

***“Hear My Soul Speak” - Finding Prospero in the Verbal Music of  
Shakespeare’s *The Tempest****

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Christopher James Hurrell, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 26/5/19

## Acknowledgments

This study aspires to the condition of seamless, synergetic interplay between reciprocal scholarly and practice-based research methodologies, and to be of service to readers approaching the material from both academic and professional practice backgrounds. As such, it has been peculiarly dependent on the generous contributions of others, to whom I am deeply indebted.

As will be evident to the reader, the principal co-informant to the practice research, Gerrard McArthur, has volunteered countless hours over several years, to say nothing of his unique talent and insight. It has been an unfathomable act of generosity and dedication to discovery.

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the capacity of the verbal music of Shakespeare's poetry in *The Tempest*, to suggest an account of the complexity, irrationality and nuance of human experience in the character of Prospero, through its somatic impact on the actor. In Shakespeare's "verbal music", Peter Brook sees, beyond "concept and image ... an infinitely powerful further dimension which comes from sound". The research question has its origins in my enquiry as a stage director into how rehearsal process might best sensitise actors to the presence of this verbal music and orient their process towards a relationship with it.

No protagonist in Shakespeare has proven so consistently mystifying to readers and audiences, in both personality and intentions, as Prospero. Past generations, satisfied to see in this ambiguity the representation of a divine mystery—a Prospero somehow above humanity—were content to trust his claim to a divinely sanctioned, supernatural authority, and frequently to perceive in that authority a meta-theatrical avatar of Shakespeare himself. Twentieth century performance and criticism reacted violently against this hegemony, and as a result no protagonist in Shakespeare has undergone such an interpretive reversal as Prospero. Once a benign, serene, dispassionate lawgiver, he became instead a corrupted, violent oppressor and more recently a despairing neurotic, fighting his own frailty and an overwhelming sense of both guilt and victimhood.

This apparent elusiveness of authorial intent regarding the persona of the protagonist is used as a locus to explore not only the implications of auricular effect in the complex poetry of Prospero's utterance—amongst the most knotted, ornate and ethereal language in the Shakespearean canon—but also to consider the broader questions raised regarding the theatrical language of the play, including its use of music, the mode of representation of personality it adopts and the Early Modern paradigms of individual identity which inform it.

Extensive practice research laboratories, leading to a performance, were conducted in collaboration with the principal co-informant to the practice research: the actor and director Gerrard McArthur. The performance, which explicates both the process adopted in the laboratories and the view which emerged of Prospero's persona and its function in the play's dramaturgy, forms the conclusion to this thesis.

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## Audio and Video Clips

These audio and video clips are principally drawn from the practice research laboratories and performance which form part of this thesis and are permanently stored in the Goldsmiths Research Online (GRO) digital repository.

The reader accessing the thesis on screen may simply click the hyperlink which appears underneath each media clip caption in the body of the thesis, or copy the URL into a web-browser.

The reader accessing a printed hard copy may prefer to scan the QR code which appears next to each clip caption, using a smart phone or tablet device. Many smart phone devices have an integrated QR code scanner in the camera. Simply open the camera app and hold it over the code on either a printed copy of the thesis or on a computer screen. Then tap the link notification that appears on the device screen. On older smart phones you may need to use a free dedicated QR code scanner app, which can be downloaded from your app store.

Once you have accessed the relevant digital item in GRO via the methods described above, you will need to click on the audio icon or video thumbnail to play the clip.

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## Glossary and Textual Note

### Metrical Notation

When marking metrical stress, I adopt the following convention: ‘#’ signifies the stressed syllable and ‘.’ the unstressed, as in:

. #  
behold

Where possible, I avoid use of the technical terms of prosody, rhetoric and linguistics, or describe their function when using them, however it may be useful to the reader to be reminded of some key terms.

**Iamb:** an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one: . # as in the example above.

**Trochee:** the reverse of an iamb: # . as in the example “counter”.

**Spondee:** a double stress: # # as in “spell-stopped”.

**Dactyl:** a single stress followed by two unstressed syllables: # . . as in “merrily”.

**Anapaest:** two unstressed syllables followed by a single stress: . . # as in “cannonade”.

**Enjambment:** the continuance of a sentence or clause over a line-break in verse.

**Feminine Ending:** (in iambic pentameter) a verse line which concludes with an additional unstressed syllable.

### Phonetic Notation

The symbolic notation of the International Phonetic Alphabet has similarly been avoided for the ease of the reader, when discussing phonemes in poetry. I adopt instead the convention of signifying a phoneme by its most common lexical representation, italicised and placed between slashes: /aw/ as in “daughter”. When referring to individual *letters*, as distinct from phonemes, the slashes are omitted, e.g. the *r* in letter.

### Quotations From the Play

In the practice research laboratories and performance that form part of this thesis, original spelling and punctuation texts derived from First Folio transcriptions are used. Accordingly, quotations from the play reproduced here are First Folio transcriptions, lightly edited by the author. Line references are drawn from *The First Folio of Shakespeare: In Modern Type (Applause First Folio Editions): Comedies, Histories and Tragedies* edited by Neil Freeman.

## Introduction

This thesis investigates the capacity of the verbal music of Shakespeare's language in *The Tempest* to suggest an account of the complexity, irrationality and nuance of human experience in the character of Prospero through its somatic impact on the actor. Theatre practitioners have long claimed a relationship between poetic device in Shakespearean verse, the emotional life of the character, and the actor's creative expression of such emotional states. The actor, director and playwright, Harley Granville Barker, who exerted an enormous influence on the direction of Shakespearean performance through both his practice and critical writing, characterised such a relationship as follows:

Shakespeare himself, intent more and more upon plucking at the heart of the human mystery, stimulated his actors to poignancy and intimacy of emotional expression – still can stimulate them to it – as no other playwright has quite learned to do... His verse was, of course, his chief means to this emotional expression (Granville Barker, 2007: 11)

Granville Barker was alluding to a process—both in the writing and in the actor's response—that is intuitive. Ensuing efforts by actors and directors to describe this phenomenon invariably offer a mystery rather than an explanation as, for example, when Oliver Ford-Davies refers to its “transforming effect both on the actor and the hearer” (Davies, 2007: 89) or when Michael Attenborough describes how “the joy of heightened language is not how you work on the language, but how the language works on you” (Attenborough, 2011).<sup>1</sup>

### Verbal Music

Identifying the specific feature of Shakespearean poetry which is the locus for this intuitive phenomenon as the “verbal music”, invokes the description by theatre director Peter Brook:

Concept is there, but beyond concept is the ‘concept brought into life by image’, and beyond concept and image is music – and word music is the expression of what

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<sup>1</sup> Attenborough participated in a panel discussion at the conference, *Training for Classical Theatre*, which was organized by and held at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2011. It brought together leaders from the actor training and professional theatre sectors to address a perceived ongoing problem in the United Kingdom with the preparation and training of young actors for the unique demands of Shakespeare and other classical and heightened-language theatre. Attenborough's comments were transcribed by the researcher during the session.

cannot be caught in conceptual speech. Human experience that cannot be conceptualised is expressed through music. Poetry comes out of this, because in poetry you have an infinitely subtle relationship between rhythm, tone, vibration and energy, which give to each word as it is spoken concept, image and at the same time an infinitely powerful further dimension which comes from sound, from the verbal music. (Brook, 2002: 14)

In framing the phenomenon as the expression of aspects of human experience that “cannot be conceptualised” in the form of “energy” Brook’s formulation implicitly asserts that verbal music and its relationship to feeling in the actor sits outside or “beyond” a semiotic system. This process, as he indicates, is a liminal one: the features of poetry such as rhythm and tone serve both as signifiers *and* simultaneously contribute to an accumulation of energy which yields an “infinitely powerful further dimension” which is beyond the purview of concept or image. Consequently, while Brook narrows the field of investigation staked out by Granville Barker, a mystery persists. Later in the same passage, the technical terms invoked here, “rhythm, tone ... concept [and] image”, give way to metaphor to invoke the greater mystery—one that appears to connote a kind of spiritualism—presented by the challenge faced by the actor seeking to engage with this “further dimension”.

Each line in Shakespeare is an atom. The energy that can be released is infinite – if we can split it open. (Brook, 2002: 25)

Brook directed John Gielgud’s most radical and interpretation of Prospero, at the Stratford Memorial Theatre in 1957, which was to exert great influence on perceptions of the role. Brook saw Gielgud as “a magician” (Cole, 1970: 424) and the characterisation is indicative of his view of the actor’s relationship to the energy of the line he describes above. He ultimately sees the identification and accessing of the line’s “energy” as destined to remain the purview of the actor’s intuition. His notable work on Theatre of Cruelty and with Ted Hughes on the dead and invented languages of *Orghast* indicate the terrain in which he has sought to develop the actor’s relationship to this energy, through a view of the pre-linguistic roots of the sounds of words.

The present study directs its focus somewhat differently: largely, though not exclusively, on the elaborate phonemic patterning present in the poetic style of Shakespeare’s late verse. Such a focus considers the composition of the verbal music as being founded in the “auricular figures” of the poetry as defined in the influential Elizabethan handbook of rhetoric and poetry *The Arte of English Poesie* attributed to George Puttenham. Puttenham alluded explicitly to the function of such figures: the rhetorical devices by which language is arranged for auditory pattern, as beyond the

construction and conveyance of meaning, by categorising them as operating on “th’care onely”—and not on the mind—“by sound, accent, time, and slipper volubilitie in utterance” (Puttenham, 2012: 191). This last, somewhat elusive descriptor might best be thought of as ‘the easy and pleasurable flow of speech’. Elizabethan rhetoricians saw the auricular figures as essential to the persuasive function of speech through the “ravishment” and delight they bring to the ear of the hearer, and as Jennifer Roberts-Smith observes, Puttenham saw such an effect as explicitly musical (Roberts-Smith, 2003). That he understood this effect on the ear and not the mind as the essence of “that vertue which the Greeks call *Enargia*” is revealing of the emotional effect he had in mind. *Enargia* customarily relates to the *vividness* of visual imagery in language: the effect by which such imagery comes to life in the mind of the listener (Lanham, 1991: 64). The effect of a *living* quality of speech that is ornamented by the auricular figures, its relationship to and overlap with the imagery in such speech, is an essential element of the phenomenon Granville Barker and Brook observe.

In discussing the effect of Shakespeare’s verse, Sigurd Burkhardt takes this concept a step further, by arguing that the function of poetic device is in fact to:

release words in some measure from their bondage to meaning, their purely referential role, and to give or restore to them the corporeality which a true medium needs... [to] drive a wedge between words and their meanings, lessen as much as possible their designatory force and thereby inhibit our all too ready flight from them to the things they point to. Briefly put, the function of poetic devices is dissociative, or divestive. (Burkhardt, 1968: 24)

The contention here is that the essential function is to disrupt a conception of language as purely a signifying system and his implication that such a disruption is necessary in order to restore our experience of the words themselves by “inhibit[ing] our all too ready flight from them to the things they point to” is revealingly contextualised by his invocation of the corporeal. In speaking of the restoration of corporeality to create a “true medium”, Burkhardt, whose interest was avowedly in the plays as texts rather than as theatre, nevertheless conceives of poetry in a manner that points to a viable strategy for the actor aiming to release the “energy” Brook identifies, contained in the vivid livingness evoked by the musicality of Puttenham’s auricular figures. The auditory ornamentation of speech in poetry may trigger a somatic response in the body of the actor, through the corporeality that arises in those poetic devices, when s/he converts them into the spoken word.

This study hypothesises, therefore, that the aspiration as framed by Brook of “split[ting] ... open” of the “atom” of the Shakespearean line may be facilitated by

interrogating the “wedge” Burckhardt speaks of “between words and their meanings”. To investigate this hypothesis, this study employs practice research methodologies which aim to orient the actor to attend to the dissociative effect of poetry, as a strategy through which s/he may experience and make creative use of Brook’s “verbal music”. This presents an immediate conceptual challenge. How might an actor consciously engage with a dissociation between words and their meaning? Is such an engagement desirable, or even possible?

Brook joined the newly founded Royal Shakespeare Company, under the direction of Peter Hall, in 1962 along with the French director and teacher Michel Saint-Denis. All three men were engaged in the challenge of finding an approach to the speaking of Shakespeare which satisfied both a contemporary sensibility of reality, and the innate power contained in the poetic form; and all three found that both overly ‘naturalistic’ and ‘rhetorical’ approaches to speaking had a stultifying effect. The rehearsal techniques and pedagogies that have been developed in the last fifty or so years for acting Shakespeare, many of which have emerged either directly or indirectly from the Royal Shakespeare Company, largely frame the issue as an *association* between sound and meaning. In an interview in 2016, the Royal Shakespeare Company’s influential former Voice Director, Cicely Berry, configured the challenge as follows:

Somehow all the sounds that Shakespeare uses are integral to the meaning. That’s why you have to capture the very sound of Shakespeare to fully understand the feelings underneath. (Quine, 2016)

A paradigm of sound in poetry as “integral to the meaning”, pointing to “the feelings underneath” represents an implicit co-opting of notions of subtext familiar and comfortable to the contemporary actor. This strategy has been crucial to the appeal and wide-spread application of such pedagogical work, but it is also a conceptual simplification of the phenomenon Brook and Burckhardt claim to observe. Brook speaks explicitly of something *beyond* meaning; beyond even the poetic terrain of image and metaphor. Burckhardt explicitly claims that the power of poetic device is that it works *against* meaning; releasing words “from their bondage to meaning”.

### **Denotation, Connotation and “The Grain of the Voice”**

The claims made for the emotional significance of poetic devices and their function on a subliminal level, at which the meanings of words must be ‘dissociated’ in order to ‘release energy’ implies a paradox, seeming to suggest the connotation of

emotional states, while denying the presence of signifying process. It is tempting to locate an ontological clarification in Roland Barthes's work on Saussure's semiotics and Hjelmslev's distinction between denotation and connotation, in which he designates *layers* of connotation (Barthes, 1977a), especially as it may be argued that virtually all signified meanings in poetry are transmitted through connotation. Such a formulation might perceive a first system of connotation in which the connoted signs are found in image and metaphor, and then further systems beneath, in which that sign interacts with the verbal music to produce a further connoting signifier. In locating the alliterative verse of Gerard Manley Hopkins within a signifying system, James Wimsatt suggests that a preferable alternative is Charles Sanders Peirce's tripartite semiotic model, in which the sound constitutes an "icon, a self-reflexive image with a non-verbal meaning... [which is] not subsidiary [to the verbal sense, but].. symbiotic" (Wimsatt, 1998: 533). However, as an expression of the actor's relationship to verbal music hypothesised here, either paradigm seems inadequate. If Puttenham is an accurate guide, then Shakespeare understood the use of the auricular figures as delivering sensation rather than meaning. Both Burkhardt's reference to the bodily nature of that sensation, and Brook's to an energy-force which may overwhelm the actor's conscious decision-making, seem to be in agreement. The operation of verbal music on the actor inhabits a gap that is not filled by any part of a signifying process. Barthes' notion of the "grain of the voice" (Barthes, 1977b: 179-89) may be tentatively worked through to fill the remaining void. Barthes himself is very clear that he is reaching for a language through which to describe music—his discussion is of the singing voice, and it is in the singing voice that he locates the presence—or absence—of the grain: "the body in the voice as it sings". From there he expands the concept to all music, but only passingly to other modes of expression, as when he says further of the grain that it may be "the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs" (Barthes, 1977b: 188).

Nevertheless, the potential analogous value of Barthes' framework to a study that speaks of verbal music in dramatic poetry is immediately apparent. That framework may, with caution, be extended to consideration of the sonic in poetry. Barthes, in building his case on Julie Kristeva's "genotext" to draw a distinction between the "geno-song" and "pheno-song" (Barthes, 1977b: 182), isolates the grain of the voice from any expression of meaning, in a manner that seems to exclude even connoted meanings. The terms of Barthes' interrogation are clearly informed by the formal conventions of performing classical music, which are much more prescriptive than those applicable in acting technique. Nevertheless, his repeated reference back to the presence or otherwise of the

corporeal *body* in the singer's voice is a useful reference point for this study, which hypothesises that in the verbal music, Shakespeare has written not merely the interplay between denotation and connotation that may be found in all poetry, but also an evocation of the *grain of character's voice*. This may be understood as the way in which the character's somatic experience, his livingness, is imbricated with his utterance through what Barthes calls "the voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers, of its letters" (Barthes, 1977b: 187).

This may be taken a step further towards the question of a character's emotional experience. Repeatedly, the practice research laboratories that form part of this study, explore the movement *between* various auricular tonalities and textures, and the shifting muscular efforts that produce them. In order to explore this movement, the practice research laboratories frequently associate sonic phenomena with various emotional ramifications. This is largely subjective, however, and primarily a tool for accessing the indeterminate expression in the movement between those phenomena. This indeterminacy is what locates the "verbal music" as an expression of the "grain of the voice" rather than merely the connotative aspects of the language which, to extend Barthes' borrowing from Kristeva, may be thought to be the province of the pheno-song: "everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression". The "grain" of the *character's* "voice" may itself take a place in the layers of interacting connotation that comprise the signifying system of the play *in performance*, but in the ontological scheme proposed here, that grain comes into being only in the presence of the actor's embodied response to the verbal music.

## **Prospero**

In order to study the function of verbal music in Shakespeare, and the actor's relationship to it, it is helpful to seek to isolate it in its most concentrated and intensified form. Methodologies narrowing the actor's field of attention to the verbal music as a distinct phenomenon are discussed in the next chapter, but such an isolation may in part be facilitated through the choice of text. The intensified interest in the "elaborate surface of the verse" (McDonald, 2006: 218) evinced by the late plays: *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, *The Tempest*, and the sections of *Pericles* acknowledged by stylometric analysis to have been written by Shakespeare (Vickers, 2002: 291-332) suggests that experimentation in the effects of verbal music may have been particularly sustained in these plays. The radical disruption of metrical and grammatical forms and the intense and

ornate use of auricular poetic devices that mark Prospero's text provide particularly fertile ground for the exploration of this effect.

The apparently arcane mystery at the heart of the character—a powerful magician (who finally reveals himself to be necromancer) isolated from social structure and interacting with others through supernatural control—immediately establishes a dimension to the characterisation that cannot be accounted for through realistic psychological motivation alone. The nature of Prospero's utterances reflects this. The role of Prospero is large—at close to 700 lines it is the virtual equal of Macbeth and Lear—but he has very little conventional interaction with other characters on stage; the bulk of his text contained in a series of set-piece monologues in Acts I, IV and V. The narrative dictates that Prospero's interlocutor is nearly always confined by his authority, be it paternal or supernatural, leaving little conventional psychological interplay. Anne Barton, in an assessment that reflects a well-established tradition in criticism and performance, sees the ambiguous characterisation of Prospero as representative of a pattern of secretiveness in the play as a whole, which never unequivocally reveals its thematic or even narrative intent.

Even Prospero, its most dominant and fully displayed figure, is curiously opaque. The theatre audience ... is never really allowed to penetrate his consciousness. Prospero's great speeches, 'Ye Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves' (V.i.33) or 'Our revels now are ended' (IV.i.148) are strangely externalized utterances. They do not offer what the equivalent speeches of a Hamlet, an Angelo, or a Macbeth offer: an interior landscape, a delineation of the private workings of a mind. (Barton, 1996: 11)

This study challenges the claim that the poetry Prospero speaks does not “penetrate his consciousness”, by giving consideration to the verbal music of that poetry. In so doing, it proposes an alternative schema for the representation of the consciousness of the protagonist in *The Tempest*. Such a proposed schema is one in which the characteristics of distinct and idiosyncratic human consciousness are suggested to an audience by structural and aesthetic devices in the dramaturgy, refracted through the words and actions of subsidiary characters, acting under the protagonist's spell, and evoked by the verbal music of the dramatic poetry Prospero himself speaks.

That the key speeches are “strangely externalised utterances” by comparison to those of the preceding tragic protagonists is not a postulation disputed here on its own terms, but rather by suggesting that the schema outlined above adopts a paradigm of human consciousness which views it as innately an exteriorising experience. While for the modern mind, authentic individual subjectivity may seem to be virtually synonymous

with interiority, a Renaissance view of the function of the soul as the seat of personality took a quite different view of the relative significance of interior and exterior phenomena. In such a paradigm of representation on stage the contribution made by the effusion of energy that may be released by auditorily ornamented rhetorical utterance and the subtle suggestion of the actor's physical presence in that speech act, already elevated in importance by Shakespeare in characters such as Hamlet and Macbeth, is, in the case of Prospero, elevated further to the primary means of expression. The text is composed in a manner that privileges emotional connotations of both the sound patterns in language—which in this respect may be thought of as developing an extended, psycho-emotional onomatopoeia—and of the particular muscular efforts involved in the creation of those sounds by the speaker.

This study, then, views the dramaturgical design of *The Tempest*, and the function that the language of Prospero serves in that design, as a uniquely radical Shakespearean experiment in the representation of the protagonist: one in which the portrait of the character is, in part, evoked through sonic suggestion in the verbal music of the language, often with only the barest suggestion of motivation and state of mind in the overt meaning of those words. Indeed, the practice laboratory work conducted here frequently investigates the possible presence of mental states in the character, evoked by the verbal music, which appear to be *in conflict* with the lexical meaning of the words. Such a hypothesis for the way in which the personality of Prospero is represented in the play, facilitates exploration of the potential ramifications of a dissociation between sound and meaning for characterisation and acting in heightened-language text.

In this context, to accept that *The Tempest* “is deliberately enigmatic” (Barton, 1996: 12) does not necessarily require concurrence with Barton's ensuing conclusion regarding the “impossibility of charting [Prospero's] mind”. A deliberately ambiguous mode of representation does not necessarily imply the absence of a traceable character arc, but rather that such an arc is connoted rather than denoted, in order to create space in the artistic representation for the indeterminate expression of the “grain of the voice”. Barton goes on to define what she sees as the principal “kept secret” of Prospero's mind:

The fact that the movement of Prospero's mind from vengeance to mercy, if indeed there is such a movement, cannot be traced causes difficulties enough in the play. There is also his obsessive, and totally unexplained, concern with Miranda's chastity. Exactly what lies behind the melancholy which seems to afflict him in the closing moments? (Barton, 1996: 16)

This is a useful summary of the questions that frame the final performance component of this study. Can the movement of Prospero's mind from vengeance to mercy in fact be traced? Can the mystery of his obsession with Miranda's chastity, for example, or his exhausted melancholy at the denouement of the play be resolved or illuminated by the body of the actor in the text as performance? The implication of Barton's conclusion is that implicit meanings in the text, are synonymous with "opaque", "secretive", or even, she seems to conclude, unknowable ones, and that such secrets include key aspects of Prospero's character. However, as Kiernan Ryan has argued, such a quality of "opacity" in Shakespeare's late plays may not be an intended feature of their authorial design:

What makes these plays still strike us as enigmatic and elusive is neither their engrossment in recondite topical allusions nor their veiled subscription to the perennial mysteries of myth and religion. It is the fact that we have not yet mastered their formal grammar and poetic idiom, and so have not yet learned how to read them. (Ryan, 1999: 18)

The implication of Ryan's view is that the radical experimentation in poetic device found in the plays may have been comprehensible, if challenging, to its original audience, but has become enigmatic to later readers and audiences as the cultural reference points for interpreting its elaborately-organised auditory effects passed from general knowledge. The contention of this study is that such experimentation was in pursuit of a vehicle for realising a mercurial, conflicted personality in order to express the inherent irrationality of human nature. If twentieth-century stage drama privileges *sub-text* as the canvas for the expression of human consciousness, then Shakespeare's drama, by the end of his life, sought to use sound-patterns in poetry as the medium for such expression; what in this context may be called the *sound-text*.

### **Gerrard McArthur – Co-informant to the Research**

Re-learning "how to read" *The Tempest* as an emotional score, comprised of verbal music, which manifests its effect in the body of the appropriately sensitised actor, is an enterprise which must draw on two essential primary sources. The first is the First Folio text of the play; the second is the actor who encounters that text. Consequently, this study is structured around an extended interaction by the practitioner-researcher, with a professional actor, Gerrard McArthur, as co-informant to the practice research. McArthur played the role of Prospero in Romanian director Silviu Purcारेte's production of *The Tempest*, a co-production by Nottingham Playhouse and Theatr Clwyd, which toured

international arts festivals during 1996 (McArthur, 2016). Cast in the tour only, he saw the production before performing in it, but was not asked to replicate the performance of Michael Fitzgerald who played Prospero originally. Consequently, he created the characterisation under unusual conditions: without the discursive contribution of the originating director, but in response to two key stimuli—the idiosyncratic and evocative images presented in the already-completed production, and the textual artefact of Prospero’s language. McArthur’s account of this experience appears at the conclusion of this Introduction.

McArthur’s instinctive approach to acting process is deeply connected to his love of the complexity of heightened language, and the physical sensation of the speech act (O’Kane, 2012: 164). Indeed, he prepares a role by ‘sounding out’ the character both in his ‘mind’s ear’ when reading and in rehearsal. It is an approach well-suited to Shakespeare but also, notably, to the work of Howard Barker with whom he first worked later that same year, quickly becoming integral to the work of Barker’s company, The Wrestling School. In 2000, The Wrestling School participated in the Adelaide International Festival of the Arts, in a co-production with an Adelaide company, Brink Productions, of Barker’s “testament for the millennium”, *The Ecstatic Bible*.<sup>2</sup> This massive work has never been performed in its entirety—Barker estimates that the uncut version of the play represents some fifteen hours of stage action—and was presented in an edited version of seven-and-a-half hours. The play traces the journey of an ageless woman, Gollancz—who has abandoned free will—across one hundred years and a chimerical landscape of twentieth-century Europe. In obsessive pursuit, caught in a perpetual psychic oscillation between judging and lusting after her, is The Priest, a role originated by McArthur. The Priest’s pursuit of Gollancz is the narrative device that governs the action of *The Ecstatic Bible* and McArthur held the stage for much of the performance. McArthur’s memorable characterisation was marked by a conception of the representation of character identity in Barker’s writing, and in his own approach to acting, that he would later come to theorise as the vocal embodiment of ‘indeterminacy’:

...the characters are both the experience of the language and the objects of that experience, consciously, at one and the same time. This is the drama of the psyche defining itself in language, in a recurring sequence of continuous self-discovery and self-immolation, under extremes of circumstance and pressure... The actor needs to contain and express this sense ... that as certain as he is of the necessity to speak in seeking definition, that very definition is fundamentally insecure. (Rabey, 2009: 258-59)

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<sup>2</sup> It was in working on this project that the researcher first became acquainted with McArthur’s work.

McArthur's stage persona is deeply ironic and frequently sardonic, but also civilised and humane. It is powered by a dynamic and elastic physicality in the body, which follows the voice into the language, yielding extraordinary, sometimes almost expressionistic performance effects. Barker's writing tends to a distinct verbal freedom, marked by extreme variety and sudden shifts in emotional affect, which vividly captures the sense of indeterminacy McArthur describes. A favourite technique is the sense of two voices, from two different centres of consciousness, competing with each other for supremacy:

THE PRIEST: I wish to help you. This desire to help you is not entirely disinterested I think you know. It is steeped in feelings of the most complex and contradictory nature THAT SMILE IS VERY UGLY BUT NOT MORE UGLY THAN YOUR LIFE BELIEVE ME among these feelings the most intense is love I do not sleep you have entirely cut me off from sleep (Barker, 2004: 11)

The acting challenge presented by this 'jump-cutting' of psychological effect is to be able to inhabit each of the contrasting effects with equal and extreme conviction, but with an ironic lightness of touch that both permits the sudden shift and subtly acknowledges the paradox. McArthur achieved this in part by following the sounding of the language and allowing the way in which the language sits in the voice and its muscularity to prompt the emotional effect. The potential application of such a technique for a Shakespearean text, in which the imagery is frequently arranged with similar divagations and abrupt juxtapositions, was immediately apparent.

McArthur's interpretation of Goldberg in Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* (Pinter, 2007) some years later, was also instructive. In that performance the notion of a dexterous physical athleticism that follows the sound and shaping of language in the voice was explored to an extreme degree. In the second act in particular, in which Goldberg's interrogation and terrorising of Stanley becomes a kind of phantasmagoria, the character's physicality approached a form of physical abstraction. The body at times seemed to dance through space to a music created by the voice from the language. The audience was invited to attend consciously to the actor's performativity but with ramifications clearly salient to the play's dialectic. McArthur's conviction is that he is following, utterly and assiduously, clear indications provided by the sonic effect of the playwright's choice of language.

## A Hypothesis from the Climax – Why Elves?

As with Goldberg, McArthur’s interpretative view of Prospero is resolute, and lays claim to similar sonic cues. Interrogating such a claim through practice research laboratory work informs the methodology of this study. An apparently unconventional reading of a canonical text is, according to McArthur’s experience of creating that performance, utterly faithful to the sonic cues in that text. What then is it in the nature of those avowedly sonic cues that prompts this imaginative act? What is it precisely that he hears that prompts those choices, and why?

The practice-dialogue with McArthur about Prospero’s verbal music and its possible interpretation began as a conversation about a single speech. In the climactic Act V oration, Prospero addresses his “meaner ministers” directly, finally revealing the full extent of his occult experiments, before vowing to renounce his “rough magic”.

Ye Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,  
And ye, that on the sands with printlesse foote  
Doe chase the ebbing-Neptune, and doe flie him  
When he comes backe: you demy-Puppets, that  
By Moone-shine doe the greene sowre Ringlets make,  
Whereof the Ewe not bites: and you, whose pastime  
Is to make midnight-Mushrumps, that rejoyce  
To heare the solemne Curfewe, by whose ayde  
(Weake Masters though ye be) I have bedymn’d  
The Noone-tide Sun, call’d forth the mutenous windes,  
And ’twixt the greene Sea, and the azur’d vault  
Set roaring warre: To the dread ratling Thunder  
Have I given fire, and rifted Joves stowt Oke  
With his owne Bolt: The strong bass’d promontorie  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluckt up  
The Pyne, and Cedar. Graves at my command  
Have wak’d their sleepers, op’d, and let ’em forth  
By my so potent Art. (V.i.38-55)

These lines are a close and extensive paraphrasing from the *Medea* of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* as translated in 1567 by Arthur Golding. Shakespeare retains virtually all of the imagery, and a smattering of the language, sometimes deployed in different places to serve different purposes. In the transcription below, images recruited for Prospero’s speech are italicised and language also co-opted is marked in bold:

Ye **Ayres** of **windes**: *ye **Elves of Hilles**, of **Brookes**, of Woods alone,*  
*Of **standing Lakes**, and of the Night* approche ye everychone.  
*Through **helpe of whom** (the crooked bankes much wondering at the thing)*  
I have compelled streames to run cleane backward to their spring.  
By **charmes** I make the **calme Seas rough**, and make ye **rough** Seas plaine

*And cover all the Skie with Cloudes, and **chase them thence againe.**  
 By charmes I rayse and lay the **windes**, and burst the Vipers jaw,  
 And from the bowels of the Earth both stones and trees doe drawe.  
 Whole woods and Forestes I remove: **I make the Mountaines shake,**  
 And even the Earth it selfe to grone and fearfully to quake.  
 I call up dead men from their **graves**: and thee O lightsome Moone  
 I darken oft, though beaten brasse abate thy perill soone  
 Our Sorcerie **dimmes the Morning faire, and darkes ye Sun at Noone.***

(Ovid, Golding, and Rouse, 1904: 137 - VII.265-77)

Ovid's characterisation of Medea—and this speech in particular—were understood in Renaissance England to be a set-piece for the representation of black witchcraft both on stage and off. Shakespeare was by no means the only dramatist of the period to contrive to have some form of Medea's words spoken on stage. David Lindley argues not only that Medea was “the archetypical witch” for Shakespeare's audience, but that the particular textual reference was sufficiently ubiquitous that at least part of Shakespeare's educated Blackfriars and court audiences would have immediately picked up the echo and the radical departure from the source when Shakespeare adds Prospero's renunciation (Lindley, 2002: 28).

But this rough Magicke  
 I heere abjure: and when I have requir'd  
 Some heavenly Musicke (which even now I do)  
 To worke mine end upon their Sences, that  
 This Ayrie-charme is for, I'le breake my staffe,  
 Bury it certaine fadomes in the earth,  
 And deeper then did ever Plummet sound  
 Ile drowne my booke. (V.i.55-62)

Stephen Orgel and others have seen sufficient connection between Medea and Sycorax—whom we come to know almost exclusively through Prospero's description—to conclude that Sycorax is a Medea-like figure, both in her magical practice and in the threat she apparently posed to the temporal power of men through her diabolical choice to be at once a witch and mother. Orgel argues that this echo would also have been detectable by the original audience, to such an extent that Medea would have been in mind throughout the performance. Indeed he even speculates a Medea-derivation for the name Sycorax, which Shakespeare appears to have invented (Shakespeare and Orgel, 1986: 19).

The few omissions from the Ovid are strikingly informative. Naturally enough, pastoral references such as “streams” and “springs” have been replaced with marine imagery such as “Neptune” and sandy beaches. More significantly, any balancing

imagery of pacification is removed. Whereas Medea both makes the “calme seas rough” and the “rough seas plaine”, Prospero evinces no interest in bringing peace or harmony; his boasts are confined to summoning tempests to whip up the waves, and the verbiage he uses is much more violent.

And twixt the greene Sea, and the azur'd vault  
Set roaring warre (V.i.48-9)

Moreover, whereas Medea addresses natural elements and professes to control them directly, Prospero lays no such claim to natural magic. Medea's entire incantation is prefaced with “ye Ayres and Windes” and the colon that follows invites the ambiguous possibility that the “elves” to which she refers are in some way *of* the air and wind. Later she similarly addresses the moon directly and seems to imply that her power to dim the sun flows from her command of the moon. The implication of Prospero's form of address is subtly different in the context of the preceding drama. Hitherto, he has commanded only the “airy” spirit Ariel, a protocol which is in keeping with a model of Agrippan holy theurgy, leaving command of the darker spirits to Ariel, as medium. The assessment of Prospero as representative of such a tradition of sanctified magic practice is discussed in Chapter Two. However, in this instance, Prospero finds reason to send Ariel away before summoning these darker spirits directly, explicitly breaking with Agrippa's practices for holy magic, and leaving open the possibility that Ariel is unaware of Prospero's direct communication with and command over evil spirits.

The most singular effect of Shakespeare's adaptation of Ovid is to elevate the gravity of the speech. This effect is largely achieved sonically. Consideration of the auricular patterning forms part of the related practice research laboratory recounted from page 54, but the effect is partially evident on the page, at a rhythmic level alone. Golding's rollicking rhyming couplets of old-fashioned Fourteeners are tensionless and create a quaint, arcane atmosphere that approaches the comic. Shakespeare could easily have retained some echo of this. His practice in *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was to use the cruder, arcane rhyming verse form of catalectic trochaic tetrameter when representing magic incantation or the presence of faery elements. Indeed, this metre is deployed, though to more poignant effect, in the epilogue to *The Tempest*. “Ye Elves of hils...” is instead transformed into particularly grand iambic pentameter through extensive use of trochees to create an insistent pounding rhythm of triple-stress phrases (marked in bold in the excerpt below). This rhythm contributes to the darker atmosphere of the necromancy image in Shakespeare than in Ovid, and extends that atmosphere throughout the speech, coinciding with some of Prospero's most formidable and sacrilegious claims.

To the dread ratling Thunder  
Have I given fire, and rifted Joves stowt Oke  
With his owne Bolt: The strong bass'd promontorie  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluckt up  
The Pyne, and Cedar. Graves at my command  
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent Art. (V.i.54-6)

This tone is seemingly inconsistent with the quaint imagery of forest elves and surf-frolicking sprites in the first seven lines of the speech. The effect of this shift is to create a startling gap between Prospero's regard for the supernatural forces he commands, and that for his own power in commanding them, a gap made explicit in the contemptuous turning point at lines 8 and 9: "by whose aide/weak masters though ye be".

The unmissable climax of the speech, in the final moment before the abjuration of magic, is Prospero's dramatic revelation that he has practised the art of necromancy. Shakespeare wrings this shocking last-minute revelation—nowhere pre-figured in the drama—from Medea's passing reference, "I call up dead men from their graves"; a half-line placed amongst references to earthquake, moon and sun, reducing it in the original to virtually a side-effect of the natural magic in which she is palpably more interested. In Prospero's utterance, this revelation—with its booming, portentous auditory style—dramatically alters our understanding of the scope of Prospero's "Art"; he is revealed at once to be more powerful and more terrible than the text has previously led us to believe.

Critical responses to this passage—even from those evincing a direct interest in the question of Prospero's knowledge and its moral dimension, as well as those interested in the details of poetic utterance—frequently reveal a determination to dismiss or ignore the implications of this revelation. *The Tempest's* most influential twentieth-century editor, Frank Kermode, confidently declared that "only those elements [of Medea's incantation] which are consistent with 'white' magic are taken over for Prospero" (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: 149). Barbara Traister writes in some detail on the role of abjuration in the figure of the Elizabethan stage magician, without once referring to the boasting speech that serves as the build-up to that abjuration, permitting her to make the astonishing claim that "he has made no errors with his 'art' ... nor has he overtly challenged the power of God" (Traister, 1984: 92). Even more conspicuously, Catherine Belsey quotes the speech all the way to the very line *before* the couplet in question, in order to declare that "Prospero's humanist magic is not forbidden knowledge" (Belsey, 1985: 80), freeing her to speculate on the possible reasons for the "strangely" penitent

references to mortality that follow in Prospero's envisioning of his future after departing the island.

Some critics are inclined to dismiss the reference to necromancy as a careless and therefore unrevealing hangover from Ovid's *Medea*: part of a pro-forma of the magician's boast (Sisson, 1958: 76). Such claims are belied by Shakespeare's decision to elevate it with grander language and rhythm. Alternate attempts to explain away this magic as a Christ-like resurrective power (Coursen, 1968: 316) are refuted not only by the Gothic, necromantic tone of gaping graves ejecting their "sleepers" but by consideration of the moral and spiritual culture at the time of writing. There is no meaningful evidence that man-performed resurrection in any context or by any means was viewed as a holy imitation of Christ's ministrations to Lazarus.

As Barton observes, it seems a "strangely externalised utterance"; a formal address, proclaiming significant action, from which the interior life of the decision to act seems curiously absent. Moreover, why is a renunciation of "rough magic" preceded by grandiloquent boasting of the transgressive accomplishments of that magic? The opening line, structured around its emphasis on "elves" and "groves", provides a sonic prefiguring of the darkest imagery at the climax of the passage: "**Jove's** stout oak" and "**G**roves at my command", yet the opening imagery seems quaint and pastoral. The question of the function of this dissociation was posed to McArthur in the preliminary practice-dialogue. He was adamant that the speech was the culmination of two unexpected impulses in Prospero.

**McArthur:** When I performed this speech, I felt that I was saying something like "God heroin feels AMAZING – but I know I have to stop"

And later:

**McArthur:** Prospero's relationship to Miranda is suspect: latently abusive. His urgency is that he knows he has to get her away from him for her own good.<sup>3</sup>

Pressed to interrogate this interpretation, which may appear at first to be entirely an actor's invented imposition to deal with an elusive text, McArthur identifies these traits as emerging from Prospero's over-riding psychological state which he characterises as "solipsistic". The heroin-high and addiction metaphor expresses the state of being thoroughly absorbed in a solipsistic mind-set: leading to feelings of both omnipresence and omnipotence, and the danger to Miranda is the obvious consequence of this mind-set. McArthur's own understanding of the source of these observations about character is

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted from the researcher's notes of an early conversation analysing the "Ye Elves..." speech.

founded entirely on his somatic experience of uttering the sounds and rhythms that comprise Prospero's language. He further claimed that such violent self-absorption was present not only in the verbal music of the "Ye Elves of hills..." speech, but throughout the enormous Act One oration—in which Prospero ostensibly teaches Miranda (and the audience) the history of their exile—and elsewhere in the play. Interrogating the underlying 'sound-text' of Prospero's utterance upon which he bases this claim has informed the structure for the practice research laboratories in this study.

The parallel scholarly research seeks in part to contextualise McArthur's interpretative approach to the role. The contextual references that may have informed Shakespeare's first audience in comprehending Prospero's moral and spiritual persona are considered in Chapter Two. Key twentieth-century performances of the role and the contemporary classical acting techniques which informed them—developed at the Royal Shakespeare Company from the earlier precepts of William Poel are reviewed in Chapter Three. Burckhardt's "divestive" effect of poetry in the writing style of Shakespeare's late plays is interrogated through English Literature scholarship into Shakespeare's use of auditory poetic devices in Chapter Four. This interrogation informs the basis of a possible model of representation of character in the late plays, and in Chapter Five the possible function in relation to this paradigm of other dramaturgical experiments evident in *The Tempest*, especially its use of music, are explored.

The interrogation of the sonic and somatic effect of Prospero's verbiage in the practice research laboratories finds a character whose capabilities imply the mastery of supreme mental control, yet a pattern of mind and actions that is paradoxically out-of-control. Self-absorption and self-delusion are detected, as is vindictiveness and a tendency to violence. Indeed, whereas the surface meaning of the text may appear to support Miranda's claim that the "passion" which "works him strangely" in Act IV is unprecedented, the actor attending to the somatic experience of sounding the language, finds ample evidence of a persona that is often overtaken by strange and forceful passions. Both the scholarly and practice research strategies employed in the work that follows here have been structured to inform the final performance, which essays neither simply an interpretation of the character, nor a demonstration of an acting and rehearsal process that privileges the sonic in heightened language, but through these, aims to postulate a proposed paradigm for the representation of the character persona in the late Shakespearean protagonist.

## Preliminary Interview with the Co-Informant

The decision to work with the co-informant on the phenomenon of Shakespeare's verbal music predated the decision to focus exclusively on Prospero as an extended case-study. Following the initial conversation analysing Prospero's Act V speech of abjuration, a formal interview was conducted to identify and document McArthur's past experience of playing the role, and the relationship of that experience to his personal pre-conceptions and convictions about the role and the play.<sup>4</sup>

**Hurrell:** I want to begin by talking about the practicalities of how you came to begin your involvement in the production and prepare for the role. The first season of the production in Nottingham took place in September 1995 and you became involved in January 1996. Did you see the first iteration of the production before you started rehearsing?

**McArthur:** Yes, I did. I'd been invited up to see it; it was at the theatre in Clwyd, Wales, and as I recall I had to take a train, another train, then a bus and then a taxi and to my shame I had never read *The Tempest*, I didn't know *The Tempest*, and so I was reading it on the journey. I began reading it the evening before I think; but certainly I was reading it as I travelled to Clwyd and I do remember vividly feeling excitement—even as mysterious as it was to me—and finding it in a way strangely unknowable. I could sense its unknowable-ness: this unrecognisable route map that it was putting out there in narrative and form. I was responding to the shapes and figures and feeling of the sounds—obviously I wasn't reading it out loud—but the sensation of them in my head as they came off the page. I just thought hang on isn't this incredible?! And why hasn't anyone told me that this is so incredible? But I was increasingly excited by it. At first it was too strange, and I had no signposts, but I liked very much: I was thinking "what is this thing really?" But I remember that the last stage of the journey was in the taxi from wherever and I remember reading the last speech, finishing the last speech literally as the taxi curved up the hill that takes you to the front doors of the theatre. I just remember closing the book and thinking 'fucking hell' and being taken straight in to see the matinee of the show, which was just about to start.

I knew that Prospero was a very insular and complicated persona and a very angry one, and it seemed key to me even then that it was a very unpredictable mind that hardly knew itself. Sort of an angry hurt; the holy wound; a wounded psyche.

**Hurrell:** To crudely generalise, there are angry Prosperos, there are loving paternalistic Prosperos and there are remote, serene, quasi-divine Prosperos. You go into this production, and you see Michael Fitzgerald's performance of the role.

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<sup>4</sup> The following transcript is an edited selection from a two-hour interview.

Can you recall which or any of those categories more than others, his performance fell into?

**McArthur:** He cut an 18th-century figure, and sort of “magicke”: an artificial creation who had a sense of Mozartian ecstasy in response to a kind of invisible music that only he could hear. I thought it was a strange and ornamented series of movements: he fitted the serene in that sense of the blissful creative genius.

What I saw was very intriguing, because of course I didn’t know beforehand that the production had split Ariel up into twelve little Ariel helpers, and that Prospero was voicing Ariel, etc., so all this was very interesting. I really responded to the large scale of the production: large in scale, large in the thought-universe of it but using very, very simple uncluttered elements which were terrifically, visually and emotionally powerful. What I saw in what Purcarete had done was, to put it mildly, an exciting filling-in of the flood of things that had come into me on my reading of it. So that was really exciting: it tapped into unique universal pulses, a sense of ‘the music of the spheres’. It was plugging into this pulse that I detected in the language that been so arresting to me. He had found form for it in his circles of a vast revolve, and lines of music staves that could also be forests, etc. But very sparsely introduced.. I hadn’t been prepared for it to be set in some inference of the 18th century, and in a way that aspect was a little quaint, deliberately so, I’m sure. The production struck me as true to the rhythms inherent in the excitements of the things that I’d read, and authentic, very beautiful, intensely resonant, by an artist responding to a great piece of art.

**Hurrell:** So, moving on to your rehearsal and preparation.

**McArthur:** I went up in January 1996 to start rehearsing and I made the curious mistake of somehow assuming it was the usual four-week rehearsal process when in fact it was only three weeks! And as I never learn things normally before starting rehearsal, I got there and did the first read-through and then the penny dropped that I was supposed to know this and start doing runs in about two weeks! It was a bit like old-style rep in that sense; being slotted into something terrifyingly quickly. I remember I wasn’t able to socialise with the cast for the first two weeks because I was going home every evening after rehearsal to learn the play into the night until about 2 or 3 in the morning.

So, it was an unusual situation. I didn’t know the play, and was literally discovering it day by day (and night by night) and yet I already knew the production. The fundamentals of those scenes were there and I acted within those scenes. But that didn’t mean I couldn’t change anything: quite the contrary. While Silviu’s purposes were laid out for me, I recall having great freedom to make whatever changes I needed, so it felt a very creative process.

**Hurrell:** And who was conducting the rehearsals?

**McArthur:** The assistant director, who was a very sympathetic person to work with.

**Hurrell:** And was that someone who had been a collaborator of Purcarete's before? Or someone local?

**McArthur:** No, he was local. He'd assisted Purcarete on this for the English producers, and was now seeing the show through on its European tour.

**Hurrell:** Do you recall any, even broad parameters, passed on from Purcarete through the Assistant Director for what the conception of the role should be? For example in terms of Prospero's relationship with Miranda?

**McArthur:** I think I'm right in saying that Purcarete's idea was that the corruptions of his magic had the potential to be a corruption in his relationship with Miranda and that Prospero intuits that, and is fearful of that, and it is that fear that gives an urgency to his actions. He really wants to remove her from him for her own sake. And I felt that was a very strong idea.

**Hurrell:** That sounds like that would have been the main character arc for that production then: that what drives his tension and anxiety and urgency is that by the time "our work shall cease" I absolutely have to have her packed off to Naples.

**McArthur:** Yes, and that idea certainly filled in my impression from that first reading that I'd had almost from the start which was that, far from enlightening him, there was a downside to the magic, and that he was cut off by it, and was in an addiction process to it, and that it was exhausting him rather than regenerating him.

**Hurrell:** I want to talk a little more about that but just before we do, as you've raised the question of the magic, the *mise-en-scène* certainly seems to be saying that the magic in this production, which is called Art in the text, is unambiguously "art" and specifically music. Did that mean, in terms of the scenography of the production—or rather in the world of that production—that he wasn't in any literal sense a magician? Or was that sense of mysterious and supernatural power still part of the picture?

**McArthur:** Oh I think it was; yes I think it certainly was. It was interesting for example that he (Prospero) was Ariel as a voice.

**Hurrell:** And what did that device mean to you?

**McArthur:** I think it fed into this idea of this fission of personality within him; that his energies were being sapped by division; that even as he is gaining considerably more powers, at the same time his necromancy is depleting aspects of him and maybe causing subdivisions in his psyche as a response; that these subdivisions are his psyche's method of protecting him, of allowing him to explore what he is doing to himself.

**Hurrell:** Was it the idea that Ariel was in some way his muse, as the great maestro genius?

**McArthur:** No, I didn't think that Ariel was the muse, no. The great force in Ariel is to want to be free, and I think that that is also true for Prospero. I always thought

of the 12 little Ariels as fractured subdivisions of myself. Which I think feeds very well into some solipsistic idea of Prospero, and the drug-addict Prospero? You know, the guy who's on 'smack magic'.

**Hurrell:** So, it's suggesting more a solipsistic worldview in which 'I see myself refracted everywhere'. The whole world is 'Me, me, me'. That sounds like what it must have been invoking. Certainly, that key word "solipsism" is mentioned in one of the reviews too.

**McArthur:** Oh really, I didn't know that. I felt the magic was a rather dangerous drug, and I felt the theme of this solipsism very powerfully in the production, because any kind of drug obviously makes the world entirely solipsistic. The drug becomes you and you are the drug, and in the end there is no division between you.

**Hurrell:** And is the drug analogy to do with the idea of feeling indestructible?

**McArthur:** Yes, yes, I took it to be that.

**Hurrell:** And just to clarify, that analogy of magic as a drug and Prospero as an addict, is that something that was said to you by the assistant director or other members of the cast, or was it your response to the things you were being asked to do in the production?

**McArthur:** I think it was my interpretation of what had been set up; the assistant made it clear that I could suggest or play within the obvious parameters. It was fed to me that Purcarete's idea was that what Prospero was worried about was the corruption of his practice of magic, and the corruption of his own capabilities of restraint in himself in relation to Miranda—and that the drive to make Miranda safe was one of the prime, desperately-driven consequences of it. So that also, obviously, fed into this solipsistic and drug-addicted notion. And because the production's idea was "the Renaissance corrupted" as I took it, of course it all worked together.

**Hurrell:** That's quite a strong marker of where the production sits in terms of an interpretative paradigm, because that's quite a minority view of the magic. In productions where the possible corruption of the magic *is* an issue, it's usually balanced or indeed outweighed by the idea of Prospero's grievance. That's a reading of the play that sees the movement of the action as being about dealing with these people who have wronged him, and that provides at least a temporary justification for the morally questionable practices that may or may not include trying to play God. Can you locate the degree to which Prospero's grievance, and even his sense of himself as victim, sat strongly in this production?

**McArthur:** Well I think it was given its due, for sure. From memory, I think both Michael Fitzgerald was very vituperative about having been betrayed in the first speech, and so was I. In the culmination of that narrative, when they come together at the "solemn air" event and are all brought in "spell-stopped" and trapped there, he was able to indict them very directly, and that was given absolutely due status and power in the staging. In the production, Prospero botches his redressing of himself in the Ducal finery in Act Five. He gets it all wrong. So, preparing himself

for the representation of Ducal power during the “solemn air” speech, Prospero gives himself a slashed, overdone, messed-up make-up, which he applies terribly to himself. He has no cognisance of what he has made of himself, which is an appearance of the grotesque: a grotesque drag of ‘the Duke’. This was clearly a marker of his mentality degrading, and of how time is running out for him successfully to complete his mission.



**Fig. 1.** Gerrard McArthur as Prospero with the sprites. *The Tempest*, Act V, scene 1. Nottingham Playhouse, 1996.

What I felt from my first reading was that the speed and pace and the imperative of what he has to do, which is established in the long Act One oration, is because he’s really afraid of losing his mind. What I really liked about Purcarete’s production was that this narrative was made explicit. He is so destabilised, and is a mind in decay. In this way everything leads from the very beginning of the production to the final speech, which, far from the standard interpretation, is here the collapse of his control, and his mind. This makes sense of his enigmatic statement “where every third thought shall be my grave”, and so much else in his language, which is, I later came to realise, so often glossed over, and has to be, in productions where this view of the narrative is not pursued.

I felt this darkness in speeches like “Our revels”, which ends “to still my beating mind”, and “this thing of darkness” and so on. They represent a consistent psychology in his intemperate and disturbing presentation; and, of course in promising he’s going to drown his book in “Ye Elves of hills” he reveals he’s been waking up the dead. No wonder he’s going to drown his book because if you’re bringing the dead back to life, then you’ve really crossed the borders of craziness. I’m surprised how little regard seems normally to have been given to those elements of a destabilised mind. Often it seems as if he’s been looked on simply as being a little choleric—in order, it would seem, to abide by the essentially reconciliatory

'ground rules' of pastoral, and to encompass an apparent 'farewell speech' from Shakespeare. If you presuppose such a reading, which is obviously not that of a destabilised mind, you tend to have to ignore the desperation and violence of feeling that I think is inherent in that final speech. In other 'final speeches' of address in Shakespeare, it is made clear that the actor is now both in and out of character, speaking on behalf of the actors' desire to have pleased; here, Prospero remains Prospero. The Shakespeare 'fond farewell' notion stops you following the narrative of the play, which is that he is a destabilised and disturbed individual, who needs to be set free. Of course, there's a double-effect of meaning, but not one where sentiment should be allowed to smother the discomfort inherent in the lines.

And so when Purcarete got him to dress up in a deranged drag of proper princeliness of which he is barely aware, in which to meet his enemies: that seemed so right. In that garb, what is expected in the narrative form to be a scene of reconciliation, is revealed to be not a reconciliation at all. The perpetrators don't utter one word of reconciliation or penitence; as we know, they remain famously silent. This is not the first sign that the pastoral 'machine' is being warped for different purposes. The form requires a reconciliation scene, but the 'problem' is that it doesn't happen.

**Hurrell:** I want to read you a quote from one of the reviews that identified this solipsistic state of mind in Prospero. I should point out that it reviews Michael Fitzgerald's performance which as we've discussed was quite different from yours:

Shakespeare's magician is imagined here less as a man torn between vengeance and mercy than a rather mannered aesthete exercised by the competing claims of his seductively solipsistic dream-world of art and illusion and his responsibilities as father and temporal ruler. (Taylor, 1995)

**Hurrell:** You've described the primary focus as you remember it as being about the question of corruption and correction within Prospero, and that review quote seems to accord with that. They seem to be saying that the play was less "a man torn between vengeance and mercy" than they would normally expect to find in the play. You certainly played it as I understand it, that he intends vengeance until Ariel inspires him to correction.

