity,

he exclaims, "we/Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see/That face of hers again"

(I.1.268-70), as though to remove her from his field of vision stripped her very selfhood.

Identity is here bestowed only as object to perceiving subject, as though the sight of Lear

were the sole constitutive force. Even his name, "Lear," although deriving from the

quasi-mystical king of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, inescapably also connotes presumptuous

vision; the OED defines the verb form of "leer" as "to look or gaze with a sly, immodest,

malign expression in one's eye," quite germane to the king's vestment of gaze with actuating power. The map, of course, is also a tool of mediated measurement that prosthetically enhances Lear's vision; like the writing of Churchyard and Harvey, it purports to demarcate and circumscribe the physical topography.[37]

Once the earthquake erupts, though, the phenomenological register of the play shifts from Lear's scopic regime to the pan-sensory morass of the storm-addled outdoors, much as the Borgesian cartographers' "vast Map" is swamped by the "Inclemencies of Sun and Winters" in this section's epigraph. This is figured most consistently as blindness, perhaps *King Lear*'s most prevalent motif. Blindness, of course, is a staple in the play's criticism, but is represented there overwhelmingly as metaphoric register of the characters' lack of judgment.[38] Robert Bechtold Heilman avers that "Shakespeare has found in sight a flexibly responding symbol for the problems which arise in connection with the point of view for which man judges the meaning of experience" (61). David Bevington invokes "the enlargement of tragic vision" achieved as "Gloucester achieves spiritual vision when he is physically blinded" (1171). Such poetic and characterological readings are valuable, certainly, but these critics neglect the embodied, material *fact* of blind eyes, whether the gouged sockets of Gloucester or the rheumied orbs of Lear. Such focus on the eye itself as perceiving mechanism makes it vulnerable, opens it up to error and sabotage.

The eye is rendered abject matter in *King Lear*. Most vividly, Gloucester's is referred to as "vile jelly" by Cornwall as he unceremoniously plucks it out (III.7.84). Its viscous depiction here lends the material eye a liquidity that belies the rigid lines of demarcation and degrees of separation promoted by the bodiless idea of "vision." And

liquid returns again later, when Lear plaintively exhorts Gloucester: "If thou wilt weep

my fortunes, take my eyes" (IV.6.176). Here, eyes have taken a long fall from the cliff of

panoptic power; now, they are linked to the material vulnerability of tears, the effusion of

inner pain into an external sphere, worrying neat partitions of inside and outside. Finally,

Gloucester's orbless sockets are referred to by Edgar as "his bleeding rings,/Their

precious stones new lost" (V.3.192-3). The eye as jewel renders it a kind of extraneous

adornment, a pretty trapping that is more luxury good than inherent, constitutive fixture

of humanity.

Such a matrix of references to the material eye not only renders it vulnerable to

attack, but also suspect in its very operation. Gloucester on his wanderings muses, "I

have no way, and therefore want no eyes;/I stumbled when I saw" (IV.1.18-9). Human

sight is thus discredited as a synonym for knowledge or intention, an idea epitomized at

Dover itself, when Edgar describes to Gloucester the scene from the cliff. Cliffside vision

immediately summons to our post-Romantic minds associations with sublime nature,

defiant individuals, and awe-inspiring power. However, the actual focus of the scene is

the *deficiency* of sight, the inability of godlike perspective to afford godlike power:

> 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 fishermen that walk upon the beach/Appear like mice…
> The murmuring surge/That on th'unnumb'red idle pebble chafes…
> I'll look no more,/Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
> Topple down headlong   (IV.6.11-24)[39]

Here, the eye fails time and again: to correctly identify the birds, to establish human

actors (fishermen) as distinct from beasts, to count the pebbles, or even to support the

comfortable remove of the observer, who threatens to "topple" at the immensity of the view and its ineffable details.

So, if the earthquake loosed by Lear shakes eyes from their sockets, is that the end of the story? Most critics, like Mentz, seem to think so, even if they excavate a valuable rebuke to anthropocentric, Gaia-earth models of natural harmony and sustainability. However, I insist that the raw sockets are not merely registers of loss, they are also *points of ingress*, porous holes inviting encounter and exchange. And indeed, that is quite likely how early moderns would've understood them. Mark Paterson has recently historicized our commonplace metonymic reading – blindness as bad judgment – to Descartes's 1637 *Dioptrique*, arguing that since then our conceptions of blindness rely on "a configuration of readerly empathy, where blindness as darkness is similarly understood as lack (of light), as deprivation" (15).[40] Situated historically, then, blindness may be recast as less the eye's loss, a dire catastrophe, and more the ear's gain, an opportunity. As such, I maintain that attentiveness to the spoken *oikos* of the quake offers a potent model of inclusiveness and reciprocity foreclosed by optic regimes.

Kenneth Gross offers one such route into the play, citing the ubiquity of the curse as emblematic of the aural praxis of the wronged Lear: "Curses crystallize around moments of violation, real or imaginary; they are provoked by breakings of law, by damage done to bodies and wishes…Curses mark a breach, and risk a breach in turn" (165). Perhaps unwittingly, Gross employs earthquake rhetoric here, as vocal matter issues from a rupture, a fault in the stable ground of order. Problematically, though, Gross positions the curse as a sort of compensatory gesture for pain, an attempt to turn the tables and reimpose one's will, an exclusively human response to the depredations of

nature, still figured as a hurdle in our story of autopoietic transcendence.[41] What's needed instead is a more positive study of the complex web of interrelations that vocality affords in the play.

Such a focus animates the recent work of Craig Dionne, who notes the abundance of proverbs in the play, tracing their lineage to Renaissance commonplace books and the mnemonics of humanist education to argue that "the proverbial voice can be seen to offer a secreted book of conditioned responses through which the speaking subject can monitor and adjust their position to their world" (67). Unlike the textual tradition invoked by Harvey, adages seek less to explain and demystify events by parsing their causes, than to offer a form of collective speech therapy *after* the trauma, a coping mechanism that situates suffering and endurance in a timeless communal (and thus bearable) context. Cherrypicking Dionne's focus on reactive integration rather than Gross's active compensation, I'd like to shift focus from the *content* of the speech act (curse, proverb) to its *form* as an embodied eruption that – as Bloom says – does not require the rational guidance of a human agent. Such an approach resists the correlationist aim of psychologizing the responses to trauma in favor of a material study of the ways sound de-individuates bodies and selves, with human speech fully situated as but one example of a larger vocality emanating from and linking all cosmic bodies.

Bruce R. Smith moves us in this direction in his gloss on the many valences of "O" as a fundamental unit of vocal experience in early modern England: "As a burst of energy from within, [o:] is an act of aggression, a projection of one's body into the world. It is, in the most basic sense of the word, an *environmental* gesture" (14). Smith foregrounds the expansion of the vocal body into its surroundings, dissolving its definite

center as it radiates outward into a zone of imbrication. An acoustic polity is chartered by the voice, or what Smith calls a "totalizing experience of sound that surrounds each hearer completely, penetrating his or her body through the ears" (271). I'd tack an "its" onto that list, enfolding the nonhuman into the ecology of voice. For indeed, the O shape invokes not only a rounded mouth, but also the gaping earth during a quake, wedged open to speak its complaint. From such a rupture comes a circumscription, another valence of the O that draws a line of non-hierarchical inclusion, a zone of contact with common borders – in this instance, the entire world of the play.

Lingering in the rattled quake-world of *King Lear*, amidst its alienating despair, is a stubborn undercurrent of community forged by the power of the voice, seen most clearly in the partnership of Gloucester and Edgar. Edgar operates as sound engineer at Dover, vocally summoning a scene that is not actually present, but exists as such to Gloucester; when he tells Edgar "Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st/In better phrase and matter than thou didst" (IV.6.7-8), he not only demonstrates his heightened aural sensitivity after losing his eyes, but also quite literally refers to the "matter" of speech, tangibly present to him through the voice of his son. Edgar reinforces this in another *double entendre* when he tells Gloucester after the fall that "thou dost breathe,/Hath heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound" (IV.6.51-2). While "sound" refers obviously to "safe" or "healthy," it is again also palpably literal, as Gloucester has become a receptacle to be filled by "sound," he *is* sound, his very being materially constituted by its entrance into him, as "matter." He is so receptive to its influx, in fact, that it eventually kills him, at the moment his son reveals himself, exposing Gloucester to the "two extremes of passion, joy and grief" (V.3.201); the influx

of otherness unselfs him, is too much to be borne by anything like an individual subjectivity.

Indeed, the auricular polity we've been shaping denies the sovereign individual, and perhaps this is why Lear never enters its circular arms. He laments to Gloucester the fallen state of the world, legible by the jumbling of its organizing categories: "A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears…Hark in thine ear: change places and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?" (IV.6.150-4). The synesthesia of "looking" with one's "ears," elevating the ear as the primary epistemological tool, suggests that sound *itself* has flattened experience and warped lines of demarcation. Power, represented here as the right to pass sentence, to label based on one's own titled status, is short-circuited by the democracy of sound, which refuses to register these distinctions. Lear pushes this further, to the realm of species: "Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at the beggar?...And the creature run from the cur. There thou might'st behold the great image of authority – a dog's obeyed in office" (IV.6.154-9). Here, the animals have skirted human "authority," their vocal "bark" toppling the human hegemony of the visual "image."[42] For Lear, "every inch a king" (IV.6.107), who clings so fiercely to "lendings" of all sorts to reify his individuated authority, such an egalitarian aural polity is more intolerable than intoxicating. Indeed, individuality must be forfeited at the gate, to be replaced by the swirling interpenetration of mutually constitutive bodies, human and non. To the last, Lear remains invested in the false tyranny of the eye, dying after a quintuple reference to vision, failing to register Cordelia's life, her stubborn body recalcitrant to his vivifying desire: "Do you *see* this? *Look* on her! *Look*, her lips,/*Look* there, *look* there –" (V.3.317-8, emphasis mine).

3. Aftershock: Conclusions

"The host counter-parasites his guests, not by taking away his food from them…but by making noise" (52). I began this essay with Michel Serres, whose insurgent noise opened a rift in the fabric of our dwelling, and by returning to him now I wish less to neatly stitch it up, than to open it yet further, to let the earth speak its resounding and enfolding "O". Serres reminds us that the space we find ourselves in is no void, but the house of the Other; when that Other "counter-parasites" us, no symbiotic harmony but rather a cacophonous soundscape of fretful voices emerges. Early moderns lived during the Little Ice Age, a time of profound ecological disturbance wherein to be alive was "to experience with some frequency the thunder, lightning, high winds, and flooding that were much less pronounced two centuries later."[43] Two, perhaps, but not four: our own era is feeling these same effects from the opposite side. According to geologist Bill McGuire, substantial boosts in earthquake frequency and severity may be caused by global warming, as melting icecaps put pressure on seismic fault lines.[44] Noise pollution and tectonic viscosity mark our increasingly disaster-riddled, post-sustainable world, rending open what Lear calls our "concealing continents" (III.2.58). The early modern quake-scape thus uncannily presages our present moment, but in it we find not merely a rebuke to our ocular regime's fantasy of static control, but also a model of inclusivity drawn by sound, as all beings, human and non, swim in its waves.[45] Edgar seems to recognize this when he ends *King Lear* with an earthquake image: "The weight of this sad time we must obey,/Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (V.3.330-1). Pain and need form a "weight" that will out, bodied forth as an eruption of sound which just might draw us together only in that we are, quite literally, beside ourselves.

II. "INTO AN ANGLE BLUNT": THE SONIC INDIVIDUAL IN EARLY MODERN LONDON

"The knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced: the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live, first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them"

– Thomas de Quincey, "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*"

It is surely significant that, at the key moment of an essay some consider a precursor to psychological criticism,[46] sound figures the re-encroachment of the social and the material into the castle of the mind. Even more radically, that mind itself, Macbeth's in the throes of guilt and ambition, is shown to be nothing more than the negative space or "parenthesis" between the "pulses" of communal responsibility. Giorgio Agamben makes a similar point. For him, the "human" is a self-perpetuating machine, forced to reiterate its own definition by ceaseless expulsion of all that it is not: "precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside" (37). De Quincey's essay, then, rather than vaunting deep interiority admits its dependence on an "outside" which gives it relative shape, and more importantly, establishes sound as the rhizome vaulting the threshold, the "gate" into the "zone of indeterminacy."[47] Gates of all sorts would've been familiar to *Macbeth*'s original audience, those Londoners either visiting or dwelling, passing through the gates in the City's wall, [48] crossing many thresholds shopping or dining, and

imagining themselves as humoral fortresses in miniature,[49] all while hearing the cacophonous din of the metropolis which leapt those boundaries at will. This essay expands their story, mapping the intersections between sound, the city, and an individual agency not dependent on the "state of exception" characterizing Macbeth's "fiendish" solitude.

The last chapter argued that sound dissolved the categorical boundaries preserved by optical perspective, but did so broadly, without exploring the consequences of a sonically interconnected world for individual speakers or listeners. This chapter makes such an attempt, charting the ways individuals could and did constitute themselves in sonic terms, through use of vocal effects like dialect, tone, and volume, as well as through response to ambient noise like bells or knocks. These sounds provided material leverage rather than social status, a way to situate one's own and other bodies in space toward a definite end like navigation or money. This appropriative use of sound, I suggest, was directly linked to the rapid expansion of early modern England's most complex soundscape: London. Newly-metropolitan London, I argue, concentrated an overload of sensory stimuli which threatened to collapse the individual into the mass. As such, it threatened the visual distinctions maintained by London's booming clothing market. A variety of advice pamphlets for the young gallant encouraged sartorial panache, as an optically dazzling means to shore up – or, more often, establish – a status newly vendible in the proto-capitalist marketplace. Such a model has certain classed and gendered limitations, as I proceed to show. Moreover, since clothing was a commodity, it was subject both to cultural shifts in meaning and the non-particularity of exchange

value, undermining its ostensive purpose of self-fashioning.[50] By contrast, sound cannot be bought, suggesting agential potential beyond market forces.

My final section constellates all these dynamics within Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*. I argue that sound in the play is figured as a kind of vestment, a clothing item that can be donned and doffed at will, conferring a makeshift subject position that affords an ephemeral agency for the user. Such agency is collaborative and improvisational, as Face, Doll, and Subtle – the alchemists – cheat their marks by adapting on the fly to knocks at the door of their master's house, which like the one de Quincey traces at Inverness Castle serve as sonic catalysts for a reassemblage of identity, spatial position, and relationality. These fleeting sonic poses allow the cozeners to conduct the orchestra of people flowing through the house, and are effective precisely due to their short duration and sensitivity to the communal circuitry of sound.

1. "A mighty arme and instrument": London c. 1600

I begin by repeating a mantra that every critic discussing early modern London must invoke: the population was exploding. An average estimate for growth is from around 50000 in 1500 to more than 200000 by 1600.[51] Yet more staggering is the city's *relative* growth; David Harris Sacks notes that "in 1500 London's inhabitants accounted for only about 1.5 percent of the English and Welsh population; in 1700, they represented about 11.5 percent" (23), meaning that London arrogated an ever-increasing share of "Englishness" both material and cultural to itself. By contrast with this exponential expansion, and – I would suggest – in response to the difficulty of totalizing critique in the face of such complexity, London criticism has seen a gradual process of *narrowing*.

The first major studies were macro, detailing institutions, statistics, and edifices.[52] Later, towards the turn of the millennium, scholars zoomed in towards the cultural, attempting to recuperate the practices that colored and scripted those physical spaces.[53] This paper narrows the aperture a stop further, focusing on the phenomenological experience of individual Londoners, the sensorial possibilities newly opened by the city.[54] That is to say, I'm interested less in the cultural self-understanding of a subject, and more in the physical, tangible agency accessible through the multifaceted and unmoored vocal posturing London afforded.

It may seem strange to begin an essay about reclaiming the individual by stressing the difficulty of individuality, but a praxis can emerge only in relation to a problematized set of conditions, and London on the cusp on the seventeenth century certainly offered those. In addition to the population boom charted above, London was increasingly the hub of an international commercial market, centrifugally dispersing its trading logic throughout the nation. As Nina Levine puts it, "the increasing claims of extra-parish associations, including company membership and new trading networks, exerted outward pressures on parochial insularities" (6). Both emergent from and fueling this proto-capitalist bevy of exchange networks was a new class of worker: the migrant from the provinces or abroad. Jean Howard notes that "Many people from other parts of the British Isles moved to London to find employment…who worked in and around the metropolis as manservants, day laborers, chambermaids, and workers in unsanctioned guilds" (8).[55] These developments embedded the individual in larger and larger networks of relation – mobility came to characterize all aspects of urban life, a churning flux of expenditure, encounter, and role-play.

Accordingly, anxiety about the anonymity of urban experience steadily inflects the period's writing, structured most frequently by the overlapping dyads of order/disorder and one/many. Even as staunch a conservative as John Stow avers in his 1598 *Survey of London* that "neither is London, I feare me, so great as populous…whatsoeuer the number bee, it breedeth no feare of sedition: for as much as the same consisteth not in the extreames, but in a verie medio critie of wealth and riches" (490). While Stow intends to extol the peaceable order of London, he implicitly admits that such order only obtains by sacrificing the individual, who by virtue of her normality, his averageness, disappears from legibility and thus from threat – quite a different logic from his typical litany of great, titled men and their deeds.[56] While such thinking diverges from Michel de Certeau's well-known formulation that the unfixable crowd actually resists power's panoptic reach,[57] it borrows the same operating premise, that the city dissolves the individual person into a solute whose borders and zones of influence are both indeterminate and mutable.[58]

Over and against this creeping illegibility, the state increasingly turned to the visually impressive and the measurably regular to reassert order.[59] The theatricality of Elizabethan and Jacobean court culture is a critical commonplace,[60] but I'm positing its visuality as a specific response to London's explosion, both in terms of development and population, as Westminster itself was slowly swallowed by the expanding London suburbs.[61] De Certeau roots the rise of geometric thought, which jettisons particularity for the clean perspectival remove and totality of statistics and figures, in the sixteenth century, what he calls "the transformation of the urban *fact* into the *concept* of a city…it assumes that this fact can be dealt with as a unity determined by an urbanistic *ratio*" (94).

And indeed, the early seventeenth century saw the city's first planned development projects, such as Goldsmith's Row in Cheapside. Paul Griffiths explains the historical exigency behind this shift; the crown tightly regulated urban space to project synchronized, seamless power as a response to urban entropy. As he writes, "In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a run of royal proclamations…tried to curb or set high standards for fresh building. 'Uniformity' was a by-word…There was a microscopic care for appearance" (183).[62] More locally, Michael Berlin notes a sea change in parochial religious practice from communal ritual to hierarchized ceremony, "a gradual shift away from outdoor annual celebrations involving mixed groups of parishioners to socially restricted forms of ceremonial…These included the distribution of relief to the parish poor, who were now to be more distinctly identified from their neighbors by separate seating" (48). Ritual cements commonality, while ceremony affirms structure – the poor are naturalized as inferior by their readable position in church. That said, I wish to shift this conversation from the epistemological – what power can or cannot know about its subjects, and what those subjects can know about their place in the city – to the ontological.

