

Truth and Travel: The *Principal Navigations* and ‘Thule, the Period of Cosmographie’

by Katie Bank

Thomas Weelkes’s bipartite madrigal for six voices, ‘Thule, the Period of Cosmographie’ (1600), paints a scene of strange spectacle complete with merchants from far off places, flying fishes, treasures and goods from abroad, foreign islands, and exotic volcanoes as its anonymously authored text vividly describes the wonders of exploration of the known world.¹

Thule, the period of Cosmographie,
Doth vaunt of Hecla, whose sulphureous fire
Doth melt the frozen Clime, and thaw the Skie;
Trinacrian Ætna’s flames ascend not higher:
These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,
Whose hart with feare doth freeze, with love doth fry.

The Andalusian Merchant, that returnes
Laden with cutchinele and China dishes,
Reports in Spaine how strangely Fogo burnes
Amidst an Ocean full of flying fishes:
These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I,
Whose hart with feare doth freeze, with love doth fry.²

At first glance, this could be a madrigal like many others of its kind, full of light-hearted fantasy and myth. In the stereotypical pastoral English madrigal, the poems are rife with figures from classical myth, skipping nymphs, kissing shepherds, fields of daisies — the pleasures of a simple life remembered in a perceived past that exists not in history, but in the mind.³ Mythical figures such as Orion, Diana, Phoebus, Cupid, and Apollo make frequent appearances in madrigal lyric. The musical setting of ‘Thule’ draws upon musical features common in English madrigal compositions, which seems to reinforce the idea that this is a typical English madrigal.⁴ Although ‘Thule’ appears in the same printed collection as more traditional pastoral examples such as ‘When Thoralis delights to walk’, perhaps the most curious thing about ‘Thule’ is that, in addition to the notoriously clever musical illustrations, the apparently fantastical objects and events described in the text stemmed from global expeditions and were indebted to travel accounts often considered credible. To an Elizabethan at home, the bizarre occurrences described in Weelkes’s madrigal most likely occupied a space that incorporated both reality and fantasy.⁵ Though it has been long surmised that travel accounts, a form that flourished at this time of global exploration, inspired this text’s imagery, there is surprisingly little in-depth investigation into the source for those images.

¹ ‘Bipartite’ means the music and text are demarcated into two clear sections, like a two-stanza poem.

² Thomas Weelkes (1576–1623), *Madrigals of 5. And 6. Parts apt for viols and voices* (London: printed by Thomas Este, 1600), sig. D2r.

³ This quaintness readily invokes a sense of nostalgia for simple country life, even if the person experiencing the nostalgia has never actually lived such a life. For further discussion on the pastoral mode and myth in literature, see: Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Laurence D. Lerner, *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1972).

⁴ In particular word-painting and (mostly) through composition, which I shall discuss later in the article.

⁵ The volcano Ætna would have been familiar to educated Elizabethans from references in Virgil, further blurring the status of the madrigal text as of this world, but also another.

During Weelkes's lifetime the European focus on outward exploration and the accumulation of wealth and knowledge from abroad grew substantially. While it is unlikely Weelkes (or his poet) collected their observations first hand, by writing about foreign travel and the observation of natural phenomena, Weelkes's music expresses an idea that was at the forefront of the national (and greater European) mind, providing a musical experience that cogitated the metaphysics of knowing in relation to the wonder of travel.⁶ Yet few scholars have treated this text with thought it deserves.⁷

This article demonstrates in the most solid terms to date why the most likely source of inspiration for Weelkes's text was Richard Hakluyt's major compilation, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589, 1598–1600).⁸ But more importantly, this article argues that through musical illustration, the composer transmitted knowledge about travel literature that was not implicit in the poem's text alone.⁹ This musical transmission of knowledge shows one way that music, through performance, was capable of not only reflecting but also contributing to contemporary negotiations surrounding the foundation of knowledge.

I consider not only what this song is and means, but also what it does in terms of the deeper questions it presents about sources of truth. I believe Weelkes used the musical tropes of a genre he knew intimately to question experience's relationship to truth at a time when reports from abroad were both a sought-after commercial object and questioned as untrustworthy fabrications. The foundations for certain truth in Europe changed over the course of the seventeenth century, but rather than focusing on those who finally articulated that change, this work contributes to the idea that practice pre-empts theory and knowledge is made and tested through collective and mundane daily activities, like music making.¹⁰

Music and music making were a daily part of life for early modern English people. Users of printed music books were usually noble or merchant class folk who were able to own instruments and purchase and read music books. Friends and family, and occasionally professional musicians or household music teachers, would sit around a table after dinner and play and/or sing from these books as the evening entertainment. One can imagine that in the household of Weelkes's patron, George Brooke (1586–1603), recreational music would have

⁶ Ian Woodfield imagines that it is possible a young Weelkes could have been employed on an Elizabethan flagship via his connections with Durham House, though there is no evidence of this. Ian Woodfield, *English Musicians in the Age of Exploration* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1995), pp. 261–2.

⁷ Musicologist Joseph Kerman was perhaps the first to write about 'a pleasant fanciful link between Weelkes and Drake and Hakluyt' present in this madrigal's text, though he does not pursue the connection any further. Joseph Kerman, *The Elizabethan Madrigal* (New York: The AMS, 1960), p. 231. Enrique Alberto Aria's problematic article connects the poem to cartography more broadly, as well as the New Map by Edward Wright, first included within Hakluyt's collection. Enrique Alberto Aria 'Maps and Music: How the Bounding Confidence of the Elizabethan Age was Celebrated in a Madrigal by Thomas Weelkes' *EMA* 9/4 (2004): pp. 28–33. Woodfield also draws a link between Hakluyt and Weelkes's madrigal in Woodfield, *English Musicians in the Age of Exploration*, pp. 251–65.

⁸ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London: printed by George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1598–1600).

⁹ Eric Altschuler and William Jansen argue that Weelkes employs a sophisticated literary language in his prefatory material, full of puns on both literary and scholarly topics. Their analysis concludes Thomas Weelkes was a 'man of letters', and capable of crafting sophisticated art. Eric Lewin Altschuler and William Jansen. 'Shakespeariana in a Thomas Weelkes Dedication from 1600', *The Musical Times* 146.1892 (2005): pp. 83–91.

¹⁰ As literary critic Elizabeth Hansen asserts, 'by the time epistemic assumptions are held with sufficient consciousness and consistency to receive philosophical treatment they have long been used by people in highly contingent and untheorized ways to negotiate myriad local crises and opportunities'. Elizabeth Hansen, *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 3. Furthermore, Steven Shapin has argued knowledge is a body of shared understanding, a collective good, that does not stand outside of practical activity, as it is made and sustained through the practices of daily life like music making. Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), pp. xxv, xix. See also Peter Burke, *Social History of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 6.

been played alongside political chat, literary discussion, games, exchange about current events, wine drinking, and general banter. Brooke's close social and familial circles included important courtly figures like Robert Cecil (1563–1612) and Walter Raleigh (c.1562–1618), who may have been included in these types of evening entertainments.