**McArthur:** Yes, very much so; that was very strongly in my mind.

**Hurrell:** Thinking about that quote I've just read, it's less a man torn between vengeance and mercy, but you seem to be saying that for you there was no ambiguity, no struggle. He absolutely intends vengeance for four whole acts, right up until the moment that Ariel challenges him.

**McArthur:** I just don't myself see any evidence for a man who's torn between vengeance and mercy. I think he's bent on it.

**Hurrell:** That's quite an unusual approach. When I asked you about the idea of Prospero's victim-hood earlier you commented that the production gave space for his vengefulness and vituperative-ness, but that's actually quite distinct it seems to me from the quality that most other Prosperos in recent times have pursued, which

is a vulnerable sense of victim-hood and distress. The sense of: “I am still distressed that this terrible thing happened to me years ago”, or playing disbelief: “I still can’t believe this terrible thing happened to me years ago”. In such readings he’s bereft by the feeling of betrayal.

**McArthur:** Well, I agree that he’s distressed, and that there is vulnerability in that. There’s a grief of loss. In the first speech, the repetition of ‘brother’, ‘my brother’: the stress on brother and brotherhood and the fracture of that seems to mean an awful lot to him. I do agree about that. But he says to Miranda “my zenith doth depend upon a most auspicious star which if I court not will ever after droop”. I just don’t believe the play works unless in the critical moment you believe that he is full of vengeance. He can be upset, and grief-ridden and all the rest of it but if you try to soften by saying he’s struggling against righteous vengeance, I just don’t think that’s an accurate perception of how the language is describing his mind.

The axis of the whole play seems to be Ariel’s line “I would were I human”, and if you feel that he might be ‘human’ about it, or humane, at any point beforehand and that, in fact, it is a struggle to conquer vengeance, that’s not the drama. The real drama of the character is signified in what’s increasingly been declared and growing and sounded out in the gnawing, gnawed, gnarled, and extraordinary force of the language that represents his mind. In that moment with Ariel, all that tension is momentarily released. The complications continue to the very end of the play, not least the ones we’ve been describing about his magic as an addiction, as a corruption, as a force of degeneracy.

**Hurrell:** To sum up, it seems to me that you prepared this role in quite an unusual way, really without direct interpretative instruction from a director and yet in a highly conceptual production. And I know the character lives very vividly for you, and as we’ve discussed in a distinct and quite unusual interpretation, which you seem to have aligned with rapidly, intuitively, in response to some key stimuli that had a powerful impact on you. And those stimuli were:

1. The sonic experience (as you’ve described) in your learning of the part in isolation.
2. The very striking images in this production that you not only observed but of course were also asked to participate in, without necessarily being provided with explanation or direct directorial ‘motivation’.

**McArthur:** Yes, it was an interesting experiment really, but I’ve always gathered ‘sense-impression’, a lot of information, from syntax and rhythms and flow.

**Hurrell:** And you’ve mentioned the word *persona* today, and I know you mean something very specific when you use that term. Can you talk about that?

**McArthur:** Well, I began to think that ‘character’, in the traditional sense, seemed to have a tendency to close down options rather too quickly, and could become, in fact, an imposition on text, so I was looking for a way that would keep things open,

and allow for complexity and discovery for much longer. ‘Character’ seems to shut things down, in this sense, whereas ‘persona’ seemed to open them up.

And I was specifically looking for a paradigm that could naturally encompass something that comes from the sound information inherent in the text. Because after all the construction, sound and texture of the text is the only real information we have.

I think that I’ve always felt information and sense impressions of language in my mind very readily. And the thing that goes along with that is naturally to be very open-ended, allowing those sequential sense impressions to build into something in me, in a continuous process, without predetermining where they might lead.

And so that really to me is a process that allows a resonance of a *persona* to emerge, rather than to make determinate judgements about character in a Stanislavskian sense. I’ve been lucky enough always to be working in the theatre on great lyric writers like Howard Barker or on Shakespeare, and so on, which facilitates this.

**Hurrell:** Yes, you mentioned, in that anecdote about reading the play, a sense of ‘hearing’ the play as you were reading it. And that’s the threshold activity that leads to the perceiving of a *persona*?

**McArthur:** Yes, that’s the entry gate, I think.

**Hurrell:** Now of course *persona* has a shade of meaning to do with ‘mask’ but I take it you don’t mean something exterior.

**McArthur:** No, the text, the sounds of the text, have a resonance inside. There’s a famous quote of Adorno’s which is “we don’t understand music, it understands us”.

And when I began working with Howard Barker, it was clear from the start that a Stanislavskian analysis of a Barker character simply can’t be done. That’s why he created a catastrophic landscape—to drive out all the predicted, societal, socially-governed responses, so that you cannot say how that character is going to respond at any given moment. There’s no ‘character’ there who is likely to respond in a certain way because he is or she is that sort of ‘character’. They can do anything, and the drama for both them and the audience is the fact that they are constructing themselves by the doing of what they do and the saying of what they say. That active sense of instability and destabilisation is the *persona* in action. That, itself, is the drama. And I think that’s the drama of Prospero too. Shakespeare is constructing Prospero out of the sonic properties of language.

## Chapter One

### Methodology

#### Reciprocal Scholarly and Practice Research Methods

The research strategy adopted in this study is one of reciprocal scholarly and practice methodologies. Insights gleaned from scholarly research are used to inform the strategies applied in what are here referred to as practice laboratories. In particular, close-readings by literary critics of relevant passages, especially readings which interrogate the use of poetic device, have been drawn on, both to inform the close-reading strategies adopted by the researcher, and to supply specific insights, claims, or provocations which are used as a point of focus in the practice laboratory work. Correspondingly, findings from the practice research laboratories—which were commenced early in the research process and have been conducted sporadically throughout—have been both contextualised by and informed the evolving direction of the scholarly research. This interaction may be seen for example in the analysis of style and poetic device in Chapter Four of this thesis.

As may be expected the pedagogical literature which has emerged in the last fifty years regarding approaches to verse-speaking for the contemporary actor in Britain has also been reviewed. The precepts which may be found there have been re-considered in the context of the practice laboratories, as may be seen for example on page 132, in which the implications of precepts from the ‘rules’ for the verse-speaking actor, applied by Peter Hall and recorded in his book *Shakespeare’s Advice to the Players*, are tested by comparing experiences in which they are applied with those in which they are contravened.

Additionally, in assessing the contemporary performance history of the play and its relationship to the shifts in acting process and pedagogy a methodological shift has been made in considering work from the 1960s onwards, to accommodate the fact that it is possible to give meaningful consideration to archival recordings of key performances. A process of analytical listening has been applied here, with focus on vocal quality and the evolution of verse-speaking techniques. The researcher, having previously been trained in both verse-speaking technique and Estill Voice Training, has applied that knowledge to consideration of the performances described here in order to track the

evolution of both verse-speaking and the use of various vocal qualities in the role of Prospero. The role raises particular questions in relation to use of both the verse-line and the voice, in the context of the late twentieth-century interpretative trend. The desire to express a 'conflicted' Prospero battling primarily his own emotional responses rather than an external antagonist raises the question of the balance between responding vocally to a highly artificial and ornamented verse-style and a desire for a vocal quality that evokes a psycho-emotionally realistic portrayal of inner conflict.

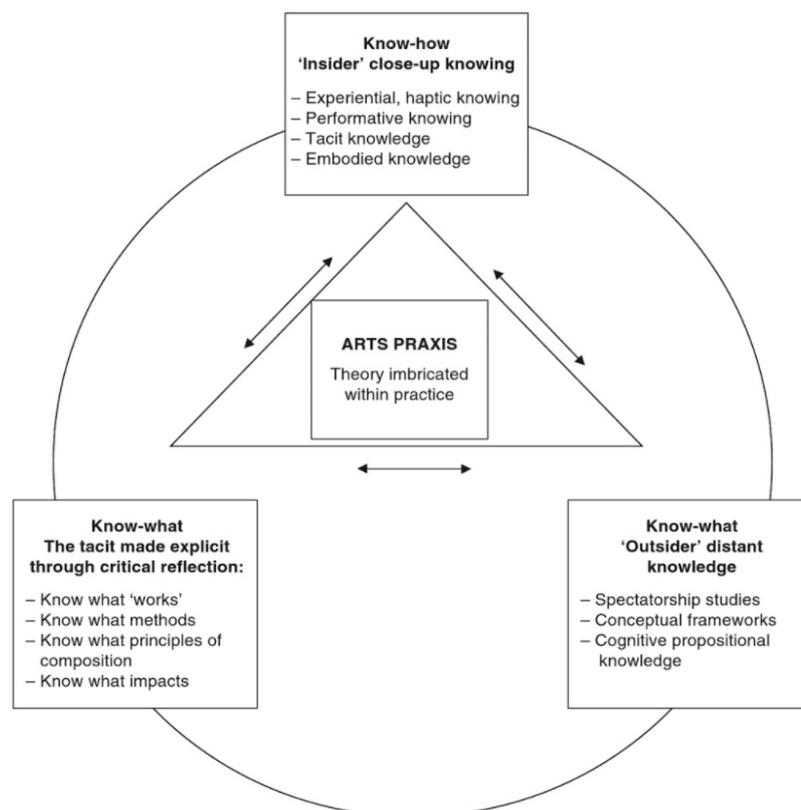
The principal practice research methodology is the observation of the interaction between a director (the practice-researcher), an actor (the co-informant to the research) and a text (*The Tempest*). The director and the actor come to the text having worked on it previously (separately) in professional but limited contexts. As McArthur has recounted, he prepared the role in 1996 in a truncated creative process, stepping into an already established production, learning the lines by rote, without the personal guidance of the production director Silviu Purcarete (who was not present). The researcher served as Assistant Director on a major Australian touring production of the play in 2006, during a period of often incapacitating illness and chronic pain. The effect of both these professional experiences was to leave a strong series of sense-impressions about the play, separated by 'gaps' in comprehension, and without a coherent overall narrative of the play's, or even the productions' possible meaning(s). Each came to the present enquiry with a combination of knowledge and unanswered questions, a circumstance which has, in effect, served as a locus for the sonic enquiry.

The research regards attitudes formed by the practitioner-researcher and the co-informant about the 'meaning' of particular sonic patterns, or indeed the meaning of the *differences* between sonic patterns, as a subjective position in the context of a phenomenologically understood encounter. Forming a meaning-relationship to the sonic is a necessary creative pathway to manifesting the sound in the performance body. The resoluteness with which the researcher and co-informant often speak about the meanings of sounds in the laboratories should be understood in this context, rather than as signals that the thesis is claiming to draw empirical conclusions about authorial meaning intended by Shakespeare in his deployment of particular auditory figures in the poetry. The purpose at all times is to stimulate an acting response primarily through the somatic experience of speaking sonically patterned language.

A strategy of phenomenological enquiry, from which the methodology employed in the practice research laboratories takes its cue, aims to record the "intentional

relationship between the person and the meanings of the things they're focusing on and experiencing" (Finlay, 2008: 2). It is not the purpose of this study to attempt to train actors in a somatic relationship with heightened language in performance, nor to comprehensively theorise the relationship between "verbal music" and the actor's intuitive and somatic faculties, but to observe the phenomenon and to make it the primary subject of rehearsal-room enquiry and thus shift such engagement from the intuitive to the conscious, in order to identify the function and test its applicability as an interpretive tool. Robin Nelson's model for modes of knowledge as it pertains to practice research is a useful reference, with some reconsideration for the purpose of the present enquiry. As Nelson observes: "Those practice-as-research projects which locate themselves in phenomenological approaches have the potential to yield experiential insights into what *it feels like to perform.*" The question of what it feels like to perform is central to a view of sonic patterning in dramatic poetry as designed to inculcate a somatic response.

Indeed, as a practice enquiry particularly engaged in understanding the nature of process, the purpose of the research may be described in part as transforming McArthur's "know-how" into "know-what", which Nelson defines as "the tacit made explicit through critical reflection".



**Fig. 2.** "Modes of knowing: multi-mode epistemological model for PaR." As illustrated by Robin Nelson, in *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (2013: 37).

Contemporaneously with the body of performance work described in the introduction to this thesis, McArthur himself began investigating strategies for shifting his instinctive approach (Nelson's "Know-how") to a describable, and to an extent teachable, phenomena ("Know-what"). He began directing, working with students, and teaching workshops and masterclasses on his approach to heightened text. In evolving his approach to this work he was inspired by the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovski's conception of *ostranenie*, which McArthur glosses as "making strange, to defamiliarise, to creatively deform the normal" (O'Kane, 2012: 164).

Shklovski coined the phrase "defamiliarization (*ostranenie*)" in his 1917 essay, *Art as Technique*, in the course of distinguishing the language of poetry from that of prose but which he extended to all artistic forms, concluding that the phenomenon of defamiliarization was a defining feature of the work of art:

In studying poetic speech in its phonetic and lexical structure as well as in its characteristic distribution of words and in the characteristic thought structures compounded from the words, we find everywhere the artistic trademark – that is, we find material obviously created to remove the automatism of perception; the author's purpose is to create the vision which results from that deautomatized perception. A work is created "artistically" so that its perception is impeded and the greatest possible effect is produced through the slowness of the perception. (Shklovski, 1989: 783)

Shklovski's formulation bears an obvious relationship to that of Burkhardt discussed in the Introduction. The 'impeding' of perception he saw in poetry is closely aligned to the dissociative function that Burkhardt identifies, to inhibit "our all too ready flight from them to the things they point to". That both theorists employ images of involuntary haste is significant: the implication of their position is that the receiver of the artwork, be they an audience, a reader, or (in the case of this study) another interpretative artist, is conditioned by language's primary function as a signifying process, to be desensitized to this "corporeal", "deautomatized" perception. Both writers implicitly assign to the receiver some responsibility in the creation of the artwork's effect. The poet may use poetic structures to facilitate a dissociation which slows the perception, but the capacity of the receiver to take those cues to a more intuitive 'artistic' experience of the work, is an essential element of the transaction. Accordingly, McArthur uses the concept both as a descriptor of a phenomenon present in heightened language dramatic texts *and* as a way of sharing his own instinctive experience of engaging as an actor with such texts. The strategies he has developed seek to inculcate this deautomatized response in his students. This approach was adopted in the practice research laboratories.

## **The Structure of the Practice Research**

The collaboration with McArthur to interrogate both techniques for liberating the verbal music and the role of such approaches in interpretation of Prospero has been extensive and occurred in a number of distinct stages.

**Formal Interview: Past Professional Experience of the Play.** See page 29.

**Preliminary Dialogue.** A dialogue about the points of intersection between McArthur's process primarily (though not exclusively) developed to meet the needs of Howard Barker's writing, the researcher's own professional experience and methods, and consideration of the work of established Shakespeare practitioners. These included collaborative close-reading of the play and others by Shakespeare.

**“Practice-Dialogue” Workshops.** The purpose of this was to build shared strategies for identifying and responding to the verbal music, which could then be taken into the laboratories on the play. In total, eight workshop days were conducted across three separate tranches.<sup>5</sup>

**Practice Laboratories.** These sessions form the core of the practice enquiry. They are an extended interrogation of the auditory effects present in key excerpts of the play's poetry, and an exploration of possible somatic implications for the actor.

- **Phase 1.** A two-day laboratory focused on the pivotal “Ye Elves of hills...” speech and surrounding late speeches.
- **Phase 2.** A three-day laboratory focused on the speeches of the long Act I, scene two oration.
- **Phase 3.** A two-day laboratory focused on Miranda and Caliban. There were two goals here: to expose something in Miranda's speeches, and test the difference between Prospero's verbal music and that of others in the play. Secondly, to test the emerging strategies developed with an outside actor. An additional co-informant was introduced in order to facilitate this experimentation: the actress Alice Haig, who had been a participant in some of the “Practice-dialogue” workshops.

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<sup>5</sup> Information about professional actors recruited to participate in these laboratories may be found in Appendix I.

- **Phase 4.** Investigation of Ariel’s music. The purpose here was to develop a more complete sense of Ariel’s music and observe it in limited interaction with the play text, to consider its dramaturgical function. Sessions were conducted separately with an additional co-informant, the countertenor Russell Harcourt, and then together with McArthur.
- **Phase 5.** A two-week process of performance preparation.

**Formal Interview: Reflection.** A second formal interview was conducted to record McArthur’s experience of the work and the evolution in his attitude to the representation of the character in the play.

### **Focus of the “Practice-Dialogue” Workshops**

Working jointly with groups of professional actors, the researcher and co-informant each devised and tested exercises for encountering and responding to language as a sonic and rhythmic phenomenon. The preliminary experiments conducted in the practice-dialogue workshops were limited to what had been hypothesised as the threshold task in seeking to approach the language primarily as sound. The contemporary actor’s relationship to the performance text is to seek the subtext. In search of this, their first, urgent need is to *decode* a difficult or heightened text: to grasp what it signifies. The strategy employed here was to take advantage of the unfamiliarity of difficult texts, either arcane or abstract, to defer the meaning-relationship, and sensitise the speaker to the sounds of which the words comprise, in order to ultimately foreground the sensation of sound-patterns and the physical sensation of producing them. The unfamiliarity may be treated as a short-cut into Shklovski’s *ostranenie*. The key research questions which informed the devising, sharing and development of such exercises were:

1. How might the actor encounter written language as a somatic sound-score, unmediated by preconceptions about character and dramatic situation, or indeed even about the meaning of the imagery?
2. How is the somatic response to such sounding engendered in the body and emotional imagination of the actor?

The exercises were formulated in response to the following assumption regarding a dominating mental process for reading and speaking:

1. The speaker sees the written word.

2. The speaker perceives a code denoting an idea or object.
3. The speaker utters the word for the purpose of making the denotation comprehensible to the listener.

The goal of the exercises, then, was to disrupt this cognitive process as follows:

1. The speaker sees the written word.
2. The speaker perceives a notation of a series of sounds in combination.
3. The speaker verbalises that combination of sounds, forming an association with them as a function of the visceral/aural experience of creating and hearing the sounds.

To isolate the issues involved in answering these research questions, a ten-point “Dogma for Embodied Enquiry into the Sounds of Dramatic Verse” was devised as a provocation and guide to devising the intent and shape of the strategies employed. This represents a shorthand from which succinct verbal cues may be drawn to regularly re-orient the practice laboratory work to the sonic phenomenon in the language. The goal is to prioritise the actors’ perception of the written word – away from a paradigm of literal comprehension and towards one of aural apprehension.

### **A Dogma for Embodied Enquiry into the Sounds of Dramatic Verse**

1. Every unfamiliar word or incomprehensible phrase is not an obstacle to be resolved, but an opportunity to explore what sounds mean to us, unencumbered by the literal.
2. We shall not seek to know who the character is. We seek to expose a *persona*, emerging from the sound of speech.
3. We shall not sit down and draw conclusions from language about who the character is or what is transpiring. This is a process of experiencing the implications for *persona* in the language.
4. So, we are not seeking to hear the method of the actor, we’re trying to hear the method of the dramatist.
5. Language has effects in the mouth; there is a plastic sense of it; that sense has implications for the body, and a process of exploration, of sensitizing oneself to

the possible implications or suggestions implicit in language choice, cadence and rhythm, can come from a process of sensitive exaggeration into first, the tongue, and then secondly, the body.

6. So, the exploration is a somatic process.
7. We shall in the first instance consider the possibility that the truth of the speech lies not within, at the mental or physical, but without, where the breath of speech joins the ether.
8. Tone first, and then rhythm.
9. We ask first how the sounds feel and afterward, what the word signifies.
10. The rhetorical figure is a focus of our attention, as is the figure described in the imagery. Through the somatic implications of these, emerges the presence of the figure who is speaking.

### **Towards a Method of Sonic Analysis**

In his 2006 work, *Shakespeare's Late Style*, to which the present study is greatly indebted, the English literature scholar Russ McDonald provides 'marked-up' texts of key passages in order to highlight the dense texturing of alliteration and assonance in the late verse. This suggested a way in which a rehearsal text could be developed that contained regular mental cues to the actor to prioritise an engagement with the language as a sonic phenomenon, while simultaneously 'slowing' the perception of meaning, as Shklovski saw, in order to facilitate the dissociation between words and their meanings that Burkhardt advocates. The mark-ups are deliberately indeterminant. The markings are not to be read as an empirical code (e.g. bold means alliteration, italics mean assonance, etc.) but rather as a relational one, encouraging the eye to link the formatting marks with its near neighbours. McDonald's mark-up of a speech by Imogen in *Cymbeline* prompted an embodied or sonically 'felt' reading of a previously unfamiliar passage, which led to a subjective, somatically-inspired interpretation of the significance of various sound patterns and tonalities. That mental encounter with the speech has been summarised below as it was a crucial element in reflecting on the early practice-dialogue workshops in order to begin to sketch a method of sonic analysis that could be applied in the practice laboratories.

McDonald cites the passage as a representative example of the, “elaborate, almost overwrought texture of the poetic surface of the late plays.” The formatting is McDonald’s, to “suggest some of the many aural relationships”.

**Where** is Posthumus? **What** is in thy mind,  
That makes thee stare **thus**? **Wherefore** breaks **that** sigh  
 From **the** inward of **thee**? **One**, but **painted thus**,  
**Would** be **interpreted** a thing **perplex’d**  
 Beyond self-explication: put thyself  
 Into a havior of less fear, **ere** wildness  
 Vanquish my staider senses. [What’s the matter?]<sup>6</sup> (III.iv.4-10)  
 (McDonald, 2001: 47)

The focused intensity that emerges particularly from the repetition of *th.. m..* when sounding out the monosyllabic, extra-stressed half lines:

# . # # #  
 What is in **thy mind**  
 . # # # .  
**That makes thee stare thus”**

and the breathlessness created by repetitions of *wh* and *th* in the ensuing lines, may energise the performer’s body with anticipation—a cursory glance at the content of the scene suggests that in this case that anticipation is fearful.

Next, repetitions of *p* and *t* are introduced. As Imogen further interprets the look in Pisanio’s eyes, fearful anticipation develops into certain alarm, expressed by a sputtering effect created by the shifting sonic context in which the plosive *p*’s and *t*’s are placed. A tightening of the repeated vowel sound – from /er/ to /eh/ contributes to the heightening alarm. A darkening development is achieved by establishing the *p/t* pattern and then for the second pair of words “perplex’d/explicated”, introducing the *l*, forcing the speaker to momentarily drop down into the throat in the midst of a pattern that otherwise sits high and tight in the mask of the face.

One, but **painted** thus,  
 Would be **interpreted** a thing **perplex’d**  
 Beyond self-explication

This entire sentence is characteristically parenthetical in structure—it is a divagation which can be entirely omitted without diminishing the overall sense—and obscure. The image itself seems curiously tortured, establishing on a painting metaphor to describe a mystifying facial expression, then extending the syntax to encompass the

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<sup>6</sup> Bracketed material not quoted by McDonald.

painting's effort to interpret itself. Finally, the pattern shifts to the hissing of repeated sibilant *s*'s, as this alarm engenders an action of angrily threatening Pisanio:

put thyself  
Into a havior of less fear, ere wildness  
Vanquish my staid senses.

This movement through the emotional response to an active, aggressive action is confirmed by the abrupt final half line.

**What's the matter?**

which sharpens the underlying intent with a demand that recapitulates the dominant sounds of the first line and develops them into new hard staccato.

All the repeated sounds identified in the passage are drawn from the single, straightforward, urgent unrelenting question with which the section begins:

**Where is Posthumus?**

This insistent demand is a sudden *non-sequitur* in the drama. Imogen, expecting to be reunited with Posthumus, and Pisanio, under secret orders to murder her, are still *en route* to Milford Haven. Suddenly, on the road, she senses that something is wrong. It emerges that not only is the six-line passage a fugue on all the sounds contained in this brief but desperate question, but that it features a brilliant aural repetition of the whole question with another half-line, midway through the passage, mirroring both the consonant and vowel usage and the rhythm of the initial question.

**One but painted thus**

This not only provides a mid-point in the development of the sonic pattern from the breathless "Where is Posthumus?" to the agitated staccato of "What's the matter?", but also deploys the drama of the present crisis to pre-figure the further torments that will later ensue. After suffering the loss of her love to betrayal, and evading the death he has ordered, she is next to undergo the apparent discovery of that lover lying dead beside her: a corpse which is in fact that of her decapitated enemy disguised in Posthumus' clothing: "one but painted thus". The technique of prioritising a phrase for the conflux of phonemes that it encapsulates, then exploring that conflux through an array of alliterative and assonant patterns throughout the speech, is one that recurs throughout *The Tempest* and is repeatedly a subject of attention in the practice laboratories.

From the initial laboratories and the scholarly research represented in this thesis, with particular reference to McDonald's work, a proposed method of 'sonic analysis' was developed as a guide to identifying and prioritising auditory patterns in the verse.

1. Patterns of assonance, alliteration and consonance are the most readily identifiable auricular patterns. Generally, a pattern may be deemed to occur if observed across up to four adjacent words. Often, the use of rhetorical figures mark the presence of such a device, however detailed technical knowledge of the rhetorical devices and their structures is not necessary. Proximity of sounds is a more important guide.
2. Next, the dominating phonemes in those patterns are considered to see if they form part of a broader pattern across the whole speech.
3. Identification of sound *clusters*. This is an extension of the first step and is partly subjective, seeking not *repetitions* of sounds but confluences of apparently *related* sounds. The relationship may be in similarity, for example a clustering of /ow/ sounds with /ah/ sounds, or the relationship may be formed through a nexus word that contains the two sounds forced together. For example, a passage containing the word *wicked*, may then draw other words that contain either /k/ phoneme or the /d/ into an auricular pattern.
4. The recurring bass note. This is where consideration of sense and metrical stress, deliberately delayed thus far, may begin to feed in to the analysis, as well as looking for keywords across an entire speech, which as a group have an assonant or consonant relationship.
5. Theme and variation. Again, this is subjective, but it also begins the shift from observing sounds patterns, outlined in the four points above, to consideration of such patterns and their inter-relationship. It may help to begin prioritising the relative importance of the patterns observed. For example, the theme and variation pattern observed in the sample speech above: a cluster of sounds established in the arresting opening declaration: "Where is Posthumus?" followed by a fracturing and varying of those sounds in the ensuing lines.

Only after this auricular map has been marked up, is the full range of metrical variation and irregularity considered. Although iambic pentameter is, like most English verse forms, largely a stress-metre, Shakespeare is frequently eager to support the stress metre with sympathetic syllable length and corresponding vowel weight. This fact is often

partially obscured by modern pronunciation and spelling. Consider a straightforward line from early-mid verse.

If we / are markt / to dye, / we are / enow (Hv.IV.2.457)

The stress-pattern is regular and throughout, the metrical stress is supported by relative syllable weight. In each of the five feet, the unstressed syllable is also of lighter weight than the stressed one. This effect was heightened in the freer pronunciation rules of Original Pronunciation, which invited alteration to pronunciation to suit sonic placement. (Meier, 2014: 9) Thus, “are” has the freedom to shorten almost to “r”, the vowel phoneme in “to” was either shortened, heading towards the pure lower-case sound /o/ of its earlier pronunciation in Middle English or perhaps omitted altogether, abbreviating the word to “t” and a similar contraction can be expected on the seventh word “we”.

In the late verse especially, the juxtaposing of vowel weights against the iambic pulse commonly serves to disrupt the metre to contrapuntal effect. This has the effect not only of creating a more complex and variety-filled rhythm, but of heightening the significance of words in which sonic stress (sound-weight), metrical stress and sense stress come together. The purpose here is in part for the speaker to encounter those impacts *in that order*. The sonic weight distribution informs the speaker’s sense of the metrical irregularities and the shifting rhythms they produce.

Phase 3 of the practice laboratories was an experiment in presenting such a marked-up text to an actor. Haig’s position in relation to the research was a marginal connection. She had demonstrated a knowledge of and interest in the issues faced by the actor working on Shakespeare, has performed Shakespeare in professional contexts, and participated in several of the preliminary practice-dialogue workshops that form part of this study. To that extent, she was aware of focus on encountering a printed text as sound score and the search for a somatic response to those sounds. She was sympathetic to the approach, but its details were unfamiliar to her prior to being presented with the ‘marked-up’ text.

### **Use of a First Folio Transcription**

It was notable in the early experiments that the automatism of perception that Shklovski describes above, could be seen in the participants’ tendency to use punctuation to form over-arching phrases, and instinctively apply an inflection that they supposed assisted them to ‘make sense’ of the line. In response, an exercise was developed for re-

orienting the participants to viewing a printed text as a ‘sound-score’ as a means of ‘deautomatizing’ the actor’s experience of reading aloud, using the opening stanza of *The Canterbury Tales*.<sup>7</sup> The key to the success of this exercise, it seemed, was the fact that while all the individual letters were familiar to the reader, the letter-combinations (complete words) mostly were not. When attempting to extend this exercise to passages from Shakespeare, the more familiar letter-combinations immediately triggered the automatized reading response. Once triggered, the automatized response was largely impervious to a variety of cues and instructions to preserve the experience of ‘sound-reading’. Use of First Folio transcriptions began as a strategy for extending the deautomatized experience into the encounter with Shakespeare.

First Folio transcriptions provide several features useful to this study. Arcane, inconsistent, phonetic spellings give the texts an ‘unfamiliar’ feel. Such unfamiliar (and varied) spellings provide a tangible, constant reminder that the text being explored is, despite its printed form, primarily an aural text. Phonetic spellings serve primarily to heighten awareness of the full sonic range of a word. The implied diphthong is potentially much broader for example in First Folio spelling “sowre”, than in the modern “sour”. Even in cases when the arcane spelling does not suggest a particular difference in phonation, its mere unfamiliarity invites a process of ‘re-acquaintance’ with the word. It has the effect of expanding onomatopoeic possibilities. “Magicke” and “Musicke” for example seem to drift and linger in the mouth and are freighted with richer connotation than their modern-spelling counterparts. Irregular capitalisation of key words has a similar effect.

In the following example, attendance to First Folio spelling invites a reconsideration of a line’s sonic structure. Mesmerised by Ariel’s musical revelation of the supposed transmutation of his father’s mortal remains at the bottom of the ocean, the grief-stricken Ferdinand utters the line:

The ditty does remember my drowned father. (I.ii.534)

A standard reading of the modern spelling requires a trotting rhythm of short vowel sounds before resting on the elongated vowel sounds of “drowned father”; effectively resulting in the omission of a stress on “does”, creating a contrast with the double-stress (spondee) in the fifth foot, subtly shifting the speaker’s focus away from the song and its effect and on to the bereavement itself.

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<sup>7</sup> A description of this exercise is provided in Appendix II on page 280.

. # . . . # . . # . .  
The dit/ty does / remem/ber my /**drowned fa**/ther

Repeatedly in *The Tempest*, however, the word “does” is printed in the first Folio as “do’s” providing a visual suggestion of a pronunciation which does not make a distinction between the vowel phoneme employed in the first- and second-person singular case, ‘do’ and the third-person case ‘does/do’s’. The radical difference in sound weight between the modern (short) ‘does’ and the First-Folio-implied ‘doos’ alters the rhythmic emphasis of the line; an alteration which would have been compounded in Original Pronunciation (see next section) by the shorter sound of ‘my’ – /mi/.

The **Dit**/ty **do**’s / remem/ber my **drown**’d /father

The implication is that the line as written was balanced on an internal near-*assonance* between “do’s” and “drowned”, accentuating the metrical stress position of the word “do’s”, complimenting the alliteration on *d* to link “ditty does” with “drowned father” more tightly, and requiring a slight holding up of “ditty” to deliver the lengthened “do’s”. Under these conditions the light, clipped trotting rhythm the modern speaker may perceive in the first part of the line evaporates, replaced by an even, balanced rhythm between the two halves of the line to create a tolling effect.

The richer auricular patterning revealed by First Folio spellings also provides a clue to unpacking the word that may be thought the most emotionally problematic: “ditty”. Its modern denotation as a light or even trite song, seemingly supported by an onomatopoetic effect, through its tripping, tip-of-the-tongue phonation, is not only discounted by recalling what is signified, according to its established meaning at the time of writing (which related to the lyric of the song as opposed to its tune) but also by its sonic (alliterative) connection to the dominating *assonance* effect: “ditty/do’s ... drown’d”: an effect highlighted by the capitalisation of the *d*.

The most frequently maligned aspect of the First Folio printing of the texts—its excessive and inconsistent punctuation—is also a source of interest in the practice laboratories and is largely retained in the texts used. The reduction in periods and increased use of commas and semi-colons disrupts the speaker’s desire to lean on punctuation in order to rationalise the statement. Elizabethan punctuation may generally be thought of as rhetorical rather than grammatical: a possible indication, like the inconsistent spellings of the period, of how the Elizabethans ‘heard’ phrase and cadence. Percy Simpson attempted to refute the accusation of inconsistency of First Folio punctuation—by assembling a manual of what he perceived to be the different usages

(Simpson, 1911). In so doing he identified no less than twenty different categories of comma, which might indeed be taken as much to be evidence against his case as in favour of it. However, for actors, such bewildering analytical detail is not only unhelpful (of course) but also, in fact unnecessary to forming a new and more intuitive, flexible relationship to punctuation.

Simpson suggested that the use of commas in the First Folio, especially in the case of the generally “clean” and “careful” (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: xi) texts prepared by the scrivener Ralph Crane, such as that for *The Tempest*, may amount to a “stage-direction” for delivery, pace and inflection. This is a speculation that was for a time adopted by William Poel and has been occasionally entertained by dedicated Shakespeareans ever since. This study prefers to frame attention to punctuation as stimulation to contemplate the rhythmic possibilities of a passage and as a further prompt to *defamiliarize* the function of language in the text. Whether such sound indications were in Shakespeare’s ‘mind’s-ear’ as he composed for his troupe of intimately familiar colleague-actors, anticipating their rhythms and voices, or whether the text was drawn from a transcription of a prompt-copy, and thus in part represents how Ralph Crane or the prompt-keeper actually heard the King’s Men speak the text, is immaterial to the enquiry here.

### **Issues Arising from Original Pronunciation**

An enquiry based on the identification of sonic patterns in Early Modern English poetry, especially patterns of assonance and alliteration, should consider the fact that English sounded very different at the time of writing. The focus in this study is on relationships between *patterns* of sounds—sets of identical or similar phonemes in relation to other sets—and the speaker’s psycho-somatic response to such patterns of phoneme clusters. Thus, the phenomenon of sounds that are the same or similar *to each other*, and how a shift in mood is inculcated when such patterns of repetition are disrupted, is the primary interest here; as distinct from the question of innate qualities or meanings supposed to be possessed by any one phoneme. It is for this reason that, although utterly absorbed in language as a sonic phenomenon, this study makes no comment on the question of an individual actor’s dialect accent. Any actor’s natural accent may be taken as a suitable tool with which to investigate patterns of sound in the language. Indeed, the early practice-experiments in sensitising the actor to language as sonic artefact were deliberately conducted among a group of actors working in a wide range of natural

accents. The only stipulation was that the full *range* of phonemes suggested by the language be observed and encountered.

For similar reasons, the work has no direct recourse to contemporary Received Pronunciation, or its differences with Early Modern English pronunciation, now commonly referred to in the context of Shakespeare as Original Pronunciation. Original Pronunciation has enjoyed a resurgence of interest in recent years, led by the linguist David Crystal, and as a result, dictionaries (Crystal, 2016), manuals (Meier) and recorded samples (Crystal, 2012) of Original Pronunciation as estimated by Crystal are now readily available. Knowledge of this work has informed the approach taken in the practice research laboratories insofar as it suggests a fundamental alteration to the weight, stress and length of individual words. Additionally, reference is made to Original Pronunciation in cases where the alteration to modern enunciation may have resulted in the obscuration of a pattern of assonance or alliteration.

In the following passage, for example, a Modern British pronunciation may indicate a pattern of interest: an idiosyncratic, apparently obsessive, buried half-rhyme on the /aw/ phoneme, in the penultimate word of four successive lines.

(Of thee my deere one; thee my **daughter**) who  
Art ignorant of what thou art. **naught** knowing  
Of whence I am: nor that I am **more** better  
Then *Prospero*, Master of a full **poore** cell (I.ii.101-4)

However, Paul Meier, in his manual of David Crystal's precepts for pronunciation, indicates that "daughter" should be considered part of the "'bath'-set" in Original Pronunciation, with a phonetic spelling of [dɑ:tə] which for the purposes of this work is marked as

D/ah/ter

And that naught would have been its rhyme

N/ah/t

Though the vowel phoneme in "poor" and "more" in Original Pronunciation was closer to its Modern British equivalent, the pronunciation of both words was significantly altered by the dependence of Original Pronunciation of the rhotic /r/ after vowel sounds.

M/aw//r/e

P/aw//r/e

In such a case as this then, the apparently obsessive quadruple rhyme scheme is, it appears, not an intended effect. However, there is other evidence of extended assonance patterning in this passage, confirming that a significant sonic cluster of related long-vowel sounds is indeed a factor. The /ah/ phoneme itself is a recurring pattern in the relevant lines. Heard in Original Pronunciation, the first couplet would in fact have evinced an even more obsessive and tightly contained pattern of assonance.

(Of thee my deere one; thee my **daughter**) who  
Art ignorant of what thou **art. naught** knowing

Moreover, as developed in the practice laboratory workshop on the sonic relationship between Miranda and Prospero, both the /ah/ and /aw/ phonemes form part of a larger pattern of assonance and dissonance throughout the entire passage.

## Practice Laboratory

### “Ye Elves of hills”

One of the first practice laboratories conducted on Prospero’s text was focused on identifying what sonic patterns in the speech may have prompted the hypothesis about its mood and meaning speculated in our earliest discussion and recounted in the Introduction.

**Hurrell:** I started to wonder whether there was an unusually high concentration of hard /v/ sounds and /z/ sounds in this speech. I think it began with just the fact that “elves” was such a strikingly odd choice of words here, because it seemed to connote something kind of sweet and benign, or at least quaint and therefore inappropriate to the image-system that follows. And also because the word “Jove’s”, which is unexpected and occurs in a climactic moment, contains that same /vz/ combination. So, what I then did was perform a kind of random sample test on other passages from Shakespeare, to see if there was any support for my instinct that the frequency of /v/ and /z/ sounds in the speech was unusually high. And those samples indicated that that was correct; there was a significantly higher ratio of the occurrence of those sounds in the speech. Then I became interested in the idea that the production of those sounds involves the catching of the breath low in the throat—they force the speaker to close the breath off low, creating a slight suffocating effect. So I think the task initially, and this is the technique throughout, is in order to bring out that sound pattern, we’ll over-accentuate those sounds when they occur. And when I talk about over-accentuating what I’m particularly interested in is over-accentuating the muscle effort involved in the face, throat and body required to make those sounds.

**McArthur:** *Reads/sounds:*

Ye Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,  
And ye that on the sands with printless foot  
Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him  
When he comess back; you demi-puppets that  
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,  
Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime  
Is to make midnight mushrumps, that rejoice  
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,  
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm’d  
The noontide sun, call’d forth the mutinous winds,

And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault  
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire and rifted Jove's stout oak  
With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory  
Have I made shake and by the spurs pluck'd up  
The pine and cedar: graves at my command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art.

**McArthur:** I think that attention to the /v/ and /z/, begins to release something about Prospero that you wouldn't get by just attending to the words in a lexical way alone. Sonically it seems much more sardonically twisted, with a greater burden and effort and sense of mission in it: a sense of reluctant mission if you like that in fact he's loved the /v/ and /z/ and those dark, back of the throat feelings that seem to be associated with enunciating the necromantic ideas. Those sounds and feelings have a grip on him and it's that grip that he is releasing over the course of the speech. And so actually when you get me to emphasise those sounds I think it takes me there, without being 'rhetorical' because there's an emotional sonic purpose for it, and if you can convey it in the right way then audiences get that. It's not rhetorical; it's a communication of the sensation, the emotional connection to that necromantic darkness and power and the struggle to let go of it.

**Hurrell:** It lies in the effort involved in making certain sounds. To really enunciate the word "elves" is quite difficult, because it has a series of consonants without the space of vowels in between to make them easier to say. It's not 'eleven' for example it's "elves" - which involves a real constriction of the throat to make that sound. That intrigued me; the notion that while in lexical terms, what an elf might be is not necessarily a particularly dark thought—actually it sounds rather quaint—whereas something about the *sound* of "Elves" seemed a striking way to start the speech. The connotations of the *sound* "elves" were of more interest, than whatever we think we know about the connotations of the concept of 'elf'.

So, we take the notion that that set of closed-off, dark, thick consonant sounds that we've identified is an underlying recurring theme. I'm not suggesting they occur in every line but rather assuming the presence of a device of establishing the sonic theme in the opening, and referring back to it at key moments later, especially in the climax.

But what I want to look at next are the local patterns of sound as we go along: the occurrences of alliteration and assonance. So, the first is the repeated hissing of the sibilant *s*. We should perhaps make an explicit distinction here between the *s* that makes a /z/ sound, as in "elves" and those which make a sibilant /ss/ sound, as in "brooks".

**McArthur:** So that gives us, for example:

Ye Elves of hills, brookS, Standing lakeS and groves,  
And ye that on the Sands with printleSS foot

And there seem to be related sounds that form a cluster pattern with the sibilant *s*, the *k* of “brooks” and “lakes”, and the *t* of “standing” and “printless”

**Hurrell:** Great. So, could you go through some of the speech again, this time attending to that second sound cluster—and again it’s the same task: simply heightening the muscular effort involved in making that particular sound. That’s key—not just thinking in terms of accentuating the sound, but accentuating the muscle recruitment involved in its production.

*McArthur demonstrates*

**McArthur:** Great. Obviously there’s a danger in what I’m asking of you here: that it starts to become self-parodic in observing the letters of which words are constructed, but the clue to the presence of a meaningful pattern is when they’re in close proximity to each other. I think one doesn’t put “Brooks, standing lakes” together into a phrase unless the effect is deliberately intended, and certainly “sour-riplets... bites” and other constructions that have no particular grammatical merit like “strong-bas’d” but create a proximate cluster of the ‘st’ sound.

**Hurrell:** What was interesting, from a purely vocal standpoint in that last reading was how it completely altered the natural pitch that you were using—the register of the voice. The focus on the thick /v/z/ sounds in the previous reading engaged the bass-register, whereas the focus on the *k/s/t* cluster moved the voice much more often into the middle and higher registers.

**McArthur:** Everything that we’re speaking of drops away after “this rough magic I hear abjure”. The speech suddenly abjures these clusters: both of the sound systems we’ve identified drop away and there’s a complete change. He suddenly goes open-throated:

and, when I have required  
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,  
To work mine end upon their senses that  
This airy charm is for,

Those sounds are gone, because they’re no longer psychologically required. Conjuring that music is not a torture or something with an emotional difficulty in it. It’s even a comfort to conjure up that music. And so the clusters that were there are now gone, and the verse form changes too. Metrically it seems more even and peaceful. The *v*’s are there, but they are soft *v*’s now aren’t they?

**Hurrell:** That’s right. We need to draw an explicit phonetic distinction between the hard *v* and the soft *v*, and as you say he switches to the soft *v* after the abjuration. The importance and centrality of that key word “heavenly” with its soft *v*, in contrast to the hard *v* “elves”, really stakes the ground, and the fact that it’s surrounded by additional ones: “have” and “even” confirms its sonic significance.

**McArthur:** Yes, those soft *v*'s are an altered resonance of the established musical theme embodied in 'elves'. These sounds represent a psychological landscape with lots and lots of clues.

**Clip 1.** "Ye Elves of hills..." – Practice laboratory: sounding the consonant clusters. (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25635/> or scan the QR code.)



**McArthur:** I'm only following the sonic instruction from what I am seeing there; I am not trying to perform anything. But following the sonic instruction certainly makes me feel a *persona*, a really, very full *persona*.

**Hurrell:** I think that's evident listening to you too, and I think the idea of different kinds of efforts is a useful way of thinking about it. It sounded like a tool of embodied text analysis or something. You can identify the shape of a character experience in a somatic way by following this path.

*The discussion continues: Whereas up until now we've focussed on the varying weight of consonants, questions of rhythm and tempo will inevitably lead us towards the vowels. So we work with a fresh version of the text, marked up metrically rather than auricularly. Considering rhythm in relation to vowel tones, we note that although as a stress beat "Ye Elves of hills..." is regular, the thickness of the y sound and length of the e sound potentially indicate that the iamb is not as straightforwardly regular as an iamb like 'to be' or in this case, "of hills". This passage is somewhat more metrically regular than much of the material in Act I: 11 beat lines are rarer. Implied elisions are occasionally used to keep the beat regular, creating the sense of for example: "mut'nous winds" and possibly "strong/bass'd prom/on'trie".*

**Hurrell:** The question I want to pose now is, does the metrical come together with relative sonic weights to suggest tempo indications?

*Discussion: Identifying the inverted and double-stressed feet, as well as putative 'omitted' stresses, which create a skipping effect to lead up to and land more heavily on the strongly-stressed ones. (Double stressed metrical feet were marked in bold, omitted stress ones in italics).*

Ye Elves / of hills, / **brooks, stand**/ing lakes /and groves,  
And ye / *that on* /the sands /with print/less foot  
Do chase /*the ebb*/ing Nep/*tune* and /do fly /him  
When he /**comes back**; / **you de**/mi-pup/pets that  
By moon/shine do /the green/ **sour ring**/lets make,  
*Whereof*/ the ewe /**not bites**/, and **you** /**whose pas**/time  
**Is to** / **make mid**/night mush/rumps, that /rejoice  
To hear /the sol/emn cur/few; **by** /**whose aid**,  
**Weak mas**/ters though /ye be,/ I have /bedimm'd  
The noon/**tide sun**,/ **call'd forth** /the muti/nous winds,  
And 'twixt /the green /**sea** and/ the azu/red vault

Set roar/ing war/: to the /**dread ratt**/ling thun/der  
 Have I /**giv'n fire**/ and rift/ed Jove's/ **stout oak**  
 With his /**own bolt**/; the strong-/**based prom**/ontory  
 Have I /**made shake** /and by /the spurs /**pluck'd up**  
 The pine/ and ce/dar: graves /at my /command  
 Have waked /**their sleep**/ers, oped, /and let / 'em forth  
 By my /**so po**/tent art./ **But this** /**rough mag**/ic  
 I here /abjure, /and, when /I have /required  
**Some heav**/enly /**music**, /which ev/en now /I do,  
 To work /mine end /upon /their sens/es that  
 This ai/ry charm/ is for, /I'll break /my staff,  
**Bury** /it cert/ain fath/oms in /the earth,  
 And dee/per than/ did ev/er plum/met sound  
 I'll drown my book.

*Discussion of multi-stressed monosyllabic passages causing a marked deceleration for example: “**By my /so po**/tent art./ **But this** /**rough mag**/ic”.*

**Clip 2.** “Ye Elves of hills...” – Practice laboratory: Sounding the rhythm patterns.  
 (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25636/> or scan the QR code.)



**Hurrell:** In terms of pure metricality, it's not that there is particularly great variety and complexity but rather a single rhythmic device repeated obsessively to create a particular effect, which is the combination of a stress omission or inversion and a double-stress, to create a rolling rhythm: a repeated pattern of running-up and then pounding of the drum.

STRESS STRESS short short short STRESS STRESS

***Discussion:** Asking whether and when the stress clusters coincide with the auricular clusters.*

**Clip 3.** “Ye Elves of hills...” – Practice laboratory: sound and rhythm.  
 (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25637/> or scan the QR code.)



**McArthur:** They do correlate as you'd expect. The rhythmic structure is helpful, but it's the pursuit of the sonic clusters that gives you a much deeper knowledge of the psychological terrain. Not that it all has to be used or deliberately 'delivered'.

**Hurrell:** That's right, once you've observed it and formed a relationship to it, you can trust that it's psychic impact will be a factor. My sense is that there is something psychologically 'grandiose' in this rolling rhythm. There's something aggressive about a rolling rhythm.

**McArthur:** There's a strong force in it certainly. As you say, this is one of the very few times we see him on his own, and I think you get a look into his head. You *can* choose to play it just as an incantation. But what is being communicated is not just what the Magus has done, but through the sound structures, what his experience of doing it has been and how that has created a certain cast of mind. The way you have to make certain strongly placed sounds by working into the darker areas of the mouth structures, and then to release them, is designed to tell you something of the mental structure of the man.

**Reflection:** *Trying to make meaning of metricality in and of itself is reductive, but it informs tempo variations, and this relates to how it intersects with the sonic weights of the vowels. The imagery at the start of this speech very often appears at first glance to be quaint and cheerful: elves in the forest, sea-sprites frolicking in the surf, but it has a darkening undertow that is hinted at in the image itself, and strongly supported in sound and rhythm. The "elves" line unspools to identify many, many elves, which gives a subtle menace to the image, and similarly the placement of "...ebbing Neptune and do fly him" suggests an overwhelming engulfing force, of which the spirits are fearful, and by implication locates Prospero's self-image as Neptune's equal. The first part of this speech consists of nine lines of phrases that lead, finally to the true subject of the sentence, Prospero. And it is this structure, imagery and sounding which expresses Prospero's troubling grandiosity.*

*There is the meaning of the images, the metrical placement of those images, but underneath all of that it is the sonic expression that expresses the mindscape generating those images. The suffocation involved in the making of the darker v/j/z sounds in the bass-line, if related, as we have done here, to the muscular effortful-ness of making such sounds, suggests that the speech-act itself, more than the content of any one image or set of images, is communicating the suffocating costliness to the individual of exerting mastery over the supernatural world.*

## Chapter Two

### *The Tempest* – A Historical Perspective on Performance

As Anne Barton's remarks (see page 18) on the apparently secretive nature of the play suggest, *The Tempest* has presented a unique challenge to criticism and production—and continues to do so. In a way that is not true for any other play, its intended meaning is unclear: a site for speculation. As Barton goes on to observe, this ambiguity has the effect of making equally welcome an eclectic range of readings (Barton, 1996: 22). Read as a literary and performance text, the comfort it gives to a plurality of interpretative responses may be not merely welcome but a locus of its fascination and power. As an acting text however, this ambiguity poses an unwelcome challenge. The question of Shakespeare's intentions—the way in which the play, and specifically the figure of Prospero, may have been seen and understood by its original audience—takes on a greater importance. To what extent does the pattern of secretiveness that Barton observes in Shakespeare's last play represent a true contrast to “earlier plays [in which] Shakespeare had been delighted to clarify and explain” (Barton, 1996: 13)? Or is such ambiguity a function of a loss of the cultural context Shakespeare's original audience would have brought to the first encounters with the play?

#### **A Fashionable Play at the Time of Writing**

*The Tempest*'s composition can be dated with unusual precision. Documentary evidence confirms that it was performed at court in November 1611, and that Shakespeare's writing was influenced by reports of the survivors of a wrecked ship bound for Virginia, which circulated in London in late 1610 (Vaughan, 2008). Unlike the roughly contemporaneous *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Cymbeline*, there is no surviving evidence that *The Tempest* was performed at the outdoor Globe Playhouse. The play's success at the indoor Blackfriars theatre, however, was prominently referenced in the preface to the Restoration-era Dryden and Davenant adaptation, *The Enchanted Island* (Dryden, D'Avenant, and Shakespeare, 1670). While not conclusive, this supports the internal evidence for *The Tempest* as an early theatrical experiment in exploiting the potential of the Blackfriars theatre for greater intimacy and intensity, more precise visual

effects, and crucially, a heightened auditory audience experience (Sturges, 1987: 74). It is likely Shakespeare's only attempt to write a drama exclusively for an indoor playing space.

There is some evidence to suggest that the play enjoyed intense but limited and brief popularity in the years immediately following its composition. In its form, *The Tempest* bears characteristics of highly fashionable innovation. Its borrowing of theatrical devices from the court masque, including its extensive and narratively integrated use of music, represents an effort to bring fashion in court performance to a wider (though by no means popular) audience. As with the court masque, its structure is informed by the explication of a series of discourses—man in his natural and cultured states, art and magic, sin and repentance, usurpation and authority—rather than by conventions of narrative action. Its conspicuous position as the first play in the First Folio of 1623 also invites speculation about the particular regard in which it may have been held in the years after its composition. Evidence of a second Court performance in 1613 (Kernan, 1995) in the presence of international guests speaks to the success of its first court outing.

### **Ignored for 200 Years**

Keith Sturges provides evidence that while twelve of Shakespeare's plays survived in the King's Men's Blackfriars repertoire into the 1630s, *The Tempest* was not amongst them (Sturges, 1987: 61). If one takes the prominent position in the First Folio to indicate at least that the play was still in the repertoire at the time of publication—by no means certain but not unreasonable—then one may grant its life in the repertoire to have lasted until sometime after 1623 but sometime before 1630. When the playhouses reopened after the Restoration, *The Tempest* returned to the repertoire only in Dryden and Davenant's new and radically altered version of 1667 (Dymkowski, 2000: 8). This adaptation was wildly successful, became ubiquitous and held the stage for as long as Nahum Tate's notorious 'happy-ending' version of *King Lear*—in both cases until Macready revived the original texts in the 1830s (Mack, 2013: 22). Though Garrick and John Kemble made efforts to restore parts of Shakespeare's text in the eighteenth century, the ubiquity of the Dryden and Davenant adaptation through the Restoration, and the huge popularity of the Shadwell musicalized version, ensured the effect of erasing the original from popular consciousness. It is an adaptation that possesses even less of the spirit of the original than the whitewashing that was Tate's *Lear*.

It is worth reflecting on the obscurity this meant for the play. As a piece of dramatic literature, with its masque-like elements, reliance on visual and musical effects, highly-wrought elliptical poetry, and characterisations that range from spare to other-worldly, it is a text that is curiously dependent on accompanying stage practices for its intended dramatic effect to emerge. The chances for survival of a stage-tradition of presenting the plays, recalled from the practices of the King's Men, was dealt a hammer-blow by the closing of the theatres during the Puritan Interregnum, but the impact of this history on *The Tempest* was particularly pronounced. It was never published in Quarto and was likely performed to a relatively exclusive audience at the Blackfriars playhouse only. Crucially this means that although Davenant may have remembered the story of its success at the Blackfriars he may not (born in 1606 and raised outside London) even have seen the play himself. At best he would have had a distant teenage memory. It is possible therefore that the Dryden and Davenant adaptation, which became for 150 years the only commonly-known version of the play, drew on little or no first-hand memory of the original King's Men's performances.

