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Chapter 3

Eerie Technologies and Gothic Acoutemology

Justin D Edwards

In Canto XIII of Dante's *Inferno*, the poet and his guide, Virgil, enter the second ring of hell. Here, the poet is taken aback by eerie sounds: 'I heard cries coming from every direction / And yet saw nobody who could be crying; / I became so bewildered that I stopped'. Upon hearing these disembodied cries, the poet is so disoriented in this dark forest of strange trees that he stops in his tracks. As the voices continue to emerge from the tree-stumps, Virgil encourages the poet to 'break off / A little twig from one of these plants'. He follows his guide's suggestion and picks a little branch from a great thorn. As he does, the trunk cries out in pain: 'Why are you tearing me? [...] Why are you dismembering me? Have you no compassion?' (98). The poet hears the plant's pain as these words emerge from the wound on the plant's stem. Virgil explains that, while he regrets the suffering inflicted upon the plant, his friend would never have believed it unless he had heard the cries from the plant itself. Hearing is believing.

I do not seek to appropriate *The Inferno* for the Gothic canon. Rather, I turn to Canto XIII because it illustrates how auditory perceptions open up the possibilities of other knowledges, other forms of experience that might not be accessible within the limits of vision. The poet's move from disorientation to understanding arises out of auditory perception, offering access to a non-realistic mode that resists documentary verisimilitude and moves away from the visual dynamics of mimesis into the slippery nature of sound and language. In a culture where seeing is believing, the ability to hear is underprivileged, even though we recognize that the ear is capable of extremely fine discriminations of pitch, intensity, and timbre or quality, and in some ways surpasses the eye. By breaking through the cultural construction of mimesis that privileges the visual, we can map new territories and explore the uncharted character of representational clarity beyond the limited perceptions of sight and capture new phenomena that are not immediately intelligible.

This chapter explores the role of aural experience and soundscape perception to outline an epistemology of auditory experience based on Gothic technologies. By amplifying sensory perceptions, the technologies of advanced hearing – listening devices – extend situated, embodied, cognitive practices, and offer insights into how acoustic epistemology provides a form of supra-rational knowledge based on a model of transduction between material sound energy and the conceptual. This challenges traditional epistemology by questioning a logocentric and rational model of knowledge, for the role of extended auditory experience can generate a supra-rational (before and beyond) knowledge so that the 'mindful ear' can enter Gothic spaces that depart from rational epistemology. In this, the practice of accessing new sounds through sound technology becomes a prosthetic 'technology of the self', and technoacoustic experiences open up new spaces to reflect on mimesis and re-embodiment in Gothic literary texts. In works such as Roald Dahl's 'Sound Machine' (1949) and Leonora Carrington's *Hearing Trumpet* (1974), for instance, technological

extensions to the ear present new knowledge and meaning; they transform aspects of consciousness – understanding, beliefs, emotions, compassion, dreams – through extended auditory experiences that challenge knowledge based on seeing.

In Dahl's 'Sound Machine', Mr Klausner, a radio expert, develops a new theory of sound and builds a machine to capture vibrations that go unheard by the human ear. The machine is a black box – 'the shape of a child's coffin' – wherein a 'mass of different-coloured wires and silver tubes' are linked by multiple connections, resembling 'complicated-looking innards' (152-3). Klausner explains to Dr. Scott, his physician and friend, that this sound machine will translate vibrations too low or too high for humans to hear. He says,

'Well, speaking very roughly, any note so high that it has more than fifteen thousand vibrations a second – we can't hear it. Dogs have better ears than us. You know you can buy a whistle whose note is so high-pitched that you can't hear it at all. But a dog can hear it [...] And up the scale, you can't hear that one either. And above that there is another and another rising right up the scale for ever and ever and ever'. (154)

The machine will access these sounds, enabling Klausner to hear the 'endless succession of notes', 'an infinity of notes', an alternative 'world of sound' (155). This new world of hearing does not just advance knowledge, but it also gestures to new ways of knowing that are not based on speculation or visual observation. Indeed, by accepting the limits of visual knowledge and the physical limitations of the human ear, Klausner articulates an auditory world of human not-knowing that might be revealed through the technology of his sound machine.

