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SOUND AND IDENTITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE

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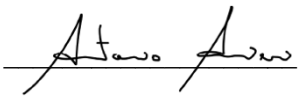
Signature 

Say, gentle nymphs that tread these mountains,
Whilst sweetly you sit playing,
Saw you my Daphne straying
Along your crystal fountains?
If so you chance to meet her,
Kiss her and kindly greet her.
Then these sweet garlands take her,
And say from me, I never will forsake her.

For Aléxandros

Abstract

The relationship between Shakespeare's dramatic characterization and Sound is at the core of my dissertation. It can be traced, first of all though not exclusively, in a strongly metaphorical language which works in Shakespeare's plays as a vehicle of meanings and, at the same time, as an instrument to question epistemological concepts. Shakespeare's awareness of the aural dimension of reality unveils a process of appropriation and re-elaboration of the theory and lexicon connected to sound and music. Indeed, his specific use of rhetorical elements directly linked to Sound, establishes a connection between his characters and the space that surrounds them – and this space is to be meant both in a largely phenomenological sense, and in a more specifically social/political sense.

In investigating the relationship between Shakespeare's theatrical text and Sound, my project aims to reveal the possible mechanism employed by the playwright in its creation. It will be focussed on four plays by Shakespeare (*The Tempest, Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Coriolanus*) and it will make an interdisciplinary use of critical tools developed in the field of Sound Studies. More broadly, however, the focus will be on the selected plays' dramaturgic rhetoric of sound, as it were, and, so, on the hermeneutic implications of the sound rhetoric informing their uses of sound with a view to character building. In fact, Shakespeare's characters are always identified and characterized by a specific compendium of sounds which reveals something *more* about them, about their identity, their rises and falls in the dramatic plot.

This research has a second, parallel, nature, owing to its sharing in the methodologies and aims of the Digital Humanities. In fact, this dissertation will include an Appendix, making available the digitalized text of *The Tempest* (Act 1, Scene 1) informed by the focuses and results of the research. This double nature of the project, in particular the DH phase, lends itself to be extended to the material field of Shakespearean performances ─ to the major, or more interesting, productions of Shakespeare's plays as they may be available on record.

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Introduction

The relationship between Shakespeare's dramatic characterization and sound is at the core of my dissertation, entitled *Sound and Identity in Shakespeare's Theatre*. Shakespeare's awareness of the aural dimension of reality unveils a process of appropriation and re-elaboration of the theory and lexicon connected to sound and music. Indeed, his specific use of rhetorical elements directly linked to sound establishes a connection between his characters and the space that surrounds them – and this space is to be meant both in a largely phenomenological sense, and in a more specifically social and political sense. His precise orchestration of voices, sounds, and noises, which reverberates through the theatre, may be seen as playing an effective role in their dramatic impact.

In the dissertation is underlined how the relationship that Shakespeare and his contemporaries had with sound was deeply different from our own. Indeed, the need for us to recover the early modern hermeneutics of sound is emphasised, with a view to understanding and catching as many nuances as possible when trying to interpret Shakespeare's texts. In light of this, it is pivotal to adjust our own perspective when investigating early modern culture, not least Shakespeare's drama. In fact, our language – and by extension, our modes of thinking when interpreting and describing reality is frequently dominated or reduced to the visual. In this dissertation the focus is rather placed on the modes of *listening* as a way of knowing, encouraging an exegesis of the text that rests on the capacity of sound and hearing to signify as effectively as images do.

With these purposes in mind, in my first chapter (*Sound Studies, Rhetoric, and Digital Humanities*) I dwell on the interdisciplinary use my work makes of critical tools developed in the field of Sound Studies, when approaching Shakespeare's creative workshop, especially as far as characters are concerned. Sound Studies are still to be considered an approach rather than a discipline, but, as I argue in my dissertation, the recent developments in this field are leading now towards the formation of an autonomous discipline. In the chapter, I describe the notions taken from sound studies, used to develop a fruitful methodology, lingering mainly on *soundscape*, *acoustemology*, *auditory culture*, and *the*

acousmatic. Besides Sound Studies, the chapter also retrieves Renaissance rhetoric as pivotally participating in the relationship between early modern literature and sound. Indeed, rhetoric allows me to stress how early modern language and sound were inextricably bound together. The rhetorical practices described in the chapter, and their influence on Shakespeare's texts, undeniably make us aware of the early modern audience's receptiveness and understanding of the playwright's building of his characters' identity.

Moreover, this first chapter briefly explains how the dissertation is also involved with the Digital Humanities, specifically with the theoretical problem of building successful negotiations in the dialogue between humanities and computer sciences. The matter is further discussed in the Appendix, which is entirely dedicated to the topic in making space to a proposal of DH application to the dissertation's findings, namely those concerning *The Tempest.*

In point of fact, the plays by Shakespeare selected for analysis in this dissertation are: *The Tempest*, (chapter two), *Othello*, (chapter three), *Twelfth Night*, and *Coriolanus*, (chapter four).

In chapter two, entitled *Soundscape, Acoustemology, and the Acousmatic in The Tempest*, the early modern hermeneutics of sound is intensely investigated. Starting from Agostino Lombardo's suggestive association of the play with a seashell I move to focus on *hearing* as understood by Renaissance's anatomists. The play is described as a triumph of *the unexpected*, an expression I have chosen to synthesize Shakespeare's ability to create, through his strategic use of sound, a disorienting feeling about his play that can be appreciated especially by paying attention to the soundscape of Prospero's island. In this chapter, I focus mainly on the phenomenology of sound and the theatrical aesthetics of the first scene of the play in that it recalls the very structure of early modern dramatic representations of war. Zoom in on Prospero's character, the adopted acustemological approach allows us to investigate deeply his political identity as substantiated by the supernatural power of *his* sounds. This is also supported by placing him in the frame of the island seen as a parallel of the Renaissance garden's labyrinth.

The third chapter, entitled *Listening to and through Othello*, is devoted entirely to the character of Othello. Firstly, an association of the play with the

early modern morris dance is suggested as possible, even probable, source of imagery influencing Shakespeare's dramatic fashioning. Issues concerning the protagonist's identity are explored specifically by *listening to and through Othello*, therefore by using the lenses of rhetoric and sound studies. Particular attention is given to Othello's speeches which, when approached from a perspective capable to combine rhetoric, acoustemology, and soundscape, reveal the ambiguity of the character, together with the modalities of his successes and falls throughout the play.

The fourth chapter investigates both *Twelfth Night* and *Coriolanus* and lingers on specific aspects of the voice as a destabilizing sound with respect to the characters' identity. The main theme, which works as a *fil rouge* for both plays, revolves around the figure of the eunuch or castrato. Indeed, the character's voice in these plays is directly connected with gender issues, revealing much about how the early modern audience perceived sexuality and how the latter could find expression through the sound of one's voice. In the case of characters such as Viola and Coriolanus, sexuality and gender identity result blurred not exclusively by their physical appearance but, rather, by their voice, which is strategically used by Shakespeare as an important device for the impact of these plays.

The Tentative Conclusions describe the results of my research by synthesizing the main points of emphasis and findings of my interdisciplinary investigation.

Finally, in the Appendix or Coda, as said above, the theoretical discussion revolves around the concept of 'digital hermeneutics' as a possible successful approach when intersecting the study of Shakespeare's theatre with the digital world. A state of the art is briefly offered to create the context for the pragmatic, experimental example subsequently proposed, namely, a TEI annotated text of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* Act 1, Scene1.

I

Combining Sound and Rhetoric: an Interdisciplinary Approach

During summer 2006, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC – paramount centre for early modern research – held a particularly stimulating exhibition dedicated to the sonic world of early modern England. Taking sound as a starting point, the exhibition showed through a collection of different items (books, manuscripts, images and musical instruments) the cultural turmoil of the seventeenth-century. Published as a companion catalogue, edited by the director of the exhibition Jessie Ann Owens, *"Noyses, sounds, and sweet aires": Music in Early Modern England* reflects on the participation of sound (in all its configurations – noises, voices, music) in the very constitution of the culture of that time.[1] In her introduction, Owens categorises sounds in three main groups and, by doing so, she also explains the title of the exhibition: "*Noyses, sounds and sweet airs"* are those sounds of everyday life such as ringing bells, the shouts of street-sellers, songs and ballads sung in the taverns, but also Elizabethan court music, religious music and all the materials involved in the hermeneutic of sound and music in early modern England, like Thomas Morley's *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* (1597), to name one. Of course, given the contents, the context and the host institution, the title for the exhibition couldn't have been more appropriate than a quote by Shakespeare, precisely from *The Tempest* Act III, Scene 2, when Caliban says:

> CALIBAN: Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
> That if I then had waked after long sleep,

[1] Jessie A. Owens, *"Noyses, sounds, and sweet airs": Music in Early Modern England*, University of Washington Press, 2006.

> Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
> The clouds, methought, would open and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
> I cried to dream again. [3.2.135-143][2]

As Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan point out, Caliban's words can be considered as a synecdoche for "the pervasiveness of music conveyed in the text".[3] Yet, Owens' exhibition is not only about music in the narrow sense of musical works, composition and practice in early modern England; it is about *sound* – music and noises included – so it perfectly mirrors what Joseph Ortiz, in commenting on Caliban's speech, calls the "radical permeability between music, language, and noise that characterizes the acoustic world of the island".[4]

Of course, various scholars interested in *The Tempest* have been considering sound as an important feature of the play, but, in their analyses, whether focused on language, or on the performative aspects, or on philosophical and literary issues, sound has always been associated with, or neglected in comparison to music. Over the last decades, the interest in music has been of pivotal importance for a better understanding of the relationship between Shakespeare and the hermeneutic of early modern English music. Indeed, the pervasiveness of music in Shakespeare's plays, especially in *The Tempest*, cannot be underestimated: publications such as David Lindley's *Shakespeare and Music,* Joseph Ortiz's *Broken Harmony*, and many more, but above all, the developing interest of musicologists in amplifying and extending their studies from a merely formal analysis of music to a study of its participation in the building of culture and society, has engendered a line of interpretation of Shakespeare's use of music that

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[2] For the present and the following quotations see William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011.

[3] Virginia Mason Vaughan, Alden T. Vaughan, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011, p.18.

[4] Joseph M. Ortiz, *Music, Ovid and The Triumph of Sound in Shakespearean Drama*, Dissertation, Princeton University, 2003, p. 220.

has permitted us to recover crucial meanings in his plays.[5] The scholars mentioned above have shown us how early modern musical theory and practice intertwine with Shakespeare's problematization of the Renaissance analogy between microcosm and macrocosm, bringing into view an entire web of knowledges in which music, in Shakespeare's theatre, becomes a signifier for philosophy, science, mythology. Such studies have made more and more clear the role played by music in Renaissance culture and, by extension, in early modern English theatre.

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has been the play that has attracted a special interest in terms of music as the presence of songs and musical effects are pivotal to the dramatic characterization of the play. Yet, the aural dimension of *The Tempest* goes further, breaking the boundaries of what we acknowledge as *music*. Insisting on the acoustic features of *The Tempest*, Michael Neill draws attention to the aural tradition of the Elizabethan theatre, stating that:

> Early modern playgoers, after all, went to "hear" a play rather than to see it; they were "auditors" or "audience" before they were "spectators". Instead of seeking to gratify the eyes of its public, *The Tempest* reasserts the primacy of their ears. […] Shakespeare's language repeatedly calls attention to acoustic effects, underlining the extent to which the meaning of his play […] is expressed through the orchestration of inarticulate sound as much as through the eloquence of speech.[6]

[5] Among these, publications of the last decade showing interest in music and sound as decisive elements in the interpretation of *The Tempest* are: Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early modern England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007; Katherine Butler, *Music in Elizabethan Court Politics*, Boydell Press, 2015; Michael Neill, "'Noises, / Sounds, and Sweet Airs': The Burden of Shakespeare's 'Tempest'", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2008, pp. 36-59; Gary Tomlinson, "The Matter of Sound", in *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 28, 2000, pp. 236-239; Scott A. Trudell, *Unwritten poetry: song, performance, and media in early modern England*, Oxford University Press, 2019; Jennifer L. Wood, "Sounding Spaces: The Tempest's Uncanny Near-East Echoes", in *Shakespeare Studies*, Vol. 44, 2016, pp. 173-179.

[6] Michael Neill, "Noises /Sounds, and Sweet Airs": The Burden of Shakespeare's 'Tempest'", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1, 2008, pp. 36-59.

A similar point of view about the prominence of aurality in early modern theatre has been argued by others, too. Gabriel Egan has noted in his article, *Hearing or Seeing a Play?: Evidence of Early Modern Theatrical Terminology*, that a number of scholars (such as John Orrel, Bruce R. Smith, Andrew Gurr, and Mariko Ichikawa) claim that the experience of Elizabethan and Jacobean playgoers was understood to be aural rather than visual.[7] Despite that, by closely analyzing the terminology of the period associating theatrical plays with the terms 'hearing' or 'seeing', Egan has demonstrated that it is not accurate to support the primacy of the first over the latter – at least not as an early modern theatre's prescriptive practice. Interestingly though, Egan has observed that the majority of the terminological associations describing the play as an aural experience specifically and unusually occur in Shakespeare's theatre. Therefore, from a terminological point of view, Egan's research problematizes the idea of an early modern theatre that is primarily aural, but still, the interest in the acoustic aspects of the plays, especially the way playwrights like Shakespeare use sound as a vehicle of meaning, shouldn't be discouraged. Works by scholars such as Bruce R. Smith have extensively demonstrated that there is no need to establish the primacy of the visual over the aural or vice versa. It is rather the importance of both and the understanding of their cultural impact that shouldn't be neglected. With that in mind, the aural dimension, the way it affected and inflected early modern literature is still to be fully explored and the Folger Library's exhibition can be purposefully considered as an example of this new path, leading to elements overlooked until now. In fact, Neill's point of view can be extended to a larger number of plays by Shakespeare if we also share the intriguing aspect of Owens' exhibition that lies in the possibility of describing and understanding early modern life from a different perspective: that of *sound*. This dissertation shares Owens' very perspective, that of taking sound as a

[7] See Gabriel Egan, "Hearing or Seeing a Play?: Evidence of Early Modern Theatrical Terminology", in *The Ben Jonson journal*, Vol.8, No. 1, pp.327-347, 2001.

starting point to better understand why and, above all, *how* sound affects early modern literature, in particular Shakespeare's plays.

More specifically, *Sound and Identity in Shakespeare's Theatre* will focus on the relationship between Shakespeare's dramatic characterization and sound. The dynamics of this relationship can be traced, first of all though not exclusively, in the strongly metaphorical language hinged on sound which usually works in Shakespeare's plays as a vehicle of meanings and, at the same time, as an instrument to question early modern epistemological concepts. Four plays have been selected for this study: *The Tempest, Othello, Twelfth Night*, and *Coriolanus*. All of them constitute a fruitful ground for tracing how sound also participates in the dramatic construction of character identity.

In investigating the role played by sound in Shakespeare's theatrical text, this dissertation aims to reveal the possible mechanisms employed by the playwright in its creation. In order to do so, I will make an interdisciplinary use of critical tools especially developed in the field of Sound Studies to combine them with the literary criticism established by Shakespeare Studies. More broadly, however, the focus will be on the selected plays' dramaturgic rhetoric of sound, as it were, and, so, on the hermeneutic implications of the sound rhetoric informing their uses of sound with a view to character building. Indeed, Shakespeare's characters are always identified and characterized by a specific compendium of sounds which reveals something *more* about them, about their identity, their rises and falls in the dramatic plot.

This research has a second, parallel nature, owing to its sharing in the methodologies and aims of the Digital Humanities, and will avail itself of the contribution of digital tools. Computational sciences cannot be considered any more as *something else*, something distant from the humanities. Whether we gladly accept it or not, our world today is imbued with technology and, as humanists, it is necessary we face the challenge of understanding its potentialities, both as a source for research and, more importantly, as a language to describe our culture. Therefore, Digital Humanities are discussed mainly at a theoretical level in the dissertation's Appendix, focusing on issues concerning the complex relationship between the fields of technology and humanities. More to the point,

Digital Hermeneutics as tackled by Michael Piotrowski will turn out to be particularly fruitful to the present work. On a pragmatic level, instead, an experiment will be suggested as a possible application of technology in literary studies. Such application avails itself of the support of specific digital tools, mainly *Oxygen XML editor*, providing the so called "annotation" of the text through the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative). This annotation is essentially concerned with offering a digitalized text informed by the focuses and the results of the research. Considering the amount of work and the necessary contribution of informatics specialists, the object-text involved in this experiment will be one single play by Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, and the final product will be specifically concerned with the interpretation of the acoustic dimension of that text.

Sound Studies: the development of a "New Discipline"

In introducing the recently published *Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, the editor, Michael Bull admits that:

> Despite the recent rapid growth of sound studies, it is still a relatively new "discipline" and when asked what my area of research is – on telling the questioner that I am a Professor of sound studies – I sometimes receive a quizzical look followed by an enquiry as to whether I study music, sonic design, sonic technologies, cultures that use sound in particular ways or whether I engage in some other form of sonic sub-cultural analysis or something more esoteric? In truth, I still haven't worked out a one sentence answer that will suffice.[8]

It is not difficult to imagine the effort Bull is talking about in describing his work since sound studies are still considered to be more as an area of research than as a

[8] Michael Bull "Introduction: Sound Studies and the Art of Listening", in Michael Bull (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, Routledge, 2019, p. xviii.

proper discipline. Nonetheless, Bull has been recognised as a pivotal figure in sound studies for many years now[9], and it is somehow reassuring that there is actually someone acknowledged as *Professor* of sound studies, which validates the developing process sound studies is undergoing in becoming an established academic discipline. Only ten years ago Jonathan Sterne was defining sound studies' scholars as "sound studies students"[10] clarifying that he had adopted the idea from Todd Gitlin who in 1997 had described cultural studies' researchers as "students".[11] Gitlin uses such label in a completely different context, criticising cultural studies and their scholars, but Sterne underlines that the word "student" bears with it a most encouraging meaning, if we consider that students are supposed to be enthusiastic about learning and broadening their knowledges. This definition of sound students fits perfectly with an area of research like that of sound studies because it captures the exact quality of the field, its interdisciplinarity. And yet, I believe, it is to be considered as a bridge-definition which mirrors the actual position of sound studies in academia, a status destined to change giving the significant enhancement of this – to come – discipline.

The difficulty of placing people who are interested in sound studies inside academia, the very question that Bull cannot solve with *one sentence that will suffice*, mirrors the heterogeneous nature of sound studies which, as mentioned above, is first and foremost an interdisciplinary field. Sterne defines sound studies as:

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[9] Bull is probably the one and only recognized Professor of Sound Studies, working at the University of Sussex. As a leading figure, his contribution to the development of this area of research consisted in managing important projects and publications: Bull is co-founding editor of the journals *Senses and Society* and *Sound Studies* (Routledge), his works include *The Study of Sound*, a Bloomsbury book series, and another book series published by Routledge entitled *Sound in Urban and Popular Culture*. He also published several monographs including *Sounding Out the City* (2000); *Sound Moves* (2007); *Sirens* (2020). Michael Bull also edited *The Auditory Culture Reader* with Les Back for Berg (now Routledge) in 2003 (2nd edn 2015).

[10] Jonathan Sterne "Sonic Imaginations", in Jonathan Sterne (ed.), *The Sound Studies Reader*, Routledge, 2012, p. 3.

[11] See Todd Gitlin, "The Anti-political Populism of Cultural Studies", in *Dissent*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 1997, pp. 77–82.

> a name for the interdisciplinary ferment in the human sciences that takes sound as its analytical point of departure or arrival. By analysing both sonic practices and the discourses and institutions that describe them, it redescribes what sound does in the human world, and what humans do in the sonic world. (I say it *redescribes* rather than *describes* because […] it tells us what we don't already know).[12]

Although Sterne is here expressing the main challenge of sound studies, i.e. to "redescribe" the human world taking sound as its analytical point of view, it is still not clear what this analytical point consists of, what is to be considered as *sound* in the context of sound studies. This is one of the central issues of the field that still has to be solved and, as Sterne himself recognises later in his introduction, "The answer to the question has tremendous implications for both the objects and methods of sound studies".[13] Indeed, even if on the one hand sound studies make it not difficult to approach sound, whether it be music, noise, voice or anything involving hearing or listening; on the other hand, it is very problematic to understand if the core object of sound studies should be sound itself, investigated as an ontological entity, or the implications (cultural, sociological, and anthropological) that sound bears with itself as a phenomenon. This has led to the development of two different, often contrasting, strains of approach to sound with respect to the critical discourses of sound studies, which has also boosted the coinage of several expressions to specify the chosen perspective and narrow the object of study down.

Thus, we have the Sound Studies branch of *ontology of sound*, mostly based on the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze, namely *Difference and Repetition*,[14] applied to the theorisation of a material ontology of sound. Such studies focus on the principal definition of sound as a set of vibrations, or sound waves, developing

[12] Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*, cit., p. 2.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (1968), translated in English by P. Patton, Columbia University Press, 1994.

universals with respect to human body, media and the nature of sound itself[15]. Similar researches, though not exactly the same, are those concerned primarily with sound waves, taking into account the neurological processes involved in the elaboration of sonic vibrations or, with different scientific approaches, aimed to achieve a new re-definition of sound, maintaining the insufficiency of its standard definitions.[16] What all these scholars and their approaches share is that they are detached from any methodology involving the cultural aspects of sound, especially when considering ways of hearing or listening, that, instead, is the centre around which the other strain of sound studies is all about.[17]

Indeed, on the opposite side, sound studies' scholarship is mainly set on the sensory feature of sound and its participation in the shaping of culture. Here, in other words, sound as a signifier of several meanings is the departing point for reflections about cultural issues and the epistemological asset of a certain subject (be it society, a geographical space or a historical period). In the track of this other path of sound studies is the notion of "auditory culture", launched by Michael Bull and Les Back. It closely focuses on sensory studies, especially those concerned with taking sound as a starting point to reach a "democracy of the senses"[18] by turning down the predominance of the visual culture as a traditional narrative of studies. A similar notion is "sonic imagination", created by Sterne which echoes T.S. Eliot's "auditory imagination" and is, as Sterne explains, a "deliberately synaesthetic neologism" that works halfway between sound culture and the observation of it from the outside. [19]

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[15] To give a few references: see Christoph Cox, "Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism", in *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol. 10, no. 2, 2011, pp. 145–161; Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, MIT Press, 2009; Greg Heinge, *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

[16] See Mark Grimshaw, Tom Garner, *Sonic Virtuality: Sound as Emergent Perception*, Oxford University Press, 2015.

[17] See Brian Kane, "Sound studies without auditory culture: a critique of the ontological turn", in *Sound Studies*, Vol. 1, no.1, 2015, pp. 2-21.

[18] Michael Bull, Les Back, *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Berg, 2003, p.2.

[19] Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*, cit., p. 5.

The approach to literature espoused in the present dissertation is quite distant from the first sound studies scholarship's approach described above. From the very beginning, until now, sound studies have developed in a refreshing, new, and broader direction due to its interdisciplinary essence. Discussing about sound as a thing in itself, and, so, aligning with that scholarship exclusively interested in sound as vibrations and sound waves, makes it hard to identify the boundaries between *these* sound studies and disciplines interested in similar ways to sound but in a long-established tradition, such as acoustics, for example. Furthermore, I agree with Sterne when he affirms that "the difference between sound studies and these other fields is that they don't *require* engagement with alternative epistemologies, methods or approaches", which instead is at the core of sound studies as an interdisciplinary area.[20] Although musicologists – of course those sensitive to matters of sound in the human sciences – have also been moving towards sound studies since the affirmation of cultural studies, the majority of works in this developing field have been brought to fulfilment by anthropologists, historians, literary critics, philosophers, art historians, and the list could go on and on.[21] Hence, it is quite clear that sound studies took its steps from a vast range of different methodologies, subjects, and intellectual enquiries, even if, as Michael Bull makes us notice, "Sound studies is in rapid transition culturally, methodologically and theoretically" and "as it develops and grows it is necessary to take stock of its own theoretical, methodological and cultural foundations"[22].

Multiple anthologies of sound studies have been published in the last decades to respond to this necessity. Among them, it is worth retrieving here some as constitutive, scientific literature that is building the pillars of the field. I already mentioned Michael Bull and Les Back's *The Auditory Culture Reader*, first published in 2003. This anthology is an attempt to define sound studies and "provide an integrated picture of what "sound studies" should look like";[23] Veit Erlmann's *Hearing Cultures* follows a similar line but still we are far from giving

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[21] On this, see Trevor Pinch, Karin Bijsterveld, *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

[22] Michael Bull, *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, cit., p. xix.

[23] Michael Bull, Les Back, *The Auditory Culture Reader*, cit., p. 3.

full shape to the field which will be better defined later.[24] In fact, the term "sound studies" will appear in the title of such publishing some ten years later, with Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld's *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2011), followed by Jonathan Sterne's *The Sound Studies Reader* (2012), and finally Michael Bull's *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies* (2019). These anthologies are accompanied also by several academic journals like *Sound Studies*, *The Journal of Sonic Studies*, *Sound Effects*, to name a few. The literature flourishing around sound studies has helped establish methodologies, trace a sort of canon, provide topics by examples of case studies, and raise questions and problems of the field, yet this is also a relatively small portion of the academic publishing output concerning sound studies. In fact, due to the interdisciplinarity and newness of sound studies, the majority of the published works are considered more as history, anthropology, literature, sociology pieces *with* an interest in sound.

It is only with the delineation of the field, achieved through the anthologies mentioned before that we recognize as sound studies' material works about the histories of sounds (Birdsall 2012; Cockayne 2007; Picker 2003; Rath 2003; Smith, M. 2007; Smith B. 2009), studies about voice (Bloom 2007, Connor 2000, Petman, 2017) about architectural and urban sounds (Bijsterveld 2016; Blesser & Salter 2007, Thompson 2002), about technological sound (Katz 2010; Sterne 2003; Schmidt-Horning 2015; Tosoni & Pinch 2016), and those works hinged on the relationship between power or violence and sound (Johnson & Cloonan 2009; Daughtry 2015; Gilman 2016), as well as religion and sound (Hirshkind 2006; Pieslak 2015), and sound and race (Stover 2016).[25]

Most of the works cited above and, more broadly, most of the sound studies' literature, challenge the way critical topics are addressed, developing new narratives which are no longer traditionally visual-oriented. Such effort is achieved mainly by building an epistemology of listening where the observation of what surrounds us is filtered through our aural experiences – as the counterpart

[24] Veit Erlmann (ed.), *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*, Berg, 2004.

[25] I am availing myself here of the bibliography of sound studies literature as described and categorized by Bull, in Michael Bull, *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, cit., p. xviii.

of "the gaze" in visual culture.[26] In fact, in a critical discourse about sound, the understanding of what it means to listen, and especially of how to "translate" sound into meaning, is pivotal for the constitution of an epistemology of listening. In order to serve this purpose, scholars usually explain sound meaning by making a comparison between the domains of sight and hearing, trying to determinate how listening works. As Sterne puts it, "to understand the faculty of audition is, then, simultaneously to understand its possibilities and its limits, its status as embedded in real social relations and its power as a figurative and imaginative metaphor for other registers of human action"[27].

A fruitful way to grasp the *possibilities*, *limits*, and *powers* of sound mentioned by Sterne, is to adopt a philosophical perspective and, more specifically, the phenomenology of sound and listening described by Don Ihde with respect to the auditory experience.[28] Ihde provides several examples of listening (phenomenologically) and in all of them he uses the relationship (be it contrastive or not) between sight and hearing. It is worth referring here to one of Ihde's description of a particular auditory experience to better understand how meaning spreads from the relationship described above:

> I walk in the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris for the first time. Its emptiness and high arching dark interior are awesome, but it bespeaks a certain monumentality. It is a ghostly reminder of a civilization long past, its muted walls echoing only the shuffle of countless tourist feet. Later I return, and a high mass is being sung: suddenly the mute walls echo and reecho and the singing fills the cathedral. Its soul has momentarily returned, and the mute testimony of the past has once again returned to live in the moment of the ritual. Here the paired "regions" of sight and sound "synthesize" in dramatic richness.[29]

Ihde's example, used to reflect on the blurred boundaries between sight and hearing (which correspond to the possibilities and limits of sound with respect to

[26] See Jonathan Sterne (ed.), *The Sound Studies Reader*, cit. 2012.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[28] See Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, Suny, 2012.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 24

mute objects),[30] I believe can also be considered as a great example of an aural experience participating in the epistemology of listening. If Sterne's possibilities and limits of sound are, in Ihde's example, vestiges of the objects (in this case the architecture and the echoing walls), it is the *power* of sound, both figurative and especially imaginative, which is striking here. Ihde doesn't use random words to describe his experience, indeed he is retrieving a historical image that thanks to the sound of a mass is coming back to life. He is not focusing on which songs he is listening too, neither does he wonder if the voices are in tune or not, or, if he can get a glance at the singers – is there actually a choir singing? A solo voice? Is it accompanied by any instruments? An organ maybe?; the only thing he is describing is the imaginative power of a sound in a place of which the meaning is momentarily recovered. Hence, the phenomenology of sound allows us to understand how many possibilities lie in listening at, and *through*, sound. Indeed, the experience, as described by Ihde, allows us also to reflect on the cultural value of sound. We can all imagine a different tune sung at Notre Dame, still the spectrum of such diversity is limited to a certain category of music, reminiscent (to say it in a simplistic way) of some typical features of western, liturgic harmonies.

It is pivotal to underline this aspect of sound because it also answers to the tacit dilemma of the subjectivity of the listener. Of course, a good part of the interpretation of sound, together with its engendered imagery and meanings, is influenced by someone's own perception, sensibility, experience and cultural background. Yet, as already implied through the questions raised before, there are some objective boundaries undeniably shared – historically, geographically, and culturally speaking. In other words, since sound's meaning is culturally situated, taking the example of Idhe's experience and assuming that the listener or reader is familiar with Western liturgical practices, I would be rather positive in stating that they unlikely could imagine the Cathedral of Notre Dame filled with oriental harmonies or heavy-metal music. This helps us understand that a process of knowing starts when we listen to something, participating in the shaping of culture by association, or recognition, or simply by listening *through* sound.

[30] *Ibid.*

Concerning particularly the epistemology of sound and listening, ethnomusicologists have been at the forefront in giving a great contribution to sound studies, theorizing key concepts such as Steven Feld's *acoustemology*.[31] By introducing this term, the anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Feld wanted "to argue for sound as a capacity to know and as a habit of knowing".[32] So, by joining the words "acoustic" and "epistemology", he finally coined acoustemology, a concept which is now used as a key notion in sound studies, especially when referring to the sonic identity of a certain society (or the individual) as a product of its (or her/his) culture.[33] Notwithstanding the specificity of Feld's work, acoustemology has been adopted as a new perspective to develop fruitful methodologies and theories for similar discussions in sound studies, especially with respect to the (sonic) identity, which will be discussed more in detail later on, when interpreting Shakespeare's *Othello* and the protagonist's sonic identity.

One of the difficulties of describing listening, sound and all the embodied processes engendered by them, is to find a suitable lexicon, together with pinpointing concepts that strengthen the chosen methodology for the development of a critical examination of the sonic phenomena. Acoustemology, as a concept and as a neologism, provides great support in that sense, but, as for sound studies in general, Feld's concept is, in turn, profoundly indebted to Murray Schafer and his previous theorization of *soundscape*.

In fact, whatever one may think of Schafer's work, the introduction of the notion of soundscape, together with its corollary of new concepts and terms (keynote sounds, soundmark, signal) has marked a swerve in the field of sound studies. In the late 1960s Schafer founded the World Soundscape Project, at Simon Fraser University, Canada, dealing initially with the study of Vancouver's soundscape, later enlarged towards the European soundscape with a special

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[31] Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*, Duke University Press, 2012 (1 ed. 1982).

[32] *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.

[33] Feld has described the listening and sounding practices developed by the Kaluli people in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea, in their engagement with the environment that surrounds them (the tropical rainforest), showing that their system of knowledge and culture is mainly based on sound and listening rather than seeing things.

attention to the rural environment. The results of this project were published in several books, the most relevant among them being *The Tuning of the World* (1977), later reprinted with a more specific title recalling the core concept of the study: *The Soundscape* (1994). 'Soundscape' as a term is built on its proximity to 'landscape' but with a focus on the sounds surrounding us. Schafer therefore exploits a word strictly linked to the visual to delineate a defined space and substitutes the first term of the compound with 'sound', twisting the domain of the word from visual to aural. Due to its appeal, the term 'soundscape' has been exceptionally productive for scholars; gradually detaching from its original, specific meaning and moving away from the notion theorized by Schafer. Almost any work dealing with sound after the late 1970s mentions or uses 'soundscape' to describe different sonic phenomena, and a conspicuous use of the term with different meanings can be registered also in avant-garde music, new theatrical forms, and in any activity involving listening environmental sounds. In other words, soundscape seems to have become part of our every-day vocabulary now, referring to almost every sonic experience in a huge spectrum of different contexts.[34]

However, despite its great influence, Schafer's soundscape is quite distant from being an umbrella term; in fact, it carries a specific meaning with precise functions. When engaging with Schafer's work at a deep level, to say that the principal meaning of 'soundscape' is the relationship between sound and space is not wrong, but it is not enough. Indeed, the purposes of Schafer's study are not merely descriptive but also normative. By describing how a soundscape changed over time and space, from rural to urban, from natural to industrial and electric, Schafer suggests an ecological, ideal way of listening where some sounds should be preferred to others. In designing the path leading from harmony to dissonance, in his words from "hi-fi" to "low-fi", he uses a specific lexicon implying a normative way of listening. This can be traced in the systematic use he makes of expressions like "noise pollution" (especially used to describe urban soundscapes)

[34] See Ari Y. Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape: a Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies", in *The Senses and Society*, Vol. 5, no. 2, 2010, pp. 212-234.

but, more explicitly, in the coinage of new words such as "schizophonia", accompanied by distinctive purposes:

> I coined the term schizophonia in *The New Soundscape* intending it to be a nervous word. Related to schizophrenia, I wanted it to convey the same sense of aberration and drama. Indeed, the overkill of hi-fi gadgetry not only contributes generously to the lo-fi problem, but it creates a synthetic soundscape in which natural sounds are becoming increasingly unnatural while machine-made substitutes are providing the operative signals directing modern life.[35]

Schafer's main concern, as we can understand from this passage, is to recover natural sounds, purging them from the *unnatural*, avoiding schizophonia as the consequence of listening to sounds out of their place of belonging. Indeed, the main cause of schizophonia is, as Schafer explains, the splitting of sound, that is a re-creation, a re-transmission of a certain sound in a different place to which it doesn't belong. Schafer distinguishes original sounds from those denaturalized by means of reproduction. A crucial example that he focuses on is the human voice, stating that it has been shown that a single phoneme can never be identically repeated by the same person – if not recorded and reproduced – through a process that denaturalizes the original sound which is now split from its marker. Although it might seem that Schafer is focusing on categorizing sound in its relationship with place, it would be more accurate to say that his study is not concerned with sound at all, but with listening instead. It is precisely for this reason that Schafer's approach is so appealing to us, even when working on cultures of the past preceding technologies developed for reproducing sounds – as it is in the interests of this dissertation. Indeed, his theorization of soundscape encouraged a collective awakening of *listening to* sound, allowing us to reflect on its quality as culturally embedded. In this view, soundscape can be considered as a hermeneutical device to understanding the world surrounding us not only by *observing* it, but pivotally by *listening to* it. In increasing our awareness of that, such an approach, with the appropriate adjustments, results efficient also when turning our attention to the

[35] Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Destiny Books, 1994, p. 91.

pre-technology era. In fact, the recording of the sounds of the past, that is to be found in written texts, allows us to understand which sounds could be heard and, most interestingly, how they were associated to certain meanings, how they qualified the environment and affected human behavior, customs, modes of thinking; in other words, how sound shaped culture. To recover such meanings from a written source might appear misleading, especially considering the strong subjectivity that the author inevitably expresses through them. And yet, it is precisely through that subjectivity, recollected and carefully compared with other's experiences, that we are able to *re-discover* the culture of the past, putting it in relation with our own.

In this light, as we shall see, early modern England is particularly flourishing when it comes to channel meanings through sounds: some of these meanings have been inevitably lost. Aiming at recovering them is to finally acknowledge the participation of sound in building cultures, allowing us to re-consider our contemporary understanding of the past. In the instance of this thesis, when observing early modern English cultural landscape, one cannot avoid to listen to its soundscape as well, that is to grasp an all-encompassing frame of it. To this concerns, Schafer's work provides us with a methodology that, developed and adjusted by other scholars, puts us in conversation with sound, be it from the past or not, be it technological or written. Indeed, as stressed before, Schafer's soundscape taught us nothing but little about sound, instead it opened our ears and pushed us to listen more consciously. This has been noticed by several scholars, who have challenged Schafer's work and tried to reformulate his theory, being aware that the crucial matter is not sound *per se* but the epistemology of listening.[36] Feld's acoustemological approach, among others, can be considered as a reaction to Schafer's theorization of soundscape, as it focuses on listening as an

[36] See David Toop, *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds*, Serpent's Tail, 1995; Sophie Arkette 2004. "Sounds Like City.", in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2004, pp. 159-168; Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise : Perspectives on Sound Art*, Continuum International, 2006; Ari Y. Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape: a Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies", in The Senses and Society, Vol. 5, no. 2, 2010, pp. 212-234.

equivalent of knowing and the matter is again stressed by Feld in his discussion of *schismogenesis* as opposed to *schizophonia*.[37]

In this light, sound studies are indebted to Schafer above all for the amount of issues that his study has raised, leading to a proliferation of works either aligned or in contrast with his *Soundscape*. A deep interest in soundscape can be traced also in this dissertation, where some of Schafer's ideas will be proposed again. It is fruitful here to underline that the term 'soundscape' will be considered in this study as a word whose connections with sound, space and society intertwine in one single unit. Moreover, I believe a rethinking of soundscape should be undertaken in the context of sound studies because, as Ari Y. Kelman effectively notices:

> Schafer's term, then, continues to resonate because it suggests that the relationship between sound and context truly does matter to scholars of sound. His notion of the soundscape calls attention to the background of sound and suggests that attending to sound can amplify critical aspects of social and cultural life that otherwise fall on deaf ears.[38]

Bearing Kelman's words in mind, *The Soundscape* boosted the study of sound with an interdisciplinary perspective. Schafer's work caused an outburst of sound studies, particularly from historians dealing with sound, and whose methodologies, thought to meet with their necessities, are largely shared in this study. For obvious reasons, unlike literature scholars, historians have developed more ways of dealing with the sounds of the past. I will later argue about such methodologies, when diving into the early-modern England "protocols of listening" as described mainly by Bruce R. Smith. Concerning literary studies though, it will be fruitful for the aims of my research to linger on the relationship between sound and the written text, since this thesis is primarily interested in

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[37] See Feld, Steven. 1994. "From Schizophonia to Schismogenesis: On the Discourses and Commodification Practices of 'World Music' and 'World Beat'." S. Feld, Steven; and Keil, Charles (eds.), *Music Grooves: Essayes and Dialogues*, University of Chicago Press, 1994.

[38] Ari Y. Kelman, "Rethinking the Soundscape: a Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies", in The Senses and Society, Vol. 5, no. 2, 2010, p. 230.

Shakespeare's theatrical text as its object of study, and it doesn't explore the afterlife performances or adaptations realized by contemporary theatre. The discourses of sound studies when applied to literature give particular attention to one pivotal issue: the textualization of sound. This includes many aspects of the text and it moves from the importance of sound in rhetorical devices (such as assonance, dissonance, consonance, alliteration, rhyme scheme, and word play) to the practices of listening as a theme emerging from references in the text to different forms of hearing or mishearing. In all this, the crucial role played by rhetoric needs emphasizing.

Early-modern Rhetoric of Sound

When it comes to literature, more specifically to any occurrences of "written sound"[39] in a text, be it a full description of one's emotions expressed in a song, or merely a reference to a single bird tweeting, such sonic features displayed on the paper are never randomly chosen by the author, but constitute in fact a device of the text. Sounds always carry meanings with them; most importantly, even when the words we read do not seem to belong to the semantic domain of sound, actually they are imbued with appealing sonic features, for after all, words are indeed sounds. This is evidently true especially when dealing with theatrical texts whose words are thought to be a performative act from the very beginning, that is to say, they are materially meant to be sounds.[40] It is fruitful to the purposes of

[39] I am referring here to any literature work, every text where a reference to any form of sound might be present, in this occasion I am not considering "written sound" as the transcription of it on a paper (e.g. musical score).

[40] To this extent, it is worthy to underline the orality-aurality aspect of literature as presented by Justin St. Clair in "Literature and Sound", in Bull, Michael (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Sound Studies*, Routledge, 2019, pp. 353-361. Here a brief excerpt: "[…] the centrality of sound to the study of literature is commonsensically apparent. Assonance, consonance, dissonance, alliteration, meter, modulation, and rhyme scheme are all foundational – and fundamentally sonic – poetic devices. Much word play, moreover, from punning substitution to

this study, to linger on this aspect of the language as a form of sound, specifically to reveal how in early modern literature the idea of sound-affecting was strongly connected to the rhetorical features of language, to the point that we can witness a synergic permeability between them.[41] To the end of fully exploring such a relationship, and so, to understand how it participates in Shakespeare's dramaturgical texts, it can be profitable here to retrieve the importance of rhetoric and its place in Renaissance culture.

As Brian Vickers extensively explores in several of his works[42], the *ars rhetorica* has existed for a very long time, still, its fortune has been always erratic. Since classical antiquity, with Plato's *Gorgia*, and the consequent Neoplatonism, passing through the medieval lack of appreciation of rhetoric, to the more recent heuristic principle of separation between rhetoric and literature, the value of rhetoric and its effective role as a cultural phenomenon, has been systematically distorted when not neglected.[43] Nevertheless, as history teaches us, such devaluation can be considered temporary, depending on the influence of three main factors, as underlined by Vickers: political, educational, aesthetical.[44] Considering Renaissance as a historical moment of great flourish in almost any intellectual area, not least the ones just mentioned as Vickers' compass points for rhetoric's fortune, it is no wonder that the early modern centuries reap the benefits of classical rhetoric like never before, changing it from being neglected (as in the

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playful metathesis, depends upon phonological sounding. Whatever one may think of print-oriented bastardy, literature is inescapably an aural art. A significant portion of literature's aurality certainly derives from ancient orality. The earliest narrative traditions were undeniably oral, and transmission, therefore, depended upon cultures of close listening." (p.353).

[41] "Sound affect" is a phenomenon widely spread from Middle Ages on although its roots can be traced back to the classical period. It was particularly enhanced during Renaissance with respect to the power of sound (and music) of moving (affecting) human spirit in specific ways. This will be discussed more in detail later.

[42] See Brian Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry* (1970); id., *Rhetorical and Anti-rhetorical Tropes: on writing the history of elocution* (1981); id., (ed.) *Rhetoric Revalued: papers from the International Society for the History of Rhetoric* (1982); id., *Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance* (1983); id., *In Defence of Rhetoric* (1988).

[43] Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, 1988.

[44] *Ibid*., p. viii.

middle ages) to gain probably the most influent place in the culture of the time. Such a revival of rhetoric during Renaissance developed in a climactic way, indeed, there is at the same time, on the one hand, a process of recovery and rediscovery of classical rhetoric, on the other, a prolific production of treatises both imitative of the classical principles and inventive of new ways of adapting ancient rhetoric to the early modern world.