Lastly, a caveat. While composers of song books rarely attributed their texts to individual poets and many song poems remain anonymous, it has been mistakenly assumed that most madrigal poetry was *poesia per musica*, an anachronistic term which implies thoughtlessly found poetry subsequently set to music.¹¹ Recent scholarship, however, has demonstrated that Elizabethan poets often intended their poems to be set to music.¹² Literary scholars Eric Lewin Altschuler and William Jansen have argued Weelkes's texts were often prepared for musical setting.¹³ While the 'Thule' poem remains anonymous, for simplicity I refer to it as 'Weelkes's text', but in this I mean the anonymous verse he set to music, making no claims regarding textual authorship.

Art, Travel, and Truth

A relatively robust field in modern scholarship, early modern travel — in practice, symbol, and theory — played an important role in changes to knowledge building throughout the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Links between global exploration and changing epistemologies favouring observation or experience as a basis for knowing have long been acknowledged as a factor in the so-called Scientific Revolution. If an explorer could testify to new knowledge from first-hand experience, it increased the claim's validity. Written travel accounts were used strategically to build political favour and fashion national identities, but they also influenced epistemology.¹⁵ To Francis Bacon (1561–1626), cosmography was a history that encompassed many types of knowledge.¹⁶ As experience was key to Bacon's New Science, he saw travel as related to the formation of knowledge, as demonstrated by the frontispiece of Bacon's *Insuratio magna* (1620. Figure 1), which depicts a ship passing through the Pillars of Hercules with the motto *Multi pertransibunt & augebitur scientia* ('Many shall set forth and knowledge shall be increased').¹⁷

¹¹ Lauren Jennings, *Senza Vestimenta: The Literary Tradition of Trecento Song* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 6–7.

¹² Recent work by Gavin Alexander and Scott A. Trudell has reinforced the idea canonical poets like John Donne and Philip Sidney wrote verse explicitly to be set to music. Scott A. Trudell, *Unwritten Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 2; Gavin Alexander, 'The Elizabethan Lyric as Contrafactum: Robert Sidney's 'French Tune' Identified', *Music & Letters*, vol. 84, no. 3, 2003, pp. 378–402.

¹³ Eric Lewin Altschuler and William Jansen, 'Thomas Weelkes's Text Authors: Men of Letters', *The Musical Times*, vol. 143, no. 1879, 2002, pp. 17–24; Eric Lewin Altschuler and William Jansen, 'Thomas Weelkes and Salamone Rossi: Some Interconnections', *The Musical Times*, vol. 145, no. 1888, 2004, pp. 87–94.

¹⁴ For more on contemporary attitudes towards experiential forms of learning as related to travel, see Melanie Ord, *Travel and Experience in Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁵ William H. Sherman, 'Stirrings and Searching (1500-1720)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, (eds.) Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 19.

¹⁶ Bacon wrote, '[a]nother kind of Mixed History is the History of cosmography; which is indeed mixed of many things; of Natural History, in respect of the regions themselves, their sites and products; of History Civil, in respect of the habitations, governments, and manners of the people; and of Mathematics, in respect of the climates and configurations of the heavens, beneath which the regions of the world lie. In which kind of history or science we may congratulate our own age'. Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, (ed. and trans.) Spedding, Vol. IV Translations of the Philosophical Works, Vol. I (London: Longman and Co, 1860), p. 311.

¹⁷ From Book of Daniel, 12:4 (Vulgate)



Figure 1. Francis Bacon, *Insuratio magna* (1620). Courtesy: The Newberry Library, Chicago, VAULT Case folio B 49 .059

Some have argued the move towards empiricism was symptomatic of the inception of scientific materialism — obviously and symbiotically linking science with discovery, meaning public interest in travel was connected to the shift towards observation as the foundation of scientific inquiry.¹⁸ In a related motion, seventeenth-century writing focused heavily on the basic principles of sensing, as the truth in experience relied on fallible sense perception.¹⁹ Questions regarding the quality of knowledge were even on the minds of men who focused on matters of interior truth, like Catholic priest Thomas Wright (1561–1623), who wondered ‘How knowledge and perfit Science, differ from credulity and opinion’ and ‘What is evidence and certitude in Knowledge and how they differ[?]’ as well as other essential questions on sense, mind, and body.²⁰ Travel accounts revealed cracks and inconsistencies in current understandings of sensing and experience as a reliable measure of truth. If a sailor reported a sighting of a sea monster, it could be a) fabricated, b) an honest testimony, but caused by a misfire of the senses due to dehydration, c) a sea monster (or something without a name and therefore called a sea monster), or d) some combination of the above. Though objects and experiential accounts from sea voyages became prized commodities to Europeans, both in terms of their commercial and social value, there remained an element of fantasy within travel accounts that was so persuasive that it would be a blunder to assume the journey towards empiricism was anything but serpentine. Indeed, early modern travel writing relied on discursive practices foreign to us today, so strict divisions of travel writing as fiction or non-fiction using modern categorisations would be misleading within contemporary mental frameworks.²¹

Though travel represented a foundation of the new science, communicating the new sometimes relied on accessible rhetorical devices affiliated with familiar mythology. As the many cartographic representations of the New World filled with mermaids and unicorns attest, realistic representation could also incorporate mythologies.²² The European exploration of America was often perceived in the Renaissance as confirmation of truth in legends, exemplified by Walter Raleigh’s pursuit of El Dorado.²³ Mythological or fantastical elements had an instrumental function in travel-related language, not only as useful and familiar rhetorical tools pregnant with symbolism, but because of myth’s wonder-provoking qualities.²⁴ Travel writers like Raleigh could use a word like *labyrinth* and with it invoke not only a maze, but also the wonder of a mythological tale, rife with familiar story and meaning.²⁵ Perhaps is for this reason that ambiguously fantastical or foreign spaces, such as the island of Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, Arcadia, or Francis Bacon’s Bensalem from *New Atlantis*, were powerful and relevant symbols, abounding with contemporary meaning that entangled together foreign travel, myth, politics, and fantasy — spaces that contemplated the

¹⁸ Jonathan Sell, *Rhetoric and Wonder in English Travel Writing, 1560–1613* (London: Ashgate, 2006), p. 23.

¹⁹ Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 65.

²⁰ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall. Corrected, Enlarged, and with Sundry New Discourses Augmented* (London: printed by Valentine Simmes [and Adam Islip], 1604), sig.V8.r.)

²¹ Sell, *Rhetoric and Wonder in English Travel Writing*, p. 2.

²² For example, see Giacomo Gastaldi and Matteo Pagano, ‘Dell Vniversale’ c. 1550 (British Library Maps C7.c.17).