It is not clear if Klausner fits the mold of the mad scientist or the visionary genius. Whatever the case may be, he seeks to construct a form of technology that introduces a potentially disruptive change to the tightly integrated nature of sound communication systems. For new acoustic integration into the self would signal a detachment from the conventional human soundscape, displacing the self from the limits of human hearing and re-embodying sound in a technology that would have the power to open up new ways of hearing and the new knowledges that might accompany the sounds that are simultaneously there and not there. Like Victor in Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Klausner is driven by an intense desire to know: 'I want to know where they [the unheard sounds] come from', he tells Scott, 'and who or what is making them' (155). Human physiognomy is extended beyond its limits.

Yet the epistemology of *Frankenstein* is prominently empiricist, based on a distinction between subject and object, self and other. In this, Shelley anticipates the Tennysonian idea that knowledge arises out of an understanding that, 'I am not what I see / And other than the things I touch' (203). This paradigm of empiricism engenders a modern subject through the proliferation of ways of being and looking in the world. This highlights the subject's entanglement with particular kinds of representational forms and estrangement from others so that knowing becomes mired in a particular 'representational' framework whereby non-visual phenomenal experience and non-visual ontology are merely referrals to knowledge by seeing. An epistemological and ontological insularity thus privileges the visual and leads to a scopophilic conception of what it means to be human based on physical signs. This is translated into the visual presence of Victor's creation: the creature is rejected by his creator before he can utter a sound, his grotesque body inspires terror in those who can see him, and his otherness is inscribed on his body. What is heard is not feared;

the blind man welcomes the creature into his home with warmth and kindness, even after the old man is told that ‘a fatal prejudice clouds their eyes, and where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster’ (158-9). Seeing is not always knowing.

The word *klausner* in modern German derives from the Latin *clausum* meaning ‘cell’ or ‘shut-away place’; the modern English translation is hermit, loner, recluse or one who lives in seclusion. If Victor Frankenstein seeks isolation to conduct his experiments, Klausner is, as the name suggests, a reclusive figure, who is seen by his neighbours as a ‘rather peculiar person’ who is inaccessible and closed off from the community, symbolically boxed in: ‘Somehow there was about this little person a quality of distance, of immeasurable distance’, Dr. Scott says of Klausner, ‘as though the mind were far away from where the body was’ (155). The exaggerated Cartesian dualism in this description signals a distance from both the individual body and the communal body. However, his distance, his cognitive inward turning, cannot be conflated with interiority, for he is motivated by his desire to understand the external world that is outside auditory experience: he separates himself from the world – becomes reclusive – in order gain new insights. Thus, his position as subject and his desire for knowledge rests on a fallacy of doubleness, for he tries to ‘penetrate inside’ that which is unknown and gain a new understanding. But he also sees himself as outside the world, manipulating the structures of life to produce a new creation. In this, the separate conceptions of internal and the external arise out of how the subject sees himself in relation to his surroundings. He might gain inner knowledge about life – what is sentient and what is not – but this rests on the fallacy that he will remain outside of the knowledge he gains, the thing he manipulates and creates. The abstract notions of understanding life (mind) thus lie in sharp contrast to the immediate material consequences of what is created (body).

Yet ‘The Sound Machine’ turns this fallacy on its head. Klausner’s body is linked to the very technology he creates. If the hearing device, the black box, is anthropomorphized through its wired ‘innards’, then it also reflects the box-like isolation of the scientist’s life and work. The electrical currents that translate the vibrations into audible sounds have their corollary in the ‘nervous, twitchy little man’; he is a live wire who is tense and jittery (155). This merger of the body and technology is highlighted when Klausner covers his ears with headphones and turns on the machine. According to the narrator,

As he listened, he became conscious of a curious sensation, a feeling that his ears were stretching out away from his head, that each ear was connected to his head by a thin stiff wire, like a tentacle, and that the wires were lengthening, that the ears were going up and up towards a secret and forbidden territory, a dangerous ultrasonic region where ears had never been before and had no right to be. (157)

Here, the machine is much more than a hearing apparatus. Organic and non-organic matter come together: the thin stiff copper wire is integrated into Klausner’s ear, which grows outward in the form of flesh and blood tentacles to extend the senses beyond its limits. This complicates the relationship between ‘inner space’ and ‘outer space’, increasing and enhancing his normal sensory capabilities so his hearing is modified to perform at higher levels than unmodified counterparts. Differences between the human body parts and the machine become blurred in a synthesis of organic and synthetic parts, and this body-altering technology engenders the mapping

of new soundscapes – secret areas and forbidden zones – that confound the human experience of sound in space. This redefines the corporeal limits of humanity through expansion and redefines what can be known about the outside world.