Concerning the rediscovery process, of paramount importance among the most enthusiastic findings was the one made by the Italian humanist Poggio Bracciolini, who found in 1416, in the monastery of St. Gallen, Switzerland, a complete manuscript of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.[45] Whereas until this event, works like Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, but also Aristotle's *Poetica,* and other major manuscripts from classical antiquity had been fragmentarily known, during the Renaissance there is a particular interest in filling the gaps of such knowledge through the recovering of ancient texts. This revaluation of Greek and Latin sources kindled the idea that civilization was strictly connected to language, that human intellect as a virtue could be achieved, enriched, and expressed through a good usage of words, that is to say, Ciceronian principles strongly echoed in Renaissance minds.[46]

Poggius Bracciolini, in his letter addressed to Guarino Veronese, communicates to his friend that he had found the complete manuscript of the *Institutio Ortoria*, but before actually writing about it, he reflects on the importance of language and, in so doing, he perfectly embodies Renaissance attitude towards classical heritage. Addressing Veronese, after a short *captatio benevolentiae*, he writes:

> I know it will bring the utmost pleasure to you, who have long been an expert, and to other learned men. For what, for Heaven's sake, is there that could be more delightful, more pleasant, and more agreeable to you and the rest of the learned world than the knowledge of those things whose acquaintance makes us

[45] Bice M. Garavelli, *Manuale di Retorica*, Bompiani, 2018.

[46] I am referring here specifically to the principle of *humanitas* reached through the *recte loqui* as expressed by Cicero in his *De Oratore*.

> more learned and, what seems even more important, stylistically more polished.[47]

Already from these first few lines, we can grasp the enthusiasm and considerable attention given to *those things whose acquaintance makes us more learned* which not only are a source both for knowledge and for pleasure but of *maius quiddam*. Even more relevant (in these lines) is what Bracciolini is referring to, that is the power of language as the highest endowment. As he goes on, indeed, it seems that all that matters, not only to him but to the entire literati community, is the importance of a well-organized speech; in other words, the essentiality of rhetoric:

> When Mother Nature gave the human race mind and reason, two wonderful guides to a righteous and happy life, she could think of nothing finer to give. Then she gave us one thing that perhaps may be the greatest gift of all, the use and understanding of speech, without which mind and reason would not have been of any use to us. For it is speech alone which we use to express the power of our mind and which separates us from the other beings. And so we must be deeply grateful to the pioneers in the other liberal arts and especially to those who by their concern and efforts have given us rules for speaking and a pattern of perfection. They have made it possible for us to excel other men in the ability in which all men excel beasts.[48]

Bracciolini also mentions the liberal arts and the hermeneutical practice related to them. This reminds us of the educational developments that already interest the Middle Ages but flourished later. Starting from the 11th century, rhetoric, together with grammar and logic, was part of the *trivium* so, it was considered essential. Still, at least until two centuries later, the relevance of rhetoric, compared to the other disciplines of the *trivium*, was much less tangible. It was logic that was the most prominent subject, whereas rhetoric was relegated as a matter of theory and it is no coincidence that of the five parts which constitute the classical taxonomy

[47] Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (ed.), *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: the Letters of Poggius Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, Columbia University Press, 1974, p. 193.

[48] *Ibid.*

of rhetoric, only *inventio* was given thought to.[49] However, due to a renewed attention towards ancient texts, especially Cicero's[50], the theoretical perspective of rhetoric overturns into a reinforced understanding of the discipline as strongly practical; after all, the bonding between rhetoric and its effective role in society had always been underlined by classical thinkers with respect to the *vita activa*, of which rhetoric was fundamental.

Concerning the proliferation of new publications instead, as Heinrich F. Plett[51] emphasizes, the developing social structures of the early modern age, demanded revised rhetorical practices compliant with the activities in which persuasion occupied a pivotal, if not the principal, role. In England, such necessities were fulfilled with a broad variety of rhetorical texts, published in different forms as treatises, text-books, annotated and commented folios, or *tabulae,* both in Latin and vernacular. Of course, translations of the classical texts were provided from Greek to Latin, but, most importantly, ancient authors' works reached a wider number of readers thanks to the translations in vernacular English, language that increasingly became the standard one also for rhetorical manuals. The spread of all these typologies of text interested the fields in which theoretical and, above all, practical demands for persuasion led to the development of diversified genres of rhetorical works. If, from the one hand, the principle of imitation of the classics seemed to be prescriptive for the printed manuals that operate as *exempla*; on the other hand, a progressive breach towards more contemporary and effective forms of rhetoric concerned a great deal of domains like philosophy, religion, education, literature, politics, and science. So, together with the recovering of the classics, renewed genres started to appear and, as identified by Plett, these can be classified as follows:

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[49] Brian Vickers, "Rhetoric and Poetics", in Skinner, Quentin and Schmitt, Charles B. (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 715-745.

[50] Among the most impactful works which influenced the idea of Renaissance rhetoric I am particularly referring here to Cicero's *De Officiis* as it inspired intellectuals, more than other texts, to adopt a more practical attitude towards rhetoric.

[51] Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture*, Walter de Gruyter, 2004.

Quinque Partes Artis, emulating the classics (especially Cicero's and Quintilian's) and based on a complete explanation of the five parts of rhetoric. These manuals were thought as complete and detailed guides, particularly useful to employ the art of persuasion in institutional contexts, from the juridical to the ecclesiastical, not least the political one. Georgius Trapezuntius' *Rhetoricorum libri V* (Venice, 1433-1434) is one of the first examples of such genre and served as a model for, among many others, Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* (1553) whose popularity is evidenced by its seven editions.

Ars Concionandi, a Renaissance rhetorical genre includeing all the treatises where rhetorical techniques were employed for the purposes of delivering convincing sermons. It is addressed mainly to the orators of the Church and, on St. Augustine's model, it incorporates classical rhetoric for the doctrine's necessities.

Ars Epistolica, or epistolary rhetoric, interested mainly in the stylistic strategies to be adopted in the communication between Church and State. Manuals taught how to excel in the *ars dictaminis* not only in the administrative, public context but also in the private, more familiar epistolary exchange; among the most circulating manuals of this genre, a pivotal example is Erasmus' *De conscribendis epistolis* (1522).

Formulary Rhetoric, one of the most common rhetorical genres of the time. It consists of a sort of compendium where fixed expressions such as *sententiae*, aphorisms, proverbs, or excerpts from classical or contemporary, authoritative works are registered with an encyclopaedic approach. These collections, called commonplace-books, aimed to provide material to be employed both to imitate and develop inventive techniques. Again here, Erasmus' works such as *Apophthegmata* operate as models.

Rhetoric of Figures and Tropes, as the most pragmatic genre, interests the abundant publication of treatises and manuals organised in a schematic way, containing a list of all the rhetorical figures and tropes to be used both in speaking and in writing. This genre was particularly fruitful for the development of new criticism of literary works and offered a significant guide both for writing and

interpreting poetry – as evidenced in Henry Peacham's *The Garden of Eloquence* (1577) or George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589);

Intermedial Rhetoric can be traced in the typical Renaissance admittance of rhetoric to non-verbal arts, specifically to painting and music. Rhetoric, both in its theory and practice, provides a semiotic paradigm to be adopted with elevating purposes but it also outlines different agents of communication primarily not linguistic. This is the fertile ground on which concepts like *ut pictura poësis*, or, as we shall see more in detail later, *musica poetica* developed.

The Encyclopedic Strain spread in the late sixteenth century and it was even more prolific during the following years. It worked as a collection and discussion of philological and philosophical research – though not exclusively. For the majority of the texts pertaining to this genre, Latin is the language employed. One of the most popular examples is Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi Maioris scilicet et Minoris Metaphysica, Physica atque Technica Historia in duo voluminal secundum Cosmi differentiam divisa* (1618).[52]

As shown above, the prolific production of early modern texts suits rhetoricians' needs of the time. These requirements converge towards a reformulation of the classical rhetorical systems. Through keeping tight to the imitation of the Latin-Greek background, in the aforementioned letter by Bracciolini we find: "rules for speaking and a pattern of perfection" to "excel other men in the ability in which all men excel beasts". From these expressions, not only we grasp the importance of rhetoric to Bracciolini (and, more broadly, to the literati community), but we can get an idea of the focal point of rhetoric, specifically its pragmatic efficacy or, in other words, the efficient persuasion

[52] Although this classification of different genres is reported here as described in Plett, (*Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture*, cit.), I believe it is necessary to clarify that some of the listed genres can be considered more as an approach, or a particular employment of rhetorical precepts to different exigencies, rather than a fixed and established categorization of texts. Nevertheless, it is fruitful to the purposes of a better comprehension of early modern understanding and adaptation of classical rhetoric to keep in mind this schematization as provided by Plett which also gives us an idea of the cultural weight and permeability of rhetoric during Renaissance with respect to other areas, and interesting different areas concerning private as well as public life.

achieved through the *elocutio,* on which Renaissance focusses more than on the theoretical *inventio* in the previous age. Although classical rhetoricians encouraged a certain balance among *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *actio*, the early modern predominance of *elocutio* is quite understandable given the fact that, of the three rhetorical aims (*movere*, *docere*, *delectare*), it is *movere* that most suits the needs of the age. We shall see later on how *movere*, that is the ability to persuade by touching human spirit, plays a pivotal role in the relationship between rhetoric and music, constituting not only a contact point between the two arts but also the communal ground for the development of a featured aesthetic.

Concerning *elocutio*, its preeminence is already identifiable in the humanists' interest in rhetoric (especially the Florentine ones). Florence is the platform from which the spread of a revived rhetoric, exquisitely epideictic and eloquent, reaches the whole European panorama. As previously emphasized, I believe the lines by Bracciolini mentioned above encompass a largely shared idea of rhetoric which also lends itself to the concurrence of the ethical thought and its consequent aesthetical achievement. Vickers clarifies how Renaissance rhetoric, together with poetics,[53] is first and foremost an ethical annexation: "the main justification for their existence was often said to be their ability to convey the teachings of moral philosophy with more powerful effect".[54] In this regard, not only Bracciolini's but also letters and works by Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, Francesco Filelfo, and others, express, through eloquence, the ethical ideal of the Renaissance *vita activa*. All of them, in the wake of the Ciceronian teachings in particular, share and communicate the idea of *elocutio* as a fruitful device, or better, a gift, to pursue a life of wisdom. In fact, the Renaissance ideal of *vita activa* disavowed the solitary, contemplative attitude; such a lifestyle was considered sterile and, above all, inhuman. It was the combination of *ratio* and *oratio* together that defined human nature, and this is clear when reading humanistic works such as

[53] For the Renaissance understanding of poetics as blended with rhetoric see Brian Vickers, "Rhetoric and Poetics", cit.

[54] *Ibid*., p. 715.

those foregrounded by Vickers. So, rhetoric, more specifically *elocutio* became a fundamental component of this ethical and social ideal of *vita active*.[55]

Bearing this in mind, the way *elocutio* worked as an ethical compass is entirely hinged on the ability to shape the human will by relying on the emotional peculiarity of expression. Renaissance rhetoricians were deeply influenced by Quintilian's enhancing of Cicero's urging to appeal to feelings in relation to rhetoric, as well as the discussion of the Aristotelian *ethos* and *pathos* where Quintilian focuses more on the latter as the main force of eloquence, suggesting that logic, although useful, does not constitute an orator's primary duty. The efficacy of *elocutio* is thus encapsulated in Quintilian's subordination of *docere* and *delectare* to *movere*:

> We do not however have to use logic in pleadings with the same minute attention to detail as in scholarly debate, because the orator's duty is not only to instruct but to move and delight the audience, and for this he also needs energy, strength, and grace: the force of a river flowing between high banks with a great sweep of water is greater than that of a shallow stream that bubbles over the pebbles in its path.[56]

[55] Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, cit.

[56] For a better understanding, here the full quotation: "And just as wrestling instructors do not teach their pupils the various 'numbers', as they are called, in order that the pupils should use them all in the actual fight (for weight and strength and breath count for more), but so that they have a stock of 'numbers' from which they can apply one or two, as occasion offers, so likewise this subject of 'dialectic'(or 'disputation' if we prefer that name)—useful as it often is for definitions, classifications, separation of different things, resolving ambiguities, making distinctions and divisions, laying traps and tying an opponent up in knots—will, if it claims the whole forensic battle for itself, obstruct better qualities, pare down the strength of the speech to match its own limited powers, and destroy it just by its subtle refinements. Thus you can find great experts in disputation, who, once parted from their sophistries, are quite as incompetent in any more serious field as certain little animals that are nimble enough in a confined space but easily caught in the open." (Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, *V, Books 11-12*, ed. by Donald A. Russel, Loeb Classic Library: 494, 2002, p. 227)

To Renaissance literati, Quintilian's idea of *movere* was exceedingly significant and cohesive with the ethics of the time, to the point that a deep influence of the precepts in the *Institutio Oratoria* (and, more broadly, in the classical texts concerning eloquence), had a bearing on the rhetoric of the time far beyond its mere description in treatises and manuals. The Renaissance revival of rhetoric developed in many layers, affecting of course other fields, in particular (as mentioned before) fine arts and music. The cardinal contact point between these arts and that of rhetoric is characterized by the supremacy of *elocutio* and *movere* as devices to achieve the practical aspect of persuasion.

Here we are entering specifically the common ground shared by rhetoric and music and, considering, especially, passions, feelings, emotions as the fulcrum of both rhetoric and music, it is no wonder that the two arts turn out to be permeable, primarily in their aesthetics, which can be defined, in Basil Muntéano's words, as "esthétique de la persuasion passionelle".[57] Indeed, Renaissance music theory was deeply interested in investigating the modalities through which music had the power to move the listener. Such power was actually thought to be a device, an instrument to instill and stimulate specific feelings considered as a recipient of knowledge. Rhetorical precepts dealing with communicating emotions were applied to music so that composers had now the possibility of following some guidelines to create a kind of music capable of reaching and shaping the human soul. Not only did rhetoric influence the language of music intended as the lexicon to describe specific theoretical aspects of the art, but it contributed to change perspective in approaching the emotions, sharing with music the *fil rouge* of *movere*; such a perspective put the listener and their feelings in a central position.

The early modern understanding of music was quite complex; indeed, two main concepts coexisted in music theory and each of these differs in its genesis and nature. The force of music was both thought to reside in its being expressive of the divine, perfect harmony, mirroring the configuration of the cosmos in terms

[57] Basil Muntéano, *Constantes dialectiques en littérature et en histoire*, Didier, 1968, p. 164. Here the expression is adapted to describe the shared aesthetics of rhetoric and music but Muntéano, with this expression, refers primarily to rhetoric in early modern literature as the instrument to dig up the deepest human emotions.

of Pythagorean numbers or intervals, and, at the same time, in its possessing an extraordinary power to elicit emotions. Although the arithmetical concept of music during the Renaissance was not completely abandoned, it was considered more as an internal feature of the nature of sound itself, while the second one, especially through the use of rhetoric, could be mastered by the composers for their specific purposes.[58] David Lindley, in *Shakespeare and Music*, has extensively investigated on early modern music theory emphasizing how "thinking about music in the period itself was in transition, and the understanding of the source of its effectiveness was moving from a metaphysical to a rhetorical foundation."[59] In this way, it appears legitimate to discuss Renaissance music in terms of aesthetics, in that the composer pursues the aim of moving the listener in the same way as the rhetoricians of the time.

In fact, it is still difficult to provide a clear framework for the impact of rhetoric over music, particularly when the so-called theory of affections (*affetti*) is involved. Music's power to influence the listener's mood, changing it, is often described in terms of affections; similarly, the efficacy of rhetoric works in parallel to these affections provoked by music. The Renaissance revival of rhetoric led to the development of this theory of affections through the association of certain features of music composition with rhetorical figures used as specific devices for eliciting specific emotions. However, it is important to underline that the theory of *affetti* doesn't have a precise statute and, as emphasized by musicologists, it is, rather than a theory, a feature of music itself acknowledged long before the Renaissance - of which an increased awareness can be noticed concurrently with the rise of early modern rhetoric.[60] In this respect, I must stress that although particular attention has been given to the relationship between rhetoric and music by important literature scholars (to name only one, Vickers) the *affetti* as meant by musicologists are frequently neglected or misunderstood.

Indeed, in literary discussions of rhetoric and music, the *affetti* are considered as something new, totally bound to rhetoric as the product of a Renaissance trend

[58] Davide Daolmi, *Storia della musica: Dalle origini al Seicento*, Le Monnier Università, 2019.

[59] David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, Bloomsbury, 2006, p. 228.

[60] Davide Daolmi, *Storia della musica*, cit.

in which musicians look at literature trying to emulate the poetic power of expression. For example, Vickers' treatment of the subject is actually detailed, and in mostly thorough, yet the subordination of music to rhetoric, specifically when discussing *affetti* is not totally convincing. In fact, music has always been considered a device to move human souls, from antiquity until today. So, I would suggest that it is not thanks to rhetoric that music gains the power of affecting, nor I would put the Renaissance *affetti* in clear contrast with the "*mathematici* composers"[61] of the Middle-ages since the Pythagorean idea of harmony - particularly influent during Middle-ages – is not completely rejected. Even when discussing those musical forms where a literary text is put into music and made into a lyric, to describe music in terms of its subordination to the text and to the latter's rhetorical features, as consistent as one could imagine it would be, it is not entirely accurate. Scott A. Trudell has clarified once and for all how poetry is indeed indebted to music at least as much as music is indebted to poetry.[62] This is particularly true in England during the early modern age, when, contrary to common beliefs, lyrics circulated also as detached from specific musical compositions, as poems to be later accompanied by music, constituting the literary form of vocal music:

> Musical, spoken, and written habits of poesis coexisted, combined, and overlapped so multifariously as to undermine conceptions of the early modern literary field defined exclusively in terms of script. In short, vocal music was poetry in early modern England, in the sense that verse, drama, and fiction were conceived as forms of poesy not limited to writing and speech.[63]

The increasing interest in the aim of *movere* both by music and rhetoric led to the development of new musical trends. As with renewed rhetorical genres, music

[61] Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, cit., p. 369.

[62] Scott A. Trudell, *Unwritten Poetry: Song, Performance, and Media in Early Modern England*, Oxford University Press, 2019.

[63] *Ibid*., p. 9.

theorists were divided into the the supporters of an *ars perfecta*[64] detached from rhetoric (more specifically, without lyrics), and the composers who encouraged a synaesthesia of both arts for the sake of the listeners or readers' emotions. I believe the misconception of today's rhetoric scholars with respect to the subordination of music to rhetoric, arises from one of the most popular stylistic trends in music developed during Renaissance, mostly representative of the twine between rhetoric and music as combined arts aiming at the power of emotions: the madrigal. Bearing in mind Trudell's aforementioned mutual indebtedness between poetry and music, the sixteenth century is characterized by the rising trend of literary music which can be traced at the very beginning in music compositions such as the motets or the Italian *frottola*.[65] Although particular attention is given to the text, in such compositions the focus is not on the meaning to be "translated" and expressed into music, but, rather, on the musical adaptation of the characters or themes expressed within the text. Thus, literary music, which tried to convey the meanings of the text through the sounds of the musical composition, was achieved primarily by madrigal. Even so, Trudell's point remains still effective. The madrigal was directly connected to the Petrarchan literary, poetic genre. In fact, early modern literary music is the product of other influential currents developed during the Renaissance: the literary one, embodied by the "Petrarchan movement" and the musical adaptation of "northern" polyphony to the Italian poetic texts.[66]

A pivotal role in such context was played by Pietro Bembo whose work *Prose della volgar lingua*, not only reestablished the supremacy of Tuscan dialect as *the* literary language but also provided a paradigm for those musicians who, using the typical Petrarchan antithesis style as retrieved by Bembo (e.g. heavy vs. light)

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[64] This expression is used by Richard Taruskin when describing the sixteenth century lust for a perfect, immortal style of music based on harmony and balance, inspired mainly by the popular theories published in the *Institutioni harmoniche* (1558) by Gioseffo Zarlino.

[65] A type of secular song characterized by repetitive rhytms, simplified structures, and narrow melodic range; one of the first early modern examples of musical setting of Italian poems which is considered as a predecessor of the madrigal and, more broadly, of Baroque monody.

[66] Richard Taruskin, *Music from the Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

were able to express through madrigals contrastive emotional states through musical contrasts such as consonant/dissonant, fast/slow, high/low, and so on. Thus, these opposites expressed in poems through phonology, rhyme scheme, meter and various rhetorical devices became equivalents of musical features to express different emotional states, thus suggesting an analogy between semantics and music, between words and sounds. Although the lyrics were deeply influenced by Italian poetry, the first madrigalists of the early modern age were transalpine working in Italy, which is why their musical language is defined as "northern". By mixing with Italian literature, it gave birth to the new madrigal, the most emblematic example of literary music.[67]

Soon, during the Renaissance, the relationship between rhetoric and music kindled the theorist's imagination all over Europe and among the many publications constituting the early modern hermeneutics of sound related to rhetoric Joachim Burmeister's *Musica Poetica* (1606), and Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia Universlis* (1650) are worth to mentioned here .[68] In the early modern English panorama, musicians like John Dowland (1563-1626), John Ward (1571-1638), and Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623) were so influenced by the Italian literary music scenario that Thomas Morley so describes his countrymen "who will highly esteem whatsoever cometh from beyond the seas, and specially from Italy, be it never so simple, contemning that which is done at home though it be never so excellent".[69] Composers weren't the only people affected by the literary music trend; indeed, in the rhetoricians' treatises too, particular attention is given to the relationship between rhetoric and music. George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589) represents a *locus classicus* for the early modern English

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] Burmeister provided the *ornamenta sive figurae musicae* divided in 16 *harmonia* figures and 6 *melodia* figures. This schematization of musical figures resembled rhetorical figures of the text, in other words, Burmeister was able to establish a practical analogy between words and sounds. Kircher instead was more interested in the *affetti* and, in light of Quintilian's discussion of *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*, he proposed the *Arca Musarithmica*, a system where every emotional state was automatically associated to specific harmonic strategies.

[69] Thomas Morley, *A Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music*, ed. by R. Alec Harman, Norton, 1966, p. 293

literati, not least Shakespeare who, as we will discuss later on, makes use of the stylistic concept of *enargeia,* which is to be reached through rhetorical figures described by Puttenham as "auricular figures".

As seen above, the Renaissance relationship between rhetoric and music can be described in terms of permeability. Both arts are extremely fortunate and occupy an important role in the culture of the time, developing in structures rooted in the past but renewed in more complex forms. Their relevance, although usually described in competitive terms, must be rethought in terms of a largely shared aesthetics, affecting both literature and music, rhetoric and sound. As Taruskin suggests: "The two arts seemed to be converging, meeting in the middle; each giving something up (stylistic "perfection," exalted diction), each gaining something else (heightened expressivity)".[70]

Considering the aims of the present study, it is important to bear in mind such a relationship, although it is necessary as well to stress that its main focus of interest is in recovering (in a broader sense) the understanding of sound by early modern culture with the purpose of interpreting Shakespearean texts in light of the hermeneutics of sound built during Renaissance. To this extent, the discourse of rhetorical music provides us with valuable instruments for interpreting sounds, which are particularly fruitful when trying to grasp the meanings both transmitted by Shakespeare and recognized by playgoers, encapsulated in his theatrical text. Thus, rhetorical music is conceived here as one of the privileged paths in furthering the early modern idea of sound meant as a special tool for *movere*. In fact, Renaissance rhetoric provides a great number of stimuli for music theory, but it also kindles the discussion of sound in the widest sense: it is not only music that has direct access into men's souls, but voice and noise as well, in that they *are* sounds and accordingly, strongly persuasive too.

[70] Richard Taruskin, *Music from the Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century*, cit., p.738.

II

Soundscape, Acoustemology, and the Acousmatic in *The Tempest*

> E poi i suoni dell'isola – si quest'isola dove l'udito conta, si direbbe, assai più della vista, e tutti ascoltano musiche e suoni e rumori e voci; quest'isola che è come una grande conchiglia in cui echeggiano i suoni tutti del microcosmo che essa diventa, in cui c'è la voce della natura e quella dell'uomo e degli animali e delle piante.[1]

This is the description of the island in the words of the influential critic Agostino Lombardo, who recognizes, as many other scholars, the centrality of sound in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. I decided to begin this chapter dedicated to sound and identity in *The Tempest* with this beautiful, poetic image of the island compared to a "large shell echoing all the sounds of microcosm" because, precisely as envisaged by Lombardo, the setting, and more broadly, the entire play of *The Tempest* shares, at many different layers, various qualities of the shell, and it operates in a similar way, especially if we look at it by adopting a multiperspective view. Although, as I will show, it places particular emphasis on the importance of the dramaturgical role played by sound within the text, the allusion to the shell can be enhanced because it perfectly encapsulates the polythetic quality of this late play by Shakespeare. Here, it is worth investigating some of these polythetic characteristics that move also beyond the text in order to provide a larger frame for the discussion about sound.

Considering the main function and materiality of the shell, it naturally serves as a temporary, protective space where marine mollusks find refuge from the

[1] "Then, the sounds of the island – yes, this island where hearing matters, it seems, much more than seeing, where everyone listens to music, and sounds, and noises, and voices; this island which is like a large shell echoing all the sounds of the microcosm it becomes, where to find the voice of nature, and that of men, and animals, and plants." My trans; Agostino Lombardo, *La grande conchiglia: due studi su "La Tempesta"*, Piccola Biblioteca Shakespeariana 27, Bulzoni, 2002, p. 20.

outside perils. In a very similar way, in *The Tempest*, the island provides Prospero and Miranda with a shelter where to hide, wait, and finally act to restore the universal order of the world they were exiled from. This place (the island) becomes Prospero's safe space where he can fully dedicate himself to his "art", practicing the *otium*[2] which in the first instance led him to lose his dukedom in Milan. It is by pragmatically exercising and developing that very *otium* that eventually he regains his political power and position at the end of the play: "I have my dukedom got" [Ep, 5].[3] Bearing this in mind, the place where Prospero is finally able to focus and devote himself entirely to his *otium* is called by the protagonist the "poor cell" [5.1.302] on "this bare island" [Ep, 8] where nothing and nobody is going to interrupt his studies. This remote place is shielded from the corruption and the socio-political turmoil which burdened Prospero in Milan, and although there is a micro-society on the island, by having full command over everyone and everything, Prospero can persevere and put to good use his *otium* in a place that becomes both his kingdom and his laboratory, a sanctuary and a refuge, or, if we want, his own *shell*.

Also the geography of the island itself, with its winding paths, described by Gonzalo as "a maze trod, indeed,/ Through forthrights and meanders!"[4] [3.3.2-3] recalls the shape of the twirling inside of a shell, not to mention that in the natural landscape of the island and, more captivating for the dramaturgical impact of the play, the prominence of the sea is inevitably as vital as it is for any marine

[2] I am using the term *otium* here, aware of its ambivalent meaning as described by Brian Vickers in "Leisure and idleness in the Renaissance: the ambivalence of otium", *Reinassance Studies* Vol. 4, No. 1 and 2, 1990. More specifically, the term has to be considered as negative when referred to Prospero in Milan, yet, it has a positive connotation when we move onto the island, where, I argue, *otium* becomes *honestum*. As Vickers explains: "The fear of idleness in Europe up to the eighteenth century was so strong that *otium* could only be accepted if strongly qualified as *honestum*, a leisure which yielded 'fruits' in works of literature, poetry, philosophy or history" (p.153).

[3] For the present and the following quotations see Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011.

[4] I will discussion this quote and, more broadly, the labyrinthic quality of the island later, when describing my own perspective on the setting of the play as an *auditory maze*.

creature. In its dense symbolism, the shell is directly linked with ears and hearing, which, in early modern time, are considered crucial in the process of acquiring knowledge. In fact, hearing and knowledge are both interconnected in the Renaissance idea that sound, entering the ears, reaches human souls, affecting also their perception of reality. Such idea of sound and hearing as instruments for knowledge can actually be traced back to the classical period, though Renaissance intellectuals strongly enhanced this epistemological nature of hearing –something that has been extensively discussed by several scholars interested, above all, in philosophers such as Marsilio Ficino and Francis Bacon.[5] Most interestingly, the image of the shell as a figurative representation of the ears reinforces the early modern interconnection between hearing and knowledge, transcending the symbolic meaning when the first anatomists described the human auditory system and its physiology.

Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia, a Description of the Body of Man* (1616) can serve here as an excellent example. Although several treatises of anatomy, published in early modern Europe, address the sense of hearing, Crooke collects the most influential voices of the field at that time, synthesizing the physiology of hearing together with philosophical ideas about sound. In his *Mikrokosmographia*, after explaining the physiology of the auditory system, Crooke lingers on the sense of hearing as an instrument to build a sort of dialogue, of contact with reality; hence the ears are described as an instrument participating in the process of acquiring knowledge. As Crooke himself explains:

> Wherefore Soundes and Voyces are transferred by this ayre to the Auditoy nerue as vnto the substance that is apprehensiue, and from thence to the common Sense where they are exquisitly iudged off. For if they must bee knowne and

[5] A survey of the topic can be found in *The Routledge companion to music, mind and well-being*, edited by P. Gouk, J. Kennaway, J. Prins, W. Thormählen, Routledge, 2019; as well as in P. Gouk, *Music, science, and natural magic in seventeenth-century England*, Yale University Press, 1999; G. Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others*, The University of Chicago Press, 1993; P. Horden, (ed.), *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity*, Ashgate, 2000; I. Fenlon (ed.), *Man and Music: The Renaissance*, Palgrave, 1989.

> perceiued, then must they touch some substance indued with Sense, because all action is by contaction. Now the Sensatiue faculty is not transported out of the bodie, and therefore it was necessary that the Sound should apply itselfe to the Eare.[6]

And a few pages later, he insists:

> And of the Hearing when it hath apprehended the sounde of an audible thing carrieth it to the Soule, and then the Reason or the intellectuall or sensatiue Soule comprehendeth and taketh knowledge of that which maketh the sound to be a Bell or a Drum, or any other thing. […] Againe by the Hearing things are sygnifyed to ourselues, as by our voice and tongues we are able to signify any thing to another.[7]

Crooke describes also physiologically, in detail, the interconnection between hearing and knowledge when he shows the parts composing the ears and their respective function. A pivotal role is assigned to two specific parts of the ear, one external, the other internal. Surprisingly, both these parts are described, mostly because of their shape, as the "shell of a Periwinkle". The main function of the external one, also called "concha", is to gather and receive all the sounds which are conveyed through the air into a narrower cavity. Here, in the internal part of the ear, is the "cochlea", described also as a periwinkle shell or a labyrinth. It is the site where sound is refined by bouncing on the twirling walls of the inner ear, hence it is qualified as harmonic and can finally be transported to the auditory nerve so that it can touch the soul and intellectually enrich it.

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[6] Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia, a Description of the Body of Man. Together with the Controversies and Figures thereto belonging*, W. Iaggard, 1616, p. 609.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 612.

Figure 1 Tabula VIII

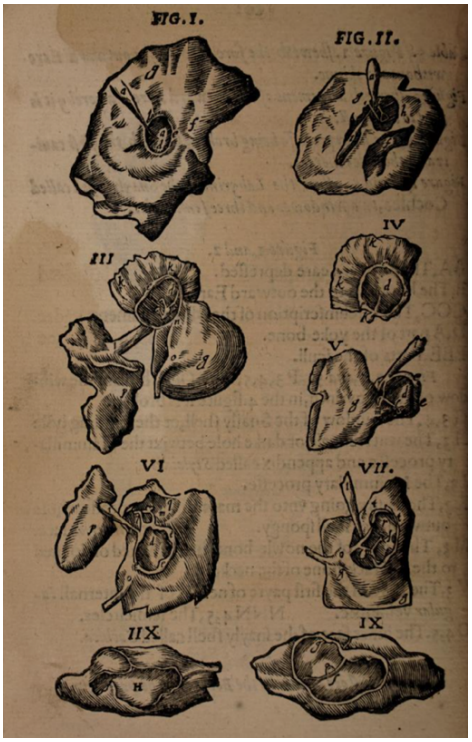

Figure 2 Tabula XI

Both the above illustrations of the *cochlea* (Fig.1: Tabula VIII, fig IV, V) and the *concha* (Fig.2: Tabula XI, fig VI, VII) resemble the shape of a shell; indeed, they are described and also called "shells". But despite this visual proximity between a periwinkle shell and the parts of the ears, it is fascinating how the ear, precisely like an echoing shell, provides a space for sound, which is then translated into meaning. The point I am arguing is that the same can be said about *The Tempest* and its setting: the play is not *enriched* by sound, which is not an ornament or a device detached from its space; on the contrary, sound is what defines space in the play, moreover it is a constituent of the play itself inasmuch it signifies actions.[8] Like Crooke's description of the process of hearing, of the air carrying sounds entering the ears, becoming harmonic and meaningful, in *The Tempest* the air filled with sounds moves through the twirling, labyrinthic paths of the island (as if it were a periwinkle shell) and it is finally understood by the characters in the play

[8] I will show later, when discussing Prospero's identity, how in *The Tempest* sound becomes an instrument used and controlled by Prospero, how it signifies actions, being also a means of knowledge for the surrounding space in which the characters move.

only at the end, when a harmonic world is restored. In other words, the island of the play works as a large echoing shell, it works as a huge ear containing "noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs" [3.2.135-136] to be harmonized in order to be understood.[9]

Above all, this image of the shell reminds us that in *The Tempest* the island works also as the exoskeleton of the entire play: not only is it the setting where all the actions take place, but, as said in the introduction, its features, both geographical and symbolical, let us perceive it as a signifier for the world, developed at many different layers so that it encompasses its own structures, its own space and time: a universe of its own. John Gillies interestingly suggests that the island in *The Tempest* can be understood in terms of exposure of the self to a "threatening and abyssal spatiality"[10]. By this, he means that the setting of the play is a temporary site with no fixed identity, hosting all the characters who do not inhabit the place as if they were at "home". In this light, Gillies is able to trace several references to the time and space characterizing the island as abyssal and, most importantly as "hollow", arguing that in *The Tempest* there is "the impression of a spatiality beyond human grasp; a temporality beyond human recall".[11] Such an idea of the setting as being a place that is empty *per se*, exclusively qualified as long as the inhabitants are exposed to it, suits the allusive comparison of the island to a hollow shell working as an exoskeleton insofar as the play is going on, insofar as someone actively lives onto or into it.

With that in mind, another parallelism, beautifully traced by Lombardo, seems to be worth enhancing here: the island as a theatrical stage. When it is not temporarily occupied by an audience or playing actors – still in the wake of following Gillies' idea, "the stage is as limited, anonymous, temporary, and provisional a site as the island is. Neither place nor theatre have the value of

[9] It is no coincidence that almost at the end of the play, Prospero calls for "Some havenly music" [5.1.52] and a few lines later, he addresses the other characters by saying: "A solemn air and the best comforter/ To unsettled fancy, cure thy brains" [5.1.58-59].

[10] John Gillies, "Place and Space in Three Late Plays", in Richard Dutton & Jean E. Howard (eds.), *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume IV: The Poems, Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, Blackwell, 2003, p. 187.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 188.

'home'".[12] But if we adopt a figurative perspective, the quality bestowed to the imagery of the shell as an object resides also in its capacity of echoing sounds (though empty), somehow suggesting that its hollowness does *speak* of something. One might foresee in such a quality (as parallel to the theatre) the power of the stage of being a space where, in time, a play could always come back to life, if only we stretch our ears and listen to it as playgoers – in the same way we could do with an empty shell, craving to hear the sound of the ocean.

Lombardo, too, encourages a correspondence between the island and the theatrical stage, both as attributes of his allusion to the shell "echoing all the sounds of the microcosm".[13] Theatre in Shakespeare's time was indeed conceived as a place of (and for) knowledge where the representation of reality answered the epistemic needs of showing how the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm worked. As Lombardo underlines, Shakespeare in *The Tempest* assigns the setting a specific meaning to convey the idea of theatre as a microcosm. But the island being a theatrical stage itself, a microcosm indeed, not only does it show the possibilities and limits of human beings in reaching knowledge of reality, but it also works as a means of meta-theatrically challenging the spectrum of possibilities and limits of drama as such in embodying and representing *that* reality. So, if on the one hand, in *The Tempest* we have

> la rappresentazione del tentativo dell'uomo di instaurare un rapporto con il reale, del suo sforzo per percepirlo, individuarlo fissarne i lineamenti – e delle difficoltà che incontra, degli inganni che subisce, della fatica con cui giunge ad un grado – che è sempre imperfetto, mai totale e totalizzante – di conoscenza[14]

on the other hand, this play is metatheatrically introspective inasmuch as it revisits themes, characters, actions, symbols, and genres of the entire Shakespearean

[12] *Ibid*., p. 187.

[13] Lombardo, *La grande conchiglia*, cit., p. 20.

[14] "the representation of man's attempt to establish a relationship with reality, of his effort to perceive it, identify it, fix its features - and the difficulties he encounters, the deceptions he undergoes, the endeavor to reach a degree of knowledge which is always imperfect, never total nor all-encompassing" my trans.; Lombardo, *La grande conchiglia*, cit., pp.36-37.

theatre, and, more broadly, of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. In this view, *The Tempest* as a shell echoes a whole ocean of different knowledges, stories, voices, and sounds of many kinds.

While Lombardo is reiterating this metaphor of the shell to anatomize and explore Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, he is also adopting a critical narrative that, most strikingly, is inextricably connected to sound and listening. Of course, to neglect the aural dimension of *The Tempest* in an interpretive reading of its text would be impossible since the entire play is waved with sounds, noises, voices, music, and songs. Still, when approaching the auditory elements traceable in the play, scholars tend to address their attention mainly to music and songs, downplaying or even neglecting the fact that the universe of *The Tempest* is noticeably characterized by sounds of different nature, conveying various meanings, and that a pivotal role is also assigned to the way both the audience of the time and the characters in the play might listen to them. As a consequence, the narrative adopted by such scholars too tend to be traditionally hinged on a visual imagery to the detriment of a sonic one. This is a pivotal matter interesting sound studies' scholars who, on the contrary, try to encourage a process of reformulation of the language used to describe, focus on, and explain sound – together with its meanings.[15] This dissertation shares a similar *modus operandi*, so it starts by taking into account the visual imagery and then valorize and hermeneutically enhance the auditory implications conveyed in the text.

To this extent Lombardo's image of the shell turns out to be an excellent starting point. In fact, hermeneutically speaking, the shell specifically works as a parallel for *The Tempest* because, despite being something that we visualize, both as a natural object and as a symbol, it necessarily implies a focus on aural aspects – in the same way as, for example, the image of a musical instrument would do. Hence, the figurative features of the shell serve to introduce a discussion of sound and listening, which, as shown so far, lends itself to focus on specific aspects of the text. Although Lombardo's study is particularly illuminating, its interpretation of sound in the play is traditionally inflected in terms of music and songs, or, when referring to other sounds, it remains on a surface level where "sound"

[15] See Michael Bull; Les Back, *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Berg, 2003

appears as an umbrella term including noises and voices. With that in mind, Lombardo defines music as the "connective tissue"[16] of *The Tempest*, arguing that in the play, mainly through the songs, it expresses the "perpetual metamorphosis of reality and the ceaseless flowing of life".[17] So, his idea is that the dramaturgical function of music and sound in *The Tempest* is not to express the universal themes related to *what* is reality, or *what* is life, but rather to *how* these perpetually evolve. In his own words:

> proprio perché la musica legge il reale non in termini qualitativi ma quantitativi, è forma perfettamente adeguata a una drammaticità intesa non a rappresentare un conflitto morale ma a cogliere il ritmo, il movimento, il meccanismo della vita.[18]

Lombardo's brilliant reading of *The Tempest* let us understand how much text and sound intersect in the play; still, if by adopting a historical approach, we recover the hermeneutics of sound in Shakespeare's time, this intersection will be revealed to be not only a quantitative feature, but, especially, a qualitative one.

Sound actively participates in the shaping of the play and its themes because early modern listeners had their own precise idea of how sound worked and with what semantic allusions – an aspect that Shakespeare could not have disregarded. The Elizabethan and Jacobean auditory culture had a capillary quality, its notions being widespread in every field of knowledge: from anatomy to rhetoric, from religion to philosophy, sound was constitutive for the perception of reality itself.[19] All this, combined with the notions emerging today from sound studies, shed light

[16] My trans.; Lombardo, *La grande conchiglia*, cit. p.18.

[17] My trans., *Ibid.*

[18] "Precisely because music reads reality not in qualitative but quantitative terms, it is a form that perfectly suits to a drama intended not to represent a moral conflict, but to grasp the rhythm, the movement, the mechanism of life". My trans., Lombardo, *La grande conchiglia*, cit., p.24.

[19] Although mostly concerned with music, concerning the influence of sound (especially its philosophical meaning) on other fields of knowledge in early modern period see David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music*, The Arden Critical Companions, Bloomsbury, 2006.

on some dramaturgical aspects that, as in Lombrado's study, have not failed to be addressed but in a very contained way.

In the following part of this chapter I will put forward my own auditory perspective on *The Tempest*, reading and interpreting the play as *the unexpected*, to focus then on the opening scene. In fact, as common in Shakespeare's plays, the playwright establishes from the very beginning the context for the entire play – and, so, also the auditory context – offering specific clues about the actions and the themes that the audience is about to witness. I aim to show how in *The Tempest*, through the use of sound, Shakespeare destabilizes the audience's expectations, experimenting with specific dramaturgical and auditory strategies.

The Play as *The Unexpected* and Shakespeare's *Aural Battlefield*

When we hold a seashell over our ears, no matter where we are, neither how far away the ocean might be, it seems we can always hear the roaring waves of the sea. As evocative as it is, this phenomenon is actually caused by false perception and it works by the same principles inducing auditory illusions. Several factors contribute in creating such an illusion: the shape of the shell, the air inside it, the environmental sounds surrounding us with their sound waves, imaginative stimuli, all these ingredients are necessary for the illusion to work upon our perception.[20]

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare strategically combines dramaturgical tools so as to play tricks over and over again to the audience, destabilizing their perception of the play. Indeed, there is an element of originality in *The Tempest* that is far more prevalent than in any other previous play of his. *The Tempest* is traditionally considered as Shakespeare's theatre "envoy", not only because it is the last play entirely written by him, but also because of its originality, resulting from the matured experience of Shakespeare as *the* man of theatre. Masterfully arranged,

[20] See Stefan Helmreich, "Seashell Sound", in Helmreich, Stefan; Roosth, Sophia; Friedner, Michele, *Sounding the Limits of Life: essays in the anthropology of biology and beyond*, Princeton University Press, 2015, pp.155-163.

the ingredients composing the play, concerning genre, characters, structure of the text, themes, the theatrical space, and the audience expectations are uncannily combined so as to characterize the play as *the unexpected*. Throughout this chapter wewill see how sound too works as a pivotal ingredient in rendering *The Tempest* "Into something rich and strange" [1.2.402].[21]

Giorgio Melchiori underlines that *The Tempest* has a plurivocal quality which encourages and engenders countless interpretations of its text. This is made possible, following Melchiori's thought, because the play can be seen as a "distillation of the entire of Shakespeare's theatrical experience".[22] I argue that such a plurivocal quality is rooted in the play's being 'unexpected'. By this, I mean that Shakespeare is able within this specific text to merge together different features that were traditionally separated, fixed, or even thought to stand poles apart; hence 'the unexpected' is the immediate response to the text's originality. Such features incorporate multiple aspects that can be defined as dramaturgical in the widest possible sense. Before focusing on the auditory plane, then, I will linger on these aspects to show how Shakespeare experiments with unexpected theatrical modes. This will make it possible for us to see how there is a coherent leaning of the play on unexpectedness which is especially reinforced by its auditory dimension.

First of all, as commonly known, *The Tempest* is the only play by Shakespeare that has no direct sources, and whose genre cannot be solely encapsulated in one specific category. As authoritatively stated by Geoffrey Bullough, though we are able to trace sources that were particularly popular around the time the play was probably written (1611), there are not enough overlapping elements to establish them as reliable, official sources. These include the pamphlets published consequently to Sir Thomas Gates's expedition in Virginia (1609-1610), describing the shipwreck in the Bermudas caused by a

[21] My guiding intuition in the interpretation of the play as *the unexpected* moves precisely from the image *sung* by Ariel which expresses the theme of metamorphosis in its contents but also unveil the auditory quality of wonder noticeable in Ferdinand's reaction when listening to the song.