²³ Alexis Tadié and Richard Scholar (eds.), *Fiction and the Frontiers of Knowledge in Europe, 1500–1800* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 27.

²⁴ When Marco Polo first beheld a rhinoceros in the late-thirteenth century, he lacked the relevant terminology to describe the animals to people back in Europe who had not seen one themselves. Naturally, he turned to analogy and likened the animal to buffalo, elephant, and boar, and called it a unicorn. Of course, what we know a rhinoceros to look like is not exactly the beautiful horse-like stallion with a goat’s beard, pearl-white mane, and a single spiraled-horn as depicted in Dominico Zampieri’s fresco *Virgin and Unicorn* (1604). The unicorn can be viewed as a symbol of the ambiguity between myth and honest testimony by travellers. Sell, p. 3.

²⁵ Sell, pp. 116–8.

fluidity between fiction and reality, or even the consequences of fiction upon reality.²⁶ This idea echoes Giuseppe Gerbino's description of the 'collective illusion' of Arcadia in Italian madrigals — a space of shared understanding both of this world and another.²⁷ Both worlds carry their respective truths, as a pastoral fantasy allowed for allegorically teaching moral or other inner truths. Travel literature also encompassed both of these worlds and their capacities for truth.²⁸ As early modern conceptions of truth are sometimes at odds with our modern understandings of fact and fiction, Jonathan Sell coins the term 'consensual truth'.²⁹ This phrase accommodates both what modern readers would affiliate with non-fiction writing, but also the mythology and other rhetorical strategies readily used by early modern writers to communicate truths. As the English madrigal commonly engaged with mythological topics, it is plausible that it too could be used to tap into contemporary debates surrounding the role of representation and experience in understanding sources of truth.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given travel writing's place as both truth and fiction, the reputation of the traveller as a liar also flourished, which might appear at first rather contrary to the assertion that observations made during travel helped to usher in new empirical approaches to knowledge.³⁰ Richard Braithwaite wrote in 1630 that 'travellers, poets, and liars are three words of one significance'.³¹ The epistemological significance represented in these typologies was probably even more entwined than even Braithwaite was aware.³² Travellers were a source of fascination and scepticism because they expanded knowledge about the world, but like any human being, they liked to tell stories and sell books, with some accounts veering more towards fiction than experiential truth.³³ Like consumers of today's tabloids, perhaps actual truth did not matter to the average early modern reader — it was the *perception* of truth that sold copies, which is why these travel accounts underwent so many reprints and retranslations. Travel literature provided readers with a space that functioned like that of a tabloid — narrative even more engaging and wondrous because it was rooted in reality, providing verisimilitude.³⁴ Those who enjoyed the genre suspended disbelief when reading it and allowed the idea of reality to transport them, whilst sceptics like Braithwaite stood nearby, glaring disapprovingly.

The story often told is that exploration of the New World in the seventeenth century ushered in an era of scientific revolution that valued observation over belief, and the new scientific method over tradition. But travel, truth, and the fictive arts were intimately tied in this period and it is clear that New World travel narratives embraced both spectacular fiction and the new metrics of scientific observation.³⁵ Thus, travel, fiction, and mythology, were central to the developments in new ways of knowing truth that developed over the seventeenth century.

²⁶ Europeans tended to adhere to preconceived ideas about the New World assembled from their own folklore tradition and classical mythology and therefore saw what they wanted to see. The classic example is Christopher Columbus, who until his dying day maintained he had landed upon Asia. Jonathan Hart, *Columbus, Shakespeare, and the Interpretation of the New World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 2.

²⁷ Giuseppe Gerbino, *Music and Myth of Arcadia in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1.

²⁸ Sell, p. 2.

²⁹ Sell, p. 23.

³⁰ The early modern period was not only an age that discovered new knowledge but new definitions of knowledge. Elizabeth Spiller, *Science, Reading, and Renaissance Literature: The Art of Making Knowledge, 1580-1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 1.

³¹ From Braithwaite's publication, *The English Gentleman* (1630); Shapin, pp. 63–4; Sell, p. 23.

³² Spiller, p. 1.

³³ *Fiction* was a term in use at this time and had affiliations with deceit or feigning. 'fiction, n.' *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, June 2019.

³⁴ For more on early modern imagination and its role in world building, see Alison Kavey (ed.) *World-Building and the Early Modern Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁵ Spiller, p. 33.

The *Principal Navigations* and Thule's Imageries

Through his work as an editor, translator, and seller of travel writing, Richard Hakluyt was England's leader in preserving and promoting European travel accounts.³⁶ First printed in a 1589 folio edition and then again in a three-volume version (1598–1600), Hakluyt's *The principal navigations* was a collection of travel writing that covered nearly every area known by European travellers, from the Americas to Persia, the Indies and Africa.³⁷ The best known narratives concern the activities of Walter Raleigh, Martin Frobisher, and Francis Drake. Though many of the authors or sources are credited, it is still difficult to attribute many of the accounts in Hakluyt's collection, as many of his reports were compiled from earlier foreign sources, which had already been borrowed, adapted, or translated from other sources.³⁸ Hakluyt included few illustrations, and scholars have suspected Hakluyt preferred to rely on text and imagination. It is for this reason this publication is sometimes seen today as a rhetorical reimagining of the world as it was known to Europe.³⁹

If Weelkes or Weelkes's poet did read travel literature, it was likely to include Hakluyt, as *The principal navigations* made Hakluyt one of the most significant figures in English travel writing.⁴⁰ Weelkes and Hakluyt did not directly share patronage, but they both men had Oxford connections and both had ties to the Robert Cecil and Walter Raleigh.⁴¹ Hakluyt enjoyed direct patronage from both Raleigh and Cecil, and *The principal navigations* was dedicated to the latter. Weelkes's dedicatee for the collection 'Thule' appears in, George Brooke, was Cecil's brother in law, and also a close friend of Raleigh's.⁴² Given these connections to well-travelled courtly men, it seems less a coincidence that each image within Weelkes's poem is mentioned in Hakluyt's widely-read publication.

Thule, the period of Cosmographie,
Doth vaunt of Hecla, whose sulphureous fire
Doth melt the frozen Clime, and thaw the Skie;
Trinacrian Ætna's flames ascend not higher

³⁶ Daniel Carey and Clare Jowitt (eds.), *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 1–2, n. 3. Hakluyt changed the spelling between editions from *principall* to *principal* - to simplify I just use the latter.

³⁷ The literary forms included in Hakluyt's publication range from diplomatic reports, to dispositions and letters patent, medieval travel accounts, translations from foreign sources, and accounts from manuscripts of vague origin. Carey and Jowitt (eds.), p. 10.