The integration of his sound machine into his body engenders new forms of knowledge, new insights into the world through new sensory perception, which relies on a physical link between the creator and the technology. He is not separate from his machine. Such technological and bodily concerns enable us to reflect on the wider themes of subjectivity and experience, interiority and exteriority, as well as the inextricable relationship between technology, the body, the senses and the self. In Dahl's text, the body takes its rightful place alongside the mind and the technology it has produced. But what knowledge or, rather, what kind of knowledge, does Klausner gain? Like Victor Frankenstein who dreams of creating beauty, Klausner envisions subtle harmonies and powerful music that will transport him to new heights through exquisite auditory splendor. In practice, though, his machine only amplifies pain and suffering. His first test of the device reveals 'a shriek, a frightful piercing shriek' emanating from some roses being cut by his neighbor. When severed, he hears the plant emitting 'a throatless, inhuman shriek, sharp and short, very clear and cold' that starts with a 'metallic quality' before building to a frightful scream 'in the most terrible way' (157-8).

The synthesis of body and technology leads Klausner to new information – plants articulate pain – and this leads to a reconception of life. If plants can communicate suffering to people, then this raises significant questions about individuality and our relationships to other forms of organic matter. What kind of pain might plants feel? What constitutes life and the hierarchies we impose on living things? Are plants forms of sentient life? These questions engender a reflection on human exceptionalism, for Klausner's sound machine is a form of technology that pushes the boundaries between the self and the environment. Perhaps vegetative life needs to be reconceived, as human and plant domains blur through the clarity of new sounds. Thus, human subjectivity can be rethought in relation to this new aural connectivity: pain and suffering are not necessarily bounded by the flesh, muscle or bone, nor are these sensations limited to humans or animals, the human animal.

The following day Klausner decides to test the machine again. He carries it to the local park and places it at the base of a giant Long Branch tree. As he swings his axe and hits the tree, he hears an enormous and astonishing sound: 'The blade cut deep into the wood and stuck there, and at the instant of impact he heard a most extraordinary noise in the earphones. It was a new noise, unlike anything he had heard before – a harsh, noteless, enormous noise, a growling, low-pitched, screaming sound, not quick and short like the noise of the roses, but drawn out like a sob lasting for fully a minute' (160). The sound engenders horror at the thought that he is hearing the pain he has inflicted, a 'woodflesh' wound that will take some time to 'heal', and fright when confronted with a new soundscape of suffering (161). The anthropomorphization of the tree continues when Klausner calls for Dr Scott to first hear the tree's pain and then dress the trunk's wound. But before the doctor hears the tree's moan, the sound machine is scattered to pieces by a falling branch.

What 'The Sound Machine' points to is a new organic epistemology wherein the subject is no longer deaf to the pain of other living organisms. This pushes the extent of knowledge beyond its visual limits, imagining a space where audition navigates life beyond the human condition. Visually oriented knowledge is thus supplemented by new auditory epistemes so the ability to understand the environment is stretched through new knowledge-making practices and material interactions that

hinge on multiple epistemologies. In this, Klausner's insights into the organic utterance of pain and suffering gestures to ontological inseparability agentially interacting components that signify the mutual constitution of entangled agencies that are relational through intra-actions between forms of organic life. This transduction of energy into a new technology, providing unique auditory understandings of an environment, territorializes the space and other things within it, a territorialization that forces a reconception of the possibilities of inhabitation. To hear plants expressing sound opens a possible world of sorts, territorializing the space and its inhabitants and creating knowledge through the cognitive act of perceptually guided action. Changes in one form of hearing necessarily entail changes in others, leading to the possibility of irreducible multiplicities.