This is speculation, but what is verifiable was that Shakespeare's play was not performed, and little read, for some 200 years after its composition. From the point at which it fell out of the repertoire, it existed only in the few hundred circulating copies of The First Folio. There is no record in the British Library of individual publication of the play until 1770. Through the seventeenth century it was published only in the four Folios, and for most of the eighteenth century only in the even more opulently produced "Complete Works" publications. If the play originally enjoyed a passionate but "coterie" audience in the few years following its composition as Sturges argues,<sup>8</sup> then its readership for the ensuing 200 years was similarly exclusive. No eager playgoer or student of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries kept a tattered copy of *The Tempest* tucked under his arm as he may have *Hamlet*.

By the time the play returned to the stage in the nineteenth century, the intellectual project of the Enlightenment was complete, and entire systems of belief relating to the spirit-world and the occult had been swept away. Thus actors, audiences and readers lost the cultural references and thought-systems through which to fully comprehend the play's narrative and discourses. The Dryden and Davenant adaptation itself provides

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<sup>8</sup> Sturges collates useful evidence about the wealth of the theatre-goers, ticket prices, and intellectual tastes to conceive an audience in the early years of the Blackfriars Theatre both well-heeled and intellectually discerning. This discernment evidently atrophied somewhat by the 1630s as the Blackfriars became more and more a playground of the court and nobility.

documentary evidence for how rapidly changing belief-systems in the seventeenth century played a part in the once-fashionable play's loss of meaning and appeal. In the prologue to *The Enchanted Island*, Dryden specifically cites the serious handling of magic in the play as a key reason for providing a new updated version. He goes so far as to attempt a faint criticism of Shakespeare's pandering to the superstitious popular view of matters occult and supernatural, prevalent during his lifetime.

I must confess 'twas bold, nor would you now,  
That liberty to vulgar Wits allow,  
Which works by Magick supernatural things:  
But Shakespear's pow'r is sacred as a King's.  
Those Legends from old Priest-hood were receiv'd,  
And he then writ, as people then believ'd.

(Dryden, D'Avenant, and Shakespeare, 1670: 17)

Dryden, in his adaptation, radically reduced the scope of Prospero's magic, and was careful to locate what remained within a paradigm of Divine direction and intervention. All references to Prospero's personal struggle with occult knowledge and power are removed, including all of Prospero and Ariel's set-piece speeches of Acts III, IV and V, and with them any sense of inner conflict in the characterisation. By the time the text was restored in the nineteenth century, this conflict had, it seems, become effectively invisible.

## **The Magus**

With his repeated references to love of his books and "the liberal arts", Prospero-as-scholar has often appeared to the modern eye as a forward-thinking proto-scientist. The twentieth-century association of the role with Elizabeth's astrologer John Dee is a manifestation of this view, which involves applying a similarly contemporary reading of Dee's own work and career. As a magus, Prospero was undoubtedly a character conceived in a backward-looking mode, inhabiting what was even at the time of writing a realm of partial-superstition and fantasy, in keeping with the pastoral and pseudo-pagan world of the late romances. The play's back-story explicitly establishes him as a figure from the past: one of the effects of Prospero's isolation on the island is to freeze him in time. He is already twelve years out-of-date with prevailing trends in politics, culture, fashion and thought when the play starts. Whereas Hamlet, a trail-blazing Protestant hero (Curran, 2013), is veritably modelling innovative philosophy and theology before our eyes, and more perhaps than any other protagonist best represents Harold Bloom's notion that Shakespeare invented the human personality as it is understood in modern thought

(Bloom, 1998), the heroes that followed Hamlet drew increasingly on more primitive systems of belief and identity. Othello's helplessness in the face of the manipulation of his base passions undoubtedly draws on euro-centric notions of arcane, oriental culture and world-view to shape the character portrait. Lear and Macbeth, haunted by pagan gods and demons respectively, looked to the ancient past for their personalities. Even Vincentio, Antonio, Pericles and Leontes are trapped in primitive passions, rendering them, as Catherine Belsey argues, partially redolent of a cosmic struggle with spiritual virtue that marked the emblematic Mystery Plays of the early Renaissance (Belsey, 1985: 13-23). It is in this tradition that Prospero sits.

As early as 1709, Shakespeare's first editor, Nicholas Rowe was inclined to pass directly from admiration for the play's form and style, to ecstasies over the inventive originality of characterisation he perceived in Caliban, bypassing comment on the play's protagonist altogether (Palmer, 1968: 31). In so doing he was as he himself acknowledges already following a nascent critical tradition,<sup>9</sup> one that continued on throughout the eighteenth century at least. Joseph Warton's thoughts on creation of character in *The Tempest* were similarly focused on Caliban, as were Samuel Johnson's. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, while rhapsodising on the creation of Caliban and Ariel, and even, inexplicably, finding Miranda to be Shakespeare's "favourite character in the play", can find much to admire in Prospero's poetry, without apparently perceiving any interest in his character (Palmer, 1968: 44).

Sturgess takes up Anne Barton's view of Prospero as "opaque", expands the notion to explicitly include an "elusiveness of intent (as opposed to a complexity of motivation)" and sees this aloofness from the audience as part of a dramaturgy for the play in which "design, not narrative, is *The Tempest's* major impulse and its structure is architectural, not dynamic" (Sturgess, 1987: 73). This is indicative of a common critical view, and one that has also informed approaches to performance from the Restoration onwards. The play, it is argued, does without narrative character conflict, indeed without dynamic narrative action at all, in favour of a dramaturgical form that is aesthetic and meditative rather than dramatic. The various approaches to performing the role of Prospero—whether traditional, revisionist or deconstructionist—all represent strategies for accounting for this perceived absent presence at the heart of the play.

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<sup>9</sup> Rowe wrote of Caliban "... one of the finest and most uncommon grotesques that was ever seen. The Observation, which I have been inform'd three very great Men concurr'd in making upon this Part, was extremely just. That Shakespear had not only found out a new character in his Caliban, but had also devis'd and adapted a new manner of Language for that Character."

Into this void has stepped a variety of allegorical impositions, the most popular of which is the idea of Prospero as Shakespeare's self-consciously autobiographical avatar, devised to utter Shakespeare's farewell to the stage, in a manner that signifies Shakespeare's own transcendence of his life's work as a dramatist. The Shakespeare-as-Prospero motif was a literary conceit long before it was a factor in stage interpretation. Dryden and Davenant's Prospero does not speak of the "Insubstantial Pageant" – makes no indulgence-pleading farewell, stages no spirit-masque and indeed makes none of the self-conscious comments about his 'Art' that the original does. Alden Vaughan traces the connection to as early as Gildon's 1710 commentary to Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's complete works, but this is dubious. The reference in question runs only so far as to observe that Shakespeare is the author of the "Cloud capt towers" speech, and that as such his voice and "his" moralizing could be both Prospero and Shakespeare (Vaughan and Vaughan: 16). A more convincing precursor is found in Coleridge who sees Prospero as "the very Shakespeare himself, as it were, of the tempest" (Palmer, 1968: 53-54)—the storm, not the play is what Coleridge has in mind here. In any case the notion was sufficiently well developed for it to colour readings of the play after the original text was restored to the stage in the 1830s, and it grew in popularity through the nineteenth century. A meta-theatrical Prospero offered a neat explanation for the apparently undramatic characterisation. In the context of the secular deification of Shakespeare as the national poet genius, which had developed steadily through the eighteenth century, it permitted the perpetuation of a performance tradition, originating in the Restoration, which saw Prospero as, in Christine Dymkowski's summary: "a quasi-divine figure, exempt from human failings and struggles, and possessing unshakeable wisdom and serenity" (Dymkowski, 2000: 14).

Actors and audiences unsurprisingly came to regard the remote, serene and pious figure Dymkowski describes as an unrewarding exercise in rhetorical skill and stately bearing. By the late nineteenth century, the critical view of the role as an inferior one to Caliban, manifested itself in the play's performance history, with a number of actor-managers preferring to assign themselves the role of Caliban. The idea of Caliban as a suitable vehicle for a leading man survived in vestigial form through to the 1960s, when Richard Burton took the role in a televised version of the play. It seems that both critical study and performance practice has struggled to locate Prospero as a genuine protagonist. If he is a hero, he is bland, saintly, and the play is to be read as a cipher, in a similar manner to readings of the Duke in *Measure for Measure* as a Christ-like measurer of men.

Only with the gradual rediscovery of a dark side for Prospero in the twentieth century, has he begun again to be seen as a show-case role for major actors.

Faint rumblings of disruption to the received view of Prospero in both performance and criticism emerged sporadically throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The earliest sign of a break in the critical consensus came in the form of Lytton Strachey's remark in his 1906 essay which is better known for his rash declaration that the last plays reveal a Shakespeare who had lost interest in the work of the dramatist, along with almost all pursuits other than that of "a new faultless lyric, or a new, unimagined rhythmical effect, or a grand and mystic speech" (Strachey, 1922: 64). Dispensing rapidly with the sentimental notion of Prospero as an embodiment of Shakespeare, he sees in Prospero "an unpleasantly crusty personage.. self-opinionated and sour". This is scarcely the exposé of a conflicted and rage-filled personality that was to emerge in the second half of the twentieth century, but it marks a significant puncturing of the critical hegemony.

### **Theorising the Saintly Theurgist**

Strachey's assertions about Shakespeare's apparent loss of interest in the conventions of narrative tension and character psychology had far more impact than his assessment of Prospero. In his 1954 Arden edition of the play Frank Kermode located Prospero as a "holy adept", with recourse to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim's 16<sup>th</sup> century defence of theurgical practice as the "translation of merit into power" through the "the disciplined exercise of virtuous knowledge" (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: xlvi). In so doing, he provided a theoretical substantiation to a general view of the character on stage that had persisted for over a hundred years. Locating him in the tradition of Agrippa reinforced the notion of Prospero's remote purity. Kermode directly and simply characterises the traits of Sycorax and Prospero as representatives of two distinct kinds of magician. Sycorax is a goetist—base, evil; a mere commander of demons (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: xl). Prospero, on the other hand, is a theurgist, whose art is to achieve supremacy over the natural world by holy magic. The Neoplatonic mage studies the harmonic relationship of the elementary, celestial and intellectual worlds, and conceives it:

in no way irrational that it should be possible for us to ascend by the same degrees through each World to the same very original world itself, the Maker of all things

and First Cause from whence all things are, and proceed... (Von Nettesheim, 1992: 37-38)

Such a reading offers no help in accounting for Prospero's aggression and ambivalence. While Kermode permits a Prospero who is "irascible" (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: xliii) and "like Adam, fell from his kingdom by an inordinate thirst for knowledge" (ibid: li) this scarcely accounts for his capacity to fall into uncontrolled bouts of violent rage, nor for his grandiloquent boasting, at the play's climax, of magical powers that explicitly include necromancy.

Indeed, Kermode proceeds to rely upon similar assumptions to those of Sturgess and numerous other scholars of *The Tempest*; namely that Shakespeare's design in the play is something other than dramatic: architectural, philosophical or aesthetic. This explanation of Prospero's singular fit of rage at Caliban's imminent, and comically ineffectual, rebellion, typifies the problems presented by such readings:

The apparently unnecessary perturbation of Prospero at the thought of Caliban may be a point at which an oddly pedantic concern for classical structure causes it to force its way through the surface of the play. (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: lxxv)

Kermode cites this manufactured "perturbation" in Prospero as merely a technical requirement to ensure the delivery of the epitasis required by classical five-act structure to which Shakespeare was apparently slavishly wedded. Kermode goes on to make a similarly dubious claim for Ariel's intervention in Act V to persuade Prospero to forgive his enemies. Kermode seems to argue that we should not allow dramatic action that indicates real moral conflict in Prospero to disrupt an image of him as a serene, iconic figure, beyond serious reproach and therefore beyond dramatic interest.

### **Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa**

Frances Yates expanded substantially on Kermode's locating of Prospero within the Agrippan tradition of Neoplatonists, through work on both the cultural and intellectual role of occult thought in the Renaissance (Yates, 1979), and on literary analysis of Shakespeare's last plays (Yates, 1975). She goes so far as to suggest that it is Agrippa's book *de occulta philosophia* from which Prospero is working when he summons good spirits such as Ariel (Yates, 1979: 160). In order for Prospero to qualify as a religious theurgist in Agrippa's terms, he must possess three attributes: charitableness of intent, proto-scientific inclination in his study, and moral purity. Consideration must be given to

whether Prospero demonstrates these attributes, but also to whether qualification as a theurgist necessarily resolves him into a theatrical figure of unambiguous spiritual and moral goodness, as both eighteenth and nineteenth-century stage practices and twentieth-century scholarship prior to post-colonial readings, have repeatedly claimed.

Yates herself frequently acknowledges the ambiguous moral position of the theurgist. She points out that Agrippa claimed for himself a deep evangelical fervour and humility and was adamant that such prayerful humility was central to theurgical practice.

There is no other key to knowledge, says this chapter, but the word of God. The writer of Ecclesiastes was right when he said that all learning is vanity. We must confess our ignorance and think of ourselves as asses. (Yates, 1979: 42)

The sentiment “all learning is vanity” could scarcely be further from Prospero’s apparent position at the start of the play and by the climax he is positively mocking God when he boasts of his ability to rip “Jove’s Stout Oak” out of the earth’s crust. We experience the terrifying destruction of the storm, and then hear Miranda’s accusation that it is Prospero’s doing and that people have indeed perished as a result, well before we hear his reassurance that “there’s no harm done”. At this point the audience has no evidence to corroborate Prospero’s claim—indeed he first lists the crimes of his “enemies” and his justification for revenge. When the extended scene with Ariel confirms that he has in fact ordered the safety of those on the ship, it is constantly clouded by Prospero’s silence on what he means to do with them next.

The claims Yates makes for the power and intent of scholarly magic, mirror those that writers such as Agrippa made in defence of their own practices. As D’Orsay Pearson cogently argues, however, in a piece that is substantially a rebuttal to Yates and Kermode, such a defence was not supported by the intellectual mainstream, the political and religious establishment, or the general populace in Agrippa’s lifetime or Shakespeare’s (Pearson, 1974: 253-79). Yates herself tacitly acknowledges as much.

Why did Agrippa in the late sixteenth century have the reputation of being the blackest of black magicians, and conjurer of devils... The fact is that Agrippa, though he had some faithful disciples, was not generally believed to be ‘white’. (Yates, 1979: 64)

The practice of such magic was by no means poles apart from damned black magic practice. As Yates and others have noted, students of Agrippa’s theurgy were acutely aware of the inherent danger of transgressing into the practice of black magic, and the inadvertent calling of evil spirits (Yates, 1975: 95). As Pearson argues, the fact that Ariel is self-evidently not an angel (Pearson, 1974: 255), but an airy spirit of the terrestrial plane—vulnerable to such actions of black magic as Sycorax’s enclosing of him in a pine

tree—indicates that despite his benign onstage persona, he is in fact some kind of demon—or at least a daemon (Gibson and Esra, 2014)—a point Prospero tacitly acknowledges in endearments such as “my tricky spirit”.

Moreover, the kind of contact with angelic spirits claimed by the well-meaning theurgist is demonstrably not that which Shakespeare dramatizes between Prospero and Ariel. Barbara Mowat maps with some precision the way in which Prospero and Ariel’s master-servant relationship diverges from the writings of Agrippa and others on the nature of the theurgist’s position in relation to the spirit world, which is definitively not one of masterly command (Mowat, 1981: 281-303). Rather, according to Agrippa, spirits of their own accord elect to assist a magus who has achieved a supreme level of divine understanding.

The other crucial claim supporting the case for Prospero as holy adept is his moral purity. His obsession with Miranda’s chastity and with securing for her a dynastic marriage which is also a love match, untainted by premarital lust, are frequently cited as proof of his white magical lineage. Such an argument takes little account of Prospero as a conventional father whose reasons for obsessing over the chastity of a girl-child have far more to do with sentiment or patriarchal possessiveness. Moreover, the dramatization of this fixation in the play leans towards the irrational, obsessive, and excessively aggressive. There is something deliberately unsettling about Prospero’s intensity on this matter, and his initially brutal treatment of Ferdinand; so much so that scholars as diverse as A.D. Nuttall and Leslie Fielder have detected an incestuous under-current in Prospero’s fixation (Nuttall, 2007: 368; Fiedler, 1973: 175).

Prospero’s moral purity is also thought to be proven by his supposed role of moral reformer:

Prospero is the good magus as a reforming missionary; he clears the world of his island from the evil magic of the witch; he rewards the good characters and punishes the wicked. He is a just judge, or a virtuous and reforming monarch, who uses his magico-scientific powers for good. (Yates, 1975: 94)

Claims that the play’s narrative depends on Prospero’s benign mission to improve the wicked souls of his rivals necessarily require acceptance of the premise that the story is structured to be one of failure. Ferdinand is put through much reforming hardship, but there is little evidence to suggest that he was ever in need of correction, being a mere child when the original sins against Prospero were perpetrated. Attempts to shape Caliban’s character manifestly fail, despite his perfunctory, terrified pledge at the end of the play. Alonso would at first glance appear to be Prospero’s great triumph of

reformation, but his sins were never clearly marked, and appear to have run no further than taking advantage of a dysfunctional administration in a rival principality, to ensure continued peace (and his own dominance) in the region. Antonio is manifestly unreformed by the end of the play and Sebastian, whose principal sin appears to be idle, impressionable sloth, seems content to return to the role of gentleman of leisure, unaffected by penitence.

Views of Prospero as benevolently engaged in the correction of his fellow-man inevitably hinge, as Pearson observes, on the banquet/Harpy sequence of III.iii. Critics have gone so far as to see a quasi-biblical teaching played out—showing the conspirators the blessings of the last supper (Hunt, 1990: 130), only to rip it away from them, replaced with the torments of awakened conscience in the form of Ariel’s impersonation of the Harpy. Such a reading presumes that Prospero’s intent is, from the beginning, merely to enforce repentance by confronting his enemies with their crimes but as Pearson points out, the text does not support such a benign reading. The condition the conspirators are placed in is not merely one of guilt and repentance, but as the text tells us repeatedly and explicitly, one of desperate madness; a despair which does not fall short of the damnable impulse to suicide.

This is a condition repeatedly inflicted on the court party from the very beginning—even the guiltless Ferdinand is inspired to leap from the ship into the raging waters, making a declaration that suggests he is aware of the danger of damnation that his possibly self-destructive act poses, but that the terror on board ship is such that hell is preferable:

hell is empty  
And all the devils are here. (I.ii.316-7)

One should not set too much store by this brief instance alone however, as the play is equally explicit that the sufferers are, up to a point, relieved from these temporary “tricks of desperation” (I.ii.312). The incident with the Harpy, however, is more problematic for a reading of Prospero as benign law-giver and quasi-divine spiritual corrector. The Harpy spell inculcates in the three conspirators a mental state in which they are at imminent danger of committing acts of damnable self-destruction. Ariel himself perhaps even encourages the suicidal response as inevitable when he says:

I have made you mad;  
And even with such like valour, men hang, and drowne  
Their proper selves (III.iii.341-3)

Alonso himself leaves no doubt about his decision.

Therefore my Sonne I'th Ooze is bedded; and  
I'le seeke him deeper then ere plummet sounded (III.iii.384-5)

Sebastian and Antonio too, in a quite different key, and without even the burgeoning repentance that is taking form in Alonso, appear to commit themselves to death in battle with their spiritual tormenters:

*Seb.* But one feend at a time,  
Ile fight their Legions ore.  
*Ant.* Ile be thy Second.  
*Exeunt.* (III.iii.387-9)

Prospero expresses delight at this mental effect of his art, and Gonzalo affirms that from the viewpoint of the outside observer, it appears that all three are in immediate danger of suicide and damnation.

All three of them are desperate: their great guilt  
(Like poyson given to worke a great time after)  
Now gins to bite the spirits: I doe beseech you  
(That are of suppler joynts) follow them swiftly,  
And hinder them from what this extasie  
May now provoke them to. (III.iii.390-5)

This is the diabolical inverse of Hamlet's sparing of Claudius while at prayer. Hamlet forbears from exacting righteous vengeance against Claudius while on bended knee apparently at sincere prayer, for fear that in such a moment, his sins confessed, he will gain entrance to heaven. Prospero, whose self-image as godly and god-like forbids the enacting of retributory death on his enemies, instead has contrived a method, not only for letting his enemies destroy themselves with their own guilt, but for ensuring their self-damnation in so doing. Whereas Hamlet accepts his doomed fate as a "scourge and minister" Prospero's goal is revealed as nothing more than a self-serving win-win. He will subject his enemies to 'corrective' torture, leaving them to destroy themselves, freeing himself of responsibility by loading the act onto their own "great guilt" and ensuring their continued punishment in the afterlife. Prospero's momentary indulgence in boasting glee is palpable in the glib ease with which he moves on to the other part of his project. He cannot resist dwelling pitilessly on his enemies' ignorance of Ferdinand's survival.

My high charmes work  
And these mine enemies are all knit up  
In their distractions: they are now in my power;  
And in these fits I leave them while I visit  
Young Ferdinand (whom they suppose is drowned)  
And his, and mine lov'd darling. (III.iii.371-6)

## John Dee

The greatest fame of John Dee—as astrologer and adviser to Queen Elizabeth—came and went long before Shakespeare arrived in London. Dee was a student of Agrippa’s occult philosophy and in the latter half of his career increasingly devoted his studies to the language of angels, after claiming to have received communications from them in 1581 (Harkness, 1999). Yates, determined to believe that Shakespeare was a defender of John Dee, goes so far as to see in the character of King Lear a reference to Dee, on the shaky grounds that Edgar’s alter-ego Tom O’Bedlam falsely claims himself to be haunted by demons (Yates, 1979: 156). When writers such as Yates, drawing a line from Prospero’s pronouncements to Agrippa and on to John Dee, conclude that in the play, Shakespeare “chose to glorify a Dee-like magus” (Yates, 1975: 95) they not only ignore Prospero’s obvious evasiveness in revealing his magical intent, as well as the conflicting demonstrations of that magical power, but also the logic of dramatic interest. Shakespeare’s famously multivalent mature characterisations, and his resistance to a firm point of view on virtually any of them, are one of the foundations of the universal enduring admiration for his genius. To claim that Shakespeare chose to “glorify” any figure or type, not only defies the evidence of his dramatic corpus but in the case of *The Tempest*, plausible dramaturgical strategy as well. In a play in which dispersal of status and power amongst the characters is so lopsided as to render all other characters utterly subject to the protagonist, the only potential locus for dramatic conflict is within the mind and personality of the protagonist himself.

A conception of Prospero as an unambiguous glorification of Dee requires us to believe in a Shakespeare who was both unprecedentedly disinterested in the dramatic and determined to engage in the subversively political, for as Yates goes on to describe:

Dee had fallen into deep disfavour after his return from his mysterious continental mission in 1589, and he was completely cast off by James I after his accession. When the old Elizabethan magus appealed to James in 1604 for help in clearing his reputation from charges of conjuring devils, James would have nothing to do with him, in spite of the earnest protest that his art and science were good and virtuous that he had no commerce with evil spirits. The old man... was disgraced in the reign of James and died in great poverty in 1608. (Yates, 1975: 95)

That Shakespeare would presume to confront his audience with a direct opposition to their established biases and beliefs flies in the face of his entire career. Moreover, it denies the highly exposed position of both Shakespeare and the King’s Men, playing to the wealthy gentry at Blackfriars and the powerful nobility at court. The children’s companies had ultimately been thrown out of Blackfriars after falling foul of the censor. Indeed, it

was this circumstance that had eventually led to Burbage finally being able to fulfil his long-held dream of installing his own company in the indoor theatre. The resident playwright in the King's own company of players, who had previously gone to such extensive and detailed lengths to flatter James' self-image as a thinker about the occult not only morally irreproachable but also deeply learned and sophisticated (Paul, 1950), was highly unlikely to write a full-throated glorification of a figure that James had decreed to be beyond the pale only a few years earlier. While that may remain a matter for speculation, the ambivalent portrayal of Prospero's studies, powers, actions and motivations is not.

### ***Doctor Faustus***

Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* of the 1590s was both hugely successful and notorious. Revived repeatedly by the Admiral's Men, revised and revived again in 1602 and published in 1604, it had accumulated a legend surrounding the vivid and terrifying evocation of demons in its performance (Chambers, 1923: Vol. 3, 423–4). As such, *Faustus* was undoubtedly a reference point for *The Tempest's* first audience and Shakespeare both highlighted and exploited the connection. The relationship between Prospero and Faustus has often been commented upon, if under-interrogated, and the play is explicit in its references, not least the etymological connections between the Latin *faustus* and the Italian *prospero* (Brown, 1989: 59). Prospero narrates a history of his life in Milan that evokes Marlowe's opening scene, engaged in secret studies with magic books. Marlowe places the desire for necromantic power (italicised below) at the very moment of transgression: when Faustus declares the natural sciences insufficient to meet his ambition.

Why, Faustus, hast thou not attain'd that end?  
Is not thy common talk found aphorisms?  
Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,  
Whereby whole cities have escap'd the plague,  
And thousand desperate maladies been eas'd?  
Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man.  
*Couldst thou make men to live eternally,  
Or, being dead, raise them to life again,  
Then this profession were to be esteem'd.*  
Physic, farewell!

(Marlowe, 2008: I.i18-27)

Anthony Harris argues that, whatever doubt subsequent scholars have attempted to sow regarding the link between Prospero's boasts of necromancy and the black magic

practice of *goety*, there can be no doubt that Shakespeare's audience, provided repeated cues to regard Prospero as a Faustian figure, understood that his practices placed him in grave danger of damnation (Harris, 1980). The fate of Prospero's soul was a significant source of dramatic tension in Shakespeare's conception of the narrative.

### ***The Alchemist – Subtle***

There was a second and much more recent reference in the minds of the Blackfriars audience watching Prospero, as Sturges points out, in Ben Jonson's satire on magic, *The Alchemist*. That audience likely saw the same actor, Burbage, play the role of a fraudulent magician only a few months previously, on the same intimate, darkened stage:

*The Alchemist*, remaining in the repertory (like *The Tempest* it was played at court in 1613) will inevitably colour not only Burbage's playing but also an audience's perception of Shakespeare's play about a conjurer. Subtle is the other side of the coin – magician as charlatan. He is an illusionist whose art is cheating, not charming and he is exiled from his little empire at the end of the play, not welcomed home in triumph (Sturges, 1987: 75).

As we shall see, Prospero in fact defends himself against charges of Faustian malevolence by pleading his indulgence in mere illusion, obliquely invoking the lesser (comic) transgressions of Subtle: a point underscored by the use of stage illusion apparatus to depict Prospero's powers. Barbara Mowat sees in Prospero not only the marks of the Agrippan magus and the hermetic enchanter, but also the much less rarefied tradition of the street 'jugler' or stage-conjurer and his apprentice servant-boy..

..who hid behind the post and blew wine "miraculously" through the wall by means of a pipe; the boy who allowed himself to be "decapitated" and "healed"; the boy who fetched, who carried, who obediently served his master. (Mowat, 1981: 300)

This is a novel observation which speaks to the earthy humanness of the light, master-servant squabbling between the two. Though Mowat does not make the connection with Subtle drawn by Sturges, her ensuing argument that Shakespeare creates in Prospero a figure who paradoxically represents both a serious magus and a low stage-trickster, mirrors Sturges' finding of antecedents in both Faust and Subtle. Such an argument has the additional appeal of seeming to support a view of the play's meta-theatricality. However, as with productions which have highlighted this—and as Mowat tacitly acknowledges—the meta-theatrical reading is easily over-stated to reductive effect. There is palpably *nothing* fraudulent about Prospero's powers, even when they are deployed for a mere "vanity of my art" such as entertaining the lovers at their betrothal.

## Magus and Illusionist

Blurring the line between these two practices—one with pretensions to the genuinely metaphysical, the other a domain of base deceit—seems to be both Shakespeare’s and, surprisingly, Prospero’s deliberate point. Not only does the theatrical representation of Prospero’s magic draw on the devices of the stage illusionist, but Prospero repeatedly excuses the apparently all-too-real effects of his magic art as mere illusion. The storm itself, Prospero tells us:

I have with such provision in mine Art  
So safely ordered, that there is no soule  
No not so much perdition as an hayre  
Betid to any creature in the vessell  
Which thou heardst cry, which thou saw’st sinke (I.ii.102-6)

An audience may be inclined to mistrust his claims to harmlessness at this point in the play, with no corroborating information yet available, and with only, as Anne Barton points out, the intensely naturalistic portrayal of the destruction of the ship’s party in the preceding scene to judge by (Barton, 1996: 7). Detailed technical terminology about trimming the sails and piloting the ship to survive the storm are used, the dialogue is abrupt and in prose and the stage directions similarly call for effects of theatrical realism:

*Enter Mariners wet* (I.i.49)

Moreover, there is no hint of the storm’s supernatural cause in the first scene. In a play that frequently deploys the device of “Ariel invisible” or “Prospero above”, neither is used here. The audience is intended to engage with the storm as terrifyingly real, then grapple with the shock in the opening line of the next scene, that such an act of God may in fact be a supernatural act, or even little more than a conjurer’s trick. Barton describes the intended effect on the audience as one of finding themselves “cast adrift” (Barton, 1996: 8). This sensation of bewilderment and uncertainty about the laws governing the theatrical performance at hand has a correlative in the audience’s budding relationship to Prospero. The question of whether his words or intentions may be trusted immediately comes into sharp relief. It is a question that would have had the gravest significance for the play’s original audience. Storm-making was infamously an alleged attribute of witchcraft, made famous by James I himself through his prosecution of the North Berwick witches, and subsequent publication of his treatise on witchcraft, *Daemonologie* (1597). Prospero rests the entire claim to the purity of his magic on its merely illusionistic properties, later assuring Miranda that the evidence of her own eyes—that the storm broke up the ship and caused it to sink—is not to be trusted. However, even the ‘illusion’ of a

tempest would have been suspect, casting initial doubt over his claim that no one was hurt.

Later he would have us believe that the tormenting of his enemies through the apparition of the Harpy is similarly merely a terrifying illusion to draw out their repentance; the point is underscored by framing the moment with resort to conjuring tricks in the staging. After the use of a magic chest to cause the banquet to vanish “with a quaint device”, the stage directions suggest that Ariel performs a crude version of the “Levitation Vanish” – a ubiquitous staple of machine-based stage magic that persists to the present day (Formichelli, 2016: 405-30). This is immediately followed both by the masque performed by spirits, which Prospero dismisses as “some vanity of my art” and the mauling of Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban by dogs, which again Prospero would have us discount as merely an illusion performed by spirits, despite the vivid descriptions of physical suffering that both he and Caliban describe.

D’Orsay Pearson makes a compelling case that in the minds of both Shakespeare and his audience including, notably, James I, the theurgist magus was distinguished partly by self-delusion.

Shakespeare’s treatment of Prospero throughout *The Tempest*, the mass of current criticism notwithstanding, is not conditioned by a positive view of the theurgist’s art. On the contrary, his treatment of his protagonist throughout the play is confined by the attitude of both church and state that theurgy is a damnable, unlawful art which is sometimes more dangerous to the practitioner than is the obviously damnable and unlawful practice of goety. (Pearson, 1974: 255)

The danger Pearson speaks of here is the self-delusion of the magus that his actions are morally righteous. In this respect, those who see in Prospero references to Cornelius Agrippa and John Dee are correct, but only in so far as the play represents the commonly-held Jacobean view of such figures. The characterisation of Prospero does not represent a defence of such practices, but rather a depiction of the theurgist as he was seen by orthodox detractors of the art. Pearson cites both James I and Walter Raleigh to demonstrate the prevailing view that the division those such as Agrippa sought to draw between their own pure theurgy, and satanic goety, was a distinction without a difference. Whether the delusion relates to the nature of the spirits the practitioner is in contact with, or to their relationship of control or subjection to such demons, varies according to the observer’s point of view, but the judgment of sinful self-delusion is the point of agreement. By the account of the very scholars who would see Prospero’s magic as unambiguously white and therefore not a site for moral or dramatic conflict, all of the figures regarded as

possible reference points for *The Tempest*'s first audience were held in deep suspicion of moral corruption. Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and John Dee were scarcely held in high regard, while on stage Faustus and Subtle, whether tragic or ridiculous were, by very dint of their magical pretensions, fallen from grace.

### **Post-Colonial Prospero**

In their influential 1985 essay, Peter Barker and Francis Hulme (Drakakis, 1985: 195-208) interrogated the weak foundations of Kermode's claims regarding the formal preoccupations that prompt some of Prospero's key moments of action with the purpose of using them as a site for the construction of their post-colonial reading. While the enormous body of literature that has grown up in support of reading *The Tempest* as a post-colonial critique of European occupational imperialism runs the risk of reading Shakespeare's authorship through the anachronistic lens of twentieth-century liberal values, it represents in part a rediscovery of Prospero's largely-hidden moral corruption. While it is the narrative device of Prospero's 'enslavement' of Caliban, and to a lesser extent Ariel and the sprites, who are viewed as 'natives' of the island that primarily attracts the attention of such readers, it is the uneasy sense of Prospero's disturbing determination to dominate anyone who dares oppose him and retain absolute personal power, as well as the play's undoubted coyness about portraying these characteristics, that make such readings plausible. In such readings, Prospero's authority is derived from colonising oppression and his magic power becomes metaphoric. Such a view restores a Jacobean attitude to Prospero's power as morally suspect, but with a significant distortion. It transforms Prospero's authority from an authentic and innate (even when suspect) facet of his persona, to a mere function; an ill-fitting mantle that he wears with doubtful credibility.

Paul Brown (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985: 48-71) configures Prospero's power to raise the inciting tempest as a capacity for creating the illusion of disruption to social order, and his command over Ariel and Caliban in terms of discourses on slavery and servitude. Jonathan Miller, the first English director to comprehensively pursue a colonialist reading on stage, drew inspiration from Octave Mannoni's study of Madagascar, to find in Prospero an example of the "rather immature personalities flourishing in the colonial situation". In a production that omitted any sense of Ariel's identity as a 'spirit', realising him instead as an "opportunistic black house slave",

Prospero's magic is simply explained as "the superior technology of advanced society" (Berry, 1977: 35).

Such readings provide the opportunity for an arc of self-discovery that goes beyond a mere decision to grant mercy, with all the spiritual self-congratulation that such a gesture of virtue implies. Miller saw his immature Prospero achieving maturity by surrendering power over his slaves. Pathological failing is implied—Miller reduces the breaking of the staff to something analogous with the child passing the age of five—and not surprisingly, Miller's production is the earliest Dymkowski identifies as showing a 'neurotic' Prospero (Dymkowski, 2000: 22). While post-colonial readings on stage have had far less impact on audiences and directors in the United Kingdom than in the United States, Australia and other former colonies, where such readings naturally take on the frisson of national autobiography, and thus lend the play a materialist political relevance that it frequently lacks in the UK, some of the devices of colonialist interpretations have also found currency beyond the strict discursive confines of the readings themselves. Prospero's neurosis is one such imbrication. The possible manifestation of that neurosis in the fractured representation of Prospero's psyche through the play's structural devices and theatrical aesthetic is the topic of Chapter Five.

## Practice Laboratory

### “Foule Conspiracy” - Viewing the Text as a Somatic Sound Score

An early practice dialogue investigated patterns of alliteration and rhythm to interrogate the claim and counter-claim regarding the ‘de-motivated’ nature of Prospero’s outburst in Act IV, scene one (See pages 67 and 77) and McArthur’s past experience of the moment in performance.

**Hurrell:** In Act IV, Prospero cuts short the wedding masque with an abrupt speech of only four lines that begins with “I had forgot the foul conspiracy...” and Ferdinand turns to Miranda and says:

*Fer.* This is strange: your fathers in some passion  
That workes him strongly.  
*Mir.* Never till this day  
Saw I him touch’d with anger, so distemper’d.

Though there’s nothing textual to let the actor work up to a frothing passion, evidently it’s completely apparent to the other characters on stage.

**McArthur:** Well, except there’s just that piece that you quote: just the compression of disorientation in those four lines, which is in the music of it, actually. Here it is, it’s given as an aside:

I had forgot that foule conspiracy  
Of the beast *Calliban*, and his confederates  
Against my life: the minute of their plot  
Is almost come: Well done, avoid: no more.

**Hurrell:** Even when marking it just then, you’re already starting to make a ‘song’, if you will, of that apoplexy rather than playing any sort of naturalistic rage.

**McArthur:** Yes, exactly so. It’s not naturalistic. Shakespeare does give Prospero platforms; he shoots up onto a platform of access to a kind of sound world and feeling-world that’s going on in his head. It’s like a door that can open so easily: it just flips like a tripwire. So, it’s almost as if Prospero is living a parallel life amongst these events that are taking place. Which, of course, emphasises again his aloneness. His music is of course strikingly different from anybody else’s in the play. As you’d expect.

The aside is quite *legato* isn’t it: all one sentence, no commas, long dark sounds: foul conspiracy beast Caliban etc.

**McArthur:** Yes, it’s like spreading black ink.

**Hurrell:** Yes, that's a great image, but really ostensibly, the bit they are cognizant of is just (because the rest is an aside they don't hear) "well done avoid no more". The black ink image is great because it's like a malignant metastasising build-up to then just those three staccato outbursts which can be played greatly impassioned and enraged without becoming incomprehensible.

**McArthur:** Exactly so, exactly. And when you think of all the interpretation of this just being sort of like a kindly grumpy old man, it's absurd.

**Hurrell:** But it's a forgivable decision, I think. Because if you've spent a lifetime acting Shakespeare then you expect that, anywhere else in Shakespeare if I, the actor, am required to have the most impassioned rage of my life, I get 25 lines of soliloquy to work myself up into that passion. And indeed that's what Burbage was accustomed to doing earlier in his career. In the past when we've spoken about what you observed as the apparent sonic, or even psychological, crudity of the Henry V soliloquies and monologues, for example, I think I said to you at the time, that what I discerned in them was that the effect was not being achieved on a level of auricular pattern. It was being achieved, and this with reference to the Joseph Roach book on acting, it was being achieved through rhetoric as a shaping of the passions. So, it has to be 25-odd lines because like the washing machine building up to spin cycle the extended rhetorical exercises build up the passions in the body to culminate in the high point of the outburst. Here, now at the end of the career the philosophy of acting and rhetoric and the relationship between them has evolved considerably. Certainly, if you read the references to what Burbage was like as an actor: protean and changeling-like: able to transform in a flash from one emotional state to another. You can map the way in which the rhetorical construction of imagery in the text is designed to be a tool for prompting those abrupt emotional shifts. And this seems to be the extreme apotheosis of that, where he is now leaning on Burbage's ability to make comprehensible extreme compression of rhetorical tropes and equivalent emotional states. The expectation implied in the writing is that this sonic viscera would precipitate in Burbage that massive alteration in performance from one line to the next. Because that was his facility.

**McArthur:** So, this was leaving behind the previous rules of the strategies of rhetoric in acting, a new development in the form?

**Hurrell:** Yes, I think so, because prior to this, the philosophy of rhetoric suggests that the speaker needs all the accumulation of rhetorical tropes to build up a *persuasion*; a confluence of the passions that would work in the body, but by this time, I'm speculating, Shakespeare had realised that Burbage didn't need that; you could trigger him with very concise, compounded well-chosen phrases or images or, as we are suggesting in this project, sound patterns.

**McArthur:** So the verbal event is not now rhetorical in the old sense, in the grammar school sense, Quintilian kind of sense. It's a rhetoric of an aperture into the psyche: an immediate access to psyche.

**Hurrell:** Yes. This being a First Folio text that in all likelihood was transcribed from a playhouse prompt copy, the stage directions are abbreviated compendiums which describe the overview of the stage action. So that stage direction that you've got immediately preceding the section we've just looked at

*Enter certain Reapers, properly habited: they join with the Nymphs in a graceful dance; towards the end whereof PROSPERO starts suddenly, and speaks; after which, to a strange, hollow, and confused noise, they heavily vanish*

encompasses all the action before that speech of Prospero's and all of the speech itself. The action that the stage direction describes concludes just before Ferdinand says "this is strange", or perhaps the spirits are running off and disappearing as he speaks it. So there is a suggestion from the stage direction, or at least it seems to me that this stage direction is trying to catch the fact that there was something in the first performances, there was a moment of silent 'acting' in those early performances that Burbage did as Prospero. Before he said "I had forgot" there's this piece of silent acting that is described as "he starts suddenly". Thinking about your point about the sound of "foul conspiracy" – in sounding the "foul", the way it lingers darkly, low in the mouth, it's much more about a cold-blooded murderous rage than about a hot-blooded, frothing passion. The material point is that Ferdinand uses the word passion, and of course passion at that time did not have to mean the performance of histrionic emotion that we take it to mean today. Back then it meant he is in some mood and the indication is that that mood moves him in some mysterious incomprehensible way – "strange".<sup>10</sup>

What you said before about the black ink spreading before the change into the percussive staccato of "well done avoid no more"; all of that is completely supported and supportable. We don't have to go with the notion that they don't see everything before "well done avoid no more". They, if you take this stage direction as the indication, would have been aware of all of his moment of speaking regardless of whether the convention is that they can hear the actual content or not. Because they would have stopped looking happily at the dance from the moment he "starts suddenly". There is a physical thing that draws their eye, and they see him as not in a frothing passion but more in a cold, disturbed, murderous rage with all those hard *t*'s and *d*'s- "I had forgot that foul conspiracy of the beast Caliban and his Confederates against my life." It's crunched with tight vowel sounds: "the minute of their plot is almost come."

**McArthur:** Yes, and that's heightened by the fact that "the minute of their plot / is almost come" is spread over two lines. So it's not just:

The minute of their plot is almost come

But

minute of their PLOT...

Is – almost – come.

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<sup>10</sup> From OED on passion: "Any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or moved".

So there are platforms here:

“of the beast Caliban”

“against my life”

“is almost come”

that is the way he’s shaped it.

**Hurrell:** Yes, whereas a conventional or naturalistic reading of the turn of phrase “I had forgot”, give you a notion of ‘my goodness, I’ve forgotten something’; and “the minute has almost come” suggests ‘goodness, look at the time’ but if you break it up as you just did then, what stands out is the repeated iteration of the /st/ sound – “against my life/the minute of the plot is almost come”.

**McArthur:** You’ve got

beast, Confederates, against, minute is, almost.

It’s jam-packed. It’s in every line.

**Hurrell:** And it’s in the first line as well and this refers back to the little analysis I did of the image and speech in *Cymbeline* you may recall - which is that once he’s (Shakespeare, I mean) cottoned onto a sound that works for him for the expressive purpose, he works the variations and iterations of that sound. So, the task is not as literal as to find say, in this case, only the words that end in *st*. He begins by establishing the component parts of the sound cluster to launch the idea

I had forgoT the foul conSpiraCy

Then works through the various combinations.

**McArthur:** And also what it’s inviting you to do is to take breaths at the end of every line:

I had forgot that foule **conspiracy**/  
Of the **beast Calliban** and his **confederates**/  
Against my life

It’s like this chain of *t*’s and *s*’s and then bringing them together repeatedly in *st*, and then splitting them apart again as you say; this atomising of it; is speaking about a mind that’s broken. Perhaps he is not able to say all this in one single breath as if he’s composed. It’s about dis-composition and distraction. It’s not the distraction of an old duffer who has forgotten something because he’s absent-minded and having a nice time at the party. It’s the distract-ness of trying to hold on to his mind.

**Hurrell:** And actually when you said that, I was reminded from my vocal training that the vocal, technical addendum to that point you’re making is that there is the potential for an involuntary intake of breath at the end of a hard /st/ enunciation (demonstrating) that permits the actor or singer to snatch mini-breaths at the end of such words even in hurried passages. It’s a way of stealing a breath. Now whether you choose to use that technique or not is not the point here, the point is that there are minuscule involuntary interruptions of breath wherever the /st/ sound appears.

It's what creates space for example around "...against. My/life". And actually, the same applies wherever there is a hard *t* at the end of a word: 'plot', 'beasT', 'confederates', 'against', et cetera.

**McArthur:** Yes, Shakespeare's insisting on the drawback of breath because that's the way the language works; that is the way the mouth works.

**Hurrell:** But only if you are attuned to the idea, really, just of the somatic importance of diction and enunciation. The /*t*/ sound and in particular the /*st*/ sound has to be enunciated with so much muscular effort. You can for example decide, perversely in my view, to make all those *t*'s into soft *t*'s. (demonstrates) "the beast Caliban and his confederates against my life". And thus omit all of the violent power we are perceiving to be contained in this line.

**McArthur:** Yes, you cannot enunciate the *st* of *beast*, followed by the *c* of *Caliban*, without taking that effort over it. It's like changing gear in a car: at some point in the process of changing gear, the car has to stop in order to be able to go forward again.

**Hurrell:** Yes, you're quite right: we really have to include the high concentration of /*k*/ sounds in this little analysis don't we. Because they are part of its pattern: "forgoT the foul ConSpiracy of the beasT Caliban and his ConfederaTES againST my life". Once I decide there is a little symphony of *c* going on and I have to work both *c* "Caliban" and *c* "Confederates", then you start to get a sonic picture emerging of the venomous rage that Miranda is seeing. Just the muscular effort of Caliban/confederates starts to generate that strange passion. And, actually, in muscular terms the hard /*k*/ placed low in the throat is the other half of the spitting action implied by the /*st*/. Hock and spit.

**McArthur:** If you observe the placement of the /*st*/ 's and so forth and the placement of words like "conspiracy", "Confederates" and "plot" at the end of the line then that combination requires you to believe that he's actually fighting for breath. It's completely the opposite of what you often hear which is the whole lot run together on the grounds that there is a sense of urgency about it. But is that right? There is an urgency: that urgency is in fact about trying to get air. So it's completely the opposite to naturalistic thinking; the urgency means that it comes out in broken terms; it's so urgent that he cannot get it out in one, and that's what the sonic phenomenon of the language is perhaps implying. The naturalistic meaning would say I've really got to tear through this quickly because it's all about time. But the language structure tells you it is about time, but on an existential level. He's fighting for breath: it's an existential threat.

## Chapter Three

### Contemporary Performance Approaches

*The revolution in acting style occurs every twenty years or so with predictable regularity.* (Hall, 2009: 191)

By the time the scholarship of Frank Kermode, Frances Yates and others was solidifying the intellectual argument for Prospero as the distant, serene, scholar-magician, such a conception of the character was already becoming obsolete on the stage. As Dymkowski observes, “focus on the tensions within Prospero's own character gives the play a theatrical momentum that earlier commentators were convinced it lacks” (Dymkowski, 2000: 22). As theatrical momentum increasingly became synonymous in the minds of actors and audiences, with psychological conflict a psychologically conflicted Prospero no doubt seemed increasingly a necessity, even before a discursive rationale for such an interpretation had been fully enunciated. Such a rationale would eventually be provided by post-colonial readings of the text, but the process of revising the role both predates this critical development and reaches beyond the scope of post-colonial readings. The true genesis of this transformation is found instead in changing attitudes amongst audiences, actors and directors to the figure of the Shakespearean protagonist which would come to render ‘heroic’ interpretations and acting styles culturally obsolete (Eyre, 2009: 55), and to the concomitant revolution in processes for acting Shakespeare. In order to consider that interpretative movement, it is necessary to observe both the major shift that took place in the second half of the twentieth century in methodologies for rehearsing and acting Shakespeare in the United Kingdom and the landmark interpretation of the role of Prospero by John Gielgud under the direction of Peter Brook. Increasingly the actors who followed Gielgud would be informed by these two broadly contemporaneous, though distinct, sea-changes.

#### **Speaking and Acting Shakespeare**

Gielgud’s accomplishments in acting through rapid and elegant verse-speaking represent the apotheosis of a movement which began in the innovations and teaching of the actor and director William Poel (1852-1934) some sixty years earlier. Poel saw himself, even at his earliest acting lesson, as fighting a lonely battle against Victorian conventions of acting and staging which no longer revealed the true nature of

Shakespeare's theatrical art (O'Connor in Mazer, 2013: 7). Peter Hall recounts that Poel claimed to have been taught his "rapid, witty speaking technique" from former members of William Macready's Drury Lane company, who "had been taught by Kean's actors, who had been taught in their turn by Garrick's who had been taught by Betterton's" (Hall, 2009: 195). Poel later spent a formative year as a stage manager for F.R. Benson's company, but it is telling that his great inspirations as a young man were the visits of two French companies on tour to London in 1874, from which he noted the "willing obedience to rhythm" in the French acting method, and the Othello of the Italian actor Tommaso Salvini in 1875 (Speaight, 1954: 21-26). This was the same performance, on a later tour to Moscow, which Stanislavski cited as the inspiration for his own revolution in acting technique (Stanislavski, 1952: 265-76). Even in his earliest recorded thoughts on English theatre as a young man, before he had made the decision to pursue the theatre as a career, Poel noted his irritation with the pedantic realism—both in pictorial scenography and the behaviourism in acting—of Henry Irving's presentations at the Lyceum Theatre (Speaight, 1954: 20). Later he would engage in a passionate fight against what he saw as "the Victorian method of speaking the verse, slow, ponderous and accented all over the place" (Webster, 1969: 295-6).

Attempting to trace the legacy and evolution of approaches to Shakespearean verse-speaking on the contemporary British stage is a perilous exercise. The question of 'naturalness' of delivery and its alleged opposition to the innate musicality of the verse form has arisen repeatedly, at least as far back as the initial response to the revolution in 'naturalness' of performance ushered in by David Garrick in the mid-eighteenth century (Davies, 1780: 40). The surviving writings from any given period which assess the relative virtues of naturalness and musicality of delivery can only be understood fully in the context of the idiosyncrasies of the general use of voice and speech in daily life and in performance at that time. By the end of the nineteenth century, dissatisfaction with the nature of 'reality' and 'naturalness' on the stage was coming to provoke a variety of new movements in theatre practice, most famously exemplified by the rise of Stanislavski. On the English stage, and particularly in relation to Shakespeare, 'reality' had come to mean elaborate pictorial realism allied to a slow, loud heavily-emphasised declamation. In production, *The Tempest* became a quintessential example of such a theatrical aesthetic, dominated by a particularly stately, rhetorical protagonist who had come to be seen as semi-divine; and a series of set-piece spectacles of stage realism including the destruction of a ship in the first scene, followed variously by the beaches, forests, and presumed

mouth of a cave for Prospero's cell, thereafter, and ultimately a transformation to a magical 'vision' of plentiful fertility.

Poel instituted two reforms that were to have far-reaching effect on the presentation of Shakespeare in Britain: the revival of Elizabethan staging techniques, and the reformation of stage verse-speaking. Poel pursued this ambition largely on the fringes of the professional theatre, and worked extensively with amateurs (Thomson in Brown, 2008). He was closely associated with the restoration of Elizabethan and Jacobean texts of the plays (Poel, 1974) and he made his start by first lecturing at the New Shakespeare Society, and later directing a reading of the recently re-published First Quarto version of *Hamlet* (Speaight, 1954: 48-49). He later instructed and directed readings for the Shakespeare Reading Society, a student group to emerge from University College London, and from this enterprise was born the Elizabethan Stage Society which survived under his leadership from 1895-1905. His productions both in this period and afterwards were staged on various versions of an Elizabethan playhouse 'fit-up' complete with platform-stage, pillars, heavens and a tiring-house façade, often erected on the existing stage of a Victorian proscenium-arch theatre. Poel's early efforts to restore an Elizabethan platform-stage were driven by a view of its essentialness to representing a seamless dramaturgical flow from one scene to the next. In this observation alone he may be regarded as having altered (or at least prophesied) the course of twentieth-century British theatre practice, whether through the ultimate transformation of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre into a thrust stage, or the re-creation of Shakespeare's Globe, or simply the way in which directors such as Peter Hall were later to apply such principles to the staging of their productions.<sup>11</sup> Poel himself notoriously pursued his idea to ends so extreme as to corrupt the purpose, infamously requiring, for example, Elizabethan-dressed supernumeraries to sit on the sides of the stage to impersonate the Elizabethan audience's close proximity to the drama (Thomson in Brown, 2008: 363).

Poel's impact was felt through his massive influence, rather than his productions which, reliant as they often were on amateur actors, were frequently regarded both as oddities of a kind of theatre-archaeology and miserably acted. His demands for delivery of the verse, like those for staging, were pursued to obsessive extremes. While his insistence on a rapid naturalness that was nevertheless also "rhythmic" and "tuned" with

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<sup>11</sup> For example, Hall's National Theatre production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which he solved the problem of the play's unwieldy number of short scenes, by recreating the geography of the Elizabethan stage with upstage side entrances through which the next scene's players seemed to descend on the forestage even before the previous scene has finished, one scene seamlessly taking the place of the next was an example of the technique.

subtlety of emphasis and inflection was an ideal which would come to be influential in the speaking of Shakespeare in the twentieth century, his own biographer, Robert Speaight, records that in his own work it resulted, on occasion, in “sounds that came to one from the stage [which] seemed equally remote from nature, poetry, or realism. They resembled the bestial agonies of the slaughterhouse” (Speaight, 1954: 69). Nevertheless, the impression he made on the most illustrious of his pupils and their successors was profound. Granville Barker revered him, absorbed his insights into Elizabethan staging and dramaturgy and transformed them into a coherent modernist scenography in his Savoy Shakespeare productions of 1912 (Gordon, 2006). Granville Barker also credited Poel with transforming his view of verse-speaking in a single coaching-session on the opening lines of *Richard II*, and went on to coach John Gielgud in the same role. Elsie Fogerty was directed by him and later made his precepts on verse-speaking part of the curriculum at the Central School where she trained Laurence Olivier amongst many others. Edith Evans, whose career he launched by casting her as Cressida, passed his precepts on to Peter Hall (Hall, 2009: 207). Lewis Casson acted for Poel, beginning a long association, became a devotee and through his long career did more in Speaight’s estimation than anyone to disseminate, “both in teaching and practice, Poel’s principles of rapid, musically inflected speech” (Speaight, 1954: 141). Casson directed Gielgud at the Old Vic in *King Lear* in 1940 and played Gonzalo to Gielgud’s Prospero that same year (Frost, 1983).