[22] My trans.; Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare: genesi e struttura delle opere*, Laterza, 1994, p. 620.

storm, some passages of which seem to have suggested to Shakespeare the idea for his play. Among them, Bullough selects three pamphlets published in 1610 but these, together with other accounts, and, most probably, conversations about the expedition animated by the curiosity towards the New World, must be considered more as 'affecting' rather than 'effective' sources for *the Tempest*.[23] The same can be said concerning other influencing sources traced by Bullough, such as various *romances*, the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and, of course, Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Shakespeare works with all this material coming from very different generic type of texts, using them "with unusual economy and ballast[ing] it with oblique topical allusions and with ethical ideas".[24]

Although in the 1623 first folio *The Tempest* appears in the comedies section, it has been noticed that this play, together with *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter Tales* owes much to the *romance* genre in terms of contents and themes. Hence, *The Tempest* contains hints from historical descriptions such as the aforementioned pamphlets about American voyages, as well as fictional traits typical of the *romance*; as noticed by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan: "the play challenges the boundaries between illusion and reality".[25] As difficult as it is, Shakespeare is able to blend in a very harmonious way these opposite elements of reality and illusion, and by doing so he creates a play where the *perception* of one dimension over the other is not neat.

This is how Shakespeare in *The Tempest* creates a third level of consciousness for his audience to believe, accept, and *inhabit* (for the time of the play) an unknown universe governed by different laws, full of possibilities, plunged into the unexpected, where "We are such stuff/ As dreams are made on" [4.1.156-157].

The unpredictable, plurivocal quality of *The Tempest*, with its mixed genre and different sources is to be found also in the characters of the play. Melchiori, by focusing on the symbolic nature of the characters' names in *The Tempest*, argues that they echo a variety of texts: Ariel has biblical nuances, Prospero and

[23] See Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespere, Vol. VIII*, Routledge & Kegan Paul and Columbia University Press, 1975.

[24] *Ibid*, p. 247.

[25] "Introduction", in Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011, p.6.

Ferdinand historical ones, Stephano has much in common with the homonymous clown in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor* (1598), while the names of Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo can be found in the popular collection of travel writing *History of Trauayle* (1577).[26] Although Shakespeare could have taken these names from different sources, altogether their symbolic allusions perfectly fit in their identity inside *The Tempest*, especially if we focus on characters such as Ariel or Caliban.

The character of Caliban has been largely discussed, particularly from colonial and post-colonial perspectives (starting by the very origin of the name that Shakespeare seems to have taken from Montaigne's essay *Of the Caniballes*). However, for the sake of my discussion about the unexpected, I argue that a fruitful trait of this character to focus on is his multifaceted identity. Again, here, we can see how Shakespeare combines opposite elements to create some sort of disorienting feeling about the play, more specifically about Caliban. This character is repeatedly depicted throughout the play as a grotesque savage, a monster-like creature, yet still he is also gifted with a particularly sensitive spirit which creates a contradiction between his being brutal and delicate at the same time. There are six occurrences of the word "delicate" in *The Tempest*, and despite being a small number, it is higher than in any other Shakespeare play. Interestingly, "delicate", usually with the meaning of "delightful, pleasant, charming", appears in the text as a specific adjective used by the characters only to describe Ariel, the island, and Caliban.[27] Hence, this adjective associates three very different entities who still share the same origin or nature, as if it were a distinctive trait of their identity; after all the three of them are not part of the commonly known world, they belong to and can only exist in a supernatural reality – a fictional dimension.

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[26] Melchiori, p. 617.

[27] When referring to Ariel, Prospero uses the expressions: "a spirit too delicate" [1.2.272]; "Delicate Ariel" [1.2.442]; "Dearly, my delicate Ariel" [4.1.49], in all three instances the meaning is delightful, charming, fine, of exquisite quality or nature. Adrian (although being sarcastic) uses the same adjective when describing the climate of the island: "subtle, tender and delicate temperance" [2.1.45]. Stephano, when seeing Caliban, utters oxymoronically: "a most delicate/ monster!" [2.2.88-89].

Caliban is described by Stephano as "a most delicate/ monster!" [2.2.88-89] and I argue that this expression, more than any other description provided by other characters, captures the identity of Caliban at its core. Indeed, the oxymoronic association of the monster with someone delicate expresses the unexpected feeling of the audience towards Caliban, especially when hearing his description of the island. Although being grotesque in his physical aspect, Caliban is gifted with a language that, at times, touches the peaks of lyricism in the play. This poetic language is specifically adopted by Caliban any time he's describing the island, not only in his most well-known lines "Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises […]" [3.2.135], but throughout the entire play, when he provides lyrical images of the island's natural landscape.[28] I will get back to Caliban and his language later, when discussing the play's rhetoric intertwined with sound, but here the main concern is to show how Caliban's descriptions of the island reinforce the connection between him and his land. Most importantly they represent the sensitive side of this "delicate monster", an aspect that raises questions about the character's identity and illustrates how Shakespeare amalgamates contrastive ingredients.

Before examining sound's involvement in creating disorientation, one last aspect has to be taken in account regarding the historical context and place of the performance, pivotal to understanding how Shakespeare was indeed aware of "playing" with his audience. *The Tempest* was written in a particularly challenging historical moment for theatres. Although private theatres, until the end of the 16th century, had always been conceived as parallel to the public ones, their space in both architectural and cultural terms, presented some differences with respect to that of the public theatres. At the turn of the 16th century and 17th century such differences became deeper and deeper, inevitably affecting the dramaturgical repertoires.

In 1608, the King's Men (Shakespeare's company) started performing at the Blackfriars and the influence of moving from public, outdoor space such as The Globe, which could host 3000 spectators, to the indoor and limited-seating of this private theatre, can be traced first and foremost in Shakespeare's late plays. While

[28] *The Tempest* [1.2.336-340]; [2.2.164-169];[4.1.194-95].

at The Globe the social variety of playgoers was wider, the Blackfriars' audience, who paid more for the tickets, was exclusive and mainly made of aristocratic people. The social distances between public theatres' audience and private ones', reflected also diversity in terms of expectations, motivations and taste with respect to the play they were about to see. The elite audience of the Blackfriars theatre took drama as something fictional, as a work of literature, a mere *divertissement*. Its playgoers bought upmarket tickets to witness the sensational, longing for spectacular, amusing and satirical allusions or to see fictional stories with a measure of aesthetic detachment. The public theatre's audience, instead, looked for something different, something they could be (to a certain extent) part of.[29] To satisfy both kinds of audience and meet their expectations, Shakespeare had to address different tastes and, as discussed above, combine different dramaturgical tools.

Curiously, with *The Tempest* Shakespeare met the expectations of his audience but also *shaped* them by employing destabilizing features in our sonic approach. We will see in detail how in *The Tempest* reality is clothed as sensational while the fictional has a realistic flavor, so that everything converges towards the unexpected, the result being fascinating and *strange* to the aristocratic playgoers as well as to the lower-class audience. It has been argued that *The Tempest* could have been originally conceived as a performance to be held at court on the occasion of the festivities for the betrothal between Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine, during winter 1612-13. However, it seems that the very first performance of the play was recorded in the Revels Account in 1611 at Whitehall Palace. Despite that, *The Tempest* was probably performed by the King's Men at Blackfriars and also, as Simon Forman records, at the Globe on 11 May of the same year.[30] Although there is no evidence, it is possible that the text

[29] See Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare: genesi e struttura delle opere*, Laterza, 1994; G.E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, Claredon Press and Oxford University Press, 1968; A. Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, Cambridge University Press, 1970; – *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, Cambridge University Press, 1987; M. Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*, Routledge, 1982.

[30] "Introduction", in Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011, pp. 6-7.

was modified from one performance to the other, from one place to another place, from (and for) one audience to another, but Bullough discourages such a thesis given the fact that the text seems to be "beautifully organized" and coherent in all its parts.[31] Nevertheless, since it was performed in different sites, Shakespeare must have kept in mind the necessity to provide a play suitable for more than one audience at the time, hence a plurivocal play, an experimental work where the dramaturgical spectrum of tools is exploited at its widest; in other words Shakespeare paves the path for a theatrical "brave new world" [5.1.183].

As anticipated before, the strange, unexpected feeling evoked by *The Tempest* is mainly reached through the use of sound. It actually relies on the meaning that early modern culture associated with sound and hearing, so that Shakespeare, continuously dislocating and relocating these associations from the very first scene, creates a confusing aural context not only at a first level, through the direct experience of hearing all sorts of sounds, but also at a deeper level, the one involving meaning, hence the audience's interpretation.

In her recently published book *Sounding Otherness*, Jennifer L. Wood points out that the sound of *The Tempest* is disorienting inasmuch as the space of the island is usually perceived as Western when actually, from a sound perspective, it mingles elements of both West Indies and East too. In defining the soundscape of the play as disorienting, Wood stresses the homophonic relationship in the text between the words "hear" and "here" providing examples in which the context is not enough clear to neatly distinguish the meaning of "hear" vs "here".[32] Confusing as it is for both the characters on stage and the listening audience, these homophones draw attention to the auditory dimension of the play, something that, indeed, is repeatedly reinforced in a more direct way on different occasions. In fact, if the Boatswain's violent shouting "what do you *here*?" [1.1.37] to Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo at the beginning, in the middle of the storm, can be an example of Wood's disorienting aurality, and an exhortation for the audience to focus on what they are *hearing*, it is just in the following scene that

[31] Bullough, p.237.

[32] Jennifer L. Wood, *Sounding Otherness in Early Modern Drama: Uncanny Vibrations in the English Archive*, Palgrave, 2019, pp 275-76.

we listen to Prospero's constantly and urgently calling for attention on hearing, in a very explicit way.

When, in this second scene, Prospero is revealing to Miranda (and to the audience too) the story of their life, explaining how and why they ended up on the island, his speech is often punctuated by an invitation to hear carefully. Prospero's story begins with "The hour's now come;/ The very minute bids thee ope thine ear" [1.2.36-37] and the rhythm is syncopated after some 70 lines, when Prospero stops in the middle of a sentence to ask "Dost thou hear?" [1.2.106], and again by the end of his story "Sit and hear the last of our sea-sorrow" [1.2.170]. Such pressure on hearing is not only addressed to Miranda, who hardly shows a lack of attention during the scene, but, more pointedly, to the audience. Hence Prospero/Shakespeare seems to suggest that the way to *see* and understand what is happening on the stage is indeed by *hearing* the play.

Bearing in mind such exhortations, to approach the play by focusing on its sound might reveal the dramaturgical strategies employed by the playwright to create the feeling of the unexpected. In a way similar to Wood's discussion of a disorienting function of sound in *The Tempest*, Bruce R. Smith had already identified another device that Shakespeare seems to employ often at the beginning of his plays. This consists of introducing the play by providing a confusing, yet revealing auditory frame which synthetizes and, at the same time, sets the tone for the entire play. B. Smith describes this strategy as the "decentering" of the auditory field which can be traced especially in the openings of histories and tragedies. In these plays, voices, noises and any sort of sound is characterized by loud volume, energetic rhythm, high pitch, and cacophony so that there is a "*decenter*[ing] of the aural field, to set up a competition for mastery over that field – and hence over the listeners' subjectivity".[33] The meaning of sound in this specific device as described by Smith is directly connected to power, to the point that in the plays taken as examples (e.g. *Titus Andronicus*), the aural field coalesces with the space of a "political arena".[34] B. Smith also argues that the

[33] Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor*, University of Chicago Press, 1999, p.276.

[34] *Ibid*, p.277.

decentering device is "quite obvious", yet as evident as this dramaturgical expedient could be in histories or tragedies, to find it again in *The Tempest* cannot but *sound* unexpected.[35]

In fact, since this device is typical of plays dealing with conflicts, or military confrontations, early modern playgoers might associate the decentering of the aural field with a dramaturgical representation of warfare. But the expectations of the audience when going to the theatre to see a play titled *"The Tempest"* were completely different. The title suggests that a storm is central in the play, and the stage direction at the beginning of the first scene, with thunders and lightning, prefigured a performance where supernatural forces and magical creatures must have been on stage rather than soldiers, or armies fighting each other. As Leslie Thomson specifies:

> In a theatre largely without scenery or visual scene changes, sounds (and flashes of fire) helped to create the dramatic and often also the thematic contexts. In the case of *thunder and lightning*, the audience was almost invariably prompted to expect the supernatural – and got what it expected.[36]

Shakespeare though, destabilizes such commonplaces by mixing dramaturgical elements usually associated with different genres, thus deceiving the audience's expectations. By focusing on sound, I argue that the first scene of *The Tempest* is structured indeed as a military scene, not only because of Shakespeare's use of devices typical of the histories and tragedies such as the decentering of the aural field, but also in terms of metaphorical clashes between two specific categories of sounds, working as "armies", pertaining to the supernatural vs the natural of which the real origin will be revealed only later in the play. But before offering my interpretation of the first scene as a military one, it is necessary to understand how Shakespeare problematizes the dichotomy of the natural and the supernatural

[35] To further validate B. Smith's "decentering" concept, it can be fruitful to see the decibel intensity list he provides when comparing common sounds in the early modern English soundscape. See B. Smith, *Acoustic World*, cit., p.50.

[36] Leslie Thomson, "The meaning of *thunder and lightning*: Stage Directions and Audience Expectations", in *Early Theatre*, vol. 2, 1999, p. 14.

associated to the staged storm. In fact, contrary to the early modern customs of theatre, as Thomson writes, the audience *got what it expected*, but, I argue, through unexpected modalities as playgoers realize that *The Tempest* is putting on stage the supernatural only later, when Prospero appears and specifically explains the nature of thunder and lightning throughout the second scene.

To further validate this argument of mine, it can be fruitful here to stress that the initial storm and the way it is represented suggest nothing but a real, natural tempest. Shakespeare's dramaturgy often makes use of the storm, and, be it a staged one or one just mentioned as a metaphor, it is possible to trace the trope of the storm in almost every play by Shakespeare. Gwilym Jones, in his *Shakespeare's Storms* offers an incredibly enlightening reflection about the presence, the dramaturgical features and purposes of storms in Shakespearean theatre.[37] Through thorough examples he shows how there's a chronological development of the storm motif which recurs, every time adding something more, from the beginning until the end of Shakespeare's dramaturgical career. This progression aims at staging the storm as more and more immediate, violent, and dramatic, culminating in the play that brings the storm as its title: *The Tempest*. Although Jones mostly agrees with Thomson's reading of thunder and lightning, he also shows how the main feature of Shakespeare's storm is actually variability, stating that the peculiarity of thunder and lightning evoking the supernatural is not always so straightforward. While this can be true for some plays, bearing in mind the association between storms and the supernatural as an early modern dramaturgical commonplace, I would rather focus on Shakespeare's disorienting modalities of staging the storm by comparing *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* on this point.

In these plays there is a strong presence of the supernatural linked to meteorological events, but the configuration of the storm, although being a manifestation or an omen of the supernatural in *Macbeth* as well as in *The Tempest*, is very different in the two plays. In fact, while the initial storm in *Macbeth* is suddenly characterized as supernatural, the one in *The Tempest* is definitively not. The three witches in *Macbeth* always appear together with the

[37] Gwilym Jones, *Shakespeare's Storms*, Manchester University Press, 2016.

roaring sound of thunders, and most interestingly in their first appearance they clearly identify and place themselves within stormy weather:

> *Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches*
> FIRST WITCH: When shall we three meet again?
> In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
> SECOND WITCH: When the hurlyburly's done,
> When the battle's lost and won.
> THIRD WITCH: That will be ere the set of sun. [1.1.1-5]

In *Macbeth*, the storm is explicitly a manifestation of the supernatural, so the sound of thunder is unequivocally a signal of magical forces. Easily recognizable by the audience who quite obviously, every time thunders are heard, expects to see on stage ghosts, monsters or, as in this specific case, witches; the function of the staged storm is here the traditional one. In *The Tempest*, on the other hand, although the nature of the storm is indeed supernatural, Shakespeare stages a very complex, more dynamic, full of details, sensational and violent storm as extremely natural and realistic. Jones, too, stresses the realistic features of the initial storm in *The Tempest*, making us notice that sound pivotally participates in rendering the storm as much natural as possible.[38] The stage directions at the beginning of the play, probably to be credited to Ralph Crane, suggest too a focus on sounds since they call for "A tempestuous *noise* of thunder and lightning *heard*" [1.1.0.1, my emphasis].[39]

Traditionally, the early modern theatre's special effects to make storms provided for a set of visual as well as auditory elements, aiming to create the illusion of a tempest on stage. While the space of The Globe and, more broadly, that of public theatres was suited to the use of visual special effects when staging storms or military actions, in the private theatres special effects mainly relied on auditory features. In fact, visual special effects consisted of fireworks or squibs lit to simulate lightnings or explosions, a practice that in an indoor space wasn't safe,

[38] Jones, pp. 125-132.

[39] See "Introduction", in Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011, pp. 126-130.

nor enjoyable, since the persisting smoke filling the air and the bad sulfuric smell could disturb the audience. Indeed, bearing in mind what Andrew Gurr writes about the performance of *The Tempest* at Blackfriars, the special effects to create thunder and lightning must have relied exclusively on sound.[40] Although scholars do not always agree on that, we can assume that when performed at Blackfriars, being an indoor space, the use of fireworks or squibs was, in this specific case, very limited, if not banished at all.[41] If, on the one hand, visual effects contributed to stimulate imagination and create the illusion of a storm or a battle, on the other hand, the audience, albeit astonished by such explosions, directly recognized them as extravagant and artificial. I argue that auditory effects could undermine the awareness of such artificiality with respect to the special effects. In the case of *The Tempest*, as for other storms in other plays, the sound of thunder was most probably created through beating drums or cannon balls rolling across the wooden floor. At Blackfriars, in the absence of visual, artificially-perceived effects, as opposed to the enhanced noise of rolling cannon balls reverberating in the enclosed space of the private theatre, the staged storm must had reached a very realistic quality. Contributing to the presentation of the storm as natural and convincing, the technical, nautical instructions of the boatswain and the vocabulary used by him during the shipwreck are incredibly specific and practical, even too much for being a fictional theatre performance.[42] Therefore, the supernatural event of the storm in the first scene of *The Tempest* is built by Shakespeare through unexpected modalities. The dramaturgical sound features employed by the playwright converge towards the natural, deceiving the expected supernatural quality of *The Tempest*, predictable for the audience.

This disorienting quality of the unexpected introduces also a feeling of suspension which persists throughout the first scene but which ceases to be so

[40] Andrew Gurr, "*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars", in *Shakespeare Survey*, Vol. 41, 1989, pp. 91-102.

[41] Jennifer L. Wood disagrees by underlining in *Sounding Otherness* that: "Gurr's and Jones's conclusions overlay modern attitudes about tolerance thresholds for sensory experience onto the early modern period", p. 285.

[42] See Jones, pp.129-138.

confusing as soon as, during his dialogue with Miranda, Prospero reveals in the second scene that the storm has actually been a supernatural event:

> PROSPERO: The direful spectacle of the wreck which touched
> The very virtue of compassion in thee,
> I have with such provision in mine art
> So safely ordered, that there is no soul –
> No, not so much perdition as an hair,
> Betid to any creature in the vessel
> Which thou heard'st cry, which thou sawst sink. Sit down,
> For thou must now know further [1.2.26-33]

Prospero describes the elements participating in the storm as "safely ordered". Such an expression refers again to sound as a fundamental feature of the meteorological, supernatural phenomena of the initial tempest. Dealing directly with the text in the first scene, Iwill show now how much Shakespeare relies on sound and, as aforementioned, how the entire scene can be interpreted as a metaphorical military clash between two different categories of sound representing the supernatural dimension and the natural one.

When Prospero says that the shipwreck was "So safely ordered", a connection is established with Botwain's words "if you can command these elements to/ silence and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority!" [1.1.21-22] addressing the aristocrats on the ship. The storm indeed seems to follow the rules that in early modern culture were associated with the philosophic dichotomy between harmony and disharmony. Such a dichotomy is also typical of Shakespeare's dramaturgy and it can be applied to several plays in which there is an initial disorder, a disequilibrium of elements, that returns to an ideal order by the end of the play. As seen, the Renaissance idea of harmony was bounded to precise, mathematical principles (mostly of Pythagorean conception) which described both the system of the cosmos and the harmony reached by sound and music as perfect structures. The analogy between macrocosm and microcosm finds a pivotal connecting point through the so called "music of the spheres" or "heavenly music" featuring the perfect harmony to be envisaged also

in the larger system of proportions of the universe. When these proportions were maintained, then harmony resounded, affecting mostly everything in a very positive way; on the other hand, disorder led to disharmony, hence chaos. In early modern modes of thinking, such a dichotomy was very influential, to the point that the major institutions were indeed described in terms of harmony vs. disharmony, order vs. disorder. Several are the explicit references of the kind to be found in Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, where marriage, warfare, monarchy, and, more broadly, the correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm rests on the struggle between maintaining harmony and falling into disharmony.

So, the initial storm of *The Tempest* is a supernatural phenomenon disguised as a natural one. Likewise, Prospero's elements are "safely ordered", harmless, and harmonious in their essence albeit appearing chaotic to the ears of the castaways who, in the descriptions of the leading voice of the boatswain, recognize the storm as catastrophic, uncontrollable, in total disharmony. In *The Tempest*, the initial chaos is punctually described in terms of violent sounds as opposed to silence, or clashing with other sounds; moreover, as already stressed, the entire play is inextricably hinged on auditory features. Indeed, Keir Elam, when discussing the meaning-making capacity of *The Tempest*, focusing on *how* such meanings are conveyed rather than what they specifically communicate, makes us notice that the text of the play is paradoxical in that everything conflates towards sound even when the visual should be at first place. In this regard Elam, on focusing on the opening stage directions and underlining that both thunder and lightning are *heard*, writes:

> so powerful is the acoustic bias of the direction that it sets up the paradox of hearing what should have been visual but that was not actually visible […] In *The Tempest* not only the visible, but even the invisible, turn into the audible.[43]

Once we fully recognize the crucial role of sound in the process of meaning-making and its dramaturgical impact, the investigation can go further on, and

[43] Keir Elam, "A Tempestuous Noise: on the Acoustics and Vocalics of Storms", in Bigliazzi Silvia and Calvi Lisanna (eds.), *Revisiting The Tempest: The Capacity to Signify*, Palgrave Shakespeare Studies, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 138.

concentrate on both *how* and *what* is the significance of sound within the play. How are the meanings associated to certain sounds in early modern culture involved in the text? What do they suggest about the play? And why does Shakespeare specifically exploit the devices of sound and hearing in his dramaturgy, particularly *The Tempest*? A one-sided answer cannot be suggested as a solution to all these questions. There is, in fact, a good deal of subjectivity when trying to underpin a precise, possibly showable, meaning of sound, not to mention the fact that Shakespeare scholars themselves are well aware of the limits that they have to face when approaching Shakespeare's dramaturgy. And yet, it is possible to trace and interpret recurrent motifs throughout his plays with respect to the use of sound for dramaturgical purposes.

The paradoxical feature concerning the visual and the audible in the text, signalled by Elam, is perfectly in keeping with my interpretation of the play described so far as a play of *the unexpected* – as disorienting, decentering, and confusing. Still, it also engenders the association of the initial storm with the structure of a military scene, particularly because visual elements, hence the imagery associated with warfare, is determinedly relocated in an auditory dimension at the beginning of the play. More to the point, as mentioned before, the competing sounds of the shipwreck scene can be categorized, hence visualized metaphorically as two different armies fighting each other. In this light I will define the soundscape, and more broadly, the dramaturgical set of the first scene as an *aural battlefield*, an expression that encapsulates the connection I foresee between the storm and war. Considering the initial tempest as a battle fought through sounds which serves as Prospero's weapon, this aural battlefield too supports my interpretation of the play as unexpected, not only because a military scene seems to be far from the context, genre and narrative of *The Tempest*, but also because, in terms of a metaphorical war, the outcomes of a battle remain unknown until its end.

Focusing on the aural battlefield in the first scene of the play, on the one side there are all the sounds of the storm which I will refer to as supernatural since they are the product of Prospero's magic; on the other side, instead, we hear the voices of people on the ship, human voices I will refer to as natural sounds,

reacting to the assault of the tempest. Indeed, the reasons why both metaphorically and structurally a military representation can be foreseen in the initial storm is directly suggested by the meanings associated with the sounds dominating the first scene and, more to the point, the relationship between them in terms of action/reaction. In the soundscape of the opening scene we have therefore two different groups of sound, each characterized by a strong key sound: the thunder for the supernatural and the boatswain's voice for the natural. Roaring thunders are disseminated in Shakespeare's drama as a specific mark for violence, their sound is referred to when catastrophic events are indirectly reported by characters, or when chaotic actions are directly staged.

In early modern auditory culture, the association between thunder and violence is first and foremost motivated by the loudness of its sound. In fact, thunder's noise was likely to be one of the most blasting sounds that early modern people could hear since the soundscape of the time was not marked by industrial loud noises, nor sounds that we can experience nowadays almost every day – sounds generated by engines, aircrafts, or, more broadly, technologically amplified. In the Renaissance soundscape, the only other sounds comparable to that of thunder in terms of intensity were the sounds of war: trumpets, drums, gunfire, and explosions of cannons. With the exception of trumpets, that could also be played for completely different purposes, to mark, for example, the presence of royals, all the other sounds are a direct signifier for violence. This acoustic peculiarity was exploited in theatres and such sounds characterized combat scenes, battles, and martial settings inducing the audience to imagine war by working on their immediate association of loud sounds with violence. War, on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage, was represented mainly through strategies evoking military action which relied mainly on the audience imagination. It was, of course, impossible to put on stage armies fighting each other, nor special effects could provide (as today) for images, lights, or videos showing a synthetized fighting; the only pragmatic technology available at the time to such purposes was sound.

Patricia A. Cahill underlines that the representation of war in early modern culture aimed at staging the traumatic impact of such an experience: "the theater

often imagined modern warfare as a phenomenon defined by its traumatic impact".[44] Cahill focuses on both sights and sounds when describing this traumatic impact linked to Elizabethan militarism, enhancing the way theatre addresses war trauma in its own distinctive way by representing damaged bodies through frightening images and sounds. Drawing from Cahill's focus on the early modern traumatic experience of war as inscribed in damaged bodies, I argue that sound, in the theatrical context of military scenes, served precisely as an instrument to create a traumatic experience, achieved through the acoustic feature of 'assaulting the ear', typical of violent sounds.

Concerning *The Tempest*'s first scene, sound stands as an auditory breach aiming at eliciting a heap of acoustic ferocity evoking the traumatic experience. As Sarah Dustagheer makes us notice about the auditory environment surrounding *The Tempest*, usually, in early modern English theatres, for almost an hour before the beginning of the play, music concerts delighted the audience, thus probably defining the soundscape of the Blackfriars theatre as enjoyable and presumably cheerful.[45] Now, we have to imagine how as soon as the play started, the same soundscape must have been abruptly changed with the violent *tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard*, affecting the audience's emotional state in a shocking, disturbing way.[46] Loudness as acoustic violence is a constant in the first scene of the play, especially if we consider that after the first thunder, character's cries, too, mark the soundscape opening the play, a soundscape which again suddenly changes in the following second scene where, in an almost opposite, anyway quieter atmosphere, Prospero invites Miranda (and the audience too) to "Be collected;/ No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart/ There's no harm done" [1.2.14-16].

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[44] Patricia A. Cahill, *Unto the Breach: Martial Formations, Historical Trauma, and the Early Modern Stage*, Oxford University Press, 2008, p.3.

[45] See Frederic Gerschow's diary (1602), recorded in Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 1892 Vol VI 2nd Series, pp. 26-81 (29).

[46] Sarah Dustagheer, "Playing Space", in Dustagheer Sarah, *Shakespeare's Two Playhouses: Repertory and Theatre Space at the Globe and the Blackfriars, 1599-1613*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 101-138.

In several occasions Shakespeare earmarks the auditory association of thunders and war specifically to tickle the imagery of combat; examples of the kind can be found especially (though not exclusively) in the histories, where military scenes are more customary. In *2 Henry VI* for instance, Suffolk, at sea, during his voyage as exiled, in the tumult of a pirates' assault which will cost him his life, shouts "O that I were a god, to shoot forth thunder/ Upon these paltry, servile, abject drudges" [4.1.194-195]; or in *King John*'s words "The thunder of my cannon shall be heard" [1.1.26], and, in the same play, King Philip's "Our thunder from the south/ Shall rain their drift of bullets on this town" [2.1.412-413]; again, in *Richard II* for instance, when Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, and Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk are about to duel, Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt urges his son to kill his rival by saying "Be swift like lightning in execution,/ And let thy blows, doubly redoubled,/ Fall like amazing thunder on the casque/ Of thy adverse pernicious enemy" [1.3.79-82]. The same trope is extended also to other genres and the juxtaposition of thunder's sound and war as a symbol of martial violence can be found as well in *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*.

In *The Tempest*, there is no visual presence of swords or weapons which can make us think of a military scene, nor is there a direct association of thunder and war in the character's words. And yet, the connection with the dramatization of warfare is established in the play through sound, not only at an acoustic level by retrieving the violence of trauma, but also aesthetically. The noise of thunder opening the scene must have been very similar to the acoustic signals identified with war, indeed drums were used to create the special effects suggesting both thunders or the beginning of a battle.

When staging war, early modern English theatre made use of a kind of customary aesthetics which can be defined mainly as aural since it relied on sharing a precise code of sound-meaning between the playwright and the audience. In our case, the latter immediately understood and interpreted the auditory signals put on stage, decoding them as military actions. Simon Smith's observations on military off-stage sounds shed light on how this process of

decoding worked, and it is worth retrieving here some reflections he offers in his study.[47]

According to him, Jacobean playgoers were accustomed to hear off-stage sounds, especially when seeing military representations, but despite being unseen, a longing for *looking* at these sounds, and trace their origin, and look at their performance, captured the audience. Therefore, in the absence of visual clues, imagination provided visions stimulated by sound, eliciting a process of locating the probable source, place and context of the unseen (but heard) sounds. In S. Smith's words:

> Jacobean plays often used off-stage drums and trumpets (or cornetts) to signify large military groups, as well as to announce an approaching royal party. When such signals sounded offstage, the imagined world of the play was immediately extended to include the (fictional) location of the sound. […] This far-off military music in a hidden location extends the dramatic world beyond the few square metres of stage space, asking playgoers to imagine a large offstage army[48]

The imaginative process described by S. Smith allowed the audience to decode the meaning of certain sounds, so that the interpretation of these sounds could blur the space boundaries of the stage, fulfilling the performance of military scenes.

When describing how off-stage sounds worked, what actually S. Smith is referring to is the acousmatic quality of these sounds. In fact, the term acousmatic indicates all the sounds that one can hear but cannot see. In being acousmatic, sounds work upon our senses as stimuli, engendering processes like the one described above. The early modern audience's decoding of theatrical military sounds strongly relied, of course, on the auditory culture of the time to seize on accurate images. Indeed, S. Smith also underlines how playgoers were able to distinguish the difference between auditory signals respectively used for different

[47] Simon Smith, "Looking", in Smith Simon, *Musical Response in the Early Modern Playhouse, 1603-1625*, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 69-102.

[48] *Ibid.*, p.85.

war maneuvers (alarm, retreat, parley, charge, or march).[49] Therefore, the aural aesthetics of military performance relied on sounds working both as imaginative stimuli and, at the same time, being specifically recognized as precise signals.[50]

War-acoustic signals participating in Shakespeare's aesthetic of military performance can be traced also in *The Tempest*. Though being different in their nature, in the opening scene of the play sounds function in the same way as in martial scenes. The aural battlefield at the beginning of *The Tempest* is actually enriched by other sounds, typical of the specific setting of certain fights: the sea. Louis B. Wright, as early as 1927, noticed that as well as being theatrically popular on early modern stage, sea-fights reached a high level of realism.[51] Auditory details pivotally participate in making these fights as much realistic as possible, Wright indeed recognizes that: "The noise of sea battle differed from other battles 'within' in the addition of typical sea sounds, the rattling of chains and hawsers, cries of sailors, and the blowing of the boatswain's whistle".[52]

Everything considered, I argue that the first scene in *The Tempest* can still be read as *aural battlefield* inasmuch as the constituents of fight imagery persists. In fact, looking at the text, there is an opposing relationship between the two groups of sounds (supernatural vs. natural). Imagining these groups as armies, let's see the leader of the former in Prospero, fighting against the ship's Master. Leaders, in turn, command over their soldiers which in this specific case are metaphorically embodied on the one hand by Ariel, who produces the sound of the storm, versus the Boatswain, who shouts orders to the mariners and other people on the ship. After the first assault through the supernatural key-sound of thunder, the ship's

[49] *Ibid*., p. 86.

[50] About the sound signals of war employed on early modern stage see Paul A. Jorgensen, *Shakespeare's Military World*, University of California Press, 1956; Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor*, University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 220; Charles Edelman, *Shakespeare's Military Language*, Athlone, 2000; Alan C. Essen and Leslie Thomas, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580–1642*, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Frances Ann Shirley, *Shakespeare's Use of Off-stage Sounds*, University of Nebraska Press, 1963.

[51] Louis B. Wright, "Elizabethan Sea Drama and its Staging", in *Anglia*, Vol. LI, 1927, pp. 104-118.

[52] *Ibid*., p. 110.

master summons the boatswain, who with a few words gives an encouraging speech to the mariners and finally, at the sound of his master's whistle, the fight begins:

A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard;
enter a Shipmaster *and a* Boatswain
MASTER: Boatswain!
BOATSWAIN: Here Master. What cheer?
MASTER: Good, speak to th' mariners. Fall to't yarely or
we run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir!
Enter Mariners
BOATSWAIN: Heigh, my hearts; cheerly, cheerly, my
hearts! Yare! Yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the
master's whistle! [*to the storm*] Blow till thou burst thy
wind, if room enough.

Boatswain's inciting voice is here to be considered as the natural key-sound. In fact, he 'directly speaks' against the storm. Moreover, when the aristocrat passengers interfere with his actions, despite the social differences Boatswain's cries overtake the other voices and there's an internal clash between 'the army of the natural'. Not only does the boatswain, as mentioned before, mock Gonzalo inviting him to use his authority to restore peace by commanding the sounds of the storm to silence, but later, he also raises his voice against Sebastian and Antonio:

BOATSWAIN: Down with the topmast! Yare! Lower,
lower! Bring her to try with main course. (*A cry*
within) A plague upon this howling. They are louder
than the weather or our office.
Enter Sebastian, Antonio *and* Gonzalo.
Yet again? What do you here? Shall we give o'er and
drown? Have you a mind to sink?
SEBASTIAN: A pox o'your throat, you bawling, blasphemous

incharitable dog.

BOATSWAIN: Work you, then.

ANTONIO: Hang, cur! Hang, you whoreson, insolent noise-maker! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

Interestingly, Boatswain is also identified by other characters as mainly sound-characterized, to the point that Sebastian curses his throat (the source of Boatswain's sound) and Antonio calls him "noise-maker". The fight, indeed, ends with one last reference to the mouth as the source organ for the voice in Boatswain's allusion to the proverbial expression "must our mouths be cold?" [1.1.51] which, as pointed out in the footnotes of the Arden Shakespeare (third edition), could mean 'Must we be dead?'.[53]

This is the moment when the aural battlefield is suddenly shut, only the prayers and despair of the characters facing their destiny remain. War has now ended and the soundscape regresses from being chaotic, violent and loud to be ordered, soft, immersed in Prospero and Miranda's quiet dialogue.

Prospero's Island: the *Auditory Maze* in a Renaissance Garden

> And Minos pursued Daedalus, and in every country that he searched he carried a spiral shell and promised to give a great reward to him who should pass a thread through the shell, believing that by that means he should discover Daedalus. And having come to Camicus in Sicily, to the court of Cocalus, with whom Daedalus was concealed, he showed the spiral shell. Cocalus took it, and promised to thread it, and gave it to Daedalus; and Daedalus fastened a thread to an ant, and, having bored a hole in the spiral shell, allowed the ant to pass through it. But

[53] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2011, p.173.

> when Minos found the thread passed through the shell, he perceived that Daedalus was with Cocalus, and at once demanded his surrender. [Ep, 1.14-15][54]

Certainly less popular then the Greek mythological stories revolving around the labyrinth in Knossos with Daedalus and Icarus, the Minotaur, and Theseus and Ariadne as the protagonists, the myth quoted above enhances the theme of the labyrinth through the juxtaposed image of the shell. Following the legends set in Knossos, the *Ant and the Shell* myth re-describes the architecture of the labyrinth in terms of a task, a puzzle to be solved. In fact, Minos carries with him a shell that, thanks to its spiral shape, resembles the design of a labyrinth. The juxtaposition is quite simple to recognize since it is reinforced by Minos' using the shell as a labyrinth's token with the purpose of finding Daedalus, the very creator of the labyrinth in Knossos. Moreover, in order to be solved, the puzzle requires the specific use of a thread which, of course, reminds us of Ariadne and her own strategy to save Theseus from being lost in the Knossos labyrinth.

In spite of the fact that the link between the shell and the labyrinth relies mainly on their shared shape, suggesting the imagery of a winding, disorienting path, or, as in the above-mentioned myth, as puzzles they both appeal for wit, there is also an acoustic connection between the two. We have already seen how, in early modern treatises of anatomy, 'shell' and 'labyrinth' are the words used to describe a specific part of the ear. Early modern understanding of acoustics, specifically of sound waves moving into space, was interconnected with the same imagery. Moreover, to imagine paths through which sound travels in the air, engendered theories aiming at fashioning these paths, hence at controlling sound as well. As fascinating as they were, these theories provided for illustrations of possible instruments to be made with the purpose of exploiting sound. Unsurprisingly, the design of such instruments took shapes from that of huge shells and their labyrinthic quality which allowed sound to be propagated, amplified, controlled, exploited.

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[54] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *The Library, vol. 2*, translated by Sir James G. Frazer, W. Heinemann and G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1921.

Athanasius Kircher's *Phonurgia Nova sive conjungium mechanic-physicum artis & naturae paranympha phonosophia concinnatum* (1673) contains a series of illustrations describing experimental techniques or machines that take control over sound. The functioning of these contraptions was directly linked to the natural laws of sound, hence the knowledge of acoustics allowed Kircher to propose sound machines which took account of the peculiarities of sound waves. Most interestingly, the illustrations we can see in *Phonurgia Nova* reproduce the labyrinthic shape of spiral shells (e.g. the "tubus oticus cochleatus") which had on the one side an aesthetic purpose, that of the 'Baroque wonder' and on the other side a pragmatic goal inasmuch as the spiral shape worked as a perfect conduit for sound (*fig.3* shows how the sounds of the square on the left side of the illustration could be reproduced by a 'talking statue' depicted on the right side).

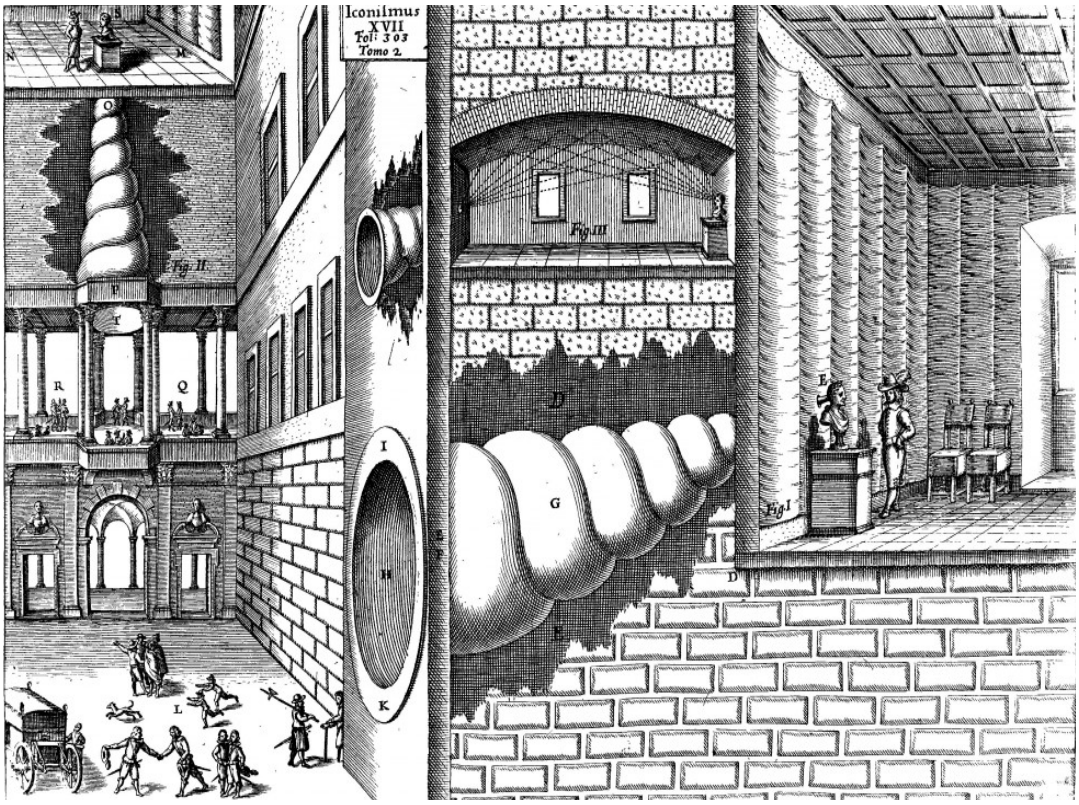

Figure 3 The Talking Statue

Although this dissertation is not concerned with in the physics of sound waves, Kircher's representations of his inventions, based on acoustics laws, suggest a connection between sound and the labyrinthic shape of the shell. More to the point, drawing from the understanding of acoustics, the attempt to control and guide auditory experiences is inextricably linked to the design shared by both the labyrinth and the shell. In the first pages of this chapter, I showed how the shell, both physically and figuratively, can be associated to the setting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The labyrinth too, especially when approached as a specific component of the Renaissance garden design, charged with symbolical meanings, can be identified within the setting of the play. It is with these connections in mind that I will show how in *The Tempest* the island works as an *auditory maze* where Prospero is aware and in control of the soundscape affecting the other characters. Moreover, taking my cue from Feld's notion of acoustemology, I will offer a deeper analysis of Prospero's identity and his *Bildung* when staying on the island, lingering on his political strategy based on the sounds he produces as the scope of his powerful art.

Again, we can begin from Prospero's statement about the nature of the initial storm: "I have with such provision in mine art/ So safely ordered…" [1.2.28-29]. The arrangement of the elements participating in the storm is described in terms of order and, as suggested before, the expression used by Prospero can refer to the quintessential harmony of the cosmos.[55] More specifically, what Prospero is actually doing, is taking control over the elements comprised in the storm, so that, indeed, there is harmony even in something perceived by the other characters (and the audience) as disordered, violent and disturbing. In point of fact, we can assume that the theme Shakespeare is retrieving here is that of the "controlled disorder", an expression that refers to the Renaissance commonplace analogy between macrocosm and microcosm.

The strong connection between man and the cosmos enabled poets and philosophers to describe any kind of turmoil, conflict, or catastrophe as disharmonic and out of tune with respect to the macrocosmic harmony; vice versa, any adverse natural event characterized as disordered, violent, chaotic, wild or

[55] See p. 19.

simply uncommon (such as a solar eclipse, or an earthquake) could be interpreted as sign mirroring sign: the social, political, or domestic instability of the microcosm. Such a view engendered a set of symbologies we don't recognize today as precisely as early modern people would have done, mainly because we do not perceive it any more as effective. The early modern age features a great flourish of allegorical displaying (to be found in poetry, fine arts, and music) of political stability, harmony, and peace as brought by the sovereign and connected to the cosmos. Such symbology thence became a communicative device to be interpreted through the lenses of the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm.

Renaissance garden design, with its abundant allegories traceable in geometrical patterns and proportions, reiterated the capacity of men to maintain nature's wilderness under control, hence to guarantee a state of stability and balance to be read in the allegorical creation of harmonious structures resembling the ideal configuration of the universe; in other words, garden design was an enactment of "controlled disorder".[56]

In 1954 the American poet Anthony Hecht publishes within his collection, titled *A Summoning of the Stones*, a poem in which he describes the gardens of the Villa d'Este in Tivoli. In one of the stanzas the poet writes:

> For thus it was designed:
> Controlled disorder at the heart
> Of everything, the paradox, the old
> Oxymoronic itch to set the formal strictures
> Within a natural context, where the tension lectures
> Us on our moral state, and by controlled
> Disorder, labors to keep art
> From being too refined.[57]

[56] See Suzanne Butters, "Pressed Labor and Pratolino: Social Imagery and Social Reality in a Medici Garden", in Beneš, M. & Harris, D. (eds.), *Villas and Gardens in Early Modern Italy and France*, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 61-87, 347-36.