Auditory experience and audio technology afford unique forms of embodiment. Sound is experienced as an enveloping and immersive medium. This is true whether we are hearing acoustic sound or technologically mediated sound filtered through amplifying mechanisms. While there is clearly a difference between amplified sound in its displaced context and the sound at its source, we experience sound similarly in both cases, that is, as dimensional sound in space. What is generally referred to as the source of a sound should be considered its 'origin'. But when the source of the sound can only be heard through a technological apparatus, the origin of the sounds heard will refer back to the technology that provides its access – its displacement – in the filtering device. Thus, the sound of the plants is doubly disembodied: it is not embodied in human or animal, nor is it heard without the aid of the machine. The origin is, then, disembodied and displaced, but the experience of the filtered sound is located in the situated space of the listener, and can only be embodied, or rather, re-embodied in this listening process.

Hearing with the technology of new ears, Klausner accesses sounds and the expression of sensations that have always been present and not-present, there but not-there, communicated but not-communicated. His technological extension to the ear calls attention to the ear as uncanny, or what Nicholas Royle, hearing Derrida, refers to as the ear as the unspoken key to the future of understanding and knowledge: 'The ear is uncanny, for example, because it is double: it can be at once open and closed; receptive and unresponsive; source and destination. The ear is the ear of the other. The ear of the other is an "eerily" dismembered ear. The ear is that from which the very possibility of speaking (or writing) comes, it is the one that does not answer, for example when Derrida asks, and I now ask in turn: "Who is listening to whom right here?"' (64). The ear uncannily picks up what is there and not there. And as both source and destination, the ear offers information through the sound, the possible communication, it captures so the sound machine is an extra layer of the ear as source. Likewise, the ear is open and cannot be shut (like the eyes) but it is also closed to many sound frequencies. The machine becomes another opening and, while it can be shut off (closed) through the act of volition, it has already opened up and outward to that which cannot be heard. From this perspective, Klausner becomes obsessed by who is listening – or not listening – to plants, and his obsession forces us to wonder what would happen if we could lend or offer an ear to the suffering expressions of another other: the organic matter that is not otherwise human or animal. If the ear is the ear of the other, then the sound machine also provides access to other forms of knowledge, even if that knowledge is mysterious, strange or eerie.

Eerie is a synonym of uncanny: it is the same but not the same. And if, as the OED suggests, that which is eerie is seemingly not of an earthly origin, then the improbable, surreal and impossible events of Leonora Carrington's *Hearing Trumpet*

are simultaneously Gothic, uncanny and eerie. The novel's protagonist, Marian Leatherby, is an elderly woman living with her son and daughter-in-law. Marian is given a listening device – a hearing trumpet that amplifies sound – and this opens up new worlds for her. She overhears her family's plot to send her to the Gothic estate of a home for 'senile old women' (63); she discovers evidence of mysterious gatherings where participants speak to the dead; she learns of werewolves, apparitions and 'what it is like being dead' (60). The trumpet also provides access to esoteric séances, the mysteries of the peering nun and the possible murder of a fellow member of the nursing home. In the end, the hearing trumpet leads her to reorder the terrestrial world: she envisions a land that is 'transformed by snow and ice', and she anticipates a time when 'the planet is peopled with cats, werewolves, bees, and goats'. This will be, she hopes, a 'fervent improvement on humanity' (158).

Recent criticism on *The Hearing Trumpet* aligns it with surrealism. Given Carrington's relationship to the European surrealist movement – particularly her affair with Max Ernst – this alignment is not a surprise (Hubert 740). In many cases, the text is referred to as a feminist subversion of Surrealist tenets, but one that nonetheless remains part of the Surrealist canon.¹ Reading Carrington's novel in this context limits its links to other literary movements and modes of writing, particularly magic realism, fantasy and Gothic. In fact, the existing criticism tends to ahistoricize Surrealism, seeing it as an isolated European movement that broke away from, but was not influenced by, earlier literary and artistic modes. This erases André Breton's celebration of the 18th century Gothic novel in his *Surrealist Manifesto* wherein he praises writers like Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis for writing texts 'infused throughout with the presence of the marvelous' (128). Surrealism has always drawn on the Gothic's penchant for taboo, irrationality, obsession, irrationality, grotesquery, apparitions, black humour and the uncanny.