Poel was battling two contrasting acting habits, both of which were inimical to the lucid and dynamic acting of Shakespeare: heavy, ‘poetic’ declamation, and ‘feelingless’ crisp modern English elocution. He sought rapidity, delicacy and variety of inflection, access to a broad range of pitch and colour, but also “restraint” and an elusive ideal of delivery that sounded both natural and musical. His expression “exaggerated naturalness” should be understood perhaps as ‘heightened naturalness’. He rejected claims that he was an antiquarian, arguing in the *Daily Chronicle* in 1913 that he was “really a modernist” and couched his battle against large-scale, pictorial realism and rhetorical acting as a pursuit of the truth of the reality represented in Shakespeare’s verse. It has been argued that in his references to ‘tuning’ the ‘tones’ of a passage, Poel was speaking primarily of the use of emphasis and inflection (Speaight, 1954: 62) and there is ample evidence that he preferred to fixedly give his actors ‘line readings’ of inflections which they were obliged to follow. However, it is equally clear that musicality of speech, which nevertheless sounded ‘natural’, was tied in his mind to the importance of a wide variety of pitch, which he made a preoccupation. He identified an orchestra of different

voice types which he took to be implicit in the writing of the various roles: tenor, bass, soprano and so on (Schultz, 1977) and he frequently cast his productions accordingly.

Poel seems to have seen ‘musicality’ and ‘naturalness’ of speaking as synonymous. In this his perspective is very far distant from that which prevails both on stage and in the culture at large today, and accordingly it can be difficult to decipher the underlying values in speaking style that were operational. The ‘naturalness’ of speech he sought to bring to Shakespearean performance was certainly not that of the conversational speech of the time. Indeed, the clipped, restrained manner of speech of the late Victorian and Edwardian middle classes was antithetical to Poel’s aims and he resorted repeatedly to casting female actors in male roles on the grounds that contemporary male English voices were insufficiently expressive for romantic roles (Schultz, 1977: 345). What seems clear is that he perceived a flow of verbal and mental energy in the rapid, extended Shakespearean thought, running as it often did in sections and clauses over many lines, which he felt was destroyed by Victorian verse speaking that was slow, over-emphasised and unremittingly loud.

I spent long hours in solitary instruction with him, saying the lines over and over until my head was in a whirl. In the end I found Poel had taught me the secret of rhythmic speech, the value of the operative word, and the magic of Shakespeare when it is spoken both musically and intelligently... in the end despite some rather over-accentuated moments, he achieved a total effect of surge and sweep quite unlike anything I had heard before, the exhilaration of which remains still in my memory. (Basil Dean quoted in Speaight, 1954: 96)

Notwithstanding Poel’s desire, evident from this anecdote, to unleash the latent *energy* in the verse-line, he was nevertheless repelled by physical activity on the stage, which he saw as a distraction from the text, only to be used when some action was needed to communicate the story. He preferred stillness from his actors (Speaight: 71), and often reduced his Elizabethan-style platform stages to a tiny size: uninterested in dynamic movement or physicality, he had no need of the space.

As the practice of speaking and listening to poetry began to drop out of education and popular pastime and the illusion of intimate self-expression unmediated by presentation or artifice became the highest-prized value in contemporary acting, the credible acting of Shakespeare increasingly became a niche ‘problem’; the subject of copious pedagogical literature, and of director-led ensemble theatrical practice. Poel’s innovations, even after they had filtered through the generation that came under his influence, while hugely influential, were not seen, of themselves to have ‘solved the problem’. As Peter Hall observed, that problem is bound to require re-solving again and

again as the aesthetic taste in acting transforms itself with each generation, but the question of a convincing marriage of verse-speaking, ‘naturalness’ and dynamic physicality remained vexed. Peter Brook observed that Gielgud, though a ‘magician’ with his voice and the text, had little interest in deploying his body in the service of dynamic expression (Cole, 1970: 424). As a young man, Olivier “butchered the language” by treating poetry as prose (Baldwin, 2003: 74): he was impassioned, and physically dynamic to the point of being over-illustrative (Jackson: 65). Though taught Poel’s precepts by Elsie Fogerty, Olivier evidently chose to interpret the dictum for naturalness as granting him the freedom to break the verse entirely.

Both Gielgud and Olivier, along with many other leading young figures in British theatre attached themselves with alacrity to the French actor and director Michel Saint-Denis who toured London with his company, *La Compagnie des Quinze*, in the early 1930s and settled in London shortly thereafter. Saint-Denis was the nephew of the French theatrical innovator Jacques Copeau, who revolutionised French theatre immediately after the First World War. Saint-Denis was deeply influenced by his uncle, and served as his stage manager and assistant producer as well as an actor in the company. When Copeau’s company, the *Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier*, could no longer be sustained financially, Saint-Denis gathered around him a core of Copeau’s actors to form the *Quinze*. Moreover, identifying ‘reality’ outside the paradigm of ‘naturalism’ became a life-time’s occupation for Saint-Denis, as it had been for Copeau. In his writing, Saint-Denis returns repeatedly to the task of disassembling the false dichotomy between reality and style, emphasising that style *expressed* reality, in its own terms, and that therefore the modern propensity to interrogate the reality of a text can only be done, not by treating it as naturalism, but by interrogating and realising its style, which should be “considered as a reality in itself artistically bound to the expression of reality as a whole” (Saint-Denis, 1982: 77).

Saint-Denis characterised Copeau’s work with *Vieux Colombier* as not only an antidote to French theatrical naturalism, but also as a “fight against the survival of romantic rhetoric in the interpretation of the classics”. In this there is a correlative to Poel’s rebellion against the English Victorian style of rhetorical, heroic Shakespearean performance. Curiously, Copeau himself may be regarded as having been indirectly influenced by Poel, through Granville Barker’s 1912 production of *Twelfth Night*, which influenced Copeau’s landmark production in French. Like Poel, Copeau sought to dispense with scenery and work on a permanent, bare, architectural stage. Indeed, Speight

perceives a parallel between Poel and Copeau, seeing them both as having retreated from commercial and popular success in order to “recover an ancient purity for the stage even if this involved some loss of present accomplishment” (Speaight, 1954: 45). Robert Gordon sees further parallels between Poel’s “attention to the music and sense inscribed in the prosodic structure of the language ... [and]... Copeau’s view of the text as a musical score for performance” (Gordon, 2006: 144). If however Poel and Copeau shared some ideals (and indeed a sense of uncompromising idealism about the theatre) in the main, they could hardly have been more different in their approaches to acting. Copeau has become synonymous with the pursuit of physical expressiveness in the actor; Dymphna Callery characterizes him as the early twentieth-century practitioner who more than anyone else “recognised the concept of the total actor rooted in corporeal awareness” (Callery, 2001: 11). This focus on the physical presence of the actor, and its direct connection to the imaginative facility, led Copeau in his teaching to work extensively with masks—the device with which his legacy is mostly associated today through its influence on the work of the mime and acting teacher Jacques Lecoq—and, as Saint-Denis observed “most of the time without texts” in order to “rediscover the secrets of acting, to experiment on renewed forms of dramatic expression”(Saint-Denis, 1960: 41) .

While, like Copeau, Saint-Denis’s search for the mastery and meaning of style encompassed all aspects of the theatrical event including *mise-en-scène* and in particular the actor’s physicality, he was much more focused on the actor’s function as an expressive vehicle of the pre-determined authorial intent behind extant texts, including classics (Gordon, 2006). Saint-Denis extended his thinking specifically to the question of the speaking of Shakespearean verse after his first move to the United Kingdom in the 1930s. Accordingly, he characterised the goal of training as to “awaken in the actor a musical and a poetic sensitivity capable of being translated to the stage by the rhythmic quality of the voice and by modulated tones conditioned by the text” (Saint-Denis, 1982). Both Gielgud and Olivier supported Saint-Denis’s efforts to found an acting school in London, and sought him out as a director of their own performances. Gielgud asked Saint-Denis to direct an English translation of André Obey’s *Noé*, which Saint-Denis had toured to London with the *Quinze* in 1931 (Baldwin, 2003: 12). Later he engaged him at the Old Vic to direct a celebrated production of *Three Sisters*, which became the definitive production of the play in English at that time. Similarly, Olivier sought out Saint-Denis as director of his Old Vic *Macbeth* in 1937.

Though it was a box-office hit for the Old Vic, *Macbeth* was disdained by critics, and ultimately by Olivier himself; but Jane Baldwin cites it as notable for the impact it had on the shift in Olivier's approach to verse speaking, after Saint-Denis encouraged him away from a preference for treating it as prose.

During rehearsals, Saint-Denis pointed out that in his attempt to create an emotionally truthful performance, Olivier was treating the poetry as prose, the result being that he butchered the language. This was astute counsel that Olivier exploited and went on to set the standard for contemporary verse speaking, merging realism with the beauty of the language, a technique that broke with time-honoured usage. It is noteworthy that Olivier's new approach was commented on favourably by at least one reviewer of *Macbeth*. (Baldwin, 2003: 74)

While the significance of this anecdote should not be over-stated, it is intriguing as an indicator of how Saint-Denis was able to provide a theatrical rationale that clarified the apparent contradiction bequeathed by Poel's demand for "exaggerated naturalism" through "tuned tones". Saint-Denis, devised an expressionistic production, both in theatrical language—which "emphasised the macabre and violent"—and intellectual conception, which suggested that "the world of the play were a projection of Macbeth's mind" (Baldwin, 2003) and in such a context was able to persuade Olivier to access the verse form as a source of the character reality he was seeking. Olivier referred to the magnetic charisma with which Saint-Denis was able to enslave actors, including himself, in service to his ideas and, though sensitive to the negative critical reaction to the production, he was eventually to acknowledge the benefit of Saint-Denis' influence on his approach to the verse (Olivier in Saint-Denis, 1960: 10).

It is in reference to a passage from *Macbeth* that Saint-Denis briefly discusses the implications for verse-speaking of his paradigm of reality revealed through style rather than in conflict with it.

When you come to a line like 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow', your desire for truth will incline you to cut it into three definite parts so as to avoid a conventional delivery. But ... the meaning of 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' carries a sense of eternity. With long pauses, the second 'and tomorrow' may sound like tomorrow morning and the third may be placed a month or so later. This absurd reality may be due to an excessive importance being given to the punctuation which breaks the unity of the line... Style has its own reality. It is made up of the choice of words of shape of rhythm and emphasis. This artistic reality cannot be separated from meaning. (Saint-Denis, 1960: 66)

An insistence on maintaining the shape of the verse line places Saint-Denis in accord with Poel before him and Hall after, as we shall see, but in reaching for a paradigm of reality,

his position more closely resembles that of Brook. His effort to define the modern aesthetic of 'realism' is particularly instructive.

What is the nature of this realism? We suffer greatly from doubt and instability. At the same time modern discoveries have given a scientific means of investigation which have created in us an acute need for lucidity and knowledge, a passionate desire to be no longer duped. (Saint-Denis, 1960: 49)

A definition of modern realism as a hunger for "knowledge" in the face of a permanent state of "doubt and instability" is key. It is the doubt-filled position of the speaker that causes him to interrogate his thought as he speaks, and thus (erroneously) represent a speech such as "Tomorrow...", as the construction of a number of separate, miniature thoughts, separated by reflective pauses, rather than a single rhetorical construct.

Saint-Denis, with his considerable flair for organisation and the motivating and managing of groups of people, was repeatedly asked to fulfil his personal wish to establish an acting school or studio. The first such enterprise was the catalyst for his move to the United Kingdom. The London Theatre Studio originally offered classes in the Sadler's Wells rehearsal rooms, eventually moving to a nearby, purpose-converted church hall in Islington. It lasted from 1935 until 1939, when it was interrupted by the war. In 1950, he was asked to form an acting school at the Old Vic, and when Peter Hall converted the Stratford Memorial Festival into the Royal Shakespeare Company he asked Saint-Denis to join him as Artistic Adviser and to establish the RSC studio. This studio envisaged ten apprentice actors studying full-time and gaining experience with the company as understudies and ensemble players, who would be joined in classes by members of the professional company when time permitted. All three ventures were abandoned after a few years. Repeatedly, the institutional support needed to provide the concentration of resources required by such a labour-intensive exercise was lacking. But like Poel before him, Saint-Denis's influence through his students and acolytes was immense. Saint-Denis left copious writings on his envisaged curriculum design, which did much to shape late twentieth-century British actor training (Gordon, 2006). Mark Evans and others have observed the particular impact of the mask work Saint-Denis inherited from Copeau on movement training and physical theatre in the United Kingdom; and the development of actor training from a focus on elocution and purely technical proficiencies to 'imagination training' was, in large part, due to Saint-Denis' model (Evans, 2009). His writing on actor training remains relevant to the present.

## Royal Shakespeare Company Directors

A year after Brook's landmark production of *The Tempest* with Gielgud, Peter Hall was appointed Artistic Director Designate of the Stratford Festival and immediately set about transforming it into a repertory company working in both Stratford-upon-Avon and London. On his arrival at Stratford, Hall saw himself as waging a battle, identical to that which Poel had defined fifty years earlier, against competing established acting habits, but with the addition of a third attitude, equally obstructive to the acting of Shakespeare.

There were a few old boys from the past who boomed and bellowed ... proudly Irvingesque;.. They were extremely slow and devoid of wit. Then there were men of the '30s, bred on Maugham, Coward and Rattigan... They threw their lines away with studied nonchalance and always wanted to appear 'real'. Emotional excess was curbed by the stiff upper lip and a studied geniality... then there were the young actors, Method-based ... The new orthodoxy was that you must be yourself at all costs... the discipline of the verse was regarded as an unwarranted imposition. (Hall, 2009: 199-200)

Fashioning a company playing-style of rapid, subtle and cerebral verse-speaking wedded to contemporary realistic acting from these disparate traditions became the Royal Shakespeare Company's *raison d'être* and Hall asked both Saint-Denis and Brook to join him in the enterprise, as well as his friend at Cambridge, John Barton. Though the RSC studio of which Saint-Denis was director was short-lived, the overall mission was met with initial success. Brook's production of *King Lear* (1962) with Paul Scofield and Hall's production of Barton's adaptation of Shakespeare's first tetralogy, *The Wars of the Roses* were cultural landmarks. Brook was permitted, to a limited degree, to pursue his experimentation in the function of the actor's physical and vocal presence in his Artaud inspired Theatre of Cruelty season, which culminated in a production of Peter Weiss' *The Marat/Sade* (1964). Later, Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1971) though famous for its revolutionary approach to *mise-en-scène* and its status as an apparent exemplar of *The Empty Space* manifesto (Brook, 2008), featured a cast of young actors by now well-schooled in verse-speaking by Hall and Barton.

Whereas Brook's definition of "verbal music" and discussion of the pentameter line in terms of energy approaches a mystic connection to lived experience, Hall is resolutely technical.

Speaking Shakespeare's verse and prose is an easily learned technique. It takes about three days for an actor to familiarise himself with what he has to look for; and it takes a few weeks more for him to become comfortable in the techniques. (Hall, 2009: 13)

Hall nevertheless acknowledges that while the techniques are quickly learned, the process of taking ownership of the techniques and allowing them to inform, inspire and shape the acting—that is, the leap to instinct—remains elusive. In his view, a series of technical steps leads ultimately to the sort of mystery described by Brook, as when he remarks that “acting Shakespeare is a physical, rhythmical and often musical discipline” (Hall, 2009: 207) and he makes a distinction between *speaking* Shakespeare, which he argues is easily learned, and *acting* him, which requires a relationship to the text that goes beyond this learning. Adamant that study of the form, and commitment to delivering that form, will lead to the revelation of the emotional life of the character, he locates the task firmly as one of mastering verse-speaking, an occupation with rules that must be followed. In this he differs from many who have followed him, who speak rather in terms of ‘guides’ to handling the verse in pursuit of ‘making it one’s own’.

Hall’s manual, written after fifty years of dominating the British theatre profession, including serving as Artistic Director of the country’s two largest theatre companies,<sup>12</sup> hints everywhere at feelings of frustration at a failed personal mission: that the message he has been carrying throughout his career, imparted to him at Cambridge and by great mid-twentieth century actors like Edith Evans and John Gielgud, has been largely ignored. Hall’s frustration is that “the sanctity of the line” has been abandoned (Hall, 2009: 24). He identifies two habits of contemporary Shakespeare acting that disrupt the verse-line and thus deny its natural energy. Firstly, the modern actor’s desire to break up the verse-line with pauses, “because he believes the pause makes a text sound spontaneous”. This habit coalesces with a corresponding “use of an italicised delivery... individual words are over-emphasised”. While Hall’s prescriptions and criticisms of contemporary practice can sound rigid, his reasons relate directly to Brook’s claims for the kinaesthetic and emotional power of the verse. The “sanctity of the line” in his formulation must be observed because only through such observation can the innate energy of the verse line—Brook’s “atom”—be released.

Both Hall and Barton were trained in the techniques of Shakespearean verse at Cambridge, by the English don and Marlowe Society director George (Dadie) Rylands. The Marlowe society had been co-founded by Poel’s nephew, Reginald Pole, inspired in part by a desire to disseminate his uncle’s ideas. Hall saw Rylands as having absorbed Poel’s approach and as a significant teacher of his methods, through his long tenure with

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to founding the Royal Shakespeare Company and serving as Artistic Director (1960-1968), Hall was also the Artistic Director of the National Theatre (1973-1988) and supervised its move from the Old Vic to the purpose-built multi-venue facility on London’s South Bank.

the Marlowe society, influencing not only both Hall and Barton, but Michael Redgrave, Derek Jacobi, Ian McKellen, Trevor Nunn and many others. His work *Words and Poetry* pre-figured Brook's declaration and much enquiry by Barton and the voice coaches who have since become the most prolific and systematic writers on acting Shakespeare, when he wrote that Shakespeare's words are

...isolated, arranged in metrical pattern, where not only the value or values of each word must be considered, but also the close interdependence of one upon the other: for every word is quick to take colour from its companion and will gain or lose emphasis according to its position in the line. (Rylands, 1928: 16)

Hall and Barton both acknowledge the influence Rylands exerted on their approach. It is substantially via Rylands that Poel's pioneering approach to verse-speaking was passed on to Hall and Barton and into the fledgling work of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Barton may be thought of as the accidental originator of the modern genre of 'acting Shakespeare' handbooks. The *Playing Shakespeare* text is in fact the transcript of a series of television programs for Thames Television in 1983: this series itself came about in part because of Barton's conviction that no written treatise on acting Shakespeare could accurately reflect the unstable, intuitive nature of rehearsal room exploration. Following Poel and Rylands, Barton begins by nominating the guiding principle as one laid down by Shakespeare himself, in the oft-quoted passage from *Hamlet*, "Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue ... Suit the action to the word, the word to the action". Establishing this as a bedrock principle, but one open to interpretation, Barton then frames the project in terms that have been retained by all who have followed. In the first instance he sets the challenge as one of 'marrying two traditions', which he nominates as an Elizabethan rhetorical tradition of performance writing—later simplified to "heightened language"—and a modern acting tradition that is naturalistic. The manner in which these terms are established is a revealing insight into the challenge faced at the RSC in the twenty years between its formation and the filming of the programme. Barton identifies the two traditions as raw materials with which he must build his work. It is a given that the text is in a heightened style—both poetic and rhetorical—and equally a given that the actors who will come to work on that text operate solely in a paradigm of what is referred to as naturalism, but which is glossed as "the acting style and the kind of text which is the norm in the theatre and film and television today. The deliberate attempt to make everything as natural and lifelike as possible" (Barton, 2009: 11). In a crucial formulation, Barton describes the heightened language as being laden with "*hidden direction* Shakespeare himself provided in his verse and prose"

(Barton, 2009: 23). He goes on to define the essential question asked in any given moment by the modern actor as “What’s my intention?” Thus, the thesis is established that the form of the language contains hidden clues to the intention; that the rhetorical text contains encoded naturalistic information, which can be detected and acted upon, by actors and director.

Barton’s approach was literary and driven by observation of poetic and rhetorical devices, as one would expect from a disciple of Rylands. A favourite technique, for example, is to encourage actors to shape the speaking of the text through playing the antitheses, which Barton identifies as a favourite rhetorical device of Shakespeare. The gift Barton displays repeatedly is for bringing such literary observations of the text into meaningful relief for the instinctively naturalistic actor seeking guidance to motivation and psychological detail. This approach is mediated and contextualised by a similarly literary consciousness of the subject of the poetry at any given moment, and a sensitivity to how often and variably that subject is a figure other than the ‘character’ speaking. Clarity is a guiding principle that informs the shifting subject. It may be the character, or the figure being described, or the speaker as actor on an Elizabethan stage, or even a hybrid of these that is the character as he speaks of him or herself. Balancing passion and coolness in the actor’s emotional condition is much explored, as are, critically, the actor’s awareness and use of irony and ambiguity.

Barton’s definition of irony as it applies to the acting of Shakespeare is key, and raises particular questions for Prospero:

Irony involves the speaker in being at once inside and outside the situation in which he finds himself... To be both inside the character and yet to stand outside yourself at the same time. It’s that double vision which is to me the heart of irony. (Barton, 2009: 128)

It is perhaps not surprising that Barton, a wittily rational observer of the verse, carrying always a strong sense of historical context, was most admired for his productions of the histories and comedies. However, his cerebral approach appears to have unearthed an irrational truth about Prospero. Barton’s austere and pessimistic *Tempest* in 1970, which played only nineteen performances in Stratford-upon-Avon, focused on a melancholy Prospero, played with characteristic irony by Ian Richardson, who had by this time already worked with Barton extensively, and would later share the roles of Richard II and Bolingbroke with Richard Pasco in Barton’s famous 1973 version of *Richard II*. Richardson himself said of his interpretation:

I played him as a very sick man, perhaps aware of something very sinister wrong inside him .... I used it because it built up a terrible tension in the text that *everything* had to be accomplished. (Greenwald, 1985: 173)

Regrettably the production dates to a period in which the British Library Sound Archive was making recordings only of RSC productions that transferred to the Aldwych Theatre in London. The BBC Television documentary that was made during rehearsals, which aired in 1971, is not only fragmentary in its recording of Richardson's performance but also distorted, as it intersperses apparent dress-rehearsal footage (almost certainly staged for camera with the actors re-pitching their performances for the intimacy of the camera close-up) with specially recorded voice-overs of some passages which are even more minimalist in scale. Nevertheless, a Prospero both melancholic and sinister—while cold and remote—is readily apparent. The programme itself is partly occupied with pursuing the myth of Prospero as an autobiographical Shakespeare figure. Richardson's comments on the character here, though in context a reluctant acquiescence to the filmmakers' desire to make the link with Shakespeare, reveal a counterpoint to the bleak conception described above, one that frankly is not in evidence in the surviving footage, nor in the critical response:

I think the fact that I found Prospero to be such a gentle, human, amusing man; a quiet man, very quick to forgive; I think that possibly that's what Shakespeare must have been like. (Pegram, 1971)

Richardson goes on to refer to the valedictory sense in the "Our revels now are ended" speech (IV.i) and the epilogue, but also obliquely reveals a locus for the autobiographical argument within the "Ye Elves of hills..." speech, reading the necromantic confession as the author's capacity to bring people from history and legend back to life on the stage.

The essential elusiveness of *The Tempest*, which Barton's 1970 production was generally regarded as having failed to penetrate, was an accepted premise at the RSC, as Hall's successor, Trevor Nunn, has acknowledged: "Nobody has ever written anything like *The Tempest* before or since, and possibly nobody has ever got the play right in performance" (Pegram, 1971). If there is a sense in *Playing Shakespeare* that Barton accepts his young actors' pre-occupation with psycho-emotional realism with only a partial willingness and regularly attempts to entice them to a more rhetorical performativity, Nunn had no such compunction. Trevor Nunn joined the RSC in 1964 and took over from Hall in 1968. Nunn's intellectual development also goes back to Cambridge, where like Hall before him (but unlike Barton) he came under the influence of Ryland's great rival, F.R. Leavis. Despite Leavis' personal disdain for theatre, his

techniques for analysing text and sub-text in literature, and especially poetry have had a considerable impact on the direction of British theatre practice. As Hall observes “a dozen or so directors, from Trevor Nunn and Richard Eyre to Nicholas Hytner and Sam Mendes have been taught to analyse texts using the techniques of Leavis” (Hall, 2009: 193). It is the Leavisite commitment to sub-text and rationality of intent that came to be the dominant intellectual discourse for British directors working on Shakespeare, while the commitment of Poel and Rylands to utilizing the forms of the verse passed, as we shall see, largely from the purview of the director, to that of a new species of practitioner: the voice and text coach.

Nunn’s landmark Shakespeare productions included intimate studio presentations, marked by psychologically intense but subtle naturalism of acting, in a minimalist “unrealistic staging... [intended to]... charm, disturb and awaken the audience’s imagination” (Smith Howard, 2006: 88). Intimacy and its attendant appeal to empathy as the primary transaction with the audience, typified Nunn’s approach:

Nunn went into great detail with character and character relationships – not Method as we know it, but he rehearsed quietly and with great intimacy, getting the actor to feel personal contact with the character by bringing his/her own personal experiences to bear. (Berry, 2001: 36)

The productions in this mould, of *Macbeth* (1976) and *Othello* (1989), were both collaborations with Ian McKellen, who, presumably in a gesture towards real-life rehearsal room debates, is the figure in the Barton *Playing Shakespeare* programmes assigned the most vigorous demands that Barton surrender his “Two Traditions” theory and admit that, in fact, naturalism is merely synonymous with “truthfulness”, or even “good acting”. Nunn’s conviction that every character onstage must present a subjectivity that conforms to psychological logic and empathy is seen in the *Macbeth* (Nunn, 2004 (1978)) even more clearly in the interpretation of the witches than it is in McKellen’s restrained desperation and nihilism, or Judi Dench’s nervous vulnerability. Under Nunn, the witches acquire newly invented/discovered individual subjectivities, becoming a trio of three very different women, with a fixed status relationship, and a back story: a vulnerable younger woman with the qualities of an idiot savant, protected and exploited by a middle aged and an elderly woman, with implications of a mother/daughter relationship under duress.

## The Rise of the Voice Coach

It was Trevor Nunn who, in 1969, invited a voice teacher from the Central School of Speech and Drama, Cicely Berry, to join the RSC. The journey of the voice teacher into the heart of mainstream classical British theatre practice, via the route of actor training, has been charted elsewhere<sup>13</sup> but the integration of such a figure into the rehearsal work of a main-stage theatre company was a significant innovation. In a post-war performance world dominated by American screen realism, an attendant rejection of ‘the voice beautiful’ as an ideal in classical acting, and emerging class-consciousness, a straightforward elocutionary training, with a single definition of ‘good speaking’ its goal, was giving way to a more complex paradigm. As Peter Brook observes, a view of the speech act as elemental—that each individual has the potential access to an individually authentic and expressive voice and speaking—is an essential tenet of Berry’s work and writing (Berry, 1993: 3). That writing is a non-theoretical compilation of strategies and observations that have helped in the rehearsal room over decades, and as such seems often self-contradictory if taken as a treatise. Her underlying approach is psycho-physical, but she adamantly advocates the power of the sonic properties of language. She advocates an intuitive exploration of sound and prosody, yet always begins from the point of view of literal sense and ends by equating the discoveries from the language to psychophysical cues for intention and characterisation.

The paradox between the insistence on the essential value of the actor’s ‘natural’ voice, and a desire for heightened exploration of sonic possibility in language inevitably leads to a working paradigm of illness and healing. Berry argues that “to a large extent I think we are trapped in our own sound and sound pattern” (Berry, 1993: 15) and it may be argued that Berry’s modus and that of those who have followed her (notably Patsy Rodenburg in the United Kingdom and Kristin Linklater in the United States) is one of the teacher as healer. They work not merely to remediate physiological vocal production and breathing problems, but also the psychological, cultural and social factors that they view as contributing to these. Indeed, their work, in different ways, goes so far as to seek to heal constricted imaginations. Lyn Darnley strongly disputes the therapeutic analogy for Berry, with whom she has worked closely, and sees it as an element that has been incorrectly reflected back on to Berry from the work of Rodenburg and Linklater. For Berry, she defines the strategy as one of freeing and empowering the actor. She posits the

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<sup>13</sup> See for example Darnley, L., *A history of voice teaching in Britain*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2013.

initial task in terms of left and right brain hemispheres, assisting actors to respond kinaesthetically to the analytical approaches of the company's directors (Darnley, 2013: 87-88).

In these terms, Berry, Linklater and Rodenburg have each sought to shift the terms of voice and text work further into right-hemispherical activity, and inevitably further into the realm of the actor's personal emotional experience. Again, Darnley draws a distinction between Berry on the one hand and Linklater and Rodenburg on the other. While she sees Berry's methods as exploring ways to account for the 'meaning' of sound in language in terms of the *character's* emotional life, by fostering "sensate placement of consonants; spatial and emotional quality of vowels" nevertheless she observes:

Emotion and feelings are of little interest to Berry, whereas common human need and survival are paramount. Berry is concerned with words and language, whereas Rodenburg and Linklater include personal emotional release through freeing the voice. (Darnley, 2013: 97)

Empowerment for Berry, in Darnley's analysis, is understood from a Marxist-materialist perspective, rather than one of emotional self-realisation. Work on the text and voice empowers the actor to shape and control meaning. It is undoubtedly true that Berry's work on sound-values in language, sits always within a paradigm of *enriching meaning*. In a chapter on subtext, advocating exercises that involve repetition of group-speaking of key words, Berry writes:

as we repeat words we isolate them from their grammatical and literal meaning, we take them out of context, and this means that other shades of meaning surface. (Berry, 2001: 125)

Such a strategy is clearly associated with moving past denotative signifying in order to access the connotative. Even as a sonic artefact, words remain signifiers, and what is signified can be configured in terms of psychologically identifiable and consistent traits in a naturalistically represented subject. In the example she gives, she asks the group to repeat words "which have to do with [the concept of] quantity" (Berry, 2001: 130) in order to draw a conclusion that rationalises the representation of an identifiably psycho-emotional realist character trait in "Lear's thinking – that he is equating love with possessions".

Like Berry, Patsy Rodenburg began her training in Voice Studies at the Central School of Speech and Drama before working at the RSC for nine years and as Head of Voice at the National Theatre for sixteen (Rodenburg, 2017). When she attributes the RSC's "wonderfully spoken and emotionally exciting work" by actors who had

“abandoned rigid verse speaking [yet] still had the concepts of verse embedded in them” (Rodenburg, 2002: 70) to years of speaking poetry at school and working with actors of preceding generations, she is undoubtedly referring in part to the actors who had worked with Berry and appeared with Barton on the *Playing Shakespeare* television programs: Ian McKellen, Judi Dench, Ben Kingsley, David Suchet, Alan Howard, Janet Suzman, Sinead Cusack and representing the previous generation, Donald Sinden and Peggy Ashcroft. While Barton and Berry may be unfairly omitted from Rodenburg’s explanation for the success of the RSC’s house-style, her point that the actors who joined the company in this period may have been pre-disposed by their upbringing and education to be receptive to an approach that sought to relate prosodic and rhetorical figures to intentionality and physicality is legitimate. In the precursor to the series, the 1979 “Southbank Show” in which Barton and Trevor Nunn led a workshop together, Ian McKellen made the following concluding remark:

If this workshop’s done anything, I hope it’s scotched the, in my view, wrong belief that Shakespeare’s verses are music and all you have to find out is the tune and everything will be all right. Rather I believe if you look after the sense, the sounds will look after themselves. (Nunn and Barton, 1979)

Self-evidently, the “music” McKellen is referring to here is conceptually far removed from Brook’s “verbal music”. Rather, his comment reflects a widespread anxiety amongst actors of his generation about ‘false’ or ‘artificial’ sound-making in verse-speaking. It nevertheless reinforces a prejudice against sound as an aesthetic property which the voice coaches are consistently engaged in confronting by emphasising the emotional ramifications of sounds in language. Rodenburg directly canvasses the past practice to which McKellen is obliquely referring:

When I started teaching in the 1970s, I often came across great actors who admitted that they didn’t really understand the content of Shakespeare’s speeches, but found a way through by accurately following the form of the verse. At the time, I worked as an apprentice to a brilliant – and slightly terrifying – classical voice coach.... I had to acknowledge, while working with that coach and those actors, that a strict observance of form did fully engage them and release the text. (Rodenburg, 2002: 70-1)

She then advocates a return to form but re-contextualises it as an embodied knowledge: “knowledge of form is not just an intellectual awareness but one that must be fully incorporated in the body and voice of the actor”. She identifies two opposing dangers: Attending only to “the givens”: the physical structures that shape the story and the sense and organize the chaos of passion” which will lead to acting that is “clear but dry” or only the “imaginative exploration of the text: the imaginative connections created by the words

themselves which release the specific quality of the verse – the emotion, the image, the concrete detail of the world and the character” which causes the actor to be “connected and passionate but make no sense” (Rodenburg, 2002: 71). Rodenburg has had a long collaboration with Declan Donnellan and his company Cheek By Jowl whose work is considered later in this chapter.

Much of Kristin Linklater’s teaching work has occurred in the United States, but her manual, *Freeing Shakespeare’s Voice*, first published in 1992, has been similarly influential to those of Berry and Rodenburg. Linklater frames the challenge in terms of the sound of language containing subliminal cues to the expression of lived experience and argues that modern life has damaged our capacity to encounter these cues; damage which must be healed by the voice coach.

Consonants and vowels are sensory agents of speech communicating information on sound waves which carry subliminal messages from speaker to listener. Twentieth-century listeners are conditioned to translate what they hear more cerebrally than in the age of oral communication, but ‘whole-body’ speaking and listening is still operative even though we may not be consciously tuned in to it. (Linklater, 2009: 14)

Linklater radically re-arranges the prevailing hierarchy of engagement with poetry, which in the work of the other practitioners considered here, typically begins with sense (meaning), followed by metre and rhythm, and only later, the purely sonic qualities of words. Her manual opens with a chapter on vowels and consonants, though her contextualizing premise is one common to all three of the voice coaches: that the challenge faced by the actor working on Shakespeare stems from the fact that the writing originates from a cultural context in which language was primarily oral rather than written. She extends the argument to a paradigm of primitive pre-lingual human communication and posits the challenge for the actor in engaging with poetry as re-connecting with this primitivism in sound-making. Indisputably, Linklater locates this task within a therapeutic discourse of a diagnosis:

Today’s adult voice is deprived of the nourishment of emotion and free-breathing. Society has taught us that it is wrong to express ourselves freely... The adult voice is, in most instances, conditioned to talk about feelings rather than reveal them. (Linklater, 2009: 5)

And a cure:

Actors who want to tune in to Shakespeare’s text and communicate it fully to their audiences can/should/must become sensitive to the feel of vowels and consonants, to the *anatomy* of words as well as their meaning. They can/should/must re-connect

the neuro-physiological circuitry that allows the senses and the emotions to be informed by the taste, touch, colour and pitch of words. (Linklater, 2009: 14)

Such a course of ‘treatment’ offers the promise of restored access to “Consonants and vowels [as] sensory agents of speech communicating information on sound waves which carry subliminal messages from speaker to listener.” However, it is the explication of this claim that begins to reveal her philosophical position. Her argument that “vowels can be seen as the emotional component in word-construction and the consonants as the intellectual component” approaches Rudolph Steiner’s description of vowels as productions from the meeting point of “astral” and “ether” bodies—broadly the interaction of the unconscious with the conscious (Steiner, 2007: 32-35). Indeed, her framing of the issue in a context of primitive man echoes that of Steiner.

Perhaps surprisingly in the context of this essentialist view of the speaker as sound-maker, Linklater makes a tacit claim for a historiographical social-realist mimesis in the texts when she argues that an Elizabethan world-view is crucial to making the language natural, and she offers what is in effect a self-hypnosis that visualizes a kinaesthetic awareness of a postulated ‘Elizabethan’ embodied consciousness, of which “the goal is to fill in the reality of the personal, political and philosophical lives of the characters of Shakespeare’s plays and to make real the words that express this reality” (Linklater, 2009: 65-67). Linklater seeks organic embodiment as an antidote to a “‘style’ that we erroneously think to be ‘classical’ because it is stiff and unreal, superficially gracious and as far from ourselves as possible” (Linklater, 2009: 192).

Taken as a corpus, the Shakespeare manuals of Hall, Barton, Berry, Linklater and Rodenburg reflect a movement from the primacy of *the line* to that of *the word* and a broadening mission, from one of verse-speaking, to one that might be called acting-through-speech. These two developments are inter-related. Hall and Barton advocate analysis of the metrical and rhetorical tropes on the grounds that, like any rehearsal-room script analysis, it will inform the acting that is sure to follow. The assumption that underpins their work is that the actors they are encountering already have a strong sense of their individual acting process, inspired partly by American ‘method’ acting, and their task is to persuade that insightful *handling* of the verse will not only achieve clarity of story-telling, but also provide information compatible to that acting process.

What is statistically undeniable is that the manuals for speaking and acting Shakespeare largely omit the romances. *The Winter’s Tale* is referenced, and the grounds for that inclusion are invariably its psycho-emotional portrayal of a domestic dispute:

Leontes' jealousy and violent rage, Hermione's distress and strength in the face of injustice and Paulina's empathy and indictment. The poetic devices may be seen as an extension and enrichment of the psychological conditions described, though in metrically more complex verse than in the mature tragedies or comedies. The scholarly consensus that the late plays are otherwise marked by Shakespeare's loss of interest in the explication of psychological complexity of character, appears to have a correlative in the Shakespeare acting coach engaged in persuading modern Anglo-American actors that they can engage with the heightened forms of the verse without sacrificing their commitment to the kind of psycho-emotional realism expected by mainstream audience of theatre, film and television. Berry's single remark on Prospero, regarding "Ye Elves of hils..." is:

Prospero's speech has an incantational quality: it is very musical, it's beat is strong, and it lifts the cadence through until you come to "I'll break my staff..." The sounds themselves are rich and musical, with assonance and alliteration, and its images are always surprising. (Berry, 2001: 194)

Precisely what Berry means by a speech that "lifts the cadence through" is not specified, but the speech, like much of the late verse, contains a high quotient of enjambed lines and is commonly performed with volume, pace, and often pitch steadily increasing from the opening line through to "...so potent art".

### **The 'Conflicted' Prospero in Performance**

Recordings of many of the key performances in the emerging contemporary interpretative tradition of a 'conflicted' and 'angry' Prospero have been preserved in the British Library Sound Archive as well as in the archives of the BBC and major theatre companies. After extensive listening to such archival records, performances by actors whose practice and training are/were demonstrably located within the late-twentieth century UK rehearsal and performance practices discussed above have been analysed here for their approach to verse-speaking and use of the voice. Though reference is made to a number of performances since 1970, particular consideration is given to the following interpretations:

John Gielgud – 1974 – National Theatre at the Old Vic

Derek Jacobi – 1982 – Royal Shakespeare Company

John Wood – 1989 – Royal Shakespeare Company

Antony Sher – 2009 – Royal Shakespeare Company

To illustrate the observations made here, and place them in the context of the broader consideration of the relationship between Prospero’s verbiage, its verbal music, and the significance of his magic practice to the character’s subject-position, audio recordings of the key “Ye Elves of hills...” speech (V.i.38-62) have been collected and a brief statistical analysis has been performed on the pace of delivery in each of the five performances analysed. To calculate the following data, each line has been assigned a line number, and note taken of particular prosodic features of the line. The timings in the dataset on the next page were manually collected at the British Library by listening to archival recordings with a stopwatch/lap-counter—accordingly they are approximate timings. After some consideration line 18 has been excluded when calculating average speaking speeds and standard deviations from that average, as most speakers take an unusually long pause mid-line between the two movements of the speech. The half-line “Ile drowne my booke\*”, with which the speech concludes, has also been omitted.

1	Ye Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,	8 monosyllables, 1 spondee
2	And ye, that on the sands with printlesse foote	8 monosyllables
3	Doe chase the ebbing-Neptune, and doe flie him	Feminine Ending, 1 anapest
4	When he comes backe: you demy-Puppets, that	
5	By Moone-shine doe the greene sowre Ringlets make,	8 monosyllables
6	Whereof the Ewe not bites: and you, whose pastime	Feminine Ending
7	Is to make midnight-Mushrumps, that rejoyce	1 Trochee, 1 Spondee
8	To heare the solemne Curfewe, by whose ayde	
9	(Weake Masters though ye be) I have bedymn’d	
10	The Noone-tide Sun, call’d forth the mutenous windes,	8 monosyllables
11	And twixt the greene Sea, and the azur’d vault	8 monosyllables
12	Set roaring warre: To the dread ratling Thunder	Feminine Ending, Anapest/Spondee
13	Have I given fire, and rifted Joves stowt Oke	10 monosyllables
14	With his owne Bolt: The strong bass’d promontorie	
15	Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluckt up	10 monosyllables
16	The Pyne, and Cedar. Graves at my command	
17	Have wak’d their sleepers, op’d, and let ‘em forth	10 monosyllables
18	By my so potent Art. But this rough Magicke*	Feminine Ending, Long caesura
19	I heere abjure: and when I have requir’d	
20	Some heavenly Musicke (which even now I do)	2 ellisions - dactyl and anapest
21	To worke mine end upon their Sences, that	
22	This Ayrie-charme is for, I’le breake my staffe,	8 monosyllables
23	Bury it certaine fadomes in the earth,	1 trochee
24	And deeper then did ever Plummet sound	
25	Ile drowne my booke.*	Half line

**John Gielgud – Stratford Memorial Theatre, 1957 / National Theatre, 1974**



**Fig. 3.** John Gielgud as Prospero in 1957, directed by Peter Brook and in 1974, directed by Peter Hall.

The journey from a performance tradition which embodied the view of Prospero's magic as unambiguously holy and 'white', to the performances of inner-conflict struggling with corrupt motivation in the present day, is regarded to have substantially begun with John Gielgud's performance for Peter Brook at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in 1957 of which, unfortunately, no archival recording survives. Gielgud's first essaying of the role in 1930 had itself presented some revision of the nineteenth century understanding of the character, but in 1957, Brook and Gielgud seem to have left none in doubt of what Dymkowski, surveying critical responses that encompassed assessments such as "harsh and dangerous", "bitter" and "frightening" and even teetering toward the edge of sanity, characterised as a performance that "made prominent the internal struggles of a flawed human being" (Dymkowski, 2000: 20). Though Gielgud's 1957 performance was widely admired and influential, it by no means resulted in a universal retirement of the pacific reading of the role that had been so ubiquitous. Notable performances including Paul Scofield's and Alec McCowen's (despite appearing opposite a famously rebellious and earthy Ariel by Simon Russell Beale) retained versions of the older reading. Nevertheless, the paradigm of Prospero as conflicted and ultimately 'angry' would

gradually come to dominate the interpretative choices by contemporary actors and directors.

In attempting to reconstruct a sense of Gielgud's 1957 performance it is tempting to draw inferences from an extant recording made just two years later. In 1959, Gielgud recorded his *Ages of Man* Shakespeare recital programme, which included three of Prospero's key speeches. Such a recording should be approached with some caution, as it is not directly based on a live stage production of the play. It may be presumed that there is less emotional activity going on here than when the speech is performed in context, to say nothing of the absence of interrupting stage business that may also have slowed the rate of speaking. However, while the recordings of "Our revels now are ended.." and the epilogue appear to be exercises in elegant recitation, the "Ye Elves of hills..." recitation retains excitement and bears traces of the forceful, aggressive magus described in the reviews.

**Clip 4.** John Gielgud's 1959 recording of "Ye Elves of hills..." from *Ages of Man*. (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25605/> or scan the QR code.)



Hall himself cites his *Tempest* with John Gielgud (Gielgud's last) at the Old Vic in 1974 as a failure (Hall, 2000: 276), but the surviving recording of Gielgud's 1974 performance serves as a model demonstration of the precepts for verse-acting that Hall advocates. The verse is taken with crisp rapidity, and phrasing is informed almost exclusively by the metre and the rhetorical figures. The colouring of individual words is subtle and unobtrusive. The softening of the character by comparison to the 1957 interpretation was observed at the time, and it is hard from a contemporary perspective to detect even the remnant vestiges of the "bitterness" and "struggles of a flawed human being" "nearly engulfed by his sense of being wronged" (Dymkowski, 2000: 20) that had marked the 1957 interpretation as revolutionary. Prospero is stern and even fierce, but in a completely controlled, quite detached manner and the "cruelty and selfishness" to which *Financial Times* reviewer B.A. Young thought "Gielgud holds fast to ... until almost the end" (Dymkowski, 2000: 21) is scarcely in evidence on the recording. What is palpable is the character's authority.

The rapidity of the verse-speaking is the most immediately noticeable feature of Gielgud's delivery, and the dramatic energy that is often generated as a result is a powerful contributor to the sense of authority. The recordings of "Ye Elves of hills..."

provide a cogent example of this point, and indeed the connection between speed and energy seems barely diminished at the age of seventy in 1974 by comparison with the recording of twenty-five years earlier. In 1959 Gielgud delivers a typical line in 3.5 seconds for a speaking speed of 1029 lines per hour. By 1974, and bearing in mind the potentially ‘slowing’ effect of stage business, he had barely slowed, delivering the typical line in 3.66 seconds for a speaking speed of 983 lines per hour. One interpretative alteration in particular is notable. Whereas in 1959, Gielgud performs a continuous build in pitch and energy all the way through to “my so potent art”, by 1974 a shift into a lower key is introduced at the moment of the key revelation “Graves at my command...” This accords with a broader, though subtle interpretative difference between the two: Prospero is seized by the excitement of his supernatural power in 1959; in 1974 the declarations of supernatural accomplishments still have great force, but the attitude is more grim.

This rapidity of delivery comes to function as a kind of minimalism, in which the decision to decelerate slightly, or even to momentarily hold-up the line in order to colour an individual word, takes on a marked dramatic significance, prompting an emotional and imaginative engagement on the part of the listener. Two straightforward examples from early in the 1974 performance illustrate the point. In the context of a delivery which is rapid, commanding, energised, yet always with a sense of control, the lyrical drift Gielgud permits on both “Twelve yere since (Miranda) twelve yere since” (I.ii.132) and “he, whom next thy selfe / Of all the world I lov’d...” (I.ii.151-2) powerfully evokes the sense of loss which then colours our hearing of what ensues. The effect is emotionally affecting without seeming either sentimental or irritatingly self-indulgent: both of which are particular traps in playing the role. This minimalism extends to the drawing out of key individual words, which is handled with great subtlety – using slight emphasis and the natural length variations of the vowel sounds, rather than a deliberate effect of vocal colour, such as in a line possessed of highly evocative imagery and a set of elongated vowel sounds to express it: “To cry to th’Sea, that roard to us; to sigh” (I.ii.242).

It can often be difficult for the contemporary listener to detect a character subjectivity in such a vocal performance. The constant revelation of subjective emotional motivation for each line, in the manner we have been conditioned to expect from the visual rhetoric of the film close-up, and which is certainly evident in the later performances considered in this survey, is simply not a prized value in the acting aesthetic of which Gielgud was an outstanding representative. The language, its imagery and the emotional connotations which arise from it, seem to be the subject of the revelation, more

than the underlying emotional state of the character speaking. What seems to the modern auditor to be emotional reserve is certainly in evidence, but the effect is subtle, and affecting: not cold or passionless.

Perhaps not surprising in the context of such a quality, is that in addition to a rapid over-all rate of delivery, the rate of divergence from the average speed is also modest. The calculated average line duration of 3.66 seconds represents a range of durations from 1.98 seconds for the quickest line to 5.9 seconds for the slowest, yielding a relative standard deviation of 28.46%. This relatively low rate of divergence speaks not only to the sense of control and restraint exercised by the speaker but to a concentration on the significance of the verse line as a unit of communication. It should be noted that even Gielgud's 1974 performance for Hall demonstrates that some of Hall's dicta regarding handling of the verse line are not always observed for *The Tempest*. Indeed, 'rules' such as 'only breathe at the end of the line' or 'monosyllables indicate a slowing up'; and even his claim that Gielgud (amongst others) always used an inflection to observe the line-ending, is not in evidence. Nevertheless, the dominance of the shaping of the line over that of any individual word is palpable and this is a key marker of his conception that 'verse-speaking' was part of his responsibilities as a Shakespearean actor.

### **Derek Jacobi – Royal Shakespeare Company, 1982**

The influence of Cicely Berry's work on the development of actors and a company playing style at the Royal Shakespeare Company was well established and at its height by the 1980s (Darnley, 2013: 73). Berry explicitly names Derek Jacobi as one of the leading actors whose work she influenced and indeed Jacobi provided a testimonial for *The Actor and the Text*. (Berry, 1993) Jacobi played Prospero in Ron Daniels' 1982 production for the company in a performance which emphasised the spectacular, mysterious and fearful force of his magic practice, staging his first appearance with twirling robe in a blackout and flash of light. He then "continued to work his spell through Miranda's speech ... only stopping when he spoke his first line". The practice of this magic, it was implied, came at great personal and physical cost, and the urgency of such practice was contextualised by its apparent motivation: a vivid capacity "to harbour true vengeance in his heart and the power to bring it about" (Dymkowski, 2000: 123).

Jacobi's performance was at the time considered the inheritor of Gielgud's 1957 interpretation and there are indeed relationships between the two. Jacobi makes use of

much more exaggerated colouring and enunciation of individual words, as well as a much higher emotional temperature that, along with frequent mid-line pausing, appears to have a greater impact on phrasing. Instances of metrical over-run in the verse structure, such as the 11-beat lines:

She said thou wast my daughter; and thy father  
Was Duke of Millaine, and his onely heire (I.ii.137-8)

is deemed to indicate a ‘conversational’ effect of the verse sliding into prose. Nevertheless, the iambic pulse remains regularly detectable, as do line endings, and, when not overcome by extreme agitation, there is a sense of imperious authority in common with Gielgud, suggestive of an interpretation which takes the power of the magic practice literally as a character-trait, as well as his history as a “Prince of Power”.

The slippage of this self-identity, however, into bouts of almost uncontrollable agitation and rage, is a recurring effect. The opening sequence was marked by extreme agitation, abandoning a traditional reading of the reassuring father in favour of angrily shouting at Miranda with his first line

...be collected.

No more amazement (I.ii.83-4)



**Fig. 4.** Derek Jacobi as Prospero in 1982, directed by Ron Daniels for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The effect was an immediate reduction in authentic status, in contrast to the staging which implied the high status of the masterful magus working the spell of the storm. His agitation has a compounding effect on Miranda's distress, she howls and weeps continuously throughout his first speech, and in response "Tis time / I should informe thee farther" (I.ii.96-7) is played as almost a spontaneous idea, a momentary concession to distract her—only momentary though, as three lines later he is again, inexplicably, screaming at her: "plucke my Magick garment". Urgency continues to pervade the opening sequence and inflects the delivery of lines such as "The very minute byds thee ope thine eare" (I.ii.113) played with an emphasis on the need to tell her immediately, and quickly.

The sense of the character's mutable status-position continues as a theme in the opening scene. His status in relation to his history is lower than that in relation to the creatures of the island. He is at the mercy of his memories, but in control of his servants. Again, this is richly expressed through vocal effect, which veers from a thin-folds sob-quality connoting self-pity on lines such as "Twelve yere since (Miranda) twelve yere since", and "Both, both my Girle. By fowle-play (as thou saist) were we heav'd thence" (I.ii.143-4) to roaring rage in lines such as "...that a brother should / Be so perfidious" (I.ii.150-1) and "thy false uncle" (I.ii.160) and a controlled twang quality<sup>14</sup> to suddenly achieve arch sarcasm on lines such as "He being thus lorded" (I.ii.182) and "Me (poore man) my Librarie / Was dukedome large enough" (I.ii.195-6).

In the key speech "Ye Elves of hills...", Jacobi's pace of delivery is 23% slower than Gielgud, delivering a typical line in 4.73 seconds for a speaking speed of 761 lines per hour. Nevertheless the rate of relative standard deviation (the average rate of variation from the mean) is comparable to Gielgud, at 29.97%. This is unsurprising in a delivery that, though making more of individual words, nevertheless maintains the verse-line. In the immediate lead up to the speech early in Act V, by taking a long pause before "And mine shall" (V.i.24) and adopting a vocal quality that sounds almost bewildered in his question

and shall not my selfe  
One or their kinde, that relish all as sharply,

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<sup>14</sup> Terms of vocal analysis and training derived from the Estill Voice Training: Sob quality is a soft and dark sound, associated with the sobbing cry of an adult who mourns. Sob quality is produced on a lowered larynx and thinned vocal folds. Twang quality has been used by speakers and singer to boost vocal resonance or 'squillo' and is referred to as the speaker's ring or singer's formant. Belt quality (see page 114) is a complex setup combining speech quality, twang quality, a tilted cricoid cartilage and raised larynx.

Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art? (V.i.26-8)

Jacobi's interpretative intent is clearly to display a Prospero bent on vengeance until the very moment of reproach by his spirit-aid. In that context, the subject-position he adopts in the key speech of abjuration is unclear. The vocal structure of the recitation is clear and conventional, beginning low in the voice and progressing higher and higher. Jacobi, however, takes the effect to an extreme, arriving at the absolute upper reaches of his vocal range and remaining there, and shouts throughout the following passage:

To the dread ratling Thunder  
Have I given fire, and rifted Joves stowt Oke  
With his owne Bolt: The strong bass'd promontorie  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluckt up  
The Pyne, and Cedar. Graves at my command  
Have wak'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent Art. (V.i.48-55)

The contrast to the vocal ease and gentleness of tone with which he handles the abjuration itself "but this rough magic ... break my staff" is extreme. Taken as a pair, these choices appear to correspond to the implied struggle with magic practice depicted in the opening. The practice of magic itself makes him angry and agitated, whereas the prospect of giving it up brings him ease.

This is the earliest of the recordings considered here to include extensive use of a 'broken' vocal quality. It is important to draw a distinction here. While Gielgud 'bellows' in loud passages of high passion, the vocal quality remains within a paradigm of a 'produced' sound. As a physiological matter of vocal production, it is very loud speaking rather than shouting. Jacobi undoubtedly introduces a genuinely forced, ugly sound associated with real-life, out-of-control screaming. He permits that vocal duress occasionally throughout the performance and it becomes more prevalent as a signifier of anger or distress in the later performances analysed below.