³⁸ For example, Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's *The history of trauayle in the West and East Indies, and other countreys lying eyther way* was first translated into English by Richard Eden in 1555, from the Latin original (published by Anghiera between 1511 and 1530). Eden's translation was subsequently republished and augmented several times. Though it passed through many hands, one can perceive the shared language between these editions and Hakluyt's. Though Anghiera's first 'decade' was published in 1511, there were three close adaptations that had appeared in print before this account, which may have come from manuscript copies of Anghiera's decade, which had circulated since 1501, with sections of it in manuscript form circulating as early as 1493. Peter Martyr, *Selections from Peter Martyr Volume V from Repertorium Columbianum*, (ed.) Geoffrey Eatough (Belgium: Brepols, 1998), p. xi.

³⁹ Scholars have noted that there were relatively few illustrations in Hakluyt compared with continental travel accounts. Carey and Jowitt (eds.), p. 10.

⁴⁰ Hakluyt's work was influential — continental editors tried to emulate and develop similar collections after Hakluyt's model. Anthony Payne in Carey and Jowitt (eds.), *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, p. 13; also, Carey and Jowitt, pp. 1, 6.

⁴¹ In 1602, Weelkes was awarded his Bachelor of Music from New College, Oxford. Hakluyt studied at Christ Church, Oxford from 1570 to 1577 afterwards becoming a Fellow and occasional lecturer there.

⁴² Curiously, Weelkes's 1600 collection has two patrons, one for the songs for five voices, and one for the songs for six voices. The book of madrigals to six voices, including 'Thule,' is dedicated to Brooke. Ian Woodfield hypothesises about Weelkes's relationship to Raleigh in Woodfield, pp. 261–2.

All the images described in Weelkes's song text are accounted for in Hakluyt's edition. Thule was often believed to be Iceland, as the northernmost region of the habitable world to ancient Greek geographers; it was first mentioned in Polybius's account of the voyage of Pytheas.⁴³ In his dedication to Robert Cecil, Hakluyt wrote that the 'sweet studie of the historie of Cosmographie' was the current limit of the mappable universe.⁴⁴ Yet as Seneca predicted, one day the known world would expand, and the 'yle of Thule would no more be the uttermost limite of the earth'.⁴⁵ In a sense, this madrigal's text and setting fulfils Seneca's prediction by redirecting wondrous exploration of the external world towards the mysterious frontier of selfhood. By exploring the reaches of the earth, we are forced to explore ourselves and our place in it.

As volcanoes were a source of intense fascination and fear, many of the Hakluyt's writers dedicate words towards their description, often as allegory for the fires of Hell.⁴⁶ Though Hecla and Ætna are mentioned dozens of times individually within Hakluyt's greater work, this passage makes a direct comparison between the flames of the two volcanoes: '[t]here is Hecla a mountaine in Island, which burneth like unto Ætna at certain seasons'.⁴⁷ The equivalent section in Latin (Hakluyt includes both languages) states that Ætna is in Sicily.⁴⁸ Hecla is described as having a 'frozen top, and the fire bottome' and the author remarks that it is 'no maruelle that fire lurking so deep in the roots of a mountaine, and never breaking forth except it be very seldome, should not be able continually to melt the snow covering the toppe of the sayd mountayne'.⁴⁹ Another writer mentions Hecla and shortly after describes Icelanders inhabiting a 'frozen clime'.⁵⁰ Significantly, the author describes the 'flame of mount Hecla', as 'by the same force that bullets are discharged out of warlike engines'.⁵¹ The discharge from the volcano is a 'mixture of colde, and fire, and brimstone' or 'ex frigoris & ignis & sulphuris commixtione', a sulphurous mixture.⁵²

The Andalusian Merchant, that returnes
Laden with cutchinele and China dishes,
Reports in Spaine how strangely Fogo burnes
Amidst an Ocean full of flying fishes:

Hakluyt's collection mentions 'Andaluzia' many times as a busy port and discusses the activities of Spanish merchants thoroughly. For example, 'A notable discourse of M. John Chilton' explains how he 'embarked my self in the bay of Cadiz in Andaluzia' in a ship eventually bound for *Nova Hispania*. On his way, he 'journeyed by land to a towne called

⁴³ 'Thule, n.', *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2016.

⁴⁴ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), sig. A2r.

⁴⁵ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig. A2r-A3v.

⁴⁶ Though the writers in Hakluyt's collection are often not Hakluyt himself, for simplicity I use vaguer terms like *the author*, or occasionally to Hakluyt, though I acknowledge that the authors are not necessarily the editor. Mary C. Fuller discusses the issues related to levels of authorship, and how one reads *Principal Navigations* in Mary C. Fuller, 'Experiments in Reading Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*' in *The Hakluyt Society Annual Lecture 2016* (The Hakluyt Society, 2017).

⁴⁷ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig. Aaa6v.

⁴⁸ *Est Hecla mons in Islandia, ardet[que] non aliter ac Ætna in Sicilia* – Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), sig. Xx6v.

⁴⁹ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig. Aaa3r.

⁵⁰ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig. Ccc3v.

⁵¹ 'The flame of mount **Hecla** will not burne towre (which is most apt for the wicke of a candle) neither is it quenched with water: and by the same force that bullets are discharged out of warlike engines with vs, from thence are great stones cast forth into the aire, by reason of the mixture of colde, and fire, and brimstone.' Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig. Aaa4v.

⁵² Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig. Aaa4v, sig. Xx4v.

Vera Cruz ... where all the factours of the Spanish merchants dwell'.⁵³ Another author describes the capture of a foreign ship that had recently returned from the New World: '[t]his ship ... had in her ... sixe chests of Cochinell, euery chest houlding one hundred pound weight, and every pound worth sixe and twentie shillings and eight pence, and certaine chests of Sugar and *China* dishes, with some plate and silver'.⁵⁴

Another account describes a jaunt past the Cape Verde isle of '*Fogo*, so called, because it casteth continually flames of fire and smoake out of the top thereof, all the whole island being one high mountaine'.⁵⁵ On the same page, the writer describes nearby sea life:

Here we saw flying fishes in great abundance, some a foote long, some lesse. Their fynnes wherewith they flye be as long as their bodies. They be greatly pursued by the Dolphine and Bonitoes, whom as soone as the flying fishes espie, immediatly they mount out of the sea in great numbers, and fly as long as their fynnes continue moyst: and when they bee dry, they fall downe into the sea againe.⁵⁶

Additionally, in Hakluyt's coverage of the Drake journeys, a writer points out 'the tops of Fogo burne not so high in the ayre', before once again mentioning the flying fish.⁵⁷ This section of Hakluyt's volume, known as the 'Drake leaves', was not added until probably the latter half of the 1590s, and prior to that the Drake account was under strict censorship.⁵⁸ It thus seems even more probable this narrative was a topical source for Weelkes by 1600.⁵⁹

The most convincing evidence that Weelkes's text author had direct access to Hakluyt or related literature is the way imageries appear in proximity. Both Weelkes's poem and Hakluyt directly compare Hecla and Ætna in terms their fire ('Ætna's flames ascend not higher'). In the poem, Fogo burns amidst an ocean full of flying fishes, and in Hakluyt flying

⁵³ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig.Pp4r-Pp5v.