Carrington draws on the Gothic mode and, in so doing, she moves surrealism away from its focus on unique visual forms to distinctive aural soundscapes. At the beginning of the text, the elaborately encrusted silver and mother o'pearl hearing trumpet makes the inaudible accessible so she can hear what is there: 'ordinary conversation became quite audible to my ears' (1). Here, the technology of the hearing device is purely functional: it enables her to hear what is happening around her. But once she is institutionalized it enables her to understand the fraudulent spiritual voices in the prison-like Christian home: the preaching of the 'inner Meaning of Christianity' is, for instance, exposed as hypocrisy, and the buffalo horn-like hearing instrument initiates her into a different belief system where the seemingly unnatural is revealed to be differently natured (28).

The stereophonic aspects of *The Hearing Trumpet* lead to a new acoustemology. First used by the anthropologist and musicologist Steven Feld, the word acoustemology expresses the primacy of sound in the human experience of the world. Feld coined the term while he was doing research on the sound world of Kaluli people in Papua New Guinea's rainforests. It was his hypothesis that the soundscapes of the environment were woven into the music, language and speech of the people living in a place with specific sounds from the wildlife, vegetation, climate and

¹ See Natalya Lusty's *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), Susan R Suleiman's *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) and Whitney Chadwick's *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (Hampshire: Thames and Hudson, 1985).

landscape.² But Feld soon realized that the methodologies he was using from the anthropology of sound were too limited for his research: he thus developed the all-encompassing notion of acoustemology. ‘Soundscapes, no less than landscapes’, he writes, ‘are not just physical exteriors, spatially surrounding or apart from human activity [...]. Soundscapes are invested with significance by those whose bodies and lives resonate with them in social time and space’ (226). This union of acoustics and epistemology calls attention to the primacy of sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world. It also suggests that sound simultaneously emanates from and penetrates bodies so that there is a ‘reciprocity of reflection and absorption’. This leads to a creative means of orientation wherein bodies are tuned into places and times through their sound potential: ‘hearing and producing sound are’, according to Feld, ‘embodied competencies that situate actors and their agency in particular historical worlds’ (226).

This emphasis on sound as an epistemology which operates through the reciprocative ‘sounding potential’ of the embodied human resonates with the sound technology that opens up new spaces – ways of knowing – through Marian’s hearing trumpet. When she places the trumpet to her ear, Marian gains access to a new world of sound that signals the change in agency to the extent that the sound, in Feld’s words, ‘both emanates from and penetrates’ the site of the body in which the vocal chords producing these words are situated. The voices to which she now has access belong in the realm of both here and elsewhere in the acoustemological space that is opened up by the hearing technology. If Klausner gains insights into a new world of vegetative sounds, then Marian gains new knowledge about otherworldly environments and surroundings, first in the unhomely space of family house and then in the Gothic space of the retirement home. In both places, the real blurs into the unreal through the instrument of the hearing trumpet, the sphere of the dead momentarily overlaps with that of the living, allowing knowledge to be transmitted within the soundscape which comes into being through the configuration of hearing technology, voice, agency and identity.

Feld’s acoustemology has no mystical, surreal or Gothic dimensions, but rather delineates an Other epistemology which stays firmly on the terrain of the rational even as it disrupts and subverts the North Atlantic tradition of privileging vision in the quest for knowledge. As such, acoustemology is operational as a theoretical framework which may be applied in other material, ontological and textual contexts where a ‘sensory tension between the seen and heard, the hidden and revealed’ throws North Atlantic forms of knowledge production into doubt (227). As a strategy for apprehending and conveying different types of knowledge, Feld’s acoustemology shares an affinity with Carrington’s literary project: ‘at the centre [of *The Hearing Trumpet*]', writes Ali Smith, ‘are people unable to hear each other, or unwilling to. It’s about how we hear, and how we don’t, or can’t, and it’s about what happens when people can hear or see differently’ (xii). Indeed, Smith’s articulation of the text as demanding ‘we perceive differently’ may refer to the Surrealist elements, but I would add that it also points to the acoustemological dynamics that structure the novel by renegotiating the assumed hierarchical relationship between sound and vision (xv).