Timothy Morton's notion of the hyperobject offers us a useful way to characterize early modern London as a problem not just of knowledge, but of being. The hyperobject is viscous, meaning that its visitor "sticks" to it, is part of it. It is nonlocal, meaning that "London" is only accessible in single moments and points that can never be sufficiently coalesced into a totalized, measurable whole – London is its topography, but is also the *effects* of that topography, partially its cultural practices, and partly the habitus of its dwellers, who might carry these London logics far beyond the physical borders. Adopting

a more contemporary example, Morton reminds us that "I do not see global warming as such. I see this brilliant blade of sunlight, burning the top of my head" (38). Global warming is thus a thing accessible only through its manifestations, but this doesn't mean it isn't real, just that its reality is never fully graspable, always withdrawn from its human observers because they themselves have become part of it: "Hyperobjects…present us with scalar dilemmas in which ontotheological statements about which thing is the most real (ecosystem, world, environment, or conversely, individual) become impossible" (19). Reconceiving the city as a hyperobject allows us to skirt the individual/community distinction by refusing to separate the terms – any Londoner is both uniquely in and inseparably of the city, and we are thus freed to sketch the contours of their interrelation. We can also escape the congruent subversion/containment dialectic dominating critical discourse about the city by observing that both power and subject are "stuck" to London, manifestations of its being – individual action is thus freed, an affordance of the city's material reality rather than a ruse of its hegemonizing "social energy." Even if we acknowledge that, of course, material London is inseparable from the social values that build and instrumentalize it, its tangible *effects* and *potentialities* are still not reducible to those values – we caused global warming, but its existence transcends and enfolds us.[63]

Other, more historically-particular scholarship helps us ground this idea. Jean Thirsk argues that early modern "London" stretches far beyond its physical borders, as its commercial tastes infected the provinces through the mobility of gentlemen even as it appropriated the unique crafts and customs of those provinces to catalyze further consumptive trends: "they were drawn into the consumerist vortex, and by 1600 they had been tied to London, as well as being tied to one another. The demands of material

London were weaving a veritable spider's web, linking to itself and to each other scattered centers of production" (106). London is thus more than its buildings, or its people: it is the sum total of its *effects*, which include but zoom beyond the cultural to constellate a space of ontological indeterminacy. Ian Munro approaches this same problem demographically, arguing that the city came increasingly to be defined by its population, an unstable and volatile referent: "The experiential space of early modern London can be fully understood only in a framework that takes into account the visible and tangible presence of more and more *bodies*" (4). While his study is actually about how the "figure" of the crowd became a problem for representation, I'd like to linger over this moment, moving from the representational to the materially "experiential." I seek to explore not how power comes to know its bodies, but what one of those bodies could *do*.

Enter sound. The order/disorder binary also structures discourse on the sonic makeup of London, with the crucial caveat that sound presents a problem of *experience* rather than representation, a phenomenological exchange immanently tied to the body in ways the epistemological debate about visual legibility was not. Accounts both contemporary and modern posit London sound as disruptive and multifarious, a threat to communal stability and self-identity. Hristomir Stanev notes that "The ears of the unaccustomed London visitor, in fact, would not only become troubled by the loud rumblings of vehicular transportation, but rang daily with the nearly incessant clamor of church bells and the animated voices of criers hawking their wares" (38). Returning to John Stow, I'd like to more closely examine London's bells, because they explicitly figure the corruption of a communal signifier into indeterminate chaos. Bells would have structured many rituals for early moderns, including church attendance, civic

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celebrations, and time itself. For his entry on Farringdon Ward Within – the ward

containing Blackfriars, where Lovewit's house in *The Alchemist* is – Stow uses the bells

as a byword for communal order:

> Neare vnto this schoole, on the north side therof, was of old time a great and high
> Clochier, or bell house, foure square, builded of stone, and in the same a most
> strong frame of timber, with foure Belles, the greatest that I haue heard, these
> were called Iesus Belles…but [were] pulled downe by Sir *Miles Partridge*
> knight, in the raigne of *Henry* the eight. The common speech then was, that hee
> did set an hundred pound vpon a cast at dice against it, and so wonne the said
> Clochiard and belles of the king: and then causing the bels to bee broken as they
> hung, the rest was pulled downe.
>
> In place of this Clochiarde, of olde times the common Bell of the Cittie was vsed
> to be rung for the assembly of the citizens to their Folke motes (295-96)

This is a common moment in Stow: an older, communally inscribed and legible past

cedes to a decaying modernity in which things lose their shapes, vectors, and connections

to individual people. Sir Miles Partridge gambles for the bells as fungible objects rather

than generators of sound, his individual desire for profit and pleasure carelessly melting

the sonic glue of the ward.[64]

In fact, even when the bells did ring, by 1600 their number had grown so great

that they risked interfering with each other, or being hijacked from their scheduling

purpose (Figure 1). The Duke of Stettin-Pomerania remarked on his 1602 visit that "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."[65] Noting the bells at all

distinguishes them as a London phenomenon distinct from the Duke's native customs.

The use of "Very late" and "7 or 8 o'clock" also evinces some surprise about the bells'

Figure 2: Section of a 1616 engraving by Claes Visscher, looking northward across the Thames into the walled City. Numerous steeples are named; each would have had its own elaborate bell-tower and ringing schedule, potentially overlaying each other as the city grew in density. The engraving even suggests this, as not all the steeples are named, their sounds thus slipping below or around notice.

ubiquity, suggesting overstepped boundaries as well as an inability to precisely measure the time of their ringing, against their timekeeping purpose. Finally, the Duke names youthful caprice as the culprit for this sonic deviance, as if the din both represented and encouraged just one of a number of inverted categories.[66] Sound thus indexes a larger problem of sensation, an overdetermination of stimuli inside the body, a kind of possession. Against such inward colonizing, Londoners turned to a variety of practices to

reassert selfhood and status on the *outside*, the exterior – and none were more ubiquitous or spectacular than clothing.

2. "Fantasticke Fashions": Clothing on the Urban Stage

Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have drawn attention to the constitutive nature of early modern clothing, which *in*flected rather than *re*flected inner essence, dissolving the boundaries of subject and object they place at the center of modernity.[67] They stress "the animatedness of clothes, their ability to 'pick up' subjects, to mold and shape them both physically and socially, to constitute subjects through their power as material memoirs" (2). However, they also trace to the late sixteenth century a shift in clothing's function from investiture to market cipher; clothes show up more than any other item on London markets, as fungible sources of ready cash. [68] Since these two models of clothing uneasily coexisted, one could still be what one wore, but what one wore was increasingly overdetermined by exchange value, a flattening that washed all particularity in the annihilating Lethe of the market.[69] A complex situation emerges. The individual is now radically free to sartorially self-determine, since the clothes of other trades, ranks, and even genders are readily available for purchase, but the signifying potential of those clothes is weakened. The socially aspiring gallant is thus given a powerful tool, but one requiring constant maintenance, a continuous parley of display and confirmation, splicing identity into a compulsive carnival of the new.

By contrast with the anxiety I've just emphasized, Amanda Bailey charts the *potential* afforded by consciously outré fashion, as a certain set of comparatively elite but disenfranchised young men increasingly adopted style – both clothes and comportment –

as the bedrock of a subculture resisting traditional ideals of elite conduct and moderation.[70] This subculture "involved constituting and reconstituting an ongoing sartorial conversation that included specific venues of display, collective standards of judgment, and a receptive audience" (6). Thus for Bailey, a booming textile market renders clothing radically performative instead of materially encoded, its meaning a product of bearing and reception rather than an inherent feature of the actual cloth. An oppositional identity embraces such transitivity: "the social meaning of the body of the man…resided not in its temporal endurance but in its value as a nodal point of a contemporary cultural network" (7). We're thus at an impasse; contingent clothing seems simultaneously to negatively dissolve individuality and positively enable remaking.

A brief detour into Thomas Dekker's *Guls' Horn-booke*, an advice pamphlet for the new man about town, will illustrate this tension. The pamphlet purports to guide "that true humorous Gallant that desires to powre himself into all fashions (if his ambition be such to excell even Complement itselfe)" through a typical day, supplying the tips and tricks needed to achieve social distinction in various London hotspots, in which clothing plays the (literally) pivotal role (32). First, the pamphlet avers that clothes are the vessels of individuality and status, that bodies come to fit them: "Hee therefore that would strive to fashion his leggs to his silke stockings, and his proud gate to his broad garters" (32). Wearing the clothes fuses a body to its investiture, as Jones and Stallybrass argue. However, the pamphlet also insists on the performative nature of clothing, in which a communally inscribed self must always keep abreast of flux and complexity: "take heede you pick out such an hour, when the maine shoale of Ileanders are swimming up and downe" (32). Finally, Dekker tropes the sartorial pageant of status with visual art, calling

St. Paul's "the onely gallery, wherein the pictures of all your true fashionate and complementall Guls are, and ought to be hung up: into that gallery carry your neat body" (32). Returning briefly to the last chapter's discussion of perspective, and its subject/object split, here the gulls are decidedly objects, their selves secured only as fixed points distinct from the mass of eyes that themselves escape notice.

We might pose two further objections to such a praxis of self-making. First, the *Horn-booke* is satirical, meaning it deals in typology – the "gull" is decidedly not an individual, but a *class* of rowdy, desperate young man recognizable to any Londoner.[71] The very fact that Dekker can write such a tract speaks to the cemented traits and familiar figure of the gull, already ossified into a tired cliché worthy of mockery. Moreover, an advice book offers the same tips to each aspirant, making the pamphlet (surely Dekker's intention) a guidebook for conformity and sameness rather than distinguishing flair. The gull is told to "warne your Tailor to attend you in Powles, who…shall like a spy discover the stuffe, colour, and fashion of any hose that dare be seene there" (36). Here, he seeks not to distinguish himself but to keep up with a norm, a *fashion* in the modern sense of the term, as opposed to its older meaning of making or creating.[72]

Much more seriously, the *Horn-booke* recognizes at times the terrifying maw of anonymity lurking just beneath the performance. Sharklike, stoppage is death – the gallant must always innovate, or risk merging back into the mere body: "Now if you chance to be not must crost among Citizens…your Powles walke is your onely refuge: the Dukes Tomb is a Sanctuary, and wil keepe you alive from wormes and land-rattes, that long to be feeding on your carkas" (34-5). To be an individual is always to be "crost," to be seen, and without it one is only one's body, its abject "carkas" the material

locus of indistinction. Earlier, the pamphlet even vaunts such nothingness, in an encomium to the peaceful egalitarianism of sleep, "this kinseman of death…sleepe is that golden chaine that ties health and our bodies together. Who complains of want? Of woundes? Of cares? Of great mens oppressions, of captivity? Whilest he sleepeth? Beggers in their beds take as much pleasure as kings" (21). Here Dekker renders annihilation *desirable*; the "great chaine" is the only cure for the sickness of individuality and its compulsive maintenance, which entails here nothing but invidious comparison and inequality. One can escape the rat race only by becoming food for the rats.

Thus we can identify, for our purposes at least, two limitations to Bailey's subculture of flaunting. First, it is class and gender specific, a localized practice of younger sons specifically in dialogue with the demands of elite and apprentice culture. This certainly isn't a knock on Bailey – she is very clear that her study concerns this particular subgroup.[73] However, I'm interested in new urban forms of phenomenological agency, possibilities for material action, and not the subjective self-understanding of a cultural group. Second, flaunting turns out to be less about individual identity and more about forging a counterpublic on the fringes of elite culture, another version of the subversion/containment dialectic. That said, Bailey's work highlights the possibilities for a provisional selfhood, one defined reactively and improvisationally in response to the affordances of the urban tempest, protean and emergent. I'll now argue that sound provides a similar form of makeshift agency, but one not subject to the vagaries of the market. In Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, where we turn next, sound is figured as a vestment in the full semantic richness of that term as charted by Jones, Stallybrass, and

Bailey: it constitutes the essence of its wielder, but only momentarily, just long enough for him or her to make something happen. It provides an *im*personal self.

3. "His lungs, his Zephyrus": *The Alchemist*

Critics have pronounced Jonson an urban naysayer, horrified by the noise pollution that jumbled the individual sensorium and the distinctions it preserved. Karen Newman avers that Jonson's plays present an "aural register of the sounds that assaulted the senses of inhabitants of the early modern city regardless of their socioeconomic status" (89). Bruce Boehrer carries the pollution imagery even farther, arguing that Jonson indexes sound as a kind of ever-accumulating detritus: "The sonic environment of London carries everything before it, overpowering any efforts to resist or ignore it, swelling into the acoustic equivalent of an urban landfill" (64). Hristomir Stanev concurs, shifting focus to the individual, who is shorn not only of social status but of all agency: "we cannot escape a gut feeling that Jonson appears to have been disturbed by the overbearing sensory output of the metropolitan body, and by its capacity to confuse, alienate, and sometimes even deprive of agency and essence the sensorium, particularly by debilitating the sense of hearing" (134).

Disabling the ear, this sonic overload decouples spoken language from its twin functions of evincing the speaker's status through the classical idea of decorum, and communication. Stanev notes the "wounded" hearing in the plays, resulting in the "diminished value of communication in Jonson's contemporary urban milieu" (135). Sound is no longer an informational conduit; instead, only the raw vibrations remain, rendering sound a mere thing, pure "noise."[74] The semiotic has been emptied from the sonic. Sound becomes, according to Boehrer, but one more example of Jonson's manic

catalogue of London stuff, a horrifying zoo of monstrous, meaningless commodities: "The general impression is of a creative process gone mad, producing a seemingly endless series of random, illogical forms, until the entire catenating assemblage collapses in on itself to reveal an essential poverty beneath the giddy display" (59). A conservative, reactionary Jonson emerges from these accounts, longing for a clean taxonomy of social distinction and inveighing against those grotesques who defy it.

For all the aptness of their insights, these critics base their arguments on low-hanging fruit, almost always mentioning only *Epicoene* or *Bartholomew Fair*, yet claiming to be explicating Jonson's sonic outlook *tout court*. *The Alchemist* is consistently left out of sonic analyses of Jonson's work, and I argue that this isn't because the play is uninterested in sound, but rather because it breaks the dominant critical paradigm, refusing to condemn sound as yet another insurgent reflective of larger metropolitan decay, an "illogical form," in Boehrer's words. Instead, the play casts denatured sound as a neutral tool, which the cozeners adopt as a kind of vibrational energy, pushing their gulls into and out of the house, and, ultimately, away from their money. I thus seek to complicate our picture of Jonsonian sound by using its materiality as a pivot, shifting focus away from the loss of meaning toward the technological potential thereby exposed.

The Alchemist understands sound ontologically, as a mediating device that, because it isn't tied to essentialist ideas of decorum or clothing's reifying potential, can provide an agency – understood as the physical ability to move objects, including bodies, through space – that is not identity. Sound may be a thing, but its thinginess makes it wieldable, a Heideggerian tool-being *avant la lettre*.[75] This makes sound rather like a

clothing item, affording a temporary subject position, as the cozeners don a variety of vocal disguises, accents, and tones. I argue that these brief vocal poses assume three primary features, the explication of which will occupy the remainder of this chapter. They are: 1.) improvisational, reactive to the local conditions and actions of each customer, catalyzed by their knocks at the door; 2.) collaborative, requiring the conjunction of all three cozeners over and against the individualizing desires of the customers; and 3.) virtual, characterized by a restless motion that defers satisfaction into the indefinite future, reiterating the same pattern each time.

a. Improvisatory

As we saw in Dekker, sartorial savvy involved active display, an aggressive positioning of one's body in front of the eyes that could stamp its legitimacy. The rogues' disguises, however, are always *re*active, local responses to immediate environmental stimuli – knocks at the door of Lovewit's house or a stray phrase spoken by a gull. These sounds vibrate through the house, galvanizing two things: a rearrangement of space, as the current mark is swept into a back room and the new one ushered in, and a new disguise, a makeshift subject position with its own dialect and demeanor. Because the alchemists make up the majority of their strategy on the spot, they can't be said to have an identity by its OED definition, "the very same, selfsame: said of one thing viewed at different times or in different relations." Their bodies are porous, reshaped from within by the latest stimuli, those "different relations" that produce a new person at each "different time." The last section will address time, but here our focus is space, the ways sound's vibrational arc rhizomatically warps straight lines.

Scholars have long drawn attention to the "produced" nature of space, as an amalgam of lived practices that dress its contours, scripting possible behaviors within.[76] Sara Ahmed highlights the prescriptive nature of this process. Spaces allow certain "orientations," or phenomenological exchanges between a body and its locale, extending some bodies in a straight line of extension toward certain objects while occluding others, "such that any nonalignment produces a queer effect" (83). In other words, bodies are approved by their spaces. We've seen how style – clothing and bearing – provided a navigational strategy through the new spaces of teeming London. Style bestowed identity through a visually confirmed alignment of locale and comportment, requiring constant re-iteration. To revisit an old example, would-be urbanites must learn to "carry quarrels,/As gallants do, and manage 'em by line" (2.6.56-64). We've noted the irony of individuation through conformity, which here is spatialized along Ahmed's terms, the "line" of the duel connoting proper movement. By contrast, "Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world 'slantwise' allow other objects to come into view" (103). Face tells Kastril, the prospective brawler, the rules of the fight, which are really all about how to arrange one's body in space: "how it may be borne, whether in a right line/Or a half circle, or may else be cast/Into an angle blunt, if not acute…in oblique, he'll show you, or in circle/But never in diameter" (3.4.33-9). "Never in diameter": Face refuses to endorse the public script, a straight line connecting a person with the compulsive behavior appropriate to their class. A diameter bisects a circle, connecting it to itself with no opportunities for deviance or change. Instead, a queer geometry emerges, responsive to local conditions, as the "oblique," slant lines Face sells Kastril mirror the alchemists' praxis of literally circulating their marks through the house. As I'll now

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show, sound provides a unique phenomenlogical bridge between bodies and space, upsetting the linear script that unites them. In *The Alchemist*, intrusive sounds continually overtax the sensorium, "as if a bolt/Of thunder had been driven through the house," radically dis-orienting the characters, who are "All struck in shivers" (4.5.67-70). A space opens for ad-libbed movements that, because they resist the straight lines preserving social hierarchy, do not reify the movers.

By far *The Alchemist*'s most important plot device is the knock, which splices the play into a sequence of iterated cons overlaid on the same spatial grid. There are, with the exception of Lovewit's return, no changes of location or perspective – the scenes and acts bleed into each other, divided only by the entrance of the latest hopeful from without. This breathless continuity suits the structure of urban Jacobean homes, which according to contemporary traveller Fynes Moryson "are built five or six roofs high, commonly of timber and clay with plaster."[77] These are thin, porous materials, which would have allowed external sound to easily filter through. The knock of each visitor, as de Quincey notes, ruptures the staid domestic interior, effecting a queer reshuffling of space and the orientations of those within it. Here is the very first knock in the play, as Drugger arrives to supplant Dapper: "*One knocks without*. Who's there? [*Calling*] Anon! (*To Face*) Conduct him forth, by the back way" (1.2.162-3). The knock precedes the knocker; the alchemists hear sound first, a vibration that they "conduct," channeling it into movement. That movement is odd, as "forth" somehow proceeds through the "back," a linguistic impossibility that signposts a spatial one, upsetting linear orientation. A similar scene occurs later, as Mammon unexpectedly arrives during the cozeners' shakedown of Dapper: "(*He speaks through the keyhole, the other knocking*) Who's there? Sir

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Epicure,/My master's i'the way. Please you to walk/Three or four turns but till his back be turned,/And I am for you. [*Aside*] Quickly, Doll!" (3.5.58-60). Again, the knock ties a knot in smoothly extensive space, as Face creates a bottleneck forcing Mammon to walk "turns," frustrating and fanning his desire.

The knocks also trigger the rogues to cycle their disguise, as in the following example: "*One knocks*. What, more gudgeons?...Stay, Face, you must go to the door….Away,/Madam, to your withdrawing chamber. Now/In a new tune, new gesture, but old language" (2.4.18-27). The question first announces the guest as unexpected, a blip in the alchemists' smooth cozening course. After taking the knock as stage direction, repositioning the bodies of the other two, Subtle tells his cohort to change poses, which again are explicitly sonic, a "tune." The word "tune" suggests a kind of musical harmony, which unifies disguise, purpose, and mark as a single vector of successful action, the sound of a violin after a knock scrapes the bow. Selfhood here *is* action, the unification of subjective instrument and objective goal. Moreover, "old language" suggests a kind of material recycling, as alchemical discourse and its power to stoke desire become tools re-slottable into new context, again bypassing their signifying power to situate them ecologically, open to the local conditions that render them effective.

Beyond the knocks, language itself, in its denuded form as mere sound, moves the alchemists to fresh ideas and orientations. Subtle asks Ananias his name, and then upon receiving it instantly conjures a filibuster of rage that expels him from the room, clearing it for the next gull: "What's your name?/*Ananias*: My name is Ananias. *Subtle*: Out, the varlet/That cozened the apostles! Hence, away!/Flee, mischief!/Had your holy consistory/No name to send me, of another sound, than wicked Ananias? (2.5.71-6).