**Clip 5.** "Ye Elves of hills..." - Derek Jacobi, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1982.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25596/> or scan the QR code.)



## John Wood – Royal Shakespeare Company, 1989

A movement away from Hall’s “sanctity of the line” to the primacy of the individual word in performance approaches to Prospero reached its apotheosis in that of John Wood for Nicholas Hytner at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1989. Dymkowski’s collation of critical responses reflects a sense of the interpretation that is palpable in the vocal performance as preserved in the archival recording. It is a highly emotional, unstable Prospero: histrionic both in the intense display of emotional states, and the volatile and abrupt movement between emotions: a “Freudian wreck battling his own internal demons” (Billington, 2011), “demented.. [and] suspended between smouldering rage at his usurpation and unbridled glee at his alternative ethereal power” (Coveney, 2011). A neurotic Prospero was not itself an entirely new innovation. Dymkowski’s admiration for the performance is based in what she found to be Wood’s encompassing of elements of many extant interpretative approaches to Prospero in a single variety-filled performance. In reviewing the performance, Michael Ratcliffe claimed that he “expected a hysterical eccentric... in this age of psychotic bitter, colonialist Prosperos” (Ratcliffe, 1989) . This is revealing not only of how much the general perception of Prospero had transformed by the 1980s but also of an emerging correlative: between Prospero the neurotic, and Prospero the coloniser.



**Fig. 5.** John Wood as Prospero in 1988, directed by Nicholas Hytner for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Wood's vocal performance is an outlier in its excessive use of vocal colour. It is by far the slowest rendition of those considered here, deploying the most heavy-handed colouring of individual words—a feature which received widespread, though by no means universal, critical condemnation (Dymkowski, 2000: 33). He deploys a massive vocal range (in both pitch and quality) in a state of constant alteration, often from one word to the next, and preferring to veer from one extreme in pitch to the other. The vocal colouring of individual words seems tied to an aspiration for onomatopoeic effect (which received particular criticism for its obviousness), literally howling the word “howl”, roaring the word “roar”, and sending the voice far into its upper-register with a thin-folds falsetto, on the word “hair”, evidently to connote its smallness. However, just as often such colouring seemed related to emotional extremes – from tears to delight—often in a flash—to create an overall sense of far greater weakness and vulnerability than Jacobi. Like Jacobi's, Wood's Prospero is governed by subjective emotional reaction rather than calculating paternal authority, similarly shouting “be collected” in response to Miranda's opening distress, as if sharing her hysteria. However, whereas Jacobi creates a heightened sense of conflict whilst still maintaining an overall persona of authority, Wood is much more often willing to abandon that persona, in favour of desperate vulnerability. Throughout the opening sequence, frequent recourse to Sob quality, when relating details of the betrayal: (e.g. “By fowle-play”, “My brother and thy uncle”, “Of all the world I lov'd”, “he did beleeve / He was indeed the Duke”, “Me (poore) man”) which seemed to connote self-pity, and then abruptly shifting to deep-voiced snarling, or Belt quality ranting to suggest the consequent rage and vengefulness.

Wood's delivery often implies an attention to the structure of the verse line, regardless of punctuation indications. For example, as the key speech rises to its climax through a passage of unpunctuated line-endings, each line-end (with the exception of the feminine-ending “promontorie” is marked with a stress on the word and a brief pause following.

Set roaring warre: To the dread ratling Thunder  
 Have I given fire, and rifted Joves stowt Oke  
 With his owne Bolt: The strong bass'd promontorie  
 Have I made shake, and by the spurs pluckt up  
 The Pyne, and Cedar. Graves at my command

The iambic pulse of alternate weak and strong stresses is frequently evident, but the heavy accenting of individual words results in a cumulative effect of ‘over-stressing’ (i.e. more than five stresses suggested by the iambic metre) of the lines. The overall effect is not

one of the verse's rhythm subsiding into prose but rather heightening into weighty declamation. On this point of over-emphasis, Wood's performance signals a major departure not only from Gielgud, and Hall, but from a tradition of attitudes to verse-speaking dating back to Poel. This use of emphasis, which Hall refers to unfavourably as an "italicised" delivery frequently extends to pronouns and conjunctions, ("Have *I* made shake", "The Pyne, *AND* Cedar"). The over-all effect is profound slowness, delivering a typical line in 6.68 seconds for a speaking speed of 539 lines per hour, a staggering 45% slower than Gielgud. The rate of standard deviation also grows (33.71%) with for example, the slowest line in the passage, "have waked their sleepers, op'd and let'em forth" clocking in at over 12 seconds.

**Clip 6.** "Ye Elves of hils..." - John Wood, Royal Shakespeare Company, 1988. (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25693/> or scan the QR code.)<sup>15</sup>



The extreme slowness is in large part facilitated by transformation of a dictum for 'truthful' verse-speaking—John Barton's insistence that "the words must be found, or coined, or fresh-minted at the moment you utter them" (Barton, 2009)—into a mannerism: a habit which is regularly found on the Shakespearian stage to the present day. Verse lines, especially those containing rich imagery, are broken up in order to 'discover' each word individually, pausing throughout, for example, the line "We / are / such / stuff as / dreams are made on" (IV.i.170-1). The effect is paradoxical. On the one hand, as previously observed, the line structure has clearly been considered, but that line structure is often partially obscured with frequent pausing between words, not just mid-line, but throughout. This forms part of a larger over-all paradox between the 'poetic' and the spontaneous – the result of extreme vocal colouring in the context of heightened emotional states and plentiful pauses to suggest the speaker improvising their lines. It seems to represent an extreme pursuit of an ideal: to make musicality of vocal expression itself seem spontaneous.

The other notable departure in interpretation, significant to this study and evident both in this key speech and throughout the performance, is a sense of wicked delight in the performance of magic. Both Jacobi and Wood shout the passage quoted above, but in Jacobi's case, the broken vocal quality seemed to connote the duress under which such

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<sup>15</sup> This a faint ambient recording only which has been crudely enhanced. Some lines are inaudible, partly obscured by background noise and recording 'hiss'. Listening at a high volume through over-ear headphones is essential.

actions are performed, whereas in Wood the vocal thundering suggests a speaker seized by the power-lust implied by his command of such abilities. As in the Medea speech from which it derives, Wood's rendition of "Ye Elves of hills..." really seems to be a boasting of his accomplishments. This effect takes its place as part of a pattern of transgressive glee noticeable in the vocal performance. The quiet and deliberate summoning of the spirits at the start of the speech seemed to suggest a kind of sensual delight in the spirits, at odds with the contempt Prospero reveals for them a few lines later. This effect is undoubtedly related to a conception of the character as lusting after revenge and viewing the magic primarily as a mechanism for achieving it, with similar effects of transgressive delight when praising Ariel as the harpy and excitement when declaring "my high charms work".

The question of the appropriateness of 'musical' expressiveness in the voice of the classical actor is a source of tension in the contemporary profession. Preliminary interviews for this research project with directors who have worked at the Royal Shakespeare Company reveal a recurring "fear" amongst both actors and directors that attending to the sound of the poetry in rehearsal will result in the actor "sounding like Gielgud". In similar vein Hytner, recalling Wood's Prospero observes:

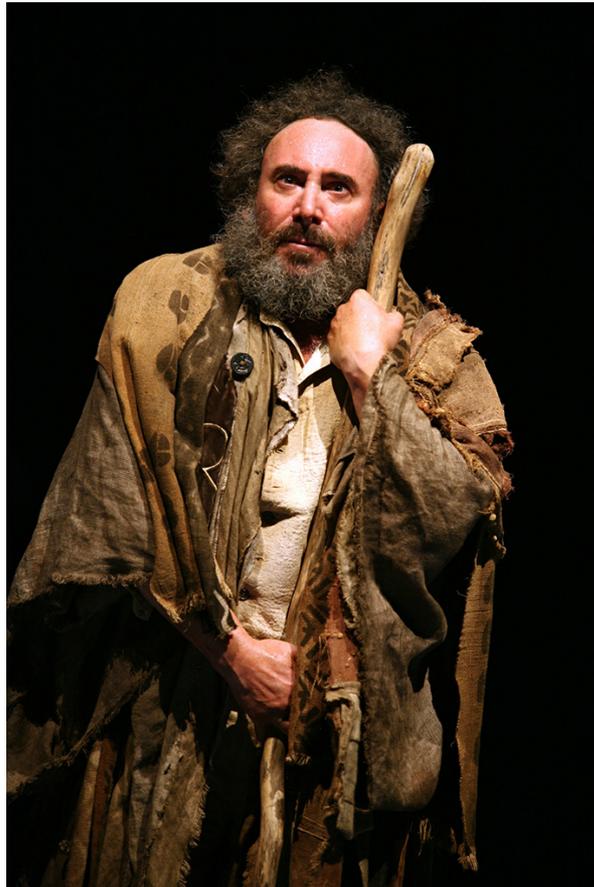
These days, nobody has as many stops on the baroque organ as John had, or even wants them.... it would be impossible to imagine doing it like that now... But I miss John's wild music (Hytner, 2017: 162).

The performances that follow appear to represent a consistent retreat from expressive vocal histrionics. A vocal quality and use of vocal effect to draw attention to the poetic, has been replaced by one designed to connote realism.

### **Antony Sher – Royal Shakespeare Company/Baxter Theatre Centre, 2009**

The Royal Shakespeare Company foregrounded a post-colonial reading of the text in its 2009 collaborative production with the Baxter Theatre of South Africa, in which Prospero was played by the South-African/English actor Antony Sher. Sher acknowledges the impact of Rodenburg on his work over many years (Rodenburg, 1993: xii) and he and the cast worked with the then-current RSC Head of Voice, Lyn Darnley while preparing the production in South Africa (Darnley, 2013: 275). The 'state-of-the-nation' quality the play tends to take on in former colonies was consciously developed to speak of post-apartheid reconciliation through focus on a power-struggle between Prospero and Caliban, in this reading the island's true Master. Accordingly Prospero's

colonising instinct was depicted as the extension of a neurotic “desire for domination [which] extends to his daughter and her future husband” (Billington, 2009).



**Fig. 6.** Antony Sher as Prospero in 2009, directed by Janice Honeyman for the Royal Shakespeare Company/Baxter Theatre Centre.

Listening to the performance, Prospero’s complex attachments, to Ariel and Miranda in particular, as much as his burning resentment which “boils inside him” (Kellaway, 2009) are readily evident. The line structure of the verse is more clearly marked than in John Wood’s performance—though less so than in those of Gielgud or Jacobi—and the colouring of individual words is less pronounced. However, the degree of disruption through mid-line pausing is the greatest yet, suggesting a desire to both observe the verse line and simultaneously render it naturalistic.

Such an intent is suggested also by the vocal qualities in evidence. Sher exhibits extreme variation in vocal quality, again often through abrupt changes, but those effects are clearly tied to shifting emotional states, rather than a desire to render the onomatopoeic effects in the poetic image that are so often evident in the voices of Jacobi and especially Wood. For example, abrupt shifts are discernible from a breathy high-larynx vocal quality connoting paternal—even patronising—compassion, to sudden

snarling rage in the long Act One speeches. In fact, a variety of ‘broken’ vocal qualities are frequently in evidence, far exceeding Jacobi’s use of such qualities. A sense of ‘music’ in the voice so frequently commented on in Gielgud, evident in Jacobi, and in a different, excessive register in Wood, is by the time of Sher’s performance completely eradicated. This reading has less recourse to neurosis than Wood, but ever-greater engagement with grief, guilt and vulnerability.

In the “Ye Elves of hils...” speech, Sher delivers a typical line in 5.27 seconds, for an equivalent speaking speed of 683 lines per hour: more rapid than Wood but slower than Jacobi. However, the increased use of mid-line pausing yields a broader variety of tempi: with individual line durations in a range from 2.91 to 8.93 seconds. This broader range is reflected by the fact that although Sher’s overall speaking speed is some 21% faster than Wood’s, the rate of relative standard deviation from average line duration is comparable to (and actually slightly greater than) Wood’s (Sher: 33.91%, Wood: 33.71%). The attachment of Sher’s Prospero to magic practice is reflected in the vocal qualities deployed. As in Wood’s performance, a bellowing grandiosity as the speech approaches its climax, suggests a genuine rush of feelings of omnipotence, by contrast to the abjuration passage, in which hesitation and greater pausing, along with occasional recourse to a broken vocal quality imply suffering even in contemplating the prospect of letting go of the staff and book.

**Clip 7.** “Ye Elves of hils...” - Antony Sher, Royal Shakespeare Company/Baxter Theatre, 2009.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25606/> or scan the QR code.)



### **Simon Russell Beale – Royal Shakespeare Company, 2016**

The pursuit of a new vulnerability in Prospero reaches its apotheosis in Simon Russell Beale’s performance at the Royal Shakespeare Company for the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in 2016. By now this has gone beyond the desire to portray inner-conflict in the character to actually presenting the character as fundamentally weak—a victim of both his enemies and his own irrationality. Russell Beale transformed Prospero’s comforting of his distressed daughter (I.ii) into hysterically distressed berating. He burst into uncontrollable sobs when Ariel asks if he loves him (IV.i) and finally utters two wordless braying howls of agony before declaring, “the rarer

action is in virtue” (V.i). This last effect perhaps provides the best clue to the interpretative intent. Russell Beale’s Prospero appeared to navigate not just the status of victim, but the mind-set of victim-hood. It is the self-image of ‘innocent’ and ‘wronged’ that his Prospero appeared to find the most painful renunciation. In *The Guardian*, Michael Billington saw this anguish as motivated by “pity” and “an aching sense of loss” (Billington, 2016).

In such a conception of the role, Prospero appears to derive no comfort from the spectacular supernatural powers he has acquired—more sinned against than sinning, burning with resentment and self-pity, he fights almost literally with the fibres of his being to avoid relinquishing the victim-status with which he has comforted himself through twelve years of exile. Phyllida Lloyd and Harriet Walter’s contemporaneous decision to present *The Tempest* as the culmination of their Shakespearean triptych set in a modern-day women’s prison, referencing the remarkable case of the rehabilitation of the Weather Underground bank-robbery getaway driver, Judith Clark—whose journey from violent rage to model prisoner has received public attention (Vincentelli, 2017)—seemed to be taking a very different strategy to make a similar point, and in so doing both productions continue what is by now a perceptible modern performance tradition. Prospero is a tormented figure, his apparent authority on the island a mask for his underlying powerlessness. Indeed, Russell Beale seemed more a spectator to Ariel’s feats than their mastermind, an effect which may have been exacerbated by the production’s ground-breaking reliance on digital animation effects, which involved constant live-capture of the actor playing Ariel.

This relative powerlessness had a palpable effect on the delivery of the climactic “Ye Elves of hills...” speech. Uniquely in the performances considered here, the voice begins high and tremulous, as if pleading with the elves rather than summoning them. In a performance that often has recourse to shouting, it remains a relatively quiet reading of the speech as a whole, rising to no discernibly elevated level of volume or tempo as the boasts of necromantic feats accumulate. This Prospero seems fearful of his own exploits; timid in the presence of them, and eager to assure the spirit figures he addresses (or possibly the audience) that he really can be trusted to break his staff (and did so immediately after the speech, despite still having several commands yet to issue to Ariel before the play’s end). Not surprisingly, given the underplayed, and overtly ‘personalised’ reading of the speech, this is the slowest reading considered here aside from Wood’s, delivering a typical line in 5.8 seconds for an equivalent speaking speed of 621 lines per

hour. The telling addendum to this is the massive rate of relative standard deviation, at 48.55%.

Comparison of Simon Russell Beale's recent interpretation of the role to those cited above, suggests the presence of trend patterns, both in psychological conceptions of the role, and in approaches to the speaking of the verse. If one regards John Wood's baroque vocal styling as an outlier, then the speed of verse-speaking has continued to slow over recent decades, a trend which continues to the present day. The use of mid-line pauses steadily increases, both in frequency and length, as does the frequency of occasions of 'ignoring' the end of the verse line entirely, running through it on to the next line, as if prose. In Russell Beale's case, the disregard of the end of the verse-line is constant, phrasing is almost exclusively shaped by punctuation. With a combination of regular upward inflections to mark the end of a sentence, and often a curiously matter-of-fact, but pregnant, delivery, the phrasing seems to pursue a goal not merely of rendering the verse in the rhythms of prose, but in those of every-day speech.



**Fig. 7.** Simon Russell Beale as Prospero in 2016, directed by Gregory Doran for the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Initially trained as a singer and musician, Russell Beale himself explicitly disclaims any recourse to musical sensibility when rehearsing or performing Shakespearean verse (O'Kane, 2012: 247). His performance is undoubtedly the least interested of the five in variety in vocal expression, both in terms of intent to colour individual words and poetic devices, and of the voice-as-instrument's innate pitch and tonal variety. The broken sound of a voice under duress first identified in Jacobi's

performance is, in the case of Russell Beale, a virtually constant presence: in turns husky and breathy, gravelly or distressed shouting. As such, and in the context of Russell Beale's recourse to wordless vocal and emotional effect, described earlier, the interpretation may appear to conform to Anne Barton's diagnosis that Prospero's words alone do not reveal his subjectivity. In *The Independent*, Paul Taylor found the climactic series of howls prior to "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance" to be "shatteringly expressive of the conflict within. The essential loneliness of the hero is matchlessly, hauntingly captured" (Taylor, 2016).

**Clip 8.** "Ye Elves of hills..." - Simon Russell Beale, Royal Shakespeare Company, 2016.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25604/> or scan the QR code.)



### **The Evolution of 'Verse-speaking' in British Contemporary Shakespearean Performance.**

As further context for the performances considered in the statistical study of the "Ye Elves of hills..." speech, Michael Hordern's recording of the role under the direction of George Rylands for a Marlowe Society recording in 1960 has also been analysed. Hordern's studio recording demonstrates a more noticeable use of caesura and achieves a pace slightly slower than but comparable to Gielgud's 1974 performance. Taken together with the 1959 recording by Gielgud, they provide a useful indication of how Poel's precepts had survived and evolved into the mid-twentieth century. Though not shown in the dataset and charts here, for further comparison, comparable speeches from both Laurence Olivier's performance (as Othello) and Frank Finlay's performance (as Iago) in the National Theatre's 1964 production of *Othello* have been considered.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Though mostly recalled today from the less satisfying 1965 film adaptation, Olivier's famous stage performance of Othello is far more authentically preserved in the extraordinary 1964 4-disc sound recording by RCA Victor, which accurately captures the performance as it was delivered on stage. George Marek's accompanying liner note to the album provides a useful insight into the unusual lengths to which he and his colleagues went in order to capture an authentic stage performance by the actors in the greatly enhanced acoustic conditions of a recording studio. "... after seeing several performances we then prepared the large Decca studio in Broadhurst Gardens, London, as a stage, coming as closely as we could to the actual setting of the Old Vic Theatre. Exits and entrances were constructed approximately where they were on the stage. We experimented for a day with microphone placements, without the actors there, placing these so that no matter how or where an actor moved, his speech could be caught. When we had assembled the cast we told them that they were to give a performance, that they were to imagine they were playing in the theatre, and that under no circumstances were they to pay any attention to the microphones. Indeed, they would not know nor would we tell them where the microphones were put."

Olivier's approach to verse-speaking exhibits far more frequent and extreme variation in pitch, tone, and volume than Gielgud's and in this respect the Jacobi and Wood performances should be considered stylistically as following the example of Olivier more than Gielgud. Nevertheless, Olivier achieves comparable speeds of delivery to Gielgud with a mean line duration of 3.53 seconds. Finlay is slightly slower at a mean line duration of 4.10 seconds. Considered together, Gielgud '59, Hordern '60 and Olivier and Finlay '64 provide a reasonable base-line for mid-century speaking-speeds influenced by Poel's precepts and disseminated by Hall's Royal Shakespeare Company.

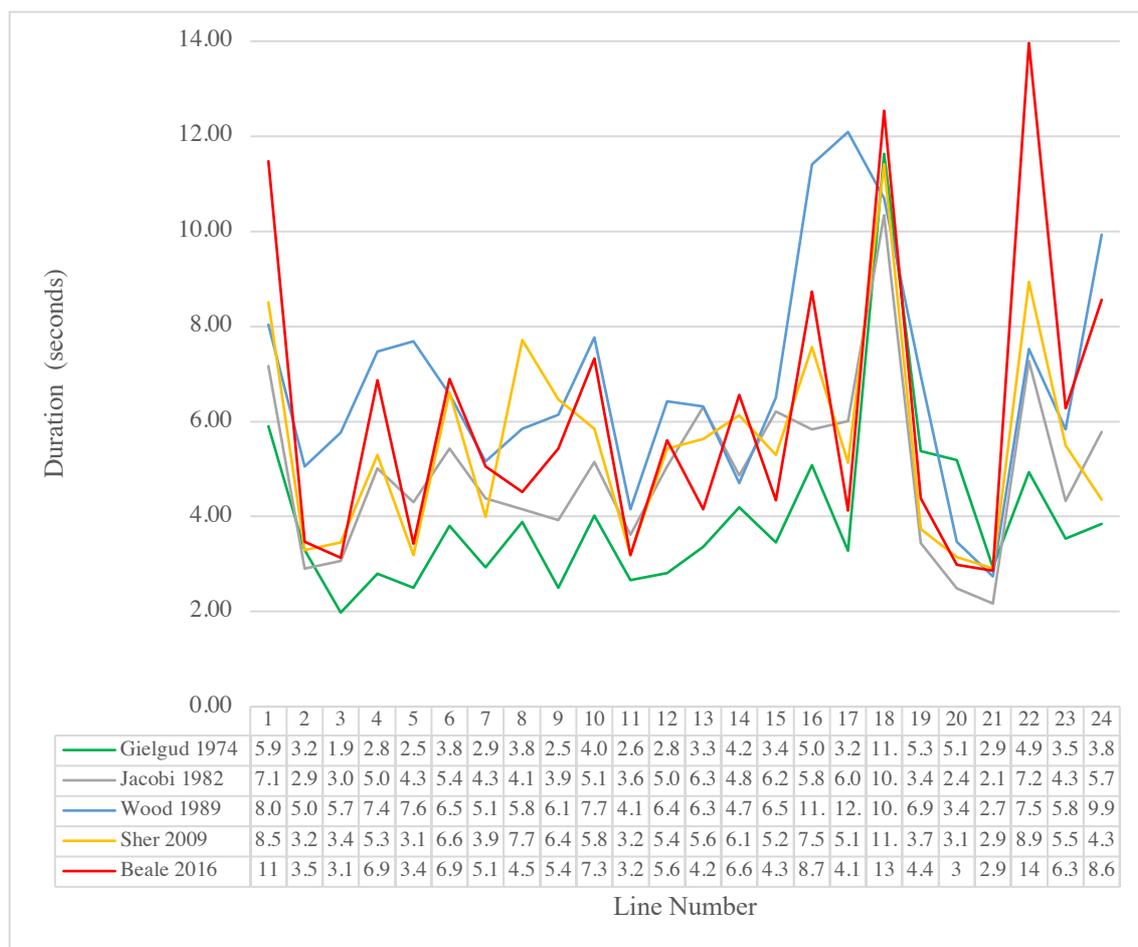
Some tentative conclusions may be drawn regarding the evolving approach to Shakespearean verse-speaking, in the contemporary UK classical theatre tradition.

1. Emphasising of individual words, causing them to 'stand out' from the verse structure, becomes increasingly overt.
2. Un-mediated vocal qualities such as the shouting, breathiness, 'growling' and a husky brokenness are deployed with increasing frequency.
3. The requirement to shape the speech through reference to the structure of the line diminishes in significance. Correspondingly, long mid-line pauses become more prevalent.
4. In addition to an overall slowing in speaking speed, the variation in pace is greater—i.e. individual lines diverge from the mean speed with greater frequency and rate of deviation.
5. A greater interest in exploring individual sounds and a declining interest in delivering the verse-line as a single but cumulative unit of energy is clearly evident in the recordings, and increasingly the actor seems to derive emotional energy from individual words rather than the over-riding rhythm.

<i>THE TEMPEST</i> Act V, Sc i		ACTOR/YEAR					
	<b>Gielgud 1959</b>	<b>Hordern 1960</b>	<b>Gielgud 1974</b>	<b>Jacobi 1982</b>	<b>Wood 1989</b>	<b>Sher 2009</b>	<b>Beale 2016</b>
<b>LINE #</b>	<b>DURATION (SECONDS)</b>						
<b>1</b>	<b>4.23</b>	<b>5.37</b>	<b>5.90</b>	<b>7.16</b>	<b>8.03</b>	<b>8.51</b>	<b>11.48</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.46</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>5.06</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>3.47</b>
3	2.15	2.44	<b>1.98</b>	3.06	5.77	3.46	3.13
4	2.92	3.18	2.80	5.01	7.47	5.30	6.86
<b>5</b>	<b>2.92</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>4.30</b>	<b>7.69</b>	<b>3.19</b>	<b>3.43</b>
6	3.43	3.57	3.80	5.43	6.57	6.61	6.9
7	2.37	2.51	2.93	4.38	5.16	3.99	5.06
8	2.89	2.92	3.89	4.15	5.85	7.71	4.51
9	2.90	3.02	2.50	3.92	6.14	6.47	5.43
<b>10</b>	<b>3.24</b>	<b>4.14</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>5.15</b>	<b>7.77</b>	<b>5.84</b>	<b>7.33</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>4.16</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>3.18</b>
12	3.35	4.43	2.81	5.05	6.43	5.43	5.60
<b>13</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>6.30</b>	<b>6.32</b>	<b>5.63</b>	<b>4.16</b>
14	3.41	3.82	4.20	4.86	4.70	6.13	6.56
<b>15</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>6.21</b>	<b>6.51</b>	<b>5.29</b>	<b>4.34</b>
16	3.77	6.09	5.08	5.83	11.41	7.56	8.74
<b>17</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>4.73</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>6.01</b>	<b>12.09</b>	<b>5.13</b>	<b>4.12</b>
18	7.37	9.71	11.63	10.34	10.70	11.41	12.54
19	5.57	4.29	5.37	3.44	6.96	3.74	4.38
20	3.59	4.50	5.19	2.49	3.47	3.14	2.99
21	3.53	2.60	2.93	<b>2.17</b>	<b>2.74</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>2.86</b>
22	6.28	6.24	4.93	<b>7.27</b>	7.52	<b>8.93</b>	<b>13.96</b>
23	4.30	3.12	3.54	4.33	5.83	5.50	6.27
24	4.17	3.39	3.84	5.78	9.93	4.35	8.56
25	3.82	2.03	2.59	5.83	4.29	3.17	1.85
<b>Total Speech Duration</b>	91.7	97.6	98.5	125.0	168.6	135.9	147.7
<b>Mean Line Duration</b>	3.50	3.73	3.66	4.73	6.68	5.27	5.80
<b>Speaking Speed - Lines Per Hour</b>	1029	964	983	761	539	683	621
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	0.94	1.12	1.04	1.41	2.25	1.79	2.81
<b>Relative Standard Deviation %</b>	26.94	29.87	28.46	29.84	33.71	33.91	48.55
<b>Slowest Line Speaking Speed - lines per hour</b>	6.28	6.24	5.90	7.27	12.09	8.93	13.96
<b>Quickest Line Speaking Speed - lines per hour</b>	573	577	610	495	298	403	258
<b>Quickest Line Speaking Speed - lines per hour</b>	2.15	2.44	1.98	2.17	2.74	2.91	2.86
<b>"Hamlet test" - Hamlet Nominal Running Time</b>	03:41:33	03:56:27	03:52:00	04:59:41	07:02:54	05:34:03	06:07:07

Fig. 8. “Ye Elves of hills...” – Dataset: line duration in modern British performance.

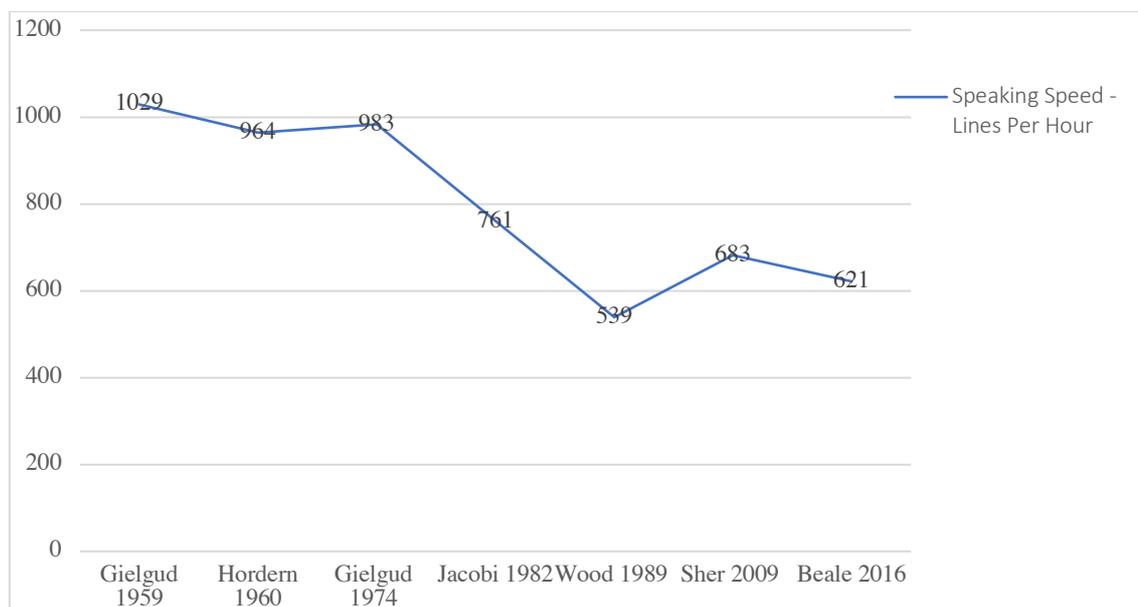
That such limited data-gathering tends to support the contention of Peter Hall and others that verse-speaking has slowed on the British stage in the last fifty years is not in itself surprising. The rate of decrease, however, is dramatic, and it is a trend which continues to the present: from Gielgud’s 1029 lines per hour in 1959 to Russell Beale’s 621 lines per hour in 2016. It is more surprising to note that the dictum, from Hall and Barton onwards, that monosyllabic lines tend to be slower than others, is in no way supported by the data, regardless of the speaker.



**Fig. 9.** “Ye Elves of hills...” line duration in performance delivery by John Gielgud (1974), Derek Jacobi (1982), John Wood (1989), Antony Sher (2009) and Simon Russell Beale (2016).

By way of further illustration, in order to give such calculations of pace-of-delivery some meaning for the reader, included in the dataset is a calculation dubbed “The *Hamlet* Test” – i.e. the time it would take to perform *Hamlet* – the longest of the plays – in its entirety at a given pace of delivery. While Gielgud and Hordern spoke the verse at a speed which equates to a plausible running-time for an uncut production of *Hamlet*, (around three-and-a-half to four hours) the speeds adopted by leading actors in recent decades render putative running times for *Hamlet* that would be ludicrous. The data

reveals not only a slowing overall rate of delivery but also an increasing rate of divergence from the average line duration: a further indication of the diminishing importance of the verse-line to the shaping of delivery.



**Fig. 10.** “Ye Elves of hills...” Speaking speed - lines per hour.

What this brief statistical survey does not directly depict is the amount of silence inserted into each line, though naturally, a slower line generally indicates more frequent and longer silences between words. What is clearly evident is an ever-more intense search for the *sub-textual* life of the character, both the psychological motivation for each utterance and a sense of the character’s *unspoken* meaning. The marked shift from the performance of authority, to one of vulnerability under duress implies an increasing interest in the subjectivity of the speaker, in which the incantatory and ritual properties of the speech are increasingly rejected in favour of a conception of the speech as utterance, by a subject, to other subjects. This is noticeable for example in the impulse of the speaker, growing over time, to address each of the categories of spirits individually, forming a distinct subject-relationship to each group. In some performances, including Simon Russell Beale’s and Jonathan Slinger’s preceding interpretation for the RSC in 2012 as well as Tim McMullan’s at the Wanamaker Theatre in 2016, this goes so far as to completely break down the single rhetorical impulse of the opening line:

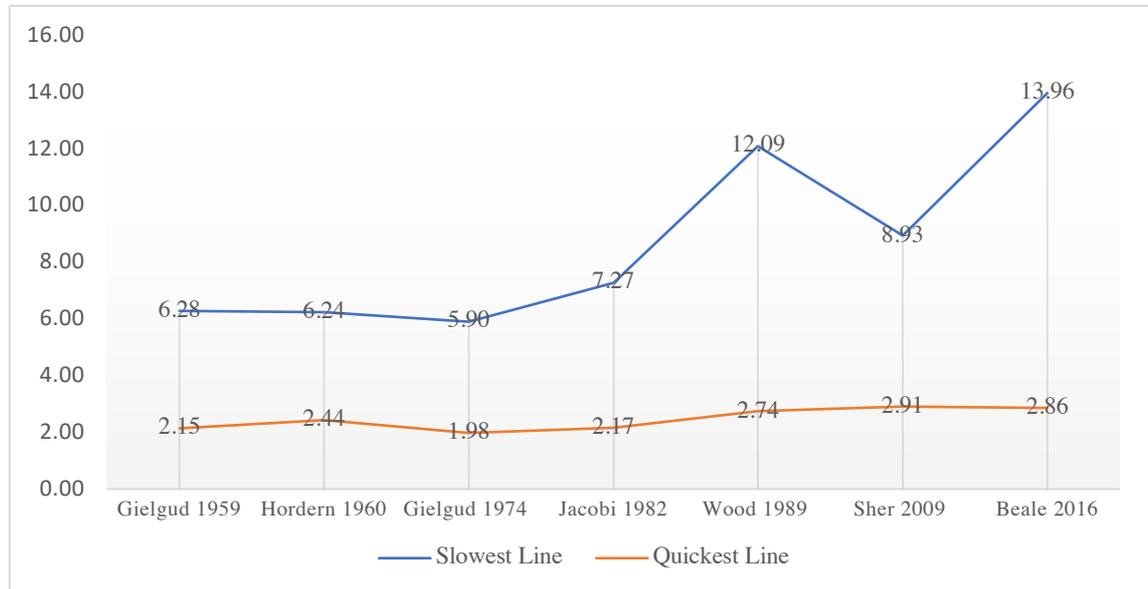
Ye Elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,

into four distinct subjective addresses:

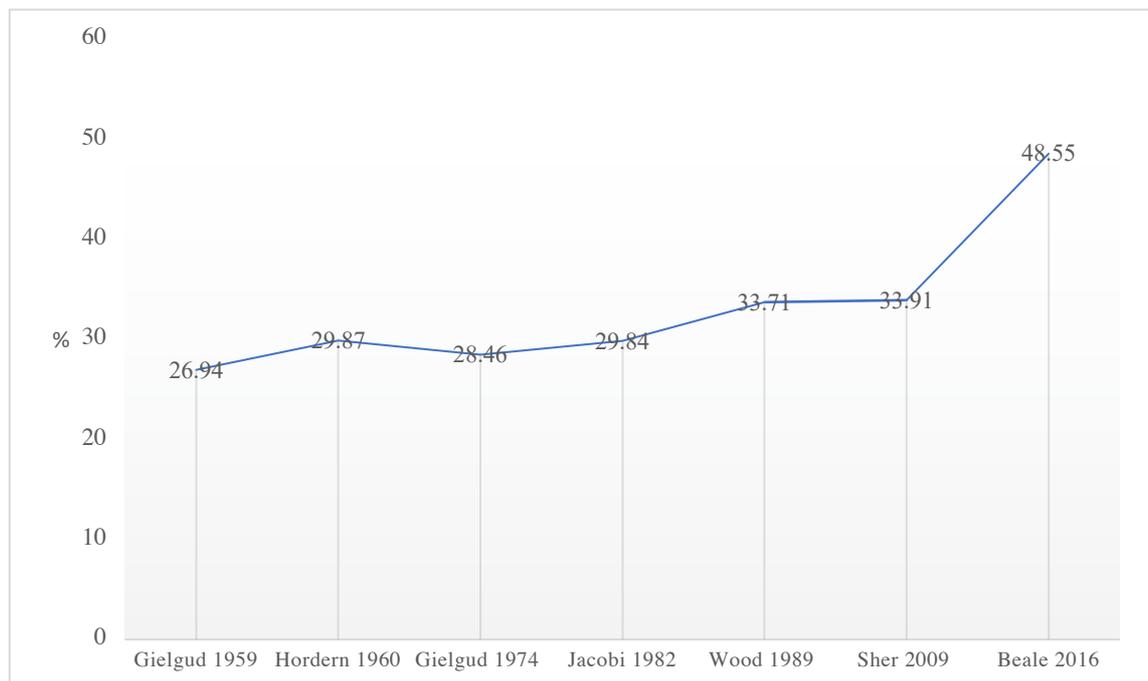
Ye Elves of hills,

Brooks,

Not only did McMullan pause after each and adjust his eye line to a different part of the stage, but pointed with his staff in four different directions over the course of the line.



**Fig. 11.** “Ye Elves of hills...” Line duration (seconds): slowest and quickest lines.



**Fig. 12.** “Ye Elves of hills...” Relative (percentage) rate of standard deviation.

There appears to be a correlation between the rejection of authority as part of the character persona in favour of a vulnerable subjectivity, and the declining dominance of the line as an indivisible unit of speech and energy. The dominance of the verse-line as a unit of energy implies the subject’s mastery of the idea. Ideas emerge from the subject into language fully-formed, even if those ideas are ones of juxtaposition, conflict and

doubt. On the other hand, the choice to allow the individual word to dominate, facilitates the search for sub-textual life: it implies that the idea is painfully constructed from fragments, struggling to emerge from the subconscious into full expression. Knowledge is hard-won, and remains in doubt even after it has been acquired. This poses a particular conundrum for Prospero, whose *persona* proclaims supreme command of knowledge, and therefore of other subjects. Indeed, everyone in his world is subject to him, and their acknowledgement of such status is not required, or even desired, in order to confirm that status.

### **The Liberal Humanist Subject**

A central impulse behind the founding of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and a preoccupation of successive leaders since, has been the establishing and development not only of a permanent ensemble, but of true ensemble practice, incorporating training in classical acting into the production work. Hall's recruitment of Saint-Denis to run the 'studio' was intended as a step towards this vision. The engagement of actors on three-year contracts in repertory productions was instituted with this ideal in mind, and Darnley has written extensively about the various ensuing initiatives to pursue this goal – and the obstacles that have been encountered, including the short-lived RSC academy, envisaged by Adrian Noble as a paid training-ensemble bridge from formal actor training into the main-stage work of the company. Noble recruited Declan Donnellan (Darnley, 2013: 124), already by this time widely-celebrated internationally, who had been pursuing an alternative ensemble approach to Shakespeare with his partner Nick Ormerod since 1981 with their company Cheek by Jowl. Their explicit agenda, to re-examine classical texts in a contemporary light through an aesthetic that privileges the body and presence of the actor, both as individual and ensemble, set their work apart from most Shakespeare productions on UK main stages, and continues to do so. Donnellan's work is unencumbered by the expectations routinely placed on the major companies to deliver Shakespeare 'in full' for a large audience, enabling him, as Maria Shevtsova observes, to take "comparably bold strokes in how he abridges texts for the sake of finding their inner core ... clearing the path for his actors' attentive, precise work" (Shevtsova and Innes, 2009: 68).

For Donnellan, ensemble work is key not only to the rehearsal process, but also part of the on-stage aesthetic, and his productions, including the 1988 *Tempest*, frequently 'stage' the ensemble, not only to foster an atmosphere in which the audience are

constantly reminded that they are participating with the performers in an act of performance, but also to clarify the story-telling and heighten the emotional stakes of what might otherwise be static or merely expositional passages. Dymkowski observes the particular benefits of this approach to Prospero's expositional narration (I.ii), in which Prospero's engagement with the actors playing Antonio, Gonzalo and Alonso as he described their role in the backstory, served to heighten the sense, increasingly present in modern productions, that Prospero is not merely recalling events, but re-living past betrayals (Dymkowski, 2000: 130). The production unambiguously deployed a backstage *mise-en-scène* to explicate a view of the play's meta-theatrical textual and structural references, in which Prospero as a "tyrannical young actor-manager" was an omnipresent and often malevolent presence, evolving over the course of the performance from a contemporary archetype of the arrogant young theatre director, into a lank-haired, red-eyed Dickensian villain (Dymkowski, 2000: 30).

Donnellan, of all the British Shakespeare directors, has proven a most eloquent pedagogue of acting technique. His book, *The Actor and the Target*, originally published in Russian, now widely read and influential in English, adopts Stanislavski's literary device of the hypothetical actor (in this case *Irina*) her process and the obstacles she faces as she works on both Shakespeare and Chekhov (Donnellan, 2005). His concept of the ever-changing "target" of the actor's intentionality revises and expands Stanislavskian notions of action and objective, to create a process for actors which lends itself effortlessly to two tasks that have regularly seemed contradictory in the British tradition: the unself-conscious consciousness required for dynamic ensemble playing, and the capacity to motivate and energise large and complex passages of heightened language. Donnellan maintains a commitment to the observation of verse structures, while adopting an attitude to the relationship between verse speaking and performance that is free and organic: he "scrupulously follows the rhythms of Shakespeare's blank verse, but has it spoken in conversational tones" (Mitter and Shevtsova, 2002: 234).

Acting exercises described in the book reflect Donnellan's interest in the verse, but his philosophical position on the function of language affirms his commitment to an acting aesthetic of intense contemporary realism, in which the inner impulse must be found to motivate all actions including the act of speech.

Words don't work. Words do not do what they are supposed to do. Measured against our expectations, words are inadequate and even banal. Trying to express in words what we need or feel is like knitting a scarf with tree trunks. We may want to tell the truth, but words lie, they have no option. Feelings and words live in different

dimensions, like polar bears and whales. Speech, like any other reaction, always ends in failure. Words can start to do wonderful things only when we realize that they can hardly do anything at all. Of course Shakespeare's language cannot express the immensity of what Juliet feels. That is precisely why Shakespeare is a genius. Like Chekhov, he clearly sees the distance between what we want to say and the meagre words we have to say it. More specifically they see the impossibility of ever being truly heard. (Donnellan, 2005: 180)

This statement appears to be a staggering departure from what Shakespeare (or any Elizabethan) would have understood to be the nature of his dramatico-poetic art. It is deeply antithetical to the rhetorical philosophies within which Shakespeare composed, which are based upon a view of what Neil Rhodes refers to as the "livingness of speech": a conception of speech in which "language becomes inseparable from the animating principle itself" (Rhodes, 2004: 18-19). Such a value-system is an essential foundation for the ensuing belief that 'expression' in the heightened language of rhetoric is uniquely capable not merely of describing life experience but of re-creating it.

The context for Donnellan's declaration, and the assumption which underlies the exercises described in his manual, is that the natural condition of the actor in the rehearsal room is to be 'blocked' in her search for character, emotional truth, and spontaneity, and that the director's role is to develop strategies for 'unblocking'. The even-more-controversial claims Donnellan proceeds to make; that language is as inhibiting of emotional expression as it is revealing of it, and that this phenomenon increases proportionally with intensity of feeling: "The more that the stakes rise, the more the word tends to strangle the feeling" (Donnellan, 2005: 181) are explicitly contextualised as aids to the struggling actor, swamped by the overwhelming complexity and richness of the language. Donnellan's conception of the relationship between thought and speech may seem radical, representing a sea-change in main-stage approaches to acting Shakespeare in the United Kingdom. However, the principal difference between his formulation and that of his contemporaries is one of clarity of explication, rather than underlying philosophical position. The assumption of the presence of an inner-subject, innately silent, compelled by the need to inadequately express in words the intensity and complexity of their interior emotional experience, is perfectly in accord, for example, with John Barton's insistence on "fresh-minting" each phrase, and that the reason for the presence of heightened language may be found in the characters need to 'reach' for such language in response to given circumstances (Barton, 2009: 18, 110, 12).

Donnellan's manifesto is, in fact, a near-perfect expression of what Catherine Belsey observes to be defining features of the identity of the subject of Liberal Humanism,

a figure for whom language is, inevitably, mere utterance; utterance that is destined always to be an imperfect refraction of the speaker's 'true' meaning. The true identity of such a subject, "tragically locked within its own silence" (Belsey, 1985: 52) lies in the wordless, the unspoken; the subtext in dramatic literature and the sub- and un-conscious of psychoanalysis. From Stanislavski onwards, theatre practitioners have embraced this orthodoxy with conviction. Truth on stage, it is thought, lies in the interrogation of the unspoken. From Peter Hall's rebellious diversions from his formal Leavisite training to the work of Dadie Rylands and the Marlowe Society, on through the twentieth-century history of British stage-practice, dominated by Pinter's *pauses* and *silences*, and "Beckett's doomed figures [who] speak without signifying" (ibid), the richly expressive and rhetorical palette of Shakespearean poetry has been held in tension with this commitment to unspoken 'inwardness'.

On her way to an argument about gender and power in the subject of Renaissance drama, Belsey posits that Elizabethan soliloquy represents an experiment in portraying the 'inner-life' of the dramatic character in the context of the emblematic tradition of drama in which Shakespeare and his contemporaries were steeped. The implication of Catherine Belsey's work on the subject of Liberal Humanism in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is that, for cultural and historical reasons, the modern reader tends to perceive in Shakespeare the representation of a paradigm of subjectivity that in fact had yet to fully come into existence at the time of writing. Belsey identifies a transitional period in the history of theatre practice, from when James Burbage built The Theatre, until the theatres were closed in 1642, which "brought into conjunction and indeed collision" emblematic and "classic realist" modes of representation (Belsey, 1985: 26).

The emblematic dramas she has in mind are the late mediaeval and Renaissance morality plays, in which the moral struggle of mankind is played out as a conflict between cosmic Vices and Virtues. The main character is the terrain on which such a battle is fought, rather than the protagonist-subject of the drama. "Classic realism", she identifies as a mode which begins with the illusionistic dramas of the Restoration, in which for the first time an aesthetic project of inculcating the suspension of disbelief in the audience—creating the illusion that the events on stage are 'real'—came to dominate theatre practice. She points out that the tools for creating such a theatre had gradually been introduced in the Jacobean period by Inigo Jones, but that the discontinuity provided by the Interregnum and the practical need for an entirely new set of playhouses, which capitalised on the possibilities for scenic illusion, meant a sea-change in playing style and purpose. As she

observes, this transformation was a deliberate aesthetic project, theorised for example by Dryden. She makes the case that the Liberal Humanist subject was coming fitfully into being during Shakespeare's lifetime, and was a fully-established hegemony by the time the theatres reopened, when Dryden and Davenant felt it necessary to re-write *The Tempest*.

As twentieth-century English acting traditions for Shakespeare followed English literature criticism in a shifting interest from the mood inculcated by poetic form to interrogation of underlying meaning as a fixed but hidden product of the poet's intent, the dominance of the Liberal Humanist subject as a paradigm of character identity became more readily evident on English stages. English Shakespeare practitioners have been engaged in a struggle to manifest their instinctive belief in the emotional force of the language 'as it is spoken' in theatre practice, in the face of an evolving cultural aesthetic that increasingly demands to *see* the subject engaged in the struggle with the insufficiency of words in the face of the supremacy of their authentic, interior meaning and feeling. As we have seen, the temporal duration of the verse line grows steadily longer as the actor creates more and more silent spaces around the language in order to depict this struggle.

## Practice Laboratory

### The Disrupted Verse Line in Prospero: Implications for Breath

The precepts for verse-speaking which have been codified by practitioners and pedagogues, surveyed in the preceding chapter, were occasionally interrogated, and sometimes adopted in the practice laboratories, to test their application to the unique demands of the late verse. The laboratory transcribed here followed a morning session in which Prospero's Act One speeches had been analysed structurally.<sup>17</sup> That structural analysis informs the somatic implications for breathing and mental-state that were then explored here.

*Pros.* Being once perfected how to graunt suites,  
how to deny them: who t'advance, and who  
To trash for over-topping; new created  
The creatures that were mine, I say, or chang'd 'em,  
Or els new form'd 'em; having both the key,  
Of Officer, and office, set all hearts i'th state  
To what tune pleas'd his eare, that now he was  
The Ivy which had hid my princely Trunck,  
And suckt my verdure out on't: Thou attend'st not?

**McArthur:** Speaking this is actually quite 'difficult', in terms of where you breathe: there's a lot of mid-line breaks/breaths. It suggests broken, interrupted thought. It forces you to make tricky decisions about breath. And no matter where you do it, you always feel like you're chasing something. You find yourself building up 'platforms' or 'waves'. Building up and stopping, building up and stopping: forward-and-back in mini-waves. And the cumulative effect of this is that it's tiring to the *mind* to say it. It connects you very strongly to a kind of fever or anxiety.

**Hurrell:** Can we contemplate in relation to this, Peter Hall's dictum that you "never breathe mid-line"?

**McArthur:** You mean he discounts caesuras as potential breath-points altogether?

**Hurrell:** Yes.

**McArthur:** Well... I think he's made that up (they laugh).

**Hurrell:** It was a precept conceived in the context of an idea of verse-speaking in which the speaker has the capacity, as Hall claimed of Gielgud, to deliver three lines to the breath, so there is a lot less breathing going on in general. But still, it does seem inappropriate to this kind of speech. It feels like a precept that was

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<sup>17</sup> The scholarly context for the structural analysis conducted with the co-informant is developed in the next chapter.

developed with the regularity of the sonnets and the early and mid-career verse in mind. Let's test it for these passages.

**Clip 9.** "To trash for over-topping" and "I thus neglecting worldly ends" – Practice laboratory: testing various breath points. (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25660/> or scan the QR code.)



### McArthur:

I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated  
To closenes, and the bettering of my mind  
with that, which but by being so retir'd  
Ore-priz'd all popular rate: in my false brother  
Awak'd an evill nature, and my trust  
Like a good parent, did beget of him  
A falsehood in its contrarie, as great  
As my trust was, which had indeede no limit,  
A confidence sans bound.

Repeatedly, the stuttering monosyllables lead in to open vowels. It's as if he's so energised by his anxiety about this story that the monosyllabics are actually causing him to stutter.

...set all hearts i'th state  
To what tune pleas'd his eare, that now he was  
The Ivy...

The mind is stuttering. Here it is again:

with that, which but by being so retir'd  
Ore-priz'd all popular rate: in my false brother  
Awak'd an evill nature

So he got through something in order to get to something that is very difficult for him to say. And that indicates that it's still very difficult for him to recall. Shakespeare would not write such an incredibly difficult, monosyllabic line by mistake, just before he says one of the most personally important and sorrowful and difficult things for him to say, which is that his *beloved* brother (he whom "of all the world I loved") betrayed him.

**Hurrell:** So this is a good example of something we wrote into our 'dogma' precepts,<sup>18</sup> as something we would focus on, which is that we are going to hone in on the moments that are syntactically 'incomprehensible', because we assume that at such points the words have been arranged particularly for their sonic effect. The sense breaks down, or starts to crumble, and the sensate feeling of the sounds dominates. And it's that precise staccato passage that you're identifying that is an

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<sup>18</sup> See page 43.

example of this technique. The entire sentence is a parenthetical aside, and its words are jumbled. When sense goes sideways, the sounds are of particular interest to us.

*McArthur reads it again.*

**Hurrell:** The effect of the jumbled thought order is, it seems to me, to create a ‘haunting’. It’s a poetic construction of a haunting or nightmare. He tries one image but it opens up another image. These images keep replaying themselves and expanding and transforming.

**McArthur:** The experience of speaking it is like waves crashing on top of each other and accumulating, because whenever he thinks of the ‘worst’ thing, it causes him to think of something even worse and he has to add and extend. ‘My feelings can’t contain or order themselves, such is the perfidiousness of the brother and the horror of his betrayal.’ It’s almost as if he’s losing breath.

**Hurrell:** The lack of obvious natural places to breathe means that the syntax by its nature begins to suffocate the speaker.

We should make an explicit distinction here, about what we mean by this. You could cite this repetition and re-expansion of thought: returning to it and developing it ad hoc, as an exemplar of the Declan Donellan dictum which is that words are insufficient: that the speaker is constantly, and consciously, struggling to find the words adequate to describe the thought, the image, the horror. It outdistances the words the speaker can find, and so he keeps going back and trying again. In that formulation, ‘I’, the speaker, never ceases to be rationally, consciously engaged in the action of explaining it to Miranda, and I’m reaching for the words to do so. But that’s not quite what we mean by it, is it.

**McArthur:** I wouldn’t say so.

**Hurrell:** Using your image of the ‘wave’, we mean something more like: ‘here comes another wave of words on to me, and I must follow the emotional contents of their texture in order to fulfil them’ because we are arguing that he is not *actually* engaged in a rational process of trying to explain his story and feelings to his daughter, but rather that the feelings are overwhelming his ability to communicate. The language is the experience for him, not a description of the experience.

**McArthur:** Yes, then a dictum like ‘only breathe at the end of the line’, ignores the real mental and emotional structure of much of a passage like this. The whole point is that there are not easy places to breathe and he has to struggle to snatch a breath on the fly. The assumption underlying such a rule is that there is a pure sentence-forming consciousness here that has that capability.

**Hurrell:** Perhaps one might summarise Hall’s argument as that the form has an irrational insistence of its own, regardless of where the sense is going. Even if the sense tells you that the breath falls in a certain place, he argues, the form is always there demanding something else and the energy is derived from working the conflict

between those two. Do you realise the last time we read that section, actually you did *not* take any mid-breath lines. Even at:

with that, which but by being so retir'd  
Ore-priz'd all popular rate: in my false brother

**McArthur:** Yes, I can see how it can work like that. The syntax is constantly trying to suffocate him because he is continually having to add to the image and therefore has to reach for breath.

**Hurrell:** Perhaps Hall would say that the forced breathing at the end of the line is essential to creating the effect, that we are going to breathe only at the end of the line, but because the lines run on, providing NO natural places to breathe, it forces you to snatch breaths rather than breath properly and deeply, and that technical phenomenon evokes the sense of suffocation you've just described.

**McArthur:** Yes, I see.

**Hurrell:** So, we seem to have come full circle there. We started out a few minutes ago rejecting the rule, and now we seem to be advocating for it, at least in this passage.