[57] Anthony Hecht, "The Gardens of the Villa d'Este", in *A Summoning of Stones*, Macmillan, 1954, p. 35.

Although these lines were inspired by a post-war scenario,[58] Hecht's reflection about art and nature through the image of *controlled disorder* recalls Renaissance art of taming and ordering wilderness through garden design. In his effort to "control disorder" the Renaissance man took the harmonic proportion of the cosmos as his model. These proportions were reified in geometrical patterns, aiming at displaying the demiurgic power and grandiosity of the Prince. But the garden did not solely work as a visual display of the harmony of the spheres; auditory elements enriched the symbolism. Indeed, some of the most spectacular sixteenth-century gardens, like those of Villa d'Este, included surprising fountains reproducing music, automata, and particular machinery replicating natural sounds.

The "controlled disorder" theme is expressed also by Ben Jonson with respect to the description of a garden. In *The Masque of Blackness*, performed at Whitehall in 1605, the set design is that of a garden which had to be arranged "as imitating that orderly disorder which is common in nature".[59] By stressing this connection between art and nature in terms of order/disorder that we can find as a trope in early modern age, I argue that Prospero's expression of "safely ordered" echoes the idea of a natural landscape characterized by the intervention of human hands. It is indeed a sign of the presence of art, to be intended here as a controlling device, aiming at displaying an "orderly disorder". Yet, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, this visual imagery is primarily expressed as aural, hence, we are not seeing knot gardens, arbours, grottoes, fountains, and mazes on the scene, instead, we can *hear* sounds that *build* and define the setting as a "safely ordered", "orderly ordered", "control-disordered" space. More to the point, I argue that the island can be perceived not only visually, as a maze, but

[58] Anthony Hecht visited the Villa during his stay in Italy around 1951, but previously, in 1944, the site suffered from severe bombing and, despite major restoration works were soon completed within two years, the area still showed some traces of the war. About the poem's interest in the historical events of war, see Florian Gargaillo, "Anthony Hecht's Controlled Disorder", in *The Yale Review*, Vol. 104, No. 3, 2016, pp. 62-69.

[59] Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness* [1.1.19], in Martin Butler, David M. Bevington, Karen Britland, Ian Donaldson, David L. Gants, and Eugene Giddens, *The Cambridge edition of the works of Ben Jonson online*, 2012. http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/.

mostly aurally, as an *auditory maze* particularly when one focuses on its soundscape. Thus, my aim here is to substantiate a definition of Prospero's island as an auditory maze, especially by highlighting how the aural aspects participate in its imagery.

So far, I have discussed analogies between the shell and the theatre, more to the point between the shell and *The Tempest*'s setting, but the island is also metaphorically and geographically shaped as a labyrinth, that, from a sound perspective, is imbued with the symbology associated to early modern garden design. Thus, in order to describe Prospero's island as an auditory maze, it is necessary here to retrieve also the symbology and the allegorical meanings of Renaissance garden design, so that it will be clear how in *The Tempest*, these meanings are expressed through sound.

Early modern English gardens' magnificence is accomplished after Renaissance Italian garden design. Since the sixteenth century, the English courtly landscape had been enriched with spectacular gardens based on Italian gardens, such as the Medici Villa at Pratolino and the Villa d'Este. A focus on these two Italian examples, and their influence on English garden design, in the specimen of Kenilworth gardens, will serve as my case study to develop a hypothesis about the aural garden imagery influencing Shakespeare when featuring the setting of *The Tempest*.

Renaissance Italian garden design served as an established European model both for its aesthetic and symbolical meanings. As explained by Jane Whitaker, English garden fashion after the Italian was shared mostly by means of French courtly gardens which, in turn, had been mainly influenced by those of Poggio Reale in Naples, originally built by Alfonso II and much appreciated by Charles VIII of France who conquered the city of Naples in 1494 and, in discovering such complex and beautiful gardens, described them as "earthly paradise".[60] Travelling the continent and back, English aristocrats reported their experiences in both France and Italy, writing and describing in detail the astonishing gardens they had visited. Inspired by literature, and travels, together with the employment of

[60] Jane, Whitaker, *Gardens for Gloriana: Wealth, Splendour and Design in the Elizabethan Garden*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019.

European gardeners and the import of new plants' species, the English courtly landscape was soon enriched with spectacular gardens.

Francesco I de' Medici, some years before becoming Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1574, commissioned an impressive architectural project to build a new palace just outside Florence. The works started in 1569 led by Bernardo Buontalenti and very soon, even before the completing of the project, the gardens of the Villa Medici with their "wonders" were praised and known all over Europe.[61] The microcosmic garden of this Villa was enriched by geometric patterns, mazes, fountains and statues but the real sensational ornaments, and the most allegorical too, were the sound-producing ones, reflecting both visually and aurally the notion of harmony by retrieving mythological figures and *loci*. Automata, dancing fountains, and statues which played music by means of complex machineries exploiting the energy of water, made of Pratolino gardens a sort of *theatrum mundi* offering a multisensorial experience of a supernatural, perfect, paradise-like place. Thus, not only did the landscape visually contribute to create an illusion of microcosm, but also the soundscape participated in its imagery.

Visitors walking through the grottos or stepping by fountains, such as the representation of *Mount Parnassus* with the sounding Apollo and the Muses, followed a path led by symbolic images and sounds as well. Natural sounds and artificial ones were perfectly blended in the soundscape of this garden, to the point that we can imagine the visitors were not able to distinguish neatly the difference between the two, unless the artificial ones would have played musical melodies. In fact, not only was the area filled with real singing birds inhabiting the gardens and the designated aviary, but here and there also artificial, metal birds sang, too.[62] Other hidden machineries reproduced music through the employment of

[61] The philosopher Francesco de' Vieri in his *Delle meravigliose Opere di Pratolino & Amore* (1586) reflects on the "meraviglia" (wonder), that will soon become an important ingredient of the Baroque aesthetics, provoked by the Pratolino garden's ornaments.

[62] Francesco De' Vieri reports that in Galatea's grotto there were singing birds probably symbolizing the poets' voice. See Suzanne B. Butters, "Natural Magic, Artificial Music and Birds at Francesco de'Medici's Pratolino", in Alice E. Sanger and Siv Tove Kulbrandstad Walker (ed.), *Sense and the Senses in Early Modern Art and Cultural Practice*, Ashgate, 2012, p. 41.

hydraulic organs, alluding at the 'music of the spheres' that could be heard in a heavenly-like macrocosm.

Therefore, as for plants and architecture, even the aural dimension of the place mirrored the Renaissance theme of "controlled disorder", this ability to control nature and, at the same time, create harmony, the latter could be either featured visually in the arrangements of green patterns, or aurally, through the sounding machineries and was consistent, also, with the alchemical imagery present in the garden. In fact, it has been noticed that the main purpose of Francesco I was not only that of rhetorically displaying his political power through his gardens, but also of providing for a place where the secrets of alchemy were unfolded to those who were able to read them. Several allusions to alchemy can be traced in the Pratolino Gardens, participating in the multifarious imageries that characterize the site, showing the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm as well as establishing a juxtaposition between man's art and nature. As Suzanne Butters has pointed out:

> Manipulating elemental forces, geological features and creatures with songs and souls were real and rhetorical virtues of the princely rule, and as such readily understood. […] Alchemical adepts would have recognized Pratolino's alchemical nuances, however, not least the patron himself. Indeed, if one looks beyond the garden's superficial details, the argument for its alchemical significance becomes stronger. Some of alchemy's most formidable philosophical advocates linked this art with those of agriculture and medicine. Unlike arts that imitated secondary qualities and appearances, those of horticulturist, physicians and alchemist were able to operate on nature's causes and processes, to effect substantial changes. A horticultural complex, Pratolino was fashioned by a practising alchemist who was a 'medic' by name.[63]

Furthermore, at Pratolino gardens the alchemical metaphor of the quest for the philosopher's stone was also suggested by their countless pathways, not least the ones composing a large laurel labyrinth (figs. 4-5). Luigi Zangheri, who collected documents and sources about Pratolino, reports the descriptions of this labyrinth

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

as very extended and having at its center an octagonal colonnade, sustaining an iron pergola that converged towards the focal point, where a fountain could be found with a colossal stone called *spugna*, that Francesco I had ordered from Corsica. Hence, as a riddle to be solved, this labyrinth had at its center a huge, raw stone which can be metaphorically associated to the alchemists' philosopher's stone. Additionally, as De' Vieri had written, the labyrinth was made of laurel to symbolically suggest the virtues of those men who were able to find their way in it.[64]

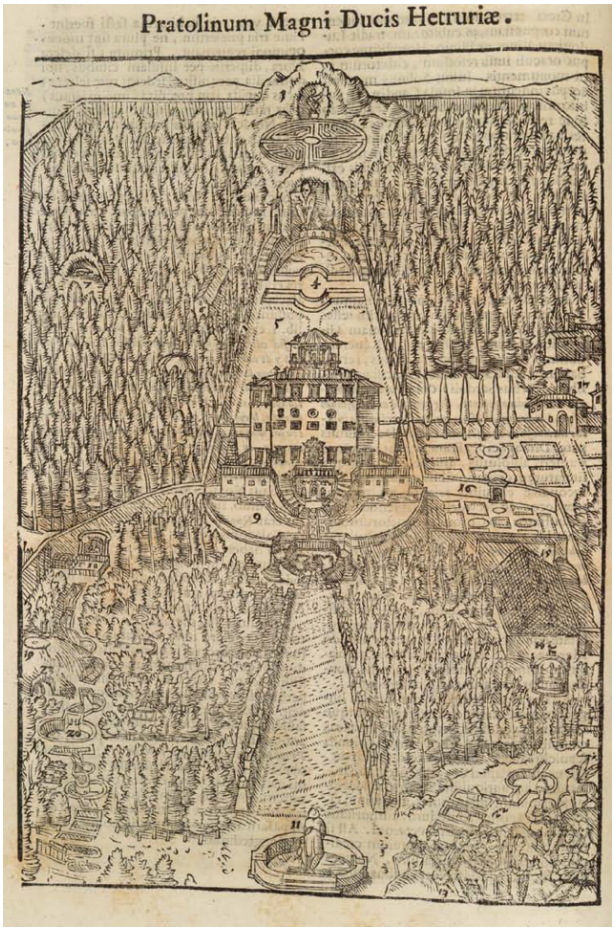

Figure 5 The Entire Pratolino Estate View, S. Vitale, *Annales Sardiniae* (1639)

Figure 4 detail of the Laurel Labyrinth at Pratolino, S. Vitale, *Annales Sardiniae* (1639)

[64] Luigi Zangheri, *Pratolino, il giardino delle meraviglie*, vol. I, Edizioni Gonnelli, 1987, pp. 144-145.

Thus, the labyrinth, in Pratolino gardens, was indeed an allegorical, difficult pathway leading towards the philosopher's stone, the alchemical source of knowledge and power that could only be reached by the ones who truly deserved it.

The wonders of Pratolino gardens soon reached a Europe-wide popularity, to the point that its imagery established a model for northern garden design, in France, Germany, and England. Early modern English people's fascination with Pratolino is attested not only by the emulation of its design, but especially by the literature describing the richness of imagery and spectacularism held inside the garden. Fynes Moryson, William Kent, Richard Lassels, and later also John Evelyn, all described the gardens at Pratolino as a marvelous experience and their publications contributed to fostering the fascination with and knowledge of the Italian garden designs. It is hard to avoid thinking that Shakespeare, too, could have been influenced by the same imagery, especially when reading in *The Tempest* the same themes and references to art and nature, macrocosm and microcosm, alchemy and power that inhabit the gardens at Pratolino. We can assume that, if not directly influenced by Pratolino, Shakespeare for sure had in mind the Italian imagery inspired by early modern garden design.

Another outstanding example that resonated in England as a model for garden design was Villa d'Este in Tivoli, near Rome. Commissioned by Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este, the Villa was inaugurated in 1572 and reflected the grandiosity of its owner especially through the splendour of its garden. Besides its complex and astonishing floral ornament, here too, as in Pratolino gardens, visitors were amazed by its soundscape. To fully exploit and enhance the force of water, the engineer Pirro Ligorio designed a system of tunnels stretching directly from the river Aniene to the basement of the Villa, from which an unusually large number of fountains were connected. Among these, particularly two sparked the interest of visitors: the *Fontana dell'Organo* (Fountain of the Organ) and the *Fontana della Civetta* (Fountain of the Owl). Both of them produced respectively music and sound (birds tweeting) by means of hydraulic organs hidden inside them. Therefore, the soundscape of these gardens was punctuated by the incessant flow

of water, artificial and natural sounds, and music. The garden of Villa d'Este celebrated life and the wonders of nature in a richly symbolical way. One of the mythological themes in support of this idea, retrieved through statues and fountains, is that of the figure of Venus born by water and mother of Harmonia. It is in line with this theme that the notion of harmony is envisaged almost everywhere in the garden, not least aurally, through the sounding fountains.[65]

When focusing on the soundscape of the Renaissance gardens, we also have to consider the space as a setting for the celebrations and events which were framed in these spectacular outdoor places. The owners of these villas used the space of the garden not only as a symbolical display of their grandiosity but also in a more functional and pragmatic way, by holding banquets and festivities to entertain their important guests. In such occasions, the soundscape owed much to music, pyrotechnic shows, theatrical performances and other sorts of entertainment. Ippolito II d'Este was famous for the extraordinary banquets he was able to arrange for his guests, which could be considered more as an attraction rather than a mere elaborate dinner.[66] Probably less elaborate than his previous banquets (the Villa wasn't completed yet and that same year Ippolito II died) the one organized at Villa d'Este on the occasion of Pope Greogorio XIII's visit, in September 1572, must have been still a sumptuous feast considering that guests were amazed not only by the customary wonders of Ippolito's banquets (music and a variety of spectacles) but also by the very first experience of hearing stones and fountains sound.[67] Later on I will show how the proximity of the Renaissance garden to theatre allows us to trace nuances of the former in the latter in terms of not only visual but also of aural themes. In particular, festivities and events similar to the banquet mentioned above, are echoed in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* when the masque takes place as a celebration of Ferdinand and Miranda's betrothal, or in the magical appearance of the banquet [3.3].

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[65] See Giuliano Danieli, *La musica nel mecenatismo di Ippolito II d'Este*, De Sono, 2018.

[66] For a detailed description of the most famous banquets held by Ippolito II d'Este see Marina Cogotti and June Di Schino (eds.), *Magnificenze a Tavola, Le arti del banchetto rinascimentale*, De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2012.

[67] *Ibid.*

Albeit available to the restricted circles of court people and aristocracy, the Renaissance garden was also a space for leisure and entertainment, and it shared, at different levels, the same representational features of the theatre. Actually, it is not unusual to find areas within the Renaissance garden with arenas or buildings specifically designed for theatrical or musical performances held in occasion of festivities and celebrations which occurred mainly in fine weather, when, in all its splendour, the garden offered an ideal and marvellous setting. The combination of visual and auditory elements, sharing the same symbolic meanings, together with the area's adaptability for dramatic purposes, allows us to build a parallelism between the space of the garden and that of the early modern theatre. Both of them are microcosms and, as noticed by John Dixon Hunt "they offered miniature worlds".[68] The imagery kindled by the relationship between garden and theatre is precisely what I am discussing here, it constitutes a salient ingredient for the setting of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In Prospero's island we can envisage the microcosmic space of the garden, more precisely *the maze* especially by focusing on the auditory elements which participate in its imagery building.

The early modern notions related to the cosmic proportions and their earthly representation, find in the garden their visual display, but, since sound and music was though to chime with the perception of reality inextricably bound to the idea of harmony rooted in the classical era and strongly retrieved during Renaissance, auditory elements enriched the garden design. Indeed, as we have seen, some of the most spectacular 16th century gardens featured surprising fountains reproducing music, automata, and particular machinery replicating natural sounds. Moreover, the garden being a theatrical space too, music reverberated through the air in the merriest occasions.

Moving to the English context, garden design during the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, suited the necessity to symbolically substantiate monarchic power. To this aim, the Elizabethan years inaugurated a period of great flourishing for the visual imagery displaying political stability, harmony and peace as brought by the sovereign. After the turmoil of the years preceding the Golden Age and the obstructions menacing Elizabeth's accession, the new, young Queen had to face

[68] John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016, p. 67.

the discontent of many. This was swiftly about to change in such a climactic way that by the end of her reign, Queen Elizabeth I had become a most worshipped figure. It is precisely in these years, and particularly around the figure of the Queen, that the outburst of an imagery mirroring the ideal kingdom of harmony, peace, prosperity and stability embodied by its ruler, spread. Poetry, fine arts, music, progresses, festivities, everything was a celebration of her perfect royalness and, at the same time, a strongly political device to perpetually affirm Elizabeth's power and authority. The cult of the "Virgin Queen", "Gloriana", "Astrea", the "fairy Queen" created a new myth, mostly built on a strongly allegorical language made of countless images displaying such symbology.

Garden design became part of this language, rhetorically conveying the political power of the Queen's good government in her symbolical ability to mould wild nature into perfectly ordered shapes. But the building of magnificent gardens by aristocratic members of the society became also an expedient to celebrate, seduce and, above all, gain the Queen's favour. This is the case with Kenilworth gardens, specifically designed by Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, to celebrate Elizabeth and, at the same time, to show the Earl's own allure and power as a distinguished member of the court who could aspire to being a husband to his Queen.

English gardens were exactly modelled after gardens like Villa Medici at Pratolino and Villa d'Este, thus sharing the Italian aesthetics and symbolic modes. The Kenilworth gardens are emblematic as an example of this influence, and also particularly renowned for hosting the entertainments organised by the Earl of Leicester in 1575: nineteen days of celebrations for Queen Elizabeth and her kingdom, symbolically represented in the microcosm of Kenilworth's garden. The outdoor spectacles were all allegorical and in support of the mythological themes developing around Elizabeth as goddess, but the masques and recitals, retrieving Ovidian tales, conveyed also messages of courtship, suggesting an ideal marriage between Elizabeth and Robert Dudley. Indeed, as pointed out by Susan Frye, these caused some friction between the Queen and the Earl since a wedding could destabilise the political authority of Elizabeth.[69] Nevertheless, the events had such

[69] Susan Frye, *Elizabeth I: The Competition for Representation*, Oxford University Press, 1993.

an echo that years later Kenilworth's spectacles still resonated in poets' writings: in particular, some passages of Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* were explicitly inspired by that event.[70]

The symbolical motifs of Kenilworth Gardens retrieved the notion of harmony, which was particularly enhanced in a space exclusively arranged for the Queen. The area, now recognised as *The Elizabethan Garden* (fig. 6), represented harmony through geometrical patterns of knot gardens and statues in the shapes of globes and obelisks restoring an ideal, cosmic order that could be appreciated if seen from an upper terrace.

Figure 6 The re-created *Elizabethan Garden* at Kenilworth

[70] Kenilworth's festivities are recorded in Robert Leneham's *A Letter, Wherein Part of the Entertainment Untoo the Queenz Majesty, at Killingwoorth Castl in Warwick Sheer, in this Soomerz Progrest 1575, Iz Signified,* and in the published entertainment script, *The Princely Pleasures at the Courte at Kenelwoorth* (1576), attributed to George Gascoigne. On Spenser's references to Kenilworth in *The Faerie Queen*, see Michael Leslie, "Spenser, Sidney, and the Renaissance Garden", in *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol.22, No. 1, 1992, p.3-36; Amy L. Tigner, *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II: England's Paradise*, Ashgate, 2012; Susan Frye (cit.).

Although at Kenilworth there weren't spectacular automata or sounding fountains such as the ones of the Italian Villas, its soundscape, if one excludes the countryside natural sounds or the birds' singing in the aviary of the *Elizabethan Garden*, was constantly marked by allegories expressed through sounds and music performances.

Though in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* the setting is not explicitly that of a garden, still Prospero's island shares a lot with both the visual and the aural features of the Renaissance garden hitherto presented. Of course, the imagery employed by Shakespeare which allows us to visually recognise the island as a metaphor of the garden has been already largely discussed.[71] Amy L. Tigner explains how Shakespeare uses the trope of the *hortus conclusus*, the analogy of macrocosm-microcosm, the metaphor of the paradise-like garden;[72] Peggy Muñoz Simonds also envisages allusions to the Renaissance garden in *The Tempest*'s setting by focusing on a parallelism between Prospero and Orpheus, both as masters of art and nature.[73]

This dissertation is interested in how Shakespeare in *The Tempest* harnesses the symbolical meanings of the garden and fruitfully combines them with auditory elements, thus allowing an interpretation of Prospero's political strategy directly connected to the way he controls the space of the island and, by extension, the

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[71] For the imagery of gardens in Shakespeare drama see Jackie Bennett and Andrew Lawson, *Shakespeare's Gardens*, First Frances Lincoln edition, 2016; Deborah Solomon, "*All in a Garden Green*: Shakespeare's Staging of garden Imagery, in *The Ben Jonson Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2019, pp. 227-252; Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton (ed.), *Ecocritical Shakespeare*, Ashgate, 2011; Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare*, Routledge, 2006; Caroline Patey, "Shakespeare's Italian Nature, or, from Garden to Stage", in Caims, Christopher (ed.), *The Renaissance Theatre: Texts, Performance, Design*, Ashgate, 1999, pp. 107-123.

[72] Amy L. Tigner, *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles II: England's Paradise*, Ashgate, 2012..

[73] Peggy Muñoz Simonds, "Sweet Power of Music: The Political Magic of the Miraculous Harp in Shakespeare's TheTempest", in *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1995, pp. 61-90. Here Simonds touches themes particularly fruitful for the discussion of the convergence between garden and music symbology, yet it focuses only on the myth of Orpheus as the principal source of inspiration for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

castaways' path. In point of fact, the hermeneutical force of the metaphor of the garden, and, more to the point, that of the maze, can be deepened by adopting theoretical categories developed more recently in the field of sound studies.

In *The Tempest*, references to the imagery of the garden intertwined or juxtaposed with sound can be found from the start of the play: more precisely in Act 1, scene 2, in Prospero's account of his unfortunate political demise as Duke of Milan at the hands of Antonio, his treacherous brother. Prospero, in his introductory dialogue with Miranda, uses two juxtaposed metaphors by stating:

> PROSPERO: The creatures that were mine, I say, or changed'em,
> Or else new formed'em; having both the key
> Of officer and office, set all hearts I'th'state
> To what tune pleased his ear, that now he was
> The ivy which had hid my princely trunk
> And sucked my verdure out on't. [1.2.82-87]

The first image recalled by Prospero is hinged on the early modern belief that sound, entering the ear, could affect and change the human spirit. For the second one, Shakespeare seems to draw on the garden imagery. Both of these metaphors are twisted here with respect to their canonical, optimistic meaning. In fact, while music, in affecting human's behaviour should bring peace as it should be imbued with harmony, Antonio's tune, distorted by his *key* (a term that here is consistent with the musical metaphor), succeeds in corrupting the courtiers' *hearts* by means of their ears. Quite obviously, this is a metaphor for Antonio's words which seduce and convince Prospero's "creatures", a metaphor that recalls the trope of the poisoning power of speech disseminated in Shakespeare's drama. The juxtaposed reference to the garden imagery is conveyed, too, through another twisted image, that of the ivy and the tree, immediately following the first one. The latter image, known as the "elm and vine" topos, is usually employed as a metaphor of marriage: the plants feed each other by merging into one.[74] However, in the lines quoted above, the ivy (Antonio) has suffocated and poisoned

[74] See Peggy Muñoz Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare's Cymbeline: An Iconographic Reconstruction*, University of Delaware Press, 1992, pp. 250-252.

Prospero's "verdure", a word indicative of the fresh, brilliant colour of prosperous vegetation. In this metaphor, drawing on the imagery of the Renaissance garden as a device for political display, nature is the emblem of a perished kingdom (not so green any more), symbolised by the exsiccation of Prospero's "princely trunk". As explained before, the Renaissance garden's splendour is symbolically tied to its owner, the landlord, and by extension to his political power. Here the dukedom, metaphorically expressed as a garden, is exsiccated because it mirrors the loss of power of its 'landlord', the Duke Prospero, whose political stability has been challenged and damaged by Antonio's poisoning *sound*. In other words, these few lines express the intersection of metaphorical meanings coming from the domains of garden and of sound which in *The Tempest* can be considered as leitmotifs, systematically associated with the political power theme running throughout the entire play.

References to the imagery of garden and sound are particularly incisive when associated to the soundscape of the island inasmuch as they reinforce the labyrinthic quality of the setting. Precisely as in the case of Renaissance gardens, the soundscape of Peospero's island is not merely ornamental, nor randomly described by the characters; indeed, it affects them and the perception of the space surrounding them as disorienting. However, not everyone in the play finds the space of the island so bewildering, indeed, sounds affect characters in different ways and it is specifically on the basis of this variance that I envisage an aural labyrinthic quality with respect to the setting. In a labyrinth there are always those who prescribe the paths who know how to solve its riddle, and the ones who lose themselves in it.

As already discussed, in *The Tempest* we can distinguish two main different inflections of sound as supernatural or natural. This categorization, though, is not so neat in that there is no way for the hearers to understand immediately if the sounds are magical, hence supernatural, or not; sounds cannot differ in their *form*, but only in their *quality*. While the audience is aware of this quality, because informed in advance, the characters are not, so they react to sounds in different ways. Throughout the play we can see how while all the castaways are taken by surprise when hearing sounds, Caliban, on the contrary, the only inhabitant of the

island, who doesn't know about Prospero's plan, appears at ease in the supernatural soundscape: he is actually not surprised at all when hearing sounds. In his understanding of sounds, Caliban doesn't perceive the idiosyncratic contrast between their natural form and their supernatural quality. The key passage in the text to understand how Shakespeare creates a complex web of meanings through sound is Caliban's description of the soundscape of the island:

> CALIBAN: Be not afeard. The isle is full of *noises*,
> *Sounds* and *sweet airs* that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will *hum* about mine ears; and sometimes *voices*,
> That if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again;… [3.2.135-140][75]

Caliban's words stand out in the passage of the text where the natural versus supernatural inflections of sound can be perceived to clash and where the difference in the characters' reactions to the soundscape is stressed. While Stephano and Trinculo, on hearing the supernatural sounds, panic and ask for mercy, Caliban reassures them, behaving as if those sounds were simply natural. The strategy used by Shakespeare here relies on the specific choice of using Caliban as the narrator for the description of the soundscape: Caliban, a creature that has no other imagery of the world except for the microcosm of the island where he has always been living, experiences the whole soundscape as natural, ignoring that the very sounds he is mentioning are not part of the 'natural' world but of a prescriptively supernatural one. Indeed, the soundscape of the island is entirely created and controlled by Prospero's art, as is already established in the first scenes. In this light, from a sound-perspective, the setting is conceived as a maze in whose paths the disoriented characters are actually following his directions.

Moreover, while the castaways are confused, and their wonder or fear are directly connected to the unknown, or the unexpected, Caliban moves through the

[75] My emphasis.

sounds of the island establishing a connection of familiarity with the aural space surrounding him. Caliban is part of the island, and albeit unaware of it, he participates in the supernatural design of that space. After all, he is a strange creature, not entirely perceived as human, nor as a full monster; Caliban, as stated before in this chapter, embodies the idiosyncrasy of *the unexpected*. He appears to fit within the space of the island in the same way as an extraordinary, metamorphic automata or sounding statue would do in a Renaissance garden scenario.

More to the point, I argue that Prospero's dominion over the soundscape of the island resembles the same control over nature displayed in the Renaissance garden to show how the prince can "civilise" nature. The only problematising and destabilising difference, in a very Shakespearean way, is that while from the point of view of Prospero everything is moving towards a perfect microcosmic order, from the point of view of the other characters, both nature and sound seem to manifest themselves in their wildest, "uncivilised" form. Only the audience can experience, grasp, and differentiate both natural and supernatural sounds at the same time, together with their political symbology. This is because Prospero's intentions are revealed to the audience in advance and such a dramaturgic expedient allows Shakespeare to convey multiple meanings through sound at once.

Therefore, we may say that the soundscape of the island reinforces the metaphor of the setting as a garden, and, more specifically, as an auditory maze in that the disorienting feeling of the castaways is mainly expressed through their reaction to sound, the latter being always featured as unexpected. But the parallel I foresee between the Renaissance garden and the sounds of the island can be deepened further, especially when reading Prospero's strategy, including the supernatural sounds he produces, as an expression of his own identity. All this becomes clearer when considering Prospero's supernatural sounds as acoustemologically oriented.

Acoustemology has been described by Steven Feld as an approach that consider the audible as a means to know the world around us, hence it also

contributes to the way we express and communicate with each other. In his own words:

> Acoustemology joins acoustics to epistemology to investigate sound-ing and listening as a knowing-in-action: a knowing-with and knowing-through the audible […] Knowing through relations insists that one does not simply "acquire" knowledge but, rather, that one knows through an ongoing cumulative and interactive process of participation and reflection.[76]

My hypothesis of reading Prospero's sound as acoustemological, draws on acoustemology's capacity to deal with knowledge as a *relational process* centred on sound attending. Acoustemology is the way Prospero expresses his political identity by establishing a connection with both the characters in the play and the audience, that relies on the persisting, long-standing associations between sound and early modern cultural values. Prospero's sound is imbued with extremely political meanings grounded in a commonly-shared symbolic spectrum which may be seen to parallel that of the Renaissance garden design. It is through Prospero's sound that we gain knowledge about his identity, his intentions, his actions, and above all, his expression of power as a political man. From the "tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard" [1.1], to the voices whispering in the character's ears, Prospero's control over the natural space of the island and its wanderers is exerted by employing sound as a *translation* of his power. In the same way as the Renaissance prince controls nature and creates marvellous gardens, ordered and harmonious, Prospero governs the auditory elements of his island and through *his* sounds he leads the way for the characters to follow.[77] Moreover, auditory elements are also the only ornaments of (what

[76] Steven Feld 'acoustemology', in David Novak, Matt Sakakeeny (eds.), *Keywords in Sound*, Duke University Press, 2015, pp. 12-14.

[77] It is interesting also to notice how, being auditory elements efficient in their nature only when listened to, the very name of the protagonist, Prospero, has biblical nuances associated with hearing. As suggested in Grace R. W. Hall's *The Tempest as a Mystery Play* (McFarland & Co, 1999) the name Prospero shares the same root of the word 'prosper' which, especially in the Old Testament, is directly associated with hearing and heeding. "Prosper" in the Bible is a

Prospero himself describes as) "this bare island" [Ep. 9.8]. It is precisely in this perspective that Shakespeare realises the metaphor of the Renaissance garden in *The Tempest*: without the auditory elements standing for the concrete presence of the sovereign, the island would only be a wild, chaotic place. Instead it is through the island's soundscape, acoustemologically approached, that we can interpret the setting as "controlled disorder".

Having established how sound defines the space of the island (its soundscape), and acoustemologically inform Prospero's political presence, a missing link between the two still needs being investigated here, and this is the acousmatic modality through which sound 'moves' on the island and affects the characters. Dazed by all the sounds of the island, the characters are not capable of tracing the origin or nature of this orchestration of music, voices, and sound designed by Prospero. The medium through which all these auditory elements affect the characters is, in fact, invisible to them, or disguised in the non-human forms of Ariel, who serves as the principal *instrument* to play Prospero's sounds and music.

When the invisible Ariel, under Prospero's instructions, sings *Come unto these yellow sands* [1.2.376], Ferdinand suddenly wonders: "Where should this music be? I'th' air, or th' earth?" [1.2.388] thus enhancing the invisibility of Ariel and, at the same time, raising the question of the supernatural. Indeed, this example of acousmatic sound, and, more broadly, all of Ariel's acousmatic songs and noises, are the vehicles for the characters' perception of supernatural forces. Ariel's song fosters Ferdinand's expectation that the supernatural will manifest in some physical shape, but, by continuously soliciting yet unsatisfying such expectations, Shakespeare creates an unfamiliar, uncanny state of uneasiness. This state of uncertainty marks the boundary between the supernatural and the natural, and it is perpetually reiterated throughout the play by employing acousmatic sounds.[78]

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consequence of hearing the word of God, similarly, Prospero's use of sound in *The Tempest* is not void, it affects the characters and the space in order to bring harmony.

[78] Every time Ariel is performing magic he plays sounds whose sources are unseen: *Enter* ARIEL *invisible playing solemn music* [2.1.184.1]; *Enter* ARIEL *with music and song* [2.1.298.1]; *Enter* ARIEL, *invisible* [3.2.39.1] in this scene Ariel whispers into the characters' ears

When trying to understand how Shakespeare's use of sound succeed in perpetually placing his characters in a state of uneasiness, we must keep in mind that the difference between natural and supernatural sounds is always blurred in the play. In fact, Ariel's sounds can be placed in both the natural world and the supernatural one. When the characters hear Ariel's sounds, songs or noises, they immediately recognise their natural form, yet, at the same time, they suspect a uncanny, subverting, supernatural quality in them. In the example showed above, Ferdinand hears music, but he also specifies that he's listening to a "ditty" [1.2.406], which is a sung tune, so the form of this sound is natural and traceable as a singing voice. However, Ferdinand also perceives the natural sound as a supernatural one when he notices that "This is no mortal business nor no sound/ That the earth owes. I hear it now above me." [1.2.407-408]. Similarly, Gonzalo hears a "humming,/ And a *strange* one too, which awake me." [2.1.318-319][79], and the same sound is described by Sebastian and Antonio as the roar of lions or the bellow of bulls: "O, 'twas a din to fright a monster's ear" [2.1.315]; Stephano and Trinculo hear a tune played on tabor and pipe and Trinculo stresses that "This is the tune of our catch, played by the/ picture of Nobody" [3.2.126].

All the characters seem to recognise some natural form in these sounds and their possible origin, but they are disturbed, frightened or amazed by their supernatural quality. In almost every sonic event like the ones described above, the listeners also take sounds as a leading entity to follow in their wandering. The castaways wander in a bewildering space, that is natural and supernatural at the same time, and when reacting to Ariel's invisible sounds they always express a disorienting feeling with questions through which they try at least to visually locate what they hear.[80] Being idiosyncratic and also acousmatic, sounds allow Shakespeare to employ them with dramaturgical purposes, indeed, the same effect of uncertainty and unexpectedness wouldn't be possible through visual devices.

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imitating other characters' voices to confuse Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo and then, staying invisible, *Ariel plays the tune on a tabor and pipe* [3.2.124.1].

[79] My italics.

[80] See Simon Smith, *Musical Response*, cit., pp. 69-102

And this is because sound is constituted by terms which bear multi-layered meanings and functions related to its form, quality, origin, and so on.

In this regard, to the purposes of better understanding Ariel's sonic role in the play, it is worth focusing here on these constitutive terms. Taking my cue from Brian Kane's model, proposed specifically with respect to voice, I will apply it now to the sounds of *The Tempest*, extending the terms of Kane's model to every sonic element, so not only voices but also noises, sounds, and music (especially connected with the character of Ariel).[81] In describing the voice (*Phonê*), Kane traces three terms that can be applied more broadly to sound: *Echos*, *Logos*, *Topos*. The first, indicates the acoustic feature of sound, its sonority; the second refers to the sound as a signifier for something, so it concerns meaning; the third designates the source or the origin of sound, which can be visible or invisible (as in the case of acousmatic sounds). These terms are not independent or detached from one other. In fact, they are intertwined and when crossing they engender complex meanings and functions in association with sound. With respect to the sounds in *The Tempest*, *Echos* may be taken to reflect what I mentioned as the *form* of sound, so to describe the sound as natural; *Logos*, instead, may be seen to refer to the *quality* of sound, its being supernatural; *Topos*, finally, appears to correspond with the character of Ariel who, invisible or not, can be read as the source for sounds to be played and heard. Kane's model offers another additional term, *Technê*. In his own words,

> By *technê*, I do not mean tools or instruments *per se*, but something broader. *Technê* includes both technologies and techniques alike. Under this heading we must consider the astounding variety of bodily and cultural techniques that subjects apply to themselves as well as the technologies that they employ to shape, define, and alter their experience.[82]

[81] See Brian Kane, "The Voice: A Diagnosis", in *Polygraph*, Vol. 25, 2015, pp. 91-112; See also Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

[82] Brian Kane, "The Voice: A Diagnosis", cit., p. 104.

In light of this fourth term, we may better interpret Ariel and his dramaturgical role in keeping with my previous discussion about Prospero's identity. Indeed, I argue that the very source of sound in *The Tempest*, hence the *topos* in Kane's model, is to be traced in Prospero's art, while Ariel serves as an instrument, a *technology*, a means for Prospero's art to reach and consequently affect the other characters. Although Ariel has his own identity in being independent, to a certain extent, from his master, and also has his own story set in the past with Sycorax, in the play's duration, he is first and foremost his master's 'spokeperson', the *technê* of Prospero's power to travel around the island, affect and lead the other characters. He actually seems to dissolve by the end of the play, dispersing in the "elements" when Prospero finally frees and dismisses him by saying:

> PROSPERO: I'll deliver all,
> And promise you calm seas, auspicious gales
> And sail so expeditious that shall catch
> Your royal fleet far off. [*aside to Ariel*] My Ariel, chick,
> That is thy charge. Then to the elements
> Be free, and fare thou well! [5.1.314-319]

Ariel's sounds are therefore Prospero's, and his being *technê* and acousmatic, reinforces the dramaturgical function and meaning of sound in the play. Indeed, as discussed so far, sound works as a means for Prospero to control the directions taken by the castaways and, at the same time, it is a sign, a symbol of his political force. With sound, Prospero arranges the labyrinthic paths of the island but it is through Ariel that he can manipulate the castaways' steps.

In Renaissance gardens, mazes were also built as a form of amusement both for the guests, wanderers who enjoyed their 'journey' towards the centre, and for the host, the owner of the garden who was delighted with watching them, knowing, of course, the solution to the riddle of the labyrinth. In *The Tempest*, a similar form of amusement can be envisaged in the banquet scene, which reinforces the metaphor of the island as a space not only controlled but also bound over to Prospero. The imagery involved in the banquet scene mirrors that of the marvellous feasts set in Renaissance gardens aforementioned, such as the ones

organized by Ippolito II d'Este. In such occasions, harmonious music and sounds participate as devices to recreate a heavenly space, a perfect microcosm. In the play, the apparition of the banquet, together with sounds, strongly work upon the characters as a device fostering the suspension of reality, to the point that credulity possess them. This feeling of enchantment starts indeed with auditory elements overwhelming the characters, suggesting that connection with the harmonious music of the spheres as a constituent of the macrocosm:

> ALONSO: What harmony is this? My good friends, hark!
> GONZALO: Marvellous sweet music!
> ALONSO: Give us kind keepers, heavens! What were these?
> SEBASTIAN: A living drollery! Now I will believe
> That there are unicorns; that in Arabia
> There is one tree, the phoenix' throne, one phoenix
> At this hour reigning there.
> ANTONIO: I'll believe both;
> And what does else want credit, come to me
> And I'll be sworn 'tis true. […] [3.3.18-26]

Prospero, invisible in this scene, probably watching everything from the upper stage, on top of everything, is amused by the reactions of *his* characters, precisely like a garden owner observing his guests wandering in *his* maze. When I emphasize that Alonso, Gonzalo, Antonio, Sebastian, and the other characters in this passage are actually Prospero's characters, I am referring not only to the fact that he has total control over their actions, but also to the metatheatrical device that Shakespeare is putting onstage. Indeed, if the banquets and festivities in Renaissance gardens were infused with theatricality, here the scene is built with the same scope. The ideas of metatheatricality and the labyrinth, within theme of entertainment, are well synthesized in Alonso's words and Prospero's aside:

> ALONSO: I cannot too much muse
> Such shapes, such gesture, and such sound, expressing
> (Although they want the use of tongue) a kind
> Of excellent dumb discourse.

PROSPERO [*aside*]: Praise in departing. [3.3.36-39]

Alonso is amazed by *shapes*, *gesture*, and *sound* which are the elemental parts of theatre but also, as shown, of the maze as part of the larger design of the renaissance garden. Moreover, Prospero is using here a proverbial expression which, as explained in the notes of the Arden Shakespeare edition (third series), "advises guests to reserve their praise for the host's entertainment until they depart".[83] Such entertainment can be interpreted both as being part of the garden imagery and as a theatrical play.

The motif of the entertainment informed with metatheatrical features and, at the same time, enriched with allusions to the Renaissance garden, is best represented in *The Tempest* through the masque. Prospero makes it very clear that the masque is a spectacle he arranged by calling several spirits, and that all is a display of his art. Indeed, the masque has a double function in the play, it is a celebration of Ferdinand and Miranda's betrothal and, at the same time, a demonstration of Prospero's authority. As Stephen Orgel has noted, Prospero's control over nature concentrates in the masque with his art as the power of imagination, of creating the world he wants.[84] I argue that this is precisely the parallel between Prospero and the Renaissance garden owner who creates a microcosm after their own imagination which is charged with allegorical meanings to establish and provide evidences of their authority. Once again, Prospero's art resides in his capacity to control disorder, and he does it in a very theatrical way, allowing us to conjoin the symbology of power related to Renaissance gardens with his dramaturgical purposes in the masque. Theatre and garden design coalesce in the masque, in expressing Prospero's political power, authority and princely status. As Amy L. Tigner observes:

> Perhaps nowhere else in the play does Prospero demonstrate his place as monarch more clearly than by producing the masque, for the masque is the theatrical form by which rulers assert their authority through allegorical

[83] Arden Shakespeare *The Tempest*, p. 258.

[84] Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance*, University of California Press, 1975.

> emblems symbolizing their virtues and by the sheer expenditure representing their economic power.[85]

However, the masque, as aforementioned, is also a celebration of Ferdinand and Miranda's betrothal, and it allegorically sets off the end of the lovers' wandering in the labyrinthic space of the island. Indeed, we can understand Miranda and, above all, Ferdinand both embarking on a journey that will lead them to their wedding, a journey totally arranged and prescribed by Prospero. Suggestive, in this sense, is also the fact that Shakespeare put Ferdinand and Miranda's betrothal at the very centre of the structure of the play,[86] as if it were the centre of a maze: a kind of ending symbolizing the union of two families, and a political order restored too, where Prospero is re-invested with his institutional power, and the lovers' union stands in the play as a focal point. It is Ferdinand and Miranda's wedding which sets off a state of peace, the metaphorical end of the storm, the restoration of the ship. By the end of the play every other character coming to know the truth and finally reuniting with each other, reach Prospero with Ferdinand and Miranda to celebrate this alliance. The image of marriage as the centre of the maze finds a useful pictorial synthesis in the painting attributed to Jacopo Tintoretto, known as the *Labyrinth of Love*.

[85] Amy L. Tigner, cit., p. 152.

[86] See Mark Rose, *Shakespearean Design*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1972.

Figure 7 Tintoretto's *Labyrinth of Love* (1538-1552), Royal Collection/HM Queen Elizabeth II, Hampton Court

The painting was probably been commissioned for Tintoretto as a wedding gift. It pictures a maze on one of the islands of the Venice, recognized as the Giudecca, and it is the setting for an allegory of marriage and life.[87] Among the banquets, theatrical performances, music, and plays, typical of the celebrations held in the Renaissance garden, several couples are represented as taking their path into the maze. There is only one way to reach the centre and it is the longest and most difficult one to take, a symbology enhanced by the presence of a couple on the right side of the central banquets and another one on the left side. Indeed, the right side pictures an easy and short path which seems to lead directly to the centre, but the couple is actually cut off from the banquet taking place there. Instead, the couple on the left side, after taking a long winding path have made it to the core of the labyrinth and can enjoy the banquet. In this painting we can see an island, a

[87] See Roland Krischel, *Tintoretto: A Star Was Born*, Wallraf Museum, Hirmer, 2017.

symbolically charged maze with the theme of the journey of life and marriage, theatrical scenes, music, banquets, animals. In the background one can see a ship and the city of Venice standing as a political institution, juxtaposed to the garden; all being elements and features that, as earlier discussed in this chapter, can be *heard* through the sounds of *The Tempest*.