⁵⁴ Spanish trade routes often picked up Asian goods like China dishes and sailed back to Spain via Mexico. Ships arrived in Mexico at the Methe port of Acapulco (on Pacific side) and got taken to Mexico City via mule trains. Cochineal grown in Oaxaca and other regions of Mexico was sold in Mexico City, but the product was also sent directly to the port of Veracruz (on Gulf of Mexico/Atlantic side), where Spanish ships picked up silver, and other products to take to Seville in Andalusia. See the special edition introduction by Dana Leibsohn & Meha Priyadarshini in 'Transpacific: beyond silk and silver,' *Colonial Latin American Review*, (2016) 25:1, pp. 1–15, though the entire issue is useful. Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations* (1599-1600), sig.Ooo4v.

⁵⁵ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig.Rrr2v.

⁵⁶ Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig.Rrr2v.

⁵⁷ The section is titled: 'The famous voyage of Sir Francis Drake into the South sea, there hence about the whole Globe of the earth, begun in the yeere of our Lord, 1577', though known colloquially as Famous Voyage. Woodfield has previously made observations about Drake and Fogo in Woodfield, 258; Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, sig.ppp5v.

⁵⁸ Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen's Pirate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 86.

⁵⁹ Furthermore, there are several examples of Weelkes's topical writing, for example in 'The ape, the monkey and the baboon' (1608), where the poet references London locations and unidentified courtly individuals, personified by various animals.

fish are described on the very same page as Fogo's burn in two accounts.⁶⁰ The description of a Spanish haul of cochineal and China dishes adds similar support.

As Hakluyt's edition is a compilation made of earlier sources, translations, and editions, specific source attributions can be messy. Weelkes's poet could have read Hakluyt, another printed source used by or taken from Hakluyt, or even manuscripts used by Hakluyt. All these possibilities would result in strong rhetorical similarities to Hakluyt's texts. For example, through advance access to manuscripts, Hakluyt's publication was the first detailed printed narrative of Drake's 'Famous Voyage'.⁶¹ It is believed that Hakluyt's account of Drake was compiled and edited from a variety of oral and manuscript resources.⁶² The most important of the surviving Drake accounts used by Hakluyt was later published alone as Francis Fletcher's *The world encompassed by Sir Francis Drake printed in London* (1628),⁶³ which shares a basic narrative with Hakluyt's Drake account in the excerpts about Fogo.⁶⁴ Fletcher's account adds, however, that Fogo 'giveth light like the Moone a great way off' and that pumice stones 'fall downe, with other grosse and slimy matter upon the hill', detailed description not in Hakluyt's version.⁶⁵

The idea that Weelkes's text author had direct knowledge of Hakluyt or related travel literature is only the first part of this argument. Rather than just a topical setting of a poem on worldly travel, a more specific idea of the poem's textual source roots the poem more strongly in actual travel literature, connecting this madrigal to contemporary dialogues about travel as a source of truth. Given madrigals are often dismissed by scholars as frivolous lyric, connecting Weelkes's song to Hakluyt helps to embed this piece of English song within contemporary intellectual debates. Few would question the presence of themes surrounding travel and the nature of truth in the works of Francis Bacon or William Shakespeare. 'Thule' demonstrates that a madrigal could also artistically reflect on contemporary epistemological issues. The controversies on truth and representation presented by travel writing were pondered and discussed by natural philosophers, church folk, poets, merchants, publishers, and playwrights and their audiences – so why not musicians?

⁶⁰ These passages conclusively settle the debate about which Fogo is referenced in Weelkes's madrigal, as there were several volcanoes known by that name to early modern explorers. In 1916, Edmund Fellowes hypothesised the Fogo in question must be in the Tierra del Fuego, an idea debunked by J. G. C. Milne in a 1972 article 'On the Identity of Weelkes' Fogo.' Milne concludes that the Weelkes's Fogo must be the one in Cape Verde. Milne does not acknowledge, however, that Donald Tovey already came to this conclusion in the 1930s (though admittedly Milne's argument is much more detailed). Tovey does not consider Tierra del Fuego, but reasoned Weelkes's Fogo was not the Fogo of the Azores due to the types of cargo mentioned in the madrigal ('I doubt whether the Virginian settlers did much trade in cochineal and China dishes') and because he reckoned the waters in the Azores were too cold for flying fish. Given this single entry in Hakluyt describes the jumping of flying fish, the eruption of Fogo, and Cape Verde, it makes the case for Cape Verde as Weelkes's Fogo rather persuasive, as also determined by Ian Woodfield. Woodfield, p. 258; Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays in Musical Analysis, Vol. 5: Vocal Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 10; J. G. C. Milne, 'On the Identity of Weelkes' 'Fogo', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 10:1 (1972): pp. 98–100.

⁶¹ Anthony Payne, *Richard Hakluyt: A guide to his books and those associated with him 1580-1625* (London: Quaritch, 2008), pp. 9–10.

⁶² Officially, the writer of Famous Voyage remains anonymous. Payne, p. 10.

⁶³ Kelsey, p. 86.

⁶⁴ Henry Wagner explains where Famous Voyage used the Fletcher MS in greater detail. Henry Wagner, *Sir Francis Drake's Voyage Around the World: Its aims and achievements* (San Francisco: John Howell, 1926), p. 241.

⁶⁵ Francis Drake, *The world encompassed by Sir Francis Drake ...* (London: printed by G. Miller, 1628), sig.B4r-C1v.

Canto

Doth vaunt of He - cla, doth

Quinto

of He - cla, doth vaunt of He - - cla,

Alto

- cla, of He - - cla, doth vaunt of

Tenore

He - cla, doth vaunt of He - cla, of He - cla,

Sesto

Doth vaunt of He - cla, doth vaunt of He -

Basso

vaunt of He - cla, doth vaunt of He - cla, _____

vaunt of He - cla, whose sul - phu ri - - - - - ous

whose sul - phu ri - - - - - ous

He - cla, whose sul - phu ri - - - - - ous

whose sul - phu ri - - - - - ous

- cla, whose sul - phu - - - ri - ous

- whose sul - phu - - - ri - ous

15

fire, whose sul - phu ri - - - - ous fire Doth melt the
 fire, whose sul - phu - ri - - - - ous fire Doth melt the
 fire, whose sul - phu - ri - ous fire Doth melt the
 fire, whose sul - phu - rious fire Doth melt the
 fire, whose sul - phu - - - ri - ous_ fire Doth melt the
 fire, whose sul - phu - - - ri - - ous fire Doth melt the