*We conclude that the amendment to the rule for us might be that it's useful to explore resisting mid-line breaths.*

**Hurrell:** What's the implication for the speaker of that device? I'm thinking of the fact that I've worked with Shakespearean actors who tend to take mid-line punctuation as an indication not to slow down or pause, but actually almost to speed up, in the sense that there is an abrupt shift in the direction of the thought, rather than a stopping of thought.

*Leads to talking about the struggle for breath again: hyper-ventilating effect on // chang'd 'em // or else new form'd em.*

**McArthur:** "Tune pleas'd his ear" returns us to the monosyllabic pattern, and it includes the *t/d* nexus.

*We conclude that the breath should go at the end of the line after "...that now he was"*

**Clip 10.** "The ivy which had hid" - Practice laboratory: breathing into metaphor. (Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25642/> or scan the QR code.)



**McArthur:** It works because he finally explodes into a metaphor.

**Hurrell:** This is really the Barton 'new-coining' dictum. In this case the explosion into metaphor is well-justified by the intensity of the feeling, and it's supported by the verse structure.

It supports the need to breathe at the end of the line to honour the verse structure.

My argument is that the nature of a rhetorical figure is that it is already a fully developed thought at the beginning of its enunciation.

Therefore

...was (breath)

The Ivy which had hid my princely Trunck

is supportable, whereas, for example:

...was

The Ivy which had hid (breath) my princely Trunck

is not.

Also, to preserve the sonic cluster, a breath could be avoided at the line ending as well:

.was (breath)

The Ivy which had hid my princely Trunck, (no breath)

And suckt my verdure out on't

Because “trunk” and “suckt” are clearly densely related through both assonance and consonance.

*Going on to the next passage:*

**McArthur:**

I pray thee marke me:

I thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated

To closenes, and the bettering of my mind

with that, which but by being so retir'd

Ore-priz'd all popular rate: in my false brother

Awak'd an evill nature

**Hurrell:** Whereas in the last passage we initially resisted the end-line breath rule and then tried and found that in a surprising way it gave something interesting, I think this passage really does seem to *demand* out-of-sync breathing.

**McArthur:** Well, I think that's another platform there on 'in my false brother'.

**Hurrell:** And when you say a platform, do you mean you think that it's an opportunity for a breath there.

**McArthur:** Yes.

**Hurrell:** I don't hear it quite that way. When I was first trained in some of the verse-speaking and Cicely Berry stuff, the way I absorbed and processed it was that when there is no punctuation on the end of a line, the space at the end of the line may be expressed within the last word of the line, not in a pause after the word. So to take this as an example, there's something in the way you lean on:

in my false brother  
awaked an evil nature.

and in that way you ‘lift on’ to the next line. But if you breathe there, it disrupts that ‘lifting-on’, it discharges the energy and invites a change of thought or a breaking of the thought.

**McArthur:** So, there’s a raising effect: just a sort of slight beat and then the continuance... you hold that word... is that what you’re saying?

**Hurrell:** Yes.

**McArthur:** Yes, but also that effect does give you the option of breath? Or are you suggesting that there are only end-line breaths where there’s punctuation?

**Hurrell:** Well, I guess I would be saying that in the case of such lines, when there’s a carrying on of the idea from one line to the next, end-line breathing is to be avoided. That’s not necessarily synonymous with the absence of punctuation but often they would coincide.

The phenomenon we’re observing here I think relates in part to the evolving use of the *caesura* in the late verse. Imagine for a moment that the two half-lines we were just looking at were actually lineated as a single full line:

False brother / awaked an evil nature.

The caesura would obviously be after ‘brother’: it’s the point at which the line is separated into its two component thoughts. When the caesura is used that way, as it customarily is in the earlier verse, it is infelicitous for breathing, and this, I think, is where something like the ‘Hall rule’ comes from. To say:

...in my  
False Brother (breath) awaked an evil nature

discharges the energy. Even though it’s divided into two, you don’t want to accentuate that division with a breath. Now let’s turn to an actual example of *caesura* in this passage. It seems to me in this more disrupted late verse, the *caesura* is often used somewhat differently, perhaps to create a more naturalistic conversational effect. The way I hear it I think accords with what you were saying earlier. The *caesuras* in this late verse often tend to signify such a significant turning point in the thought that a breath *is* warranted. As we observed earlier:

With that (breath) which but by being so retir’d  
Ore-prized all popular rate (breath)

Of course it would be only a snatched breath, not a big gap, because the rapid turn in thought, inculcated by the parenthetical construction, is so extreme that the snatching of breath actually assists to create that sense of disjuncture.

**McArthur:** Well, we’ve got a whole series of such shift points in this next section, then. So, theoretically you would be saying that in all of these five lines, there is the potential for a breath in the middle of the line, at the caesura?

**Hurrell:** Possibly. It might create a bit of a hyperventilating effect, but given what he's talking about, you might *want* him to hyperventilate a bit here.

**McArthur:** Well it's certainly interesting that they're all there in a sequence, so let's play that, because that's the sonic pattern of this section.

I thus neglecting worldly ends, (breath) (all dedicated  
To closenes, and the bettering of my mind  
with that, which but by being so retir'd  
Ore-priz'd all popular rate: / in my false brother  
Awak'd an evill nature, and my trust  
Like a good parent, / did beget of him  
A falsehood in its contrarie, / as great  
As my trust was, which had indeede no limit,  
A confidence sans bound. / He being thus Lorded,  
(Not onely with what my renews yeelded,  
But what my power might els exact) like one  
Who having into truth, / by telling of it,  
Made such a synner of his memorie  
To credite his owne lie, / he did beleve  
He was indeed the Duke, out o'th' Substitution  
And executing th' outward face of Roialtie  
With all prerogative:

**McArthur:** Well, that seems feasible: to take the *caesuras* as an indication of mid-line breath.

**Hurrell:** Great, can you do it one more time, and to extend the exercise, can you try every single one of these unpunctuated line endings having a lifting-on as we just discussed. So, the idea is that you are finding a reason to 'expand' the last word.

**Clip 11.** "The ivy which had hid" - Practice laboratory: mid-line breaths and 'lifting-on' enjambments.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25644/> or scan the QR code.)



**Hurrell:** What seemed to emerge from the combination of the mid-line breaths and the repeated lifting-on of the line endings; was a kind of *keening*. And the fact that it is repetitive is not boring but evocative of that keening. Yes, it's a bit histrionic. But that seems appropriate and informative to the moment.

**McArthur:** A histrionic breathlessness, associated with the felt injustice. The poetic information here is incredibly useful as to state of mind. It's as if the pattern of exaggerated caesuras and run on lines, which, as you say are lifted on, place him under duress: his search for breath becomes predominant.

## Chapter Four

### Language and Characterisation

#### Features of the Late Style

The poetry of the late plays is marked by a radically free approach to prosody and grammatical construction, allied to a highly ornate use of sonic (auricular) properties such as assonance and alliteration. This combination represents experimentation that appears to many scholars to be more aesthetic than dramatic, evincing a renewed fascination with sound and form and implying a declining interest in psychological intensity and realism. In this respect the late verse has been seen as paradoxically both experimental and backward-looking. Russ McDonald, a passionate and penetrating observer of the stylistic features of the late plays, characterises the shift as follows:

At the very end of his career Shakespeare's view of rhetoric seems to undergo another turn, a renewed commitment to the pleasure of unconcealed artifice... the poet in Shakespeare appears to succumb once more to the temptations of pattern, especially the satisfactions of auricular arrangement. (McDonald, 2001: 47)

Recourse to the language of self-indulgence: “succumb once more to the temptations”, is a telling marker of critical bewilderment about the purpose of a newly ornate auricular style. The retort by those such as Brian Vickers who instead focus on the radical metrical freedom of the late verse to conclude that the intended effect is merely mimetic—reflecting the rhythms of real speech (Vickers, 2008)—does not satisfactorily account for the highly organised and insistent sonic effects that are palpably evident. Both positions acknowledge a sense that there is *something* there, just beyond our reach, and both of the scholars cited above read the plays as works for the theatre, either tacitly or directly acknowledging that there is a dimension to the plays that is accessible only in performance.

Literary scholars and Shakespeare practitioners alike observe that metrical irregularity in the verse is both more frequent in instance, and more extreme in scope. Mid-line pauses, lines with one or more extra beats, and disruptions and inversions to the iambic foot are constant occurrences, to such an extent that the precepts developed for acting earlier Shakespeare—such as the dictum that disruption to the metre indicates mental or emotional disruption in the speaker (Hall, 2009: 30)—become reductive.

## Ellipsis and Omission

Constant syntactical disruptions go hand in hand with metrical disruptions. Such disruptions include ellipsis and other forms of omission:

Ellipsis exerts a constant pressure on the sound and sense as the poet concentrates expression, omitting phonemic and verbal units that in an earlier phase of composition he would have retained. Connectives between clauses are sometimes removed, creating the effect of asyndeton: words and phrases that remain make the verse sound unusually distilled. (McDonald, 2006: 33)

In *The Tempest*, the sense of abbreviation and compression extends to the handling of metaphor and other imagery. Expansive, developing flights of imagery are particularly rare in *The Tempest* and stand out, not only as striking moments of dramatic intensification, but of emotional release, when they do appear. More typical is the constant, abrupt invocation and dismissal of one image, to be rapidly displaced by the next. McDonald observes that “metaphors tend to be introduced and often succeeded rapidly by others, not articulated at length”. This abrupt handling of imagery incorporates word-order itself, which in the late style is a site for constant poetic licence:

Syntax becomes convoluted ... the number of deformed phrases, directional shifts, and intricately constructed sentences is exceptional for the period and exceptional for Shakespeare. (McDonald, 2006: 33)

Anne Barton identifies a particular effect in *The Tempest*, of creating transitory and evocative of images by simply yoking together two words, “neither of which appears to modify or be syntactically dependent upon the other in any normal sense” into a compound word “which jars both components out of their accustomed meaning” (Barton, 1996: 14). This technique may be thought a further development of *hendiadys*: literally “‘one by means of two’ [it is the] expression of an idea by two nouns connected by ‘and’ instead of a noun and its qualifier” (Lanham, 1991: 82). James Shapiro identifies Shakespeare’s developing use of *hendiadys* during the writing of *Hamlet*, in which the two nouns “begin to oscillate, seeming to qualify each other as much as the term each individually modifies”. Complex examples such as “the book and volume of my brain” or “the abstract and brief chronicles of the time” “induce a kind of mental vertigo” in which “the destabilising effect of how these words play off each other is slightly and temporarily unnerving” (Shapiro, 2005: 321-2). It is a similar destabilising mental effect that Barton identifies in the even more abrupt word-combining found in *The Tempest* when she describes “these paired and evenly weighted words [which] expand almost

indefinitely in the consciousness, in widening circles of meaning.” In the following passage, “undergoing stomach” is an example of this technique.

O, a Cherubin  
Thou was't that did preserve me; Thou didst smile,  
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,  
When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt,  
Under my burthen groan'd, which rais'd in me  
An undergoing stomacke, to beare up  
Against what should ensue. (I.ii.247-53)

The ostensible meaning of the phrase—broadly, ‘the will to go on’—is slightly obscured by the syntax, creating space for other connotations to emerge. In this case these may include the voyage itself, sea-sickness and the sense of a base-line feeling or experience that underpins other no-doubt less stabilising emotions and experiences.

Another feature which similarly contributes to draw focus to the poetic and the auricular, is the disordering of thought, approximating a stream-of-consciousness effect. An easy label to apply casually, the term needs to be defined quite specifically in this context, as a series of thoughts linked by their resonant connection to one another, and emerging in order of emotional importance, rather than in a linear order of cause and effect, or from context and background to central detail. The entire passage above is an example of this technique. Both speaker and listener are subtly disoriented by the intensity of isolated images in the memory. There is no effort to order the thoughts into a logical story, which might begin with Prospero’s circumstance, continue with his distress at that circumstance and then rise to a climax with Miranda’s smile that alleviates that distress. Rather the image lurches into the climax at once:

Thou did'st smile  
Infused with a fortitude from heaven, (I.ii.248-9)

Then jumps to the connecting, antithetical image in the memory

When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt (I.ii.250)

Resonance-ordering dominates over sense-ordering here. Miranda’s smile is connected to heavenly providence, while Prospero’s own subjectivity—represented by his tears of distress—is subsumed by the poetry into his earthly surroundings: the boat, “deck’d,” and the sea water, “full salt”. Only belatedly and obliquely is the link made to the cause of the tears—“burden groaned”—before returning to the original purpose of the image, again expressed in paradoxical antitheses: “under/raised” and “undergoing/bear up”. The imagery describes an alteration to the speaker’s mental state, while obliquely connoting

the external circumstance—the sea voyage: “burden groaned” evokes the raft’s creaking timbers, while the oscillation of ‘down’ and ‘up’ references provides the tossing on the waves.

Under my burthen groan’d, which rais’d in me  
An undergoing stomacke, to beare up  
Against what should ensue. (I.ii.251-4)

Often the device of yoking two words together to create a succinct yet resonant image creates a corresponding metrical disruption—a double stress—which may be achieved through the simple inversion of an iambic foot (a trochee) but often, as in the following example, through the more metrically radical device of the spondee which invariably creates a triple-stress.

. # # # . # . # . .  
The Clowd-capt Towres, the gorgeous Pallaces,

This line serves also as an example of the complimentary technique of omitting a stress entirely elsewhere in the line—the dactylic “Pallaces”—creating a sense of motion and shifting tempo within the line. This rhythmic effect occurs frequently, indeed obsessively, in *The Tempest*: a phenomenon, associated in the practice research laboratories with a wave motion, and one which rises to a heightened form in the climactic speech from which the hypothesis of the present study is drawn.

### Prospero’s “Parenthomania”

The abrupt concision of syntax and imagery occurs within an apparently contradictory sense of constant expansion and digression. Long speeches are constantly parenthetical, frequently opening up further parentheses before closing the previous one. Prospero’s narration at I.ii.149-71 is an extreme example of this technique, in which a single sentence runs over twenty lines, and is constructed through the opening up of numerous parentheses, one inside another. It is this effect, which Keir Elam dubs “parenthomania” (Elam, 1992: 69), that maps Prospero’s racing thoughts—the sense that he is not merely recalling but reliving the usurpation and its emotional trauma. The presence of this feature, and its ramifications for actor and audience, were explored at length in the practice laboratories quoted below. In the textual transcription, the parentheses and broken lines have been added as a result of analysis in the laboratory.

My brother and thy uncle, call’d *Anthonio*:  
(I pray thee marke me, that a brother should



exclusively conjunctions and prepositions—and, more significantly, subtly disrupts the auditor’s process of comprehension, such that the overall sense of the passage emerges clearly, but in a manner that forbids grammatical cognition. Stephen Booth, writing of the sonnets, describes the experience recounted in the practice laboratory excerpt above as a state in which “we see the speaker’s point without understanding the sentence that makes the point” (Shakespeare and Booth, 1980: xii).

### **Repetitions: Assonance, Alliteration and Dissonance.**

Ellipsis, omission and “parenthomania” work together to clear a space for engagement with the language as sonic artefact, by disrupting comprehension, and permitting syntactical constructions which intensify the auditory effect by both concentrating it and making it more overt. Consider for example, a passage cited previously as the nexus of a series of auricular relationships:

Under my burthen **groan’d**, which rais’d in me  
An **undergoing** stomacke, to beare up  
**Against** what should ensue. (I.ii.251-4)

“Undergoing” and “stomach” are sonically paired by the *u/o* assonance to create a rising and tightening sensation, from the thicker *n/d* consonants of “undergoing” to the thinner relational consonants *m/t* in “stomacke”. That shifting assonance forms part of a larger process of brightening dissonance in the vowels contextualised by *g/n/d*: from the darker */oh/* “groaned/undergoing”, rising through the */uh/* of “undergoing stomacke” to the brighter “against”. The passage also deploys a crude lexical repetition—simply reiterating the word “under” to further concentrate the cluster of repeated sounds. This is an effect found repeatedly in Prospero’s text. The repeated words in his opening lines of the play are underlined below. The resulting effect is intensified through extensive assonance patterns (marked in bold) and alliterative pairings (marked in italics).

**Pros.** *Be collected,*  
**No** more amazement: *Tell* your pitteous **heart**  
there’s **no harme** done.

**Mira.** **O woe**, the *day*.

**Pros.** **No harme:**  
I have *done nothing*, but in care of thee  
(Of thee my *deere* one; thee my **daughter**) who  
Art ignorant of what thou art. **naught** knowing  
Of whence I am; **nor** that I am **more** better

Than *Prospero*, *Master* of a full **poore** cell,  
And thy no greater *Father*. (I.ii.83-93)

It is Shakespeare's abundant use of assonance and alliteration in the late style that most unsettles the modern critic, and it is in discussing this feature that McDonald most often has recourse to the language of self-indulgence when attempting to describe Shakespeare's intent, despite his enthusiasm for observing the phenomenon as it arises in the verse. Others, as he notes, prefer to avoid discussion of it altogether:

Alliteration is one of the first properties readers of poetry learn about and one of the last they talk about. As a consequence, anyone who undertakes to discuss the repetition of literal sounds and poetry will find few models for this kind of analysis. (McDonald, 2006: 182)

In his 1952 essay, Minoru Yoshida helpfully locates such re-iterative patterns as the essential element from which an effect of what he refers to as "word-music" in poetry is composed, by pointing out that one of the "characteristics of music is repetition; simple music repeats simply and openly, but subtle music disguises its repetitions." In identifying the subtle repetitions in the sophisticated music of classical prosody, he categorises six distinct types, all of which may be found in abundance in the language of *The Tempest*:

1) sound repetition, 2) sound-group repetition, 3) syllable repetition, 4) word repetition, 5) word-group repetition, and 6) mixed repetition. These types of repetition are usually made within a line, but they also occur in successive lines and stanzas. (Yoshida, 1952: 152-54)

Like McDonald, who characterises his approach to the observation of such patterns as "beginning with microscopic units such as syllables and lines and moving outward" Yoshida works outward from the most 'microscopic' repetitions: alliterative and assonant patterns, to repetitions of various sound clusters, to word and word-group repetitions. The practice laboratories conducted as part of this study repeatedly ground their enquiry in the observation of such verbal repetitions. It is only in the presence of intense repetition of a particular muscle effort that a somatic implication may arise. Only in such patterns of apparently meaningless, excessive auricular repetition, does the body become present in the speech of the character, and accordingly it is in precisely such patterns that we discern the 'grain' of the speaker's voice. Techniques for releasing such somatic implications have been explored by voice practitioners such as Kristin Linklater—discussed in Chapter Three—through processes of imaginative engagement with the language at the 'sub-atomic' level of individual vowels and consonants. Such a process invites discovery not merely of the technical demands of their enunciation for

clarity and contribution to meaning, but of their individual emotional and imaginative resonances. Though Linklater makes a distinction between the emotional value of consonants and vowels which is disputed in the practice research laboratories, her general approach is a stimulating position from which to consider the rationale for dense aural patterning of a performance text for actors.

The sounds [of consonants] communicate more externally through the body, creating moods and effects more than emotions. The vibrations of consonants travel through the skin and muscle and bone to the senses, while vowels have direct access to the solar plexus, making them more immediately emotional. (Linklater, 2009: 19)

It is to critics working contemporaneously with Yoshida that one may turn in search for further insights into the many variants and usages of sonic patterning that litter *The Tempest* and the other late plays. Stephen Booth's observation of what he calls "pulsating alliteration" in Shakespeare's sonnets, in which "a pair of sounds will come together and then pull apart" (Booth, 1969: 87) is just as applicable to the late style as his earlier-cited comment regarding syntactical disruption to comprehension. Indeed, the sonnets are a forerunner to the dense auricular repetitions of the verbal style of the late plays. The following example from *The Tempest* illustrates the technique Booth observes:

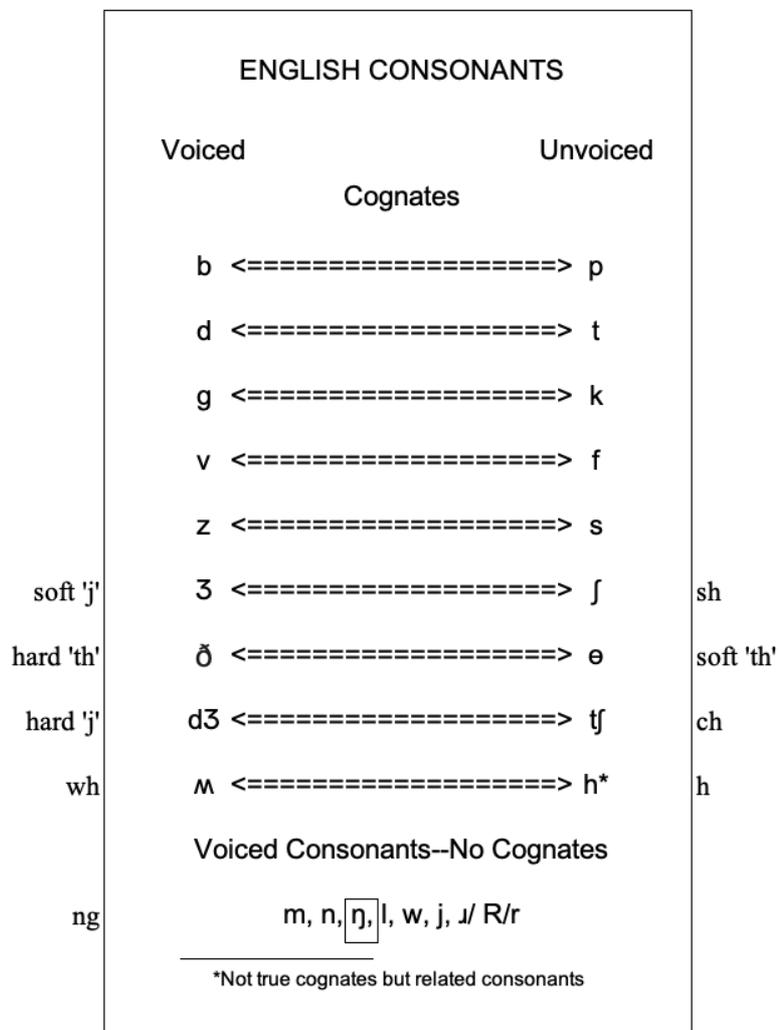
The Ivy which had hid my princely *Trunck*,  
And *suckt* my verdure out on't: (I.ii.170-1)

The relationship here is between the vowel *u* and the consonant group *c/k/t*. We hear them first split from each other by the additional consonants *r* and *n* then jammed together into a single phoneme in 'suckt'. This is only one of many aural relationships in a passage densely packed with pairings and clusters of sonic effects through assonance and alliteration.

Booth's work has a kinship with the observations of Kenneth Burke on musicality in the verse of Coleridge. Burke deliberately borrows from the language of music to sort such splitting and re-joining of phonemes into "augmentations" and "diminutions" (Burke, 1940: 35). In Burke's terms, the example above represents a diminution—in which the space first established between phonemes is then removed. An "augmentation" in his terms, is the inverse effect. Burke's work on "concealed alliteration" between related sounds (cognates), similarly finds a correlative in the methodology adopted in the practice research laboratories, and for similar reasons of phonetic production. Cognates, as Burke describes them, are consonants which are related because of their similar placement in the mouth:

If you place your lips in the position to make the sound *m*, from this same position you can make the sounds *b* and *p*. Hence when we are looking for a basis of musicality in verse, we may treat *b* and *p* as close phonetic relatives of *m*. (Burke, 1940: 32)

In strictly phonetic terms, the cognate relationship is that between the voiced and unvoiced consonant (LaBouff, 2007: 115). Burke is here extending the concept of the cognate beyond its definition in strict phonetics, by tying consonants created in the mouth's root position (*m*) to the voiced (*b*) and unvoiced (*p*) plosives that ensue. As can be seen in Kathryn LaBouff's chart of all the cognate relationships in English pronunciation, these root mouth position consonants (*m*, *n*, etc.) do not themselves have related cognates. Her chart has been reproduced below, annotated to assist the reader unfamiliar with the symbols of phonetic notation.



**Fig. 13.** English Consonants: cognates. As shown in *Singing and Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction* (2007) by Kathryn LaBouff.

“Hidden alliteration”, then, in Burke’s terms, is alliteration on all of these related consonants. This effect was found to be extensive in Prospero’s extended Act I oration (I.ii.149-61), quoted above from the practice laboratory log as an instance of “parenthomania”, and is continued in the passage below. The parenthetical device continues, and a readily apparent pattern of alliteration on *t* is revealed to be singularly obsessive when its cognate *d* is considered.

Being **once perfected** how to graunt suites,  
how to **deny** them: (who **t’advance**, and who  
**To trash** for over-topping;) **new created**  
The *creatures* that were *mine*, *I* say, (or **chang’d ’em**,  
(Or els **new form’d ’em**;) (having both the key,  
Of Officer, and office.) **set** all hearts i’th **state**  
To what **tune pleas’d** his ear, that **now** he was  
The Ivy which **had hid** my princely **Trunck**,  
And **suckt** my **verdure** out on’t: Thou **attend’st not?** (I.ii.162-71)

This pattern originates in the climactic lines of the previous passage:

those being all my studie,  
The Government I cast upon my brother,  
**And to my State** grew stranger, being **transported**  
**And rapt** in secret studies (I.ii.157-60)

**Clip 12.** “Now he was the ivy..” - Practice laboratory: identifying the T/D nexus.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25647/> or scan the QR code.)



Both Burke and Booth disclaim any relationship between sound and meaning. Burke declares himself unwilling to take on the “extra burdens” of attempting to associate the effects of verbal musicality with content (Burke, 1940: 53) while Booth perhaps goes further when he affirmatively declares such patterns to be “individually insignificant” (Booth, 1969: 70). The observation of such patterns is nevertheless invaluable to a focus on the somatic implications of speaking the text, and the practice of identifying *related* sounds and their patterns such as the “T/D nexus” in clip 12—rather than only *identical* sounds—has been adopted throughout the practice research laboratories. The hidden alliterations between cognates and other related consonants are particularly important, because, as Burke’s point about the similar muscular efforts involved in the structures of the mouth suggests, they are physiologically even more closely related to each other than they are sonically.

Yoshida expresses the same view that McDonald would echo fifty years later: that what the poet and critic Edith Sitwell dubbed the “texture” of the verse, to be found in

“the conscious shaping of the pattern of vowels and consonants” was being neglected by criticism in favour of the more objectively categorizable phenomena of rhyme and metre (Yoshida, 1952: 152). Sitwell herself published observations on such texture in her 1948 *A Notebook on William Shakespeare*. Her account of the various forms of dissonance provides a rationale for a connection between vowels that are not assonant but seem to bear a looser, yet palpable, sonic relationship to each other. A simple dissonance exists where alliterative consonants are contextualised by varying vowel sounds:

In thunder, lightening or in rAllne  
When the hurly burly’s dOne (Mac.I.i.2-3)

Sitwell attributes tonal qualities to the *kind* of dissonances she perceives, as when she seeks to describe the nature of the shift between vowels in this typical example drawn from Cleopatra’s suicide in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

“Lucke” ... is a dulled dissonance to “quick” and is divided from this by the darker more hollow dissonance of “mocke”. (Sitwell, 2013: 112)

Such dissonant patterns do not depend on adjacent or corresponding placement of words, to achieve their effect. The example above is drawn from across a four-line passage:

Yare, yare, good Iras; **quicke**. Me thinks I heare  
Antony call: I see him rowse himselfe  
To praise my noble Act; I heare him **mocke**  
The **lucke** of Caesar, (A&C.v.ii.3384-7)

Though she does not declare as much, the formation of a sonic pattern here may be regarded as partially dependent on a single instance of close adjacency (“mocke”/“lucke”) and from there extended to other iterations of the phoneme across the broader passage. She also observes a related phenomenon of vowel arrangements that are neither properly assonant nor dissonant, but nevertheless relational, and which require no contextualising alliteration to achieve their effect. The relationship may be as simple as short and long forms of the vowel, as in the following example, in which she quotes from Iachimo’s stealthy observation of Imogen asleep in Act II, scene 2 of *Cymbeline*:

An exquisite effect of dimming and brightening, brightening and dimming, is produced by the use of a vowel, first faint, then brightened, or vice versa...

Fresh lilly, and whiter than the sheets

(Sitwell, 2013: 180)

An example from Prospero which contains several of Sitwell’s “dissonances” in interplay may be seen in a passage already quoted above. The significance of the slight sharpening and brightening from *a* to *i* is confirmed by the preceding use of the ‘brighter’

version of the vowel, an ensuing assonance between “hid” and the key word “princely” and a further darkening of the line’s over-all vowel scheme to the dull *u* of “Trunck”.

The Ivy which *had hid* my princely Trunck

Sitwell’s unalloyed delight in the verbal sound effects she perceived in Shakespeare’s poetry, highly subjective and, as Vickers has scornfully observed, unaccompanied by any effort at a Leavisite analysis of relationship to meaning (Vickers, 2008), speaks to her position as an artist and poet rather than, primarily, a literary critic. Indeed, her observation of the sonic phenomena themselves may be regarded as subjective, or at least not thoroughly supported by any proposing of the formal poetic or rhetorical structures from which the effects are derived. However, that very subjectivity, and the freedom it grants her, is precisely what make her observations a useful resource, both of themselves and by example, to the inherently subjective process of rehearsal exploration by actors and director.

### Miranda’s Opening Indictment

Sitwell’s notion of a sonic pattern of “dissonance” may be extended to conceive dissonant patterns of assonance, as in Miranda’s opening speech of Act I, scene two. The assonance on /aw/ in the first two-and-a-half lines makes a shift to the brighter /ow/ phoneme in lines 3-5 (marked in upper-case type below).

If by yOUR Art (my deerest father) you have  
Put the wild wAters in this RORE; alay them:  
The skye it seems would pOWRE dOWn stinking pitch,  
But that the Sea mOUNting to th’welkins cheeke,  
Dashes the fire OUt. (V.I.70-4)

This is followed by a further shift to a lightening dissonance /oh/ in lines 5-9 (marked in bold). In the final lines, the three phoneme patterns are brought together to create an oscillating dissonance

**Oh!** I have suffered  
With th**O**se that I s**A**W suffer: A brave vessel  
(Who had n**O** doubt some n**O**ble creature in her)  
Dash’d all to peeces: **O** the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: p**O**ORE s**O**Ules, they perish’d.

Had I byn any God of p**O**Wer, I would  
Have suncke the Sea within the Earth, **O**R ere  
It should the good Ship s**O** have sw**A**llOW’d, and

The fRAUGHting SOUles within her. (V.I.74-82)

Throughout the passage, the contextualising consonants both reinforce the sense of a pattern of repetition, and develop its mood, from *r* in the first three lines, the cognates *d/t* and their root *n* in the next three, the *n* continuing but now placed in the context of sibilant repetitions of *s* in the middle passage, before drawing from both sets to juxtapose *s* against the originating *r* in the final lines. A more complete ‘sonic mark-up’ of this passage, applying the method of sonic analysis, described in Chapter One on page 47, for drawing together consideration of the various sonic effects, was made the basis of a practice laboratory with McArthur and the additional co-informant Alice Haig.<sup>19</sup>

The importance of the recurring */or/* sound is established immediately with the “your/rore/powre” rhyme in the first three lines and will be sounded again both at the climax and the conclusion of the speech. It sits further forward, in the floor of the mouth, than the related */oh/* sound, and requires aggressive recruitment of the muscles under the chin and at the top of the neck. Although the speech is commonly performed in the theatre as a single histrionic expression of a young girl’s distress, in order to motivate Prospero’s response “Wipe thou thine eyes”, the iconic sound of distress, */oh/* becomes a theme only later, in the build-up to the emotional climax of the speech.

**Clip 13.** “If by your art...” - Practice laboratory: sounding the dissonant bass notes.

(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25648/> or scan the QR code.)



The internal rhyme on “Art/father” in the first line sets up an immediate counterpoint to the establishing */or/* bass note, requiring the speaker to make some effort to balance the two sounds of “your Art”, disrupting the establishment of the iambic pulse, by creating the effect of a spondee and establishing the phrase as the key idea. The first line is not merely a build up to the apparent climax of the first image “wild waters in this Rore” but a typical rhetorical establishment of the issue the play will explore: the conflict between Prospero’s practice of magic and his role as a father.

A dominating assonance, “wild/skye/fire” and consonance, of hissing *s* sounds, in the ensuing lines, establishes the horror of the illusion—in which water, air and fire are indistinguishable from one another. However, it is the concentrated sound cluster forming

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<sup>19</sup> The marked-up rehearsal text provided to McArthur and Haig may be seen at Appendix III on page 289.

a near-rhyme, “stinking pitch”/“welkins cheek”, at the end of lines 3 and 4, that informs the handling of the surrounding assonances and consonances. This clustering of sounds around an ambiguous image is a characteristic technique of the poetry of the late plays. It is not quite a rhyme, not even quite a perfect assonance or consonance, but rather almost as if Shakespeare had performed a sound-jumble to re-arrange a set of phonemes into a pair of images. What is crucial here is that these phonemes confirm the aggression suggested by both the imagery and the other auricular patterns, the /or/ and the sibilant *s*. “Stinking Pitch” leaves no doubt that the *s* is being deployed for its spitting or hissing quality.

**Clip 14.** “If by your art...” - Practice laboratory: sounding the secondary sound cluster.

(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25652/> or scan the QR code.)



“Oh!” on line 5 heralds a major shift and for the next four lines the /oh/ sound takes over as the dominating bass-note. The sibilant *s* continues but is softened by its adjacency to other soft, thick consonants: (“suffered”/“vessel”) There is no ambiguity about the connotation of the grieving /oh/ sound. It leads the ear, via assonance, to the “noble creature”. As the syntax narrows Miranda’s focus from a group of victims to a *single* noble creature on board and is accompanied by direct references to her own heart and suffering, an invocation emerges of her future husband, Ferdinand. This implication is confirmed later in the scene when she repeats the word “noble” to describe Ferdinand when she first sees him.

I might call him  
A thing divine, for nothing natural  
I ever saw so Noble. (V.ii.548-50)

The rhythmic and syntactical echo that bookends this section “Dashes the fire out”/“Dash’d all to peeces” establishes it almost as an extended aside. Attention drifts from the events themselves to their mortal and spiritual consequences. Monosyllables are concentrated into this passage, slowing it down, heightening the sense of drift or bewilderment. The sense of deceleration is heightened further by the radical shortening of the length of thought, from two lines:

A brave vessel  
(Who had no doubt some noble creature in her)  
Dash’d all to peeces:

to one line:

O the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart:

to half a line:

poore soules, they perish'd.

**Clip 15.** “If by your art...” - Practice laboratory: second ‘stanza’: “Oh I have suffered”.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25649/> or scan the QR code.)



There is a dramatic shift in the nature of the ‘I’ Miranda refers to at the beginning of the speech’s third and final sentence. The ‘I’ that feels compassion and experiences suffering in the second sentence is abruptly replaced by a hypothetical self in the guise of a “god of power”. This transformation forms a hidden antithesis which provides the superstructure of the entire speech: between Prospero’s suspect use of power: “If by your Art my dearest father” and her own emerging ethical position on the proper use of great power: “Had I been any god of power”. Numerous syntactical and auricular echoes confirm the centrality of this antithesis: It opens the third and final sentence of the speech, it occurs twice in a line—mirroring the “your”/“you” iteration of the opening line, it precedes a set of synonyms for the subject of the opening line (“art”/“power and “God”/“Father”) and it sits adjacent to the hard *b* of “been”. The sibilant *s* is continued through to the very end, and the sound-text of the speech is completed by an eerie, metrically incomplete recapitulation of the dominating sound patterns established in the opening couplet.

. # . # # # . # . .  
It *sh*ould the *g*ood *S*hip *s*o have *s*wallow’d, and  
The *f*RAUGH*t*ing Soules within her.

The strong pairs of sounds and stern regularity of the first line seem at first to be returning securely to indictment. The additional metrical stress on “ship” sets up an illusion that the line will conclude with “swallow’d”. A sense of enjambment, despite the regular ten-beat count of the line, is created by the unstressed final word “and” opening out into sudden re-echo of the drift and mourning of the middle section, as the unknown, lost husband is again invoked. “Fraughting”, in its assonance relationship to “Poore” at the end of the preceding sentence, confirms a progression of the sonic resonance from Prospero, to his actions and on to the victims of those actions, pivoting on the key homophone of “pour/poor”:

Your – Rore – Powre – Poore – Fraugh-ting.

**Clip 16.** “If by your art...” - Practice laboratory: embodying the sounds in interpretation.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25651/> or scan the QR code.)



An example of the acting interpretation to emerge from a focus on the sonic patterns detected in the speech may be seen in clip 16 above. In its sonic and structural pattern, the speech creates an *exordium* for the entire drama, naming Prospero’s deeds and formulating an accusation. The full extent of the consequences of Prospero’s actions are unknowable; they drift and elude both the speaker and us. The entire question of Prospero’s mind, powers and morality of intent, are laid out before he speaks a word.

### **Characterisation in the Late Plays**

Consideration of dramatic context is key to understanding the significance of the aural patterning Shakespeare employs in the passage above. That context includes not only character and situation, but also dramatic style and emotional effect. We are not in the realm of psychological realism here; we are in a dramatic world aiming at transcendence through the narrative devices of fairy-tale. Miranda’s intuition that her father may be responsible for the terrifying, destructive storm which opens the play, comes as a jarring shock which immediately throws Prospero’s moral position into question, as we have seen in Chapter Two. She goes so far as to tentatively accuse her father of mass-murder. As in Imogen’s speech in *Cymbeline* (see page 45), sonic effect is being used to portray a psychic condition of heightened awareness approaching a state of premonition. Just as Imogen’s soul-connection to Posthumus grants her an extra-sensory awareness to his absence, so Miranda, as if deriving an impression from a nightmare, has a sensation of deep personal consequences for her of the storm’s destructive force.

In *Cymbeline*, there is nothing concrete to indicate that the quest for Posthumus has failed when Imogen begins to speak: she simply begins to feel that this is so when she utters his name. Similarly here, there is no rational evidence available to Miranda to inform her sense both that her father has caused the storm, and that its victim is a “noble soul” whose destruction is of particular consequence to “her very heart”. In an earlier play we may expect to find the components of such a moment explicated: both the speaker’s sense of dread, and its relationship to perhaps the ominous look in the eyes of her interlocutor, described in detail with resort to a passage of developing imagery. But here

in the late plays, we encounter a new development of linguistic expressionism; an experimentation with the heightened patterning of sound in language, that seeks to represent a heightened non-realistic terrain of emotional experience; an exploration of the human psyche in situations of extreme duress, fomented by given circumstances that are not bound by psycho-emotional realism, but constructed with direct reference to notions of the metaphysical. Rather than *described*, such mental and emotional conditions are *evoked* by the auricular patterning.

Anne Barton, in her essay “Leontes and the Spider” (Ryan, 1999: 22-42) argues that, in the late plays, Shakespeare evinces much less interest not only in applying laws of character motivation to the things people say, but also the *way* in which they say them. Rather, he seems more interested in creating the texture of the scene, or giving voice to an idea, than honouring character consistency. McDonald takes up this claim which, as he observes, has been a critical commonplace throughout the twentieth century, going back at least to Lytton Strachey’s polemic on Shakespeare’s supposed loss of interest in dramaturgy discussed in Chapter Two (McDonald, 2006: 33-4). The notion has fierce objectors too, not least Brian Vickers, who specifically ridicules the claim in relation to the experience of the plays *in the theatre* (Vickers, 2008).

As an example of situational effect prevailing over character motivation, Barton gives, amongst others, Paulina’s apparently hysterical outburst to Leontes after Hermione’s ‘death’ (TWT.II.ii.214-54). No psychological acknowledgement of Paulina’s apparent ruse is given either in this section or at the end when the ruse is revealed. Moreover, the speech seems to be one of losing control, when by definition the moment is one of supreme control in dissembling. That the outburst lacks psychological motivation to match its apparently authentic intensity of feeling does not, however, compel the adoption of a Shakespeare no longer interested in character complexity. In this example, an *essence* of character, as distinct from a situation-appropriate psycho-emotional response, is what is being represented. Paulina’s deep capacity for empathy is surely an essential narrative element of *The Winter’s Tale*; indeed, the entire process of redeeming Leontes depends upon it. Character complexity is represented not through a series of identifiable causes and effects but through the presentation of a mysteriously mercurial personality; one with the calculating presence of mind to manipulate persons and circumstances, yet seized by passions; a paradigm in utter accord with contemporary understandings of the human psyche and body at the time.

Joseph Roach, referring, as many before him have done, to Thomas Wright's 1604 treatise, *The Passions of the Mind*, summarises a rhetoric of the passions informing the work of Elizabethan actors and playwrights, which permits—indeed requires—a view of human feeling that emerges from the interaction of spirit and body. It is irrational, essential to the self, potentially dangerous, and difficult if not impossible to control (Roach, 1985: 23-57). It is one of the key mystifying features of *The Winter's Tale* that Paulina's solution defies logic, rationality, and even plausible explanation. Ostensibly the audience is expected to believe simply that Paulina hides Hermione for sixteen years in a house near enough to the palace to visit "two or three times each day" after orchestrating the illusion of her death. What is her motivation? Not the correcting of Leontes: he has just expressed repentance and a newly-clear vision in response to news of the death of his son. Not protection of Hermione: Leontes has by this time relented. Even a spiritual justification for the extended punishment of Leontes seems implausible, given that it requires the virtual long-term imprisonment of Hermione.

There is a paradox in this dramaturgy. It is on the one hand deeply dependent on distinct characterisation—Leontes' jealousy and rage, Paulina's strength, empathy and strangely capricious self-righteousness, Hermione's loyalty and courage—yet identifiable motivation is conspicuously excised. Indeed, the entire play depends upon such absence, and the irrationality that replaces it. While it may be true that as Anne Barton, McDonald and others have claimed, Shakespeare has moved on from the depiction of logical psychological motivation, the claims that have ensued, which tend to be applied much more liberally to *The Tempest* than *The Winter's Tale*—that he is somewhat abstractly interested in form, philosophy and poetic ornamentation, or even as Barton herself argues, that the poetry serves plot more than character—defy the vivid and highly individualised characterisation that drives the continued dramatic effectiveness of the works on stage, as those who strongly object to this line of thought, such as Vickers, protest.

Barton is identifying a technique that Kermode and many others have found so perplexing in *The Tempest*, as when Prospero loses control in a fit of passion and cuts the masque short to deal with Caliban.

I had forgot that foule conspiracy  
Of the beast *Calliban*, and his confederates  
Against my life: the minute of their plot  
Is almost come: Well done, avoid: no more. (IV.i.152-5)

There is no psychological motivation to be found that warrants Prospero's speech, despite the fact that its structural form as an apparent aside seems to us to imply a heightened level of self-awareness and intent. This is the key example of what Kermode finds to be an almost pedantic adherence to the formal requirements of dramatic structure (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954: lxxv) and which Barker and Hulme interrogate to build their case for Prospero's colonial anxiety (Drakakis, 1985: 195-208) (See Chapter Two). In this moment of manufactured dramatic conflict, such readers see Prospero's outburst as the momentary emergence of his suppressed doubts about his adopted role of colonial oppressor, from which they extrapolate a "fundamental disquiet" the play itself possesses "concerning its own functions within the projects of colonialist discourse" (Palmer, 1968: 209). Such a need to depart from the terms of reference the play itself offers, to imagine an imbricated thematic concern, is a device resorted to frequently in recent critical literature. Catherine Belsey, for example, similarly extrapolates from precisely the same moment to find instead an Early Modern anxiety about the conflict between spiritual and material modes of knowledge (Belsey, 1985: 79-80).

Whereas such readers share a view that the dramaturgical inconsistency of the moment should be taken as an indication that it refers to an underlying thematic or aesthetic concern, the practice research laboratory on this passage (documented on page 79) hypothesises that the passage is entirely an expression of underlying character complexity—a moment of revelation of the character's psyche, expressed largely through sound—and that this revelation is only passingly related to the dramatic situation. The fundamental irrationality of human experience, our subjectivity to the whims of the passions—for which the medico-philosophical wisdom of the time had an entire school of thought, would seem to be Shakespeare's object, and he brings his audience to that object by providing character action without explained cause-and-effect motivation.

When scholars such as Barton and McDonald conclude that, because *all* of the late verse bears such characteristics of sonic repetition through poetic ornamentation, those characteristics cannot therefore be related to the portrayal of character, and begin to look elsewhere—to narrative, atmosphere or stylistic preoccupation—for the effect of such innovations within the drama, they necessarily omit, as literary scholars, the function of the actor in relation to that verse. Verse disruptions as a signifying process for a variety of emotional or psychological characteristics should, one may suppose, logically evince laws of degree and consistency. To think of the aural effects of dramatic poetry purely as a signifying process, however, can only be taken so far, for the same reasons that thinking

of music as a signifying process inevitably falls short of adequately describing the phenomenon, as Roland Barthes essays.

The late plays represent the development of an appropriate dramatic vehicle for foregrounding a particular view of the essential livingness of language-as-speech. Speech, in the plays, is not mere utterance as the modern audience would understand it. It is not entirely the formulated and organised anterior revelation of an interior thought, silent in its pure, authentic form. Rather the impulse—the thought—is bound up in the speech-act itself, reflecting the authentic effusion of the interaction of spirits and humours in the body. This speaks to the paradox that lies at the heart of rhetorical studies. The highly organised structuring of language into persuasive speech was aimed always at recreating the eloquence that was believed to occur in moments of real-life emotional intensity. The rhetoricians from at least Quintilian onwards, including the Elizabethan writers, understood that speech was language in its primary and most authentic form, because they understood it to be the natural effusion of passions in the body. A truly verbal (rhetorical) drama aims at the goal of recreating the experience of intense emotional (and therefore persuasive) reality through the livingness of speech. In the late plays, we find an increasingly radical experiment, culminating in *The Tempest*, in the employment of rhetorical forms which increasingly dispense with *description* of such a lived-experience, in order to free the language to perform the function of *recreating* that experience through the physical presence of the actor.

### **On Pneumatism in Acting**

Joseph Roach writes on the pseudo-scientific basis for a conception of rhetorical acting in which the spirits of the actor literally ‘moved’ the spectator.

It was widely believed that the spirits, agitated by the passions of the imaginer, generate a wave of physical force, rolling through the aether, powerful enough to influence the spirits of others at a distance. (Roach, 1985: 45)

Roach cites the academic and acting teacher Bertram Joseph as the last twentieth-century acting theorist to attempt a description of the philosophical basis of Elizabethan rhetorical acting. Joseph’s work, as he recorded it in his book *Elizabethan Acting*, became ensnared in precisely the issue that has repelled most other modern theorists, the seeming requirement of *actio* as laid down from Quintilian onwards, and diagrammed in John Bulwer’s oft-cited 1644 treatise on gesture (Bulwer, 1973) for a rigidly reproduced system of physical gesture to portray the various passions of the body. This, as both Roach

and Joseph point out, is a commonly held misconception. Rather, the rhetoric of gesture was thought to be one of the manifestations of the physical force of the spirits in the body described above. The intention was to show “through speech and gesture the state of physiological secretions within the body, as well as what went on in the soul” (Joseph, 1951: 30).

Roach’s focus is on acting technique and its relationship to contemporaneous scientific (mis)understanding of physiology and psychology to, in effect, describe the belief systems that supported the concept of *actio* as described by Joseph. Galenic medical principles survived in amended form from the classical period into the Renaissance partly because they permitted a conception of the body—and the emotions—which incorporated a Christian philosophy of the soul into a corporeal frame. The actor’s power was thus configured in partly supernatural terms:

The rhetoric of the passions that derived from pneumatism endowed the actor’s art with three potencies of an enchanted kind. First, the actor possessed the power to act on his own body. Second, he possessed the power to act on the physical space around him. Finally, he was able to act on the bodies of the spectators who shared the space with him. (Roach, 1985: 27)

Roach relies in part on Francis Bacon as well as the account of the Restoration actor Thomas Betterton’s “fire in the eyes” to conclude that such energy was thought to be best transmitted eye-ball to eye-ball, and therefore “provides a key reason why rhetorical delivery required actor and spectator to meet face to face” (Roach, 1985: 46-7). This, however, does not sufficiently account for the power the speech-act itself was deemed to possess in the transmission of such energy. As the term itself suggests, the roots of this concept derived from the ancient Greek for breath, *pneuma*, a word which was used biblically to denote spirit—the breath of life. Shakespeare himself eloquently essays the rhetorical view of speech as the transmission of life force, as Neil Rhodes observes:

“If words be made of breath/and breath of life, I have no life to breathe” says Gertrude in *Hamlet* (3.4.181-2) So breath becomes a metonym for speech, as in Bolingbroke’s observation on the power of the royal sentence, “such is the breath of kings”, in *Richard II* (1.3.208) or in Richard’s own claim that “The breath of worldly men cannot depose | The deputy elected by the Lord” (52-3). The streamers that issue from the mouth in medieval and early Renaissance art, the original speech bubbles, provide the visual image with a text message, but as they curl skywards in the air they also represent speech as breath. ... In these representations language becomes inseparable from the animating principle itself... (Rhodes, 2004: 7)

The “streamers” Rhodes refers to, called *banderoles*, can be seen to exquisite effect in *The Pair of Lovers*, attributed to The Master of the Housebook, circa 1480. The

lovers, whose physical connection is either furtive (the hand on the bodice) or mediated by another object (the mutual fondling of the man's shawl) are united by their breath/speech/thought—which is the true locus of their intermingling. The significance of the *banderoles* representing both speech and breath is that they elide the two functions, and thus equate both—not just breathing—to living. Peering into this trope of representation from the perspective of modern drama reveals a greater distance in values from our own than might first appear. In this schema, silence is not a value, nor is its expressive correlative: facial expression. Indeed, both the lovers are studiously impassive in their facial expression. The living connections between them exist, only delicately and furtively at the point of mediated or secretive physical contact, but riotously and freely, in the intermingling of their breath/essence, facilitated through their conversation.

Sloterdijk's epic work of philosophy, *Bubbles*, begins with a reading of Sir John Everett Millais' painting of the same name. In Sloterdijk's interpretation, the image not only presents a minor miracle of literal inspiration—the boy's breath—as creation, but suggests a discourse of personal identity that, because it takes breath and attention to be two defining features of living, posits the act of living as an experience which fundamentally happens outside the borders of the body, at least as much, if not more than it does within them. He mentally overlays an additional sphere onto the image: the circumference of which is marked by the boy-bubble-blower and the bubble itself.



**Fig. 14.** *The Pair of Lovers*, Master of the Housebook, 1480-85. *Bubbles*, John Everett Millais, 1886.

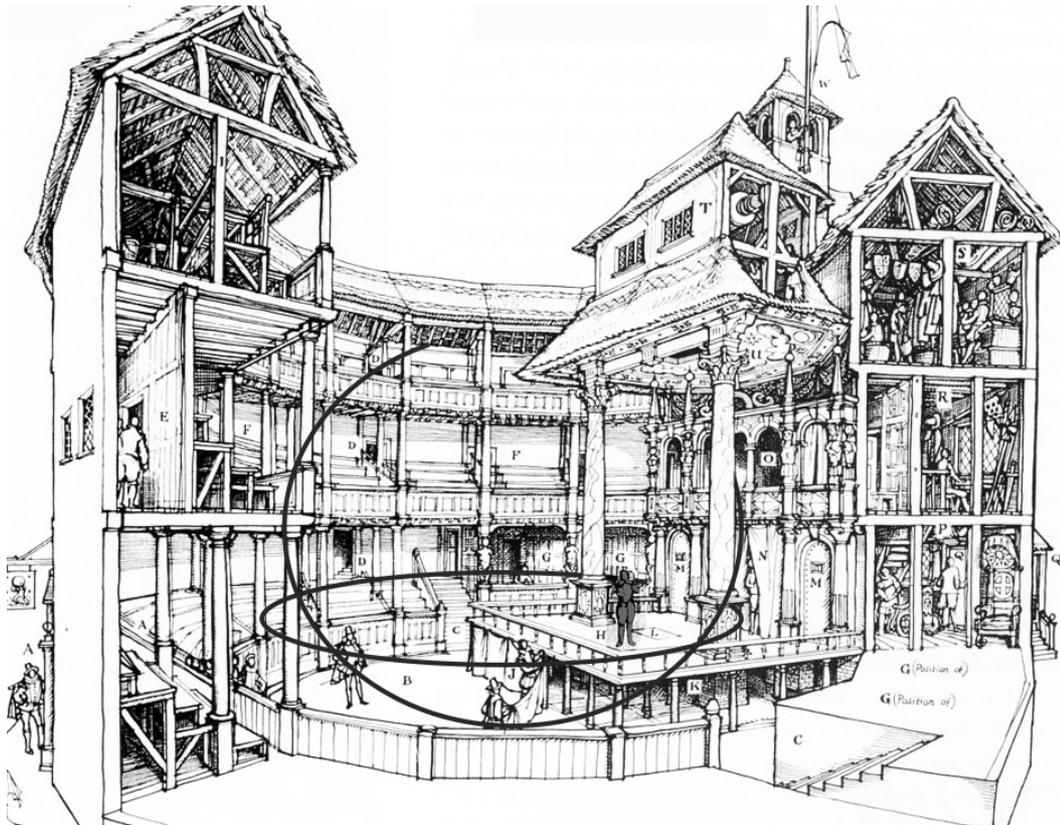
Sloterdijk proceeds in the ensuing chapter to work through the Christian creation myth in terms of this “spherical” conception of lived experience. Broadly speaking, the initial act of creation is analogous to the image of the boy and the bubble. In that analogy, one may replace the boy with God, and the bubble with Man. Extrapolating out from this, Sloterdijk sees the progression of human experience as the development of further bubbles, mimicking this primal existential sphere. In so doing, Sloterdijk is in effect revising a notion of the soul as a paradigm of human identity, in the context of what recent discoveries in neuroplasticity have revealed about the degree to which not only the human mind, but even the very mass of the brain itself is subject to external stimuli rather than genetic design (Damasio, 1994).