While Subtle draws on his knowledge of the biblical Ananias to denigrate this one, it is the "sound" of the name that he emphasizes; while pretending to hate the sound, he treats it like a thing, pivoting off it into his own sonic anger, expelling Ananias so that he will grow desperate and cough up more money for the philosopher's stone: "This will fetch 'em/And make 'em haste towards their gulling more" (2.5.87-8). Later, listening to Surly, disguised as a Spanish don, Face undergoes a similar sonic epiphany: "*Mi vida*? 'Slid, Subtle, he puts me in mind o'the widow./What dost thou say to draw her to't, ha?" (4.3.63-4). The final scheme that propels the end of the play, the use of Dame Pliant as a draw for the Don and his eventual unmasking as Surly, is invented on a whim in response to a throwaway bit of dialogue. Crucially, the rogues do not understand Spanish, meaning that Face hears "mi vida" as pure sound, supplying the meaning and the use himself.

One final example crystallizes both improvisatory modes explored in this section, the spatial and the linguistic. Promising to conjure for Drugger an astrological sign that will tell his fortune, Subtle looks around the room, assembling the man himself from spare parts he spies in corners:

> He first shall have a bell, that's Abel;
> And by it standing one whose name is Dee,
> In a rug gown; there's D, and rug, that's Drug;
> And right anenst him, a Dog snarling 'er' –
> There's Drugger, Abel Drugger. That's his sign.
> And here's now mystery and hieroglyphic!
> Abel, thou art made (2.6.19-25)

Drugger is a cyborg, a patchwork of incongruent pieces that Subtle plucked from a quick sweep about the room – we can guess this from the ordinariness of the things, a bell, a gown, a dog. The passage of course wryly suggests that people are no more than this, as the earlier passage describing Dapper's paltry qualifications did, but unlike that passage

this one builds Drugger ecologically from local materials, with no pretensions to mastery or wholeness. Subtle also collapses language into sound yet again, treating all words as onomatopoeic – "Abel" is just "a bell." Material language is resituated as a building block for a hybrid, patchwork self, like Bailey's sartorial pastiche but free of market forces and upper class ennui; in this play people really "art made" and not born, reactive and not active, their agency always contingent on context and time.

b. Collaborative

Each of the gulls visits the titular alchemists to become unique, to sketch themselves in 3D against a flattening urban backdrop.[78] Their desires, while various, indicate this: the blessing of the Faery Queen, a princedom, the perfect shopfront, confirmation that their Puritanism makes them God's elect. Subtle asks of Kastril, "What's her brother? A knight?" to which Drugger replies, "No, sir, a gentleman newly warm in his land…and is come up…to carry quarrels,/As gallants do, and manage 'em by line" (2.6.56-64).[79] London is a kind of finishing school, supplying the behavioral codes befitting those "newly warm" in their position; the position itself isn't enough, contingent because bought with impersonal money. Along these lines, Sir Epicure Mammon imagines his own identity as the centerpiece of a sartorial pageant: "No more/Shall thirst of satin, or the covetous hunger/Of velvet entrails for a rude-spun cloak,/To be displayed at Madam Augusta's" (1.4.14-7). Clothing and display trope here again, in twin service of status, although Mammon takes it far enough to exempt human actors – the commodity takes on a life on its own, "velvet entrails" the only ones around. Face puns on Doll's name to tell the same story; her social appeal as the disguised Dame Pliant fuels her sexual attraction, so that she might "not be styled Doll Common, but Doll

Proper,/Doll Singular. The longest cut, at night, shall draw thee for his Doll Particular"

(1.1.177-9). It is the particularity, and not the pleasure, that is foregrounded here. This

shift is mirrored spatially: the gulls come in from the city, their ever-more-frequent

knocks evincing an almost desperate need to enter the securely particularizing confines of

domestic space.[80] The play's great irony is that the alchemists have filched that space

from the absent Lovewit, stripping it of its signifying function, and they use it to trick

each gull in the same way, bringing the city and its massifying logic indoors.

What's more, each gull imagines his reward in the form of a visual blazon, a

readable, confirmable mark that reifies the bearer. Mammon imagines the following

scene in his harem: "Then my glasses/Cut in more subtle angles, to disperse/And multiply

the figures as I walk/Naked between my succubae" (2.2.45-8). He struts a runway of

distinction, multiplying himself so that he might be seen – naked, his true essence in this

most private of chambers not requiring clothing – as much as possible. He does not care

about the illusory nature of the performance, or its dependence on mediation – sheer

volume is enough, a fantasy that a million flat mirrors might a round character make.

Similarly, Subtle tells Drugger that "In metoposcopy, which I do work by - /A certain star

i'the forehead, which you see not./Your chestnut or your olive-colored face/Does never

fail" (1.3.44-7), promising that one's fate, one's essence, was visible to the trained eye.[81]

We sense that it is simply to be told this, to be gazed upon by that eye, that draws

Drugger, as much as any improvement to his grocery shop.

The absurd futility of individuation is hammered home again and again in the

play, but nowhere is the satire so brutal as in the following description of Dapper,

> a special gentle
> That is the heir to forty marks a year,

> Consorts with the small poets of the time,
> Is the sole hope of his old grandmother,
> That knows the law and writes you six fair hands,
> Is a fine clerk and has his ciphering perfect,
> Will take his oath o'the Greek Xenophon
> If need be, in his pocket, and can court
> His mistress out of Ovid (1.2.50-8)

Purely external trappings define a "special" person here: one's money, one's position, one's skillset, one's textual knowledge.[82] The emphasis is on imitation, which fractures the self into a multiplicity of copies, "six fair hands" that "cipher." Participation in a market economy requires just this sort of skill, a mercurial adaptability that refuses settlement in a single subjective core.[83] "Courting" one's mistress "out of Ovid" mocks the Renaissance veneration of classical learning as a kind of slavish parroting, a ritual of courtship supplanting any kind of affective, personal attachment.

By contrast with the gulls, the alchemists operate collectively, pooling resources to process each would-be individual entering the house, slotting and filing them neatly – sans their cash – back onto the street.[84] The play opens with Face and Subtle quarreling, as they grudgingly suppress their individual desires for leadership of the group. Doll tells Subtle, "You must be chief, as if you only had/The powder to project with, and the work/Were not begun out of equality?/The venture tripartite? All things in common?" (1.1.133-5). This quarrel is important because it makes the "venture" an active choice, a sonic collective willingly embarked upon, at the temporary and difficult sacrifice of individual identity, rather than naturalizing it as the particular province of the poor or the grotesque. Face is quick to reintegrate the pair: "Now, do you see that something's to be done/Beside your beech coal and your cor'sive waters,/Your crosslets, crucibles, and cucurbites?/You must have stuff brought home to you to work on" (1.3.102-5). This

division of labor allows us to understand the referent of the play's title, *The Alchemist*, as an assemblage, a single being comprised of "tripartite" elements. Accordingly, Subtle tells the audience "We must keep Face in awe,/Or he will overlook us like a tyrant" (4.3.18-9), troping singularity with panoptic vision, but rejecting it as inefficient and stultifying.

Moreover, as opposed to the optical bent of the gulls' fantasies, the rogues' schemes are consistently sonic. The play quickly establishes the materiality of sound, as Subtle says of goading Face about his lowly origins, "I only used those speeches as a spur/To him" (1.1.158-9), literally jolting his recalcitrant body into action. To that body he also says "I'll thunder you in pieces. I will teach you/How to beware to tempt a Fury again/That carries tempest in his hand and voice," to which Face rejoins, "The place has made you valiant" (1.1.59-63). Sound is given its three central attributes here: 1.) material, able to fragment an individual from within, into "pieces," 2.) impersonal, as Subtle momentarily impersonates a "Fury" to summon its sonic power, and 3.) spatially-inscribed, since "the place," a formerly domestic space emptied of its master – a good metonym for all of early seventeenth century London– renders sound newly appropriable.[85]

The rogues speak in short, controlled bursts, thunderclaps. *The Alchemist* has no soliloquies, no grand speeches of intent or motivation, no interiority. It is a depthless world, and the rogues respond by fusing sonic assemblages designed to sweep matter rather than stimulate minds. Even when arguing, Subtle and Face link their words, alliteratively and metrically syncing their insults into a single line of iambic pentameter:

Subtle: Cheater!
Face: Bawd!

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Subtle:                    Cowherd!
Face:                         Conjurer!
Subtle:                              Cutpurse! (1.1.107)
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Toward the gulls, the pair use a springboard effect, with the words of each propelling the

other forward in a rhythmic pattern:

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Subtle:   The pleasures of a countess! To be courted –
Face:     And kissed, and ruffled!
Subtle:                          Ay, behind the hangings.
Face:     And then come forth in pomp!
Subtle:                          And know her state!...
Face:                          And has her pages, ushers,
          Footmen, and coaches –
Subtle:                     Her six mares –
Face:                          Nay, eight! (4.4.40-6)
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Excitement mounts as they speak, each new idea leaping off the last while carrying the

whole verbal assemblage forward in a palimpsest of dazzling yet controlled energy, in

perfect iambs that cannot but overwhelm their interlocutors, who are bowled over by the

sonic assault. Such speech is sound transformed, worked upon by the craft of the rogues;

in other words, it is the real alchemy of the play.

Before exploring its linguistic tenor, it's worth probing what alchemy purports to

do. It claims to purify matter, removing the dross to leave only the rarefied spirit, or true

essence, free of the particulate tying it to the gross body and the material world. It seeks

to uncover the philosopher's stone, which can turn base metals to gold, and provide

perpetual life for the bearer, thus absenting him from the material decay that is death.[86] It

posits a telos for objects, which have Platonic forms embedded within them that must be

drawn out by careful labor. In effect, this process mirrors the individuation sought by the

city dwellers, who view London as a roiling mass of indistinction, the alchemical

particulate they wish purified from their unique spirits. As Subtle puts it,

> Nature doth first beget th'imperfect; then
> Proceeds she to the perfect. Of that airy
> And oily water, mercury is engendered;
> Sulfur o'the fat and earthy part – the one
> Which is the last supplying the place of male,
> The other of the female, in all metals.
> Some do believe hermaphrodeity,
> That both do act and suffer. But these two
> Make the rest ductile, malleable, extensive (2.3.158-66)

The passage begins with separation, the alchemical ideal of pure gold and perpetual life, but ends in imbrication, the "hermaphrodeity" of all things, passive and active, air and earth, male and female.[87] Rather than transcending matter, then, all things bear the traces of what they are made of – they are palimpsests, whose mottled origin opens out onto further "malleability," change and porous openness. The rogues' story is told in miniature here; they promise the extraction of "perfect" individuals, but always collapse such distinction into a sweeping broom of mutually-implicating sound.[88]

Each of the gulls stresses their aversion to the mediating tools of alchemy, wanting just the thing itself as emblem of particularity. Mammon tells Face, "Thou shalt be the master/Of my seraglio. Good, sir. But do you hear?/I'll geld you, Lungs." (2.2.32-4). He needs Face's help, of course, to manage his women, but wants to castrate him in a fantasy of the pure mediator, which *pace* Heisenberg doesn't interfere with the merchandise. Even toward his pillow, Mammon "will have all my beds blown up, not stuffed;/Down is too hard" (2.2.41-2). He wants air over matter, an immaterial void that keeps his head floating on ether. Ananias the Puritan speaks tortuously, trying to wipe language clean of its pagan origins, refusing to name the days of the week: "About the second day of the third week/In the ninth month?" (3.2.131-2). Even Surly, the would-be chivalric hero of the play, tells Mammon "I'll have gold before you,/And with less danger

of the quicksilver/Or the hot sulfur" (2.3.286-8). Referring literally to alchemy's use of "quicksilver" and "sulfur," but punning on their other uses as treatments for venereal disease, Surly deflates Mammon's desires as doomed to the bodily mire of syphilis while still bracketing himself as worthy of transcendence.

By contrast, the alchemists turn their profession on its head, repeatedly bringing the body back into the rarefied discourse of the gulls. The particulate in their reactions is sonic, the material remainder of their linguistic conjurations.[89] Let me give an extended example. Mammon courts Doll in the guise of Dame Pliant, an aristocratic widow. Questioning her, he avers that "These answers speak your breeding and your blood" (4.1.42), foolishly equating sound with Derridean presence, as though her status and identity were manifest in her words. Spurred by this, he continues "Sweet madam, le' me be particular – *Doll*: Particular, sir. I pray you, know your distance" (4.1.77-8). Most literally she means "keep back," but we can tease out a deeper implication: Mammon should "know" that he is always "distant," never self-identical or "particular," as he uses borrowed language in a clichéd scene in a satire of love toward a woman who is only pretending. Doll enacts this philosophical coup by foregrounding the materiality of language, as breath: "This art, sir, i'your words/Calls your whole faith in question. *Mammon*: By my soul – *Doll*: Nay, oaths are made o'the same air, sir" (4.1.71-3). Mammon remains trapped in the prison-house of language, although this one has real bricks and mortar; even his spontaneous oath ("By my soul") is hackneyed, with no expressive potential because it too, like all words, is mere "breath," audible but asignifying. Language slides into sound over and over in *The Alchemist*, forestalling

presence not because language is always isolated from matter – as Derrida would have it – but precisely because it can only ever be part of it.

Such material embeddedness may foreclose identity, but it does not eclipse agency; the gulls use language as a blunt instrument, by temporarily adopting vocal disguises that become vectors of intent, shifting bodies. Subtle proclaims to Dapper: "Hoping that he hath vinegared his senses/As he was bid, the Faeiry Queen dispenses,/By me, this robe, the petticoat of Fortune,/Which that he straight put on she doth importune" (3.5.5-8). Here the "petticoat of Fortune" refers literally to the blindfold they use on Dapper, "vinegaring" his senses so that their ventriloquist act will work, but it also refers to their imminent disguises as the Queen herself and her interpreters. Once Dapper is blinded, Face tells him to "Keep nothing that is transitory about you (*Aside to Subtle*) Bid Doll play music" (3.5.30-1). Ironically, while insisting that the Queen will bless him if he gives up his money, that "transitory" element, it is really the Queen who is transitory, conjured in a purely sonic space to the blind Dapper who is already bewildered by the mystifying music. The rogues then parrot the Queen, claiming to interpret her alien sounds: "*Ti ti, ti ti to ta*! He does equivocate, she says" (3.5.41). Here, their sound fleeces Dapper of his coin, entering his body as fear and coercion; the overwhelming effect of the sonic performance strips Dapper from within by overloading his sensorium.[90]

c. Virtual

Space drove the last section, but this one takes up time, the ways the alchemists' poses morph faster than the gulls can keep up. Specifically, they take advantage of the temporality of sound, as an utterance or event with a limited duration. That duration is a space of movement, as sound waves travel outward from their source and finally

dissipate. Within each wave is the event-space itself, which is virtual – that is, the pure

potentiality of movement that, because sound materially alters its medium, affords the

real possibility of change without congealing into permanent identity. Brian Massumi

calls this soup of potentiality affect, which in its most basic sense is the ability of one

body to move or effect change upon others. In his words,

> The conversion of surface distance into intensity is also a conversion of the
> materiality of the body into an *event*. It is a relay between its corporeal and
> incorporeal dimensions. This is not yet a subject. But it may well be the conditions
> of emergence of a subject: an incipient subjectivity. Call it a 'self –.' The hyphen is
> retained as a reminder that 'self' is not a substantive but rather a relation (14)[91]

A body in motion is liminal, between identities which exist only as the "capture" of

impersonal affect. Sound is a privileged affective site because it is both material and

mobile, a wave that displaces air as it moves through it, opening a momentary zone of

relation not possible before or after. Unlike Dekker's gallant who remains a frozen

portrait on display at St. Paul's, the alchemists don and doff these "relational" selves at

will, freeing them to establish new zones of interconnectivity.

Virtuality helps us rethink the critical discourse on the play's temporality, which

leans heavily on Jonson's use of the neoclassical unities as a kind of clockwork

objectivity. Ian Donaldson avers that "the formal structure of the play embodies a more

regular, orderly, faithful view of human affairs, depicting a world amenable to

explanation…a world aptly realized in the great figure of the clock" (105). John

Shanahan develops the point, arguing that Jonson constructs an impersonal, culture-less

space that anticipates developments in laboratory science: "The unity of time is so

extreme and literal, and makes such demands on the characters, that we can rightly liken

Subtle, Face, and the others to parts in a clockwork or cogs in a vast impersonal system"

(40). Problematically, these accounts foreclose agency, rendering the abstracted

playwright a deist clockmaker-god, his characters volitionless gears. Against such

determinism, which separates time and character as separate entities, one constricted by

the other's imposition, I argue that *The Alchemist* blends the two into a manipulable blur.

The rogues cheat their marks by stoking and deferring expectation, frustrating their

desires for synchronic pleasure; their own disguises, moreover, are fleeting iterations that

stretch the same con diachronically, affording an agency (un)grounded in motility,

avoiding the paralysis of selfhood.

The limited duration of the alchemists' scheme is declared right from the start:

"Though we break up a fortnight, 'tis no matter" (1.1.188). By contrast, the hopefuls

seek to master time by fixing it in an eternal present of enjoyment, power, and

knowledge; Mammon will "then renew/Our youth and strength by drinking the

elixir,/And so enjoy a perpetuity/Of life and lust" (4.1.163-6). On the opposite side of the

social register, but with tellingly similar desires, the Puritans Tribulation Wholesome and

Ananias believe that, secure in their fates as God's elect, time has already stopped for

them. They want an earthly reflection of this fixed security: "We may be temporal lords

ourselves, I take it" (3.2.52). Subtle flatters their desire, explicitly contrasting the stability

they seek with their former, temporally-bound religious practice:

> You may be anything, and leave off to make
> Long-winded exercises or suck up
> Your 'ha!' and 'hum!' in a tune. I not deny
> But such as are not graced in a state
> May…get a tune to call the flock together –
> For, to say sooth, a tune does much with women
> And other phlegmatic people; it is your bell (3.2.53-60)

Subtle promises them exemption from time, a static mastery without need to constantly

interpellate new followers with "a tune," a device foregrounding sound's temporality

even while troping it with tedium, "long-winded exercises." To be in the world, Subtle

says implicitly, is to live in time, with unfulfilled needs that drift beyond control,

requiring constant maintenance. The alchemists by contrast embrace the iterable nature of

experience: "For look how oft I iterate the work,/So many times I add unto his virtue"

(2.3.106-7). Doing something again is additive, a sedimentary model that (as Judith

Butler has shown in the realm of gender, for example), offers subversive agential

potential by dragging into time – and thus change – things that otherwise seem

immutable.[92]

Surly, too, believes in synchronic time, but his invokes the permanence of the

sign. Having cozened the cozeners with his Spanish disguise, revealing their fraud, Surly

makes a long Marlovian speech of triumph, in a gesture that typically would end the play

and restore order, tying events in a final linguistic bow. Face, however, shatters the

atemporality of the monologue by simply leaving halfway through: "I've found from

whence your copper rings and spoons/Come now, wherewith you cheat abroad in

taverns…Then weeps Mammon;/Then swoons His Worship. Or he is the Faustus, [*Face

slips out*]/That casteth figures, and can conjure, cures/Plague, piles, and pox by the

ephemerides" (4.6.35-8). Surly so securely believes words fix, that the world operates by

calls and responses with clearly delineated boundaries, that he literally cannot grasp

Face's departure.[93] The irony doubles as Surly mocks Subtle's "ephemerides" at the very

moment Face proves them more real than Surly's false transcendence. Face, always

attuned to the virtuality of sound over the stasis of discourse, thus enacts another deferral, reopening the play for its final act where he will retune events one last time.

4. Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, I've sought to redirect our London thinking toward the phenomenological interface of body and world. A congeries of new, dissonant sounds generated by the metropolis wedged a new layer of mediation between self and environment, spawning anxieties about alienation and unmeaning but also new possibilities for meaningful interaction. By centering a reparative reading on the technological praxis of sound, I've tried to complicate the sensorial crisis narrative proffered by many scholars of early modern London, and round out accounts of social practice that focus only on the culturally-appropriate behaviors associated with particular urban spaces and the catch-and-release game these practices played with power. Moreover, my reading of instrumental sound figures an alternative to such classic accounts of urban subjectivity as Georg Simmel's "blasé" attitude, wherein an individual shores up interiority by blunting her receptive faculties to the siege of external stimuli. The urbanite "develops an organ protecting him from against the threatening currents and discrepancies of his external environment which would uproot him" (13), contracting herself into an affect-proof bunker. In contrast, by becoming willing antennas for the cacophony of London sounds, an epidemiological spread not unlike the plague forming the backdrop for *The Alchemist*, Jonson's rogues achieve a communally porous but consistent agency that is temporarily individual but never personal. Such agency shares certain similarities with clothing – namely, a patchwork iterability and the constitution of inner essence from the outside – but exists in an ontological event-space free from

exchange-value and the need for ritual, social confirmation. If, as Face reminds us, the myriad phenomena of seething London "Would burst a man to name" (2.3.198), then *The Alchemist* is a handbook for burst men, who find the capacity to *do* in the labile space beyond the fixity of naming, establishing a file-sharing community four centuries before MP3 files and ironic usernames.

The play's denouement offers one final turn of the screw. On the surface, the ending seems rather conservative. Lovewit, master of the house, unexpectedly returns early from the country to opportunistically claim Kastril's rich widowed sister for himself; Face confesses his crimes and is forgiven; Subtle and Doll are driven from the house; social hierarchy and domestic privacy are restored at last. Despite noting the "poetic justice" foiled when the passive Lovewit scoops spoils he didn't win, Andrew Gurr claims that virtual identity resolidifies: Face "can only return to his former role as Jeremy, Lovewit's butler" (14). However, Face himself suggests that "Jeremy" is just another guise, older and better-practiced but no closer to an original self: "I'll into mine old shape again, and meet him,/Of Jeremy, the butler" (4.7.120-1). Moreover, by reaping the profit Lovewit simply supplies the place of Subtle and Doll – the con itself is successful, regardless of the individuals carrying it off. The "venture" thus imparts a temporally distributed agency: an assemblage. According to Drew Daniel, "The coding and territorialization of an assemblage sustains its consistency across the ceaselessness of its own becoming…until its subpersonal components get reassembled into other forms and relationships" (11). Ironically, in this case the subpersonal elements are people. Lovewit instantly adopts the collaborative vocality of the venture by ceding his final speech to his servant, splicing the iambic pentameter just as Face and Subtle did before:

"Speak for thyself, knave. *Face*: So I will, sir" (5.5.157). Face's impromptu addendum

enacts one final shift from the visually signifying – the "kind spectators" Lovewit wanted

to confirm his innocence – to the sonically moving:

> I put myself
> On you, that are my country; and this pelf
> Which I have got, if you do quit me, rests
> To feast you often, and invite new guests (5.5.162-5)

Face pays the venture forward to the audience, aurally interpellated into the scheme, even

as he zooms beyond them too to those like me, centuries later, queued up waiting to enter

the house's – and the theater's – impersonal bowels. Knock knock.

III. "CHARNEL TALK": ECHOPOETICS AND *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI*

"What if death is nothing but sound? You hear it forever. Sound all around. How awful."

– Don Delillo, *White Noise*

"In politics diverse elements infiltrate into the others, metabolizing into a moving complex—Causation as resonance between elements that become fused together to a considerable degree. Here causality, as relations of dependence between separate factors, morphs into energized complexities of mutual imbrication and interinvolvement, in which heretofore unconnected or loosely associated elements fold, bend, blend, emulsify, and dissolve into each other…the electronic news media now serve as the echo chamber of this capitalist-evangelical complex"

– William E. Connolly, "The Evangelical-Capitalist Resonance Machine"

Delillo's Jack Gladney neatly voices contemporary fears about media oversaturation, by eliding the privileged category of "information" with its material substrate, sound. To be flooded with information is to die, that is to cease one's existence as an individuated pattern of data distinct from the noise. The buzzings finally level out into a steady, eternal monotone, reverberating "all around": echoic because eternally the same. Connolly calls the media assemblage producing these echoes a "resonance machine," which functions as a solvent of difference, sucking political screed, religious polemic, and sensational event alike into a single message, electronically pulsed into every capillary of the body politic. For both Gladney and Connolly, echoes figure the fatal erosion of content by form, as what was formerly a vibrant message becomes "just" sound. Echoes are, then, perhaps our sturdiest metaphor for always-already mediated communication: a scrub-wash of white noise foreclosing any real connection, a dead parody of lost originary truth.[94]

This chapter suggests that early moderns would hardly find Gladney and Connolly's warnings convincing. I'll argue that in the Renaissance echoes, far from being secondary, inert repetitions of "real" truth, were thought to be autonomous forces possessing the power to change and redirect received sounds in new, provocative directions. Echoes were *technological*, prosthetic devices for the amplification of voices beyond the contexts and spaces in which they were spoken. As such, echoes indexed contemporary anxieties about the individual's relationship to her voice, his body, and truth itself; such vocal portability was read by turns as opportunity and chaotic disturbance. The last chapter tapped the affordances of a London soundscape defined by overwhelming complexity, specifically the individual's capacity to temporarily adopt a sonic guise to spatially shift other bodies for various ends. This one expands on the last by charting the technological possibilities individual humans had to amplify their voices beyond their own bodies, particularly those provided by the stage. As such, echoic sound offered its human users a material agency, but only through articulation with the nonhuman; echoes are formed when human voice bounces off nonhuman, ambient material like stone or metal, producing a vocal product that is always both/and.

The chapter first examines the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century discourse about echoes, in both the original Ovidian myth and a spate of sermons and tracts that draw upon it. Though the *attitudes* of these texts toward echoes differ – some are anxious about the body/voice split, others celebrate its transformative power – their conclusions about the *nature* of echoes are the same. Echoes were not, as today, "dead" repetitions. They rather were *un*dead – that is to say, severed from the self-presence of a speaking body, yet still potent and motive. However, I must carefully distinguish such a

formulation from spectrality; these echoes were persistently material, able to make things

happen in the body politic, in God's ear, or the stage audience.[95] Such echoes thus

challenge Gladney and Connolly's denigration of materiality – raw sound – as the

leftover shell of evacuated informational content; *what* is spoken does not matter, only

the sonic residue of the speech act itself.

We're thus now able to theorize a Renaissance *echopoetics*, defined as the

strategic deployment of sound amplification technology to project, amplify, or distort

one's voice through its echo. My test case will be *The Duchess of Malfi*, in which the

titular Duchess is famously reduced to an echo heard by her husband after her murder in

the play's fourth act. Most critics assert that the fifth act undoes the radical feminism of

the living Duchess, located in her body; once dead, she's a mere specter, pliably molded

by her male interlocutors into the ideal Christian martyr and patient wife. In contrast, I

argue that the Duchess's death allows her voice to leave the realm of *content*, as decorous

manifestation of her social role – wife, ruler, aristocrat – and enter that of *form*, where the

echo retains a vibrant, material power to shape the action in the present. In this way, the

play mounts a feminist critique of the way bodies are fetishized both by early modern and

contemporary new materialist discourse. Assuming in the echo a reanimated form

normally allied with male writing – the "dead letter" – but shirking endless *différance*

because materially present as sound, the Duchess claims an agency not reducible to her

body alone. Such an agency retains all the power of a flat ontology, as in Ian Bogost's

words a "unit" free to "operate,"[96] but without the utopian insistence that all entities are

equivalent, which ignores the cultural discipline of women's bodies in lived reality.

Throughout, I use echoes to reframe our critical vocabulary for talking about voice. The deconstructive tradition where speech is troped with presence, origin, and meaning, supplanted by a lack-and-desire-inducing absence borne of signification, no longer obtains: echoes transcend their spoken origin while remaining materially present. The same sound returns from a new place. Instead, echoic sound participates in what Katherine Hayles describes as the technologically-catalyzed shift from presence/absence to pattern/randomness as *the* structuring binary of metaphysics; in the pattern/randomness paradigm, "meaning is not front-loaded into the system, and the origin does not act to ground signification…complexity evolves from highly recursive processes being applied to simple rules. Rather than proceeding along a trajectory toward a known end, such systems evolve toward an open future marked by contingency and unpredictability" (285). The "open future" is the ability of the resonating medium to transform the message; spoken voice is "unpredictable" in that it may echo in unforeseen directions, or be warped by that which it encounters after leaving the body: empty canyon, stone theater walls, or even another person. These strange encounters facilitate not alienation, but emergence, as entities recombine in generative new ways.

1. Echo Texts

The figure of Echo would have been a newly resonant one for those living in the late sixteenth century, as Arthur Golding's immensely popular 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English brought her to a much wider audience. While in subsequent centuries the figure of Echo has been overshadowed by her mythmate Narcissus, it is provocative that two such figures – associated respectively with the ear and the eye – are originally brought together, even juxtaposed. Joseph Loewenstein argues that while other

Renaissance deployments of Echo used her for all manner of antiauthoritarian purposes, the translations of Ovid moralized her story as an allegory of punished flattery: "The moral tradition…survives wherever the vernacular Ovids continue to be produced; Golding and Sandys maintain this tradition in England" (74).[97] While in this version Echo's immodesty draws censure, by reading the myth literally rather than archetypally, she emerges as a more sympathetic and powerful character. Alongside the allegorical tradition, I contend that Echo also supplied early moderns a way to conceptualize sound as both technological and relational, and thus counterposed to the reflexivity of the eye.[98] In other words, the myth invites consideration of Echo and Narcissus's relationship as representative of that between sound and vision.

In Ovid's tale, Echo falls in love with Narcissus, but cannot make him notice her because she can speak only in response, and Narcissus becomes too transfixed by his own image to interact with her. Echo's affliction – her inability to speak except to repeat the last few words of another – is originally a punishment:

> The cause thereof was Junos wrath. For when that with the feate
> She might have often taken Jove in daliance with his Dames,
> And that by stealth and unbewares in middes of all his games:
> This elfe would with hir tatling talke deteine hir by the way,
> Untill that Jove had wrought his will and they were fled away.
> The which when Juno did perceyve, she said with wrathfull mood,
> This tongue that hath deluded me shall doe thee little good (3.450-6)

Echo here is associated with mediation; she prevents Juno from apprising herself of Jove's "daliance." Moreover, that mediation is sonic, as her "tatling talke [deteines]" Juno. The content of the talk is here irrelevant; merely the act of speech, its tangible presence as sound to be reckoned with, is enough to divert Juno from her course. Echo's motivation for this is never given; she isn't described as Jove's lover or in any way

personally involved in the scene, prompting the conclusion that she obstructs for sheer obstruction's sake. And indeed, even the location of this anecdote in the larger story figures as interference; it is Echo's backstory, which is spliced into the middle of the narrative that heretofore has shadowed Narcissus, interrupting its chronological course. Echoic sound, then, from its classical beginnings is interference channeled through a medium, which possesses the autonomous power to inflect or block information.

Again, the myth originally casts Echo's reflexivity as a punishment. It forces her into a kind of environmental openness, as she is not capable of projecting or asserting herself onto other bodies, only responding to their stimulus. However, that response is not merely passive reproduction of data. The process is algorithmic, meaning that each functional iteration slightly modifies the words spoken. More importantly, it leaves the terms of that modification up to Echo – the mediating technology – herself. Specifically, she is able to use Narcissus's very words in new contexts and arrangements, transforming their meaning. When Narcissus scorns her, "And sayth: I first will die ere thou shalt take of me thy pleasure./She answerde nothing else thereto, but take of me thy pleasure" (3.487-8). His words are twisted from a rebuke into an invitation, as the referenced body shifts – his to hers – even in the act of speech. Again, Ovid doesn't describe her reply as rote recitation; "answerde" connotes agency and choice. Moreover, the lack of quotation marks bleeds her response into the narration, as though the sound of her reply transcends mere phrasing, imprinting her into the story's very blueprint.

For all her clever repurposing, though, Narcissus ultimately chooses his own reflected image over the living Echo. In our own time, that story has anchored countless others, from psychoanalytic disorders to jeremiads against the Twitter-sphere, which I

will not add to here.[99] In fact, those thinkers themselves enact a Narcissian reflexivity by

excising Echo from the story, as her bereavement forms the narrative's final affective

crux.[100] His unwillingness and inability to call to her, or in our material reading the

absence of environmental stimulus, causes Echo to shrivel and die:

> And ever sence she lyves alone in dennes and hollow Caves.
> Yet stacke hir love still to hir heart, through which she dayly raves
> The more for sorrow of repulse. Through restlesse <u>carke</u> and care
> Hir bodie pynes to skinne and bone, and waxeth wonderous bare.
> The bloud doth vanish into ayre from out of all hir veynes,
> And nought is left but voyce and bones: the voyce yet still remaynes:
> Hir bones they say were turnde to stones. From thence she lurking still
> In Woods, will never shewe hir head in field nor yet on hill.
> Yet is she heard of every man: it is hir onely sound,
> And nothing else that doth remayne alive above the ground. (3.492-500)

Again the myth positions Echo and the sound she embodies as a relational being;

Narcissus's failure to speak gives her no material to transform and resonate outward. But,

while the myth clearly prompts us to feel sorry for the victimized Echo, as the

inaccessible Other desire can never reach, the story actually ends with her survival, even

permanence. "Her bones they say were turnde to stones," stone being perhaps the most

resonant of all natural materials, and "they say" suggesting the successful migration of

her resounding voice beyond the scene itself. In a book about constant change,

metamorphosis, the endurance of voice is especially striking. Despite "never shewing her

head," she "is heard of every man," and "nothing *else*…doth remayne alive above the

ground," suggesting both that her voice is still alive, and that ground, a material medium,

is required for its transference. Echo's body, then, I suggest is not so much lost as

transformed, into sound itself, thereby freed to resonate in *other* contexts. Thus, it does

not signal a transcendence of materiality into spectrality, but rather a shift into the realm

of pattern, as a self-organizing complexity. She is both dead and alive, *un*dead.

Early moderns picked up on this sense of Echo as a refracting medium, and indeed she became a powerful locus of contemporary anxieties about the transgressive power of female speech, what Gina Bloom calls "the disembodied voice as a source of female agency" (160).[101] A prime example is Giacomo Affinati's 1605 dialogue *Dumbe speaker of Diuinity, A learned and excellent treatise, in praise of silence*, which cites echoes as dangerous misrepresentations of (male) truth. In his definition, "Eccho is the resounding of the voyce, or of a noyse formed in concaue places & cauerny, & rebounding thence back again, such as perchance are the vallies, among the mountains or stony places, & it hath this property: that if you sing, it sings again, if you lament, it lamenteth…and in breefe, it is a counterfetting Ape of the voyce of man." "Concaue places and cauerny" recalls both the larynx and the womb, troping both with a paradoxically passive generativity linked also with natural spaces that amplify and redirect voice. Anxiety about the primacy of the human also haunts Affinati's account; humans are associated with willed self-presence, manifest in their speech, such that any mere repetition isn't only false – "counterfetting" – but "Ape"ish, pure unthinking mechanism. Echo thus represents a threat to the logocentric tradition – explicitly linked to male speech in Ovid's myth and to humanity proper in Affinati's dialogue – by establishing a quite literally monstrous feminine linked to the dead yet somehow still circulating voice, severed from its body but still agential and disruptive.

Affinati's warning against repetition redoubles as he proceeds to associate echoes with flattery, defined as a knowing recapitulation of others' words to affirm and please:

> It is to be noated, that as the Eccho neuer answeres where a firme voyce is made, or when one smiteth, but as it were a far off, and in a contrary or ouerthwart place: Euen so the flatterer shapes his blow, & formes the appearance of faire

words, in the eye only of him he flatters, but else-where it resoundeth, in a further place it reuerberates, and the intention is in a quite contrary kind

Here the mistrust of mediation returns, as echoes warp their catalyzing voices into other spaces, disrupting the logocentric association of bodies with sincere speech flowing cleanly from them as their truest manifestation. Echo is also striking, a "blow" that "smitheth," again described as a kind of technological tool-being. As Kim Solga writes, "An echo is a sound negative: speech in the act of disappearing, the sound of sound going missing, the sound of the origin as unstable ground" (102). "Unstable ground" indeed; echoes trouble phenomenologies of space, presenting bodies where they are not, in subversive parodies of intention.

In a different key, Echo was also a fruitful figure for religious thinking, representing the ideal parishioner who had properly received the word of God and whose body resonated it outward as a sign. Ramie Targoff writes that "the English liturgy was designed to connect the faculty of hearing to its cognitive and spiritual counterparts" (23). English vicars imagined their sermons as seeds planted by God in the ears of their congregations, who must correctly calibrate those ears to receive and act on the given wisdom.[102] However, echoes could also turn such wisdom to account, as piety acquired through listening then grounded spoken petitions to God for aid. Anglican minister and later Archbishop of Canterbury George Abbot avers in his 1600 *Exposition on the Prophet Jonah* that "publike prayers are much worth, which comming ioyntly from whole congregations, will eccho vp to the heauen, and pierce the clouds and sky, and as a man may say, will offer a kind of violence, to that God who did make vs. It will wring mercie, and wrest louing kindnesse from him." This is quite a surprising statement for a Protestant. Far from the inward communion with God that replaces Catholic ceremony,

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here the linked chain of vocal bodies gain agential power only in their outward

collectivity, with each praise a simultaneous echo of all the others. Such public speech

gains a literally material force, turning the tables on God who is forced into the *listening*

rather than the speaking role, given a tangible body vulnerable to the aural intrusion of

his worshippers. Kindness and mercy are "[wrung]" and "[wrested]" from his ear by the

directed force of resounding echoes. Abbot's hesitation before the word "violence" is

also notable; he hedges the word as something "a man may say," as if the idiomatic

expression is all his fallen state can conjure. The statement is thus itself an echo,

secondhand, a translation of an unrepresentable process into our imperfect language –

translational, technological. Abbot endorses the power of Echo, rather than denigrating it

as Affinati does, but their accounts both depict echoes as vectored sonic tools detachable

from the original speech giving them life. This discourse of prosthetic sound also haunts

Elizabethan and Jacobean England's most prominent resonator: the theater. It is there we

turn next, through the example of *The Duchess of Malfi*, which likewise positions the

echo as a pointedly mediated, disruptively autonomous sound.

2. The Resonating Stage

     The Duchess of Malfi self-consciously takes its theatrics for thematics; the play is

rife with spectacles from severed hands to wax figures to elaborate dances set to music.

Critics argue that the play actually mobilizes these spectacles in an *anti*theatrical critique

of artifice, as an obstacle to "real," inner truth; Ferdinand and Bosola's dissembling

ultimately destroys the Duchess's integrity. Andrea Henderson contends that the play

endorses the burgeoning premium on privacy born of print culture, and thus

paradoxically must cancel itself, as publically displayed spectacle; in her words, "this

play, for all its spectacular qualities, is in fact anti-theatrical and reflects a movement

toward a literary culture which privileges private reading" (206). Katherine Rowe makes

a similar argument by way of epistemology, averring that the play indexes contemporary

anxieties about the hidden motives of agents in a newly-contractual society: "The specific

form these problems take in *The Duchess of Malfi* is the task of explaining actions

performed at a distance, by proxy, or through intermediation" (100). Crucially, she links

this anxiety to a redoubled distrust of theatre; her central example is the stock stage trope

of the severed hand, which Bosola calls an "engine": "Bosola develops a…reading of

'engine' as stage machinery: describing the marriage that will unfold, will she nil she, to

remake the Duchess into her own monument" (96). In essence, then, these critics base

their readings on the presence/absence binary as sketched above, with malicious artifice

willfully obscuring the "present" truth of the Duchess's embodied honesty. By contrast, I

propose that by reconsidering *The Duchess of Malfi* through the conceptual lens of

pattern/randomness, these problems become opportunities as theatre's artifice becomes

technology, its falsehood prosthesis. By loosening the theater's association with truth and

meaning, we may chart instead its affective power to unsettle and remake its audience

through technologically manipulated sound.