In conclusion, on considering the auditory features enlightened so far, Prospero's island can be finally understood as an *auditory maze* of the kind characterizing Renaissance gardens and resembling puzzles to be solved to their centre – the heart of knowledge. Such a definition of the island as a maze is encouraged by the very words of Gonzalo who, in the play, just after the scene where Caliban describes the soundscape of the island, and before the central one with Ferdinand and Miranda, exhausted by endlessly walking without finding Ferdinand, says:

> GONZALO: By'r laking, I can go no further, sir;
> My old bones aches. Here's a maze trod, indeed,
> Through forthrights and meanders! By your patience,
> I needs must rest me. [3.3.1-4]

Caliban's description and Gonzalo's words reiterate the aural and visual phenomenology of the island, defining its space as a composite of sound and nature. The expression 'auditory maze' includes in its semantic references the dramaturgical characterization of supernatural and natural sounds, the political symbology of demiurgic Prospero's creation, and, by extension, the restoration of order. Alonso's lines perfectly synthesize in a poetic language the idea of *The Tempest* as an auditory maze highlighted in this chapter:

> ALONSO: This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod,
> And there is in this business more than nature
> Was ever conduct of. Some oracle
> Must rectify our knowledge. [5.1.241-244]

III

Listening *to* and *through* Othello

One of the pivotal ingredients in Shakespeare's tragedies is the dramaturgical representation of uncertainty through the representation of heroes who manifestly show their human vulnerability. This is apparent in a character such as Hamlet, for example, whose complexity in terms of psyche and troubled identity is expressed through an exacerbation of uncertainty, leading to the *fall* of the hero and the unmasking of language, of those "words, words, words" [2.2.189][1] as powerful and empty at the same time. More than in *Hamlet* or the other great tragedies by Shakespeare, uncertainty is the pillar around which *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice*, revolves. This is readily apparent when, narrowing down the focus on the protagonist, Othello, the question of his being *the* hero of his tragedy is tackled. In my view, it is through characters like Othello that we can understand how Shakespeare deals with the genre of tragedy, characterizing his heroes as vulnerable, fallacious, unstable human beings the audience (or the reader) may temporarily identify with.

In this chapter, by listening *to* and *through* Othello, I aim to discuss the identity of the protagonist from a renewed perspective, that of sound. Examining the text of *Othello* by adopting sound studies' notions as my guideline, not only substantiates the idea of alterity, inextricably linked to this play, but also engenders questions about the identity of Othello and Shakespeare's specific shaping of it. 'Who is Othello?', this is probably one of the most asked questions when reading the tragedy, but why are we pushed by the text to feel the need to think about such a question so intensely? This chapter ponders the origin of the question 'Who is Othello?' by adopting sound as its hermeneutic, and asks, in turn, why the answer can be multiple and none at the same time.

More to the point, my discussion about *Othello* focuses on the delineation of the protagonist's 'sonic identity', meaning that his crucial traits, as widely

[1] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2006.

investigated by Shakespeare scholars, find a coherent and deepened expression when closely looking at 'Othello's sound'.[2] By focusing on the sounds recalled by Othello in his speeches, but also on his rhetoric and, more broadly, on the sonic imagery that Shakespeare employs in the entire play, this chapter seeks to provide a missing tile that still needs to be added when recreating the mosaic that is Othello. As stressed by Ernst Anselm Joachim Honigmann, *Othello* is a play "so devised that its characters and the theatre audience cannot explain all that happens, and consequently the 'need to know' survives to the end".[3] I suggest that not only is the 'need to know' something that survives to the end, but that it also goes beyond the play itself; the 'need to know' flows without aiming to reach a specific final solution, it has to be considered as an expanding process of investigation moving through space and time.

The puzzle Shakespeare was able to create through *Othello* is still appealing today because it surpasses the boundaries of the play in terms of space and time, and, exactly like a growing mosaic, it presents more and more complex motifs when carried *through* different contexts. In this expanding process, until now, little attention has been given to the specific participation of auditory elements to the question 'who is Othello?': sound as part of the mosaic has not been completely neglected, yet it has never been fully merged in the design engendered by Othello's puzzling identity.

Among the most representative studies to be recalled here, G. Wilson Knight's *The Wheel of Fire* prepared the ground for a vivid understanding of the centrality of sound in *Othello*.[4] His description of the protagonist's language as "*Othello* Music" has been pivotal for the discussion of the entire play as hinged on contrasts such as harmony/disharmony, concord/discord, tuned/untuned.[5]

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[2] 'Othello's sound' is to be considered here as an echo and, at the same time, as an adjustment of G. Wilson Knight's renowned expression "*Othello* music" with respect to the protagonist's language style. See Knight, G.W., *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearian Tragedy*, Methuen & Co., 1949.

[3] "Introduction", in Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Ernst Anselm Joachim Honigmann, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 25.

[4] G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, cit.

[5] *Ibid*., pp. 109-135.

These are constituents of the tragedy of *Othello* that, as mentioned before, is imbued with uncertainty and contradictory characters. Although Knight's perspective was not programmatically sound-oriented, his discussion of Othello's speeches in terms of music exhorted a sort of 'acoustic reading' of the tragedy which was further developed by others. Joel Fineman, for example, focuses on the pressing sound of [o:] in *Othello*,[6] later echoed in Bruce R. Smith's "O-factor";[7] the first, in discussing, among other concepts, the theme of desire in *Othello*, the latter in adopting acoustemology with respect to Othello's "aural mark of African identity".[8] Both studies appear to have been crucial for "The greedy ear in *Othello*", a reading of the tragedy by Wes Folkerth to which this dissertation owes a lot, since Folkerth's *The Sound of Shakespeare* was the first attempt to build a conversation between Sound Studies and Shakespeare theatre.[9]

The critical readings of Shakespeare's *Othello* mentioned above, the perspectives they offer, the concepts developed through them, represent a pivotal contribution to the interdisciplinary approach adopted in this dissertation, therefore, particularly in this chapter, they are taken into careful consideration. Indeed, although these scholars strongly pointed out the participation of sound in *Othello*, further, revised issues need to be addressed, especially considering the developments concerning Sound Studies in the last decades. Such issues relate to the renewed views we can formulate through sound with respect to the character of Othello, his performativity, his identity, and, more broadly, by *listening* to the entire tragedy. The aim, therefore, is to engage in the aforementioned 'expanding process' and the intrinsic 'need to know' of this play with an attentive ear, offering the additional hypothesis of thinking about Othello's identity, also and crucially, as a matter of sound.

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[6] Joel Fineman, "The Sound of O in Othello: The Real of the Tragedy of Desire", in *October*, Vol. 45, 1988, pp. 76-96.

[7] Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending the O-Factor"*, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 334.

[9] Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare*, Routledge, 2002.

The imagery of the Morris Dance and *Othello*

Figure 8 The Betley Window (1550-1621)

The 18th-century edition of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, *Part I*, by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, included final notes written by George Tollet, who, when describing the custom of the May-Games in England, wrote:

> We are authorized by the poets, Ben Jonson and Drayton, to call some of the representations on my window Morris Dancers, though I am uncertain whether it exhibits one Moorish personage: as none of them have black or tawny faces, nor

do they brandish swords or staves in their hands, nor are they, in their shirts adorned with ribbons.[10]

The window mentioned by Tollet is now preserved at the Victoria and Albert Museum, but very little is known about its history. What is certain is that it comes from Betley Hall, in Staffordshire, originally built around 1621, then inherited by Tollet. Later, the building was demolished and rebuilt in 1783, the glass preserved and finally removed in 1922, sold at auction, and later installed at Leigh Manor, Shropshire.[11] The window has become a fascinating object especially for those interested in the medieval and early modern English folklore, mainly the morris dance, of which, likewise, little is known.[12]

The figures depicted on the window have been associated by many, not least by Tollet himself, with morris dancers. E. J. Nicol, taking his clue from Tollet's description, portrays them as follows, from the top left to the bottom right: the Fool; a nobleman or a Morisco; a Fleming or a Spaniard; a gentleman of fortune; the Maypole; the Minstrel; a clown; the Hobby Horse; the Lover; the Bavian fool; Maid Marian or the Queen of May; the Friar.[13] All these characters, or at least some of them, were usually involved in morris dances as a folkloristic custom typical of 16th-century festivities, such as that of May Day (the 1st of May).

Nicol, as well as Tollet, by focusing on the costumes worn by the figures, dates the window around 1500, though even if the morris dance can be dated back

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[10] *The dramatic writings of Will. Shakspere, with the notes of all the various commentators; printed complete from the best editions of Sam. Johnson and Geo. Steevens Uolume the Eleventh. Containing king richard the second. King Henry IV. Part 1*, Vol. 11, printed for, and under the direction of, John Bell, British Library, 1785-1788, p. 148.

[11] A picture of the Betley Window appears on the cover of Cecil J. Sharp's *The Morris Book* (1907). Sharp is considered as the first collector and revivalist of the morris dance, his work was crucial for the recovery of British folk song and dances, mainly the morris one, of which, in his book, 95 discovered melodies are collected.

[12] Whilst the date of the window itself is controversial, we know that the concept of the Morris Dance goes back to the Medieval period at least, as it can be seen in the various usage reported in the OED from the fifteenth century.

[13] E. J. Nicol, "Some Notes on the History of Betley Window", in *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1953, pp. 59-67.

to those years, there is no guarantee that the window is that old.[14] Anyway, our interest here lies in particular in the popularity of the morris dance, its history, and the cultural impact it had on popular theatre's stage as well as Royal Court, in rural contexts as much as in urban ones. By recalling the imagery inspired by this dance, visually but especially aurally, I aim to show that Shakespeare's *Othello* includes some peculiar elements of the morris dance. Although in *Othello* there is no direct reference to any morris dance, nor is it staged or mentioned in the text (while it is present in other plays written by him) I argue that the play might well be considered as analog to the morris dance. To the purpose of describing such analogy, it is fruitful here to recover the historical, as well as the cultural, and aesthetic features of this folkloristic dance which then will be matched with the imagery permeating Shakespeare's *Othello*.

To trace the exact origin of the Morris Dance is a limitless endeavour. Indeed, many scholars have tried to pin down theories about how and where this dance originally came from, but the failure of such investigations, interested mainly in favoring one theory over the other, lies in the fact that the morris dance developed and evolved in a variety of forms, contexts, and places, all of which are equally to be considered as particular and universal at once. John Forrest might be considered as the most authoritative voice when reviewing the history of the morris dance. Indeed, he himself was aware of the problems with tracing one 'true' origin of the dance when writing his own *History of Morris Dancing, 1458-1750*, a book that took him over thirty years of thinking and searching where he states that:

> What I have tried to do here is put those sources together in a way that they belong naturally, and put a framework around them so that they can tell their own story. It was the sources themselves that first pulled me away from that old chestnut, 'What are the origins of morris dancing?' — which is not a very good question anyway — to the much more interesting study of how morris dances have evolved and developed over the centuries. Trying to discover the 'origins'

[14] In several occasions, it has been suggested that the decoration on the Betley window could have been inspired, or at least that it shares, the same subject of the famous *Ornamental Engraving with Morris Dancers* (ca. 1440/45–1503) by Israhel van Meckenem.

> of any long-standing and complex tradition is undoubtedly a lost cause from the outset.[15]

Taking into consideration such assertions, to the purposes of delineating the morris dance tradition, it is worth mentioning the theories of its origins which appear to be the most suggestive or commonly accepted ones, being also the ones which enhance certain features of the dance, crucial for the association I envisage with *Othello*.

Probably the most speculative, but also alluring to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholars, is the theory that places the origins of the morris dance in classical antiquity. Coming directly from Crete, the *saltatio phyrrica,* or simply the *phyrrica*, was an enactment of war battles in the form of a dance which apparently was very close to the morris dance. Invented by Phyrrus, this dance was to be performed in armour as a war dance, and its association to the morris dance was first suggested by Philemon Holland in 1601 when translating the works of Pliny the Younger.[16] Although strongly conjectural, there is indeed one trait that the phyrric and the morris dance have in common: war. As I will show later, Morris dances could also consist of choreographed war battles, also known as *sword dance*, which, together with other typologies of dance, was considered a morris dance.[17]

Another hypothesis commonly shared yet slightly variable, based more on the etymology of the name *Morris* and its variants *moreszka*, *moriskentaz*, *moresca*, *morisco*, *moresque*, as summarily derived from *Moorish*, is the one that traces the origin of the dance in Spain, linked to the moors, and later imported in England. This theory has been supported, among others, by Christopher Wase, who, in 1654, implied that the music and the dance of the morris tradition, being exotic and wild, were to be considered "alla moresca", meaning in the style of the

[15] John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing, 1438-1750*, University of Toronto Press, 1999, p. xv.

[16] *Ibid.* p. 5.

[17] The morris dance doesn't indicate one single style of dance, it is instead a term used to broadly categorize a variety of dances sharing some very similar features.

moors.[18] Similarly, as Sujata Iyengar discusses, the Spaniards called *moriscos* those moors who had converted to Christianity, and the Moorish/Morris dance or *moresca*, was a choreographed representation of the collision between the Muslim Moor and the Catholic Spaniard.[19] How then the morris dance travelled from Spain to England is another conundrum, but here is sufficient to mention Francis Peck's commentary on John Milton's masque *Comus*, where he asserts that it was John of Gaunt, on his way back to England, who imported the morris dance in the fourteenth century.[20] Another supposition is that the morris dance arrived in England with travelers from Spain such as the Gypsies, a hypothesis that offers a possible explanation for the face-blackening which seemed to be practiced by the dancers when performing a morris dance.[21]

Everything considered, despite the difficulties of tracing the origins of the morris dance, its presence in England and all over Europe during the early modern age evolved in different forms and contexts. In England, it merged with the popular tradition, becoming part of the English folk culture, and still today the morris dance is performed on several occasions in a variety of styles, changing from place to place on the island itself.

Concerning the early modern English morris dance, putting aside all theories on its origin, we can synthetize its definition as a popular dance which was performed in both rural and courtly contexts, danced in a variety of styles involving groups of people or individual artists, choreographed as processional or stationary.[22] The morris dance became extremely popular during the 16th century

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[18] Christopher Wase, *Grati Falisci Cynegeticon, or, A Poem of Hunting, by Gratius the Faliscan, Englished and Illustrated by Christopher Wase*, Charles Adams, 1654, p. 76.

[19] Sujata Iyengar, "Moorish Dancing in The Two Noble Kinsmen", in *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 20, 2007, pp. 85-107.

[20] Francis Peck, *New Memoirs of the Life and Poetical Works of Mr John Milton*, 1740, pp. 135-136.

[21] See Sujata Iyengar, *Moorish Dancing*, cit. but it is necessary here to specify that, although the face-blackening is recognized by almost everyone as a practice involved in the morris dance, in Natália Pikli, *Shakespeare's hobby-horse and early modern popular culture*, Routledge, 2022, such conviction is challenged and considered untrue due to a lack of precise data.

[22] The differences between the morris dance performed at court and the one performed in commercial theatres are deeply discussed in both John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*,

and at the beginning of the 17th century, when it merged with other English traditional figures, then involved in the dance, such as the Robin Hood characters. It soon became a customary dance during the May Games, though not exclusively, in fact, it was performed on other occasions too, mostly outdoor (during festivals or courtly entertainments) but also indoor (particularly in aristocratic contexts). Mainly choreographed as a group dance, it could also be performed solo, or in a circle around a maypole. When danced in group, it featured at least 4 to 6 men, probably with darkened faces, wearing bells on their legs, waving handkerchiefs or coats' long sleeves, and sometimes wielding swords or sticks, dancing in a very energetic way with high leaps. The music accompanying the morris dance usually, but not exclusively, had a binary rhythm. It was played on pipe and tabor and it could have two or three repeating motifs, always sounding energetic and vigorous, enriched, at every step of the dancers, by the sounds of the bells attached to their legs. Dancers, sometimes arranged in two lines facing each other, could enact a battle or tell a story of courtly love. In fact, they embodied several characters. The most common were those depicted also on the Betley window shown above: a fool interacting with the audience, a hobby-horse, a cross-dressed lady, a lover, a friar, gentlemen, and even soldiers in the case of a sword dance.

As mentioned, morris dances could also be performed solo, indeed, one of the most popular sources we have, with reference to the morris dance, is the pamphlet

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cit. and John R. Ziegler, "We Are All Made: The Socioeconomics of The Two Noble Kinsmen's Anti-Masque Morris Dance", in McCulloch, Lynsey and Shaw, Brandon (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Dance*, 2019, pp. 133-154. In this dissertation though, the morris dance is discussed in a broader sense and with different purposes. So, with respect to the different contexts (that of the Court and that of the Theatre) where the morris dance was performed, the assertions made by Pikli on commenting Forrest's study are taken here as a leading approach: "Forrest sometimes loses sight of this synchronic approach and argues for a historical evolution and a one-way geographical relocation of the morris dance from an original courtly setting to urban Midsummer Watches till the 1550s, then from country church ales to the public stage and other rural locations, and finally, to private venues, without seriously commenting upon *the co-existence of several forms* and possible parallel developments in different venues." Natália Pikli, *Shakespeare's hobby-horse*, cit., p. 40. (My italics).

published by Will Kemp in 1600 with the title of *Kemps nine daies wonder. Performed in a daunce from London to Norwich. Containing the plaeasure, paines and kinde entertainment of William Kemp between London and that Citty in his late Morrice. Wherein is somewhat set downe worth note; to reprooue the slaunders spred of him: many things merry, nothing hurtfull. Written by himselfe to satisfie his friends.* Kemp, in this pamphlet doesn't actually describe the morris dance, in fact, the text is more to be considered as an autobiographical account of his tour from London to Norwich. Despite that, some details do give us information about the dance, its popularity, and other pieces of evidence.

As Forrest points out, the loss of particulars regarding the dance itself, in Kemp's description, indicates that the morris dance was very well known at the time. Every reader of the pamphlet would have been familiar with the forms and steps of the dance, making it unnecessary for Kemp to linger on further details.[23] The interesting aspect of the text is that through the anecdotes reported by Kemp, we are able to understand that the morris dance must have been extremely lively, almost exhausting, without a real beginning nor ending since here and there, along the way, someone tries to challenge Kemp in the dance, and most of the time without any success. Moreover, even if the morris dance was mostly performed by men or cross-dressed boys (as when impersonating Maid Marian or the Lady of May), it was not unusual to see women taking part in the choreography. In Kemp's account, women step in, dancing, on two occasions, and Kemp is particularly complimentary with respect to one of them, writing in the episode of the Sudbury Butcher that "she had a good eare, daunst truely".[24]

Hints on the morris dance can be inferred also by the woodcut (fig.2) on the title page of Kemp's short pamphlet.

[23] See John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, cit.

[24] William Kemp, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*, Nicholas Ling, 1600, B4*r*.

Figure 9 Will Kemp's *Nine Daies Wonder, 1600* (woodcut)

The illustration shows Will Kemp performing a morris dance to the music provided by his companion and tabor-player Thomas Slye. While the latter is simply wearing average clothes of the time, Kemp's fashion is particularly indicative of the morris dance. He, in fact, is wearing a coat, typical of morris dancers, with long sleeves which were supposed to whirl around, following the dancer's movements. Coats with such sleeves were not necessarily used when performing a morris dance, and actually, in Kemp's pamphlet it is also said that a woman, joining him in the dance, was waving napkins instead; indeed, handkerchiefs or ribbons were traditionally used for the morris dance.

Another interesting detail in the illustration is that Kemp's calves are covered with crotal bells. From the point of view of sound, even if the music for the dance was played only on a few instruments, the morris dance must have been a loud, ear-catching performance. In fact, I argue that the spirit of this dance was perfectly expressed not only through its vigorous steps, but especially through its music, sound, and noise. When we think, for example, of the sword dance, the

sound of clashing swords (or sticks), and bells, and the drum, and most probably the shouts of the dancers, must have reached a good allusive representation of the sonic imagery of the battle, something I will discuss later in detail with respect to *Othello* and its analogies to the morris dance.

Kemp's tour was not a unique, isolated experience, indeed, records of similar morris dancers' tours have been registered before Kemp's, their purposes mostly being that of raising money.[25] Seemingly, Kemp's enterprise and the publication of his pamphlet were also primarily a means of profit and self-publicity. There is not so much information about Will Kemp's life, although we know that, at the time, he enjoyed a good deal of popularity, both as a dancer and as an actor. For several years, until 1599, he was the most renowned fool/clown of the Chamberlain's Men, playing roles such as Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1*.[26] His career was extremely tied to the theatre, even if he was notoriously known as a dancer and a jig-maker.

What interests us here, is that Kemp's morris, and his tour, shed light on the theatrical aspect of this specific dance. In this sense, I share Forrest's point of view on the connection between the morris dance and early modern English theatre, particularly with respect to Kemp's text, which Forrest comments on as follows:

> Strictly speaking William Kemp's morris dance from London to Norwich in 1600 was not a stage performance, but it was so intimately connected with the theatrical milieu of the late Elizabethan period that it is best understood in that context. In turn, analysis of the dance sheds light on the stage performance of the time.[27]

Although the connection seems to be suggested predominantly because of Kemp's career as an actor, and his popularity as such, the morris dance *per se* can be strictly associated with stage performances. Except for the absence of words to be

[25] See Natália Pikli, *Shakespeare's hobby-horse*, cit., pp. 79-80.

[26] See David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[27] John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, cit., p. 236.

recited, morris dancers actually played characters in their performance and, we could say, they even told or recalled a story by enacting battles or courtly love tales.

Theatre and morris dance also faced the same strong disapproval from puritans. Among the most prominent voices railing against morris dances, we find that of the anti-theatricalist Stephen Gosson who, in a passage of his *Plays confuted in fiue actions* (1582) associates theatre with morris dancing and other artistic practices as forms of disgraceful, carnal pleasure:

> For the eye béeside the beautie of the houses, and the Stages, hee sendeth in Gearish apparell maskes, vauting, tumbling, daunsing of gigges, galiardes, morisces, hobbi horses; showing of iudgeling castes, nothing forgot, that might serue to set out the matter, with pompe, or ra|uish the beholders with varietie of ple|asure. To séeke this, is, to spend our studies in things that are meere naturall, to spende our time so is to be carnally minded, but to be carnally minded is death […][28]

Probably the strongest attack to the early modern morris dance comes from Philip Stubbes, though, whose writings not only provide us with an idea of the customary morris dancing performed during the May games, but also let us perceive how, in their interpretation, puritans condemned the pagan, or infernal ideology hiding behind the morris dance. Indeed, dancers are systematically associated with devilish, wicked people, serving unholy heathens through their performances described by Stubbes as evil rituals. Interestingly, a great deal of this ideology is connected specifically with the sounds produced by morris dancers while performing:

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[28] Stephen Gosson, *Playes confuted in fiue actions prouing that they are not to be suffred in a Christian common weale, by the waye both the cauils of Thomas Lodge, and the play of playes, written in their defence, and other obiections of players frendes, are truely set downe and directlye aunsweared*, London, Thomas Gosson, 1582. Retrieved from Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/a01951.0001.001/76?page=root;size=125;vid=6069;view=text, [accessed 4th December, 2021].

> Thus all things set in order, then haue they their Hobby-horses, dragons & other Antiques, togither with their *baudie Pipers* and *thundering Drummers* to strike vp the deuils daunce withall, then marche these heathen company towards the Church and Church-yard, *their pipers pipeing*, *their drummers thundring*, their stumps daūcing, *their bels iyngling*, their handkerches swinging about their heds like madmen, their hobbie horses and other monsters skirmishing amongst the route: & in this sorte they go to the Church (I say) & into the Church (though the Minister be at praier or preaching) dancing & swinging heir hadkercheifs ouer their heds, in the Church, like deuils incarnate wt such a *confused noise*, yt *no man can hear his own voice*.[29]

The auditory experience described above must have been perceived indeed as loud and violent (or at least abrupt), but the association of the morris dance with the Devil is not only suggested by Stubbes alone: it was commonplace. Others, too, specifically associated the extravagance of colors, movements, and above all, of sounds with devilish 'instruments'. As Bruce Smith underlines, the sounds mostly linked with morris dance were produced through bells, pipes, drums, and fiddles, each one bearing several cultural meanings and associations. The fiddling, for example, was "a form of noisemaking, of percussion. Of all the instruments in the morris, it seems to have been most closely associated with the Devil".[30]

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[29] Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses contayning a discouerie, or briefe summarie of such notable vices and imperfections, as now raigne in many Christian countreyes of the worlde: but (especiallie) in a verie famous ilande called Ailgna: together, with most fearefull examples of Gods iudgementes, executed vpon the wicked for the same, aswell in Ailgna of late, as in other places, elsewhere. Verie godly, to be read of all true Christians, euerie where: but most needefull, to be regarded in Englande. Made dialogue-wise, by Phillip Stubbes. Seene and allowed, according to order*, London, Richard Iones, 1583, (my italics). Retrieved from Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A13086.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext, [accessed 4th December, 2021]

[30] Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, cit., p.143.

Another reference in Stubbes' collection of "abuses" is made to the morris dance when condemning music. Specifically, when lamenting the scarcity of good music and minstrels, he writes that:

> all good minstrelles, sober and chast musicions (speking of suche drunken sockets, and bawdye parasits as rāge the Cuntreyes, ryming and singing of vncleane, corrupt, and filthie songs in Tauernes, Ale-houses, Innes, and other publique assemblies) may daūce ye wild Moris thorow a néedles eye. For how should thei bere chaste minds, séeing that their exercyse is the pathway to all vncleanes.[31]

Such views of sinful, dirty, diabolical forms of music and dancing are cohesive with the puritans' idea of theatre and stage performances. Therefore, it is quite obvious that there was a clear association of the morris dance with theatre performances, although, as showed so far, at least in their beginning, these artistic forms seemed to be quite distinct. Of course, puritans' attacks to the morris dance also fostered a sort of rebellious answer by the playwrights, who, especially from the 1620s on, began to include more and more morris dances in their plays (e.g. *The Witch of Edmonton*).[32]

In spite of that, the spectacular aspect of the morris dance and, more broadly, of dance in general, so aptly embedded in the theatrical context, was not surprising, nor new in the early modern period. In fact, dance was regularly interposed in the plays staged in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres. Dance occupied a central role in masques, which usually were also included in commercial theatre plays as well. Particularly in anti-masques, professional dancers were employed to perform specific choreographies.

Shakespeare himself makes use of masque, anti-masque, and revels on stage where dances are performed; such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry VIII*, and *The Tempest*. But in all these dancing performances there is no specific reference to which kind of dance the audience is seeing. An exception in Shakespeare's theatre has to be taken into consideration though: in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, written

[31] Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses*, cit.

[32] John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, cit., pp. 244-245.

with Fletcher, a morris dance is specifically addressed and performed in the play. The occurrence has been largely discussed and here we are more interested in the presence of the morris dance *on stage* rather than in the interpretation of its function inside *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.[33] This example indicates that, being a spectacular event, the morris dance had a theatrical potentiality that was not underestimated by early modern playwrights. Certainly, they were well aware that all the crucial features of the theatrical performance could be found in the morris dance as well: characters, costumes, music, gestures, cross-dressing, and the presence of an audience.

In this specific case, we can imply that not only did Shakespeare have knowledge of the morris dance, but that he was aware of the efficacy of this specific dance's spectacularity. More to the point, what I suggest is that Shakespeare was able to anatomize and isolate all the constituent features of the morris dance (its sound, its objects, costumes, characters, meanings) and employ them in a play such as *Othello*. In that tragedy, indeed, we can find all the elements of the morris dance disseminated in the text and participating, in their own way, in the impact and the fashioning of the play itself.

In *Othello* we have a 'moor' as a protagonist, and this is a first direct echo of the morris dance which, as shown, appears to have been called so after the 'moors'. But the tragedy's analogies to the morris dance can also be found elsewhere. Interestingly, almost all of these analogies are condensed, for example, in the few lines I will consider as my starting point, expressed by Bianca (4.1) when talking to Cassio:

> BIANCA: Let the *devil* and his dam *haunt* you! What
> did you mean by that same *handkerchief* you gave
> me even now? I was a fine *fool* to take it – I must
> take out the work! A likely piece of work, that you
> should find it in your chamber and know not who
> left it there! This is some minx's *token*, and I must

[33] See John R. Ziegler, "We Are All Made: The Socioeconomics of The Two Noble Kinsmen's Anti-Masque Morris Dance", in McCulloch, Lynsey and Shaw, Brandon (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Dance*, 2019, pp. 133-154.

take out the work? There, give it your *hobby-horse*;
wheresoever you had it, I'll take out no work on't! [4.1.147-154][34]

Although there is clearly no sign at all of a morris dance taking place, in these lines we find the words "devil", "haunt", "handkerchief", "fool", "token", and "hobby-horse": all pertain to the morris dance imagery. Some of these words instantly remind us of the characters involved in the morris dance such as the fool or the hobby-horse, while others recall morris-dance objects, like the handkerchief also used by morris dancers. [35] Suggestively, the words "devil", "haunt", and "token" echo the puritans' description of the morris dance. Shakespeare is apparently playing with it, or implicitly answering to the puritans through Bianca's voice, that is the voice of a prostitute – one might suggest, what better voice than hers to speak against or just to provoke puritans?

Hence, in just eight lines, Shakespeare uses six words that can be associated with the morris dance, and although this could be just a coincidence, or considered as a mere supposition, still one could find it interestingly uncanny, especially when these terms are, actually, deeply representative of the whole tragedy.

Concerning the dimension of sound, to think that *Othello* echoes the morris dance, helps us interpret and define the soundscape of the play itself. Morris dances, as described so far, sound chaotic, extremely noisy, and somehow

[34] For the present and the following quotations see Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Ernst Anselm Joachim Honigmann, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2014. [My Italics].

[35] The handkerchief, for example, is a crucial object for the play to evolve into a tragedy. It has a strong visual potential, too. It is suggestive to think of it, with respect to the analogy between *Othello* and the morris dance, as actually 'dancing' from one character's hand to another, and also metaphorically, in the intense conversation between Othello and Desdemona (III, 4), or, in Othello's furious lines where the word "handkerchief" in the text, seems to work as an actual element of the 'choreography of Othello's histeria', closing with him falling, exhausted. Here the full quotation: "Handkerchief! Confessions! Handkerchief!/ - To confess, and be hanged for his labour! First to be/ hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature/ would not invest herself in such shadowing passion/ without some instruction. It is not words that shakes/ me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is't possible?/ Confess! Handkerchief! O devil! [*He falls in a trance*] [4.1.37-43].

haunting. It can be argued that the melodies of the morris, being suitable for cheerful occasions such as festivals, were supposed to convey a joyful atmosphere. Despite that, when considering the morris dance in its entirety (not only the painted faces, the energetic waving of colorful handkerchiefs, the effort that dancers put into it, but also the sounds of bells, the shouting voices, the stamping steps, the beating drums), its supposed cheerfulness actually verges euphoria; in fact, in my view, the morris dance is rather about creating and expressing a moment of frenzy, very close to some sort of delirium one could say. Indeed, it is most probably because of its exaggerated loudness or, to use B. Smith's words, its "pandemonium of sounds"[36] that puritans always associated the morris to the Devil.

In *Othello*, Shakespeare is able to convey a very similar feeling throughout the entire play. The tragedy starts in *medias res* and also in a very chaotic way, especially from the point of view of sound. Roderigo and Iago create a soundscape that is alarming, erratic, and turbulent when they wake up Brabantio in the middle of the night. To enhance this frenzy, Shakespeare juxtaposes silence and noise, so that the aural context is precisely set at the beginning as charged sounds soaring suddenly. Such juxtaposition is also suggested metaphorically by the very first words between Roderigo and Iago, which address silence as a form of 'not listening':

> RODERIGO: *Tush*, *never tell me*, I take it much unkindly
> That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
> As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.
> IAGO: 'Sblood, but you'll *not hear me*. [1.1.1-4][37]

In this beginning, particular attention is placed on misunderstanding, as [*mis*]listening also works as a call to silence. The audience is invited to stay quiet and carefully follow what is happening on stage since Iago is introducing his dislike for Othello. When Roderigo and Iago appear, they are in the middle of the

[36] Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustemology of Early Modern England*, cit., p.140.

[37] My italics.

night, so the soundscape is only made up of their voices, but just after some seventy lines, everything suddenly changes: "Timorous accent and dire yell" [1.1.74] awake Brabantio, since Roderigo and Iago are shouting and the sound of bells is alarming every citizen. The aural context set as the prelude of the play is very similar to the soundscape characterizing the beginning of *The Tempest* discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, B. Smith suggests that *Othello* is one of those plays where Shakespeare uses a "decentering" strategy with respect to the aural dimension of the tragedy, and invites us also to observe that the conversations on stage swiftly move from private to public without giving immediate information about the plot or the characters involved in the scene.[38]

The presence of the bells' sound, and the chaotic soundscape at the beginning of *Othello*, can be seen as an analog of the morris dance. More to the point, many references are made by the characters to the infernal imagery of pandemonium as the implied reason for such soundscape. In fact, the connection with the morris dance here has to do more with Shakespeare's adopting the puritans' idea of the morris dance, expressed by specific characters who rail against the protagonist of the tragedy. In this sense, Othello, as a character, is the embodiment of the morris dance, and it is precisely by focusing on the protagonist, rather than on the entire play, that the analogy with the morris dance results cohesive.

Bearing in mind Stubbes' and Gosson's comments on the morris dance mentioned before, a parallel to their association of the dancers with the Devil is repeatedly proposed in *Othello*, especially (though not exclusively) in the first part of the play, when Othello is charged with seducing and abducting Desdemona. Throughout the entire first act of the tragedy, Othello is addressed as a "Barbary horse" [1.1.110], a "lascivious Moor" [1.1.124], an "extravagant wheeling stranger" [1.1.134], and other expressions are used that can be associated with the morris dancers from the puritan perspective. Iago's lines, fomenting the frenzy of the moment by yelling at Brabantio, are very representative of the association of Othello with the Devil, and the similarity to the puritans' description of morris dancers is evident:

[38] See Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, cit., p. 277.

IAGO: Even now, now, very now, an *old black ram*
Is tupping your white ewe! Arise, Arise,
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell
Or else *the devil* will make a grandsire of you,
Arise I say! [1.1.87-91][39]

But the link between the morris dance and *Othello* can be further observed in other features of the play, especially when focusing on sound. B. Smith describes the morris dance as a performance inextricably linked to rhythm. Indeed, melodies for morris dancing seemed not to be as fundamental as the beat to mark the rhythm which was crucial for the dancers to keep the pace. So, percussion is of pivotal importance, and at the same time, it is the perfect expression of the dance's noisemaking quality and its connection with the martial world.

Taking Barten Holyday's *Technogamia* (1617),[40] as a starting point, Smith makes us notice that:

> What's needed, the dancers imply, is not so much a melody as a marker of rhythm. "Tuning" the morris is sounding out the beat. When the human voice joins the morris, it does so as a percussive instrument. Who needs a tune? What is required is [o:] [o:] [o:]. To the tabor's tap tap tap, the pipe's pip pip pip, and the gut-string's grate grate grate might possibly have been added the clap clap clap of clubs, as the morris dancers faced one another. And thwacked the staffs they carried.[41]

In *Othello*, a similar percussive quality can be traced especially when comparing Smith's "[o:] [o:] [o:]" with Joel Fineman's "sound of O in Othello".[42]

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[39] My italics.

[40] This play includes the performance of a morris dance as an interlude, although it wasn't a successful play, it can be considered as the one starting the trend of specifically including morris dancing in the plot. For further information see John Forrest, *The History of Morris Dancing*, cit., pp. 242-325.

[41] Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, cit., p. 143.

[42] Joel Fineman, *The Sound of O in Othello*, cit.

Although Fineman in his article is interested mainly in the psychological characterization of Othello, and so the sound of 'O' is read by him as language performing "hollowness", he also states that "this peculiar voicing is sounded out throughout the entirety of the play".[43] This sound of 'O', as we can understand from Fineman's article, works somehow as a percussive instrument, in the sense that its presence in the text is obsessively recurring. On this line, I argue that we think of *Othello* as a play having the percussive quality of the morris dance. In fact, Othello is portrayed mainly as a soldier, and the whole rhythm of the tragedy expresses the military theme which is present in almost every scene of the play. In early modern theatre, drums were the *sine qua non* of staged battles, so the imagery of war was inextricably bound to percussion instruments. *Othello* is no exception, even if its percussive quality is not achieved through actual drumming but metaphorically, through obsessive repetitions of certain sounds or words.[44] It is also fascinating to ponder on the haunting feeling of the "music without sound" evoked by *Othello's* clown's line "If you have any music that may not be heard,/ to't again." [3.1.15-16] described in Fineman's interpretation of this line.[45] Indeed, this music without sound finds a parallel in Smith's quotation given above

[43] Joel Fineman, *The Sound of O in Othello*, cit., p. 87.

[44] Notice how repetitions are much employed by Shakespeare in *Othello*, mostly to achieve thematic effects. An example could be Cassio's lines: "Reputation, reputation reputation! O, I have/ lost my reputation, I have lost the immortal part of/ myself – and what remains is bestial. My reputation,/ Iago, my reputation!" [2.3.258-261]

[45] Fineman observes that 'the music without sound' can be interpreted as a noise signaling Othello's *coitus interruptus* as connected with the wind musicians (see J. Fineman, *The Sound of O in Othello*, cit. pp.92-93). However, as fascinating as this interpretation is, the 'music without sound', particularly when associated with the wind music, actually entails different themes linked to the early modern hermeneutics of sound and music, to the notion of harmony envisaged in the microcosm/macrocosm analogy. Therefore, I would rather suggest that the scene Fineman is referring to, and, more specifically, the clown's lines, have to do with the dichotomy harmony/disharmony that Shakespeare widely uses in his plays, not least in *Othello* where the dichotomy is expressed in terms of tuning/untuning mirroring Othello vs. Iago. See, for example, J. Ross Lawrence, "Shakespeare's 'Dull Clown' and Symbolic Music", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1996, pp. 107-128.

concerning the lack of a tune and the unnecessary presence of a melody when performing a morris dance.

The analogy between *Othello* and the morris dance is traceable in specific features characterizing the protagonist, too. Of course, as we are repeatedly reminded in the text, Othello is a 'Moor'. His origins and appearance are stressed over and over throughout the play, not only by the other characters, but also by Othello himself (see, for example: "begrimed and black/ As mine own face" [3.3.386]). The fact that Othello is constantly addressed as the 'moor', or with clear references to his dark skin, establishes a visual association with the morris dancers, who, as mentioned before, used to blacken their face when performing, not to mention that one of the theories for the origins of the morris dance is directly connected with the moors or *moriscos*. Another word that Othello uses with a certain emphasis to name himself is "O fool, fool, fool!" [5.2.322], which is also stressed by Emilia's calling him a "murderous coxcomb"[46], and also by Iago's reference to a "baboon" [1.3.317];[47] again in this case, as we have seen, the figure of the fool is omnipresent in the morris dances.[48]

Although, as shown, the analogy between *Othello* and the morris dance can be suggested through the juxtaposition of some features shared by both of them, my insisting on this analogy finds its most cohesive *raison d'être* not in aesthetic elements, but, especially, in terms of the meanings arising from both the play and the dance. In fact, I argue that in creating the character of Othello Shakespeare couldn't but have in mind the morris dance as a representation of war and otherness at the same time.

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[46] As explained in the notes of the Arden edition of Shakespeare, *Othello*, cit. the word 'coxcomb' indicates a hat that professional fools used to wore.

[47] The term 'baboon' appears in Shakespeare's plays only 6 times. It is believed to be also a character, similar to that of the fool, involved in the morris dance (usually with the variant name of 'Bavian'). Interestingly, one of these few occurrences (in Shakespeare) of the term can be found in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, precisely in the morris dance scene.

[48] The parallel between *Othello* and the morris dance has also been noticed by François Laroque who suggests very briefly that there are some analogies such as the ones included also in this dissertation. See François Laroque, *Shakespeare's Festive World: Elizabethan Seasonal Entertainment and the Professional Stage*, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Morris dances, which included also sword dances (or stick dances), usually reenacted a sort of battle. Be it the reenactment of the Moors expelled from Spain, or the Crusades battles, the dance worked as a story-telling device for war tales. In *Othello*, war is *the* crucial motif linked to the protagonist; it is actually the only trait that the character seems to be sure about as a constituent of his own identity. I will discuss later in detail how the process of building an identity based on military life affects Othello, but as for now, it is sufficient to state that he recognizes himself first and foremost as a war hero, an image, probably the only one, which he firmly tries to convey to the Venetian society, and by extension, to the audience, too.

Here we are specifically interested in the sounds of both *Othello* and the morris dance, all of which are representative of war. From the beginning, in fact, as shown before, the soundscape of *Othello* is characterized as chaotic and somehow explosive. Actually, everywhere in the text, war, (or the military identity of the protagonist), is described through a collection of sounds, primarily recalled by Othello's own story-telling, that are described by Iago as "a bombast circumstance/ Horribly stuffed with epithets of war" [1.1.12-13]. Othello, indeed, in his most vivid descriptions of war, does not linger on the deeds of his battles, nor does he describe physical efforts, trauma, or military strategy: he rather remembers his experiences on the battlefield by recovering the sounds of war, like "the nighing steed and shrill trump,/ The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear-pearcing fife" [3.3.354-355] or "the rude throats" of cannons [3.3.358]. Hence, both Othello and the morris dance tell stories of war *through* sounds.

Moreover, the morris dance can be considered as involving structurally the relationship between self and 'the other'. On this matter, I agree with Sujata Iyengar's idea that playwrights using the morris dance on the Jacobean stage to render the unfamiliar familiar and vice versa.[49] Although Iyengar's discussion of the topic is specifically concerned with Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, her discussion of the morris dance, placed in a precise historical and social period, does apply to *Othello*, as well. Indeed, as Iyengar herself states:

[49] See Sujata Iynegar, *Moorish Dancing*, cit.

"Early in the seventeenth century, the morris dance is at once a quintessentially English tradition and a sharp encounter with the foreign".[50]

The encounter with the foreign is probably the theme most explored in *Othello* and the morris dance should be valued as participating in Shakespeare's configuration of this very theme. To turn something strange, foreign, unfamiliar into something recognizable, familiar, and part of one's culture as the morris dance is, I argue, a crucial topic in *Othello*.

The relevance of the morris dance in *Othello* described so far is a perfect starting point for the investigation of Othello's sonic identity that I am going to discuss in the second part of this chapter. As a concluding remark which launch us in the matter of Othello's identity, it is worth retrieving here B. Smith's view of the morris dance precisely as a practice of identity-formation:

> As a combination of combat and communion, morris dancing enacts the dynamics of male identity-formation in early modern England […] Affiliation is affirmed through antagonism; bodies move in opposition yet in synchrony. That ritual act takes place beyond language, at a point where music, ambient, sound, and the primal [o:] ring out together.[51]

Othello's sonic identity: a matter of rhetoric and sound

> There are two types of despair: one is the despair of willing not to be oneself, the other is the despair of willing to be oneself. The official heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies are men of passion who will not to be themselves—their passions, not unlike the humours of Jonson's characters, are the attempt to hide from themselves what they are.[52]

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[50] *Ibid.* p. 87.

[51] B. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, cit. pp. 145-146.

[52] W. H. Auden, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, edited by Arthur Kirsch, Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 553-554.