Such a conception of lived experience has ramifications for the position of the speech act in the hierarchy of the representation of character on stage. The person represented on the Renaissance stage shares with his twentieth-century counterpart the impulse to come to a deeper knowledge of himself, but at this point the similarity ends. As Catherine Belsey reminds us, Renaissance minds seek self-knowledge outside the bounds of the body in the Will of God (Belsey, 1985: 56). Such a mind’s understanding is inscribed by the belief that from the moment of his birth, the fundamental element of self-hood—the soul—is on a journey of return to its natural habitat in the spiritual domain: hopefully heaven. The twentieth-century mind seeks self-knowledge inside its corporeal frame, understanding that the fundamental element of its self-hood—its psychology—is housed within. For the Renaissance Man, speech—in its purest form, prayer—is synonymous with this search for self-knowledge. For his twentieth-century counterpart, the act of speaking is an imperfect reflection of, and ultimately, as Belsey and Donnellan observe (see Chapter Three), an obstruction to this search, which can be best conducted through the silence of thought, often aided by the act of writing.

### **The Voice on the Elizabethan/Jacobean Stage**

The speech-act, then, occupies a position in the hierarchy of signifiers in the Jacobethan theatre of much greater significance than it does in contemporary performance: a point on which the staging of Shakespeare at the modern recreation of the Globe Theatre in Bankside is instructive. The almost completely ‘in-the-round’ auditorium not only approaches 360 degrees of horizontal perspective on the actor but, owing to the extreme variation of height from ground level (below the stage) to the third gallery, nearly as much variance in vertical perspective. The inevitable consequence is that the actor’s face is the

least-relied upon component of the story-telling apparatus available to Shakespeare. Indeed, the spectators with the best point of view to the actor's face—those standing in the yard around the stage—paid least for access to the performance. The voice is by far the most effective means of expression in Shakespeare's playhouse, closely followed by music and other sounds, largely confined to the gallery behind the actors. Next is the actor's body, not so much for the meaning of any one physical gesture, which is by no means equally visible to all observers, but for physical action and the energy it conveys.



**Fig. 15.** Near-spherical sightlines to the actor at the globe.

Such physical action fully realises its communicative potential when it relates to the spoken word. With the exception of the battle scenes and dances—the dramaturgical preponderance of which takes on a new significance when viewed in this light—the bodies of the performers are ‘dead’ to the viewer of the Globe stage, until enlivened by speech. The ‘live’ bodies in any ensemble scene are the ones speaking, and to a lesser extent the ones spoken to. Efforts by director and performers to deny this rule frequently cause the story-telling to evaporate into incoherence for many of the highest-paying spectators in the galleries, who, presented with busily-staged scenes, are all-too-quickly unable to discern who is speaking to whom and what precisely is being said. Scenery, gestures, and facial expressions are relegated to a relatively minor function in the communication of meaning. The recent opening of the Wanamaker theatre, though highly

speculative as a recreation of a Jacobean indoor playhouse, has revealed that in fact the new-found intimacy of the Blackfriars did not necessarily alter this hierarchy of expressive means—at least initially. The small stage inhibits extensive use of scenery, sight-lines remain poor, especially in the upper gallery, and candle-light creates a generally dark environment. Meanwhile, the auditory improvement provided by the privacy of an indoor space, and the radical reduction in the size of the audience, was instant and profound. Through its deployment of special effects, *The Tempest* exhibits some indication of an interest in the new visual potentialities, but with its sophisticated poetic effects and consistent fascination with the power of music to communicate emotional meaning, its engagement with the sonic possibilities offered by the new playhouse is far more palpable.

### **Interiority, Free Will and the Soul**

A philosophy of representation that prizes the spoken word as the natural effusion of the soul's life-force, and a playing space that draws attention to the interchangeableness of living with the act of speaking, demands consideration of the ways in which the supposedly unbreakable nexus between interior life and authenticity of character might be challenged. For language as written signifier, its value to the actor lies in what is signified—its meaning. Even in the case of elaborate metaphor and imagery, the actor is compelled to find an interior explanation for the utterance. However, if something else is activated only in the act of uttering the sounds then it follows that part of the authentic energy of the verse line is an experience that is anterior to the thinking mind.

In considering Shakespeare's evolving representation of human lived-experience and personality throughout his career, it can be tempting, enchanted as we are by his relevance to our modern experience, to see only his own apparent modernity—his prophetic prescience—and conclude that his conception of human-ness is substantially the same as our own. To do so, however, requires not just a selective reading of the canon, but a reading confined in its perspective by our own moment in intellectual history. Such a reading requires an assumption, intentional or not, that Christian philosophy is ultimately superficial in its impact on concepts of human identity and the human mind. For all that has been written about Shakespeare's prefiguring of Freud in *Hamlet*, Early Modern European thought did not have the paradigm of psychology available to its ruminations, rather it had the religious paradigm of the soul. Soul has a direct etymological connection to *psyche*. The original Greek was Latinised as *anima*, then

commonly translated into English as “soul”. As the Oxford English Dictionary definition indicates, this conflation went a step further, to include the mind. The mind then was synonymous with the breath of life, the soul. In its essence, the mind/soul as Shakespeare and his intellectual contemporaries understood it, was a force of energy, emanating outwardly from the corporeal body. This is a radically different base concept of human personality to our own, which finds its natural home inside the body, existing in perfect, private silence, and of which all outward manifestations of thought, including speech, are imperfect refractions. A philosophy of the soul conceives of the natural, pure state of personality as an outwardly-emanating experience, engaged in the act of engaging. This is hardly surprising when one recalls the aspirational destination of all Christian lived experience: Paradise, apparently residing somewhere upwards, outwards, in the ether, both the birthplace of the soul, and the site of its (hoped-for) ultimate, everlasting return.

In such a context, the apparently secure position of interiority as the supreme locus of personal identity begins to destabilise. Even the figure in Shakespeare most, indeed ubiquitously, associated with the interior life of the mind has not always held such fixed associations. Both Paul Curran (Curran, 2013) and Peter Saccio (Saccio, 2001) give convincing accounts of Hamlet as a Protestant Hero, a symbolism signalled early by repeated mention of his enrolment at Wittenburg, which associated Hamlet with Martin Luther—perhaps even inviting the audience to imagine Hamlet being tutored by Luther, who both studied and taught there. Protestantism itself, with its focus on personal knowledge and exploration of the word of God, has become deeply linked to the emergence of the Liberal Humanist subject. It is seen as displacing a Catholicism of both blind obedience to church hierarchy and excessive superstition. In this reading, Hamlet’s relationship to the ghost is the key thematic device. Hamlet’s need to *know* that the spirit is truly the ghost of his father, rather than a masquerading demon, is read as an indicator of his Protestant theological mind-set. Notwithstanding the myriad psychoanalytic readings in the twentieth century, the ghost was originally intended, and received, as a real spiritual phenomenon rather than a psychological symbol.

The evolution of representations of Hamlet in visual art suggests that his relationship to the ghost, specifically his *fear* of the ghost, was the iconic image of Hamlet’s persona that entered and remained in public consciousness until the nineteenth century. This image locates Hamlet’s struggle as a conflict of the soul, as distinct from a conflict of the mind, and he seeks resolution to that conflict *outside* the borders of his own corporeal frame. Truth is not to be found within, but outside and above: knowledge

is not scientific and rational, but rather knowledge of God's will. It is Hamlet's determination to come to *know* God's will before acting that Saccio sees as the defining trait of his proto-Protestantism: he is unwilling to act on the authority of his own instinct. A fully-fledged Liberal Humanist Hamlet, by contrast, would act on his own authority, arrived at through rational thought, and possesses a unified sense of himself as individual and a representative of correct governance. Hamlet seeks *obedience*—willing only to act on *fatherly* authority—a concept which is deliberately blurred by Shakespeare in the figure of the ghost, between God the Father and Old Hamlet. Only when he is able to obtain confirmation that the two F/fathers are in accord, does he find the equanimity to act, and that equanimity involves a surrender of self-agency to providence.

Only later does the dominating cultural image of Hamlet evolve to the inward-focused figure we are familiar with today. It is only since the middle of the nineteenth century that actors, readers and artists have attached themselves to the image of Hamlet gazing into the empty eye-sockets of Yorick's skull. From Betterton, of whom the earliest surviving depictions of Hamlet are drawn, consistently until the mid-nineteenth century, Hamlet is portrayed as the haunted young man on the battlements, his arms outstretched in active confrontation with the spirit. Undoubtedly the primary function of the Yorick image is as a meditation on mortality, but the significance of gazing into the absent eyes has reconfigured the meditation in the modern mind to one on identity. For nearly 250 years, Hamlet's public primarily saw him as engaged in a struggle that defined its battlefield beyond the corporeal frame, seeking revelation of the eternal mysteries of a spirit-realm.

After this supposed high-water mark in Shakespeare's exploration of free will the concept rapidly recedes from the persona of the protagonist. Macbeth, mesmerised by the phantasms of his own imagination, almost literally sleep-walks his way to his defining act. For Lear, the mind's free will is utterly dissolved into madness, and repeatedly in the plays that follow; *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale*, the characterisations depend upon overwhelming, often self-destructive, impulses over which the individual is able to exert little control. Moreover, though suffering as a consequence of these impulses is depicted in Antony, Antonio, Leontes and others, the question of their will—whether or not they wish to indulge or control the impulse—barely figures in the drama.



**Fig. 16.** Depictions of Hamlet, 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Clockwise from top left: Thomas Betterton (1661), David Garrick (1769), The Drury Lane Edition frontispiece (1776) confirms that the portraits of Hamlet with out-stretched arm relate to the confrontation with the ghost. Edmund Kean's performances marked a shift to the introspective, and he was depicted both with the spirit (1814) and with book (1818). The earliest depictions of Hamlet gazing into the skull were not portraits of actors, but illustrations for published editions of the play, the first appearing in 1773. The confrontation with the ghost remained the popular subject for portraits of actors as Hamlet, but by 1899, Sarah Bernhardt was photographed with the skull, and in the twentieth century it became ubiquitous, largely unchanged through to David Tennant (2008).

Hamlet and Prospero are the only two instances in which Shakespeare sought to characterise a figure with some claim to intellectual or philosophical genius and both figures are marked by twin absorptions in the spirit-world and in intellectual matter. However, the representation of these obsessions in *The Tempest* is the inverse of that in *Hamlet*. Hamlet's response to a summons from the spirit-world is to question the nature of that world, not only by recourse to his books, shown on stage, but through his adoption of the mode of the essayist; as has been observed by Shapiro and numerous others, his soliloquies owe an enormous debt to the pioneer of the essay form, Michel de Montaigne (Shapiro, 2005: 318-38). The mode of the soliloquising essayist permits Hamlet a seemingly unlimited capacity for explicit and dialectical self-analysis and reflection. Hamlet's determination to verify the moral legitimacy of the knowledge offered to him by the spirit-world marks his modernity for us. Prospero, by contrast, though he tells us repeatedly the importance of his books, not only never shows them to us, but also never essays to us the insights they contain, or the benefits to his own thinking. Rather as a

magician—“rapt” by the access his studies grant him to the occult—his attention is on the spirit world directly, a point made repeatedly by his willingness to find a pretext to sweep his human companions, including his own daughter, out of his way so that he may commune privately with spirits.

Prospero, a Prince of knowledge as well as power, may appear to be Shakespeare’s most daring experimenter in free-will, but the implication of his absorption in the study of magic, is that he himself is ignorant of the degree to which that will has been overcome by powerful supernatural forces. In place of Hamlet’s didacticism, Prospero’s extensive verbiage is marked by suggestion and insinuation. His mood and meaning communicated obliquely, relying on the suggestion of poetic and sonic construction and the somatic sensibility of the actor.

## Practice Laboratory

### Prospero's Forgiveness? "A solemne Ayre..."

A sol/emne Ayre, /and the /best com/forter,  
To an / unset/led fan/cie, Cure /thy braines  
(Now use/lesse) boile /within /thy skull: /there stand  
For you are Spell-stopt.  
Holy/ Gonza/llo, Hon/oura/ble man,  
Mine eyes /ev'n so/ciable /to the /shew of /thine  
Fall fell/owly /drops: The /charme diss/olves apace,  
And as the morning steales upon the night  
(Melting the darkenesse) so their rising sences  
Begin to chace the ignorant fumes that mantle  
Their cleerer reason. O good Gonzallo  
My true preserver, and a loyall Sir,  
To him thou follow'st; I will pay thy graces  
Home both in word, and deede: Most cruelly  
Did thou Alonso, use me, and my daughter:  
Thy brother was a furtherer in the Act,  
Thou art pinch'd for't now Sebastian. Flesh, and bloud,  
You, brother mine, that entertaine ambition,  
Expelld remorse, and nature, whom, with Sebastian  
(Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong)  
Would heere have kill'd your King: I do forgive thee,  
Unnaturall though thou art: Their understanding  
Begins to swell, and the approching tide  
Will shortly fill the reasonable shore  
That now ly foule, and muddy: not one of them  
That yet lookes on me, or would know me: Ariell,  
Fetch me the Hat, and Rapier in my Cell,  
I will discase me, and my selfe present  
As I was sometime Millaine: quickly Spirit,  
Thou shalt ere long be free.

**McArthur:** My first thought about it is the pentameter really: it seems much less of a driver than in the speech we've just had.<sup>20</sup> It's as if the rhythm were 'evaporating' here. I think it's to do with the scansion often not supporting the iambic stresses. Lots of irregular stresses.

A sol/emne Ayre, /and the /best com/forter,  
To an / unset/led fan/cie, Cure /thy braines  
(Now use/lesse) boile /within /thy skull: /there stand  
For you /are Spell-/stopt.

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<sup>20</sup> The previous session interrogated "Ye Elves of hils..." see page 54.

**Hurrell:** Yes, there is a repeated pattern of metrical effects that dissipate the iambic beat.

*Un-stressed iambs – marked in blue, three-syllables elided into a single iamb, usually anapests – underlined, interchanged with, in the first half of the speech a high frequency of trochees (inverted-stress iambs) and spondees (double-stresses).*

Holy/ Gonza/llo, Hon/oura/ble man,  
Mine eyes /ev'n so/ciable /to the shew/ of thine  
Fall fell/owly drops:/ The charme /dissolves /apace,  
And as /the mor/ning steales/ upon/ the night  
(Melting/ the darke/nesse) so/ their ri/sing sen/ces (FEM)  
Begin /to chace /the ig/norant fumes/ that man/tle (FEM)  
Their cleer/er rea/son. O /good Gon/zallo  
My true / presser/ver, and /a loy/all Sir,  
To him/ thou fo/llo'w'st; I/ will pay /thy gra/ces (FEM)  
Home both /in word, /and deede/: Most cru/elly  
Did thou/ Alon/so, use/ me, and/ my daugh/ter:  
Thy bro/ther was /a furt/herer in/ the Act,  
Thou'art pinch'd /for't now/ Seba/stian. Flesh, /and bloud, (MANY BEATS)

**Hurrell:** This line can be scanned as ten beats, but the heavy elision at the start and the need to linger on the name Sebastian disrupts the effect.

You, bro/ther mine,/ that en/ertaine /ambi/tion (FEM)  
Expelld /remorse, /and na/ture, whom, /with Seb/astian (MANY BEATS)

**McArthur:** It seems the scansion just won't let the iambic run.

(Whose in/ward pin/ches there/fore are /most strong)  
Would heere /have kill'd /your King:/ I do /forgive/ thee, (FEM)  
Unnat/urall though /thou art: /Their un/derstand/ing (FEM)  
Begins/ to swell, /and the /approach/ing tide  
Will short/ly fill /the reas/ona/ble shore  
That now /ly foule,/ and muddy:/ not one /of them  
That yet/ looks on /me, or /would know/ me: A/riell, (FEM)  
Fetch me /the Hat, /and Ra/pier in/ my Cell,  
I will /discase/ me, and /my selfe /present  
As I /was some/time Mill/aine: quick/ly Spir/it, (FEM)  
Thou shalt / ere long / be free.

**McArthur:** When he addresses Gonzalo the metre seems to drive through again, as in the section when he observes the lifting of the spell. But the length of thoughts is uneven, and creates an impression of the mind darting about.

**Hurrell:** Those differing thought lengths have the effect of creating tempo shifts within the line.

**McArthur:** Yes and that ties in with the fact that the shifts between thoughts are abrupt. Sudden, significant shifts in his focus:

Did thou/ Alon/so, use/ me, and/ my daugh/ter:  
Thy bro/ther was /a furt/herer in/ the Act,

*Thou'art **pinch'd** /for't now/ **Seba/stian**. Flesh, /and bloud,*

The section addressed to the traitors and conspirators – feels to be the most disrupted, metrically and in thought length. The restoration of metrical regularity when describing their coming to consciousness, implies the settling of his own mind.

**Hurrell:** there's an omission of stresses interchanged with inverted stresses. It runs through-out. That contributes to the over-all effect of constantly shifting tempi too.

**McArthur:** This is a play on a courtly speech of welcome. And so there is often restraint in the auricular patterning, compared to “Ye Elves of hills...” and elsewhere.

**Hurrell:** Yes, his intent here is a declaration that has smoothness and decorum. His intent is to remain in control. But what you're identifying I think is how flashes of verbal congestion over-run that intent.

**McArthur:** Yes, that's exactly what happens.

**Hurrell:** What's dramatized consistently from “I'll drown my book” through to the end of the play is his experience of a sense of the loss – it's a movement towards “my ending is despair”.

I think what you're observing here is that the use of the metre to drive a personal energy is diminished here, but that over-all, gentle metrical ease permits sudden drives into rhythm, when Prospero can't help flipping into anxiety and vituperative mania.

***Discussion:** Proposal that the repetition of the word **pinched** within five lines is a staking of the auricular pattern in that section.*

**Clip 17.** “A solemn Ayre...” - Practice laboratory: identifying the ‘pinch’d’ sound cluster.

(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25609/> or scan the QR code.)



*The word is onomatopoeic as well as repeated, lending credence to its possible significance, and seems to focus a pattern of /in/ sounding through that section – marked in bold. The **pinched** quality becomes the dominating mood of the speaker in that passage. Arguably working against the sense of the speech. The /in/ sounding by the psyche reveals that the forgiveness is hollow. It is forced.*

*Thou'art **pinch'd** /for't now/ **Seba/stian**. Flesh, /and bloud, (MANY BEATS)*

***You, bro**/ther mine,/ that **en/tertaine** /**ambi/tion** (FEM)*

*Expell'd /remorse, /and na/ture, whom, /with **Seb/astian** (MANY BEATS)*

*(Whose **in/ward pin/ches** there/fore are /most strong)*

*Would heere /have **kill'd** /your **King**:/ I do /forgive/ thee, (FEM)*

*Unnat/urall though /thou art: /Their un/derstand/ing (FEM)*

*Begins/ to swell, /and **the** /approach/ing tide*

*Will short/ly fill /the reas/**ona**/ble shore*

*That now /**ly foule**,/ and **muddy**:/*

**Hurrell:** In this example it's a fairly simple straight-forward sonic effect. Sound largely supports the *connoted* meaning. The pinched sound corresponds perfectly with the remaining bitterness that seems evident in other aspects of the passage's construction: the accusatory aspects, the conditional and abrupt nature of the forgiveness. However, the sound nevertheless works in contrast to the overt *denotational* meaning of the passage. The forgiveness that is the ostensible subject of the passage, is undermined by the sound-text, creating psychological interest.

**Discussion:** *The forgiveness is entirely a forced act of will which is enacted for ultimately self-absorbed reasons: both to save his daughter and the family legacy but also to preserve his own soul. Not only is this mercy not "not strained"<sup>21</sup> but the blessing intended on the giver is accordingly not present. It's a pinched act of bloody-minded will, and resentment remains. The person who is really 'pinched' is Prospero.*

**McArthur:** Prospero's anxiety is embedded in the speech. His fear of having to face them without the props of his power.

**Hurrell:** These rhythmic effects we've identified along with the sonic contradiction to the forgiveness impulse, implies that the entire speech is self-reflexive. The syntax through which many of the images are expressed, permits a simultaneous self-reflexive reading, in which he is as much the subject as the figure to whom he applies the image. Indeed, the speech opens in a way that could easily be read as a call for grace for self:

A sol/emne Ayre, /and the /best com/forter,  
To an /unset/led fan/cie,

**McArthur:** He goes on to describe his sense of grief as equal to Gonzalo's:

Fall fell/*owly* drops:  
The charme /dissolves /apace,

... and in describing the dissolution of the charm, he is actually invoking the dissolution of part of his own mind: the magic mental force that he has just vowed

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<sup>21</sup> The speech, as a speech of forgiveness, may be tested for its quality and success as an act of forgiveness, by comparing it to the conditions of the 'quality of mercy' as Shakespeare laid them out in *The Merchant of Venice*:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle raine from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest,  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes,  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes  
The throned Monarch better then his Crowne.  
His Scepter shewes the force of temporall power,  
The attribute to awe and Majestie,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and feare of Kings:  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,  
It is enthroned in the hearts of Kings,  
It is an attribute to God himselfe;  
And earthly power doth then shew likest Gods  
When mercie seasons Justice.

to give up. What then follows is a repeated series of descriptors that might just as easily apply to his own state of mind as to theirs:

/the ig/*norant* fumes/ that man/tle  
Their cleer/er rea/son

en/tertain*e* /ambi/*tion*  
Expelld /remorse and nature

(Whose **in**/ward **pin**/ches there/fore are /most strong)

That now /ly foule,/ and *muddy*/

**Hurrell:** Those images herald Prospero’s movement into darkness and despair, occasionally revealed by resonant non-sequiturs in the remainder of the fifth act: “This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine” “Every third thought shall be my grave” “My ending is despair” but also in the sardonic, acerbic asides: “my brace of lords” “at this time I will tell no tales”, “tis new to thee”

**Reflection:** *The tonal contradictions in this speech suggest an approach to playing it that is the alarming discovery by the character in real time of the absence of consolation or grace in the (forced) act of forgiveness. Forgiving his enemies is supposed to be redemptive to him – Christian doctrine promises as much, and yet he finds himself unable to authentically feel forgiveness and therefore unable to derive grace from the act. Rather, he finds himself (sometimes) uncontrollably excoriating them, even in the very act of forgiving:*

Thy bro/ther was /a furt/*herer* in/ the Act,  
Thou ’art **pinch**’d /for’t now/ Seba/stian.

I do /forgive/ thee,  
Unnat/urall though /thou art

**Discussion:** *Observation that this speech would have been underscored by ‘solemn music’ in the original production. The search for some suitable ‘solemn music’, as the original is now lost. Speculation on whether a reprise of ‘Full fathom five’ would serve. Questioning where the exact placement of the music cue would come.<sup>22</sup>*

**Hurrell:** Do you want to give the whole speech a try with ‘Full fathom five’ as an underscore, and lets use the dissipation of rhythm you observed to give the speech plenty of space, to interrogate those occasional auricular patterns we observed, and the rancid resentmentfulness that they seem to call up.

**Clip 18.** “A solemn Ayre...” - Practice laboratory: final reading.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25607/> or scan the QR code.)



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<sup>22</sup> These speculations later superseded by the discovery of ‘Care Charming Sleep’ (see Chapter Five).

## Chapter Five

### The Portrait of Prospero

Musicality of verbiage is not the only means by which Prospero's personality is suggested through the style of the play. The consequence of the magic he has mastered for the play's dramaturgy is that it inflects every other character, and every piece of dramatic action, with his subjectivity and intent. He speaks with a voice dispersed through the play's actions, language, sounds and images. We hear him, and are meant to hear him, in Miranda, Caliban and Ariel especially. Not only do they, through their varying resistances to the imposition of his authority, reveal his shortcomings and weaknesses, but each of them owes their power of expression to him. Miranda and Caliban have been taught to speak and think by him, while Ariel's presentation of the Harpy illusion in Act III, scene iii requires him to literally mouth words scripted by Prospero. While there can be no doubt that we are intended to discern Gonzalo's well-meaning ineffectuality—and generosity of spirit—as his own, and Antonio's sour mockery and opportunistic, Machiavellian seduction as his, the form of the story constantly reminds us that their responses to the situation they find themselves in on the island are also subject to Prospero's manipulation. The diminution of their free will through the enchantment under which Prospero holds the island invites us to wonder at the degree to which their responses and actions are being inculcated by the atmosphere that envelopes them. Prospero not only speaks through his own utterance and that of others, but reveals his nature through his own acts, and those of others, which are frequently difficult to distinguish from each other.

The critical strategy, popular since the eighteenth century, of accounting for the dramaturgical design of *The Tempest* through an allegorical reading, has come to encompass a dizzying range of thematic preoccupations—political, cultural, religious, and more recently, post-colonial. Such readings frequently identify Ariel and Caliban as 'part' of Prospero, and indeed their non-human status and their narrative position of subjection in relation to Prospero readily accommodate the perception of such a structural design in the play. Vestigial remnants of the emblematic mystery plays may be found throughout Elizabethan drama, as in Marlowe's deployment of the good and evil angels to influence the choices of Faustus, and the continuing influence of such devices is decipherable in *The Tempest*. Ariel's appeal to Prospero's better angels in Act V is merely the most overt manifestation of the way in which Prospero's emotional responses are

mediated through these figures. Caliban's unwitting capacity to bring out the worst in Prospero, as in Prospero's sudden eruption of vengeful vindictiveness towards Caliban and his confederates in Act IV "let them be hunted soundly" / "go charge my goblins that they grind their joints" may be seen in a similar light.

Applying psychoanalysis to what he defines as Prospero's over-riding personality trait of detachment, Bernard J Paris sees Prospero as

caught between contradictory impulses. He is full of rage that he has a powerful need to express, but he feels that revenge is ignoble and that he will be as bad as his enemies if he allows himself to descend to their level. What Prospero needs is what Hamlet could not find and what Shakespeare is trying to imagine: a way of taking revenge and remaining innocent. This is a problem that only his magic can solve. (Paris, 1991: 266)

Paris points out that amongst other objectives, contriving the storm enables Prospero to give vent to his vindictive rage whilst maintaining a self-image as self-effacing, compassionate and wise. The play repeatedly dramatizes Prospero's pleasure in the suffering of those who challenge him. He expresses not merely approval but giddy delight at inflicting emotional and physical suffering: on Alonso and Antonio, on Caliban and the conspirators, and even on those with whom he has no previous grievance: Ferdinand, Stephano and Trinculo and Gonzalo. "He is rather indiscriminate in his punishments, as he is later in his forgiveness" (Paris, 1991: 267). Paris argues that Prospero forbears to inflict physical suffering while revelling in psychological torture, permitting him to preserve his self-image as innocent. In fact, Prospero revels equally in the inflicting of physical pain, so long as it is only temporary. Prospero's line "there's no harm done", must be understood as no *permanent* harm. In fact, the near-drowning of Ferdinand and the court party, Ferdinand's later hard labour with the logs, the pinching and stinging of Caliban and later his mauling by dogs along with Stephano and Trinculo, all bring Prospero pleasure, even as he is eager to know that they are ultimately "safe". As Paris goes on to point out, while some of Prospero's most sadistic threats remain threats only, the supposed slights that prompt such threatening—the imagined danger that Ferdinand may take Miranda for granted or Ariel's grumbling at long service—seem "weak excuse" (Paris, 1991: 268).

If the self-image proposed above is accepted, then a state of *denial* regarding intent is an essential element of that mentality. Prospero means not to make a decision. He will leave his enemies to the sufferings of their own great guilt—enhanced by a little magic—thus absolving himself of ultimate responsibility in the event of their suicide. The nature of the enchantment, when it begins and ends and the scope of its direct effect on

the state of mind of the enchanted, is repeatedly left ambiguous in the play, and never more so than at the moment of the Harpy's torments in Act III. Does the enchantment end with the vanishing of the Harpy and the spirits? The alterations in the characters' physicality seems to suggest so. We are told during the Harpy's indictment that magic prevents the conspirators from raising their swords (a feat we have already seen Prospero perform on Ferdinand earlier in the play). That physical enchantment has evidently been lifted by the end of the scene when the party exits. Gonzalo appears to observe a difference between the "strange stare" of the enchantment and the "great guilt" of their condition after it has passed. When the conspirators re-enter in Act V however, the balance seems to have shifted again. The stage directions speak explicitly of a physical representation of a tormented enchantment.

*Solemne musicke.*

*Heere enters Ariel before: Then Alonso with a franticke gesture, attended by Gonzalo. Sebastian and Anthonio in like manner attended by Adrian and Francisco: They all enter the circle which Prospero had made, and there stand charm'd (V.i.62-3)*

Ariel speaks of the charm in the present tense, and Prospero explicitly describes the employment of heavenly music to release the charm. Nevertheless, the point at which enchantment ends and natural attitude begins is constantly blurred, and it is the natural feelings of grief, guilt and despair which permit this blurring. Is Gonzalo subject to the charm when Ariel describes him with memorable lyric beauty as "The good old Lord Gonzalo, / His teares runs downe his beard like winters drops / From eaves of reeds" (V.i.17-19) or is he merely experiencing the natural empathetic response to his friends' torments?

As the subservient, supernatural functionary by which Prospero's magic power expresses itself, Ariel lacks a subjectivity of his own: a fact which he explicitly, if paradoxically, reveals to us near the end of the play when he tells us that he would feel compassion for the suffering Italians on the island "were he human". Prospero responds with a correspondingly key confirmation that Ariel is "but air". Recalling Gertrude's philosophical elision of breath, life and language (see page 159) invites us to understand Ariel as an energetic expression of Prospero's mind. This theme has previously been made explicit in Ariel's appearance as the Harpy in Act III: the most transparent instance in the play of Prospero's subjectivity being mediated through the stage action of a subsidiary character. The malevolent horror of the Harpy's appearance is a manifestation of Prospero's rage, still unabated after twelve years, towards Antonio and Alonso. The long, parenthetical speech of condemnation is uttered word-perfectly by Ariel to a text

provided by Prospero. Like an anxious playwright on opening night, Prospero stands in the shadows above, watching Ariel's delivery, and confirms for us the success of the recitation: "Of my Instruction, hast thou nothing bated / In what thou had'st to say". Anne Barton observes that "Ariel's speech is contorted and knotty in a fashion reminiscent of Prospero" and argues that the effect is to deliberately remind the audience that these are Prospero's words (Shakespeare and Barton, 1968: 164). Prospero's deployment of Ariel as a proxy for himself, his framing of that deployment as mere illusion (discussed in Chapter Two), allows him, as we have seen, to inflict agonising torment in a way that skirts personal responsibility for its consequences.

Prospero is as easily pacified as he is provoked to anger. Submissiveness, loyalty and obedience draw benevolence from Prospero and Ariel plays upon this trait in his master. As Paris astutely points out, this benevolence is a pillar of Prospero's self-image. "Indeed, his anger with Ariel when he murmurs derives partly from the fact that Ariel has threatened his idealized image by making him seem unkind" (Paris, 1991: 268). This is a crucial insight into Prospero and the narrative arc of the entire play. Again and again Paris returns to his theme of a Prospero who revels in the role of punisher, but must contrive circumstances to permit self-regard as guiltless. Both the need to punish, *and* the need to be free of guilt are urgent, indeed desperate in Prospero. His study of magic is driven in part by the need to demonstrate a mental superiority over other mortals that approaches the god-like. However, the forgiveness Prospero delivers to his true enemies: Antonio, Sebastian, and Alonso, is deeply compromised and reluctant.

Although Prospero is still furious with the evil three, his perfectionistic and self-effacing 'shoulds' are stronger than his vindictive impulses. He releases them from his spell, in part, because his cruelty is making him uneasy and, in part, because his need for revenge has been assuaged by their suffering. (Paris, 1991: 272)

Earlier Prospero has declared that "they being penitent" he is satisfied and ready to forgive, however Shakespeare is careful to show such penitence in Alonso only. Antonio and Sebastian's silence in Act V, considered in conjunction with their behaviour throughout the play, suggests an absence of reform or repentance. The practice laboratory conducted on the speech of forgiveness itself: V.i.63-84 (see page 168) interrogates the gulf between the courtly formality of the speech's construction, and the underlying bitterness and contempt suggested by the sonic and rhythmic patterning. Prospero's forgiveness of them is ultimately forced, and the rancidness is readily evident on the page, as Paris avers. He sees Prospero's forgiveness as just as compulsive and indiscriminate as his earlier vindictiveness. The urge to see himself as 'good' asserts itself on the

slightest pretext, just as his arrogant vindictiveness does. Indeed, the urge for what Paris names “self-effacement” finds rather greater stimulus than lesser in the perfunctory, forced, begrudging penitence of the conspirators: “Antonio’s undeservingness contributes to Prospero’s sense of moral grandeur; the worse Antonio is, the more charitable is Prospero to forgive him” (Paris, 1991: 273).

Finally, Paris precisely catches a similar conflicted relationship with magic art to that suggested by the practice research laboratory into the “Ye Elves of hills...” speech (see page 54). “He seems to feel ashamed of his magic (even as he celebrates its power) and guilty for having employed it.” Paris sees the mental suffering of the court party as a psychological tipping point for Prospero, at which the conflict between his “arrogant-vindictiveness” and his “self-effacement” shifts irrevocably. Having justified indulgence in his sadistic impulses, he now comes to be dominated by his need to assert a self-image of moral purity (Paris, 1991: 274). Prospero’s inability to commit whole-heartedly to the forgiveness of Antonio is as nothing to his irrational fixation on the largely imagined perfidy of Caliban. The threat Prospero persists in imagining Caliban to represent, and his vituperative outbursts against it, ultimately reveal the fissures in Prospero’s own personality. Caliban is presented as a ‘blank slate’ wild-man whose manner of speaking, and very patterns of thought, have been inculcated in him by Prospero. This point is made explicit in Miranda’s remonstrance:

I pittied thee,  
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour  
One thing or other: when thou didst not (Savage)  
Know thine owne meaning; but wouldst gabble, like  
A thing most brutish. (I.ii.482-6)

This expression of a philosophical position in which the thinking-action is not merely communicated by, but is dependent upon the function of language, is in accord with prevailing Renaissance views of the role of rhetoric and has significant implications for how we are intended to read Caliban’s mental preoccupations. His self-image as a rightful heir to sovereignty and the victim of a usurpation, is a pattern of thought that he has acquired through Prospero’s instruction. Like Prospero, Caliban allows that pattern of thought to dictate his actions and responses, but the fact that it is merely a *pattern* of thought, transposed onto him, is revealed by his later, nonsensical decision to ‘free’ himself by offering himself up to enslavement by Stephano.

As a rhetorician, Caliban crassly over-uses the auricular figures to deliver too-obvious patterns of alliteration and assonance:

All the infections that the *Sunne suckes up*  
From Bogs, *Fens, Flats*, on *Prosper fall* (II.ii.360-1)

The heavy-handed triple assonance on “sun sucks up” and triple alliteration on simple monosyllabic words (“fen”/”flat”/”fall”) in the next line establish a pattern that is continued throughout the speech. The ‘bad rhetorician’ is a familiar device in Shakespearean drama, deployed to sometimes comic effect as in the laughably crude poetic stylings of Orlando or Armado. However, in the subtler guise of a mishandling of the laws of eloquence and persuasion, it may also lead to tragic consequences, as in Brutus’ rhetorical besting by Mark Antony, or Bassianus’ defeat at the hands of Saturninus. In the case of Caliban, the effect is initially comic and ultimately poignant. His early speeches exhibit a blend of the crude aural music with occasional turns of phrase that echo Prospero. The kinaesthetic response McArthur identified, shown in the laboratory excerpt in Clip 19, stimulated by the simplicity of his aural expression, was ultimately found to grant an open emotional expressiveness which stands in stark contrast to Prospero’s knotted mental processing of the wounds he has suffered.

**McArthur:** there is something about it, where it all happens on an open breath. It’s an open channel to this complaint. It’s not being said by a sophisticate, and that’s its strength and freedom. The conflux of the words causes you to return to an open channel – a tunnel out from the diaphragm to howl. So much of it is an open-throated howl.

**Clip 19.** “I must eat my dinner” – Practice Laboratory: sounding out Caliban.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25690/> or scan the QR code.)



Their shared fixation on the theme of usurpation, Prospero’s irrational obsession with the imagined threat Caliban poses and the final, famously ambiguous declaration of ownership: “this thing of darkness, I acknowledge mine” ultimately form a pattern of mirroring between the two characters too comprehensive to be dismissed. Paris assesses Prospero as needing to hold an image of Caliban in his mind that is both sub-human and morally responsible. The moral responsibility requires punishment; the sub-human status permits guilt-free cruelty in the execution of that punishment. He sees “Prospero and Caliban caught in a vicious circle from which there seems to be no escape” (Paris, 1991: 270). He goes so far as to define Caliban as Prospero’s scapegoat—which is surely correct—and finally declares that “Prospero must hold onto his image of Caliban as a devil in order to hold onto his idealized image of himself”.

Paris identifies the root source of this neurosis as the hatred Prospero harbours for that in Caliban which “is the forbidden part of himself”, by which he intends a reading of Prospero’s subconscious recognition of character traits in common. Barbara Rogers-Gardner, applying a Jungian analysis, takes this further, characterising Caliban as the compartmentalisation of an element of Prospero’s psyche, the purpose of which is to isolate and express his (Prospero’s) “passion, his bestial side, and that of all men” (Rogers-Gardner: 81). In this reading, the journey of the play is seen as one of unifying the disparate parts of a hitherto fragmented psyche through humble acceptance. Such readings do much to explain the enormous though nebulous sense of catharsis that frequently accompanies the uttering of “this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine” in the theatre. With that utterance, Prospero finally tacitly confesses to the delusional idealization of himself with which he has held together his self-image.

### **The Structure of the Play as a Portrait of Prospero**

In the mirroring of Caliban and Prospero, the play’s dramaturgy draws on a strategy of juxtaposition in order to transmit its meaning. This device takes its place in a recurring pattern of juxtapositions that run throughout the play. The traditional allegorical reading of Ariel and Caliban as ‘air’ and ‘earth’ respectively, which was later extrapolated to a view of them as ‘fancy’ and ‘brute instinct’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and has continued as we have seen into psychoanalytic readings, is prompted in part by the structural juxtaposition of their respective first appearances. The constantly shifting point of view on which the play’s structure is based similarly facilitates comparison and contrast: between the party of nobles and the party of servants for example, and the deeper thematic juxtapositions they represent, as between Caliban’s imagined perfidy and Antonio’s real Machiavellian instincts. Aesthetic juxtapositions were an essential element of the masque form which *The Tempest* co-opts. The device of the anti-masque, preceding the masque itself—here reflected in the sequence of the dance of the shapes/banquet/harpy in Act III, scene iii followed by the betrothal masque in Act IV, scene i—was itself an exercise in juxtaposition of the grotesque comedic potentialities in misrule, disorder and wantonness against the sublime beauty to be found in goodness and order.

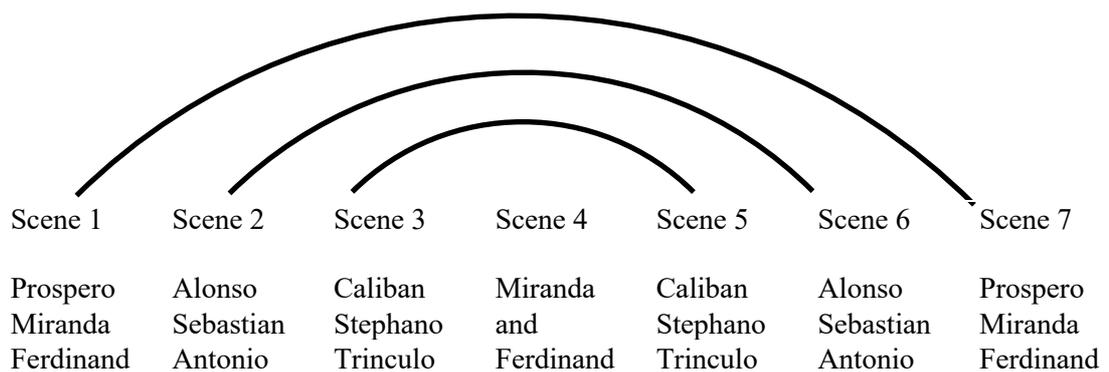
The feature of the play’s structure that draws most frequent comment is Shakespeare’s anomalous observance of the classical unities generally attributed to Aristotle, but expanded, developed, and codified by the Renaissance neo-classical scholar Lodovico Castelvetro. Kermode’s claim for an academic preoccupation with the form

that amounts to a counter-dramatic effect has already been canvassed in Chapter Two and he is by no means alone in attributing structural and dramatic choices to a failure by the dramatist to balance form and content. It is therefore with some justification that Traister claims that contemporary scholarship has failed to find a convincing explanation for Shakespeare's use of this structural technique (Traister, 1984: 128), though Anne Barton provides a useful insight when she observes that the classical unities, theorised to contribute to a "realistic" stage aesthetic are paradoxically employed in the case of *The Tempest* to make the events seem *more* strange, *less* plausible – in short, more magical (Barton, 1996: 26-8). The effect of these formal patterns of dramaturgical organisation is to disengage the audience's expectation of narrative tension resulting from the cause and effect of plot. Whether through effects that seem out of proportion to their ostensible cause, the absence of intra-character dramatic conflict, or (not least) the profound status-imbalance between Prospero and every other personage or entity depicted on stage, the audience is at every turn discouraged from engaging with the expectation of narrative action. Indeed, the very narrative drive that Aristotle intended his unities to foster is, in the case of *The Tempest*, resisted. The lack of narrative justification or dynamic action constantly refocuses attention instead on the persona of the protagonist, and the effect of the language.

Mark Rose's observation on the chiasmic scene structure of *The Tempest* (Rose, 1972: 172-5) has been influential and it is a striking and bewildering formal design, though it takes some judicious squinting to perceive it. Rose's schematic is revealed by disregarding the opening storm-scene (I.i) and most of the ensuing expository scene between Prospero and Miranda, Caliban and Ariel (I.ii). His sequence broadly begins with Ariel's delivery of the enchanted Ferdinand and ends after the masque at the end of Act IV. It is striking to find that the Ferdinand/Miranda log-bearing courtship, literally overseen by Prospero, sits at the very centre of the play. Similarly, it is surprising, even in performance, to find ourselves revisiting the adventures of the clowns with Caliban so soon after we left them.

Rose relies on the common conception of Prospero's reforming mission, though his colouring of it as a process of self-education for Prospero seems to offer more promise for character development (Rose, 1972: 173). Nevertheless, he resists the possibility that vengeance may at any stage be part of Prospero's plan, or even under serious consideration. Like other readers before and since, he is obliged, therefore, to conclude not only that "*The Tempest* is one of the most disciplined, most severely controlled plays

in the canon” but also that the structural patterning he observes “has little dramatic function”, and therefore must be seen either as a technical “display of virtuosity” or at best as a curiously academic effort to reflect “the central theme – discipline” (Rose, 1972: 174). Such strained conclusions once again require acceptance of a Shakespeare no longer interested in the dramatic. A ‘post-dramatic’ Shakespeare may have temporal appeal to our own moment in the history of theatre practice, and undoubtedly has historical cover of a kind in the abandonment of the dramatic in the Court Masque, in favour of the aesthetic, the philosophical, the artificial and the spectacular. It nevertheless requires acceptance that, in a play that his colleagues later gave the pre-eminent position in his posthumous anthology, Shakespeare chose to abandon a life-time’s preoccupation with human drama.



**Fig. 17.** Chiastic structure of scenes in *The Tempest*.  
As illustrated by Mark Rose in *Shakespearean Design* (1972: 172).

There is however an alternative explanation for such a structural device. What is striking about the above diagram is what it reveals about the lengths to which Shakespeare was willing to go to obscure, confuse and reduce the force of the linear structure to which all playwriting of the period is irresistibly drawn. Shakespeare repeatedly seeks to interrupt the expectation of linear narrative drive. Indeed, the arcs at the top of Rose’s diagram, speak not only to the circles in which Prospero’s adversaries/victims find themselves walking, but also to the sense of *déjà vu* that such a phenomenon induces in the audience. It is striking also that the vast majority of Prospero’s text and stage time fall outside the scope of Rose’s schematic, in Acts I and V. The seven scenes accounted for in the diagram feature Prospero only as observer-puppeteer, but all the actions dramatized in these scenes are manifestations of Prospero’s magic will. No man is, as Gonzalo later

observes, entirely himself. Prospero's lengthy oration in Act I, scene ii establishes his extraordinary power, his unquenched sense of betrayal and considerable motive for vengeful action, his easy willingness to inflict suffering, his capricious changes of mood and capacity for rage. What is deliberately not established through that long sequence, is what exactly he means to do with this heady cocktail. Even when the progress of the action requires him to impart some details of his plan on stage, Shakespeare resorts to the hoary device of having him whisper inaudibly in Ariel's ear to keep those details from us.

This then is the dramatic question which hangs over all the scenes covered by Rose's diagram of chiasitic structure in the play. The terrain in which this drama plays out is entirely that of Prospero's mind. Indeed, we are led to imagine (though not assured) that the only contribution the other characters may make to deciding their fate, is the moral quality of their own behaviour, as judged by Prospero. Perhaps penitence, obedience and chastity will help Alonso, Caliban and Ferdinand respectively to happy ends; perhaps not. As discussed earlier, Alonso's faults are in reality only acts of political rivalry with Prospero, rather than empirical sins on a par with Antonio's fratricidal impulses. Prospero shows no sustained interest in reforming Antonio, but rather seems to hope to entice Antonio into further sin. Indeed, it is by no means certain that Prospero is opposed to Antonio orchestrating the murder of Alonso. It is Ariel who intercedes to save Alonso's life, explicitly telling us that he has done so without Prospero's knowledge or sanction—the only time he makes such a claim regarding his actions.

The structural facts of the play are that all the scenes encompassed in Rose's diagram of chiasitic structure are inflected by the presence and power of Prospero's mind. The circumstances in which the characters find themselves are entirely the creation of Prospero's magic art; the landscape they explore, in fact a mindscape of Prospero's will. This is underscored by the fact that the appearance of that landscape alters according to the nature of the individual perceiving it, evidently the result of an unexplained coalescence of Prospero's art with the mind and conscience of the perceiver.

*Gon.* How lush and lusty the grass looks?

How green?

*Ant.* The ground indeed is tawny. (II.i.53-5)

The subjective character of the island is, as Keith Sturgess points out, not confined merely to its appearance but to its role and meaning for each of the characters (Sturgess, 1987: 79).

More subliminally, Prospero's principal obsession, the theme of usurpation is, in veins tragic, romantic and grotesque, played out in all its variants, by the actions of the characters. Antonio engineers Sebastian's usurpation of Alonso while Gonzalo, intoxicated by the island, finds himself whimsically—and transgressively—speculating on the end of Monarchy itself. Caliban obsesses over what he sees as his own usurpation and urges his new allies to re-usurp the island in his stead, inviting Stephano to imagine a radical disturbance of Natural Order in his own sudden elevation from butler to king. Even Ferdinand is invited to unwittingly countenance a usurpation of his own, by supposing himself the King of Naples, whilst simultaneously playing his role in the greatest retaliatory usurpation of all: the infusing of Prospero's blood into the royal house of Naples. In imposing a chiasmic structure on the play that plays itself out by constantly denying us the next step in a linear story but instead returning us to things, people and circumstances we have seen and heard a little of before, Shakespeare drives the attention of his audience inward rather than onward. We look for threads of coherent meaning through juxtaposition and reflection and, most crucially, in the drama of suggestion playing out in our own imagination as we listen and observe.

### **Music as Prospero's Voice**

These juxtapositions are stagings of Prospero's competing instincts for vengeance and forgiveness. A will to grace is repeatedly suffocated by an impulse to violence. Likewise eruptions of the impulse to violence invariably prompt a resurgence of the will to grace. This may be seen most obviously in the two parts of the "Ye Elves of hills..." speech considered at length in this study, but also in the competing moods of the "A solemn Ayre..." speech which follows, the juxtaposition between the banquet with its gentle attendants and the harpy with her painful torments, and others. Identifying the intended effect of these juxtapositions is a task complicated by the fact that many of them involve the use of music which is now thought to be lost. This represents a significant portion of what may be regarded by the terms of this study as the acoustic portrait of Prospero's *persona*. On seven separate occasions, Ariel or the spirits, acting either at Prospero's explicit direction or in accordance with his desired ends, perform music imbued with magical power. On three of these occasions, the music includes singing. All but two of these pieces of music are presumed lost. Six of these instances of music occur directly adjacent to moments of violence or verbal aggression.

1. Ariel sings “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” immediately after Prospero and Miranda’s impassioned argument with Caliban.
2. Ariel sings “*Full fadom five...*” in order to comfort the suffering inflicted by Prospero on Ferdinand through the violent effects of the storm. Once the song ends, the transcendent mood of delight between Ferdinand and Miranda is cut short by Prospero’s sour and apparently warrantless threats.
3. In Act II, scene i, Ariel performs “solemne” music to ease the mental suffering inflicted by Prospero on Alonso, and its mood is cut short by the murderous instincts of Antonio and Sebastian.
4. A similar effect is inculcated by the return of solemn music in Act III to entice the nobles to the banquet, which is cut off by the appearance of Ariel as the Harpy.
5. The joyful and apparently mesmerising effect of music in the Act III betrothal masque of Ferdinand and Miranda is cut off by Prospero’s violent rage at Caliban’s conspiracy.
6. The violent necromantic imagery and energy of the “Ye Elves of hills...” speech in Act V is displaced by the sudden call for “some heavenly music”.

The seventh, Ariel’s ode to imminent freedom “Where the bee sucks” stands apart as the only music Ariel delivers at his own behest. However, its deployment represents an overt further use of juxtaposition. He sings of freedom and nature while removing Prospero’s magic garment and replacing it with the old Milanese ducal robe.

This series of complex interactions between music and action represent a considerable experiment in the use of integrated music in Renaissance English drama, amounting to what Keith Sturges argues is the creation of an original dramatic form, “a genuine melodrama” (Sturges, 1987: 82). Anne Barton identifies songs which “draw to themselves and translate emotions which words alone seem inadequate to express”. While the purpose of the practice research laboratories is, in part, to dispute the notion that Prospero’s language is “inadequate to express” his emotions when the force and resonance of its own verbal music is considered; the notion that part of his emotional character may be expressed exclusively through Ariel’s music is intriguing and not without external supporting evidence.

*The Tempest*, in its deployment of rich auditory effects in both language and music, exhibits clear signs of a deliberate attempt to exploit the acoustic advantages of the indoor theatre at Blackfriars. The Burbages acquired the Blackfriars space in 1596, but had faced

resistance from the area's well-heeled residents to the presence of a professional acting company and had been forbidden to use it (Laoutaris, 2014: 270-87). In 1600, Richard Burbage leased the space to Henry Evans for performances by The Children of the Chapel. As a result, by the time the King's Men finally gained permission to present their own work there in 1608, Shakespeare had already seen first-hand other playwrights take advantage of both its intimate atmosphere and the boys' companies' musical expertise, to make music a much more subtle and integral part of the theatrical language than it was at the Globe. Sturges cites evidence of the extensive use of music at Blackfriars by John Marston in *The Malcontent* (1604) and *Sophonisba* (1606) as a guide to the emerging trend. *The Malcontent* is a particularly instructive case, because of its history of being padded with additional dialogue when it was later performed on the acoustically inferior outdoor stage at The Globe, in lieu of the musical material which was necessarily omitted (Sturges, 1987: 47).

In fact, music occupies a central thematic position in *The Tempest*, and it is a position that depends not simply on the idea or action of music, but on its specific auditory effects, and their capacity to provoke complex mental states. This is a significant departure from Shakespeare's previous use of music, which was either comic, or confined to the illustration of a character's already established mood. By the time of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare evidently had at his disposal a musical sound-world and a composer of much greater expressive sophistication. He was confident not only to use music extensively, but to demand music sufficiently delicate, harmonious and rarefied to satisfy as the representation of the "hidden" music of the spheres (Austern, 1990: 196) and to write scenarios that demand music to which the speaker can credibly attribute transformative emotional power.

Weeping again the king my father's wreck,  
This music crept by me upon the waters,  
Allaying both their fury and my passion  
With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it,  
Or it hath drawn me rather. (I.ii.520-4)

Ferdinand goes on to describe the unearthly quality of the music; a claim that is made repeatedly by numerous characters throughout the play. The piece of music in question survives and is known to us: Robert Johnson's setting of "*Full fadom five...*".

That Johnson, who was appointed Court Lutenist to James I in 1604 and held the position until his death some thirty years later, came to work extensively—and exclusively amongst playing companies—with the King's Men (Cutts, 1955: 110),

providing dramatic music for Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, is now well established (Lumsden *et al.*, 2017). Johnson's music achieved such specific and complex dramatic effects that it altered the dramaturgical balance between text and music in Jacobean drama, especially through his extensive collaboration with Beaumont and Fletcher. This point has been demonstrated in close reading of the music by scholars such as Catherine Henze, prompting her to suggest that Johnson should be thought of as a co-collaborator on some of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher (Henze, 2000: 2).

The play is specific about the instrumentation of the music that has such transcendent and complex effects. Caliban informs us that it is the music of plucked strings and voices:

Sometimes a thousand twangling Instruments  
Will hum about mine eares; and sometime voices (II.ii.254-5)

The point is confirmed obliquely by the stage direction indicating Ferdinand's entrance, accompanied by the first of Ariel's songs, which indicates that the actor playing Ariel accompanied his own singing on a small, guitar-like instrument that he could carry with him. That such an instrument was a lute is suggested not only by its status as Johnson's preferred instrument, but by a series of rich associations. Johnson's position at court was as lutenist in the "king's 'lutes and voices'" (Spring, 2006: 235) and as the title suggests, the lute was closely associated with the aristocratic atmosphere of the court. A gut-stringed instrument, it is quiet: as a solo instrument, suitable for indoor, intimate performance only. In order to make it a dominant feature of the dance music in Ben Jonson's *Masque of Oberon*, performed at court in the same year as *The Tempest*, Johnson assembled an ensemble of no less than twenty lutes. Its exclusive connotations and delicate, fleeting sonority inspired a belief in its "power to transport the listener into a kind of ecstasy" which was shared by Shakespeare (Goodwin, 2001).