Recent theatrical scholarship grounds such a move. Henry Turner has described

the theater in algorithmic terms, and it is worth quoting him at length on the subject:

> For early modern writers the problem of the "fictive," or the "imaginary" and
> "invented," fell within the larger problem of the relationship between "art and
> nature," which itself formed the discursive domain for many arguments that we
> would today describe as "scientific" or "technological"; the antitheatrical
> arguments we know from Shakespeare's period may be understood as anti-
> "technological" arguments, in the sense that they object to the unnaturalness of
> *ars* or artifice implied by acting on stage. With this view in mind, I now propose
> that we approach the early modern theatre as a kind of machine with which to

fashion or project artificial life, and that these forms of artificial life provide an example of…a posthuman condition" (204)

In Turner's model, the early modern theater was informational, in the literal sense of giving form: it spliced diverse material elements into a common code that served as a structural blueprint, producing a tangible, "real" product out of abstract data. Steven Mullaney reaches a similar conclusion, dubbing the theater a "laboratory of human affect. Elizabethan theater comes into being, in fact, through an affective reformation…enacted as it shifted away from the morality tradition of late medieval English drama, with its abstract personification of states of being, and moved toward the particular, discursive, and theatrical embodiment of affective characters" (881). "Particular," "embodied," "real": the theater offers a permutational grid of abstract possibilities that are nonetheless materially singular. What is unique, then, about the early modern theater is its coagulation of multiple "falsities" in constructing the real; a performance is both organic and mechanical, alive and dead, singular and rehearsed, such that deconstructive criticism hinging on the presence/absence binary cannot fully account for it.

Moreover, the theater figures the seamless articulation of human life with technology; actors form but one node in the network of performance, their movements dictated by scripts, through props, inside a demarcated zone, enmeshing them in a larger assemblage. This formulation remarkably anticipates Hayles's argument about the "posthuman condition" by four hundred years. In fact, her description of what happens when a human user engages a digital system bears uncanny parallels to early modern theater experience: "When a text presents itself as a constantly refreshed image rather than as a durable inscription, transformations can occur that would be unthinkable if matter or energy, rather than informational patterns, formed the primary basis for the

systemic exchanges. This textual fluidity, which users learn in their bodies as they interact with the system, implies that signifiers flicker rather than float" (30) Hayles, usually wary of the ways information brackets its material substrate, here emphasizes the emergent possibilities as user and data corporeally fuse. Theatrical performance works likewise, through iteration: each performance is unique because its constituent elements are "constantly refreshed," as actors perform their coding with slight but significant differences each time.

With this framework in place, we may now hazard some conjecture about how sound would have functioned in theatrical space. Namely, sounds would not have secured the organic self-presence of their generating body – actor or device – but would have been (and, perhaps more importantly, *been perceived as*) material effects of the mechanism that was theatre. In other words, *all* theatrical sound was echoic, that is, un-original, un-dead, mediated. Andrew Gurr has demonstrated that early modern audiences would have approached plays as primarily aural events, noting "their habitual assumption that poetry was words for speech rather than the page…Education and literacy were still rare enough and the price of books high enough to make the spoken word far more the central mode of communication than it is now" (97).[103] Playgoers would thus be especially attuned to the sonic makeup of the plays they heard, sensitive, even vulnerable, to minute changes. As Allison Deutermann writes, "theatrical speech…might be imagined either as sound that penetrates the self regardless of its content or as something that can be sampled and selected according to its sense" (231). This possible penetration puts the audience in a double bind, forced to screen what they hear to keep critical distance, but also unsure of the extent to which they may already have been

compromised. They too, then, help comprise theatre's echoic nature, as both discrete and enmeshed, self-regulating against environmental noise *and* secondhand transmitters of resonating sound they did not produce. Again, questions of origin and truth cede to those of effect.

The Blackfriars theater, where *The Duchess of Malfi* was first performed, would have produced a particularly echoic sound. It was made of stone, rather than the Globe's wood. Bruce Smith tells us that "Stone walls are even more reflective of sound than wood and plaster, returning 98 to 99 percent of the energy waves that strike them. Paved flooring is almost as reflective, returning 97 percent of sound waves…Judged by its outer shell, the Blackfriars theater would have been a very 'live' space" (214). "Live" connotes movement, the circulation of sound throughout the edifice. Smith goes on to say that "In its shape the Blackfriars theater fostered a very different kind of sound than the Globe. However stage, galleries, and open seating may have been configured, the Blackfriars was a rectilinear space. As such, it *dispersed* sound waves throughout the room rather than *focusing* them in the center" (216). The Globe's octagonal structure refracted all sound toward the middle, meaning that its sonic effects were singular, whole, merely *amplified* extensions of what came from the stage. Blackfriars sound was by contrast diffracted, disorienting, centrifugal, making it much harder to link sound to a speaking body, and much easier to isolate it as an autonomous force with its own character. In short, the Blackfriars was an echoic space, actively transforming received sounds by re-cycling them. Intriguingly, Webster specifically wrote *The Duchess of Malfi* for this theater, after the chilly reception of *The White Devil* in the public playhouses. While Gurr claims this was for class reasons – the masses couldn't appreciate Webster's complex art

– I suggest that Webster may also have chosen a stage whose sonic properties suited his main character, who becomes a literal echo by the play's end.[104]

3. Duchess of Malfi…Still?

The foregoing discussion demonstrates that *The Duchess of Malfi* attends to echoes as both its manifest content – the plotted events on stage – and form – its sounds would resonate crazily in the Blackfriars, leaving the audience no choice but to consider sound *qua* sound. The resonating device – theater walls, actor's body – replaces the originating one as the agential force. We are now ready to discuss the play's own treatment of echoes, which offer a neat heuristic for critical attitudes toward the Duchess as both character and play. In 1938 Edgar Wind noted the relationship between echoes and death, in a reading of the ruin scene where Antonio and Delio "hear" the Duchess's echo after her death: "What the ruin is to the sense of sight, the echo is to the sense of hearing: a faint reflection of the past. A ruin 'lives' as long as it yields an echo" (259). While this reading grants the possibility that the Duchess might still survive, it hedges that possibility by casting survival as a lessening, into a "faint reflection" of her former self. Indeed, the quotation marks around 'lives' invite us to consider the Duchess's longevity as tragically specious. Nevertheless, Wind introduces a question that reverberates through the play's critical history: does the Duchess survive her death? And if so, in what form? In several more recent treatments, that question becomes another: is the autonomy the Duchess gains to choose her mate and administer her affairs killed with her? If so, what are the implications for a feminist reading of the play? The echo almost always assumes a prominent place in this debate, allowing us a vantage point from which to survey its current state.

Most critics take our modern suspicion of echoes as evidence that the Duchess loses her sway post-mortem. Elizabeth Oakes asserts that "When she is reduced to an echo at the end, the Duchess is silenced like so many women in early modern drama" (63). Echo here is "reduction," "silence" because the "real" Duchess, imagined to be an originary, volitional speaker, is no longer speaking. That self-creation is a liberal humanist one, *ex nihilo*, and as such Oakes takes the Duchess's late-game reassertion of her social role as backsliding: "At the end she is, she says, the Duchess of Malfi, and with that title she negates her relationship with Antonio: she becomes the woman carved in stone that Ferdinand wanted her to be" (52). Brian Chalk extends the stone imagery, arguing that Ferdinand and the Cardinal attempt to render the Duchess a living monument, extending their own lives into posterity: "just as monuments are meant to compensate for the loss of the dead that they represent, the echo creates the impression that some form of posthumous communication is possible. But what Antonio hears is the reverberation of his own voice returning back to him in distorted form" (399). Stones and the echoes they produce offer nothing but flattered vanity. Reina Green shifts focus to echo as the reproduction of received truth, at least granting that the Duchess herself speaks: "The Duchess may be punished because she listens too well to Antonio and Bosola and ignores the advice of her brothers, but after death she behaves as the ideal listening wife, echoing her husband's words" (467). While Green rightly points out the role of listening, we've already noted that the play's staging at the sound-dispersing Blackfriars complicates the listener's autonomy as a discerning filter. Those audiences would thus have a harder time endorsing good listening ability *within* the play as well. Thus, to "echo" her husband's words does not, as Green argues, make the Duchess a

passive receptacle, but gives her materially signifying power through resonance technology.

In contrast with such readings, I argue that the Duchess espouses an echopoetic sensibility from the beginning. First, I show that while prior readings of the play vaunt the Duchess's integrity and self-will, these are not her defining qualities. In fact, just the opposite: she thinks of herself as a distributed entity, her selfhood dispersed throughout the people and places she interacts with. By contrast, the men who seek to control her, her brothers and Bosola, rigidly maintain an ideology of discrete, self-enclosed selfhood. The contrast between sound and vision subtends this dichotomy; the Duchess thinks of herself in sonically mobile terms, while the men trope their judgment and identity with the objectifying power of their eyes. Second, I demonstrate that the play imagines its sound entirely in echoic terms, through the use of rumor. Rumor is repeated information that escapes its point of origin, just as echo is. While the play's men seek to shore up their own identities by gathering and deploying the secrets of others, rumor's ubiquity ultimately compromises their integrity from within. Finally, I explore the well-known "echo scene" as less a translation or reduction of the Duchess, and thus an interpretive crux, and instead merely a compressed example of the play's already-dominant topos. Throughout, I foreground the overt theatricality of the play's echoic moments, and the way its technological discourses always also refer to the theatrical apparatus itself.

4. The Extended Duchess

Before addressing the Duchess's apotheosis as The Echo, and the alleged changes to her feminist praxis, we need to establish just what that praxis is. Critical accounts of the play cite the Duchess's integrity as her key virtue. This integrity is literal; the

Duchess finds power and identity in her own body and will, rather than obedience to her social role or the various men that structure it. Historically-minded versions of this argument commonly cite the special prerogatives granted to widows to administer their own estate,[105] and/or the theatrical precedent of the self-actualizing male tragic hero,[106] to ground the Duchess's radical challenge to Renaissance patriarchy. With respect to these arguments, which outline crucial byways and sites by which patriarchy was and is contested, I take an entirely different tack, arguing that in fact it is the Duchess's distribution, rather than her enclosure, that defines her strength. The Duchess practices what philosophers Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers call "extended cognition," using her surroundings and other people as storage devices for her secrets, bearers of her reputation, and heuristics by which to think and make decisions.[107] In fact her male counterparts, Ferdinand, the Cardinal, and Bosola, kill her for that very reason, because they imagine their own blood as hers and thus cannot brook class impurities (in Ferdinand and the Cardinal's case) or believe women to be dangerously dissembling (in Bosola's). It is they, I will show, not she, who defend a notion of self as defensively bounded.

Critical accounts of the Duchess routinely cycle through the same key passages, which seem to forcefully establish the Duchess's independent will, and so accordingly I'll examine them as well, to make a case for the Duchess as a transembodied, piecemeal figure. Famously, she proclaims to Antonio her iconoclastic freedom from the yoke of her dead husband, located in her body:

> This is flesh and blood, sir;
> 'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster
> Kneels at my husband's tomb.
> Awake, awake, man!

> I do here put off all vain ceremony,
> And only do appear to you a young widow
> That claims you for her husband, and, like a widow,
> I use but half a blush in 't (1.1.454-60)[108]

The passage hinges on the contrast between her corporal body and the "figure" that submits to its socially prescribed role, but who is that figure? The referent is immediately unstable; does she mean her husband, who kneels before God? Her own figure on her husband's monument, ossifying her into obedient submission for all time? Or does she mean her actual self, forced to pay tribute to her late husband in the living death of widowhood? It isn't so easy to call the passage an encomium to presence; even the famous lines where the Duchess dismisses all without the circumference of her love bond with Antonio – "All discord, without this circumference,/Is only to be pitied and not feared" (1.1.470-1) – also refers to the wedding ring she gives him, an external, material circumference that frames them only in relation to a nonhuman synecdoche that echoes the "real thing." This is borne out as the Duchess discards one role for another, "putting off the vain ceremony" of grief for the freedom of widowhood, but both are roles. And indeed, since early modern stages featured very little scenery, speech was of prime importance for establishing character and scene.[109] The ring itself recalls the theater, the "Wooden O", substituting echoic metal and stone for a play staged at the Blackfriars. This faint reference to that theater recurs when the Duchess raises Antonio from his kneeling supplication at her feet: "This goodly roof of yours is too low built;/I cannot stand upright in't, nor discourse,/Without I raise it higher. Raise yourself,/Or, if you please, my hand to help you: so" (1.1.417-20). Equating the actual room with her husband's body, the Duchess imagines both as resonance chambers where her "discourse" will resound, just as the theater itself was for the actor playing her. Smith

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tells us that the Blackfriars, unlike the Globe, had a roof, adding to the pinballing

disarticulation of the sound circulating within.[110] Such sound is accordingly both inside

and outside Antonio's body, a spatial queering that enfolds both into the theatrical

assemblage of echoic sound.

　　　The Duchess links this sonically distributed selfhood with death, calling into

question assumptions about what exactly death meant for early moderns and for us. The

following exchange is typical:

> Antonio: Give him all.
> Duchess: All?
> Antonio: Yes, your excellent self.
> Duchess: In a winding sheet?
> Antonio: In a couple" (1.1.388-9)

While again, the most obvious reading here celebrates the Duchess's playful equation of

coupling with death as a coy maintenance of individuality, such a reading assumes that

death is a negative value, the loss of "real" life. The Duchess, perhaps recognizing that

the prospects for her life as an autonomous widow in sixteenth century Italy are grim,

embraces death as a dispersal of the discrete self into its surroundings, here Antonio's

body. In so doing, she participates in what Scott Dudley has called "the moment in

seventeenth-century culture when the corpse can be seen either as an object that has been

emptied of all subjectivity, as Protestant theology and the emerging scientific discourse

of anatomy claim, or as an object in which attenuated and even enhanced subjectivity and

agency still reside, as Catholic polemics about relics insist" (278). "Death" is thus a

signifying crux, uneasily suggesting both pure annihilation and motive force. The

Duchess combines both meanings into a kind of undeath, a perpetual motion (suggested

by the present-tense "winding" of the "sheet" she imagines herself wrapped in) linked to

the mechanism of many parts rather than the singular and ethereal *cogito*. Such a thinking

self is vulnerable in ways her newly-dispersed being is not. Take the moment she beholds

her husband and children supposedly dead, at which sight she invites death herself:

"That's the greatest torture souls feel in hell,/In hell: that they must live and cannot

die./Portia, I'll new-kindle thy coals again,/And revive the rare and almost-dead

example/Of a loving wife" (4.1.70-4). As before, the easy reading, that she seeks

annihilation, is belied by her citation of precedent. It was held that Marcus Brutus's wife

Portia killed herself when she learned of her husband's imminent defeat in battle, by

swallowing hot coals. By invoking Portia's example, the Duchess "revives" an "almost

dead" custom, circulating her death in a publically-legible lineage, while lending her

sacrifice meaning in the present. Once again, the meditating force, here the splicing of

real bodies into legend, eclipses the origin.

Moreover, that extended self is linked consistently to the sonic redirection we've

called the echoic. After they marry, the Duchess slyly goads Antonio that,

> Duchess: I now am blind.

> Antonio: What's your conceit in this?

> Duchess: I would have you lead your fortune by the hand
> Unto your marriage-bed./(You speak in me this, for we now are one)…
> Oh let me shroud my blushes in your bosom,
> Since 'tis the treasury of all my secrets" (1.1.495-504)

To marry is to lose the distinct perspective that vision provides, in favor of a conjoined

interiority that the Duchess links to voice. Antonio "speaks in [her]," even as *she* is the

one literally speaking, again subverting the question of origin. She voices his desire, but

that desire is enabled by her free choice to speak it. Married words are thus always

echoes, as each partner voices the other's self through the resonating medium of the

other's body.[111] The Duchess then links this echoic partnership to death; "shroud" connotes both the act of concealment and the sheet over a corpse. Recalling her image of coupling as a "winding sheet," to repose one's being in another is to cease living, because the "self" has become networked beyond recognizable boundaries.

The Duchess demonstrates this aural sensitivity throughout the play; when Ferdinand surprises her in her chamber, she's quite willing to hear his complaint: "I will plant my soul in my ears to hear you" (3.2.78). Such openness contrasts vividly with Ferdinand's closure; she cannot get him to accept that she is not a harlot, eventually interjecting "I pray, sir, hear me: I am married" (3.2.84). Even that marriage itself is a verbal concoction, as the Duchess defies canon law to declare *herself* wedded: "I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber/*Per verba de presenti* is absolute marriage" (1.1.479-80). We may be reminded here of J.L. Austin's "illocutionary acts," in which a thing is effected in the very act of verbalizing it; such is this marriage.[112] More interesting, though, is the contract's secondhand nature; the Duchess has "heard" that marriage can be spoken into being, demonstrating an ability to repurpose discourse from the masculine realm of law for her own domestic ends. Such repurposing skirts Derrida's critique of Austin, that speech does not ground the self-presence required to initiate an effect; the knowingly recycled legal talk gives the Duchess a curating, not an originating, agency.[113] Once more, voiced sound is transmuted into new purpose through a medium – in this case, the Duchess herself.

5. Many-Tongued Rumor

The subject of "having heard" allows us to pivot from the Duchess to her male interlocutors, who fear her sexual transgression primarily because the report will escape

and tarnish their own names. As such, the greatest enemy they can imagine is rumor, with its ability to infect the ears with contagious false truths. Keith Botelho has written of rumor's propensity to eclipse the intentions of its speakers: "Rumors, of course, begin with people, but their anonymous function disrupts notions of an originary moment or place of information. Thus, the ability to be an earwitness…became a crucial means of securing truth" (12). Botelho uncovers an ocean of early modern male anxiety about their "informational authority" in the face of rumormongering (5), noting that proper listening, or "earwitnessing," accordingly became a central skill in the formation of masculine identity. And indeed, this is the concern Ferdinand has with the Duchess; because she is his blood, her reputation is really his. Critics have long interpreted Ferdinand's motivations as narcissistic: Frank Whigham diagnoses his incestuous desire for his sister as anxiety about aristocratic purity;[114] Lynn Enterline offers a psychoanalytic reading of his simultaneous identification with and estrangement from his sister's maternal body;[115] and most recently Mary Floyd-Wilson has linked him to the proto-scientific male discourse of objectivity that sought to pry open occult female secrets.[116] These critics, however, don't attend to the threat circulating sound posed to this (male) discrete selfhood, by dispersing fragmented bits of it inside the ears of others. Rumor, then, is echo in reverse: rather than tracing an originary speech act through its diffusion, it begins with scattered information from which it tries to adduce the "truth."

Ferdinand grandly lectures his sister on the importance of chastity, eliding the deed itself with public knowledge of it in an allegory he propounds to her: 'Stay,' quoth Reputation,/'Do not forsake me; for it is my nature/If once I part from any man I meet/I am never found again.' (3.2.133-5). The personification underscores Botelho's point

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about the autonomy of Rumor, but also places responsibility for its control squarely in the hands of each person, allowing Ferdinand to blame his sister for her alleged looseness. In an ironic contrast, he imagines that his own actions should serve as model to his court, and that they can freely reproduce his image without any distortion: "Methinks you that are courtiers should be my touchwood: take fire when I give fire, that is, laugh when I laugh, were the subject never so witty" (1.1.124-6). What he does never escapes him; by imitating him his courtiers *are* him. Of course, we learn that Ferdinand is not quite as independent as he claims. Delio asks Antonio if the Duke and the Cardinal are "Twins?," and Antonio responds "In quality./He speaks with others' tongues and hears men's suits/With others' ears…Dooms men to death by information,/Rewards by hearsay" (1.1.172-7). Not only is Ferdinand thus the echo of his underlings' reports and opinions, and of his brother, whose conduct he mimics to the point of indistinction, the audience's knowledge of this is thrice removed, as they overhear a court rumor recounted to Delio.[117] Ferdinand thus imagines that he is the origin, but he is in fact the copy, the echo.[118]

If Ferdinand tries and fails to cordon himself off from rumor's diffusion effect, his case against the Duchess falls flat. No stable epistemological ground on which to stand renders truth inaccessible. Antonio, after the Duchess has borne children, notes "The common rabble do directly say/She is a strumpet" (3.1.25-6). "Direct" access to anything in this play is impossible, as rumor – echo's inverse – works backwards from partial data to posit an inevitably flawed origin. Bosola makes this point to Ferdinand during his report of the Duchess's conduct:

> Bosola: 'Tis rumored she hath had three bastards, but
>   By whom, we may go read i'th'stars.