With these words, Auden describes the heroes of Shakespeare's great tragedies, in a lecture where he specifically discusses *Othello*. Auden recognizes and distinguishes two typologies of characters based on the acceptance and awareness of themselves. In Auden's view, while Othello is a desperate hero because he hides himself behind his passions, trying to be someone else; Iago, on the other hand, is desperately attached to what, or *who*, he is. Such a distinction needs to be approached in a more complex way, especially with respect to Othello. Actually, the relationship the latter has with his own identity is, for sure, more complicated than the one described by Auden. Othello is a character struggling with his own being, but how much he is aware of this struggle is not clear in the text. In this sense, the hero in *Othello* is not consciously *hiding* his true self; on the contrary, rather he is completely lost in the building of his own identity, erratically moving from being the hero to being a fallen hero and an anti-hero within the same tragedy. Therefore, I argue that Othello is actually swinging from one type of "desperation", as described by Auden, to the other: in the play he is perpetually negotiating between his "willing not to be oneself" and his "willing to be oneself". What is more, in each of these positions and in-between them, he always finds himself an outsider, the other, the unaccepted, which indeed is the true source of his despair.

Of course Othello's identity, his race, and his being an ambivalent, contradictory character, an embodiment of otherness, have been widely addressed by scholars from different perspectives.[53] And yet, focusing on the aural

[53] Literary criticism on *Othello* with respect to identity and race issues is boundless, some of the most influential critical approaches include formalism, psychoanalysis, character criticism, feminism, new historicism and so on. Among the most authoritative studies it is worth here to mentioning Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Macmillan & Co., 1904; G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, Methuen & Co., 1949; Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama*, Fourah Bay College, 1965; Elliott Tokson, *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama, 1550–1688*, G. K. Hall eds., 1982; Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare Negotiations*, University of California Press, 1988, Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama*, University of South Florida Press, 1991; Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*, University of Chicago Press, 1994; Virginia M. Vaughan, *Othello: A Contextual History*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, Oxford University Press,

dimension of the play, adopting a perspective based on the sounds which accompany and shape the protagonist (hence his identity, too) helps us see more clearly how Othello's attempted negotiations fail and how his own expression of identity results in precariousness. Indeed, from this unusual critical perspective, one can better understand the elusiveness of this tragic hero. With that in mind, the study of Othello's *sonic* identity can be included in the lively critical debate concerning his being extremely contradictory, and so, extremely human.[54]

One of the most important traits of Othello's self-fashioning of a solid identity is deeply connected to his military role, hence his *being* a Venetian war hero. In fact, in order to satisfy his excruciating desire to fit in to Venetian society, Othello attempts to settle negotiations aiming to narrow down the Venetian perception of his otherness: to *maintain* his military services as strictly necessary for Venice, is one of them. I use the word 'maintain' because it gives an idea of the intentional effort that Othello is putting in this type of 'military' negotiation, which is a continuous one. In fact, to be a war hero in the eyes (but most importantly, as I will show later, in the *ears*) of Venice's authorities means (from Othello's point of view) to satisfy and keep steady the feeling of *belonging*. To belong to Venice, to its society, is a crucial element for Othello's building of a proper identity. But the fashioning of an identity that would also satisfy the feeling of belonging solicits the persistent *performance of a task* in order to preserve the delicate connection between identity and belonging. In tackling this precarious connection,

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2002; Alessandro Serpieri, *Otello: l'Eros negato*, Liguori, 2003; Emily C. Bartels, *Speaking of the Moor*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008; Lena Cowen Orlin (ed.), *Othello: The State of Play*, 2014; Patricia Akhimie, *Shakespeare and the Cultivation of Difference*, Routledge, 2018; Ayanna Thompson, *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Race*, Cambridge University Press 2021; etc.

[54] I am echoing here E.A.J. Honigmann's description of Othello as a contradictory character and therefore a human being, as he stresses in his 'Introduction' to The Arden Shakespeare *Othello* (third edition): "I want to concentrate on a few conflicting impressions that make him appear a mass of contradictions – in other words, a human being. Gentle himself, he loves 'the gentle Desdemona' (1.2.25), yet reacts savagely when he thinks himself betrayed. […] Trustful at first, he grows compulsively suspicious (4.2.1ff), yet continues to trust Iago. Easily persuaded, he remains impervious to Desdemona's desperate pleading. I cannot help feeling that such contrary impressions are meant to intimate Othello's 'otherness' […] (*Introduction*, p.20).

it may be useful to consider the view of sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, who has claimed that:

> One becomes aware that 'belonging' and 'identity' are not cut in rock, that they are not secured by a lifelong guarantee, that they are eminently negotiable and revocable; and that one's own decisions, the steps one takes, the way one acts - and the determination to stick by all that - are crucial factors of both. In other words, the thought of 'having an identity' will not occur to people as long as 'belonging' remains their fate, a condition with no alternative. They will begin to entertain such a thought only in the form of a task to be performed, and to be performed over and over again rather than in a one-off fashion.[55]

Concerning Othello, the condition of belonging is perpetually questioned because of his origins and appearance, which, as stressed throughout the entire play by the other characters, mark a boundary, a degree of separation, between *them* and *him*. In fact, not only is this evident because of the epithets rhetorically used by the other characters to name Othello ('The Moor' being the most common and 'neutral' one) but also in the relationships that the protagonist entertains with the Venetians, not least with Desdemona.

Interestingly, in the play, Othello is called by his own name only few times, almost always when the Duke of Venice is speaking. It is quite surprising that Iago, who is present in almost every scene of the play, uses the word "Othello" only eight times, while the Duke, in his short appearance on stage, uses the protagonist's name up to four times. Equally significant is the fact that we hear Othello's name for the first time when the Duke appears on stage; that is, after two scenes from the beginning of the play, so, with a delay that, in my view, is suggestive of the programmatic problematization created by Shakespeare around Othello's identity in the tragedy. Such difference in the occurrences of the protagonist's name already tells us something about Othello's identitarian negotiations. The fact that the Duke, as a character representative of the Venetian oligarchy, is the first one to speak the name of Othello in the play, in calling him

[55] Zygmunt Bauman, Benedetto Vecchi, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Polity Press, 2004, pp. 11-12.

"valiant Othello" [1.3.49], and that he is also the only one who uses his name often, in proportion to his own number of lines when compared with the other's, entail that, in order to *belong*, Othello *has to be* the Venetian war hero, the "*valiant* Othello". Therefore, bearing in mind Bauman's words quoted above, I would suggest that Othello, in order to maintain his military identity, does perform this kind of negotiation as a task, to be enacted over and over again throughout the play which he himself defines as "Othello's *occupation*" [3.3.360].[56]

Furthermore, Othello underlines the efficacy of his negotiation by speaking of himself as someone that has nothing to fear from Venetian authorities when Brabantio accuses him. He is positive that his 'performance of a task', that is his military services, will ensure his belonging (celebrated, even) to that society, and his clearance from any charge. There is a confidence indeed in the hero, in this first part of the play, that will not be so firmly stressed later:

> OTHELLO: Let him do his spite;
> My services, which I have done the signiory,
> Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know –
> Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,
> I shall promulgate – I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal siege, and my demerits
> May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune
> As this that I have reached. [1.2.18-24]

This is reiterated a few lines later:

[56] As reported in the notes of Honigmann's ed. of Shakespeare's *Othello*, cit. the term "occupation" might refer simply to his military role, to the loss of Desdemona, or more interestingly, it means "employment, hence life". I am arguing that the term is indeed indicative of Othello's military identity which is to be considered as his warrant to belong to Venetian society, hence it is deeply connected with his life.

OTHELLO: Not I, I must be found.
My parts, my title and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. [1.2.30-33]

We can say that this is a negotiation because by *playing*/*being* the war hero of the Venetians and especially *for* the Venetians, Othello has something to hold on to in order to feel belonging. But from the point of view of the audience and of the other characters on stage, is this task to be considered more as a performance (Othello *playing* the war hero) or as a real-life achievement (Othello *being* the war hero)? In other words, how does Othello express and build his military identity in the play? Is this negotiation really successful or not?

When trying to answer these questions, a possible trail to follow is to focus our attention on the aural dimension of the play, comparing it to the visual one. My point here is, in fact, to demonstrate how this 'performance of a task' pursued by Othello with respect to his military identity, is realized solely as an aural/oral performance, rather than a thorough one, hence, his, can be considered specifically as a *sonic* identity.

In the tragedy, Othello presents himself first and foremost as a soldier. His entire life seems to find its rightful place in the battlefield, as he himself remarks in front of the Duke and senators when accepting to go to Cyprus to fight against the Turks:

OTHELLO: The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
My thrice-driven bed of down. I do agonize
A natural and prompt alacrity
I find in hardness, and do undertake
This present war against the Ottomites. [1.3.230-235]

When listening to such words, the audience creates in their mind an image of this soldier, fighting bravely on the battlefield, being indeed a war hero. Surprisingly, the expectations of the audience are not really fulfilled by Shakespeare, who never puts on stage the "valiant Othello" fighting in the middle of a battle. Throughout

the whole tragedy, we never *see* him at war or involved in a sword fight, nor do we have visual elements that directly convey or convince us of his "action in the tented field" [1.3.86].

In spite of the difficulties of staging war in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, the combination of aural and visual elements usually helped to imagine actions, contributing to the illusion of the physical endeavor, the strength, and braveness of characters depicted as war heroes.[57] Such a combination of visual and aural elements creates a dimension where the audience's expectations with respect to the military performance are fulfilled. However, in the case of Othello, the visual imagery of war is absent. Othello's performance of the brave soldier is realized exclusively through his voice, his stories, and the soundscape he describes as he "pertains to feats of broils and battle" [1.3.88].

And yet, there are some occasions in the play where Othello could have shown some of his skills as a soldier, but surprisingly he is always inviting the other characters to avoid combat, even when he is impudently provoked. For example, when Brabantio finds Othello, just after hearing that he has married Desdemona, the encounter starts as a fight between Brabantio's troops and Othello. Although being challenged, Othello orders his fellows (Cassio and Iago) to stay quiet and, more than once, invites Brabantio and the others to lay down their weapons:

Enter Brabantio, Roderigo, *with Officers and torches and weapons.*

IAGO: It is Brabantio: general, be advised,
He comes to bad intent.
OTHELLO: Holla, stand there!
RODERIGO: Signior, it is the Moor.
BRABANTIO: Down with him, thief!
[*they draw on both sides*]
IAGO: You, Roderigo! Come sir, I am for you.

[57] In other plays Shakespeare relies on the visual elements by referring the audience to the hero's physical experiences in the battlefield (let's think of Coriolanus' wounds).

OTHELLO: Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.
Good signior, you shall more command with years
Than with your weapons. [1.2.54-61]

And after Brabantio's long, provoking accusations, Othello answers:

OTHELLO: Hold your hands,
Both you of my inclining and the rest:
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it
Without a prompter. Where will you that I go
To answer this your charge? [1.2.81-85]

This is the closest we can get to a combat scene in the entire tragedy; in fact, the war to be fought in Cyprus, against the Turks, never actually breaks out because of the tempest that destroys the enemy's fleet. Therefore, we are never able to *see*, nor to have proof of how much of a war hero Othello is. Yet, if on the one hand, we cannot see Othello's *being* a soldier, on the other hand, there is an abundance of auditory elements through which Othello is *playing* the war hero in the tragedy.

Shakespeare's attention for references to sounds that create war imagery is indeed to be considered strategic in *Othello*. In the protagonist's speeches, not only is the theme of war conveyed by recalling the specific sounds of the battlefield, but also, and pivotally I would suggest, through rhetoric. In *Othello*, it is mainly by listening *to* and *through* the protagonist's speeches, to the contents and the rhetorical quality of them, that we can recognize Othello's military skills as markedly signified through sound.

In *The Emperor of Men's Mind*, Wayne A. Rebhorn describes rhetorical figures of speech as weapons employed to conquer the listener.[58] This is, at least, the idea that early modern rhetoricians had in mind when talking about persuasion. Their use of metaphor, for example, was conceived of as a device to move beyond the boundaries of the orator, of the space of communication

[58] Wayne A. Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men's Mind: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric*, Cornell University Press, 1995.

between them and the auditor, with the aim to penetrate and conquer the latter. In Rebhorn's own words:

> In essence, then, every time a rhetor uses a figure of speech, every time he has recourse to metaphor or some other trope (and it would be hard to think of a time when he would not), he both expresses his identity and impresses that identity on his auditor. It amounts to a *translatio imperii*, an imperial sallying-forth beyond the boundaries of the self in order to occupy the alien space of the Other and to plant one's banner there as conqueror and ruler.[59]

I argue that Othello's language works exactly in the same way. In point of fact, not only is he able to perform his military identity exclusively through his words (rather than through actual deeds seen on stage) but he also expresses through his rhetoric a form of power, more precisely of military strength. Even if, as stated before, we never see Othello as a soldier on stage, the visualization of his military activity is conveyed through his words and the sound of them. Indeed, the capacity to suggest vivid images of this kind was central to Renaissance rhetoric, and was crucial in the context of early modern English rhetoric.

Allison Deutermann shows that the subject of hearing or listening, because of several factors, was particularly strong in early modern England. In particular, she stresses the Protestant predilection for words over images.[60] Indeed, the avoidance of a rich imagery, to be intended as a cultural and historical phenomenon, elicited peculiar attention towards listening and, by extension, towards the evocative power of words. In such context, rhetoric became fundamental for an incisive, vivid characterization of language. In *Othello,* the emphasis on the rhetoric of sounds is evident especially when examining Othello's speeches. For the purpose of tracing such emphasis, my discussion of Othello's speeches will focus particularly on the rhetorical skills of the character that can best be appreciated in the so-called 'defense speech' [1.3], while the evocative sounds of war, and the

[59] *Ibid*., p. 44.

[60] Allison K. Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical Form in Early Modern England*, Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp. 5-7.

delineation of Othello's *sonic* identity, will be discussed by analyzing his 'farewell speech' [3.3].

Shakespeare organizes Othello's defense speech in two parts: the first [1.3.77-94] establishes him as a successful soldier at the service of Venice. He starts with a *captatio benevolentiae* showing his devotion to the Venetian authorities: "Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,/ My very noble and approved good masters" [1.3.77-78]. The second part [1.3.129-171] describes how he caught Desdemona's interest through his tales ("She'd come again, and with a *greedy ear*/ Devour up *my discourse*" [1.3.150-151])[61] and *conquered* her love. In both parts, rhetoric is balanced between *ethos* and *pathos*; there are, in fact, all the elements of a good orator.

We can find the *celarem artem* precept when he asserts that, being a soldier, he is not capable of delivering a good speech, while, on the contrary, it is evident that he does know how to express his ideas and defend himself. Othello appears to be aware of the rhetorical skills he uses to perform his identity of soldier, especially when he describes his words by retrieving a dichotomy between war and peace as key metaphors of his language: "Rude am I in my speech,/ And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace" [1.3.82-83]. His expression of emotions aiming at *movere* the listener sounds refined and balanced. There is not too much passion in his words, nor does he appear to be too detached, hence he respects the rhetorical precept of *decorum*. This ability to keep his demeanor, to appear dignified even when being accused, and to give a persuasive speech under the pressure of losing his position and his wife, might be considered, too, as a required quality of the military leader. Most importantly, Shakespeare seems to play ironically with the audience and the characters on stage when he has Othello say "I will a round unvarnished tale deliver" [1.3.91]. Since, In fact, Othello's defense speech is one of the most sophisticated examples of Shakespeare's ability to build a rhetorically impeccable narration. This is not surprising if we also consider that rhetorical training was crucial in early modern English education.

Keeping our attention focused on sound, and on Othello's capacity to create vivid images through rhetorical exquisiteness, we cannot but envisage in

[61] My italics.

Shakespeare's tragedy George Puttenham's perspective on rhetoric and sound, developed in *The Arte of English Poesie*.[62] As pointed out by Heinrich F. Plett, Puttenham doesn't follow a classical structure for the categorization of rhetorical figures.[63] In fact, in his classification, there is a specific emphasis on the auditory characterization of language, to the point that the criteria he follows to distinguish the rhetorical figures are strictly dependent on their aural appeal. Puttenham, indeed, in the third book of *Arte,* distinguishes *enargeia* from *energeia* which usually, in rhetorical treatises of the time, coalesced into one single meaning. Yet, in Puttenham's view, the first one (*enargeia*) is that "power" of the "ornaments" to please the ear *only*; the latter (*energeia*), on the contrary, strongly affects the mind.

Starting from such a distinction, Puttenham classifies the figures of speech:

- "auricular figures", only conveying *enargeia*, defined as

> those which worke alteration in th'eare by sound, accent, time, and slipper volubilitie in utterance, such as for that respect was called by the auncients numerositie of speach. And not onely the whole body of a tale in poeme or historie may be made in such sort pleasant and agreable to the eare, but also euery clause by it selfe, and euery single word carried in a clause, may haue their pleasant sweetenesse apart. And so long as this qualitie extendeth but to the outward tuning of the speech reaching no higher then th'eare and forcing the mynde little or nothing, it is that vertue which the Greeks call Enargia and is the office of the auricular figures to performe.[64]

- "sensable figures", which "serues the conceit onely and not th'eare" so they give the verse *energeia*; [65]

[62] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), ed. by Edward Arber, Birmingham, 1869.

[63] Heinrich F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture*, Walter de Gruyter, 2004.

[64] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, cit., p. 172.

[65] *Ibid*., p. 173.

- "sententious figures" that "serues as well th'eare as the conceit" where both *enargeia* and *energeia* resides. [66]

From the above classification, we can see how much Puttenham's interest lay in the hearer's receptiveness when giving his formal definition of figures. This testifies to how important, in early modern thought, the *affective* power of sound and the auditory aspects of language were. Indeed, as stressed also by Brian Vickers, figures strictly connected to sound such as the figures of repetition (*anaphora*, *antistrophe*, *epanalepsis, epizeuxis*)[67] are frequently used by Shakespeare, thus occupying a pivotal role in his drama.[68]

Othello's speeches, being so vibrant and sound-characterized to express the hero's military identity, vivified by a language that channels both *energaia* and *enargeia*, can be coherently read as built by Shakespeare with Puttenham's rhetorical rules (or, at least Puttenham's attitude towards rhetoric) in mind, which were much more sound-oriented than those of his contemporary colleagues.

Othello's performance of his identity as strongly characterized by the military imagery of his language can be equally observed when focusing on his speech as a phenomenological act. Mark Johnson, drawing from speech-act theory, describes the scope of speaking as a combination of forces.[69] Indeed, as underlined also by B. Smith, speaking requires some physical effort (muscles' activity, the vibration of vocal cords, sound waves propagating from point to point).[70] In Smith's discussion of Johnson's speech-act description, particular attention is given to the definition by the latter of the speech as a "gestalt of force".[71] Indeed, Johnson

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[66] *Ibid.*

[67] Puttenham includes these in the "sententious figures" having both the powers of *enargeia* and *Energeia*; the very names he uses for such figures always stress the importance of sound. For example, he calls *epanalepsis* as "echo sound or slow return".

[68] Brian Vickers, "Shakespeare's Use of Rhetoric", in Kenneth Muir, Samuel Schoenbaum (ed.), *A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 1971 pp. 83-98.

[69] Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, University of Chicago Press, 1990.

[70] Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, cit., pp. 23-29.

[71] *Ibid*., p. 23.

observes that in the act of speaking we can distinguish several forces at work. His "gestalt of force" is mainly explained by focusing on one of these forces: compulsion, which is the capacity to compel or be compelled through speaking or hearing. There is, therefore, an exertion of strength in the act of speaking, and, while it can be applied to speech-acts of any kind, it is particularly suggestive here to think of Othello's speeches as an exertion of power; in other words, as a performative demonstration of his military strength. His compelling persuasive power over other characters (first and foremost Desdemona), although shadowed in the play by Iago's superb persuasive skills, can be considered as a "gestalt of force", both metaphorically and phenomenologically. In fact, in my view, although the speech-act as "gestalt of force" lends itself very well to a modern, phenomenological reading of Othello's identitarian rhetoric, Johnson's "gestalt of force", after all, is nothing more than the practice of persuasion as prescribed by early modern rhetorical theory.[72] This *exertion* of force is to be considered as inextricably connected to sound's pivotal participation in the speaking and hearing of Othello's military skills.

When focusing on such aspects of Shakespeare's *Othello*, one cannot avoid noticing how central the role of hearing was in early modern culture, and, as underlined elsewhere in this dissertation, how crucial is for us to recover the Renaissance hermeneutics of sound. Wes Folkerth persuasively explains Shakespeare's awareness of sound as a means to *know* and to establish a deep connection with the inner self. Shakespeare's characters, indeed, show how such a process of knowing and exploring in depth human passions and emotions is usually filtered and accessed through acoustic devices. In Folkerth's words: "In their efforts to explore the interiority of those around them, they almost always figure sound as the most reliable way of penetrating through the opacity of the other".[73]

Shakespeare's *Othello* is no exception: it is probably the play in which the strong connection between sound and hearing as a key to gaining access and remodelling the inner self of the other is explored at its fullest. Iago is the

[72] *Ibid.*

[73] Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare*, cit., p. 28.

paramount example of this dynamic, and probably the character through which Shakespeare excels in showing directly the effectiveness of "abus[ing] Othello's ear" [1.3.394].[74] And yet, if Iago is the one who is able to *untune* Othello's universe, I argue that the same mechanism can be traced with respect to the protagonist. In point of fact, Othello's performance of his military identity as described so far, acts likewise as sounds affecting the ear, though, in comparison to Iago's, Shakespeare shapes Othello's power of ear-affecting in a more sophisticated and subtle way, mostly by relying, as shown, on rhetoric.

Vickers has argued that the efficacy of Iago's rhetoric lies in his capacity to shift from prose to verse, from one type of language to another, also by employing an imagery that Vickers defines as "forensic".[75] While Othello's rhetoric and persuasive power, as stressed before, are mainly hinged on sound and hearing, Iago's power of language is rooted in his use of imagery, both aural and visual. Indeed, Vickers makes us notice that Iago's rhetoric vivifies images aiming at confusing Othello's certainties. Being obscene, bestial, and twisted, these images shake Othello's emotions, slowly eroding his capacity to understand reality,[76] and consequently dismantling his identity. Therefore, Iago's strategy relies on his "chameleon ability" ("I am not what I am" [1.1.64]) to draw from both aural and visual imageries, creating arguments that change and "perfectly suit the nature of the listener" ("The Moor is of a free and open nature/ That thinks men honest that but seem to be so" [1.3.398-399]).[77] Vickers' discussion of Iago's capacity to create strategic images, his strong reliance on the visual, interestingly contrast with Othello's "defective eyesight", which allows Iago to have him prey of his distorted visual corroborations.[78] However, Othello's visual *naïveté* is made to

[74] It is worth underlining here how Shakespeare, in the text, insists on references to the ear, usually as a metaphor: "greedy ear" [1.3.150]; "the bruised heart was pierced through the ear" [1.3.220]; "lend your prosperous ear" [1.3.245]; "I'll pour this pestilence into his ear" [2.3.351]; "his ear a stranger to thy thoughts" [3.3.146], etc.

[75] Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose*, Methuen, 1979, p. 335.

[76] Vickers, for example, stresses how Iago is able to change Othello's understanding of 'love' into 'appetite'. See Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose*, cit., pp.335-344.

[77] *Ibid*., p. 336.

[78] See E. A. J. Honigman, *Introduction*, cit., p.19.

contrast, in its turn, with his mastery of the aural imagery employed for its ear-affecting, persuasive power.

In this light, the early modern conception of how sounds pierce the ears is pivotal to understanding how Othello's sonic identity is expressed in the text. The ear being an orifice that cannot be physically controlled, hence, hearing being impossible to shut down, the acts of compelling persuasion carried through rhetoric in the play specifically mirror the Renaissance rhetors' description of persuasion as an assault.[79] In my view, it is not by chance that Shakespeare, in *Othello*, as already suggested, insists on similar images of forced penetration of the ear (mostly prompted by Iago) or, more broadly, on ears being poisoned (a Shakespearean trope we can find in other plays, too). Othello's performance of his military identity is therefore expressed by the 'assaults' he enacts through his speeches, penetrating the ears of the other characters and convincing them to absolve him (as in the case of the Duke and senators) or, in Desdemona's case, to marry him.

Considering the crucial role that the rhetoric of sound occupies in Othello's performance of his identity, it is helpful to compare this hero to the emblematic iconography of another hero, that of classical Hercules Gallicus as illustrated in Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi* (1556).

[79] Several examples can be found in Wyne Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men's Mind*, cit. Here is one particularly fruitful to the purposes of my discourse, taken from Joan de Guzman's *Primera Parte de la Rhetorica* (1589), translated and quoted by Rebhorn as follows: "The little flowers of Rhetoric…awaken the spirit and wound it, and they prepare wills in such a manner as when, by hammering, workmen soften and render hard iron malleable in order to make their objects out of it" (p.43-44).

Figure 10 "Hercules Gallicus", in Vincenzo Cartari, Lorenzo Pignoria, and Cesare Malfatti, *Imagini Delli Dei De Gl'antichi*, Tomasini, 1647

The caption accompanying Cartari's Hercules highlights how the hero is depicted as the "God of Eloquence", and, at the same time, as an emblem of "strength and military discipline".[80] The allegory shows several chains that connect Hercules' mouth with the soldiers' ears; it is a symbol of the power of language. The military associations in the allegory cannot but be seen as supportive of the interpretation of Othello's identity as discussed so far. Importantly, references to the mythical iconography of Hercules Gallicus can be found elsewhere in early modern art and literature, not least in Puttenham's *Arte*. Most interestingly, Hercules Gallicus can be also found in Henry Peacham's *The Complete Gentleman* (1621) where the image is described as "the pomp of eloquence", an

[80] My translation.

expression that echoes Othello's "Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!" [3.3.357].[81]

One further consideration can be put forth when comparing Othello to Hercules Gallicus, and that is the idea of the hero which is not any more a *war* hero, the brave warrior who fights with the power of his physical sturdiness, but a hero of a different kind, a soldier fighting with 'weaponized words'; that is to say: an orator. In Cartari's illustration, Hercules is not any more portrayed as showing a young, strong body, instead, he looks old and although carrying some weapons, it is through his voice, his language that he is able to exert his power. In my view, this illustration is particularly evocative with respect to Othello and his identity. Indeed, if at the beginning of the play Othello is able to convincingly perform his military identity, by the end of the tragedy he himself abandons his military life, his "occupation" [3.3.360], which, not surprisingly, coalesces with the crisis of his identity.

The turning point in the tragedy with respect to Othello's crisis of identity occurs in act 3, scene 3, when, devoured by doubts, Othello finally falls into a state of self-alienation. This is the moment of his 'farewell speech' closed by the line, "Othello's occupation is gone" [3.3.360]. Here the term "occupation" synthesizes both his military role – his public life – and the loss of meaning of reality as a consequence of Desdemona's possible betrayal – his private life. But actually, Othello's public and private lives converge in the moment his identity is corroded. This is clearly expressed in the 'farewell speech': life has lost all meaning for Othello who, from now on, will occasionally and increasingly address himself in the third person until the end of the play as a sign of depersonalization and consequent self-alienation. Most interesting is the fact that, again, here his language is entirely hinged on sound as a performance and expression of an identity (as a soldier) that Othello is about to say farewell to. If the 'defense speech', as shown, is an expression of the hero's military power through rhetoric, in this other speech sound is put in the first place to perform, or better, to *recall* a military identity now lost. In this speech the very meaning of

[81] Henry Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman*, ed. by Virgil B. Heltzel, Cornell University Press, 1962, p. 18.

life, of Othello's occupation that is now gone, is described by precisely recalling all the sounds of the "glorious war":

> OTHELLO: I had been happy if the general camp,
> Pioneers and all, had tasted her sweet body,
> So I had nothing known. O now for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind, farewell content!
> Farewell the troops and the big wars,
> That makes ambition virtue! O farewell,
> Farewell the neighing steed and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, th'ear piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war!
> And, O you mortal engines whose rude throats
> Th'immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
> Farewell: Othello's occupation's gone. [3.3.348-360]

Othello is saying farewell to a past identity, a knowledge of the world filtered by the sounds of war. His 'farewell speech' can be read through the lenses of the soundscape and the acoustemology interpretative tools. The sounds Othello is recalling are indeed typical of the battlefield's soundscape, at least of the soundscape retrieved by early modern theatre when staging war. In Shakespeare's plays war is usually staged as violent sounds, and there are fixed typologies of sounds providing a typical *war soundscape*. Sound marks or signals of such soundscape always include trumpets, drums, and all the sounds and noises recalled by Othello in this 'farewell speech'. Usually, we find these martial sounds in the stage directions, but in the case of *Othello*, their occurrence is spread all over the text when referring to battles, duels, or any form of war report by the characters themselves.

Furthermore, the same sounds mentioned by Othello in the 'farewell speech' also entail acoustemology as the "capacity to know and as a habit of knowing".[82]

[82] Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*, Duke University Press, (third edition) 2012, p. xxvii.

This is precisely at the core of Othello's performance of his sonic identity as a soldier. His knowledge of the world is primarily linked to the dimension of war; more to the point, his language is always imbued, as shown, with the sounds of war.

It is in keeping with this use of sound as Othello's specific means and an expression of knowledge that Shakespeare builds a parallel, but much more astute and devilish language for Iago hinged on sound and listening, as well. In fact, sound seems to be the preferential channel (and the most effective one) used by the villain to affect and mislead Othello. This is because Othello's knowing is based on the sounds of war both as a source of perception of reality and, at the same time, as the expression of it. In this acoustemological frame, the soundscape of war becomes Othello's main instrument of communication and negotiation as the brave soldier *par excellence*. Unfortunately, Iago has the metaphorical key (O, you are well tuned now: but I'll set down/ The pegs that make this music, as honest/ As I am [2.1.198-200] to push Othello in a state of dissonance, of crisis, leading to the failure of those negotiations.

As shown, Othello's performance of identity as a soldier, built primarily in the form of a sonic identity, is unstable, ephemeral, and perpetually undermined. But Shakespeare, by using sound as, I argue, the *main* ingredient of the language of this tragedy, let us remember that, as incisively observed by Deutermann, the early modern theatrical performance was conceived as "an affective, dynamic process that was largely aural in its experience" and that "[p]aying attention to audition is vital if we are to understand how the codes and conventions through which the drama became legible took shape on the early modern stage".[83] Therefore, a critical approach to early modern literary texts and sound shouldn't neglect the connection between rhetoric as a pivotal practice involving sound and the meanings arising from such a relationship. In my view, to linger on such matters is to contribute to developing a critical tool of 'aural' awakening that leads contemporary audiences to 'open their ears' and build new ways of hearing (by retrieving the old ones) thus, understanding at a more complex level plays and characters such as Othello.

[83] Allison Deutermann, *Listening for Theatrical form in Early Modern England*, cit., p. 2.

When focusing on the sounds of *Othello*, even if there is a failure of the protagonist with respect to his military identity which ends in a crisis leading to self-alienation, still Othello remains a character that can be identified as a hero. In fact, precisely as in Cartari's Hercules Gallicus, the hero, who has lost his physical virtues, finds his power in his voice. Likewise, Othello, although failing in building his identity, unconsciously represents the 'hero of the word' from the beginning to the end of the play. Bearing in mind that his exertion of force lies in his rhetoric of sound as described so far, I argue not only that Othello succeeds in building a sonic identity, but, more specifically, that it is the identity of 'the bard', a master of storytelling who pays attention to the affecting power of sound. Furthermore, such a reading of the character from the perspective of sound is encouraged by a specific quality of Othello, that is his 'sounding like an echo' throughout the entire play.[84]

That Othello is more a story-teller, a bard, than a soldier, is suggested already at the beginning of the play by Iago:

> IAGO: But he, as loving his own pride and purposes,
> Evades them, with bombast circumstance
> Horribly stuffed with epithets of war. [1.1.11-13]

Interestingly, Iago is describing Othello with these words in lines juxtaposed to the description of Cassio as a man of theory, who has no experience at all of war battles but who is, on the contrary, a "great arithmetician" [1.1.18]. Therefore, Iago appears to suggest that, pragmatically speaking, both Othello and Cassio have no skills as soldiers, that Othello's talent rather lies in his "epithets of war". Of course, this could be considered just an initial hint in the play to the idea of Othello as the bard: the very name of the character fascinatingly sounds like 'O – *T*[h]*ell* – O'.[85]

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[84] Wes Folkerth let us notice that *Othello* ends with an echo, an idea that here is pivotal for the understanding of Othello as the bard. See Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare*, cit. pp. 111-112.

[85] See Laura Di Michele, "Le Storie di Otello", in Laura Di Michele (ed.), *Tragiche Risonanze Shakespeariane*, Liguori Editore, 2001, pp. 101-124.

Of course, Othello's figuring as a bard substantially relies on his own portrait achieved through the tales (imbued with the rhetoric of sounds), that he repeatedly provides on stage to define himself through *his history*, his experiences, but also with other aims in mind. Indeed, it is thanks to his tales that Desdemona falls in love with him, it is thanks to his tales that the Duke is convinced of his noble intentions, it is thanks to his tales that he believes he 'is' a soldier and a 'Venetian'. In other words, Othello *is* his tales. The centrality of Othello's narratives and his association with the bard, the story-teller, the orator, can be understood especially by focusing on his last words addressed to Lodovico just before stabbing himself, words that sound indeed like a testament:

> OTHELLO: Soft you, a word or two before you go.
> I have done the state some service, and they know't.
> No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
> When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
> Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
> Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
> Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
> Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
> Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
> Albeit unused, to the melting mood,
> Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
> Their medicinable gum. Set you sown this,
> And say besides that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and turbaned Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by th'throat the circumcised dog
> And smote him – thus! [5.2.354-372]

These last lines reestablish the character of Othello that we met in the first half of the play, the hero whose poetic voice has the power of enchanting the listener. It is, in other words, an echo of himself, and he specifically refers to his precious

tales, his previous spell cast onto other characters. In this testament, Othello's voice echoes his own being a soldier, a Venetian, a husband, and, most interestingly, he is asking Lodovico to perpetuate such echo. He persistently invites Lodovico to speak, to write letters about his tales so that others can, in turn, bring and spread this echo in the future. Even in his last moments, Othello is building an identity to be narrated again and again. He has failed to achieve the identity/belonging, and yet, through his last words, he has left us with an identity that is as ephemeral and elusive as an echo, a *sonic* identity that inevitably speaks to us about our own way of fashioning ourselves. As Folkerth aptly wrote with respect to the tragedy of *Othello*:

> The tragic play we have just heard is a present echo of events past, acoustic food for future greedy ears such as our own, which listen for hints of ways we might better orient ourselves in relation to our own volatile desires and epistemological uncertainties.[86]

[86] Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare*, cit. p. 112.

IV

Voicing Troubled Identities: the Early Modern Sound of Voice

In describing our understanding of the sound of voice, Bruce Smith claims that by listening to human voice we actually hear a combination of different phenomena: physical phenomena, perceptual phenomena, and imaginative phenomena. Although these are related to various features that come with voice (volume, pitch, colour, meaning, and so on), Smith aptly summarizes his description of the sound of voice as such: "the object the audience hears in a human voice is character".[1] Inspired by this assertion, this chapter revolves around *the voice*, to be meant here specifically as sound, and its understanding in the early modern period. More to the point, this chapter lingers on some aspects of the human voice that can be defined as destabilizing, especially when associated with questions of gender and identity that closely concern characters in Shakespeare's plays such as Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Coriolanus.

When it comes to describing phenomenologically the human voice as sound, an important theoretical crux is whether to detach the voice from the articulate sounds of speech or not; in other words, some argue that voice as sound is not to be understood as 'language'. In point of fact, Adriana Cavarero holds that when the human voice is considered just as the phonetic element participating in a system of meanings (that is language) it is deprived of its particular sonority, which, instead, is a pivotal ingredient for the understanding of our own being.[2] She observes that

> the voice—as it is studied from the perspective of language and especially from the perspective of language as a system—becomes the general sphere of

[1] Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, cit., p. 245.

[2] Adriana Cavarero, "Multiple Voices", in Jonathan Sterne (ed.), *The Sound Studies Reader*, Routledge, 2012, pp. 520-532.

> sonorous articulations where what is not heard is, paradoxically, the uniqueness of the sound.[3]

Cavarero insists on recognizing the "uniqueness" of the sound of voice. Indeed, taking as a starting point one of the last tales by Italo Calvino, entitled "A King Listens" (1986),[4] she ponders the sound of voice as a distinguishing trait characterizing human beings. Not only does voice communicate words, but, most importantly, for Cavarero, it expresses something very intimate about the person who emits such a sound, it is the very manifestation of the "elementary givens of existence".[5] In pursuing her "vocal phenomenology of uniqueness", she also retrieves the difference between orality and vocality as put forth by Paul Zumthor, who had recognized the voice as language in the first instance, and an independent sound in the second. When placing her concept of voice's uniqueness in the context of orality, Cavarero argues that in the case of epic poetry and, more broadly, in lyrical language, since sound, rhythm, and all the sonorous quality of voice provoke pleasure to the ear, and so, to the body, overtaking rationality, the sound of voice takes on a "subversive role" with respect to language. In fact, following her thought, the economy of language in poetry is actually "systematized" by the sound of voice.

Cavarero's argument is certainly interesting, but still I argue that in her idea of the "uniqueness of voice", she neglects to fully consider the role of the listener. Indeed, the short story by Calvino that she draws on, is much more about listening

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[3] *Ibid*. pp.526-527.

[4] This short story is part of a collection titled *Under the Jaguar Sun* by Italo Calvino. Every story in the collection represents an allegory of one of the five senses, "A King Listens" is concerned with hearing. The story is about a King who, to keep his place, must stay seated on his throne. The only way to rule from his throne is to listen to the voices and sounds of his realm, which is metaphorically described as a huge ear. He rules his kingdom by means of acoustic control, so, people living at court have to use their voices carefully; in fact, their voices become deceptive in that the tyrant has suspicious ears everywhere. One day, the king hears a different, new voice. It is the voice of a woman, singing. This voice captures the king's attention, he finally leaves his throne to follow and embrace the emotions sprung from that sound. In the end this is revealed to be a *coup d'etat*, and the king is replaced by another one.

[5] *Ibid.* p. 525.

than voicing. After all, the control of the tyrant, in "A King Listens", is both exerted and defeated by means of listening. Moreover, although she places the "uniqueness of voice" in the scope of phenomenology, she appears to describe this specific sound ontologically. In fact, Cavarero's perspective could be made more fruitful by considering voice as a crucial ingredient participating in the expression of one's identity. In this light, though, it is not possible to completely detach the sound of voice from language, and neither can it be considered merely as a phonetic phenomenon: the human voice produces meanings *in that it is part* of a language. Regarding this, it is worth retrieving, here, Don Ihde's phenomenological study of voice, whilst not neatly in contrast with Cavarero's point of view, it is similarly concerned with the modes of listening which may shed light on voicing, as well.[6]

Ihde and Cavarero share a description of voice that partly draws on its materiality as the system of physical phenomena involved in the processes of speaking and listening, primarily involving the body (lungs, larynx, throat, mouth). Equally, the "uniqueness of voice" is simply described by Ihde as the "distinctiveness of voice" which has to do with the materiality of the body, as well: "voice retains vestigially some sense of the materiality we are".[7] The materiality of voice is of pivotal importance when looking back at early modern descriptions of this specific sound, but in order to understand how such descriptions participate in the identitarian discourse directly linked to the sound of voice, it is necessary to focus our attention on the hearer, too. In this respect, it is equally crucial to elide Cavarero's separation between voice and language. In fact, Ihde notices that, for the voice to truly signify, one cannot neglect the reception of this sound and the meanings that arise from its listening, including the semantic ones coming from the speech. These meanings can also be related to the visual when, for example, language is not understood by the listener, and the encounter

[6] Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, State University of New York Press, 2007.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

with the speaker becomes the encounter with "a face" that, paradoxically, is voicing silence.[8]

All of this, and other features that mainly concern the dramaturgical voice as explained by Ihde, constitute what he himself defines as "the play of the polyphonic" engendered by the phenomenology of voice. In this "play", important questions connected to the identitarian discourse can be addressed:

> A phenomenology of the voice is in this sense not only a return to the center of embodied meaning in sound but a return to the existential voice, to the speaking and listening that occurs with humankind. In the voice of embodied significance lies the *what of* the saying, the *who* of the saying, and the *I* to whom something is said and who may also speak in the saying. In the voice is harbored the full richness of human signification.[9]

The quote above implies that the sound of voice cannot be completely detached from language since listening, that is necessary to understanding voicing, inescapably implies the co-participation of *logos*.[10] Moreover, the quote above echoes Smith's idea of voice as an object, that *is* character. Ihde's investigation, as mentioned before, interestingly focuses on the dramaturgical voice which, as he puts it, solves the problem of the relationship between voice and language in that "Dramaturgical voice stands between the enchantment of music, which can wordlessly draw us into the sound so deeply that the sound overwhelms us, and the conversation of ordinary speech".[11] Therefore, in this paradigm of the dramaturgical voice, meanings appear to arise from both the sound and the words *of* voice. What is more, to ponder on voice as a dramaturgical element, complicates Cavarero's "uniqueness of voice" since there are relational factors participating in the expression of both the character's and the actor's voices.

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 168

[10] This is clearly explained in Brian Kane's theoretical model of voice, already discussed in this dissertation's chapter 2, in which *Phoné* (voice), is composed of three terms: *Echos* (sound), *Logos* (meaning), and *Topos* (source).

[11] Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice*, cit., p. 167.

When *listening to* the characters on stage, is their voice different from that of the actors interpreting them? And what role does voice play with respect to the actor or character's identities? Does the audience perceive voice as connected to the character's identity or the actor's?

Early modern understanding of voice is primarily material. When dealing with the sense of hearing, anatomists of the time tried to provide scientific explanations with respect to voice, too. Yet, in a way similar to their description of the ear,[12] when describing the phenomenon of voicing, their physical and physiological explanations often intertwined with philosophical concepts, as well. Concerning the instability of voice and its change, typical of men's puberty, Helkiah Crooke, for example, in his *Mikrokosmographia* (1616), describes in detail all the organs involved in the production of voice:

> in children when the Larinx is narrow the voyce is sharper, small, or treble because a little ayre is swiftly moved through a narrow passage; on the contrary in old or elder age the Larynx is wider, and receiveth from the Lungs a greater quantity of ayre, whence it is that the motion is not so swift and so the voyce becommeth base.[13]

Although, as here, he occasionally provides a physical explanation for the change of voice (mainly due to the dilation of the larynx while growing up), especially when describing the physiology of voice, Crooke also resort to philosophical ideas that were thought to explain the difference between male and female voices, involving men's puberty, as well. In fact, early modern descriptions of the volatile aspect of voice mainly drew on Aristotle's *De Anima* where the philosopher claims that voice is a sound which can be produced only by things that have a soul. Such explanation is later expanded by Galen, for whom soul was conceived of as material, running in the human body as "vital spirits", an expression that Crooke, in reinforcing this material nature of the soul, defines as a vehicle for the

[12] See chapter 2.

[13] Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia, a Description of the Body of Man*, W. Iaggard, 1616, p. 634.

"Faculties of the soule" made of "blood and vapors".[14] Still retrieving knowledge provided by thinkers of the past, the link between voice and soul is also stressed by Crooke elsewhere in his *Mikrokosmographia* as a direct connection of mind with body:

> *Galen* expresseth the use of the Voice in these wordes, that it is the Messenger of the Thought of the mind, and therefore worthily is accounted the principall of all the actions of the Soule.[15]

Apparently, early modern understanding of things that nowadays are not conceived of in material terms, such as soul and, to a certain extent, voice, too, were actually conceived of as tangible, bodily, material. In this view, the social hierarchical structures of the time, related to male and female bodies, were additionally validated by one's sound of voice. Indeed, the explanation finally given for the differences in male, female, and young men's voices is directly connected with ideas of masculinity and femininity as produced by the particular conditions of body and soul.

Blood and vapors (the very substances of soul), in fact, were responsible for the so-called "temperament" of the body, inasmuch as they produced heat. According to early modern humoral theories, women's bodies were colder than men's, thus implying that the latter was a perfect example of the development of the body at its fullest. As to the difference between the two sexes from a physical perspective, men and women were thought to originally have shared the same type of body, even the same genitalia. As Stephen Greenblatt has noticed, "[i]n the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, physicians and laymen of sharply divergent schools agreed that male and female sexual organs were fully homologous",[16] but, because of the heat level already traceable in the procreative process, while men fully developed every part of their body, women didn't. The main evidence for this was to be traced in their sexual organs, which are fully

[14] *Ibid*., p. 174.

