157–186; Susan Wolfson, “Gendering the Soul,” in *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1995), 33–68; “A Lesson in Romanticism: Gendering the Soul,” *Lessons of Romanticism: A Critical Companion*, ed. Thomas Pfau and Robert F. Gleckner (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 349–375.

3. Bentham, quoted in Charles Kay Ogden, *Bentham's Theory of Fictions* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1932), 8.
4. Bentham, in Ogden, *Bentham's Theory*, 13.
5. Bentham, in Ogden, *Bentham's Theory*, 15–16.
6. Bentham, in Ogden, *Bentham's Theory*, 17.
7. Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics.* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 150.
8. Tucker, “Hips,” 167 and 168.
9. Tucker, “Hips,” 167.
10. Tucker, “Hips,” 168; Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” lines 12–13, *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Norman H. Mackenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 141.
11. Robert Browning, *The Ring and the Book*, ed. Richard D. Altick and Thomas Collins (Orchard Park: Broadview, 2001), bk. 10, line 373.
12. John Stuart Mill, “Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties,” in *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 343–365, 346.
13. For detailed accounts of moral character see Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Lauren M. E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). I take the term “character-talk” from Collini, *Public Moralists*, 113.

Sound

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SOUNDSCAPES shape individual and cultural consciousness, and the industrial revolution made the nineteenth-century world louder.

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John Picker has argued that "the development of Victorian self-awareness was contingent on awareness of sonic environments."[1] With the exception of Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes*, many recent studies of the way Victorian writers represented sound have focused on poetry, especially the work of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Christina Rossetti. I would like to call attention to the way sound worked metaphorically in some nineteenth-century fiction: as an alternative to the classic Western metaphor that represented knowledge through vision. Flannery O'Connor has pointed out that, "the nature of fiction is in large measure determined by the nature of our perceptive apparatus . . . [and] the fiction writer begins where human perception begins."[2] Writers engage readers through the senses, and descriptions of sound suggest thoughts and emotions in ways that representations of vision cannot. Picker has observed that in Victorian prose, sound served "as a metaphor for the communication of meaning."[3] Through a brief analysis of works by Edgar Allan Poe and Thomas Hardy, I would like to suggest that in the nineteenth century, descriptions of sound conveyed paths to truth that circumvented reason. Metaphorically, the perception of sounds could imply a growing awareness of truths too terrible to "see."[4]

Poe organized the narrative of "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) around sound. His epigraph by Pierre-Jean de Béranger, "Son coeur est un luth suspendu; Sitôt qu'one [sic] touche il résonne" ("His heart is a suspended lute; as soon as one touches it, it resonates") refers to Roderick Usher, who seems too sensitive to live.[5] Physiologically, sound and touch are closely related, since when the cells of the inner ear vibrate, the world touches its listener. Poe's tale is told by a school friend of Usher who has come to cheer him, and the story follows his slow discovery of just how disturbed Usher is. Usher's "morbid acuteness of the senses" affects every modality, but Poe uses sound synecdochically to show Usher's general hypersensitivity.[6] Above all, Usher suffers from a "morbid condition of the auditory nerve."[7] This synecdoche serves Poe well, since it seems that one good tremor could disintegrate Usher's fine tissue as it would the crumbling stones of his house. This tremor comes when Usher's twin sister dies and the protagonist helps him place her in a vault. When the door's "immense weight caused an unusually sharp, grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges," it speaks of the horrifying proximity of death.[8]

Like a composer, Poe uses intensifying sounds to drive his story toward its climax. In a suspenseful sequence, the protagonist begins to "hear" a disturbing truth that has been known to Usher for some time.

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During a violent storm, he reads aloud to Usher and hears increasingly real echoes of the fictional sounds. Usher confesses, "Yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb*!"[9] Usher and his sister die together, and the protagonist flees their collapsing house. The story ends when "a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters" sinks into silence, and the terrible truth settles.[10] Through sound, Poe has tracked a slow, horrifying awareness that couldn't be rendered through sight.

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), Thomas Hardy also uses sound to represent looming truths and encroaching forces. One could read these forces as industrial, but they also take the form of social laws and human cruelty. Hardy describes sound to place a reader in a scene, as when "the milk in the revolving churn . . . changed its squashing for a decided flick-flack."[11] Hardy's sounds do more than engage readers, however; in context, they often do symbolic work for the story. Tess has been shuddering at the tale of an unwed pregnant girl, and as Angel pursues her, she fears her past will be discovered. She flees outside to hear "a solitary cracked-voiced reed sparrow" singing "in a sad, machine-made tone."[12] In this emotional moment, the bird's mechanical music suggests the soulless natural and social worlds that Tess perceives.

Repeatedly, Hardy has Tess awaken in darkness, with only sound to alert her to the horrors around her. Her horse Prince is killed as she sleeps, and she is startled awake by "a hollow groan, unlike anything she had ever heard in her life."[13] "A slight creak" alerts her to the presence of sleep-walking Angel, and "strange sounds . . . sometimes . . . a palpitation, sometimes a flutter; sometimes . . . a sort of gasp or gurgle" betray the bloodied pheasants dying near her as she sleeps outdoors.[14] Both Tess's rapist, Alec, and her intolerant husband, Angel, can be heard when they are not seen: Alec, through a "rustling of the branches;" and Angel, through a "splashing."[15] Scenes in which characters can hear but not see convey the terrifying predicament in which one senses danger but doesn't know what or where it is.

Probably, Victorian writers used sound and vision differently as epistemological metaphors for cultural and physiological reasons. Long associated with clarity and reason, vision carried baggage that made it inadequate to represent the approach of an unknown, mechanized modernity. If two of the nineteenth century's most creative authors depicted characters struggling to identify sounds in the dark, they may

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have been conveying a cultural feeling that combined awareness with ignorance.

Notes

1. John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.
2. Flannery O'Connor, "The Nature and Aim of Fiction," in *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose,* ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1969), 67.
3. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes,* 7.
4. I would like to thank the students in my Fall 2017 "Literature and the Senses" class, especially Carolyn Koehnke and Raul Perez Zarate, for leading me to these ideas.
5. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," in *The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales* (New York: Signet, 2006), 109.
6. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 114.
7. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 117.
8. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 121.
9. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 127.
10. Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 128.
11. Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 150.
12. Hardy, *Tess,* 150.
13. Hardy, *Tess,* 38.
14. Hardy, *Tess,* 266, 297.
15. Hardy, *Tess,* 81, 158.

Stupidity

RAE GREINER

> Folly is to be distinguished from madness only in the sense that the former, like stupidity, is conscious.
>
> — Friedrich von Schlegel, "Athenäum Fragments"[1]

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