Ferdinand: Why, some/Hold opinion all things are written there.
Bosola: Yes, if we could find spectacles to read them (3.1.59-62)

Bosola notes the partiality of rumor, in which only a fragment of truth is legible; the other

part – the children's parentage, a quite literal origin – is opaque. Notably, he also links

truth to vision; proper "spectacles" could generate the appropriate critical distance for an

observer to acquire the needed data. Ferdinand's eyes are the frequent topic of discussion,

not least by the man himself; when the Duchess asks "Will you see my husband?," he

answers "Yes, if I/Could change eyes with a basilisk" (3.2.88-9), a mythical snake whose

eyes killed on sight. Pescara warns Delio to "Mark Prince Ferdinand:/A very salamander

lives in's eye,/To mock the eager violence of fire" (3.3.48-50). His eyes are thus linked

not with the cold remove of textuality, but the fantastical rage of basilisks and the

destructive chaos of fire, which like rumor acquires its own agency to enact "eager

violence." Fire, as Anne Harris writes, is Biblically associated with aspiration, the

transmigration of bodies beyond their proper spheres, from Satan's flames to the kiln-

fired bricks of Babel.[119] More locally, while we don't know the exact date of the play's

first performance, most scholars put it somewhere in late 1613 or 1614, shortly after The

Globe burned to the ground on June 29, 1613 from a cannon fired onstage. For Webster

and his first audiences, then, fire would link artifice with mutability and destruction, not

the epistemological fixity sought by Ferdinand. We must shift our analysis of rumor,

then, from the fraught epistemology of the truth sought to its material effect on the

knowing subject.[120]

Late in the play Julia does just this, in an experiment designed to demonstrate the

folly of secrecy. By so doing she gives the lie to withdrawn, core selves based on it, as

when Ferdinand boasts, "He that can compass me and know my drifts/May say he hath

put a girdle 'bout the world/And sounded all her quicksands" (3.2.84-6). Stowing Bosola behind a curtain, Julia implores the Cardinal to divulge the secret plaguing him, i.e. complicity in his sister's murder. He initially refuses on the grounds that "The only way to make thee keep my counsel/Is not to tell thee," to which she responds, "Tell your echo this,/Or flatterers that like echoes still report/What they hear (though most imperfect), and not me./For, if that you be true unto yourself,/I'll know" (5.2.254-8). Julia links echoes and rumor as similar distortions of truth. Both "what they hear" and the "reporting" itself are imperfect; the information is already tainted when it arrives, and is twisted further in the act of reporting. Purity of transfer is impossible. Information is always-already sullied by the material mediums that deliver it, and the invocation of "flatterers" suggests that such sullying can be deliberate, as we saw in Affinati. Ironically, the Cardinal expounds the same logic his sister did in her marriage: sharing secrets is sharing self, although for the guilty Cardinal – who often chides Ferdinand for his lack of self-control – this is unthinkable. Julia, by contrast, promises that secrets made to a close confidant remain reflexively contained, "true unto yourself." Of course, both she and the audience know that Bosola is hiding just off-scene, and so her words are a lie – in the very act of utterance the Cardinal is betrayed, diffracted. His final lines evince a desperation to box Pandora again, and reverse the entropic drift of rumor: "And now, I pray, let me/Be laid by and never thought of" (5.5.107-8). As I have argued, though, death in this play is not nothingness, but its opposite: endless, networked circulation. A prayer for annihilation, rather than the soul's immortality, roots endurance, "life," squarely in the realm of the earthly, linked to monstrous undeath.

Indeed, while Rumor in early modern texts is often a dangerous threat, linked as Carla Mazzio writes to "anxieties about the powers and vulnerabilities of language itself" when "dislodged from its bodily surround" (54),[121] *The Duchess of Malfi* uses its title character to reframe rumor as generative. Returning to Hayles, the material instantiation of information in a medium causes signifiers to "flicker," creating new permutations with each iteration. From one perspective then rumor degrades old truths, but from another it creates new ones. The Duchess, as we've already seen in her appropriation of widow's roles, lawyer-speak, and Roman legend, is a master of this recombinative bricolage, and rumor is no different. She declares to Cariola her intention to woo Antonio, vowing "Even in this hate – as men in some great battles,/By apprehending danger, have achieved/Almost impossible actions; I have heard soldiers say so –/So I, through frights and threat'nings, will assay/This dangerous venture" (1.1.345-9). The Duchess foregrounds the transmission rather than the content of the message; she "has heard" of male heroics, and is thus able to adopt them in a vastly different context. Indeed, her rhetoric is instantly suffused with military and commercial terms, a "venture" "assay"ed. Webster himself, in the play's dedication to George Harding for its 1623 folio printing, writes that "men who never saw the sea, yet desire to behold that regiment of waters, choose some eminent river to guide them thither, and make that, as it were, their conduct or postilion. By the like ingenious means has your fame arrived at my knowledge" (4-8). Emphasis again falls on generative translation; the "means" are "postilion" to the message, but end up supplanting it, as "fame" replaces the man. And once more, unexpected results follow; having heard of Harding, Webster writes him a play.

6. "The Echo Scene"

All of the foregoing dynamics – distributed selves, echoed sound, and feminism – coalesce in a single scene near the end of the play, commonly known as "the echo scene." While, as we have seen, critics usually read this scene as the Duchess's transformation or reduction, I find in it just another example, typical in every way, of the echopoetics the Duchess has always practiced. As such, this section rehearses in compressed form the arguments I have made, as their culmination. After the Duchess's murder, her husband Antonio and his friend Delio approach the Cardinal her brother's lodging, in a bold plan to force retribution from him. However, as they approach it is the building itself, and not the man inside, that anchors the scene:

> Yond's the Cardinal's window. This fortification
> Grew from the ruins of an ancient abbey;
> And to yond side o'th'river lies a wall,
> Piece of a cloister, which in my opinion
> Gives the best echo you ever heard,
> So hollow and so dismal, and withal
> So plain in the distinction of our words,
> That many have supposed it is a spirit
> That answers (5.3.1-9)

The edifice is itself translated, an abbey that became a castle, but imperfectly, leaving traces of its former status. Already then we detect echopoetics: the act of translation inflects the result, diluting the origin's form-giving power. Delio acts as enlightened tour guide to Antonio, coloring his explanation with bemused skepticism, by carefully distinguishing the superstition of the "many" who "suppose" from his own proto-Burkean aesthetics, ranking the echo as the "best" for the quality product it offers the tourist. Antonio, by contrast, resumes the narration in a more somber key, linking the ruins to the folly of seeking immortality, to which the Duchess's echo responds:

I do love these ancient ruins.
We never tread upon them but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history;
And questionless, here in this open court,
Which now lies naked to the injuries
Of stormy weather, some men lie interred
Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to't,
They thought it should have canopied their bones
Till doomsday. But all things have their end;
Churches and cities, which have diseases like to men,
Must have like death that we have.

Echo: *Like death that we have* (5.3.9-20)

A conventional warning against hubris is instantly belied by the Duchess's answering voice, which playfully mocks Antonio by negating with his own words the permanent death he pronounces. But, if the sound is produced by Antonio's voice interfacing with the stones, how then might we understand it as his wife's voice, and not his own projection? If, as we've seen, the Duchess stores herself in Antonio, as a tangible repository of her being, the stones disaggregate his voice into shards by dispersing it on contact, one shard of which is the Duchess herself. Contemporary staging practice offers another clue; Jacobean theater featured a panoply of off-stage sound effects, from cannons to pealing bells to birdsong.[122] Audiences were thus likely to associate unstaged sound, even a human voice, with technological intervention. Antonio thus reads the ruins only half-right; one indeed cannot endure just as one was, but to lie "naked to the injuries" doesn't mean to dissolve, it means to change form, to commingle.

Delio tries to reassert critical distance, prompting Antonio to consider the echo a quaint aesthetic curio: "I told you 'twas a pretty one. You may make it/A huntsman, or a falconer, a musician,/Or a thing of sorrow" (5.3.24-6). For Delio, the speaking body (i.e. Antonio) retains authority over the speech act, "making" it what it will be. As such, he

tries to dissuade Antonio from confronting the Cardinal, citing his free choice in the matter, only to be rebuffed by Antonio's stoic fatalism: "Necessity compels me./Make scrutiny throughout the passes/Of your own life; you'll find it impossible/To fly your fate," to which the echo rejoins "*Oh, fly your fate!*" (5.3.36-9). Recalling Ovid, the Duchess's echo selectively twists Antonio's speech into new meaning, here importuning him to do exactly the opposite of what he intends, *with the same words*. Importantly, the echo splits the difference between Delio's absolute freedom through critical distance, and Antonio's grim resignation. The echo promises him a kind of agential choice, but one grounded in sensitivity to environmental influence, context-specificity. He can fly because she told him to, and only out of concern for her, just as that concern itself was bodied forth by Antonio's voice, forming a daisy-chained, algorithmic response pattern.

Antonio initially shrugs off the echo's power by invoking the presence/absence binary to debunk its legitimacy: "Echo, I will not talk with thee,/For thou art a dead thing," to which she responds "*Thou art a dead thing*" (5.3.42-3). But again, the binary is vacated in favor of material effect; Antonio himself is "dead" in that his voice has joined the stones to produce an echo of his wife, or in other words has expanded beyond the bounds of his own body. He is no longer alive by any of the common standards: organic, self-present, autopoietic. And indeed, accepting such imbrication forges an affective connection to the Duchess, and thus allows her influence: "I marked not one repetition of the echo/But that; and on the sudden, a clear light/Presented me a face folded in sorrow." The echo's sound enters him, reproducing his wife's image in the way a computer code opens a program. Delio calls this "Your fancy, merely" (5.3.47-50), again citing the reflexivity of the thinking self, but Antonio is noticeably changed by the encounter.[123]

His final statement, which ends the scene, subtly revises his former stoicism: "Though in our miseries Fortune have a part,/Yet in our noble suff'rings she hath none;/Contempt of pain, that we may call our own" (5.3.60-2). While seemingly the same sentiment as before, resignation to fate, here Antonio – pointedly echoing his wife – claims not an absolute, but a *regulatory* power. Such power doesn't deny circumstance as Delio's aesthetics do, but it does afford the ability to modulate its effect, just as Ovid's Echo did the voice of Narcissus. And indeed, the self finds its locus *in* that very modulation, a distinctly echoic identity.

7. Conclusion: Ec(h)ocriticism

This chapter has proposed a link between the early modern conception of echoes, the resonance technologies that produced them, and gender. Early moderns heard echoed sounds as "undead" events, hybrid assemblages of human speaker and nonhuman resonator. Such events have implications for both transmission and reception. On the front end, the speaker's intent no longer governs a speech act, ceding primary agency to the mediating device. On the back end, those willing could themselves become resonators, opening their ears to sonic stimuli, and then inflecting them in generative new directions. I've called this process echopoetics. Early modern women like the Duchess of Malfi were its most frequent practitioners, allowing me to piece out earlier accounts of transgressive Renaissance female speech by linking them with sound reproduction devices like the theater. Such fusion makes good on Donna Haraway's bid for a cyborgian feminism, embracing technology as an escape from women's association with the originary nature alienated men seek to reenter: "Every story that…privileges the return to wholeness imagines the drama of life to be individuation, separation, the birth of

the self, the tragedy of autonomy, the fall into writing, alienation…These plots are ruled by a reproductive politics – rebirth without flaw, perfection" (58-9). Lacking a stable origin to return to, echoes are freed to resonate in new contexts or directions, through new bodies. They escape the biopolitical injunction to extend indefinitely in paralytic and managed sameness. The sly power attendant on posthuman fusion with sonic *techne* also helps expand our taxonomy of early modern imaginative relationships to technology. Namely, we might move beyond Ferdinand's border anxiety, to explore what Jean Feerick and Vin Nardizzi call "a fuller range of responses to the identifications that writers imagined with other life [and nonlife] forms" (4). Contemporary ecocritics might also find in the Duchess a model for a renewed critique of the boundary between organic nature and technology, which still underwrites much of our scholarship. After all, as Patricia Clough writes, "The biomediated body…is not disembodiment. Rather it is a recent complexification in bodily matter at the molecular level as its informational capacity is made more apparent and more productive" (214). Against our usual story about the separation of matter from its informatic soul (and the Terminator-panic or brain-in-a-vat arrogance it spawns), new media weds the two, creating fresh sites for affects unknown. I have sought to historicize the "new" from such media, arguing that echoic sound operated by these dynamics four hundred years ago.

With help from *The Duchess of Malfi*, I've also nominated the early modern indoor theater as a prime echopoetic medium for its ability to disperse staged sound, and I return there for one final example of the way echoes recast content – what is spoken – through form – transformative contact. Heretofore I've discussed represented echoes *inside* the play, but they also gesture beyond it. *The Duchess of Malfi* echoes an

astonishing number of Shakespearean moments, from plot points to individual lines, but always distorts them for its own ends. For example, the Duchess herself recalls *Twelfth Night*'s Olivia, but instead of using grief to prolong her independence, she throws parties, and willingly chooses a mate rather than having one thrust upon her. One tiny moment in *King Lear*, Gloucester's quip, "As flies to wanton boys are we to th'gods,/They kill us for their sport," is parceled across *three* moments in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Bosola laments to the Duchess that "Our bodies are weaker that those paper prisons boys use to keep flies in" (4.2.124-5). Later he claims "We are merely the star's tennis balls, struck and banded/Which way please them" (5.4.56-7) to which Antonio agrees, "Like wanton boys, whose pastime is their care,/We follow after bubbles blown in th'air" (66-8). By splicing the citation, the play decenters its authority, offering both Webster and his audience a curatorial power. There are too many such echoes to list here, although I will try in the footnote.[124] The play thus approaches metatheatre, but instead of highlighting representation itself, it models the permutational iterability of experience. William West has called this embodied recycling "intertheatricality":

> Rather than seeing different patterns and forms of performance as variations on a fixed type…it understands them as belonging to a horizontally organized repertoire, never completed and slowly changing, of lines, gestures, characters, situations, genres, and other smaller elements that cumulatively allow for new performances and new concatenations of actions…It is recalling or re-enacting that is neither wholly allusive nor wholly citational, in the sense that it does not primarily point towards a single past performance, much less an original one (154-5)

Again recalling Hayles's "flickering" signifiers, theatrical "patterns or forms" – among which "Shakespeare" acquires the same value as an improvised hat tip – evolve across instantiations, as they enter individual bodies, stages, and references.[125] We know that Webster began his career as a collaborative dramatist, and that he attended his own plays;

it's no stretch to assume he was a regular theatergoer. Moreover, since only a few of

Shakespeare's works had appeared in quarto by 1613, Webster must more often than not

have cited from *memory*, thus imperfectly stamping the result. These echoes show us a

culture less textually immured than ours, one that thought in terms of live example and

not quote. If, as Henry Turner has shown, Renaissance dramatists saw in plays the

perpetual motion of many scenes rather than synchronic coherence,[126] their untimeliness

is illustrated nowhere better than the intertheatrical echoes enfolded within. Like their

sisters made of actual sound, these are measurable by their material, not their semiotic,

effects.

As such, echopoetics can operate beyond the conscious will. At the end of the

play, Bosola kills Antonio by mistake, cutting off his vengeance plot at the knees. Dying

himself shortly thereafter from the Cardinal's wounds, he claims to be expiring

> In a mist; I know not how,
> Such a mistake as I have often seen
> In a play. Oh, I am gone!
> We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves
> That, ruined, yields no echo. Fare you well (5.5.112-6)

In his tragic self-consciousness, Bosola recalls many a postmodern hero, lost in the

funhouse of textuality. He is aware, like them, of his implication in a chaotic world

indifferent to his knowledge or skill, as a single signifier in an anchorless chain. But, if

Bosola's imagined grave "yields no echo," his words themselves do; they revive his

earlier narration of ordinary lives to the Duchess, of whom "Sin their conception, their

birth weeping,/Their life a general mist of error,/Their death a hideous storm of terror"

(4.2.182-4). The content of the words (dissolution) is pointedly belied by their form, as a

heard repetition the audience would recognize and keep alive, splintered in as many

directions as there were ears in the crowd. Bosola thus unwittingly embraces echopoetics,

his mobile "mistake" taking him somewhere else, as someone new.

NOTES

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

[1] Recall also Althusser's example of the policeman's hail, the vocal response to which interpellates the citizen as a subject of state authority.

[2] While logocentric presence depends on the idea that one hears one's own voice "at the same time" of speech, phenomenology introduces a crucial time gap – however tiny – in the passage from mouth to ear. That gap replays Zeno's Paradox, in which halving the time or distance between two things – in this case moments, the speaking and the hearing ones – will never fully erase the space between them. If I keep dividing a number by 2, I'll never reach zero, pure identity. Thus presence, the absolute simultaneity of a moment with itself, is impossible – to think it one has to have already passed to the next moment.

[3] Even Austin, who focuses on functionality and not semantics, fails to actually leave semantics behind, and thus draws Derrida's rebuke. "Signature Event Context," 14-20.

[4] As she puts it, "Bodies may become orientated in this responsiveness to the world around them, given this capacity to be affected. In turn, given the history of such responses, which accumulate as impressions on the skin, bodies do not dwell in spaces that are exterior but rather are shaped by their dwellings" (9).

[5] Buttressing this point, Robert Markley argues that "The comparatively widespread attempts to develop and promote a "Real Character" – an ideographic system of representation that defines unproblematically what it names – are themselves evidence of the anxieties fed by the belief that the world had grown too complex to describe in conventional speech or, alternately, that everyday discourse had been corrupted by war, sectarianism, and political instability past the point where it could adequately describe the physical or metaphysical universe" (64).

[6] This is John Wilkins's *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*, one of many such "universal language" schemes the period produced.

[7] An important precursor of this trend is Goran Stanivukovic, who makes the case for a citational queerness: "Thus viewed, queerness is a product of literary affiliation, and a critical conjecture about specific points of contact between those texts; it is not directly related to a bodily act" (47).

[8] This phrase titles a chapter in her forthcoming book, *Posthuman Shakespeare*.

[9] He uses the term outright earlier in the essay, proclaiming that the grain "is in the throat…where the phonic metal hardens and is segmented…bringing not the soul but *jouissance*" (506).

[10] *2 Henry IV* is again instructive here. Compare the reaction of Northumberland, upon learning that his son Hotspur has been killed:

> Let heaven kiss earth! Now let not Nature's hand
> Keep the wild flood confined! Let order die!
> And let this world no longer be a stage
> To feed contention in a lingering act
> But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
> Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
> On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
> And darkness be the burier of the dead! (1. 1.154-61)

Is this not *jouissance*? The desire to break through the chain of signifiers, "act" and "scene," is there, as is the indistinct bliss of annihilation, "in all bosoms" alike. The tone may be despair instead of rapture, but the desire for a responsibility-cancelling apocalypse echoes uncannily some of the sentiments of contemporary ecocriticism.

[11] Even Deleuze and Guattari, in their peyote-popping, scrotum-stitching paean to "openness", insist that "you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to…enable you to respond to the dominant reality…You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying" (160).

[12] I refer to her seminal essay "Paranoid Reading," which argues that the hermeneutics of suspicion underpinning new historicist scholarship not only "depends…on an infinite reservoir of naivete in those who make up the audience for their unveilings" (141), but ceases to make sense within a conservative political regime that, contrary to Foucault's ubiquitous power network, is actually eagerly *divesting* itself of responsibility for its subjects. In other words, theory too, like literature, should be historicized into its generating contexts. I would argue we've reached a comparable point with ecocriticism: we *know* that the human fails to constitute itself, and that its construction excludes both its own margins and the nonhuman world, and we *get* that that harms the planet.