² The term soundscape was coined by the Canadian composer and director of the World Soundscape Project Murray Schafer in his book *The Tuning of the World* in 1977. Steven Feld records being inspired by Schafer’s influential development of the concepts of ‘soundscape’ and ‘acoustic ecology’ (Michael Bull and Les Back 21; Steven Feld 225).

The centrality of the category of sound to *The Hearing Trumpet*'s meaning-making processes is evident from the opening pages. When she first puts the trumpet to her ear, Marian is 'terrified' and 'frightened': 'what I had always heard as a thin shriek', she says, 'went through my head like the bellow of an angry bull [...] this frightful noise was worse than Robert's motor cycle' (5). Marian is overwhelmed by this technology, and 'the revolutionary possibilities of the trumpet' – sonorous, exhilarating, scary – must be kept secret, hidden away from those who might try to rob her of this new world. 'You must not let them see you using it', Carmella tells Marian, 'you have to hide somewhere and listen' (6). But this secret does not only allow Marian to eavesdrop on other people's conversations, it also gives her supernatural powers: she hears otherworldly voices, she becomes telepathically linked to Carmella, and she can gain knowledge of the mysterious portrait of the nun.

But the hearing trumpet is not just an instrument for accessing new knowledge. It is also a protective device from those who try to impose a sound-based false belief system on her. The owners of the home, Dr. and Mrs. Gambit, preach the 'Message from the Great Beyond' and attempt to teach the residents to overcome the 'interior impurities' of 'Greed, Insincerity, Egoism, Laziness and Vanity' (46, 44). This requires, they expound, finding the 'light of Objective Observation Consciousness' that will 'open psychic doors for New Truth' on the journey to the 'inner Meaning of Christianity' (44, 28). Residents can access this new world by listening to the Movements. Mrs. Gambit explains,

The Movements were given to us in the past by Someone in the Tradition. They have many meanings. I am not at liberty to disclose to you yet as you have only just arrived, but I can say one of the outer meanings is the harmonious evolution of the Whole organism to different Special rhythms which I play to you on the harmonium. Do not expect to grasp the meaning of the Movements when you first begin, just start off as you would any ordinary task of the day. (34)

According to Gambit's faux Christian psychobabble, the process of listening to sound – the Movements – offers a new ontology that cannot be accessed by visual or other non-auditory perceptions. The Movements are a gateway into 'the great unseen' (39). Yet it is not clear if the Movements are self-contained fragments or combinations that form part of a coherent composition. Are these individual or selected movements from a composition that are preformed separately? Are they a succession of movements that are performed to make up a complete work? And how does the form of the music – in fragments or through coherence – relate to what Mrs. Gambit calls the 'Wholeness' of the self? Using her hearing trumpet, Marian concludes that none of these questions can be answered, and that belief in hearing 'Inner Christianity' is nothing more than a policing mechanism to serve the Gambits' agenda.

The Gothic tenor of the text increases when one of the residents, Christabel, secretly conspires to give Marian a clandestine manuscript titled 'Doña Rosalinda della Cueva, Abbess of the Convent of Santa Barbara of Tartarus. Canonized in Rome 1756. A true and faithful rendering of the life of Rosalinda Alvarez' (72). Ostensibly translated from the original Latin text by Friar Jeremias Nacob of The Order of the Holy Coffin, the text reveals the transgressions of Abbess Rosalinda (the leering nun in the portrait that captivates Marian). Rosalinda's transgressions are numerous: she is skilled at witchcraft, she steals a potion found beside the wrapped mummy of Mary Magdalen, she uses the potion – a powerful aphrodisiac – to host opulent and

grotesque orgies, she disguises herself as a bearded nobleman and seduces a Maghrebi Prince, she poisons Prince Theutus Zosimus and buries his body in the convent's courtyard. Long passages from the Friar's manuscript disrupt Marian's first person narrative and yet the hearing trumpet appears in the illustrations that accompany this section of the text. In one illustration depicting an orgy that is 'too horrible to set down with honest ink', Rosalinda and the Bishop of Trève les Frêles inhale the potent potion and are 'wafted into the air and [...] suspended, levitating, over the open crate of Turkish delight with which they were both gorged' (79). Here, the floating figures float above the hearing trumpet, which is placed at the centre of the image. The composition of this drawing calls attention to the significance of the hearing device: it is present even when Marian does not need it to access sound. It is a form of technology that enables her to enter another realm, a world that is not based on rationality and logic.