Figure 2. Weelkes, ‘Thule, the period of Cosmographie’ bars 11-17 (edited by Francis Bevan)

Word-painted Wonder

Weelkes’s musical setting of this curious text plays a vital role in the song’s interpretation. This might appear to be an obvious statement, but this idea has not been taken for granted by past scholars. Musicologist Denis Arnold observes that ‘[Weelkes] always delights in finding poems where the music can portray literally the meaning of the words’, a statement that might be interpreted as slightly patronising.⁶⁶ Though Weelkes’s musical depiction of the text is indeed literal, this literalness is used to bring additional meaning to the text. Word-painting is a compositional technique where music is used to aurally and visually reflect the literal or figurative meaning of a word or phrase.⁶⁷ While word-painting is only one aspect of what made the English madrigal a madrigal (and a reductive one at that), it was and remains one of the form’s defining features, even to English contemporaries.⁶⁸

A full musical analysis of Weelkes’s madrigal, including his use of word-painting, has been discussed in detail in other publications.⁶⁹ Some of these instances of word painting include ‘Trinacrian’, in triple time, which cleverly references Sicily’s triangular shape or the melting of snow through a homophonic texture, which comes together on a sustained semi-breve (bar. 17; figure 2) on ‘melt’ (as melting can appear as the merging of separate particles into a single liquid body). The phrase ‘ascend not higher’, describing Ætna, appropriately ascends, with the highest note in the canto and tenor lines reaching a high A. The only other

⁶⁶ Denis Arnold, ‘Thomas Weelkes and the madrigal’, *Music & Letters*, 31,1 (Jan.,1950): pp. 1–12, 5.

⁶⁷ For example, on the text ‘ascends not higher’ and ‘thaws the skye’ the notes ascend, getting higher in pitch and in the music notes on the page.

⁶⁸ Joseph Kerman observes that Weelkes’s 1598 madrigal and ballet collection ‘characteristically exaggerates’ features like word painting, perhaps more so than his peers. Kerman, p. 228.

⁶⁹ Most notably, in Eric Altschuler and William Jansen, ‘Further Aspects of ‘Thule’: Wondrous Weelkes’, *The Musical Times*, 144.1882 (2003), pp. 40–43; David Brown, *Thomas Weelkes: A Biographical and Critical Study* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 113–15; and Tovey, p. 7.

place that top A occurs is during the ascending semiquaver notes runs on Hecla's 'sulphureous fire'. Those As are the highest notes in the piece, and the only two places they are used are atop each mountain, musically drawing a comparison between the two fires – a comparison also made in the poem and in Hakluyt. Lastly, the consonants and polyphonic texture of 'full of flying fishes' create percussive 'fh' and 'sh' sounds which phonate like a school of fish jumping in and out of water.

Two points of word painting in particular, however, give reason to argue Weelkes had knowledge of travel literature independent of what is described in the poem. First, Weelkes's semiquaver illustration of Hecla's 'sulphureous fire' (bar 14; figure 2), which drastically changes the rhythmic texture from the preceding musical texture, resonates with Hakluyt's description of Hecla's violent discharge as '*ex frigoris & ignis & sulphuris commixtione*' that sounds and looks like bullets shooting in quick succession ('by the same force that bullets are discharged out of warlike engines'). Given the artillery-like projection of the sulphuric fire is not mentioned in the madrigal's poem, Weelkes's musical depiction is remarkably accurate.

Second, Weelkes's striking depiction of 'how strangely Fogo burnes', crawls in descending chromatic lines, like molten magma, a beacon to ships as the 'burning Island', as it was known, glows in the dark (figure 3). The music's movement on 'how strangely Fogo burnes' has a 'grosse and slimy' liquidity about it. The passage stands out from the music that surrounds it, immediately calling one's attention to its qualities, not unlike a beacon (Fogo 'giveth light like the Moone a great way off'). It might be purely coincidental that in 1600, Weelkes inferred from 'strangely' the downward, slimy by-products by Fogo's eruption (pumice stones 'fall downe, with other grosse and slimy matter upon the hill'). Perhaps Weelkes had access to other sources — printed, manuscript, or oral — of Fogo's behaviour, or even of the behaviour of other volcanoes that might be thought 'strange' through his well-connected patron George Brooke.⁷⁰ Regardless, Weelkes's musical depiction of Fogo's burn is remarkably accurate given how it was described in the travel literature.

The implication of knowledge conveyed through music that is not implicit in the song lyric alone, both in Fogo's strange burn and Hecla's fire is poignant. The aural images projected by Weelkes's musical setting allow for singers and hearers to imagine the bullet-like ejaculation of Hecla's sulphuric fire and Fogo's viscous glow, dripping slimy matter. In this way, Weelkes's music becomes a part of travel literature's 'textual community'.⁷¹ Whether hearers, players, or singers recognised it or not, by internalising Weelkes's musical setting, they were also learning about how these volcanoes erupted (as reported in the travel literature). Some participants in the recreational performance of this song may have recognised the cleverness of Weelkes's madrigalisations of Hecla and Fogo as similar to the descriptions of their eruptions in the travel literature. But upon hearing a successful performance of this madrigal, even those unfamiliar with the literature, or indeed those who were musically or otherwise illiterate, would have been exposed to a kind of knowledge, based on a testimony of observation, about the wonders of places afar. Musical inside jokes and references were common in music of this time, but one did not need to get the references to appreciate the music — that's what made them clever.⁷² Indeed, these references were often aimed at very select audiences, as may have been the case here given Brooke's circles.

⁷⁰ For example, Thomas Maynarde, a protégée of Drake's, wrote a Drake account *Sir Francis Drake his voyage 1595* (B.M., Add. MSS, 5209) that was not printed until the mid-nineteenth century. The contemporary circulation of this manuscript is unknown. Kenneth R. Andrews (ed.), *The Last Voyage of Drake and Hawkins* (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1972), p. 85.

⁷¹ The model of textual communities, first coined by Brian Stock, demonstrates how a text can be central to a community, even if not all members of the community are literate, as illiterate members still receive a textual education through socialisation and oral circulation, i.e. religion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the 11th and 12th Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁷² Weelkes's *Ayeres or phantasticke spirits* (1608) song book is rife with topical references.