[13] Perhaps my favorite illustration of this idea is David Foster Wallace's searing description of Wittgenstein (not a deconstructionist, but close enough) as a "*mad crackpot genius…who believed that everything was words. Really. If your car would not start, it was apparently to be understood as a language problem. If you were unable to love, you were lost in language. Being constipated equalled being clogged with linguistic sediment.*" (73).

[14] Katherine Hayles reminds us "how small the fraction of the world's population is who ever believed they had a liberal humanist self" (322).

[15] For example, see Talal Asad's recent diagnosis of the violence latent in humanism, in which "States that kill in the course of their claim to be engaged in a universalizing project, that of raising 'the best part' of humanity in the name of humanity as a whole, must be distinguished from the violence of 'lower' societies" (404).

[16] See the introduction to their recent collection *Renaissance Posthumanism*.

[17] Examples of this position abound, such as Rob Nixon's expose of the ways ecological damage is exported safely out of sight to the Global South in *Slow Violence*.

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[18] See Carson's *Silent Spring*, 9, and Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 6.

[19] For example, Laurie Shannon points out that Robert Hooke and Robert Boyle's famous air pump experiments were less science and more spectacle, performing human dominion over animals to a live audience who needed this ritual, *visual* confirmation. *The Accomodated Animal*, 250-66.

[20] To be sure, Jay actually stresses the *continuity* of visual culture from antiquity, contesting Febvre's claim that it spontaneously generated in the Renaissance, but he *does* agree that an enormous intensification began in the sixteenth century. See *Downcast Eyes*, 45-57.

[21] Compare Foucault's gloss on *Las Meninas*, in which the gaze of the viewer takes precedent over the represented image: the "centre is symbolically sovereign…These three 'observing' functions come together in a point exterior to the picture: that is, an ideal point in relation to what is represented." *The Order of Things*, 14-5.

[22] See Schafer's *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*.

[23] This accords with what Steven Connor has called "implicated space," in which "insides and outsides change places, and produce each other reciprocally." *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, 13.

[24] See page 16 for a linkage of storms with earthquakes. All weather was thought by early moderns to have a terrestrial origin. See Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, 275. As Robert Markley puts it, "The chemistry of explosive disruption links thunder and earthquakes as violations in kind of an idealized climatological and geological stability." See his "'Casualties and Disasters': Defoe and the Interpretation of Climatic Instability," 114.

[25] Jane Bennett deploys this term as analogous to her "thing-power," the capacity of all matter (sentient or not) to initiate effects on other things. *Vibrant Matter,* 9.

[26] For Crooke, the human production of speech is merely one example of a general praxis of sound amongst all bodies, "which may bee shewed in bels and musical instruments for such bodyes containe a great deale of ayre in them, which airy when it is moued and seeketh a vent, doth euery way strike about the sides and euery way causeth a resonance or resounding" (645).

[27] Jonathan Sawday argues that "dissection is an insistence on the partitioning of something (or someone) which (or who) hitherto possessed their own unique organic integrity." *The Body Emblazoned*, 2. By contrast with this human-made-object, I embrace the autonomy of the body's parts as a pointed critique of human hegemony.

[28] Quoted in Bruce R. Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, 283. Smith uses Crooke to emphasize the difference between theatre as performance art and textual object to be read.

[29] Compare James Yates's also-contemporary account of the quake, in which God "send'st us signes, and tokens of thy wrath,/And if with grace we rightly then do *scanne*,/We may thus thinke, and also understand" (emphasis mine). Yates is advocating a kind of close reading; God's works are symbolic presages of his intent, which we can learn to "rightly scanne," or correctly interpret.

[30] I recognize that I am potentially skirting a rather large elephant here: how was God's voice conceived by early moderns? Implicit in my argument is a kind of perverse logocentrism, in which God's voice may be the ultimate reality, but is not fully accessible to fallen humans, who must perforce turn to inferior writing as a kind of ancillary prosthesis. The damage that such self-willed alienation from embodied, "real" vocality can do is depicted in both Harvey's letter and *King Lear*, as I proceed to show. I seek less to probe the ultimate *cause* of the earthquake than the ecological *potential* afforded by its immeasurable vocality. For a good debunking of Derridean logocentrism, which asserts that writing is itself an embodied process, see Bruce R. Smith's *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, 10-12. Gina Bloom traces the conception of God's voice in early modern sermons as a kind of seed that produced tangible change, a fully material and porous process that accords with my own claims. See *Voice in Motion*, 111-159.

[31] Karen Raber, triangulating the quake through its putative influence on *King Lear*, dubs it a "hyperobject," borrowing Timothy Morton's term for an event, thing, or phenomenon that is so massive in scale, and so diffused in effect, that it defies human representation, orientation, and intervention. In her words, the earthquake "[reminds] humans of the magnitude of natural elements, the impossibility of a "god's eye" view of earthquake destruction, and the relative failure of human knowledge to encompass such objects" (6).

32 The critical literature on Harvey's letter foregrounds its refusal to pin down the quake's precise origin, casting this skeptical naturalism as the replacement for the religious certainty of Churchyard, Yates, and their ilk, consonant with the burgeoning scientific revolution. Kendrick Prewitt cites the failure of Harvey's empirical method to ratify the divine, noting that "the conclusion that Harvey reaches about the provenance of the quake betrays a thoroughgoing skepticism about human access to knowledge of divine actions" (30). Christopher Carter picks up this thread, arguing against the clean demarcation of superstition and triumphal empiricism which is the too-easy typical story of the rise of science: "The end effect was to create an epistemological debate over the ability to know whether a prodigy was natural or not, as opposed to an ontological debate about its actual status" (133). Gerard Passannante reaches the same conclusion by circuitous means, charting Harvey's deployment of classical sources that sketch an aleatory and atheistic cosmos, particularly through Lucretian atomism: "In tracing the expression of Lucretian influence…we will find that the mere specter of an intertextual allusion raises a number of deeper questions about the meaning of digression and about the unstable ground of tradition itself" (796). What's missing in these accounts is precisely the earthquake *itself*, as material phenomenon, its "ontological status" as Prewitt puts it. These critics, in zooming beyond the physical event to situate it as mere example in the history of human thought, fail to attend to what the letter actually *does* say about the operations of earthquakes. By contrast, I argue that by discarding questions of authorial intent or epistemological quagmires, we may attend to the transembodied connections between quakes and quaking humans sketched in the letter.

33 The question of void was hotly debated in the sixteenth century. Henry Turner traces a profound shift in spatiality, "between a neo-Aristotelian scholastic philosophy that could conceive only of container or place and the emergence of a distinct notion of space understood as a homogenous, extended medium that precedes and receives all bodies and their movements" (177-8). Brian Rotman nominates one surprising culprit for this sea change: the number zero, imported to Europe in the mid-fourteenth century from Hindu India via Arab merchants, which marks "the origin of a new, radically different mode of sign production; one whose novelty is reflected in the emergence of a semiotic subject able to *signify* absence" (57). As with the advent of perspective seen earlier, space is thus parsed into actors and sets, unified human subjectivities dialectically established alongside inert environments – voids – which *a priori* wait for human activity to instrumentalize them. Harvey's quake not only renders such a partition literally "absurd," it emphasizes the labile mobility inherent in all bodies; heterogenous matter interacts, "forcibly" and "cruelly" inverting the inside and the outside in constant flux.

34 Although it deals specifically with written text, compare Mikhail Bahktin's "heteroglossia," which stresses language's tendency to slip the leashes of its authors: "Not all words…submit equally to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them" (294). Citing words as "property" grounds their material status, and his action verbs firmly invest those words with agentic capacity: "submit," "remain," "resist." Thus, whatever the authorial aim of Harvey may be, the

very act of inscribing characters means that they instantly transcend his ability to subordinate their voices to his. The letter thus transforms from echo-chamber to amphitheater.

[35] This and all subsequent citations are drawn from the Pelican Shakespeare edition of *King Lear*, edited by Stephen Orgel (1999).

[36] Henry Turner notes the disorienting lack of geographic specificity in the play, explicitly contra the process of mapping. "*King Lear* Without: The Heath," 164-5.

[37] For a linkage of the play's cartographical taxonomizing with discourses of anatomy, underpinning a wider critique of norming practices, see Valerie Traub, "The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography, 'King Lear'."

[38] For an excellent reading against the grain of this trend, see Robert B. Pierce's "'I Stumbled When I Saw': Interpreting Gloucester's Blindness in *King Lear*," which invokes disability studies to debunk the stereotype of blindness as spiritual poverty.

[39] This scene is commonly read as an example of *ekphrasis*. See for example Andrew Bozio, who argues that Edgar's narration functions as a type of prosthesis; it "ultimately persuades Gloucester to trust Edgar's sight over his own sensations" (271). Such a reading still figures the triumph of the eye and human ingenuity. "Embodied Thought."

[40] Paterson *does* emphasize Descartes' empirical turn, in attempting to specify exactly how the constitutive features of the eye – retina, pupil, optic nerve – produce vision, but he insists that Descartes ultimately viewed his inquiry as more broadly metaphorical, where "mechanisms of light and optics might be considered indissociable from his reflexive inquiry into truth, method, and certainty." *Seeing With the Hands*, 23.

[41] Totaro, while mostly citing the curse as an instrument of "bodily government," does admit that it can exceed the agency of the speaker: "From a strictly Aristotelian perspective, heat must rise or otherwise escape from confinement. No degree of will can change the process." "Meterophysiology," 202.

[42] For the definitive treatment of *King Lear*'s assault on the primacy of the human, see Laurie Shannon's "Poor, Bare, Forked: Animal Happiness and the Zoographic Critique of Humanity" in *The Accomodated Animal*, 127-73.

[43] Robert Markley, "'Casualties and Disasters': Defoe and the Interpretation of Climatic Instability," 111.

[44] See his *Waking the Giant: How a Changing Climate Triggers Earthquakes, Tsunamis, and Volcanoes* (2013).

[45] The swimming rhetoric here is not incidental; I'm suggesting that human being-in-the-world increasingly resembles what Steve Mentz has called "swimmer poetics," in which "The swimmer's vulnerability and effort provide a model for how to live in our world today, when landed life increasingly resembles conditions at sea" "After Sustainability," 589-90.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

[46] See for example Frederick Burwick's *Thomas de Quincey: Knowledge and Power* (2001). De Quincey himself called it his "specimen of psychological criticism."

[47] Even more can be said here. It is not Macduff, the knocking agent, that breaks the spell, but the knock itself. The actual sound jolts the audience into a recognition of Macbeth's crime. Moreover, de Quincey equates the restoration of community with "the human," over and against the "fiendish" pause in which individuality and interiority appear, situating the self as a monstrous temporary aberration against social being.

[48] See John Stow's 1598 *Survey of London*: "the gates of London should bee new repayred, and diligently kept in the night, for feare of French deceytes" (41). This description invokes the gates only to figure anxiety about their potential infiltration, displaying a nostalgic desire for insularity and legibility that characterize the *Survey* as a whole.

[49] The Galenic model of humors dominated early modern medical theory. Among modern critics, two major arguments exist about the function of humors in social life. Gail Kern Paster argues that humors were powerful tools of social discipline, as an ethos of self-control and balance was used to stigmatize those thought less able to control their bodies – women in particular. Michael Schoenfeldt, by contrast, argues for a powerful agency granted each individual to regulate the makeup of his or her body. See her *The Body Embarrassed* and his *Bodies and Selves*.

[50] Of course, as Stephen Greenblatt has famously argued, such self-fashioning was *always* doomed to merely replicate the dominant ideology of the day, "not an epiphany of identity freely chosen but a cultural artifact," but the subject at least retains the "illusion" of autonomy. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 256-7.

[51] The standard data comes from E.A. Wrigley's *People, Cities, and Wealth: The Transformation of Traditional Society* (1987), 158-67.

[52] Exemplary here is Lawrence Manley's *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (1995), which tells a rosary of institutions and the literary forms that emerged from and promulgated them.

[53] For good summaries of this trend, see Paul Griffiths' and Mark S.R. Jenner's introduction to *Londonopolis* (4-9), Ian Munro's *The Figure of the Crowd in Early Modern London* (7-11), and Nina Levine's *Practicing the City* (4-5).

[54] Hristomir Stanev's *Sensory Experience and the Metropolis on the Jacobean Stage* has come the closest to the methodological approach I posit, although his study doesn't offer much of a central argument, because it's invested in charting the new possibilities afforded by the metropolis. In his words, "I explore how Jacobean experience of the city helped to articulate intricate forms of sensory practice" (4). I consider his work a kind of ground-clearing, from which my own more specific claims about what a person might do with those possibilities can emerge.

[55] More than urban growth attracted these people, of course. Increasing enclosure of arable lands in the country deprived a huge number of tenant farmers of their work, forcing them to seek a living elsewhere, most frequently in London. However, we might note, enclosure was *itself* galvanized by the London marketplace and its exchange logic: sheep's wool was worth far more on the market than the rents collected from subsistence farmers. On enclosure and its discontents, see Arthur F. Kinney's introduction to *Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars*, 19-21.

[56] Valerie Traub has traced a shift in this same period from an older, vertically hierarchical chain of being to what she calls "the logic of the grid," in which "spatial logic creates not only a uniform model, but a serviceable ratio, a standard for comparison," producing "a universalized body, one whose individuality and particularity, and difference are subordinated to the creation of an abstract, common humanity" (56). I'd suggest that London's growth, and the difficulties of categorization and the mobility engendered therein, served as crucial catalysts for this shift, toward a notion of population we now identify as the biopolitical, characterized by, in Foucault's words, "a global mass that is affected by overall processes characteristic of birth, death, production, illness, and so on…not individualizing, but, if you like, massifying, that is directed not at man-as-body but man-as-species" (242-3).

[57] See his "Walking in the City": "The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins…The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility" (93).

[58] Ian Munro extends de Certeau's line of reasoning, finding in the crowd's unknowable anonymity a valuable rebuke to panoptic power: "Rather than an easily identifiable peasant rabble ranged against the order represented by the city, the urban multitude was inherently ungraspable" (38).

[59] Such distinction also obtains at the level of the individual, as consumption became increasingly conspicuous to throw the buyer into relief against London's teeming streets. Gail Kern Paster traces a new fashion of physician-assisted purgation as a demonstration

of status-based mastery: "willed acts of purgative catharsis by adult men and women in early modern England were a socially visible performance which engaged the body's internal habitus…as the subject of an emergent practice of early capitalist consumption" (195). This example is doubly rich, because not only is the purge conspicuous consumption, it also models for the audience the elite purger's self-control, their closed, Bakhtinian "classical" body secured against the invasive stimuli of the city.[59] Linda Levy Peck charts a shift in elite cultural value from what one did to what one had, as property slowly melded with status distinction: "While the gentry kept fewer servants and spent less on funerals, they increased the number and variety of their material goods," so that "such collections…are more signs…that what it meant to be noble in the seventeenth century was significantly different from what it had meant a century and even decades before" (277, 283).

[60] New Historicist work often stresses this, tying the theatric spectacles of power to the actual commercial theater as an extensional apparatus for its ideology. Stephen Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets" is perhaps the most lastingly influential example.

[61] See Howard, 12.

[62] This wasn't just true for the arrangement of buildings or their materials, but also their style. The early seventeenth century witnessed a vogue in neo-Palladian architecture, an Italian style notable for its classical harmonies and visually-pleasing symmetry. See Linda Levy Peck, "Building, Buying, and Collecting in London, 1600-1625," 271.

[63] Cf. Brian Massumi: "Individuals and societies are not only empirically inseparable, they are strictly simultaneous and consubstantial…they might be seen as differential emergences from a shared realm of relationality that is one with becoming – and belonging" (71). As for subversion and containment, Stefan Herbrechter has recently claimed that the new historicism parsing it is really just humanism in disguise. This is because it's still after a human *essence*, even one that is decentered and discursive. As he puts it, "The liberal humanist and the Marxist anti-humanist positions…can in fact be seen to compete for the same moral authority over so-called human 'nature'" (44). We need instead a post-human practice, which emphasizes not just the constitutive role of the nonhuman environment, but also allows us to talk about what action or self might look like for the human within it. Early modern sound, I suggest, was used to create such an inessential yet effective self.

[64] Thomas Dekker also makes bells central to one of his advice pamphlets, *The Bel-Man of London*. Dekker uses the titular bellman as a symbol of order, "the Ringing of his Bell…assured those within that no theeves were entred" (110). However, this is the bellman's only appearance in the tract, which is surrounded on both sides by a torrent of rogues and their socially disruptive tricks. Even more damning, the narrator's encounter with the bellman opens a crucial gap between immediate experience and cultural meaning. The narrator only understands the bells' function once it's explained to him;

before that, merely hearing the sound, he hears chaos and arbitrary cruelty instead of order: "why with such a jangling, and balling, and beating at Mens doores hee went about to waken…poore men that were over-wearyed with labour" (110).

[65] Quoted in Stanev, 38.

[66] For more on the youth subcultures generated by urban complexity, see Paul Griffiths' *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England 1560-1640*.

[67] Jones and Stallybrass, 20-3.

[68] As Jones and Stallybrass put it, "Clothes, in other words, were closer both to a second skin, a skin that names you, and to money than are the clothes that we wear today" (32).

[69] Jane Schneider charts a shift in prevailing colors from the sober black and white of the Tudors, signifying the nationalism of English textile production, to the bright hues of the Stuart court, as James opened England to a massive new influx of foreign styles and tastes. Such an expansion was seen by some as anarchy, the erosion of legible distinction; she notes that William Harrison "worried that, their clothes full of jags and cuts and garish colors, 'women are become men and men transformed into monsters'" (118).

[70] She actually uses this "flaunting" counterpublic to debunk the stereotype of the "placeless market." Instead, "the purchase and display of apparel in early modern England entailed heterogeneous, locally defined practices determined by particular subjects' relations to the commercial cultures available to them" (9). As my reading of Dekker will show, I don't think anxiety about the anonymity and radical equivalence of exchange is entirely erased, even among this subgroup.

[71] Jean Howard asserts that the pamphlet indexes London's shift to a consumer culture; it "strikingly calls attention to a cityscape defined less by churches and guildhalls than by places of consumption and pleasure" (7).

[72] On this semantic shift see Jones and Stallybrass, 1.

[73] In her words, "The centralization of England's political life in London, an unprecedented surge in population, and economic crises in provincial areas led to the mass migration of 'superfluous' young men, those second and third sons who, because they were not heirs apparent, flooded into the city seeking places," 13.

[74] Contemporary conditions in London corroborate this view, as the influx of new accents, dialects, and languages from the provinces and abroad increasingly frayed the transparency of English. Jean Howard notes that "Candidates for employment by the East India Company regularly presented as chief qualifications their skill at foreign languages" (10). We also find polyglots on the opposite side of the social register; Craig

Dionne describes a special type of rogue, "the taker-up or 'verser,' who as his name implies can parrot different regional accents pretend to be from the same county" (51).

[75] Craig Dionne has argued that early modern language did function in this way; thinking "language as tool-being" shifts its purpose "from that of masking intent, participating in the aristocratic flourish of prodigality and circumstance, to that of survival and pondering one's relation in the interdependence of a denuded world." *Posthuman Lear*, 150.

[76] See Henri Lefebvre's classic study, *The Production of Space*.

[77] Quoted in Stanev, 35-6.

[78] Derek Alwes makes this point succinctly, although rather than acontextual selfishiness, I read the gulls' desire as a particular response to urban expansion: "Whatever the gulls might have been like in the absence of the rogues, what they all reveal is a willingness to abandon all meaningful social relationships in pursuit of their own selfish desires" (45).

[79] This and all subsequent quotations from the play are drawn from *English Renaissance Drama*, eds. David Bevington, Lars Engle, Katherine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen (2002).

[80] Lena Cowen Orlin has argued that, contra the usual story, privacy and the individual subjectivity associated with it were actually the *result* of proliferating indoor spaces, and not the cause. As she says, "early moderns began to accumulate more personal possessions and then needed more spaces in which to keep them" (11). However, I'd suggest that these possessions, as Linda Levy Peck and others have shown, are *themselves* constituent of an individuated person, meaning we can still read the desire to be indoors to store one's stuff as a fundamentally subjective, private move.