The friar's translation of the 'tractate of Doña Rosalinda' is a polyphonic text (100). It includes Rosalinda's letters to the Bishop, fragments from Hebrew scrolls documenting the nun's exploits in Ireland, as well as Latin documents (not translated) by Dominico Eurcaristo Deseos (confessor of the convent of Santa Barbara de Tartarus, who is executed by the order of the Pope). One of these extracts comes from a letter sent from Rosalinda to the Bishop relating the discovery of Magdalen's crypt. She writes,

“Lose no time as interest has already been quickened in certain quarters in England. The tomb is no doubt the genuine burial ground of Mary Magdalen; the ointment which was found on the left side of the mummy may very well release secrets which would not only discredit the gospels but which would crown all the arduous work we have shared during recent years [...]. You may imagine the transports of delight which overcame me when I learnt that Magdalen had been a high initiate of the mysteries of the Goddess but had been executed for the sacrilege of selling certain secrets of her cult to Jesus of Nazareth [...]. How heartily you will laugh when you read this! We will soon be undermining the Vatican itself!” (75)

Marian's voice blurs into the voice of the Friar Jeremias who is translating another's voice which in turn moves into the voices of Rosalinda, Dominico and others. This diversity of narrative voices includes multiple points of view, encouraging us to ask a vital question: who is speaking? Indeed, the lack of continuity of a single voice engenders a conceptual and structural split in the narrative that conveys an acoustemology based on disruptive vocalization. The question 'who is speaking?' leads to uncertainties about who is listening. For the technology of the hearing trumpet introduces a disruptive change in the tightly integrated nature of acoustic communication systems. The device includes a unique mediation wherein acoustic integration is challenged as the various aspects of sound and its technological manipulation can detach the listener from a visual ontology that manipulates perceptions into the paradigm of seeing-is-believing. The displacement of sound from its source and re-embodying it in the filtering process offered by the hearing trumpet changes the dynamics of acoustic communication and disrupts mimesis by relating new environmental sounds that cannot otherwise be heard.

'The Sound Machine' and *The Hearing Trumpet* offer acoustemologies that focalize a self which resonates and resounds in its relation to the categories of human and non-human, self and other, logic and irrationality. Depicting realms that

overcome these binaries, the technologies of the texts offer a system of knowledge production that privileges sound over vision and allows for a repositioning of the relationship between the nominally separate forms of experience classified respectively as rational and irrational, subjective and objective. Acoustemology opens up new realms and includes possibilities for countering the historical ascendancy of visual epistemologies in North Atlantic cultures. Advocating a different approach to our sensory apparatus, the focus on hearing technologies avoids a reliance on the distancing sense of vision wherein subject and object appear to be transparent. Listening engenders an alternative perception of the relationship between subject and object, inside and outside. In its engulfing multi-directionality, sound blurs the above distinctions and enables us to re-think our relationship to them. The plane which Dahl and Carrington activate is the one which structures the otherworldly realms of the Gothic: the acoustic relations between human and non-human, self and other signify the temporary obliteration of rational and irrational ontologies through the medium of sound. The heightened hearing through this technology reconfigures the environments and repositions the self in relation to the world: the 'soundingness' of the technologies conveys new knowledge and renews the bonds that mediate the social constructions of rational and irrational experiences. These hearing technologies provide unique focal points, for they open up new spaces, places and new perceptions through a heightened state of consciousness. From this perspective, the spatial dynamic of the Gothic is not just limited to the visual perceptions – often defined by scopophilia – conveyed in the text. Gothic spaces are also unlocked through the keys of auditory experience.

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