Canto
- ports in Spaine how strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how

Quinto
Re - ports in Spaine how strange - ly Fo - go burnes,

Alto
in Spaine

Tenore
how strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how

Sesto
Re-ports in Spaine how strange - ly Fo - go burnes,

Basso
how strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how

_ strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how strange - ly Fo - go burnes,

how strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how_ strange - ly Fo - go

how_ strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how

_strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how strange - ly

how strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how strange - ly

_ strange - ly Fo - go burnes, how strange - ly Fo - go burnes,

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how strange, how strange-ly Fo - go burnes, A - midst an O - cean full of flying
burnes, A - midst an O - cean full of
strange-ly Fo - go burnes, Fo - go burnes, A - midst an O - cean
Fo - go burnes, how strange-ly Fo - go burnes, A - midst an O - -
- it burnes, how strange-ly Fo - go burnes, A - midst an O - cean
how strange-ly Fo - go burnes, A - midst an O - cean

Figure 3. Weelkes, 'Thule, the period of Cosmographie,' bars 51-58 (edited by Francis Bevan)

Madrigals and Mythical Packaging

The outwardly fantastic appearance of the poem, as well as its musical packaging as a literally word-painted interpretation of the text, are of central importance to this argument. At first glance, this poem might be like many other pastoral madrigal texts from the period — a straightforward representation of otherworldly events and figures from myth or story.⁷³ I argue that by the time Weelkes wrote 'Thule', the madrigal genre's affiliation with the mythical element of the pastoral was so engrained that the musical form itself carried with it an implied sense of the pastoral or myth, even when the text was not strictly so.⁷⁴

Musicologist-semiologist Eero Tarasti argues that music can sometimes entirely replace a mythical text, suggesting that because music is like language without semantic meaning, the notes could indeed detach themselves from their verbal foundation, while retaining myth's cultural function.⁷⁵ The musical form is then imbued with the ability to transport the listener to the affiliated mythological space, even without the text. If music can indeed retain the transportive function of mythology, even without its textual antecedents, this function is demonstrated here through Weelkes's coupling of a mythologically-affiliated musical style with a text that surveys the wonders of the wider world.⁷⁶ I argue that in 'Thule', the literal musical interpretation draws on the madrigal's familiar form to invoke a sense of

⁷³ Musicologist David Brown notes the "fantastic" and "artificial" richness of [the madrigal's] musical imagery'. Brown, *Thomas Weelkes*, p. 113.

⁷⁴ As pastoral madrigal texts use many figures from mythology, I here use myth and the pastoral interchangeably, though I acknowledge there are nuances that differentiate their histories.

⁷⁵ Tarasti argues that 'myth and music as discourses have similar functions, as a result of which they can, in certain cases, substitute for each other'. Eero Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, Especially that of Wagner, Sibelius and Stravinsky* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), pp. 30, 33.

⁷⁶ Tarasti, p. 17.

the mythological, transporting the listener to a fictive space, even though all the fantastic subjects in the text are not mythical but rooted in reality. This would not be the first time early modern English thinkers drew parallels between the idea of Arcadia or the pastoral and the possibilities inherent in the idea of a New World.

Ergo, Weelkes's musical setting draws attention to the ambiguity between appearances and reality by juxtaposing a text based upon events of consensual truth with a musical form typically affiliated with pastoral mythology. By using literal and expected madrigalian compositional techniques, Weelkes's setting raises questions about representations of truth with epistemological implications. It is well established that early modern song often discussed political or other worldly topics veiled under a façade of allegorical story.⁷⁷ Additionally, pastoral fiction was often used as a metaphor of human existence. 'Thule' is different from these examples because there is no allegorical veil or metaphor in its discussion of the tension between inner and outer truths, only the *appearance* of one.⁷⁸ Just as it was the appearance of truth that sold copies of travel literature, it is conversely the appearance of myth, the musical packaging, that makes this musical representation jar with the knowledge it presents.

The compositional tropes of the madrigal form bring the reality of the text into the realm of fantasy (without the need for allegorical veil), musically rendering the New World as a suspended space of imaginative possibility. This demonstrates one way music worked as an agent through which people could play out ideas about truths. Given Weelkes's propensity for sceptical, satirical interrogations of issues of representation and reality in his 1608 collection, *Ayres or Phantasticke Spirites*, it is entirely plausible 'Thule' is more than just a whimsical literal representation of a found text.

The Couplet

A distinctly humanist couplet concludes each stanza of text, which looks sceptically at external knowledge compared with the wonder of interior knowledge: 'These things seem wondrous, yet more wondrous I, / Whose hart with feare doth freeze, with love doth fry'. The refrain, a common Petrarchan binary, dismisses all the marvellous places and events described in the madrigal, reinserting the self as the most wondrous, most central figure.

In a performance of this piece, the self-awareness of the multiple singing bodies is accentuated in this section by the turn to a first-person 'I', bringing together disparate voices on a more homophonic texture of clear, sustained triads, emphasised by the move to the triad on the flattened seventh in the first 'wondrous', which gives a sense of arrival with a plagal cadence. The same harmonies are repeated nearly identically in each instance of the text couplet (figure 4).⁷⁹ Notably, the use of a repeated refrain is distinctly un-madrigalian, as a more typical madrigal would be through composed.⁸⁰ Therefore, the refrain underpins this phrase as central to the structure of the piece.⁸¹

⁷⁷ For example, William Byrd's use of biblical texts as political allegory in his *Cantiones Sacrae* (1589) is thought to express the plight of the Catholics in England through texts mourning the destruction of Jerusalem. Through the veil provided by mythological or biblical allegory, composers set texts that carried truths about the external world, whether praising a monarch, partaking in courtly gossip, or commenting on the current politico-religious situation, in addition to the contemplation of inner experiences, like love.

⁷⁸ The 'freezing and frying' of the heart aside, a common Petrarchan metaphor also used by English writers like Shakespeare in *The taming of the shrew* (2.1.335-36) – 'Graybeard, thy love doth freeze, but thine doth fry'.

⁷⁹ Note the last three bars are not musically identical.

⁸⁰ Kerman points out that this section as the most uncharacteristic attribute of the madrigal, as the 'formal fibre' of the repeated refrain was 'not desired by any Italian madrigalist'. Kerman, *The Elizabethan Madrigal*, p. 232.

⁸¹ Weelkes uses refrains in other madrigals as well, such as 'A Sparrow-hawk proud' (1600) or even in text and effect in the bipartite 'What have the Gods' and 'Mee thinks I heare' (1600).