[15] *Ibid.,* p. 646.

[16] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, University of California Press, 1988, p. 79.

developed in men and, unlike women's, appear outwards. As for the sound of voice, Crooke explains that:

> If we consider the habite and structure of the parts of both Sexes, you shall finde in men more signes of heate then in women. The habit of a woman is fatter, looser and softer; but fat is not generated but by a weake heate, woemen are smooth without hayre. The flesh of men is more solide, their vesselles larger, *their voyce baser*: now it is heate which amplifieth and enlargeth, as cold straightneth and contracteth.[17]

This also explains why men's puberty, being the moment of passage from childhood to manhood, is marked by the change of voice as a result of a further heating of the body, due to the development of sperm (testicles were a focal point of bodily heat). The heat was responsible for the dilation of flesh and organs, including those in the vocal apparatus, whose dilation, as previously mentioned, was the reason why "the voyce becommeth base".

Francis Bacon's description of "the changing of voice" in his *Sylva Sylvarum* is similar, yet, he claims that an important role is played by bodily moisture, too. Particularly in puberty, moisture concentrates in the testicles so that the rest of the body becomes hotter causing its organs to dilate, making one's voice stronger, hence louder. Bacon groups together as "small and shrill voices" those pertaining to children, women, and, most interestingly, also eunuchs, which is in keeping with the crucial function of the testicles with respect to his explanation for the voice to change. Here follows the full quotation:

> *Children, Women, Eunuchs*, have more small and shirill Voices than Men. The reason is, not for that Men have greater heat, which may make the voice stronger, (for strength of a Voice or Sound, doth make a difference in the loudness or softeness, but not in the Tone) but from the dilatation of the Organ, which (it is true) is likewise caused by heat; but the cause of changing the voice at the years of puberty, is most obscure. It seemeth to be for that, when much of the moisture of the Body, which did before irrigate the Parts, is drawn down to

[17] Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, cit., p. 274.

> the Spermatical Vessels, it leaveth the Body more hot than it was; whence cometh the dilatation of the Pipes: For we see plainly all effects of Heat do then come on; as Pilosity, more roughness of the skin, hardness of the flesh, &c.[18]

As noticed by Smith, when they had to describe the phenomenon of voice as sound, early modern thinkers put in the first place its materiality, meaning voice's physical and physiological characteristics. And yet, by reading the quotations above, it is clear that there was an osmotic relationship between the 'scientific' explanations of the sound of voice and its impact on the social and cultural landscape of the time. As suggested by Smith, although voice appears to be the result of complex bodily dynamics, it was certainly intended to communicate something else, too, something that had to do with culture, society, and politics.[19]

Gina Bloom is probably the most authoritative voice to 'listen to' when investigating on particular aspects of the early modern view of the sound of voice. Indeed, her *Voice in Motion* perfectly elucidates the relationship between gender identity and voice, which is the central topic of this chapter. Bearing in mind the early modern physiology of voice, Bloom insists on how the volatile nature of the sound of voice could be read as destabilizing in relation to the dichotomies of the binary system of early modern gender identity.[20] According to her, the difference between the sexes, between the deeper voice of men's hot bodies and the "squeaking" voices of children and women as mirroring their defective, colder bodies, also influenced the contemporary aesthetics of sound. Following Bloom's discussion, squeaking voices were considered to exist not only as the physiological consequence of a cold body, but also as a lack of control over it. Of course, the patriarchal system of early modern society couldn't but consider the coldness of the body as a sign of weakness, of inferiority, therefore, when 'listening to' women's sound of voice, "[s]queaking is not just a signature of difference, but of inferiority – an aural symptom of the body's surrender to

[18] Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum, or a Natural History in Ten Centuries*...(1626), Printed by J. R. for William Lee, 1670, pp. 43-44.

[19] See Bruce Smith, *The Acoustic World*, cit., p. 101.

[20] See Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

irrational, lower passions".[21] Most interestingly, the ideal of control over voice affected men as well, with a certain anxiety, in that it was a sign of an assured humoral rightness and a proof of masculinity at once. In fact, male identity, in relation to the sound of voice, was far more threatened by instability, especially with the pubescent change of voice that men had to face. In this light, men were required to master the sound of their voice in order to maintain their masculinity as strong and intact; at the same time, they also were targeted much more than children and women if manifesting vocal weaknesses.

It is with that in mind that, considering the spectrum of different voices, the instability of sound becomes problematic especially when associated with gender identities, particularly with those that could hardly be recognized as part of one specific gender in the early modern dichotomic structure of male/female bodies. The body of the eunuch or castrato is, in this view, a most elusive figure especially concerning the contradictions arising from his voice as representative of his gender identity. Looking at Shakespeare's references to this figure in both *Twelfth Night* and *Coriolanus* may shed light on the connection between the volatile sound of voice and troubled gender identities, thus unveiling other possible perspectives on these topics when relating ourselves to early modern modes of thinking.

Viola *in-between* Genders: The Enigmatic Figure of the Eunuch in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*

In Shakespeare's theatre there was no place, on stage, for women, yet the presence of voices which were not necessarily recognized as masculine played an important role in the representation of female characters. Indeed, the liminality between sexes conveyed by boy actors' squeaking voices conventionally covered the non-presence of women on stage. As noted by Bloom:

[21] *Ibid*., p. 25.

> Onstage or off, a squeaking voice announced a boy's transition into manhood at the same time that it indicated that the transition had yet to be completed. As it attested to a boy's liminal position in a gradual and uneven process of pubescent change, the squeaking voice exposed the fragile condition of young male bodies and, as a corollary, the aleatory nature of gender differentiation.[22]

Boy actors, therefore, could achieve on stage an extent of illusion of femininity not only because of their physical aspect (they were beardless and young), but also because of how they sounded, because of their unstable voice. In fact, Dympna Callaghan persuasively argues that in a phallocentric society as the one in which Shakespeare lived, the theatrical representation of femininity aimed at reaching a precise aesthetics that was not interested in bringing on stage a realistic depiction of womanhood, but, rather, a specific representation of gender differentiation.[23] In this view, female characters were not necessarily staged *as* women but more as *different from men*, more precisely as bodies lacking male genitalia. Such defective bodies could be mainly represented as incapable of control over one's voice, especially because the sound of voice, as we have seen, was physiologically connected to the testicles. The figure of the eunuch or castrato was a paramount example of the modes of representing femininity on stage and embodying both visually and aurally gender differentiation in the early modern European context. In point of fact, though eunuchs and castrati both experienced genital mutilation, and both were taken to represent a different gender, standing in-between an alternative masculinity and a femininity shaped by (and out of) men, their being either a 'eunuch' or 'castrato' indicates specifically different social roles assigned to them.

Katherine Crawford observes that the meaning of the term "eunuch" – deriving from the Hebrew *sārīs*, the Greek *εὐνοῦχος*, and the Latin *eunuchus* – can be translated in different ways: it indicates a castrated man but also a guardian, a court officer, or a harem attendant, whereas the term "castrato"

[22] *Ibid*., p. 22.

[23] Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Rrace on the Renaissance Stage*, Routledge, 2000.

specifically indicates the opera singer, or, more broadly, the man castrated with the purpose of maintaining a high pitch voice.[24] In spite of that, both eunuchs and castrati upset and fascinated early modern audiences at the same time by destabilizing the phallocentric gender code of the time. In fact, Abdulhamit Arvas has observed that, with their mutilated bodies and enigmatic aesthetic appearance, eunuchs and castrati had no position in the early modern spectrum of gender identities, indeed they were rather conceived of as outsiders, purposely kept in a liminal place with respect to gender. In Arvas' words:

> Eunuchs' bodies were *re-formed*, *re-figured*, and *re-inscribed*, and ultimately existed beyond the male-female binary. They were pushed outside many of the boundaries of normativity, and considered "out there," foreign, and monstrous.[25]

Arvas urges us to consider that these bodies were intentionally disabled to cover different social roles which, no matter how high-profile these could be, barred any possibility to procreate. This was crucial if one considers the importance of breeding, especially when imposed by social standards on men as a sign of strong masculinity, which was particularly concerned with early modern expectations towards male body efficiency. Being denied what was conceived of as the dominant feature of manhood, eunuchs and castrati suffered not only social marginalization, but also physical disability. Despite that, their castration and their imposed non-normativity made them eligible for specific social roles. Indeed, while, as aforementioned, castrati were particularly appreciated because of their singing ability, eunuchs, freed from any sexual connotation of masculinity, were considered suitable as servants, covering specific tasks.

From a historical point of view, eunuchs had been existing long before the early modern period, especially in the Eastern world, mainly in royal and religious contexts that can be dated back as far as the tenth century BCE, in the empires of

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[24] Katherine Crawford, *Eunuchs and Castrati: Disability and Normativity in Early Modern Europe*, Routledge, 2019.

[25] Abdulhamit Arvas, "Early Modern Eunuchs and the Transing of Gender and Race", in *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 2019, p. 117. [My Italics].

ancient Egypt, China, Persia, or Byzantium.[26] Eunuchs, indeed, were believed to be perfect guardians, especially in religious contexts, for sacred places. Their being outsiders, not only in relation to gender but significantly with respect to an ideal nature of the human condition, engendered a sort of mysticism as, symbolically speaking, they were perceived as being *outside* the natural dynamics of life and death. In this perspective, they assumed a role so detached by society that they appeared to belong elsewhere, specifically in a sacred context. Holy sites, such as the tomb of Prophet Muhammad in Medina, were exclusively guarded by eunuchs, and still today, after more than eight-hundred years, they remain the guardians of the site.[27]

Eunuchs as guardians and domestic servants also played a fundamental role in the Sultan's harem during the Ottoman Empire, in the fifteenth century. As underlined by Arvas, these eunuchs were highly educated and they had administrative responsibilities, especially towards the women living in the harem. They were allowed to move around the public, the administrative and, above all, the private space of the royal palace, which was a restricted area exclusively open to the women of the royal family and the Sultan (the only man who could have access there, too). Guardians, servants, and officers were all eunuchs who, while being outside the boundaries of adult masculinity, weren't perceived as a threat for political and power stability.[28] Most importantly, Crawford reminds us that eunuchs were mediating figures in several contexts because "[t]heir capacity to cross – or "trans" – was a function of gender ambiguity that served instrumental purposes".[29] In fact, it is not surprising to observe the presence of eunuchs in political contexts, flanking rulers, as early as ancient Rome and even before. Their presence not only was valuable in terms of mediation but they also symbolized the transformative power of the ruler, her/his capacity to change bodies into something else, highlighting at the same time royals' fertility in contrast to eunuch's lack of fecundity.

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[26] *Ibid*., p. 118.

[27] Katherine Crawford, *Eunuchs and Castrati*, cit., p. 3.

[28] See Abdulhamit Arvas, *Early Modern Eunuchs*, cit., pp. 118-120.

[29] Katherine Crawford, *Eunuchs and Castrati*, cit., p. 4.

Lastly, another social role of the eunuchs, as mentioned before, was better embodied in the castrati. The latter were mutilated with one specific aim in mind: to preserve their high-pitched voices. Therefore, boys were castrated at a young age in order to meet the aesthetic needs related to their vocal ability. Specifically, through castration, boys maintained a kind of voice capable of reaching unusually high singing notes for men (comparable to female alto or mezzosoprano pitch) while sounding, at the same time, stronger than female voices since male muscles and vocal apparatus could produce much more powerful sounds. In the sixteenth century a papal bull (*Cum pro nostro pastoral munere*) expressly called for castrati to join the Cappella Sistina choir. In fact, if at the beginning a castrato's employment was mainly addressed in religious contexts, as components of the choirs singing sacred music, the castrato singer became, later in time, a more and more popular figure, especially as opera singer during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Interestingly, the castrato of the opera will play the most heroic and masculine characters, igniting the audience's fascination with such an enigmatic, strange figure.

In Shakespeare's theatre, as is commonly known, female roles were played by boy actors. Although eunuchs and castrati never really appeared on English stages until the late seventeenth century, both their visual and aural aesthetic qualities, or, as Callaghan suggests, their "deformities", were very much known and appreciated. Indeed, the English transvestite actors, if not surgically, had a lot in common with eunuchs and castrati's aesthetic.[30] Interestingly, Shakespeare's audience was deeply concerned with the vocal ability of transvestite actors, far more than with their appearance. In fact, reviews of the actors of the time, specifically young males impersonating women, judged, above all, the vocal ability of the performers as a crucial aesthetic feature to adequately represent female characters. This is evident also later on, in the Restoration theatre, when the problem of voice is famously referenced in Samuel Pepys diaries with respect to the last of the boy actors, Edward Kynaston. Probably because he had reached that age in which voice cracks, Kynaston is described by Pepys as the actor who "made the loveliest lady that ever I saw in my life, *only her voice was not very*

[30] Dympna Callaghan, *Shakespeare Without Women*, cit., p. 66.

good".[31] The problem of the squeaking voice, cracking during puberty, pivotally affected the stage performance of femininity. Concerning this, to understand the audience's expectations and the early modern English ideas about feminine voice in theatre, it is sufficient to retrieve Hamlet's lines:

> HAMLET: Welcome good friends. O old friend, why,
> thy face is valanced since I saw thee last! Com'st thou to
> beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and
> mistress! By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven
> than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine.
> *Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be*
> *not cracked within the ring*. Masters you are all welcome. [2.2.360-366][32]

Femininity on stage was, thus, understood as a male representation of *the differentiation of gender* especially in terms of vocal performativity, a feature that at the time of puberty, imposed a certain anxiety on the actor companies.

Although Shakespeare's female roles were interpreted by boy actors, so that there is no need for the presence of eunuchs on stage, in his texts we can find explicit references to them. The majority of these references play on both negative and positive connotations of the English fascination and exotic curiosity towards eastern eunuchs, such as in *All's Well That Ends Well*, when Lafeu says "I would send them to the Turk, to make *eunuchs* of" [2.3.986-987]; or in *Henry VI, Part II*, in Jack Cade's raging lines "Fellow kings, I tell you that that Lord Say/ hath gelded the commonwealth, and made it an *eunuch*:/ and more than that, he can speak French" [4.2.2470-73]; or again in Chiron's line "And if she do, I would I were an *eunuch*" [2.3.866] from *Titus Andronicus*.[33] Exceptionally, in one play, a eunuch appears as character, even if, of course, we must assume he was

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[31] Samuel Pepys, "Saturday 18 August 1660", in *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1660), online source available at http://www.pepysdiary.com/archive/1660/08/18/index.php [last accessed February, 2022]. [My Italics].

[32] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2006. [My Italics]

[33] My Italics.

not interpreted by a real eunuch. He is Mardian, Cleopatra's chief eunuch appearing alongside her with other eunuchs, fanning Cleopatra in her extraordinary first entrance on stage.[34] All these references let us understand that the deployment of the eunuch's imagery in Shakespeare's theatre was typical. The English audience linked precise meanings to such imagery, usually associating eunuchs to gender ambiguity issues, such as a vulnerable or defective masculinity, or, simply recognizing their social roles as in the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Most importantly, though, Shakespeare's references to eunuchs are also correlated with the sound of voice in its physiological meaning. Indeed, Shakespeare makes use of the connection between eunuchs' voice and their lack of genitalia to the point that we can consider it as one of his traditional tropes. In *Cymbeline*, for example, the trope of the eunuchs is employed by underlining the singing ability of the castrato and, at the same time, his lack of testicles. By playing on these features of the castrated men, Shakespeare creates a sexual metaphor with which Cloten expresses his wild desire to possess Innogen. In the scene, in fact, Cloten is persistently wooing Innogen by calling for musicians to wake her up with an aubade:

> CLOTEN: So, get you gone. If this penetrate, I will
> consider your music the better; if it do not, it is
> a voice in her ears which horsehairs and calves' guts,
> *nor the voice of unpaved eunuch* to boot, can never amend. [2.3.27-30][35]

In the lines above, the castrato or eunuch's physiology, together with early modern theories of sound penetrating the ear, serves as Cloten's sexual metaphor to reveal to the audience his carnal desire.

Similar imageries are employed by Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night* and *Coriolanus*, as well, but in these plays, the trope of the eunuch is further

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[34] *Antony and Cleopatra* is the play written by Shakespeare that has the highest number of references to eunuchs, at least six throughout the entire play.

[35] William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ed. by Valerie Wayne, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2017. [My Italics]

problematized with respect to the gender identity of the protagonists, respectively Viola for the former and Coriolanus for the latter.

Twelfth Night is the only play by Shakespeare to begin with music and, above all, with lines that indirectly spur the audience to sharpen their sense of hearing in order to grasp subtle meanings. Orsino's opening lines contain important clues foretelling the plot:

> ORSINO: If music be the food of love, play on,
> Give me excess of it, that surfeiting
> The appetite may sicken and so die.
> That strain again, it had a dying fall.
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour. Enough, no more,
> 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
> O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou
> That, notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there
> Of what validity and pitch soe'er
> But falls into abatement and low price
> Even in a minute. So full of shapes is fancy
> That it alone is high fantastical. [1.1.1-15][36]

The importance of music, both acoustically (music is played at the beginning) and semantically, together with the hearing of it, is clearly enhanced in the opening of the play. Keir Elam, has suggested that, in *Twelfth Night*, music (and musicians, too) is crucial in that it is strictly intertwined with verbal language.[37] Furthermore, we will see how the eunuch trope is specifically built in this play in connection with Viola's supposed musical skills and vocal ability, a theme that, to a certain extent, is already anticipated in Orsino's lines above. Indeed, through Orsino's

[36] For the present and following quotations see William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, Or What You Will*, ed. by Keir Elam, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2008.

[37] See Keir Elam, "Appendix 3", in William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, *Or What You Will*, ed. by Keir Elam, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2008, pp. 383-394.

opening lines Shakespeare seems to suggest in a prophetic way, the portrayal of the character of Viola and her association with music. The "*sweet south*/ That breathes upon a bank of *violets*"[38] enters Orsino's ear, affecting his emotions which clearly are amorous, foreshadowing Viola and Orsino's being in love by the end of the play.

Another image we can associate with Viola as a eunuch is given by the metaphorical *movement of love* described by Orsino with images of a wind that comes and goes, "Stealing and giving odours", but also of love as a sort of agitated sea, in a movement described with words that could define as well the sound of voice ("Receiveth as the sea, naught enters there/ Of what validity and *pitch* soe'er/ But falls into abatement and *low* price").[39] And finally, there is the "spirit of love" that Orsino sees as "full of shapes" and "high fantastical", that can be interpreted as suggesting the 'trans' quality of the eunuch's body described before in this chapter.

Aside from these suggestive assumptions, the eunuch-like *status* of Viola is expressly described in her own account after disguise. When Viola reaches the land of Illyria as a castaway, she reveals her plan to survive in a conversation with the Capitan, directly asking him to support her disguising by introducing her as a eunuch to Orsino:

> VIOLA: I pray thee – and I'll pay thee bounteously –
> Conceal me what I am, and be my aid
> For such disguise as haply shall become
> The form of my intent. I'll serve this duke.
> Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him.

[38] [My Italics]. The word 'South' here is meant as the wind "which bear both sound and odour", while the term 'violets' can be read as an allusion to Viola. See Keir Elam's notes to the text in William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, *Or What You Will*, ed. by Keir Elam, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2008, p.162. Furtherly, note that "sweet south" is Elam's emendation of the folio text which in other editions is preserved as "sweet sound".

[39] [My Italics]. Here the images of the changing sea and wind may mirror the movement of the eunuch's body on the spectrum of gender differentiation, and, equally, on that of the changing voice typical of young boy actors. Moreover, it is worth noticing that Viola literally 'comes from the sea' when arriving to Illyria after the shipwreck.

It may be worth thy pains, for I can sing
And speak in many sorts of music,
That will allow me very worth his service.
What else may hap to time I will commit;
Only shape thou thy silence to my wit.
CAPITAN: Be you his eunuch, and your mute I'll be.
When my tongue blabs then let mine eyes not see. [1.2.44-60]

This is the only occasion in which Viola, who, from now on, will be Cesario, expresses her intention to disguise herself explicitly as a eunuch. Later in the play, this eunuch role will be somehow blended with more fixed genders, at times replaced by the role of a boy, a page or a young male servant. Still, the allusions to the eunuch figure can be traced as a *fil rouge* within the entire play. Indeed, Elam underlines how this eunuch role, chosen by Viola, is commonly interpreted as something that Shakespeare probably had (willingly or not) forgotten when writing the rest of the play, or that he had probably changed his mind about since no other explicit references to this specific castrato or eunuch role are mentioned.[40] And yet, I agree with Elam when he writes that the eunuch role picked by Viola at the beginning can be envisaged also later, in other passages of the play; certainly it is not mentioned as explicitly as in Viola's first lines, still, "oblique references" elsewhere in the text reminds us of this eunuch choice.[41] Before showing where in the text it is possible to read Viola as eunuch, it is fruitful, here, to pay attention to the lines quoted above.

Interestingly, Shakespeare merges in Viola's disguising plan all the features, social and aesthetical, of the eunuch. In fact, she assures the Capitan that she has all the necessary skills to take on this specific role. Viola underlines that she is going to be a good servant and a mediating figure for the aristocratic Orsino, recalling the profile of the Sultan's eunuchs described before. Accompanying and participating in the representation of aristocracy (in this case Orsino's dukedom) and working as a messenger almost throughout the entire play, the character of

[40] Keir Elam, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, *Or What You Will*, ed. by Keir Elam, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2008, pp. 57-67.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 59.

Viola lets us understand that Shakespeare and his audience must have had precise knowledge of the imagery of the eunuch. Most importantly, Viola's lines enhance that she has the required vocal ability of the castrato: "It may be worth thy pains, for I can sing/ And speak in many sorts of music". But the most important intention that Viola's expresses is to be traced in her request to "conceal" what she is. This expression, in fact, lets us ponder on her choice which is not only that of being disguised as a eunuch but, also, of being perceived as different in relation to her gender identity, that is in line with that of the eunuch, precisely *in-between*, or *outside* the male/female binary. Viola's plan revolves around the *concealing* of her genitalia, which may help her to take on a different, inscrutable identity. As Elam observes:

> Viola, in planning to take on a new identity, refers to her disguise not as a form of crossdressing or a change of gender roles but as an actual canceling of biological sexuality. She is to play the part not of a boy but of a castrate.[42]

Therefore, Viola is to play the part not of a boy but of a eunuch that is, as mentioned before, a man lacking genitalia, a man *representing* femininity. Interestingly, Viola's role can be seen as specular with respect to boy actors in Shakespeare's theatre: she is to play a role in her life exactly as a boy actor would do on the stage, thus only simulating a different gender identity which falls outside the boundaries of male/female gender modes.

Shakespeare creates with Viola a very cunning character. Although presenting her as innocent and pure, as embodying (outside her disguise) all the feminine features that early modern society expected to see in a good young woman, Viola's plan will permit her to acquire more and more sexual and social power throughout the play, by pretending to be the opposite, that is, the least expected figure of power: the marginalized eunuch. Indeed, in my view, *Twelfth Night* is deeply concerned with the theme of social climbing. Olivia, "A virtuous maid, the daughter of a count" [1.2.33] that has inherited her family fortunes, is

[42] Keir Elam, "The Fertile Eunuch: Twelfth Night, Early Modern Intercourse, and the Fruits of Castration", in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 1996, p. 1.

(unfortunately for her) the 'golden goose' that everyone wants to marry. Orsino is not the only one who tries to conquer her love, Malvolio and Sir Andrew, too, desperately want to marry her because of her social status.

Surprisingly, Viola-Cesario is the only one that succeeds in enrapturing Olivia. With her being *in-between*, Viola-Cesario exerts a most attractive sexual power that will grant her not only Olivia's love, but pivotally, Orsino's, as well. The power exerted by Viola as a eunuch is thus developed in a climactic way throughout the play. She will be, In fact, the most fascinating and enigmatic figure in the court of Illyria. So, by using the imagery of the eunuch, especially the aesthetic semblance of a eunuch, the vocal features of the castrato and, at the same time, by reversing this figure from being traditionally marginal, Shakespeare creates a sort of short-circuit in which gender ambiguity is no longer to be traced outside society but at its very center. And yet, one may wonder *how* does he achieve such a twist? *How* is Viola-Cesario as eunuch able to climb the social steps of Illyria?

A possible answer to these questions can be reached when lingering on Viola's voice. Her strategy is indeed entirely based on her presumed vocal abilities. It is the focus on her voice, particularly the castrato quality of it, that can be read as Viola's means for success. Olivia, indeed, falls in love with Viola-Cesario's voice that apparently can 'sing' love in the most beautiful ways. When Viola-Cesario brings Orsino's messages of love to Olivia, the latter asks Viola-Cesario in what ways she/he would woo a woman ("What would you do?" [1.5.259]). Viola's answer is cunningly built around her presumed extraordinary vocal ability to sing love:

VIOLA: Make me a willow cabin at your gate
And call upon my soul within the house;
Write loyal cantons of contemned love
And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
Hallow your name to the reverberate hills
And make the babbling gossip of the air
Cry out 'Olivia', O you should not rest

Between the elements of air and earth
But you should pity me. [1.5.260-268]

But the theme of Viola's castrato quality and its success is most evident in Orsino's interest in the auditory features embodied by Viola as a eunuch that he associates directly with eunuchood and womanhood at once, blurring the separation line between gender identities:

ORSINO: It shall become thee well to act my woes.
She will attend it better in thy youth
Than in a nuncio's of more grave aspect.
VIOLA: I think not so, my lord.
ORSINO: Dear lad, believe it,
For they shall yet belie thy happy years
That say thou art a man. Diana's lip
Is not more smooth and rubious. Thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative a woman's part. [1.4.26-34]

Orsino's description of Viola's ambiguity recalls the aesthetic uniqueness (both visual and aural) of the eunuch andcastrato. Orsino is enchanted by Viola's youth, beauty, and voice, and through his lines Shakespeare creates multifaceted puns that coalesce together the identities of the early modern theatre boy actor, of Cesario as a castrato, and of Viola as a woman. Indeed, Viola-Cesario is chosen as an actor by Orsino ("It shall become thee well to act my woes") to proclaim his love to Olivia. But, most interestingly, Orsino's bodily descriptions linger on the organs of the vocal apparatus metaphorically associated to the sexual organs. His words "Thy small pipe/ Is as the maiden's organ,/ shrill and sound" refer to both Viola's voice and Cesario's genitalia, which, as seen before, were thought to be directly connected in the physiological nature of voice. This very description, therefore, exactly catches Viola's being *in-between*: she's the marginal eunuch and the popular castrato at once, she is the man representing femininity and the woman playing with masculinity, she is the main female role of the comedy and,

at the same time, the boy actor on stage. It is by this specific position of in-betweenness that she is able to succeed in the comedy. In keeping with this perspective, it is suggestive to conclude this part of the chapter by recalling Viola's own words when she describes herself as such: "I am all the daughters of my father's house/ And all the brothers too; and yet I know not" [2.4.120-121] which could easily be imagined as being spoken by a eunuch or castrato.

"My throat of war be turned": the Hero's Aphonia in *Coriolanus*

W.H. Auden has observed that in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* the auditory dimension is richer than in any other tragedy of his. The play abounds with sounds, noises, public and military music, shouts, acoustic signals, and other auditory elements. With the purpose of showing how these sounds effectively have an impact on the play, Auden focused our attention on the acoustic elements characterizing each scene, providing us with a list of them by quoting only the stage directions.[43] Almost all of these sounds belong to the military world, which dominates the tragedy *Coriolanus*. And yet, especially by focusing on the protagonist, there is a specific sound carrying further meanings than the ones

[43] Auden Wystan Hugh, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, edited by Arthur Kirsch, Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 245. Here is the full list of sounds as described by Auden: In the first Act alone the noises include: "a company of mutinous Citizens" as the play opens (I.i.), "Shouts within" in the same scene, "Drum and Colours," "Drum afar off," "They sound a parley," "Alarum far off," and sounds of fighting a few scenes later (I.iv), "Alarum continues still afar off," and "a Trumpet" (I.v), "They all shout and wave their swords" (I.vi), "Alarum, as in battle" (I.viii) and successively in the following scene, "Flourish. Alarum. A retreat is sounded," "A long flourish" as "They all cry, 'Marcius, Marcius'" and "Flourish. Trumpets sound and drums" (I.ix). The final scene of the Act is introduced with another "flourish," of "Cornets" (I.x). Throughout the play we hear flourishes and sennets, the sounds of armies and warfare, of noises "within," of shouts, of riots. In addition to these sounds of battles and parleys, "Music plays" during the feast at Aufidius's house (IV.v), ceremonial music that would be customary for such an occasion. "A dead march" is "sounded" at the very end of the play (V.vi).

linked to the cacophony qualifying military sounds. This particular one is profoundly unstable, moving from one extreme to the other, from loudness to silence: it is the sound of the hero's voice. Through his lecture on *Coriolanus*, Auden underlines that the tragedy is not pivotally concerned with the clash between the roman social classes of patricians and plebeians, nor, I would suggest with the fight between Romans and Volscians. Rather, in Auden's words: "The main contrast in the play is […] of the one and the many, of Coriolanus and the crowd".[44] Such contrast is addressed by Shakespeare through his 'staging' of a materiality that is retrieved from the physical and physiological nature of (the) sound, as well as from ideas of power and politics connected with femininity/masculinity.

As opportunely underlined by Peter Holland, the term 'voice/voices' appears in the text twelve times in the singular form and thirty-six in the plural one.[45] Moreover, Holland stresses that *Coriolanus* is also the "tragedy of the body", a theme, that of corporeality, that of course, is strictly connected with the sound of voice, too:

> In a play so concerned with the fragmentation and coherence of the body, the emphasis on the physical attributes of speech – *tongue* thirteen, *tongues* eight, *mouth* two, *mouths* four, *throat* four, *throats* three, *lips* three, *lip* four – is surely significant. Given that people become nothing more than their ability to speak – 'Here come more voices' (2.3.123) – there is a powerful sound of sounds, a speaking of speech across the play.[46]

Coriolanus is a protagonist with whom the reader finds it difficult to sympathize. In the play, we *hear* contrasting opinions about him and his behavior – from the private context to the public – remains difficult to read. Although we can recognize Coriolanus as being proud, stubborn, invulnerable, at the same time he is haunted by different forms of anxiety, such as the anxiety to excel, readable in

[44] *Ibid*., p. 247.

[45] Peter Holland, "Intorduction", in William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, edited by Peter Holland, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2013, pp.1-133.

[46] *Ibid*., p. 77.

his constant seeking for approval. He is divided between his personal goals and the goals of Volumnia, his mother, who clearly in the play is portrayed as a most influential figure.

The problems unconsciously affecting the main character can be well understood by focusing on the sound of his voice, which opens for us a deep insight into his identity, namely into his difficult relationship with his gender identity. In this brief discussion of Coriolanus, indeed, voice will be the guiding sound in providing a portrayal of the character's unstable masculinity. For this reason, the pivotal focus will be on the protagonist's voice and on the meanings that we can identify and associate with it by taking into account the context of the early modern hermeneutics of sound.

To begin with, one cannot but observe that the most used imagery in *Coriolanus* is the one representing the dichotomy between war and peace. Traditionally, war is evoked through violent sounds like that of thunder, or, more pointedly, with acoustic signals of trumpets and drums, the typical instruments that could be heard in the battlefield. In *Coriolanus*, the violent sounds of war are a symbol for strength, fierceness and, above all, of masculinity. Manhood is acoustically represented as strictly connected with violence and ruthlessness. Peace, on the other hand, is commonly associated to soft and sweet sounds, like those produced by pipes, or even to complete silence. If war and violence convey a powerful masculinity, peace, on the other hand, is embodied by the supposed weakness of women, children, and people whose gender is non-normative. Such a dichotomic view, particularly influent in the early modern period, is also reflected in the different typologies of voices, hence, the mild, soft, shrill voices of girls, young boys, and eunuchs as representative, here, of gender ambiguity, were registered as opposed to the strong, deep voices of men.

These different connotations of the sound of voice, especially its functioning as a sign of masculinity/femininity, is central in *Coriolanus*. In relation to the discussion of the early modern understanding of voice proposed before in this chapter, it can be said that the capacity to master one's own voice (but also the others' and, more broadly, the entire aural field) is a prerogative of manhood that is strongly underlined in the tragedy. Indeed, as Gina Bloom argues,

"Shakespeare's Coriolanus dramatizes just how much is at stake for male identity in the loss of control over voice".[47]

The figure of the hero in *Coriolanus* is portrayed as an epitome of adult masculinity. Caius Martius (later Coriolanus) is the invincible Roman soldier, deeply concerned with maintaining his reputation of 'Male' not only by relentlessly fighting against the Volscian enemy, but also by controlling voices, and, pivotally, by showing no sign of a 'crack' in his own voice. And yet, the sound of voice is extremely volatile by nature and, in point of fact, my argument here is that studying the sound of his voice across the whole play allows us to say that Coriolanus is gripped by the anxiety of not appearing solidly masculine. In the tragedy, his fall is punctuated by various forms of aphonia and impossible communication, which may be seen as a way through which the playwright may tackle, at the same time, gender ambiguity, that the protagonist perceives as deeply threatening his own identity.

Coriolanus' anxiety about manhood is not only caused by society's expectations, but especially by his own suffocating mother, Volumnia, who raised his son denying him a maternal kind of love, instilling in Coriolanus her own idea of masculinity already at a young age. In her first appearance on stage, together with Virgilia (Coriolanus' wife) Volumnia admonishes her daughter in law who is worried about her husband being at war:

> VOLUMNIA: I pray you, daughter, sing, or express yourself
> in a more comfortable sort. If my son were my husband,
> I should freelier rejoice in that absence wherein he won
> honour than in the embracements of his bed, where he
> would show most love. [1.3.1-5][48]

In these first words by Volumnia, traditional images of tender love and passion, such as that of the loving husband, or the wife waiting for him to come back from war, are replaced by violence as the sign of masculinity and honor. Instead of

[47] Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, cit., p. 9.

[48] For the present and the following quotations see William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, edited by Peter Holland, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2013.

being worried for her husband's life, Virgilia, in Volumnia's view, should *sing* and rejoice. This first speech continues with Volumnia's proud account of her instilling in Coriolanus fast growth into a man, being purposely sent to war when he was just a boy:

> VOLUMNIA: When yet he was but *tender-*
> *bodied* and the only son of my womb, when *youth* with
> comeliness plucked all gaze his way, when for a day
> of king's entreatis a mother should not sell him an
> hour from her beholding, I, considering how honour
> would become such a person – that it was no better
> than picture-like to hang by th'wall, if renown made it
> not stir – was pleased to let him seek danger where he
> was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him, from
> whence he returned his brows bound with oak. I tell
> thee, daughter, I sprang not more joy at first hearing
> he was a *man-child* than now in first seeing he had
> proved himself a *man*. [1.3.5-17][49]

In the lines above, Volumnia gives us an image of Coriolanus skipping the important age of puberty. In fact, her account is punctuated by the life-stages of growing up, revealing to Virgilia (and the audience) how, forcing him across violence, Volumnia had pushed her son from being a "man-child" to becoming "a man". This is pivotal for the audience to understand Coriolanus' development of his own idea of masculinity, in which the stages corresponding to childhood and boyhood are not only lacking but also repudiated.

Unsurprisingly, the adult-man Coriolanus is qualified in the play by his voice that more than once is compared to the roaring sounds and noises of war; besides, in numerous scenes we can hear him shouting out of rage. Volumnia recalls her son's voice in "the ecstasy of her maternal pride",[50] opposing his masculinity to

[49] My Italics.

[50] See Peter Holland's notes to the text in William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, edited by Peter Holland, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 179.

the image of children running in fear, fantasizing about her son's actions on the battlefield:

> VOLUMNIA: Methinks I *hear your husband's drum*,
> See him pluck Aufidius down by th'hair,
> *As children from a bear* the Volsces shunning him.
> Methinks I see him stamp thus, and *call* thus:
> 'Come on, you cowards, you were got in fear
> Though you were born in Rome!' [1.3.31-36][51]

And later in the play, in the middle of war, when Lartius thinks that his friend Coriolanus is dead, the hero is identified again as a voice blast:

> LARTIUS: Thou wast a soldier
> Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible
> Only in strokes, but with thy grim looks and
> *The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds*
> Thou mad'st thine enemies shake, as if the world
> Were feverous and did tremble. [1.4.60-65][52]

Coriolanus' identity is repeatedly described *as* a sound; in this sense, his identity may be safely defined as a *sonic identity* strongly projecting a masculine force by means of the percussive quality of his voice.[53] Yet, if in the first part of the tragedy, Coriolanus is depicted as one of the most outstanding men in Rome, later, when he comes back from war and starts pursuing his political career as a consul, his identity, just like his voice, begins to waver.

Traces of metaphorical aphonia, described as 'silence' in the play, can be first found when the senators insist on praising the hero's deeds as a form of

[51] My emphasis.

[52] My emphasis.

[53] In addition to the lines quoted above, it is worth here recalling also Cominius' recognition of Coriolanus precisely by the sound of his voice, which validates the idea of the sonic identity I'm here advancing: "The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabor/ More than I know the sound of Martius' tongue/ From every meaner man" [1.6.25-27].

propaganda.[54] Coriolanus is reluctant to give in to this habit and, considering such proclamations as only a diminishing way to flatter people, he develops a form of resistance through aphonia, which is also anticipated in a conversation with Cominius, even before returning to Rome:

> MARTIUS: Pray now, no more. My mother,
> Who has a character to extol her blood,
> When she does praise me, grieves me.
> I have done as you have done, that's what I can,
> Induced as you have been, that's for my country.
> He that has but effected his good will
> Hath overta'en mine act.
> COMINIUS: You shall not be
> The grave of your deserving; Rome must know
> The value of her own. 'Twere a *concealment*
> Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement,
> To *hide* your doing and *to silence* that
> Which, to the spire and top of praises vouched,
> Would seem but modest. [1.9.13-25][55]

In the context of the discourse embraced in this dissertation, words like "concealment", and "hide" should remind us of the eunuch's gender identity discussed before, concerning Viola in *Twelfth Night*. However, putting aside what could be a mere suggestive reference to the eunuch, it is "silence" that here becomes pivotal. Indeed, Coriolanus' fall, in the tragedy, precisely starts during his transactions with the roman citizens, where he shows the first signs of what I here define as his aphonia. He refuses to speak with people in the market-place (the Roman forum), but in the end, although reluctantly, and with the wrong

[54] In the context of republican Rome, as emphasized by Shakespeare in *Coriolanus*, it was customary to *ask* people for their votes through rhetorical persuasion based on reporting the candidate's own experience of war. People, indeed, expected the 'valiant warrior'-candidate to ask for their votes, as a way to prove he was worthy of them.

[55] My emphasis.

attitude and intentions, he tries. Yet, Coriolanus wants to control, rather than ask, and eventually accept, the citizens' *voices*.[56]

It is interesting to notice that the citizens' votes work as "voices" to be exchanged with the candidate, and heard, as well. As stressed by Gina Bloom, since the *voices must be given* to the candidate in order to be elected consul, "the voice is figured as something that can be transferred from one man to another".[57] Coriolanus' propaganda fails: when speaking with the citizens in the market-place, "[r]ather than offering his deeds in exchange for their vocal support, Coriolanus presents the transaction as already completed".[58] This can be read both as a form of control over the citizens' voices, and, at the same time, as a form of aphonia of Coriolanus' own voice. The first is described in the text as the protagonist's will to "silence" the citizens: "that to's power he would/ Have made them mules, silenced their pleaders and/ Dispropriated their freedoms" [2.1.241]; "for their tongues to be silent and not confess so/ much were a kind of ungrateful injury" [2.2.29-30]. Interestingly, when discovering that the citizens have changed their minds, and that they want him not elected but sentenced, Coriolanus furiously asks: "Have I had *children's voices*?" [3.1.32].[59] In such a question, it is clear that the hero considers "children's voices" as volatile, soft voices that crack: in other words, voices that cannot be said to belong to adult men.

Also, unstable and small voices, carrying with them Coriolanus anxiety with respect to his threatened masculinity, can be seen as crucially signifying the cause of the hero's aphonia. In this view, a key scene is the one in which Volumnia tries to convince his son to be less "absolute" [3.2.40]. Volumnia pushes Coriolanus to *act* a part that is not in his nature in order to establish a communication with the citizens. In doing so, the conversation between the two revolves around those sounds of voices that fall in the sphere of femininity and peace, engendering a discussion of gender ambiguity, as well:

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[56] Here I am referring to the citizens' votes, as it should be pointed out that in the text the votes are named "voices".

[57] Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, cit., p. 9.

[58] *Ibid*.

[59] [My Italics].

CORIOLANUS: I muse my mother
Does not approve me further, who was wont
To call them wollen vassals, things created
To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads
In congregations, to yawn, be still and wonder
When one but of my ordinance stood up
To speak of peace or war. [*to Volumnia*] I talk of you.
Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me
False to my nature? Rather say *I play*
The man I am.
[…]
VOLUMNIA: You might have been *enough the man* you are
With striving less to be so. [3.2.9-21][60]

And some lines later:

VOLUMNIA: I prithee now, *sweet son*, as thou hast said
To have my praise for this, *perform a part*
Thou hast not done before.
CORIOLANUS: Well, I must do't.
Away my disposition and possess me
Some harlot's spirit! My throat of war be turned,
Which choired with my drum, into a pipe
Small as an eunuch or the virgin voice
That babies lull asleep! [3.2.108-116][61]

In the lines above, Coriolanus may be envisaged as being profoundly frightened to appear less masculine, by having to express himself with a voice that is not his own. Indeed, not only is there an explicit reference to eunuchood and womanhood as symbols of weakness in producing precise sounds with their small voices but, since Coriolanus is called to *perform* these voices, there is also a link with the boy actors of the early modern theatre. The fact that the protagonist will not be able to

[60] My Italics.

[61] My Italics.

play this part, falling into a state of aphonia, will be the main cause for his propaganda to fail.

And yet, in my view, Coriolanus *will perform*, to a certain extent, the very part of the eunuch and that of the boy actor, as well. Indeed, while failing to change his nature in trying to persuade the Roman citizens, after the banishment from his hometown, Coriolanus will entertain a relationship with Aufidius that has been rightly described by many as a homoerotic relationship. In this sense, he moves on the spectrum of gender ambiguity by serving Aufidius as a eunuch would do. It is important to notice that, as evidenced by the lines quoted above, it is Volumnia that is pushing Coriolanus to *play* a feminine role for the sake of his consulship's propaganda, conceived of by the latter as unacceptable inasmuch as it could undermine his masculine appearance. And yet, this very role is played by Coriolanus when allying with his former enemy, Aufidius.

When, by the end of the play, Aufidius and Coriolanus are marching together against Rome, in the last encounter with the women of his family – Volumnia, and Virgilia who tries to convince him not to fight against *his own* people – Coriolanus cannot but *listen* to them. In that very occasion, in front of his mother, he switches back to the Coriolanus we knew in Rome, the one who is not capable of performing (or expressing) a different identity, who cannot show any sign of mildness. Indeed, he confesses "Like a dull actor now, I have forgot my part" [5.4.43]. This "part" that the hero has forgotten is the same that he was able to play when allying with Aufidius, and, it is also the very feminine role that Volumnia urged his son to perform in order to gain the Romans' votes. In fact, I believe it is not by chance that Coriolanus forgets how to play a different role (different from his masculine identity) when standing in front of his mother.