[81] John Shanahan has called the play an important precursor to modern laboratory science, wherein an expert-class produces "facts" through complex mediation on an infinitely manipulable stage: "a more important, and novel, source of authority in *The Alchemist*, one crucial for the future of natural philosophy, is skill with instrumentation as a means of making the natural world and human behavior increasingly predictable, and perhaps even to an extent controllable" (47). Unlike scientific facts, though, the alchemists' work is not repeatable or stable – it is fleeting, momentary, the opposite of the edificial permanence of objective knowledge.

[82] Adam Zucker notes that "an abstract placelessness or vague and immaterial sociability can seem to define the figure of the gallant. A close look at Jonson's plays, however, reveals his own kind of witty double move, as he first stages, then unmasks or controverts his gallants' presumptive distance from the ordinary world" (56).

[83] Patricia Fumerton has argued that such routine psychic fragmentation was a cardinal experience in the lives of London's workers, who increasingly performed a variety of

short-term jobs to make ends meet, refusing them the settled certainties of a regular living and the identification it gave. In her words, unsettledness was "the nature of being a Londoner, and more intensively in the socioeconomic group of London's services and apprentices, whose often fractured and uncertain place as dependent laborers could render them psychically (if intermittently) unmoored, even while housed" (22). This paper can be read as a handbook for the "unmoored," charting the agential possibilities afforded those who are, as Fumerton calls them, "'no man,' or perhaps more accurately, 'many men'" (51).

[84] Jonathan Haynes has compared the "venture tripartite" to a proto-corporation, dealing in the emergent logics and discourse of mobile trade, which dissolved previously solid distinctions between the legitimate social sphere and the criminal underworld; Jonson "sees not only how the old order is breaking up, but the form and presence of a new economy…working through both society and the underworld" (29-30). See also Elizabeth Rivlin's "The Rogues' Paradox," 115-129.

[85] Adam Zucker makes a similar point about wit, as the bedrock of a new form of status not linked to inherent essence or even commercial success, but verbal skill, which displayed a familiarity with and ability to navigate new kinds of urban space: "To be witty…is not simply to speak or act well but to exist in a privileged relation to the spaces and materials of a given environment" (3). My argument carries this point to the level of individual bodies, as the rogues make use of new urban cacophony, a *phenomenological* tool instead of the purely cultural rhetorical flourish.

[86] Katherine Eggert has recently argued that alchemy was a special discourse of "disknowledge," which its practitioners knew to be fake but carried out anyway, as a response to a hermeneutic crisis in a late humanism under siege from new theories of science, theology, and matter. In her words, alchemy was "a deliberate means by which a culture can manage epistemological risk" (8). Thus freed from its pretensions to make the world mean, Jonson's alchemy can be read as a more immediately practical art, which by reducing language to noise bypasses epistemology's individuating, distinguishing impulse – "this is not that" – and so renders sound portable and useable.

[87] Mimi Yiu has made an analogous argument about spatial thought in Jonson's London, as it underwent "a gradual shift that would culminate in the rise of Cartesian geography and scientific cartography…the ambiguous and dreamlike femininity of choric space awakens to a more rigorous, cartographic transparency based on the notion of a chartable, nameable, masculine *topos*" (76-7). In the liminal phase of the early seventeenth century, between these two paradigms, space is "epicene," or as Subtle puts it, "hermaphrodeity," queerly blending opposite elements in ways that occlude absolute measurement or purity.

[88] Even Subtle's name encodes this duality. Jessica Wolfe notes that "At its best, subtlety denotes intellectual acuity, precision, or prudent machination. At its worst, subtlety is shorthand for intellectual nit-picking, rhetorical superfluity, excessive intricacy, or dishonesty" (11).

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[89] William West notes that "the languages of alchemy, kabbala, and other occult practices dazzle their hearers rather than escaping their notice; they are, to use the distinction Jonson makes of masques, gazed at rather than read" (182). While they may not signify, the "dazzling" words still have a material effect.

[90] They subsequently banish Dapper to the privy, what Gail Kern Paster calls "the dunghill of undifference…the collapse of individuation back into the chaotic urban environment" (148)

[91] Ahmed ascribes a similar ephemerality to queer phenomenology: "It is given that the straight world is already in place and that queer moments, where things come out of line, are fleeting. Our response need not be to search for permanence…but to listen to the sound of 'the what' that fleets" (102). The sonic metaphor is especially felicitous, as my focus here is on the temporality of sound, as a material vibration moving through space for a given duration, as opposed to the inert image.

[92] Caroline Levine has recently suggested we rethink institutions in this way, as diachronic structures that accumulate new possibilities and configurations as they're continually reinstantiated: "since institutions persist and survive through repetition – through the citation of rules and the performance of practices – they are never present as such. They are materialized *across* time" (62).

[93] For an abstract version of this point, see Catherine Gallagher's seminal essay "Formalism and Time," which argues that pure events are uncapturable; all language can do is sculpt the ashes – the fire's heat and light fleet away. Forms "give the impression of overcoming time, rising above or congealing it, and hence, whatever their virtues, they appear strangely at odds with the temporal nature of the analyzed work"(231). I've leaned more heavily on Massumi's virtuality because its concern is material rather than semiotic.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

[94] See also Frances Dyson; contemporary media are, "modulated, distorted, reverberated beyond sense and ultimately beyond hearing. As Echo was cursed with the monotony of repetition, voicing only the last words of men who spoke, the echo-sphere circulates fragments of authorial voices as endings, terminations, leaving nothing more to be said." *The Tone of Our Times*, 113-4.

[95] An important influence here is Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, in which he argues that the present is always compromised by irruptions of the past. These "specters" arise from "this pre-originary and properly spectral anteriority of the crime – the crime of the other, a misdeed whose event and reality, whose truth can never *present themselves* in flesh and blood, but can only allow themselves to be presumed, reconstructed, fantasized. One does not, for all that, bear any less of a responsibility" (24). Much like his earlier argument

that an utterance is never present but "citational," dependent on previous use-patterns of the spoken words, here the experiential present is shot through with the past, which paradoxically compels responsibility for a state of affairs one did not create. Such is the case with echoes, which are sounds that bear the traces of their spoken past. Crucially though, this happens in the immediate realm of the senses, not the abstract sphere of ethics. Echoes don't so much haunt, then, as revivify, by carrying the original sound into new contexts, simultaneously diluting and extending its life. Thus the zombie, and not the ghost, supplies the rhetoric I use to discuss the echo. For another critique of Derrida's immateriality, see Gil Harris, 11-12.

[96] Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology*, 22-9.

[97] In his words, some later Renaissance commentators inflected Echo with a "mildly, cannily antiauthoritarian bias," as she spoke out "against a variety of repressive forces – chastity, discretion, science, vanity, the courts of Elizabeth and James" (35). Surprisingly, neither here nor anywhere in the book does he directly discuss gender, one of the most crucially "antiauthoritarian" inflections Echo assumed, as *The Duchess of Malfi* will show.

[98] Loewenstein speculates that actual echoes were an acoustic experience so uncanny that they required a psychological allegory to tame their power, and for this reason were written down as myth. I argue that, despite the moralizing, allegorical strain of interpretation Loewenstein traces from Ovid through to his Renaissance translators, the phenomenological representation of *unheimlich* Echo survived alongside it. *Responsive Readings*, 5.

[99] See for example Adam Zyglis's recent cartoon for the *Buffalo News*, depicting Donald Trump as Narcissus staring into the reflecting pool of his phone screen. The cartoon implicitly censures both Trump and the enabling technology itself, which tempts him to self-absorption. Early modern echoes, by contrast, were a technology for dispersing, rather than concentrating, self.
http://buffalonews.com/2017/01/10/trump-on-twitter/

[100] According to Loewenstein, this tradition begins as early as Jonson, who excises Echo from his masque *Cynthia's Revels* in order to foreground Narcissus's vanity, in a reflexive exploration of the limits of visuality itself in the masque tradition. 74-5.

[101] I am indebted to Bloom for my sense of the echo "Disjoining vocal sound from the speaking body and dispersing accountability for an utterance" (161). My account expands on hers by emphasizing the technological nature of echoes, which are created through a prosthetic device that inflects the speech act.

[102] On seedy sermons see Bloom, "Fortress of the Ear: Shakespeare's Late Plays, Protestant Sermons, and Audience," from *Voice in Motion*, 111-159.

[103] To be sure, Gurr stresses that the auditory dimension was appreciated primarily by elite audience members, and charts a steady shift away from conceptions of drama as poetry toward a more ocularcentric dramaturgy, culminating in the spectacular masques of Inigo Jones – *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 98-116. The Duchess of Malfi, however, offers a sonic counterpoint to the visual artifice comprising the treacherous deceit of her brothers, who "plague [her] in art" (4.1.113).

[104] See Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 99.

[105] See Katherine Maus and David Bevington's introduction to the Norton edition: "In Renaissance society, widows of marriageable age who had inherited the property, the businesses, or, in the Duchess's exalted case, the sovereignty of deceased husbands were virtually the only women in a socially legitimate position to control their sexual and economic lives" (1749).

[106] See Dympna Callaghan, *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy*: "the presence of the female protagonist radically destabilizes the tragic paradigm as it has been constructed in criticism from fatal flaw to catastrophe, and, finally, to apotheosis" (68).

[107] Clark and Chalmers use as their test case a hypothetical man named Otto, who has lost the ability to form new short-term memories, and thus relies on a notebook to keep track of appointments, names, and facts. They argue that Otto's notebook fulfills the same function as the memory would for a typical person, and thus allows the theorization of extended selfhood. In their words, "Most of us already accept that the self outstrips the boundaries of consciousness; my dispositional beliefs, for example, constitute in some deep sense part of who I am. If so, then these boundaries may also fall beyond the skin. The information in Otto's notebook, for example, is a central part of his identity as a cognitive agent."

[108] This and all subsequent quotations from the play are drawn from *English Renaissance Drama*, eds. David Bevington, Lars Engle, Katherine Eisaman Maus, and Eric Rasmussen (2002).

[109] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 173.

[110] Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, 215-7. While the exact height is unknown, Smith estimates (following Irwin Smith) a dropped ceiling would have been approximately 38 feet high and a vaulted ceiling 53 feet. He notes that the higher the ceiling, the longer the delay between staged sound and audience reception. Thus, by raising Antonio's "roof," the Duchess is actually facilitating *more* sonic distortion, a provocative confirmation of her echopoetic intent.

[111] Clark and Chalmers include couples in their extended mind theory: "In an unusually interdependent couple, it is entirely possible that one partner's beliefs will play the same

sort of role for the other as the notebook plays for Otto. What is central is the high degree of trust, reliance, and accessibility."

[112] Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 98-132.

[113] In fact this means that Derrida is right, but not for the reasons he thinks. He asks, "Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a 'coded' or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a 'citation'?" (18). He argues here that illocution's power is social; a marriage isn't sealed by speech itself, but by the auditors' recognition of the institution being invoked. However, he assumes that speakers imagine their statements to carry originary force. In this case, though, the Duchess is *knowingly* citing precedent, and the marriage is effected anyway. The question isn't whether an utterance is secondhand, but who manages its secondhand-ness, and thus controls its terms. In this case, that is decidedly the Duchess, hence her comment that "We now are man and wife, and 'tis the church/That must but echo this" (1.1.493-4). See Derrida, "Signature Event Context."

[114] See his *Seizures of the Will in Early Modern English Drama*: "I view Ferdinand as a threatened aristocrat, frightened by the contamination of his ascriptive social rank, and obsessively preoccupied with its defense…The duchess then becomes a symbol, flooded with affect, of his own radical purity. In reaching for her he aspires…to be like only himself" (191).

[115] See her *The Tears of Narcissus*: "Webster's version of melancholia represents Ferdinand's crisis as a narcissistic one. In the mirror of his twin sister's desire, and of her maternal body, the melancholic Ferdinand finds himself reflected and estranged at once" (242). While Enterline draws a telling contrast between Ferdinand's Narcissus and his sister's Echo, I argue that he is an *aspiring* narcissist, constantly fighting a border-war for his ego.

[116] See her *Occult Knowledge, Science, and Gender on the Shakespearean Stage*: "Webster frames women's bodies as central objects of inquiry. Indeed, Ferdinand's efforts to discover his sister's secrets are staged as an inquisition that mingles the discourses and practices of proto-scientific experimentation, natural magic, and demonology" (111).

[117] John Durham Peters writes that the telephone embeds a similar "uncanniness" inside mass communication, when the speaking body is severed from its voice, forcing the weight of interpretation onto the listener: "Mediated communication, as by the telephone, teaches us that we are always eavesdropping" (367). Such a paranoiac experience, I suggest, was quite common in the early modern theater, as the nested hermeneutics of audience-character-character suggest.

[118] Another provocative instance of origin-confusion occurs after the Duchess's murder, when Ferdinand reveals "She and I were twins;/And, should I die this instant, I had lived/Her time to a minute," to which Bosola replies "It seems she was born first" (4.2.265-7). But, as Maus and Bevington point out in their footnote, elsewhere Ferdinand is described as her *elder* brother (4.1.21). Again, the origin fleets; which was born first? Which echoes the other? The play deliberately leaves this question unanswerable.

[119] Harris, "Pyromena: Fire's Doing," in *Elemental Ecocriticism*, 29-34. She also notes that glass – a prevalent motif in the play, linked to truth-finding prostheses like spectacles – is itself sand metamorphosed by fire, a transformative core troubling the control it was instrumentalized to produce.

[120] Mary Floyd-Wilson posits Ferdinand's lupine degeneration as punishment for his overreaching empiricism: "Ferdinand's lycanthropy functions as the appropriate disease for a man whose arrogant experiments may have unwittingly engaged demonological forces" (127). I approach the more-than-human world from a different direction; the play obsessively queries the human/animal divide, trying to posit some sort of originary humanity. "Madness" is linked to animality, which in turn is linked to sound. The Madmen tormenting the Duchess emit screeches "Sounding as from the threat'ning throat/Of beasts and fatal fowl,/As ravens, screech owls, bulls, and bears!" (4.2.63-5). Animality is here the overflow of noise, the inability to anchor or "put yourself/In tune" (2.4.62-3), in the Cardinal's words. The play marks such tuning impossible, however; Bosola notes that "in our own flesh…we bear diseases/Which have their true names only ta'en from beasts,/As the most ulcerous wolf and swinish measle" (2.1.53-5). Our very bodies are echoes of animal conditions; there can be no stable human origin on which to stand. I read Ferdinand's lycanthropy as his realization of this fact, our ur-echoic nature.

[121] Mazzio argues that the tongue was for early moderns a synecdoche for language itself, detachable from its original context, of which rumor is a prime example. Ferdinand himself tropes the tongue's slippery speech with sexual mobility: "women like that part which, like the lamprey,/Hath nev'r a bone in it." The Duchess rebukes him, "Fie, sir!," to which he rejoins "Nay,/I mean the tongue. Variety of courtship!/What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale/Make a woman believe?" (1.1.337-41). Information is a rogue phallus, reconstituting vulnerable female bodies from within, thus prompting Ferdinand's defensive harangue.

[122] Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*, 184.

[123] Here I depart from Bloom, who argues that "Delio and Antonio dismiss the phenomenon as nothing more than 'fancy'" (161). While I share her sense of the echo as transgressive female power, I contend that that power is enhanced further by its measurable effect on Antonio.

[124] Here are listed all the Shakespearean echoes I have detected. Doubtless there are many more. In this case the echoing medium is me: my own imperfect knowledge of

Shakespeare has allowed these (and not other, which I've missed) sidelong references to resonate outward to you. Of these, only *Titus*, *Hamlet*, *Lear*, *Henry IV 1* and *2*, had been published in quarto when *The Duchess of Malfi* was staged, in late 1613 or 1614.

Hamlet: Ferdinand spies on the Duchess to discover her lover's identity, but then hesitates, fearing the effects, like Hamlet (3.2.92-7). Ferdinand tells the Duchess "It had been well/Could you have lived thus always, for indeed/You were too much i'th'light" (4.1.40-2), echoing Hamlet who is "Too much i'th'sun." Hamlet's inward melancholy cedes to the Duchess's physical containment at the hands of her brothers. Bosola echoes Hamlet's transformation from hesitation to blind action ("readiness is all"): "They that think long small expedition win,/For, musing much o'th'end, cannot begin" (5.2.119-21). The Cardinal tries and fails to pray and atone like Claudius (5.4.28-30).
Henry IV: The Cardinal grows slowly more impatient with Ferdinand's rage ("I'll leave you" (2.5.74)), like Worcester does that of Hotspur: "I will talk to you/When you are better tempered to attend." The frequent invocation of horses recalls Hotspur but also the post-riders of Part II, associated with degraded or false information: "if he had had a good back,/He would have undertook to have borne his horse,/His breech was so pitifully sore" (2.4.54-6).
King Lear: Bosola leans over the Duchess's corpse willing life into it like Lear over Cordelia: "She stirs! Here's life!" (4.2.344-8). Delio's devotion to Antonio echoes Kent's dogged loyalty to Lear, and he provides a similarly moralizing epigraph to close the play (5.5.127-39).
Macbeth: Bosola claims that "There's no more credit to be given to th'face/Than to a sick man's urine" (1.1.238-9), echoing Duncan's "There's no art/To find the mind's construction in the face."
Othello: the Cardinal boasts to Julia "Come, I'll love you wisely,/That's jealously, since I am very certain/You cannot me make cuckold" (2.4.24-6), an echo of jealous Othello who "Loved not wisely/But too well." Frequent emphasis is placed on the heart as a locus of truth, most notably by Cariola; when Bosola tells her "I should turn this to thee for that" she rejoins "Pray, sir, do; and when/That you have cleft my heart, you shall read there/Mine innocence" (3.2.146-9). This recalls Othello's desire to know Iago's thoughts, and his response, "You cannot, if my heart were in your hand."
The Taming of the Shrew: the Cardinal describes wooing Julia in falconer's terms, just as Petruchio does for Kate (2.4.27-30).
The Tempest: The Duchess claims that her children will only curse: "But I intend, since they were born accurst,/Curses shall be their first language" (3.5.116-7). This echoes Caliban's famous quip that "thou hast taught me language, and my profit on't is, I know how to curse."
Timon of Athens: The Duchess, like Timon, is eaten literally out of house and home: "In my last will I have not much to give;/A many hungry guests have fed upon me" (4.2.195-6).
Titus Andronicus: Ferdinand threatens "to boil [the Duchess and her lover's] bastard to a cullis,/And give't his lecherous father, to renew/The sin of his back" (2.5.72-4), just as Titus boils Tamora's sons into a meatpie and serves them to her.

Twelfth Night: as noted, the Duchess is a clear echo of Olivia. Bosola also reads Antonio's dropped horoscope like Malvolio reads the false love letter from Olivia, with a similar allegory of textual inscrutability (2.3.58-70).

The Winter's Tale: Bosola and the Duchess have an exchange about art improving nature; he says 'Tis a pretty art, this grafting," and she replies "'Tis so. A bett'ring of nature" (2.1.148-9), recalling Perdita's lines "There is an art which in their piedness shares/With great creating nature." Here though, there is no Polixines to correct her, meaning the Duchess's statement stands. Ironically though, "art" will be used by her brothers to kill her, although doubtless it also refers to her echoic transformation.

[125] Further suggesting "live" citation, Andrew Gurr notes that "there is more evidence of playwrights making covert allusions to contemporary people and events than there is of allusions to passages or phrases from well-known books." *Playgoing*, 101. See also Jonathan Gil-Harris, who argues that certain plays invoked the performance style or "vein" of others to demonstrate their own supercession of them. *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, 66-87.

[126] Turner contends that "The evidence of the stage 'plotts' indicates that English writers composed plays in a series of scenes that were meant to be played continuously in the theatre, and not in five acts" (179). He contrasts this with the later shift toward conceptualizing plays as texts to be read: "On the page, act and scene…contribute a conceptual unity to the play by subdividing its action into discrete parts, and these parts are presumed by the reader to fit together into a coherent structural whole" (180). *The English Renaissance Stage*.

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