26

Canto
- er. These things seeme won - drous, yet more

Quinto
These things seeme won - drous, yet more

Alto
- scend not high-er. These things seeme won - drous, yet more

Tenore
- scend not high - er. These things seeme won - drous, yet more

Sesto
These things seeme won - drous, yet more

Basso
high-er, not high - er. These things seeme won - drous, yet more

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won - drous I, more won - drous_ I, Whose hart with feare doth

won - drous I, yet more won - drous I,

won - drous I, yet more won - drous I, Whose hart with feare doth

won - drous I, yet more won - drous_ I,

won - drous I, yet more won - drous I, Whose hart with feare doth

won - drous I, yet more won - drous I,

Figure 4. Weelkes, 'Thule, the period of Cosmographie' bars 26-31 (edited by Francis Bevan)

In a madrigal that artistically represents phenomena of an observable, physical world, a hint of uncertainty in the use of the word ‘seeme’ is detectable — ‘these things seeme wondrous’. ‘Seeme’ simultaneously diminishes the wonder of the outside world as it draws attention to the idea that reports based on eye-witness testimony can always be doubted. How something appears, or seems, is not necessarily how it is, as it relies on fallible human perception and assessment. Ultimately, the poem and musical setting take comfort in the centrality of Self, with its distinctly human heart and emotions, in lieu of the strange foreign phenomena observed in the outside world. Late sixteenth-century discourse on sense perception was astutely aware of how easily mental processes like common sense were swayed by the powerful passions. This example by Weelkes hints at a similar kind of scepticism, one that acknowledges the tension between the power and quality of truths experienced internally (including the passions), and external sources of knowledge transmitted via mediums like travel narrative.

Performance of Knowledge

In situ, I imagine this music sung amongst activity and engagement — one person frantically sight reading and listening to their friend for their part, another confidently singing or playing along on a viol, a family member listening while sewing, and perhaps even another person contemplating exterior or interior wonders, listening in a slight haze from too much drink at dinner. Perhaps the song sparks discussion of travel or travel chat reminds them to take another crack at the Weelkes piece. Many of these people would recognise features of the poem from Hakluyt, bringing in associations alien to modern listeners. Naturally, contemporary listeners were engaged to various extents and on differing levels, but ‘to wonder’ is still an action that elicits tangible effects and response.

The response elicited through wonder is how knowledge, both of ourselves and the external world, is created.⁸² The *making* of truth through juxtaposition was a process that was necessary to both science and fiction in the production of knowledge.⁸³ As ultimately knowledge of the self is still a type of knowledge, it makes sense that the process through which we build consensual truth about the world and the process by which we form ourselves are mechanistically similar. Both require, first, the identification of a contrastive body upon which to formulate truths and identities. By juxtaposing the external wonder of the New World with the inward wonder of the self (mediated by the word ‘seeme’) the text of ‘Thule’ highlights contemporary thought about the role of sensing and the self in the creation of new knowledge.⁸⁴

The heart of the ‘Thule’ poem is the wonder of the human self. Yet in Weelkes’s poem and setting, a family in Derbyshire singing about cochineal, flying fishes, and volcanic eruption is also circulating knowledge, through the experience of music. In this setting, Weelkes engaged with two kinds of knowledge — knowledge gained through written testaments of empirical observation and a more implicit knowledge of the self gained through feeling and recorded through metaphor. Using Hakluyt and other established travel literature as a source for the images of the external world (even beyond what was apparent in the poem), means that the knowledge of the exterior world used to build our interior world in the

⁸² Francis Bacon saw wonder as ‘broken knowledge’. Mary Baine Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 260.

⁸³ Spiller considers literary texts as instances of knowledge production in Spiller, pp. 1, 3.

⁸⁴ For example, in *Passions of the Minde* (1604), Thomas Wright not only asked questions about the quality of knowledge quoted earlier, but also questions about the internal processes related to sense perception and representation – ‘How a corporall imagination concurre to a spirituall conceit’ or ‘How doth Reason direct and correct Sense?’, as well as ‘What is Arte? what the Idea in the artificers minde, by whose direction hee frameth his workes...’ and ‘What is our fantasie or imagination’. Wright, *The Passions of the Minde* (1604), sig.V8r; sig.V7r; sig.X2v.

couplet is more than some abstract notion of Other. It is a musically transmitted contemplation on the relationship between representation and consensual truth.

Yet, as mentioned before, it is not only what the song is or means that matters, but what a performance of it does to the minds of those experiencing it that creates change. This cannot happen when the song is mediated by separate pieces of paper.⁸⁵ For most people, music requires performance to access it in full, particularly when songs were printed between separate partbooks.⁸⁶ Natural philosophers observed that knowledge penetrated deeper and was better absorbed when it engaged an element performance. In 1616 Helkiah Crooke wrote that a live performer's voice is more affecting 'by reason of his inflexion and insinuation into our Sense'.⁸⁷ Therefore, 'those things which be heard, take a deeper impression in our minds, which is made by the appulsion or ariuall of a reall voyce'.⁸⁸ Knowledge circulation through performance is also a type of knowledge production.⁸⁹

In performance, this piece requires a group of at least six subjects collectively asserting the superior wonder of 'I'.⁹⁰ Though the idea of self-fashioning in the madrigal form is well established outside England, it is still interesting to hypothesise about the implications of a multi-voiced song on a text that ultimately centres on the self. Crooke noted that performance has an advantage over reading in part because it is a social activity.⁹¹ Many of Weelkes's contemporaries argued that the acquisition of knowledge, even of the self, must be to some extent a collective enterprise.⁹² This idea is reinforced in modern theory by social history and a resurgence of the sociology of knowledge, and therefore it seems reasonable that social collaborations, like that of music making — a cooperative activity that stimulated the passions, the mind, and moved men to action — would be the very sort of everyday activity that contributed to change in the way people thought about the reality around them.⁹³

⁸⁵ Trudell, pp. 9–10.

⁸⁶ Each voice part (in modern terms, soprano, alto, tenor, bass, etc) was printed in a separate book, so unlike in a modern score, a singer could only see their part and nobody else's.

⁸⁷ 'Collected and translated' by Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia A Description of the Body of Man* (London: Printed by W. Iaggard, 1616), sig.Ooo2v.

⁸⁸ Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1616), sig.Ooo2v.

⁸⁹ Angela Esterhammer, 'Afterword: The Audience, the Public, and the *Improvisator* Maximilian Langenschwarz' in Mary Helen Dupree and Sean B. Franzel (eds.), *Performing Knowledge, 1750-1850* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015), p. 341.

⁹⁰ Susan McClary, *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Mauro Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera: Monteverdi's Staging of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

⁹¹ Crooke says, 'there is a kind of society in narration and acting, which is very agreeable to the nature of man, but reading is more solitary'. Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1616), sig.Ooo2v.

⁹² Descartes confessed, 'I am becoming more and more aware of the delay which my project of self-instruction is suffering because of the need for innumerable observations which I cannot make without the help of others'. James, pp. 247–8. Andrew Barnaby and Lisa Schnell's assessment of Baconian inquiry as one in which knowing was remade in order to 'reconstruct the very notion of the political community as a community of shared inquiry', rooting the social conception of knowledge in contemporary theories as well. Andrew Barnaby and Lisa Schnell, *Literate Experience: The Work of Knowing in Seventeenth-Century English Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 2, 8.

⁹³ As Stephen Shapin says, 'formal scientific knowledge is made through mundane processes of social interaction' and 'there is no other way of conceiving truth save through the study of what people do collectively'. Shapin, *A Social History of Truth*, xxii, pp. 6, 7.

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