Being lost in different performances of his identity, Coriolanus is not able to speak. In the encounter with his mother, he falls into a state of aphonia, stressed by Volumnia:

> VOLUMNIA: Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,
> To imitate the graces of the gods,
> To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o'th' air
> And yet to charge thy Sulphur with a bolt

That should but rive an oak. *Why dost not speak?*
Think'st thou it honourable for a nobleman
Still to remember wrongs? Daughter, speak you;
He cares not for your weeping. Speak thou, boy;
Perhaps the childishness will move him more
Than can our reasons. [5.3.149-158][62]

At this point, though, Coriolanus also falls into the trap designed by Aufidius, who will use this momentary aphonia of Coriolanus to his own advantage. In fact, although the first believes he has reached an agreement with Aufidius to spare Rome, and he can now rejoin with his family, Aufidius will later accuse him by touching Coriolanus' most vulnerable nerve, calling him "boy of tears" and mocking his alleged masculinity:

AUFIDIUS: But at his nurse's tears
He whined and roared away your victory
That pages blushed at him and men of heart
Looked wondering each at others.
[…]
Name not the god, thou boy of tears. [5.6.99-104][63]

Peter Holland, explains in the notes to the text that the term "'boy' may carry overtones of a homosexual partner […] but the word is also an insult to someone who thinks of himself as a man", furthermore, 'boy' can also be intended here as meaning "servant".[64] The offence is so effective that Coriolanus, at Aufidius' words, answers by shouting all his rage out, crying for three times the word 'boy' just before he is being killed by Aufidius and the lords involved in the conspiracy against him.

To conclude, in this tragedy, the hero is fashioned by Shakespeare as a man so anxious about his masculinity and what it is made to represent that his own

[62] My emphasis.

[63] My emphasis.

[64] Holland, notes to the text, in William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, edited by Peter Holland, The Arden Shakespeare (third series), Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 406.

identity (best described by the thunderous sound of his voice) dissolves into silence. In a vertiginously climactic way, Coriolanus will lose everything: his masculinity, his honor, his identity, *his voice*.

Conclusions

In her book, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260-1330*, Emma Dillon shows that by looking at medieval musical practices, it is possible to further understand the culture of the past by focusing on sound and listening as privileged hermeneutical instruments. In introducing the subject of her book, Dillon lingers on our relationship with sound and its cultural meaning, directly drawing on a personal experience:

> In my childhood, one particular spot outside M & S was the site of the city's most notorious music man: an accordion player. He appeared there sometime in the late 1970s, tweed jacket, jaunty hat, squeezing tunes out of a dinosaur of an instrument fringed with Morris-man tassles. He had a repertory of folk songs and […] [d]uring December, as holiday lights appeared, he expanded his canon to a medley of carols […] When he vanished a few years ago (I hope to a new pitch, in a new town), to be replaced by the fiasco of barking and crooning, his memory provoked something more complicated than nostalgia: *a kind of heightened aural awareness, attentive listening made acute by absence*.[1]

Dillon's reflections let us understand that the accordion player, with his music, had instilled in her a sense of familiarity, "of home and communal identity", that she suddenly recognized only later, owing to the perceived absence of that sound.[2]

Working as my guiding intuition, Dillon's account of her experience has led me to think of sound as something *more* than just an acoustical object. Moreover, her study being centered on the meanings of sound and listening as practices of the past, it also inspired me to consider their participation in early modern culture, and, more specifically, in Shakespeare's theatre. Indeed, by pondering on the modes of listening in Shakespeare's time, this dissertation has attempted to ignite a form of aural awakening, by inviting the reader to reach an auditory awareness that goes beyond the understanding of sound as a merely acoustic phenomenon.

[1] Emma Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260-1330*, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 4.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 5.

More to the point, approaching Shakespeare's theatrical text from this perspective has made me aware of how deeply the early modern perception of sound differed from our own. The preceding chapters have been written in the conviction that to retrieve the same perceptional practices, to put ourselves 'in the ears' of the early modern theatre's audience, allows us to really understand and grasp the meanings associated with sound. Furthermore, by developing a fruitful methodology that is new with respect to the critical approaches applied until now to the study of Shakespeare's plays, it has been possible to build a dialogue between different disciplines, showing that sound, when *listened to* carefully, does give us access to further hermeneutical implications.

So, one of the pivotal objects of my study has been that of raising an auditory awareness specifically related to literary texts' critical approach. This specific kind of awareness in my view has been long neglected, or inadequately taken into consideration, especially within the scope of Shakespeare's theatre.

Consequently, in the first chapter of this dissertation, by availing myself of the sound studies' notions, I tried to delineate what is to be considered as 'sound', and *how* it participates in early modern culture. With this purpose in mind, the methodology described in the first chapter has been developed through an interdisciplinary approach that combines Sound Studies and Shakespeare Studies, considering as pivotal both the early modern hermeneutics of sound and the rhetoric of sound. The first chapter has also underlined that often, the critical approach to Shakespeare's texts and more broadly, to literature, is dominated by the visual, while the aural is played down or left to fade into the background. This dissertation has sought to demonstrate the need for a more balanced and fruitful attention to both the visual and the aural dimensions of the plays. Concerning this, I agree with Don Ihde whose attitude towards the visual and the aural perfectly represents the one applied by my own critical approach:

> we exist in a language world that is frequently dominated by visualism. Thus often perception itself is reduced to the visual. This does not mean that I wish to substitute a different sense as model here, because I do not more wish to simply reduce the visual than to simply enhance the auditory. What I am trying to do is

> to demonstrate the sedimentation which is reductive, reductive of both the visual and the auditory.[3]

Bearing in mind the relationship between the visual and the aural, in the second chapter, dedicated to *The Tempest*, sound is understood as both validating imaginative associations linked to the visual traced by previous scholars, and, at the same time as shedding light on the possible dramatic strategies employed by the playwright. Indeed, on the one hand, *The Tempest* is approached by focusing on the visual association of its setting with the Renaissance garden's design, and by observing how the main elements of that association may be seen to be substantiated by the soundscape of the play discussed in the chapter. On the other hand, the acoustemological frame envisaged in the play with respect to the protagonist gives us privileged access to Prospero's inner identity, as well as to his social and political identity.

Sound as a constitutive ingredient of one's identity is also to be traced in Shakespeare's *Othello*, whose "sonic identity" helps us understand how the playwright was able to suggest the elusive nature of the protagonist. Taking into consideration the rhetoric of sound in the tragedy reveals how it pivotally participates in characterization, and is particularly enlightening as to the dramaturgical dynamics producing the gradual corrosion of identity experienced by Othello. Also, in this chapter, the balanced relationship between the visual and the aural is addressed through a focus on the imagery of the morris dance, whose main traits are shown to be relatable to both the protagonist's characterization and, more broadly, to the play's aesthetic.

The fourth chapter more strictly works on the connection between sound and identity, by calling critical attention to how crucially the sound of voice, in Shakespeare's theatre, was understood as inextricably bound to one's own identity. The very volatile quality of the voice sound has been dramaturgically employed by Shakespeare to 'stage' gender ambiguity and troubled identities, in characters such as Viola and Coriolanus.

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[3] Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, State University of New York Press, 2007, p.190.

Finally, with the more circumscribed and experimental Appendix, the present dissertation proposes a sample of DH application to its findings concerning *The Tempest* (second chapter), a digitalization of Act I, Scene 1 in TEI that makes use of the tool known as *Oxygen* – a first step, looking ahead to a more extended work. In this way, its interdisciplinary design, as announced in the *Introduction*, may be said to have been completed.

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Appendix

Sound and Identity in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: Navigating the Digital Ocean

The relationship between Shakespeare's dramatic characterization and Sound is at the core of my dissertation. Having said that, in an era where the inexorable development of technology is inextricably tied to our lives, one cannot avoid reflecting on how, nowadays, it affects the access and, at the same time, the production of culture. Therefore, although this dissertation is mainly developed with an interdisciplinary approach, aiming to trace the fruitful connections arising from the dialogue between Shakespeare studies and Sound studies, and placing itself in the scope of literary criticism, it also has a second, parallel, nature, owing to its sharing in the methodologies and aims of the Digital Humanities.

With the purpose of understanding how the digital humanities could participate in the interpretation of literary texts, this appendix takes as its starting point the discussion of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as elaborated in chapter 2 of this dissertation, making it 'react' to the Digital Humanities' methodologies and tools, trying to build a synergetic dialogue between the two. In fact, rather than an appendix to my dissertation, this section should be taken as its *coda* (to use a musicological term) where some theoretical considerations may shed light on the advantages and problems in the application of the Digital Humanities into the specific scope of literary interpretation. Such discussion is followed by an experimental example which is meant as a possible pragmatic answer to the theoretical discourse that attempts to provide a digitalized text of the first scene of *The Tempest*, informed by the focuses and results of the research described in the chapter dedicated to that play.

The aim is to single out which horizons of applied research may open for literary interpretation when 'navigating the digital ocean'. In point of fact, due to the specificity of advanced competences that a thorough investigation of the intersection between computer science and humanities requires, this *coda* is only proposed as a possible first step that within a multidimensional perspective of

literary interpretation could be developed and extended to the material field of Shakespearean performances ─ to the major, or more interesting, productions of Shakespeare's plays as they may be available on record ─ being, thus, open to further investigation that hopefully will be carried out in the future.

The Humanities in the Digital Era

Teresa Numerico, Domenico Fiormonte, and Francesca Tomasi, in *L'Umanista Digitale*, deal with several questions concerning the clash between the humanities and the digital world.[1] Among these, they wonder in what ways technology has challenged and changed the humanists' work, with a specific look at the cultural and social role humanists represent, or, as underlined by them, used to represent.[2] More than a decade later, we still need to address the same questions, especially when dealing with fields of knowledge where the dialogue between the voice of technology and that of the *creative* human processes of understanding seems to travel on different paths, lacking reciprocity.

In fact, technology has been conceived by the majority of humanists as a collection of tools necessary to reach new, digital representations of knowledge which are able to travel in unlimited historical time and geographical space. Unfortunately, today, many of us still think of the digital world in such terms, limiting technology to remain an incredibly useful tool, but still, detached from the contents, or the creative processes that might be engendered by its application. Indeed, while in certain fields the humanities knowledge (and here we are particularly interested in literary studies) takes on *qualitative* forms, digital data, in the majority of cases, are thought to be quintessentially *quantitative*.

In this light, the digital humanities represent the connection point between the humanities and the digital world. In my view, the dialogue between the two still

[1] Teresa Numerico, Domenico Fiormonte, and Francesca Tomasi, *L'Umanista Digitale*, il Mulino, 2010.

[2] *Ibid*., pp. 7-11.

needs to be fully developed in terms of reciprocity, particularly when dealing with researches strongly dependent on issues of interpretations.[3] Others have already traced and discussed the problems of this 'dysfunctionality' of the digital humanities, trying to increase awareness of the necessity to build a successful dialogue between these different fields. As a result, scholars interested in building successful negotiations in the dialogue between humanities and the digital world, have discussed and re-discussed the digital humanities by pinning down several substitutive defining expressions, oriented towards specific theoretical aims.

In the case of literary studies, for example, scholars attempting to solve the issues of the aforementioned dysfunctionality, have developed new definitions of the encounter between humanities and the digital, trying to build a theoretic syncretism between the two. In this scope, the 'digital humanities' have become 'electronic literature', 'humanities computing', or, more convincingly, 'new media', to be framed in the larger 'digital literary studies'.[4] Interestingly, the theoretical discussion evolved around the dialogue between the literary and the digital, did underline aspects of dysfunctionality which seems now to have been solved, although not entirely. In fact, even if it has been suggested that technology is not a mere tool that can be only employed as a different, descriptive language of communication, and that, instead, it participates as constitutive of our culture,[5] we are still far from actually *seeing* how the digital humanities are indeed recipient and *provider* of that culture; in other words, it is necessary to understand how the digital humanities can be conceived of as hermeneutical. I argue that the theoretical conundrum developed around this is strongly dependent on the negotiations mentioned before. Indeed, to reach a fruitful reciprocity, the responsibilities (for the negotiations to be successful) weigh on both parts. To this extent, if on the one hand, humanists, especially younger junior scholars, are able

[3] In a larger sense I am referring here to the interpretation of reality as synecdoche for all those researches in the humanities which necessarily are partly subjective-oriented.

[4] See Ray Siemens and Susan Schreibman, *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, Wiley Blackwell, 2008.

[5] See, for example, the idea of "cultural informatic" proposed in Gregory Crane, David Bamman, and Alison Jones, "ePhilology: When the Books Talk to Their Readers", in Ray Siemens and Susan Schreibman, *A Companion to Digital Literary Studies*, cit. pp. 29-64.

to understand the potentiality of the digital humanities and their language, mainly because they are also spurned by necessity (our world is not any more conceivable to be understood without knowing technology); on the other hand, computer scientists, who are not led by necessity, *need to be interested in* and understand the humanities. In this sense, reciprocity, at a first stage, can only be achieved if both humanities and the digital world look at each other from a common, collaborative perspective, equally *trying* to reach each other. This is pivotal for tracing and appreciating the possible qualitative forms of the digital humanities, and not only its quantitative features; it is a crucial passage for the digital humanities to *be* hermeneutic.

When looking at such theoretical matters, a good point is the one stressed by Michael Piotrowski and Markus Neuwirth, who, with the definition of "computational hermeneutics" try to build a fruitful dialogue between the hermeneutical process engendered by the interpretation and understanding of "human artifacts" and their possible digital humanities' frame.[6] As they underline:

> One of the main challenges for the theoretical digital humanities remains to find ways to *integrate* hermeneutic methods and insights into formal models, rather than keeping interpretation detached, as a kind of afterthought to automatic analyses (or vice versa).[7]

With particular attention to the literary text, Piotrowski and Neuwirth linger on matters of authorship, but above all, of *meanings* arising from text's interpretations which cannot be reduced to the retrieving of the author's intention only. They argue, indeed, that these meanings are the result of several factors involved in the practice of interpreting, linked with intricate inferential proceedings. With that in mind, when trying to develop similar methodologies, close to the modes of humanistic hermeneutics, Piotrowski and Neuwirth state

[6] Michael Piotrowski and Markus Neuwirth, "Prospects for Computational Hermeneutics", in Cristina Marras, Marco Passarotti, Greta Franzini, and Eleonora Litta (eds.), IX Annual Conference AIUCD, *La svolta inevitabile: sfide e prospettive per l'informatica umanistica*, Associazione per l'Informatica Umanistica e la Cultura Digitale (AIUCD), 2020.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 205.

that the digital humanities, with respect to the issues of the literary text's interpretation, have developed mainly two different approaches: annotation on the one hand, and the "computer-assisted interpretation", which includes mainly quantitative analysis, on the other hand.[8] Both of these in Piotrowski's and Neuwirth's view are not sufficient methods to answer the needs of humanities when it comes to literary text's interpretation. In fact, they suggest that a successful model could be realized by merging these two digital humanities approaches in a "semantic network" or "knowledge graph" which consists of framing semantic objects into a network of information that stands as the context of interpretation.[9]

Here, in this dissertation, such complex methodologies could not be seen at work with the purposes of my research because they are supposed to work formally with semantics at a stricter level. In fact, it is clear from the preceding chapters of this dissertation that, in combining Shakespeare's texts with notions taken from Sound Studies, my research moves beyond semantics, its methodology including several approaches (i.e. historical but also philosophical, and, more broadly, cultural) pertaining to the literary world as well as to the acoustic one in a larger cultural frame. Although seen as limited by Piotrowski and Neuwirth, annotation is the method that might answer to the ends of an interpretation of the kind, retrieving traits of historical hermeneutics of sound but also phenomenological, philosophical, rhetorical meanings altogether as arising from Shakespeare's text and discussed in this dissertation. To inform the text with the results of this research in a digital context might engender new perspectives of interpretation. Therefore, the annotation here is exemplified by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) which, although not without problems, might represent a successful negotiation in the digital representation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

TEI has been developed in the digital humanities with particular applications in the description of documents since 1980s. Its language is standard, an XML

[8] See Geoffrey Rockwell and Stéfan Sinclair, *Hermeneutica: Computer-Assisted Interpretation in the Humanities*, MIT Press, 2016.

[9] Michael Piotrowski and Markus Neuwirth, "Prospects for Computational Hermeneutics", cit. p. 206-207.

which is a metalanguage primarily useful in the definition of the structures of documents and data. An XML document follows a specific hierarchic organization and, in the case of TEI, it can be used to inform the text by defining its structure, but also to the aim of describing the text through elements, attributes, and comments. XML being a metalanguage, it is necessary to use specific languages such as the TEI that has a standard format. This is the reason why it can be seen as insufficient in some cases, especially when dealing with text's interpretation. And yet, through TEI, literary texts (novels, poems, or drama) can be described thanks to the availability of tags through which it is possible to signal phenomena of different nature traceable in the text. These tags, for example, help defining in the digitalized texts all of its components, from the name of the characters, to places, titles, sources, and dates, making the TEI the preferred language to be employed in the case of critical digital editions. The reason why in this dissertation, TEI is used as a possible answer to the requests of digital hermeneutics is indeed the fact that in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, the sounds from which my interpretation develops can be signaled through specific tags, accompanied by comments which provide a critical explanation to be attached to the text.

The aim is not much about the (digital) contents, it is rather about the digital form that, if on the one hand, could be limited because of the boundaries set by the TEI language, on the other hand offers the text a different visualization, a dynamic nature, and an availability of the contents of the interpretation to a larger audience. In other words, it is a matter of *the object* through which hermeneutics is exercised, as the interpretation of the text will not be limited to being printed on paper, or provided only in its written, static form. This *translatio* might inspire, too, new possibilities of interpretation, in the form of new contents to be developed (by other users, though not exclusively) within the same interpretation. Finally, to provide an annotated text is to create new material that can be employed with didactic aims in mind as well. Like a textbook, but with the advantages of being interactive and of making the user or reader an active participant, a TEI-text of Shakespeare's drama, informed with critical perspectives and interpretation, might become an additional tool for teaching.

Moreover, the TEI-text also allows us to query the text with the specific annotations related to sounds and their meanings, facilitating their visualization, position and description inside the text. This may engender different, possibly new interpretations reachable in consequence of the realization of a targeted text analysis. But before showing an example, here, of a TEI Shakespeare's *The Tempest* annotated text, it is worth introducing the relationship between Shakespeare Studies and the Digital Humanities by recalling the main projects through which such relationship has been established and see in what direction this is moving nowadays.

Shakespeare Studies and the Digital Humanities

In confronting the encounter between Shakespeare studies and digital technology, Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan have asked themselves if "Shakespeare studies is *acting on or reacting to* technology, whether scholarship and practice are leading or following technological innovations".[10] Attempting to answer this question, with particular attention to Shakespeare studies the essays included in the book mainly address the academic debate about such matters, though the discussion is also interestingly extended to pedagogy, communication and performance.

When dealing with Shakespeareans' academic research today, it is difficult to trace the turning point when the practice of such activity changed owing to the introduction of digital tools. What is clear is that the modalities of research have been considerably changing in the last twenty years because of the fast developments in the field of computer sciences. Nevertheless, scholars seem to be divided by such progresses with respect to Shakespeare studies; indeed, digital humanities have brought incredible advantages as well as intricate problems to the academic society who cannot ignore the impact of technology on its scholarship.

[10] Christie Carson, Peter Kirwan (eds.), *Shakespeare and the Digital World, Redefining Scholarship and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p.1 [my italics].

Bruce R. Smith offers his detailed point of view about doing research from a phenomenological perspective, specifying which features characterize the shift from physical to virtual modes of studying. Although it might seem obsolete to the 'touch-screen generation', Smith's discussion of the physical experience of doing research recovers the multisensorial stimuli as pivotally participating in such activity to reach knowledge. In fact, he argues that knowledge can be built through layers of experience which are deeply connected with what he calls the "thingness" of the objects. Such a dimension of the physical experience is completely different, certainly bounded, when dealing with a virtual reality, to the point that Smith craves a "combination of digital technology with living in the world".[11]

Yet, the other side of the coin is that, thanks to the achievements reached through the digital humanities, the very experience of reading (though on a screen, rather than on paper) has been extended to an unlimited audience, changing the game with respect to the one's knowledge building, and, particularly, the spreading it. This line of thinking has been, for example, the driving force for the realization of projects which constitute nowadays essential tools for academic research. In the scope of Shakespeare studies, high-profile digital projects which have transformed research, having an impact on teaching Shakespeare as well, started with the idea of sharing and making accessible rare materials. This is the case of Early English Books Online (EEBO), or the Shakespeare Quartos Archive, the digitization of Bodleian's First Folio, or the Digital Anthology of Early Modern English Drama (EMED) undertaken by the Folger Library that provides hundreds of plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Despite that, issues such as those enhanced by Smith, debating the opposition between virtual and real, must be taken into account, although, in my view, freed from a sort of nostalgia for the traditional modes of doing research.

[11] Bruce R. Smith, "Getting back to the library, getting back to the body", in Christie Carson and Peter Kirwan, *Shakespeare and the Digital World*, cit. p. 30.

Digital editions of Shakespeare's text begun to appear as early as the 1960s on diskette,[12] moving then on CD-ROM, and now have spread on the internet. Nowadays publishers too, provide the printed editions of Shakespeare's text online, some of which are also available for free, online.[13] Not only do we have digital versions of Shakespeare's printed texts, but there are also texts which were published first and foremost in digital form, so these texts were originally thought to be published online without being printed first; probably the most popular example is that of the *Internet Shakespeare Editions*.[14] Despite that, such editions just exploit the digital advantages of reaching a larger audience and their contents do not differ from the critical printed editions. Although the power of availability is not to be underestimated, in these digital editions, computer sciences are still considered as a mere instrument that doesn't affect the quality of the product, neither can we witness any change in their form. In fact, these are simply texts that can be consulted online, but their nature remains static, in the sense that the experience of their users is not markedly different from that of the readers of the printed editions. In my view, connecting the text fruitfully with the digital, could open infinite interactive possibilities which still haven't been fully explored as, for example, it has been done with respect to the performances of Shakespeare's plays.

The final visualization of the experiment I am proposing here, which cannot be realized without a team of experts in the field of computer sciences, aim at providing a different kind of text that hopefully will offer an experience not limited to reading only. Indeed, the tags informing the text, would work as interactive data, possibly enriching the text not only with further critical written

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[12] For example, the Oxford Text Archive with transcriptions of the First Folio by T.H. Howard-Hill, as described in Anita Lowry, "Electronic texts in English and American Literature", in *Library Trends*, Vol. 40, no. 4, 1992, pp. 704-723.

[13] See, for example, the *Oxford Scholarly Edition Online*, https://www.oxfordscholarlyeditions.com; or *The Folger Shakespeare*, https://shakespeare.folger.edu

[14] Accessible at https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/ ; for more information about the development of the project see Michael Best, "The Internet Shakespeare Editions: Scholarly Shakespeare on the Web", in *Shakespeare*, Vol. 4, no. 3, 2008, pp. 221–233.

comments, but also with interconnections inside and outside the text itself, with multimedia objects (i.e. videos, recorded sounds, visualization of other sources connected to the text). In this way, to parallel Smith's idea of knowledge as a result of different layers of experience, the text will not be *only* a text, and the engagement of other senses and connections will serve exactly as multisensorial stimuli. Of course, it is an experience which differs from going to the library, touching books, smelling papers, but the hermeneutical exercise will be successful as well, although assuming exciting, different forms, finally suggesting new ways of navigating *through* knowledge.

Shakespeare *The Tempest* Act 1, Scene 1: a TEI experiment

Using a software called *Oxygen*, that is an XML editor which allow us to annotate the text in TEI, it is possible to inform the text with the results of my research. In this specific example I am providing, the annotated text is taken from Act 1, Scene 1 of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The annotations, through the use of elements and attributes, underline specific words that are related to the 'acoustic' exegesis of the scene as described in the Chapter 2 of this dissertation. In some cases, these words are just informed through the use of tags which help describe them; in other cases, by using the tag `<note>` it is possible to add critical comments through which the interpretation of the text is elucidated containing also bibliographical information. XML being a standard language, in this TEI annotation it was necessary to understand how to use tags to convey specific meanings associated with sounds. As I will show, for example, the military aesthetic associated to certain sounds had to be signaled through the attribute `subtype` while the material aspect and their function in the text is described as `type`. In the dissertation's chapter 2, it was not necessary to address such problems of strict categorization (i.e. specify that a certain sound is actually a special effect in the stage direction). To face similar matters, owing to the specificity of a digital language, let us ponder on the hermeneutic processes

involved in the digital humanities, and, their solutions, testify to the interpretative dynamics that, as for the written text, can be applied to computer sciences, as well.

To see how the annotation works and to underline some of its aspects, I will comment here on some screenshots which illustrate how the annotated text looks like.

```
3  <?xml-model href="http://www.tei-c.org/release/xml/tei/custom/schema/relaxng/tei_all.rng" type="application/xml" [1 line]
5  <TEI xmlns="http://www.tei-c.org/ns/1.0">
6     <teiHeader>
7        <fileDesc> [31 lines]
39       <encodingDesc> [8 lines]
48    </teiHeader>
49    <text>
50       <front> [85 lines]
136      <body>
137         <head>THE TEMPEST</head>
138         <figure>
139            <graphic url="/Users/antonioarnieri/Desktop/TEI - Tempest/tempestimg.jpg"></graphic>
140         </figure>
141         <div1 type="Act" n="1">
142            <p>Act 1</p>
143         <div2 type="Scene" n="1">
144            <p>Scene 1</p>
145            <stage type="setting">
146               A tempestuous noise of
147               <sound type="special_effect" subtype="military_aesthetic">
148                     <ref target="https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-35299891">thunder</ref>
149               </sound>
150               <note>this specific sound has a
151                  <emph>supernatural</emph> quality but a
152                  <emph> natural </emph>form,it is produced by
153                  <ref corresp="#Arl">Ariel </ref>, by the command of
154                  <ref corresp="#Pro">Prospero </ref>
155               </note>  and lightning
156               <note> The
157                  <term>heard</term>
158                  emphasizes aurality as primary in the staging of the storm
159               </note>;
160            </stage>
```

In the picture above the focus is on the stage direction that opens the play ("A tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning heard"). The tag `<stage>` with the attribute `type="setting"`, specifies that this part of the text is a stage direction. But the emphasis in the annotation is on the term "thunder" which is described through several tags. It is indeed a `<sound>` that, as explained in Chapter 2, is a special effect that in early modern time was realized through specific machineries. A video, taken from BBC, is attached to the annotated text as a reference (`<ref target="https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-35299891">`) showing how this sonic special effect was realized through the

use of a “thunder run”. The sound of thunder, is also marked with the attributes `type=special_effect` and `subtype=military_aesthetic` which indicate the relationship between this sound and the sounds employed to create warfare scene on early modern theatre’s stage.[15] Furthermore, under the tag `<note>`, it is emphasized how the sound of thunder is to be understood as having a supernatural quality despite its natural form and, as resulted from my interpretation, the supernatural forces are linked with the characters of Ariel and Prospero, who appear in the annotation thanks to the references to their specific id (`<ref corresp="#Arl">Ariel</ref>;<ref corresp="#Pro">Prospero</ref>`). Finally, in the note, it is also specified that the `<term>`heard`</term>`, as stressed in Chapter 2, enhance the sonic importance of the stage direction.

Another passage in the text which is worth showing here with its annotations is the one where the homophonic relationship between “here” and “hear” stands as a feature of the play as ‘unexpected’.

```
161     <stage type="entrance">enter a SHIPMASTER and a BOATSWAIN</stage>
162   <sp who="#Mst">
163     <speaker>MASTER</speaker>
164     <l n="1">Boatswain!</l>
165   </sp>
166     <sp who="#Btsw">
167       <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
168       <l n="2">
169         <sound type="voice" xml:id="Hps">Here</sound>
170           <note type="interpretation">
171             <ref corresp="#Hps #Hps_2">Here</ref> and Hear
172             can be considered as
173             homophones
174             drawing attention to the auditory dimension of the play, creating a disorienting aurality as described by
175             <bibl>Jennifer L. Wood (2019)</bibl>
176             likewise defined in <bibl>this dissertation's Chapter 2,</bibl> as
177             <emph><term type="concept">the unexpected</term></emph>
178             or<term type="concept">decentering</term> as described by
179             <bibl>Bruce R. Smith (1999)</bibl></note>
180         master: What cheer?</l>
181     </sp>
182     <sp who="#Mst">
183       <speaker>MASTER</speaker>
184       <l n="3">Good, speak to th' mariners. Fall to't, yarely or</l>
185       <l n="4"> run ourselves aground. Bestir, bestir!</l>
186     </sp>
187     <stage type="exit">
188       <p>Exit.</p>
189     </stage>
190     <stage type="entrance">
191       <p>Enter Mariners.</p>
192     </stage>
```

[15] See Chapter 2, p. 16.

As it can be noticed above, the term “here” spoken by Boatswain is signaled as a sound (`<sound type="voice" xml:id="Hps">Here</sound>`). By employing <note>, a critical apparatus accompanies the term with the explanation of its homophonic feature. “Here” and “hear” being homophones, they create a feeling described as ‘unexpected’, or as participating in the ‘decentering’ strategy, or as being disorienting. This specific interpretation is substantiated by bibliographical information which are referred to in the annotation as `<bibl>Jennifer L. Wood (2019)</bibl>` and `<bibl> Bruce R. Smith (1999) </bibl>`. Moreover, since the same phenomenon can be seen later in the text, the homophones have been specifically identified with an id that will be referred to in the next occurrence as `<sound type="voice" xml:id="Hps_2">here</sound>`

Finally, another example is again linked to the military aesthetic of the scene from the perspective of sound.

```
190        <stage type="entrance">
191           <p>Enter Mariners.</p>
192        </stage>
193        <sp who="#Btsw">
194           <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
195           <l n="5">Heigh, my hearts; cheerly, cheerly, my</l>
196           <l n="6">hearts! Yare! Yare! Take in the topsail. Tend to the</l>
197           <l n="7">master's
198              <sound type="voice" subtype="military_aesthetic">
199                 <ref corresp="#Mst">whistle</ref>
200              </sound>
201           </l>
202              <stage type="direction">
203                <p>[to the storm]</p>
204              </stage>
205           <l n="7">Blow, till thou burst thy</l>
206           <l n="8">wind, if room enough.</l>
207        </sp>
208
209           <note>
210              <ref corresp="#Btsw">Boatswain</ref>
211           incites with his voice <ref corresp="#Mar">the mariners</ref> to fight against the
212              <ref corresp="#Arl #Pro">storm</ref>
213           </note>
214
215        <stage type="entrance">
216           <p>Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND,
217              GONZALO and others</p>
218        </stage>
```

In the image above the term “whistle” has been marked as a sound corresponding to the Master, which is a military signal (`<sound type="voice"`

subtype="military_aesthetic">) for the metaphorical beginning of the fight between the natural and the supernatural, between Prospero's army and the Master's one. In the note is also enhanced that Boatswain's voice incites the mariners to fight a war that is between two categories of sounds, each of them is associated to specific characters through an id that also reminds us of the natural/supernatural inflections of these sounds.

Here the full annotated text:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<?xml-model href="http://www.tei-
c.org/release/xml/tei/custom/schema/relaxng/tei_all.rng"
type="application/xml"
schematypens="http://relaxng.org/ns/structure/1.0"?>
<?xml-model href="http://www.tei-
c.org/release/xml/tei/custom/schema/relaxng/tei_all.rng"
type="application/xml"
      schematypens="http://purl.oclc.org/dsdl/schematron"?>
<TEI xmlns="http://www.tei-c.org/ns/1.0">
   <teiHeader>
      <fileDesc>
         <titleStmt>
            <title>The Tempest: Sound and Identity</title>
            <author xml:id="WS">William Shakespeare</author>
            <respStmt>
               <resp>Transcribed and encoded by</resp>
               <name xml:id="AA">Antonio Arnieri</name>
            </respStmt>
         </titleStmt>
         <publicationStmt>
            <publisher>University of Verona</publisher>
            <pubPlace>Verona</pubPlace>
         </publicationStmt>
         <sourceDesc>
            <bibl>
               <title xml:id="Tem">The Tempest</title>
               <author>
                  <name>William Shakespeare</name>
               </author>
               <editor role="editor1">
                  <name xml:id="VMV">Virginia Mason
             Vaughan</name>
               </editor>
               <editor role="editor2">
                  <name xml:id="ATV">Alden T. Vaughan</name>
               </editor>
               <publisher>Bloomsbury</publisher>
               <pubPlace>London</pubPlace>
               <date>2011</date>
               <idno type="ISBN">HB: 978-1-4081-3348-4</idno>
            </bibl>
```

```
   </sourceDesc>
</fileDesc>
<encodingDesc>
   <projectDesc>
      <p>The text encoded is an excerpt taken from
     Shakespeare's The Tempest. It is the Act1,
     Scene1 and it is encoded according to
     the text edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and
     Alden T. Vaughan. This document was created as part
     of a PhD's Dissertation. It is a sample to show how
     the Digital Humanities can be used to provide new
     sources of scientific literature, making it more
     accessible and attractive.</p
           </projectDesc>
         </encodingDesc>
      </teiHeader>
      <text>
         <front>
            <head>THE TEMPEST</head>
            <div type="DramatisPersonae"
     n="castlist21" org="uniform">
               <castList>
                  <head>Dramatis Personae</head>
                  <castItem type="role">
                     <role xml:id="Al">ALONSO</role>
                     <roleDesc>King of
     Naples</roleDesc>
                  </castItem>
                  <castItem>
                     <role
     xml:id="Seb">SEBASTIAN</role>
                     <roleDesc>his brother</roleDesc>
                  </castItem>
                  <castItem type="role">
                     <role
     xml:id="Pro">PROSPERO</role>
                     <roleDesc>the right Duke of
     Milan</roleDesc>
                  </castItem>
                  <castItem>
                     <role xml:id="Ant">ANTONIO</role>
                     <roleDesc>his brother, the
     usurping Duke of
       Milan</roleDesc>
         </castItem>
         <castItem type="role">
            <role xml:id="Ferd">FERDINAND</role>
            <roleDesc>son to the King of
       Naples</roleDesc>
         </castItem>
         <castItem>
            <role xml:id="Gonz">GONZALO</role>
            <roleDesc>an honest old
      councillor</roleDesc>
         </castItem>
```

```
  <castItem type="role">
     <role xml:id="AampF">ADRIAN and
FRANCISCO</role>
     <roleDesc>lords</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Cal">CALIBAN</role>
     <roleDesc>a savage and deformed
slave</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Trinc">TRINCULO</role>
     <roleDesc>a jester</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem type="role">
     <role xml:id="Steph">STEPHANO</role>
     <roleDesc>a drunken butler</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Mst">MASTER</role>
     <roleDesc>of a ship</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem type="role">
     <role xml:id="Btsw">BOATSWAIN</role>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Mar">MARINERS</role>
  </castItem>
  <castItem type="role">
     <role xml:id="Mir">MIRANDA</role>
     <roleDesc>daughter to Prospero</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Arl">ARIEL</role>
     <roleDesc>an airy spirit</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Irs">IRIS</role>
     <roleDesc>spirit</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Cer">CERES</role>
     <roleDesc>spirit</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Jun">JUNO</role>
     <roleDesc>spirit</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Nys">Nymphs</role>
     <roleDesc>spirits</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
  <castItem>
     <role xml:id="Rps">Reapers</role>
     <roleDesc>spirits</roleDesc>
  </castItem>
```

```
            </castList>
         </div>
      </front>
      <body>
         <head>THE TEMPEST</head>
         <figure>
            <graphic url="/Users/antonioarnieri/Desktop/TEI -
Tempest/tempestimg.jpg"></graphic>
         </figure>
         <div1 type="Act" n="1">
            <p>Act 1</p>
         <div2 type="Scene" n="1">
            <p>Scene 1</p>
            <stage type="setting">
               A tempestuous noise of
    <sound type="special_effect" subtype="military_aesthetic">
<ref target="https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment
arts-35299891">thunder</ref>
               </sound>
               <note>this specific sound has a
                  <emph>supernatural</emph> quality but a
                  <emph> natural </emph>form,it is produced by
                  <ref corresp="#Arl">Ariel </ref>, by the
             command of
                  <ref corresp="#Pro">Prospero </ref>
               </note>  and lightning
               <note> The
                  <term>heard</term>
                  emphasizes aurality as primary in the
             staging of the storm
               </note>;
            </stage>
            <stage type="entrance">enter a SHIPMASTER and a
       BOATSWAIN</stage>
         <sp who="#Mst">
            <speaker>MASTER</speaker>
            <l n="1">Boatswain!</l>
         </sp>
            <sp who="#Btsw">
               <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
               <l n="2">
                 <sound type="voice" xml:id="Hps">Here</sound>
                     <note type="interpretation">
               <ref corresp="#Hps #Hps_2">Here</ref> and Hear
                        can be considered as
                        homophones drawing attention to the
                  auditory dimension of the play,
                  creating a disorienting aurality as
                  described by
                        <bibl>Jennifer L. Wood (2019)</bibl>
                        likewise defined in
<bibl>this dissertation's Chapter 2,</bibl>
as
      <emph><term type="concept">the unexpected</term></emph>
           or<term type="concept">decentering</term>
as described by <bibl>Bruce R. Smith (1999)</bibl>
```

```
</note>
                  master: What cheer?</l>
            </sp>
            <sp who="#Mst">
               <speaker>MASTER</speaker>
               <l n="3">Good, speak to th’ mariners.
          Fall to't, yarely or</l>
               <l n="4"> run ourselves aground. Bestir,
          bestir!</l>
            </sp>
            <stage type="exit">
              <p>Exit.</p>
            </stage>
            <stage type="entrance">
               <p>Enter Mariners.</p>
            </stage>
            <sp who="#Btsw">
               <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
               <l n="5">Heigh, my hearts; cheerly,
          cheerly, my</l>
               <l n="6">hearts! Yare! Yare! Take in the
          topsail. Tend to the</l>
               <l n="7">master's
        <sound type="voice" subtype="military_aesthetic">
                     <ref corresp="#Mst">whistle</ref>
               </sound>
               </l>
                  <stage type="direction">
                    <p>[to the storm]</p>
                  </stage>
               <l n="7">Blow, till thou burst thy</l>
               <l n="8">wind, if room enough.</l>
            </sp>

               <note>
                  <ref corresp="#Btsw">Boatswain</ref>
               incites with his voice
<ref corresp="#Mar">the mariners</ref>
          to fight against the
                  <ref corresp="#Arl #Pro">storm</ref>
               </note>

            <stage type="entrance">
               <p>Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO,
                FERDINAND,
                  GONZALO and others</p>
            </stage>
            <sp who="#Al">
               <speaker>ALONSO</speaker>
               <l n="9">Good boatswain, have care.
          Where's the master?</l>
               <l n="10">Play the men!</l>
            </sp>
            <sp who="#Btsw">
               <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
               <l n="11">I pray now, keep below!</l>
```

```
  </sp>
  <sp who="#Ant">
     <speaker>ANTONIO</speaker>
     <l n="12">Where is the master,
boatswain?</l>
  </sp>
  <sp who="#Btsw">
     <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
     <l n="13">Do you not hear him? You mar our
labour.</l>
     <l n="14">Keep your cabins! You do assist
the storm.</l>
  </sp>
  <sp who="#Gonz">
     <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
     <l n="15">Nay, good, be patient.</l>
  </sp>
  <sp who="#Btsw">
     <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
     <l n="16">When the sea is! Hence. What
cares these</l>
     <l n="17">roarers for the name of king? To
cabin! Silence!</l>
     <l n="18">Trouble us not.</l>
  </sp>
  <sp who="#Gonz">
     <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
     <l n="19">Good, yet remember whom thou
hast aboard.</l>
  </sp>
  <sp who="#Btsw">
     <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
     <l n="20">None that I more love than
myself. You are</l>
     <l n="21">a councillor; if you can command
these elements to</l>
     <l n="22">silence, and work the peace of
the present, we will not</l>
     <l n="23">hand a rope more. Use your
authority! If you cannot,</l>
     <l n="24">give thanks you have lived so
long and make yourself </l>
     <l n="25">ready in your cabin for the
mischance of the hour,</l>
     <l n="26">if it so hap. - Cheerly, good
hearts - Out of our way, I say!</l>
  </sp>
  <stage type="exit">
     <p>Exit.</p>
  </stage>
  <sp who="#Gonz">
     <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
     <l n="27">I have great comfort from this
fellow.</l>
     <l n="28">Methinks he hath no drowning
```

```
            mark upon him - his</l>
                 <l n="29">complexion is perfect gallows.
            Stand fast, good fate, to</l>
                 <l n="30">his hanging; make the rope of
            his destiny our cable, for</l>
                 <l n="31">our own doth little advantage.
            If he be not born to</l>
                 <l n="32">be hanged, our case is
            miserable.</l>
              </sp>
              <stage type="exit">
                 <p>Exeunt.</p>
              </stage>
              <stage type="entrance">
                 <p>Enter Boatswain.</p>
              </stage>
              <sp who="#Btsw">
                 <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
                 <l n="33">Down with the topmast! Yare!
            Lower,</l>
                 <l n="34">lower! Bring her to try with
            main course. (A cry</l>
                 <l n="35">within.) A plague upon this
            howling. They are louder</l>
                 <l n="36">than the weather or our
            office.</l>
                    <stage type="entrance">
                       <p>Enter SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, and
                  GONZALO</p>
                    </stage>
                 <l n="37">Yet again? what do you
<sound type="voice" xml:id="Hps_2">here</sound>?
Shall we give o'er and</l>
                 <l n="38">drown? Have you a mind to
            sink?</l>
                 </sp>
              <sp who="#Seb">
                 <speaker>SEBASTIAN</speaker>
                 <l n="39">A pox o'your throat, you
            bawling, blasphemous,</l>
                 <l n="40">incharitable dog.</l>
              </sp>
              <sp who="#Btsw">
                 <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
                 <l n="41">Work you, then.</l>
              </sp>
              <sp who="#Ant">
                 <speaker>ANTONIO</speaker>
                 <l n="42">Hang, cur! Hang, you whoreson,
            insolent</l>
                 <l n="43">noise-maker! We are less afraid
            to be drowned than</l>
                 <l n="44">thou art.</l>
              </sp>
              <sp who="#Gonz">
```

```
      <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
      <l n="45">I'll warrant him for drowning,
 though the ship</l>
      <l n="46">were no stronger than a nutshell
 and as leaky as an</l>
      <l n="47">unstanched wench.</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Btsw">
      <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
      <l n="48">Lay her a-hold, a-hold! Set her
 two courses</l>
      <l n="49">off to sea again! Lay her
 off!</l>
    </sp>
    <stage type="entrance">
      <p>Enter Mariners, wet.</p>
    </stage>
    <sp who="#Mar">
      <speaker>MARINERS</speaker>
      <l n="50">All lost! To prayers, to
 prayers! All lost!</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Btsw">
      <speaker>BOATSWAIN</speaker>
      <l n="51">What, must our mouths be
cold?</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Gonz">
      <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
      <l n="52">The King and prince at prayers,
 let's assist</l>
      <l n="53">them, for our case is as
 theirs.</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Seb">
      <speaker>SEBASTIAN</speaker>
      <l n="54">I'm out of patience.</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Ant">
      <speaker>ANTONIO</speaker>
      <l n="55">We are merely cheated of our
 lives by</l>
      <l n="56">Drunkards. This wide-chopped
 rascal - would thou</l>
      <l n="57">mightst lie drowning the washing
 of ten tides!</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Gonz">
      <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
      <l n="58">He'll be hang'd yet, though
 every drop of</l>
      <l n="59">water swear against it and gape
 at widest to glut him.</l>
      <l n="60">(A confused noise within) Mercy
 on us! - We split, we split!</l>
      <l n="61">- Farewell my wife and children!
```

```
- Farewell brother! -</l>
      <l n="62">We split, we split, we
split!</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Ant">
      <speaker>ANTONIO</speaker>
      <l n="63">Let's all sink wi’th’ King.</l>
    </sp>
    <sp who="#Seb">
      <speaker>SEBASTIAN</speaker>
      <l n="64">Let's take leave of him.</l>
    </sp>
    <stage type="exit">
      <p>Exit [with Antonio]</p>
    </stage>
    <sp who="#Gonz">
      <speaker>GONZALO</speaker>
      <l n="65">Now would I give a thousand
furlongs of sea</l>
      <l n="66">for an acre of barren ground -
long heath, brown furze, </l>
      <l n="67">anything. The wills above be
done, but I would fain die </l>
      <l n="68">a dry death.</l>
    </sp>
    <stage type="exit">
      <p>Exit.</p>
    </stage>
  </div2>
  </div1>
 </body>
</text>
</TEI>
```