The play adopts an aesthetic schema in which live music is virtually synonymous with magic—all the major enchantments performed by Prospero and Ariel involve the performance of music. This theatrical practice had deep philosophical roots, amounting to much more than a mere convention of practical stage music to represent the Neoplatonic hidden musics of *musica mundane* and *musica humana* (Lindley, 2006: 19-20). As David Lindley, Linda Phyllis Austern and others note, Agrippa and his English followers understood practical music, under certain conditions, to possess magical agency, and rated it as a crucial tool in engaging with the occult (Austern, 1990: 193). In *The Tempest*, this relationship is extended in another direction. The play depicts music as

inextricably linked with dreaming, and therefore with what the modern reader might think of as the sub-conscious. Again, this is a connection richly supported by philosophical thought at the time. Renaissance beliefs about the cause and nature of dreams were diverse and accorded different causes to different kinds of dreams and nightmares. The recurring theme, however, is that they were a function of disorder of bodily spirits, or humours: a belief which is everywhere found in Shakespeare and other dramatists of the period (Camden, 1936). The Neoplatonic view of music “perceived to be a living spiritual substance not unlike the souls of men” had become similarly widespread in English literature and philosophy (Austern, 1990: 194), inviting the theory that the two spirit substances may interact to curative effect (Fox-Good, 1996: 247).

Not only does Ariel use “*solemne musicke*” to put Alonso and his party to sleep, and to induce a dream-like state in Ferdinand, but Caliban’s speech of reassurance to the rebellious clowns, which, along with Prospero’s later reassurance to Ferdinand, justly stand out from the rest of the text as memorable and mesmerising set-pieces of lyric poetry, explicitly forges the link between music and dream-states. The effect of both speeches is intentionally mesmerising, not merely for the audience, but as an effect on the character(s) being addressed, and even on the speakers themselves. Taken as a pair, they elucidate the key associations an audience is to attend to in order to apprehend the play’s meaning. Both use a similar rhapsodic technique; what a modern reader might associate with a stream-of-consciousness effect, to allow association, rather than semantic discourse to dominate the sequence of expression. In this sense both speeches are themselves depictions of dreaming. Ostensibly, Caliban is reaching for the dream image as a metaphor—a figure by which to communicate the hypnotic effect the music of the island has, and the nourishment and comfort it offers if embraced:

Sometimes a thousand twangling Instruments  
Will hum about mine eares; and sometime voices,  
That if I then had wak’d after long sleepe,  
Will make me sleepe againe. (II.ii.254-7)

However, it immediately becomes clear that Caliban has invoked an image over which he has little power; it absorbs and envelopes him even as he utters it:

and then in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open, and shew riches  
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak’d  
I cri’d to dreame againe. (II.ii.257-60)

Even in recalling it, the music has transported the impressionable Caliban into a dream-state where he finds the very inciting phenomena of the drama—the storm—transmuted into a divine nourishment, rendering real life hollow by comparison.

Prospero later takes this association into philosophical rumination, completing a conceptual sequence from magic to music through to dream-state as the essence of life itself. That which is innocent rapture in Caliban, when worked by Prospero's intellect settles first into grim realisation of the transitory nature of the human endeavour, this time invoking not the enchanted tempest itself, but the imaginary ship-wreck it caused:

The Clowd-capt Towres, the gorgeous Pallaces,  
The solemn Temples, the great Globe it selfe,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And like this insubstantiall Pageant faded  
*Leave not a racke behinde* (IV.i.166-70)

From there he progresses to bleak nihilistic reflection on the fleeting nature of life itself, without the comforts of an everlasting afterlife:

we are such stuffe  
As dreames are made on; and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleepe. (IV.i.170-2)

This series of thematic connections would have drawn the play's original audience inexorably back to the question of the fate of Prospero's soul, in ways that are not immediately clear to a modern audience. In the first instance is the question of what is revealed of Prospero's intent by the apparently heavenly—but actually daemonic—music that he commands from Ariel. Austern refers to the case of the Enchanter in the contemporaneous play *The Wisdom of Dr Dodypoll*, to highlight the fact that the song commanded by the Magician and performed by his obedient spirits, reflected an aspect of the magician's own will—and voice—which would otherwise remain unspoken.

The Enchanter's particular power and dramatic convention forbid him from voicing his own desires in song, but instead he commands those more powerful beings at his service, 'that are bodies made of lightest ayre' to work his magic and express the affection of his mind directly with their airy music. (Austern, 1990: 199)

Austern's description of the Enchanter working his end by commanding spirits to create music, not to mention the direct quotation from the play she includes, make clear the connection between the conception of demonology depicted in *The Wisdom*, and that which Shakespeare draws on to construct the relationship between Prospero and Ariel. There are other striking parallels, including the presentation of an enchanted banquet

provided as bait for malevolent intent, which need not be considered here (Austern, 1990: 198).

Like Dodypoll, Prospero employs seemingly celestial music to manipulative and deceptive effect. As Lindley argues, “*Full fadom five...*” is unambiguously presented to the audience as an act of deceptive manipulation. It purports to translate into acceptance and wonder Ferdinand’s grief at a death that has not in fact taken place and does so by telling the explicit lie that Alonso has indeed perished at the bottom of the sea. (Lindley 224-225)

*Full fadom five thy Father lies,  
Of his bones are Corrall made:  
Those are pearles that were his eies,  
Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a Sea-change  
Into something rich, & strange:  
Sea-Nymphs hourly ring his knell.  
[burthen: ding dong]  
Harke now I heare them, ding-dong bell. (I.ii.526-33)*

Even the momentary beneficence in Prospero’s attitude to Ferdinand that the easeful song implies, is an illusion—Prospero will shortly begin tormenting Ferdinand with suspicious enthusiasm. What is notable, however, is that this illusory effect of compassion and transcendence seems genuinely to affect Prospero’s own mind. Immediately prior to the musical interlude, he has been engaged in a vituperative fight with Caliban, but for a few moments he seems becalmed and even generous.

### **Robert Johnson’s Music**

Of the three surviving pieces of music which are thought to be some of Johnson’s original music for *The Tempest*, two are song settings for Ariel: “*Full fadom five...*” and “*Where the bee sucks...*”. The question of the precise dramaturgical function served by the play’s original music has received little attention from scholars or practitioners. The music known to survive is rarely used in performance. Peter Hall’s 1974 production with Gielgud is the single case amongst the productions considered in this study, in which Johnson’s “*Full fadom five...*” setting was used. However, Hall did not elect to engage a professional singer to deliver it, choosing instead to make a feature of Ariel being an inept singer with an overtly feeble, off-key rendition. While it has been assumed that the ‘lost’ status of such music renders enquiry into its function inevitably fruitless, this study adopts

a strategy of conjectural reconstruction of some of the key vocal music, by considering Johnson's extant corpus.

Surrounding the music that does survive, there has been some confusion. The two song-settings have not always been universally understood to be by Johnson, though as J.P. Cutts observed, such doubts around attribution were largely the result of a misreading of attribution terminology in the 1660 volume *John Wilson's cheerful Ayres and ballads* in which they both appear (Cutts, 1955: 111). Among those who have correctly attributed the songs to Johnson, there has by no means been a consensus that his settings are the original ones, despite the preponderance of evidence now assembled to support the contention that Johnson was the virtual composer-in-residence for the King's Men during the period in which *The Tempest* was written (Lumsden *et al.*, 2017). That doubt partly stems from a perceived dramatic unsuitability of Johnson's settings. Cutts himself, who did so much to uncover, document and raise awareness of Johnson's music, declared both songs to be "full of spontaneous gaiety" (Cutts, 1955: 112), unintentionally casting a pall over the credibility of "*Full fadom five...*" in particular, which carries the dramaturgical burden of transmuting Ferdinand's grief into catharsis and serene acceptance. Other scholars, including Sturgess, have followed Cutt's lead in declaring the piece "surprisingly cheerful, almost gay" (Sturgess, 1987: 89). The G Major setting of the music would appear, on the page, to support such a contention.

The relationship between dramatic or emotional mood and the harmonic and rhythmic conventions that have come to signify them in classical and modern music practice, however, was by no means similarly determinant in Early Music. As performers of Baroque and Early Music have repeatedly shown, such effects may be as much dependent on the different sonorities and textures drawn from the instrument, as on any particular harmonic language. The countertenor Andreas Scholl's interpretation of "*Full fadom five...*", which was presented in recital at the Sam Wanamaker Theatre in London in 2013, but is also available in recording (Scholl, 2008), convincingly reveals music that, far from being "cheerful" or "gay" is rather hauntingly appropriate to the mystery and mournfulness of the moment, in a manner that radically expands the scope of the scene's dramaturgy. In so doing, he follows in a brief lineage of twentieth-century interpreters as far back as Alfred Deller, the 'godfather' of the modern countertenor, whose slow, lyrical 1967 recording points to the richer emotional possibilities for the piece.

The precise nature of the artistry of the boy players—both the apprentices in the adult playing companies, and the all-boy troupes of The Children of the Revels and

others—is something of a mystery, but what can be said with certainty is that they were rigorously trained, and evinced a beguiling combination of the boyish (treble) voice and sweetness, with a capacity to knowingly deliver the erudite, satirical, and sometimes erotic dramas composed for them by Ben Jonson and others. A male adult knowingness combined with an ‘angelic’ treble soprano voice is a stage presence which was absent from music drama since the end of the era of the *castrati*, until the mid-twentieth century rise of the countertenor. This movement has, in the UK and beyond, undertaken the rediscovery of the English pastoral and art song as one of its on-going projects. It is for this reason that the practice enquiry relating to the play’s music has been conducted by drawing on the expertise of an additional co-informant, the countertenor Russell Harcourt.

### **The Enchantments of Ferdinand**

Whether as a result of insights to emerge from its return to the performance repertoire or not, scholarly interpretation of the music has evolved and deepened. David Lindley correctly sees in “*Full fadom five...*” “a grave but relatively uncomplicated setting” (Lindley, 2006: 223); while Jacquelyn Fox-Good gives a plausible account of the way in which the music attempts to enact harmonically the sea-change described in the lyric through modulations (Fox-Good, 1996: 250-53). The practice laboratories experimented with variations in tempo, key and vocal quality to explore respectively the claims made for “gay” and “grave” emotional potentialities in the music. Both performance approaches seem musically credible, although obviously the lyric only seems supported by the setting when the singer’s interpretation is “grave”. In fact, the music when rendered this way radically alters the dramatic power of the lyric, which on its own can seem oddly glib and careless of Ferdinand’s sensibilities, given that the song is presented as an enchantment of Ferdinand which eases his suffering.

“*Come unto these yellow sands...*”, also sung by Ariel to Ferdinand, precedes “*Full fadom five...*” and is separated from it only by Ferdinand’s eight-line speech of enchanted (in both senses of the word) response:

This Musicke crept by me upon the waters,  
Allaying both their fury, and my passion  
With its sweet ayre (I.ii.521-3)

Several references by Ferdinand imply that the two pieces of music are related. Though the first song makes no reference to Ferdinand’s suffering or the loss of his father, Ferdinand explicitly points to the song’s function in comforting him in his distress. He

was “weeping” and the music “crept by” him and “allay[ed his] passion”. The second song goes on to directly confront the source of Ferdinand’s despair, offering a vision of transcendence through its reassurance that his father does not “fade” but rather achieves a kind of beautiful immortality through his “rich and strange” transformation into coral and pearls. Critically, Ferdinand’s exclamation when the music re-commences, observes the reprise of a single musical event, rather than an emotional shift from one piece of music to another:

hence I have follow’d it  
(Or it hath drawne me rather) but ’tis gone.  
*No, it begins againe.* (I.ii.523-5)

This sense of musical continuity is further supported by Ferdinand’s response immediately after “*Full fadom five...*”, “The Ditty do’s remember my drown’d father”. The Oxford English Dictionary points out that in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the word ‘ditty’ related exclusively to “the words of a song, as distinguished from the music or tune” and indeed Shakespeare explicitly uses the word to make this distinction in *As You Like It*: “There was no great matter in the dittie, yet the note was very untunable” (AYLI.V.iii215-6). Ferdinand’s comment then is exclusively on the new lyric he has just heard. He is not drawing a distinction between “*Full fadom five...*” and “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” as pieces of music.

Prospero’s intent requires the enchantment of Ferdinand to accomplish two distinct tasks: the first is simply to get him on his feet again, to assuage his suffering and ‘draw’ him into exploration of the island, the second is to elevate his state of mind from preoccupation with mortality to engagement with the prospect of spiritual renewal. He requires music to unnaturally accelerate Ferdinand’s grieving process so that he will be receptive to the prospect of romantic love on seeing Miranda. It is a manipulation that must be handled with sensitivity and subtlety to preserve both the boy’s sensibilities and that of the audience. Ferdinand must experience his subsequent attachment to Miranda without a clouding sense that he is abandoning his mourning duties to his father, and an audience must engage with Ferdinand’s love for Miranda as a positive value, beyond reproach. A single piece of music with the capacity to evolve its emotional connotations from comfort to transcendence is an attractive solution to this dramaturgical challenge.

While such calculations are necessarily speculative, the most convincing argument for “*Full fadom five...*” as a musical continuation and development of “*Come unto these yellow sands...*”, lies in the sheer proximity of the two verses, and their structural similarities: similarities which are partially obscured by the garbled and

abbreviated First Folio transcription of each lyric.<sup>23</sup> Both are stanzas of eight verse lines and an onomatopoetic, ‘word-less’ refrain of non-human sounds. Both give indication that the refrain is delivered by figures other than Ariel, who are not present on stage. Ferdinand tells us that the sound of the refrain issues from upwards “in the air”. Both lyrics are based on variations to a standard seven-syllable line and exhibit a tendency to alternate between a longer, over-stressed line and a shorter, under-stressed one. In “*Come unto these yellow sands...*”, this variance is visible in the text:

*Come unto these yellow sands,  
and then take hands*

Indeed, so confused was the compositor that he has hedged on the question of whether these are two short verse lines or one long one, indenting the second and leaving “*and*” uncapitalized. However, the presence of the terminal rhyme leaves no real doubt that the text forms a couplet, in which the syllables of the second line may have been musically extended by use of melisma.<sup>24</sup> In “*Full fathom five...*” the variance between a long first line and short second is hidden by the comparable syllable count (8 and 7 respectively).

*Full fathom five thy Father lies,  
Of his bones are Corrall made*

But the disparity is immediately evident in the music, which assigns five stresses to the first line, and only three stresses to the second.

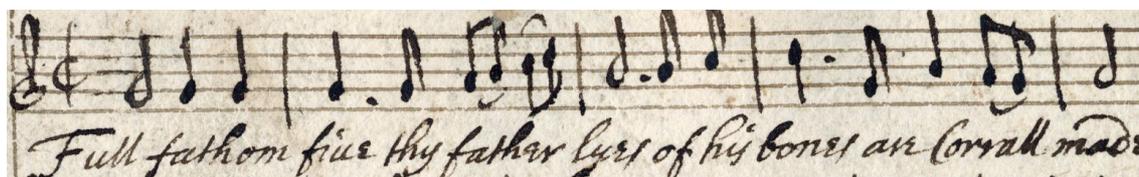


Fig. 18. “*Full fathom five...*” music by Robert Johnson, transcription by John Playford c1665.

As David Lindley points out, the greatest ambiguity in the transcription of “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” surrounds the setting out of the ‘dispersed’ burthen.

*Come unto these yellow sands,  
and then take hands:  
Curtsied when you have, and kist  
the wilde waves whist:  
Foote it featly heere, and there, and sweete Sprights beare  
the burthen.*

<sup>23</sup> Editors of the play, including Lindley, Barton and Kermode, and going back at least as far as the edition of Edward Capell in the eighteenth century, have commented on and/or rearranged the problematic lineation of the song text in the First Folio.

<sup>24</sup> From OED: “the prolongation of one syllable over a number of notes”.

Burthen dispersedly.

*Harke, harke, bowgh wawgh: the watch-Dogges barke,  
bowgh-wawgh.*

*Ar.*

*Hark, hark, I heare, the straine of strutting Chanticleere  
cry cockadiddle-dowe. (I.ii.507-16)*

In the first instance, the part line “*and sweete Sprights beare // the burthen*” appears to be a straightforward transcriptional error. The text should be set on a separate line, and burthen and bear reversed to preserve the “*there*”/“*beare*” rhyme, revealing a straightforward rhyming couplet:

*Foote it featly heere, and there,  
And sweete Sprights the burthen beare.*

Ariel’s stage direction is clear: the subsidiary sprites will sing the burden (refrain) and the manner is “dispersed”: broken into overlapping parts. The otherwise redundant additional attribution “*Ar.*” for the final line confirms this, and suggests the compositor’s difficulties in finding a satisfactory representation for a complex interplay between soloist and chorus. But the overall intent that Ariel, the soloist, will sing the invocations and the sprites will sing dispersedly the wordless chorus of sound effects—the calls of dogs and roosters—alerts us to a further corruption in the transcription:

*Harke, harke, bowgh wawgh: the watch-Dogges barke,  
bowgh-wawgh.*

In fact we should expect this line to represent the interaction between a soloist, singing the text: “*Harke harke the watch-dogges barke*” with a chorus in counterpoint singing “*bowgh-wawgh*”.

Wilson’s transcription of “*Full fadom five...*”, which is the earliest surviving source, on which all other early manuscripts of the song are based, is a simple arrangement for single voice and accompaniment, and so provides no direct indication of the musical expression of the dispersed “burthen”. However, the clear echoing of the melody in his bass line accompaniment was logically transposed to a treble counter-melody by Johnson’s influential twentieth-century editor Ian Spink and the implicit invitation for a chorus to break into canon, in order to create the “dispersed” effect has been taken up by David Lindley in his editorial reconstruction (Lindley, 2002) and by a numerous choral arrangers of the song<sup>25</sup>. This effect, in a simple canon arrangement by

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<sup>25</sup> Compare for example the arrangements by Andrew Sims, Andrew Griffiths and James Gibb, all available at [http://www2.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Full\\_fathom\\_five\\_\(Robert\\_Johnson\\_II\)](http://www2.cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Full_fathom_five_(Robert_Johnson_II)).

the researcher, has been explored by means of digital overlay in the practice laboratory (see Clip 20).

The image displays two musical scores for the song "Full fadom five...". The top score is a transcription of John Wilson's original parts, featuring a treble clef and a bass clef. The lyrics are "Ding Dong Ding Dong Bell" and "Ding Dong Ding Dong Bell" repeated. The bottom score is Ian Spink's 1974 arrangement, which includes a vocal line with lyrics "ding, dong, bell;" and "Ding, dong, ding, dong," and a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems, with a measure number of 20 at the start of the second system and 30 at the start of the third system.

**Fig. 19.** “*Full fadom five...*” by Robert Johnson, “*ding-dong*” refrain.

Above: transcription of John Wilson’s treble and bass parts (Kermode and Shakespeare, 1954); below: Ian Spink’s 1974 arrangement with countermelodies and accompaniment (Johnson and Spink, 1974).

**Clip 20.** “*Full fadom five...*” - Practice laboratory: arrangement for solo voice and digital looping.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25685/> or scan the QR code.)



It is notable that Johnson’s setting musicalizes not a “*knell*” of bells, as the text invites us to expect, but a peal, with a high, descending melody. The dotted rhythm takes the aural associations further away from the even striking of church bells, but offers an intriguingly apt musicalisation of the equivalent refrain at the conclusion of “*Come unto these yellow sands...*”.



**Fig. 20.** “Cockadiddle-dowe” set to the tune of Johnson’s “ding dong bell” refrain from “*Full fadom five...*”.

The confluence of similarities and parallels between the two songs, described above, and the long-observed emotional mutability of Johnson’s music for “*Full fadom five...*” were explored in a practice laboratory, in order to test the suitability of that music as a conjectural reconstruction of the lost “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” song setting (see clip 21). The lyric structure of the “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” was adapted both to take account of past editorial observations on possible errors in the First Folio, with light further editing by the researcher to suit the surviving Wilson arrangement of Johnson’s music for “*Full fadom five...*”.

*Come unto these yellow sands,  
And then take hands:  
Curtsied when you have, and kist  
The wiled waves whist:  
Foote it featly heere, and there,  
And sweete Sprights the burden beare.  
Harke, I heare the watch-Dogges barke,  
Hark, now I heare,  
The straine of strutting Chanticlere*

*Full fadom five thy Father lies,  
Of his bones are Corral made:  
Those are pearles that were his eies,  
Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a Sea-change  
Into something rich, & strange:  
Sea-Nymphs hourly ring his knell.  
Harke now I heare them,  
Harke now I heare them; ding, dong bell.*

*Cockadiddle-dowe  
(bowgh-wawgh, bowgh-wawgh)  
Cockadiddle-dowe  
(bowgh-wawgh, bowgh-wawgh)  
Cockadiddle-dowe*

*Ding, dong, ding, dong bell  
(Ding, dong, ding, dong bell)  
Ding, dong, ding, dong bell  
(Ding, dong, ding, dong bell)  
Ding, dong, ding, dong bell*

**Clip 21.** “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” – Practice laboratory: reconstruction using Robert Johnson’s melody for “*Full fadom five...*”.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25685/> or scan the QR code.)



The tune’s apparently “gay” mood, which has been seen by past critics as problematic for the setting of “*Full fadom five...*”, is entirely appropriate to “*Come unto these yellow sands...*” and was highlighted in the practice laboratory by performing it in faster tempo and a higher key. It should be re-emphasised that the purpose of this practice speculation

was to reconstruct the dramatic mood inculcated by the lost music of “*Come unto these yellow sands...*”, rather than to lay a claim for a particular identification of the lost song-setting. Nevertheless, it is tempting to see in the aptness of music to words in the “*ding dong bell*”/“*cockadiddle-dowe*” refrain, and the repetition of “*Hark now I hear them*” in the ninth line, a vestigial indication of the tune’s double service as a setting for both lyrics. Perhaps more instructive though, are the instances of word-painting—the illustration of particular words and phrases through melodic or harmonic effect<sup>26</sup>—that arise from the conjectural song-setting. Wilson’s original bass-clef countermelody provides a convincing setting of the “*bowgh-wawgh*” refrain, the melismatic effect on “*wiled waves*” in the fourth line satisfyingly evokes the tossing of the sea, the off-beat rhythm of the music to “*but doth suffer*” at the fifth line of “*Full fadom five...*” seems much more evocative of the text as a setting for the nimble, dance implications of “*foot it featly*” and even the “strutting” of the chancleer seems well depicted by the even-stressed, repeated notes which in “*Full fadom five...*” accompany the words “*hear them*” on the ninth line.

### “Solemn Musicke”

Though the “*solemne Musicke*” with which Ariel lulls Alonso and Gonzalo to sleep in the Act II is also lost, the text provides explicit detail about its function and mood. The sleep it must induce is to bring comfort to a grieving prince, who is otherwise beyond the reach of consolation, as Gonzalo’s extensive efforts have shown. Prospero’s description makes clear, however, that we are to regard Alonso as a guilty and thus-far unrepentant figure, undeserving of consolation or comfort, and indeed the comfort of sleep is to prove illusory. In fact, that sleep—shared by his loyal retainers—leaves him exposed to the threat of murder, urged on Sebastian by Antonio: it is a sleep that portends death. It is music that is intended to simultaneously comfort and unsettle the senses.

The stage direction “*solemne Musicke*” recurs, in the variant “*Solemne and strange Musicke*”, to accompany the delivery of the banquet by the strange shapes in Act III, and again in its original form in Act V, at the moment of Prospero’s abjuration. Here again, its function is to bring relief to the guilty and tormented, who are by now variously “distracted” and “brim full of sorrow, and dismay”. It does this, however, in a manner

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<sup>26</sup> Consider, amongst many examples of Elizabethan word-painting found in *The Oxford Book of English Madrigals*, “This sweet and merry month of May” by William Byrd (1543-1623) which features running quavers at bars 2-6 to illuminate “merry”, the ornamentation at bars 16-21 to illustrate “The birds do sing” and the switch to triple time and long-short-long-short rhythm to evoke “the joyful tune” at bars 32-35 (Ledger, Parker, and Bateson, 1978: 313). The piece may be heard at <https://youtu.be/BEVC95O53Qs>.

that renders them utterly vulnerable to Prospero's judgment. The comfort offered by such music repeatedly comes with the threat of future destruction. In its final iteration, we learn more about this music. "Solemne" is not merely a stage direction, but Prospero's explicit design. He clarifies that the music is not only solemn but also melodic: "A solemne Ayre". It is also the moment in which Shakespeare explicitly follows the convention of deploying stage music to represent celestial music.

and when I have requir'd  
Some heavenly Musicke, (which even now I do) (V.i.56-7)

Prospero calls for such music at the very moment of his abjuration of the power that commands it. In one sense, this line is his most explicit presumption to a godhead, and as such there is a deep dramatic irony to this occurrence of the music. It palpably brings release to another guilty noble, the newly confessed necromancer, Prospero. The "Ye Elves of hills..." speech is full of violence and the lust for power as it builds to its wrenching renunciation. From the moment the line is uttered, the power begins palpably to drain away, a process that will occur gradually through the remainder of the play, until by the epilogue Prospero faces a choice between despair and prayer, culminating in a plea for pardon and freedom.

The Oxford English Dictionary credits Shakespeare himself with contributing to the evolving meaning of the word 'solemn' during the Elizabethan period, from its original connotations with ceremonial religious practice and formality, to a meaning of "gloomy, dark, sombre", a usage first found in Hamlet's "customary suites of solemne Blacke". It is undoubtedly this shade of meaning that is invoked by the stage direction in *The Tempest*. While the music in question may be lost, examination of Johnson's other surviving music for the King's Men provides an intriguingly precise insight into how he may have approached the task of composing "*solemne musicke*" which achieves this particular dramatic effect and function. In fact, he provided a song setting for the King's Men, only one year after *The Tempest*'s premiere, for a lyric which with uncannily precise detail and relevant imagery describes the action that the "*solemne Musicke*" of *The Tempest* is required to perform. The lyric is by John Fletcher for the moment in his play *The Tragedy of Valentinian*, in which a sinning monarch, sick and sick at heart, is granted sleep.

*Care-charming Sleep, thou easer of all woes,  
Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose  
On this afflicted prince; fall like a cloud  
In gentle showers; give nothing that is loud  
Or painful to his slumbers; easy, sweet,*

*And as a purling stream, thou son of Night,  
Pass by his troubled senses; sing his pain,  
Like hollow murmuring wind or silver rain;  
Into this prince gently, oh gently slide,  
And kiss him into slumbers like a bride* (Beaumont and Fletcher, 1717: 60, V.ii).

In a striking echo of *The Tempest*, Fletcher charms his guilty prince to sleep with post-storm weather imagery. As Dryden and Davenant tell us in their Preface to *The Enchanted Island*, Fletcher was deeply influenced by *The Tempest* and such influence appears to be richly evident here. Johnson's moving yet eerie setting for this lyric, and the juxtaposition between that setting and the apparently forgiving tone of the poetry, has tended to prompt critical overstatement. Catherine Henze's claim that the music's "harsh dissonances and melodic leaps seemingly intended to keep the Emperor awake" (Henze, 2000: 15) surely misrepresents the effect of the musical structure. Johnson's song became something of a popular hit on the death of Henry, Prince of Wales, when it was taken up as an elegy to the glamorous and universally mourned young prince. Such usage indicates that the "harsh dissonances" detected by Henze were not readily evident in performance, which any reasonable listener's experience of the song's overall effect affirms. Nevertheless the surprising and haunting musical effects, "a series of jarring notes in disjunctive sections", are rightly observed, and Tiffany Stern comes closer to the mark when she notes the appropriate dramatic irony of Jonson's invention in supplying music "so seemingly against the meaning of the lyrics (but actually so appropriate)" (Stern, 2009: 137).

As in *Valentinian*, so in *The Tempest*'s first occurrence of "*solemne Musicke*", an ostensibly pacifying lullaby, which nevertheless carries in its music the shadow of the recipient's sins, is richly appropriate. The audience is invited to understand that the sinner is being granted sleep, easing his immediate agonies, but that his dreams will not necessarily be easeful. The apparently vague stage direction, "*solemne*" is illuminated by treating the delicate and haunting setting for "*Care-charming Sleep...*" as a reference point. Similarly, in the context of such music, the full potential effect of Prospero's climactic speeches of renunciation and forgiveness emerges. The transition from the grandiloquent boasting of the first eighteen lines of the "Ye Elves of hills..." speech, through its at-first redemptive and ultimately painful renunciation, and the agonising effort to relinquish both vengeance and power that follows, undoubtedly provides the emotional climax to the play. That climax is given its counter-point by the solemn music, which continues to run through the "A solemne Ayre..." speech, probably until just before the textual indication that the charm has broken—"their understanding begins to

swell”—placing it in juxtaposition not only to the shifting moods of Prospero’s two set speeches, but also to the lively music of Ariel’s “*Where the bee sucks...*” which immediately follows. In the practice laboratory, the tune, as a hummed melody without words, was used to reconstruct the “*solemne Musicke*” underscoring this key passage.

**Clip 22.** “*Solemn Musicke*” - Practice laboratory: underscoring “Ye Elves of hills...” and “A solemne Ayre...”

(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25686/> or scan the QR code.)



### Further Investigation

Johnson’s setting for “*Where the bee sucks...*” is far simpler in harmonic effects than either “*Full fadom five...*” or “*Care-charming Sleep...*” and this accords with its function in the play. It is the spontaneous expression of Ariel’s own anticipation, rather than the direct expression of Prospero’s magic acts. However, it is required to serve a more complex dramatic function than its superficially merry posture may at first indicate. Though the lyric, with its present-tense grammar, seems to be merely Ariel’s statement of the delights of freedom, the dramatic moment is in fact Ariel’s *anticipation* of that much longed-for freedom. Fox-Good again provides a convincing account of the music’s harmonic evocation of the sensation of “energies breaking out [which] helps realise Ariel’s longing for release” (Fox-Good, 1996: 265). Furthermore, by accompanying the re-dressing of Prospero from the robes of Magus in to those of Duke, it contributes to one of the play’s most significant moments of dramatic irony. Prospero’s declaration that he “will discase me” is ambiguous: prior to Shakespeare’s usage, the word carried a meaning of ‘unshathed’, as in a sword. The connotations of dangerous exposure (OED’s preceding cited usage is “..fell upon his discased sword”) are fittingly ambivalent. Prospero’s apparently triumphant restoration to noble dignity comes at the cost of an identity, powers and garment, which render ducal finery and authority trivial by comparison. The point is underscored by Prospero’s ensuing formulation that “I will present myself as I was”. His guise as Duke of Milan is now merely a *disguise*: one in which he means to hide for the remainder of his life. As Fox-Good observes, the “discasing” himself of his magic garment implies an ‘encasing’ in the ducal robe: an imprisonment of, or at the very least a constraint on, his true identity. As in the case of “*Full fadom five...*”, the performer’s interpretation is key to the emotional mood inculcated by “*Where the bee sucks*” and that mood is critical to the ironic effect achieved

through its juxtaposition with the action. Brief interpretative experiments were conducted in the laboratory and may be compared in clip 23.

**Clip 23.** “*Where the bee sucks...*” - Practice laboratory: testing different interpretative approaches.

(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25689/> or scan the QR code.)



The surviving piece of instrumental masque music in the British Library’s *Additional Manuscript 10.444*, marked “The Tempest” (Lawrence, 1922) has long been a source of critical speculation and is often printed in an appendix to critical editions of the play. What has gone largely unexplored, however, is Cutts’ claim that both of the pieces either side of “The Tempest”, marked “A Blackfriars Masque” and “A Masque” respectively, are potential candidates for lost incidental music by Johnson for *The Tempest* (Cutts, 1955). Similarly, another item in the same manuscript, marked “The Hay-maker’s Masque” has received insufficient attention, despite the explicit call for a dance by such figures in both text and stage directions in *The Tempest*’s betrothal masque and the circumstantial evidence that other theatre music from *The Tempest* was collected into *Add. MS 10,444*.

You Sun-burn'd Sicklemen of August weary,  
Come hether from the furrow, and be merry,  
Make holly day: your Rye-straw hats put on,  
And these fresh Nimphes encounter every one  
In Country footing.

*Enter certaine Reapers (properly habited:) they joyne with the Nimphes, in a gracefull dance (IV.i.147-53)*

Another manuscript for the music of “The Hay-maker’s Masque” is found in *B.L. MS 38539* in a volume dated to 1613-16, where it is positively attributed to Robert Johnson, under the generic name “A Masquing Tune”. Wiggins and Richardson have assigned this piece to the amateur poet William Browne’s *The Masque of Ulysses and Circe* (Wiggins and Richardson, 2015: 432) which was given by the lawyers at Inner Temple in 1615. However, the absence from that piece of any figures even remotely resembling haymakers, the dual-naming of the music and the striking echoes of *The Tempest* in the language, figures and scenography of *Ulysses and Circe*—to say nothing of the question of how music by the King’s Lutenist and King’s Men’s resident composer found its way into an amateur theatrical presentation—excite speculation that music written for the former was reused in the latter.

The broader question of the reuse of music from the period for other purposes and lyrics need not be debated here. There is specific evidence for the recycling of tunes between the masques for court performance and the plays in the public theatre, including those of Shakespeare. The “Satyr’s Dance” by Robert Johnson, from Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Oberon* was immediately recycled into *The Winter’s Tale*, and characters comment on this fact in the text. It is the dance of reapers and nymphs which is interrupted by Prospero’s outburst, “I had forgot the foule conspiracy”, abruptly ending the betrothal Masque in Act IV. However, the consideration and reconstruction of Jacobean dance music is far beyond the scope of the present study, and so the manuscript items “The Tempest” and “The Hay-maker’s Masque” have not been considered in the practice laboratories. The dance of reapers and nymphs is preceded in the Masque by the song “*Honour, riches, marriage blessing...*” The secretary of The Lute Society in England and Wales, Christopher Goodwin, observed<sup>27</sup> that Robert Johnson’s surviving song-setting for the lyric “*From the famous Peak of Derby*” written by Ben Jonson for his 1621 court masque, *The Gypsies Metamorphised*, offers an uncannily close fit to the scansion of the “*Honour, riches, marriage blessing...*” lyric. This music has been included in the performance presentation of the practice research, in order to provide a further speculation on the revelation of character through juxtaposition between music, poetry and action considered in this chapter.

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<sup>27</sup> In correspondence with the researcher.

## Practice Laboratory

### Epilogue: “This thing of darkness, I acknowledge mine”

**Hurrell:** I think the trajectory of his psychic arc in the play could be characterised as the ‘rising to the surface’ of this ‘drowned’ persona, just long enough to take one last gasp of air and see the sun again before being dragged back down forever into the depths. That one breath of air and moment of sun is all the redemption he gets.

**McArthur:** Yes, a variation on the *Faust* parable. It would be remarkable for a *Faust* figure, as Prospero turns out to be, to get off scot-free.

**Hurrell:** Yes, and that’s the ostensible superstructure of the story: he is Faust and he gets away scot-free; he gets to go back to Milan and be Duke.

**McArthur:** But as the sound-structures tell us, the ending is in fact deeply fissured.

**Hurrell:** The stylistic device of the way in which the psyche is being revealed to us, seems to radically change in “A solemne Ayre...” and never quite change back. The somewhat ‘rococo’ sound patterning that was the engine of the evocation of his psyche in Act I, and in “Ye Elves of hills...”, recurs briefly at the centre of “A solemne Ayre...” in the ‘pinched’ conflux and then that’s really the end of the sustained use of such sonic devices in Prospero’s language, until a very feeble, final pattering of it in the epilogue. The ‘feebleness’ is inculcated by this denial of the powerful rolling rhythm that we said is such an important feature of everything else he says previously.

**McArthur:** Yes, much of what follows “A solemne Ayre...” is a kind of formal, anodyne welcoming, and it’s not of particular sonic interest. Two features are noticeable: the most important is the formal courtliness of his extended utterance, which creates the effect of the ‘real’ Prospero disappearing into the figure of the restored Duke.

In this last Tempest. I perceive these Lords  
At this encounter doe so much admire,  
That they devoure their reason, and scarce thinke  
Their eies doe offices of Truth: Their words  
Are naturall breath: but howsoev'r you have  
Beene iustled from your sences, know for certain  
That I am *Prospero*, and that very Duke  
Which was thrust forth of *Millaine*, who most strangely  
Upon this shore (where you were wrackt) was landed  
To be the Lord on't: No more yet of this,  
For 'tis a Chronicle of day by day,  
Not a relation for a break-fast, nor  
Befitting this first meeting: Welcome, Sir;  
This Cell's my Court: heere have I few attendants,  
And Subjects none abroad: pray you looke in:

My Dukedome since you have given me againe,  
I will require you with as good a thing,  
At least bring forth a wonder, to content ye  
As much, as me my Dukedome. (V.i.170-88)

**Hurrell:** That this is an intended effect is indicated by the costume instructions. At the end of “A solemne Ayre...”, the magus literally disguises himself in the Duke’s robes. This disguising of himself in formal garb is both a stage and a verbal effect.

**McArthur:** The second noticeable feature is that there is a long period, almost a hundred lines, in which Prospero says almost nothing. He has some passing response lines but no extended utterance.

**Hurrell:** And the action of that sequence is substantially the reunification: it begins with the reveal of Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess, continues through the reuniting of Ferdinand and his father, continues still through Ariel’s delivery of the ship’s crew, includes Gonzalo’s and Alonso’s reflections on their experience on the island and ends when Gonzalo begins (correctly) to suspect that something more than natural forces have been at work.

**McArthur:** There’s something courtly, disappeared, obviously formal. The shift in tone is a jarring dislocation from what we have come to know of this person’s mental state throughout the play. It’s clear that the person meeting them and speaking in this way is not the person we have come to know.

**Hurrell:** On a banal level it’s true to observe that this is the first time we seen him truly in public in the whole play, and being the politician again et cetera.

**McArthur:** There are naturalistic reasons for it.

**Hurrell:** But if you listen to the play as a poem, you have to ask: “Where has he gone?”

**McArthur:** “Where has the psyche gone?”

You doe yet taste  
Some subtleties o’th’Isle, that will not let you  
Beleeve things certaine: Wellcome, my friends all, (V.i.133-5)

**Hurrell:** Now, within that texture emerges, flickering briefly, vestiges of the roiled life of the mind that we have come to experience during the play.

Here’s one surfacing here ‘but you my brace of lords’

*But* you, my *brace* of Lords, were I so minded  
I heere could *plucke* his Highnesse frowne vpon you  
And *ju*stifie you *Tra*itors: at this time  
I will tell no *ta*les.  
*Seb.* The Divell speakes in him:  
*Pro.* No: (V.i.136-41)

The aside begins with the alliterative plosive *b* of ‘but’ and ‘brace’, and the odd syntactical construction of ‘justify you traitors’ is placed to set up a sonic fulcrum in justify, which has an assonance relationship to ‘pluck’ beforehand and an alliterative connection to ‘traitors at this time / I will tell no tales’ afterwards. The hissing /*st*/ conflux heralds the hotter temperature, and in that moment Sebastian unwisely accuses him of something too close to the bone (“the devil speaks in him”) touching on the core anxiety in Prospero – that in acquiring all this knowledge he has become an instrument of the devil, and that’s the reason that abrupt ‘NO’ sits on its own – it’s a shuddering howl of denial, and the eruption ensues:

For you (most wicked Sir) whom to call brother  
Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive  
Thy rankest fault; all of them: and require  
My Dukedome of thee, which, perforce I know  
Thou must restore (V.i.142-6)

**McArthur:** Yes that’s where the mask breaks, and that is full or rage: a rage-filled sardonic. ‘Infect my mouth’ is an extraordinary phrase.

**Hurrell:** And it is again coloured by the /*k/g*/ confluence. One of our precepts for tuning ourselves to the presence of something that is not just a coincidence but a genuine pattern of sound is to look to where he has put a set of sounds together and then you can extrapolate backwards and forwards from that nexus to where the component sounds repeat. The fulcrum of this conflux is “infect my mouth / rankest fault”. That eruption adds the /*k*/ sound to the already established /*st*/ pattern, (which incorporates its cognate *d* ) to demand the speaker repeatedly sound /*sT*/, /*k*/, /*sT*/. the device of ‘you my brace of lords’ establishes that the entire sequence is an aside that only the two conspirators can hear, and afterwards Prospero pulls himself back to the public and formal with the repeated calming, open vowel sounds of “perFORCE I KNOW THOU must restore”.

**McArthur:** And that’s a glimpse – more than a glimpse, a flash, of the true psyche.

**Hurrell:** Out of the sonic wall: this kind of banal, formal, courtly, spiritless, graceful speech-making, come these shocking, sudden eruptions which then immediately subside back into the formal texture.

**McArthur:** Yes, the interest is ‘can he maintain the verbal façade’ and the answer is ‘no’.

**Hurrell:** Sometimes the eruption is just one of these weird phrases: expressions that seem to resonate far beyond and in excess of their ostensible functional purpose as statements. The ultimate example, of course, is “this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine”. On a surface level he’s just saying this is a wicked little monster and I’m his master, but the audience’s resonant experience of that line is of a much deeper meaning.

If you be pleased, retire into my cell  
And there repose: a turn or two I’ll walk,  
*To still my beating mind.*

Such *cues* as this leap out of the play frequently. I use that term, ‘cue’, deliberately, because they are often apparent *non-sequiturs*. They do not precipitate an extended meditation by the protagonist in which he reveals explicitly the terms of his troubled state of mind, rather they have their moment and immediately recede into the fabric of the play. I argue this is so because they are cues to the audience, repeatedly reminding the auditor, that the entire landscape of the play is one of mental conflict.

These verbal *non-sequiturs* continue sporadically to the very end of the play. “Every third thought shall be my grave” is a thought that appears to come from nowhere, unbidden, as does “and my ending is despair/unless it be relieved by prayer”. The whole play is the pulse of his mind, and we are expected to *feel* it, as a pulse, rather than have its condition *explained* to us.

**McArthur:** They’re like eruptions of Prospero’s *psyche*.

**Hurrell:** Yes, exactly. The extremity of these cues is part of the clue. They are existential cries, that often begin by taking the form of courtesies or banalities:

a turn or two I’ll walk  
To still my beating mind.

**McArthur:** The idea of a mind beating is so unusual isn’t it - extremely unusual. At the end of “our revels now are ended”, the listener’s expectation, when he says ‘I’ll walk around to still my beating..’ is absolutely that he’s going to say ‘heart’. Because he’s been upset, et cetera et cetera, because the heart is the source of all feeling – so “beating *mind*” brings you up short.

**Hurrell:** Well, it’s an image of pressing against the skull.

**McArthur:** The whole play is about his beating mind, and it seems extremely important here, because it’s at the end of one of the great arias of the play; a prime position in the play to place that statement of the beating mind: a key thematic spot.

**Hurrell:** Repeatedly, the substance of the poetry outruns what’s required by the narrative moment it supports, deliberately, and to extreme. In “a turn or two I’ll walk” the narrative beat is that Prospero in fact has no intention of ‘walking it off’ but rather is merely arranging the rapid exit of Ferdinand and Miranda into the cell, so that he may be free to continue his project of magical punishment with Ariel. But the terms of his poetry reveal that more is at stake, and that those stakes are mental: “..my beating mind..” echoes and reverberates, speaking of a distemper in the mind beyond Prospero’s immediate control.

So, to return to the image of the psyche’s brief surfacing into the fresh air and sunlight before being dragged down to the depths, this section we’re considering now is the ‘dragging down’ part of that image with these brief desperate ‘upwards-reaching moments’ as he sinks quicker and quicker.

What he’s going through in real time in Act V, is the disappointed expectation of grace. From the moment he forgives his enemies, convention, and Christian teaching promises him grace and he finds he doesn’t feel it. That gnawing,

unfulfilled need erupts periodically throughout Act V and as the play arrives at its conclusion he finds that the promised relieving grace still hasn't come. Prospero has not found his resolution, just as the audience has not found theirs. By the time he turns back to us as the last of his guests enters the cave, he and we inhabit the same space of irresolution. It's a secret irresolution. Everyone else in the story feels a resolution, whether positive (Alonso/Ferdinand/Miranda) or negative (Antonio/Caliban).

This secret irresolution is in conflict with that, and it is hinted at repeatedly throughout Act V:

- The sharpness of "'tis new to thee".
- The startling courtly knowingness of the lovers, engaged in a game of strategy (chess).
- The continuing eruption of vindictiveness towards Caliban, which notwithstanding his feeble attempt at murderous insurrection, seems out of kilter and excessive, complete with the echoing ambiguity of 'this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine'.
- Antonio's stony unrepentance.
- The alarming moment of recognition from Sebastian and Prospero's abrupt denial: "the devil speaks in him, NO".
- Even passing moments like Gonzalo's unknowingly apt assessment of the experience – "where no man was himself."

All these point to a fact that permeates and undermines the narrative resolution. The real drama of the play, the question of Prospero's soul, remains unresolved and, it seems, is to be left unresolved in a manner eerie and disquieting, in accordance with the transgressive magic forces that have been at work in the play.

It is in that context that the epilogue begins. It continues to suggest disquieting imbalances. The formal attributes of the epilogue: the rhyming couplets, the short verse line and even the broad open sounds of the opening line, indicate to the listener something quaint, arcane, and therefore comforting. A seemingly fitting conclusion to our expectations of the pastoral romance. The verse form is that of arcane and faery elements. It's the same verse form that Puck and the witches speak in. However, in this case, while the form is ostensibly simple and primitive, it has a sensation that goes far beyond that. To me that sensation is evocative of him dissolving, running out of steam, disappearing. Not able to resolve, he dissolves.

**McArthur:** I agree with that. "Sails" and "fails" reminds me of "flailes". There's something about the structure of the half-lines and so forth, is a kind of grasping at something. To end with "assaults ... faults ... be ... free" – to end on 'ee's is deep unease. It's the most difficult of all the vowels to end on, and if you really give yourself over to those sounds it's difficult to hear it and think everything's okay.

**Hurrell:** The effect we're talking about is partly achieved through tempo changes, and the mismatch of the thought with the line structure. First there's the massive contrast between the long open sounds of the first line and the short abrupt sounds of the second line and then that sense of imbalance is compounded by the radically short third line that stops dead halfway through the line.

NOW my ChARmes are ALL ore-thrOWne,  
And what strength I have's mine owne.  
Which *is* most faint: (E.1-3)

**McArthur:** And monosyllables really elevate the effect.

**Clip 24.** "Now my charmes..." – Practice laboratory: sounding out the epilogue.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25701/> or scan the QR code.)



now 'tis true  
I must be heere confinde by you,  
Or sent to Naples,

Let me not  
Since I have my **Dukedome** got,  
And **pardon'd** the **deceiver**, **dwell**  
In this bare Island, // by your Spell,  
But release me from my bands  
With the help of your good hands:

Gentle breath of yours, my Sailes  
Must fill, or else my project failes,  
Which was to **plEAs**e:

Now I want  
Spirits to enforce: // Art to **inchant**,  
And my ending is **despAIre**,  
Unlesse I be **reliev'd** by **prAIer**  
Which **pierces** so, that it assaults  
Mercy it selfe, and frEEs all faults.

As you from crimes would **pardon'd** bE,  
Let your Indulgence set mE frEE. (E.3-320)

**McArthur:** That confluence of sounds is hugely similar to that 'knot' of *s, t, d* in the big Act I speech.

**Hurrell:** Yes, and meanwhile there's this repeated device in the verse structure. The form promises something warm, quaint and resolving: rhyming couplets, a sing-song rhythm. But the disruptions of these broken-off half-lines: the thought not making its way to the end of the line but stopping dead mid-line: these disruptions completely undermine the apparently resolved nature of the structure.

**McArthur:** A resolved structure, you're saying, is left constantly, awkwardly unresolved.

**Hurrell:** Yes, by constantly having the thought over-run into a third line but then drop off mid-line it creates a verbal limping. He won't just give himself over to the ending of the play, he keeps hauling himself back onto his feet to drag himself over the finish line of the play. The intent is to offer something warm and conclusive, but he's limping and dragging himself over the finish line – unable to deliver the intended, masterful effect, promised by the verse structure.

## Praxis into Performance

The performance, *Hear My Soul Speak*, an archival video of which can be seen in Clip 25 below, explores Prospero's *persona* as expressed through his 'musics': the complex verbal music of his utterance as sonic and somatic artefact, the cruder verbal music of Caliban's declamations of anguish and rage, as well as his unexpected bloom into the lyric poetry of "The isle is full of noises...", and examples of the subtle art music that Robert Johnson wrote to be sung and played by Ariel at Prospero's behest.

The performance text which appears from page 215, edited from excerpts from the First Folio edition of the play, presents a portrait of Prospero in a 'prelude' and three 'movements'. It has been annotated to indicate the staging and interpretative choices made and their rationale. The performance further investigates one of the key research questions which underlies this thesis: can that which is, according to conventional reading and analysis 'unspoken' in Prospero's nature, intentions and moral struggle, be revealed by the play's verbal and vocal music. The performance is created in collaboration with the principal co-informant to the practice research, Gerrard McArthur, performing text from Prospero, Caliban and Ariel and the additional co-informants: the actress Alice Haig, as Miranda, and the countertenor Russell Harcourt singing Ariel's songs. The goal was not merely to test an interpretation of the character that has been drawn from the practice and scholarly research contained in this thesis, but to stage the alternative schema for representation of the protagonist that has been perceived in this study. Such a schema is essentially one that locates the essence of self in 'outwardness'. The *persona* of Prospero is found partly in the body: the actor's somatic experience of the language as sound and partly in the sound of the language itself.

The question of how to attune a contemporary audience to experience the sonically ornate verse *as sound*, was one regularly considered over the long gestation period of the laboratories, and it was long envisaged that the performance to eventually emerge would be accompanied by a visual presentation of the texts which drew an audience's focus to the language as sonic artefact. The correlative of the oft-declared dictum, which dates back at least as far as Poel, that the Elizabethans were auditors who went to hear a play more than to see it, is that both they and Shakespeare's actors, fluent in a rhetorical philosophy of language and speech, had developed a heightened 'cultural proficiency' in detecting the subtle expressive implications of language as a sonic phenomenon. If that was so, it follows that a process of awakening somatic awareness of

such a phenomenon in the modern actor should be accompanied in performance by a concomitant process of re-orienting a modern audience's attention: to in some way 'bridge the gap' which has appeared as cultural proficiencies have shifted from auditory to visual. The sonic 'mark-ups' of key speeches which have been used in the laboratory process of sonic analysis, inspired by the example of Russ McDonald's work on the patterns of auditory repetition that mark Shakespeare's late style, might simply be shown by means of an overhead projection. Perhaps the actor might deliver the speech from behind a transparent screen, demanding of the audience that their relationship to the presence of Prospero be mediated through the visual presence of the language. A more sophisticated, and expressive, gesture towards this goal, may be found in projecting digital animations of the text, which give dynamic visual expression to some of the poetic and auditory structures observed in this study.

This phenomenon occurs in the context of an 'exteriorised' representation of the identity of the protagonist in the play, which does indeed have some of its roots in the traditions of the emblematic Mystery Plays, as Catherine Belsey observes. This suggests other 'cultural proficiencies' in Shakespeare's audience, both in a philosophical paradigm of identity as soul-centric rather than mind-centric, and in an emblematic theatrical presentation of that paradigm. A digital projection realisation could also include visual cues to a modern audience to consider two key related phenomena in the representation of the protagonist, which have been considered in this study. The first of these is the connotation of speech with *psyche* through the expression of breath: an audience may be cued to experience Gertrude's formulation that 'words be made of breath'. Secondly, and more significantly to the view of the protagonist in late Shakespeare which has been developed in this study, visual cues to the refracted nature of the representation of the psyche may be provided. 'Caliban', 'Ariel', and 'Miranda' should be both present in the performance and simultaneously not present. An audience should be invited to encounter 'Prospero' not just in the body of the actor, but in the experience of the performance as a whole.

The terms of this study do not depend upon such a *mis-en-scène* dimension to the performance-sharing of the discoveries made in the practice laboratories, but the practitioner-researcher is, after all, a theatre director, not an actor, and the instinct to not merely share the research findings but to manifest them into an aesthetic expression is a strong one. The enthusiasm for the project of a talented digital artist, Ben Glover, made such a manifestation possible, as can be seen in the video. The annotated performance

text provided here includes notes by the director and projection designer on the content and function of the projections, and the crude pictorial renderings made by the director that were provided to the designer as an *aide-memoire* after the initial design discussions. Accompanying them are thumbnail photographs of the corresponding scenes in the performance.

The tempest Prospero contrives represents the furthest extent of his mind's reach beyond the confines of his isolation on the island. It does many things and yet alone achieves nothing. By comparison to a soul's journey, its power is paltry. It brings his enemies to him, but only when they happen close by. It separates the innocent Ferdinand from those enemies, enabling him to encounter Miranda cleanly, but as Prospero acknowledges, it cannot enforce the love between them. Indeed, the play is at pains to point out repeatedly that Prospero's power extends only to the elements (which includes spirits/sprites). He can use those elements at times to control the actions of men. But he cannot directly influence the contents of men's hearts. The mind's powers are ultimately confined to destruction. Repeatedly, when Shakespeare needs to reach for a larger vision of the self than the concept of the mind will permit, he refers to the soul. Consider the following contrast:

It goes on I see  
As my soul prompts it. (I.ii.551-2)

a turne or two, Ile walke  
To still my beating minde. (IV.i.176-7)

These are the only instances of Prospero employing each word to refer directly to his own subjectivity. The differences are striking. The mind is the locus for that which is unworthy—his uncontrollable rage at Caliban and his intellect-induced despair at the transitory nature of mortal life. The soul on the other hand is outward-focused—on the welfare of others—and hopeful in its disposition: “prompting” or longing for romantic love and domestic bliss to blossom between his daughter and the son of his enemy. He intends for the Dukedom of Milan to be after all dissolved and absorbed into the Kingdom of Naples, but through loving union rather than deceit and conquest.

Late twentieth century main-stage performance in the UK has reacted violently against the previous 250 years' orthodox reading of Prospero as a serene figure, above human drama, and yet he remains a misunderstood figure. The intriguing thing about the post-colonial readings which have been so influential in recent decades is that, however anachronistic they may be, they seek to account for a disturbing ambivalence that is

manifestly present in the text and its depiction of Prospero, which is yet to be otherwise adequately explained. Shakespeare's original audience, attuned to the cues indicating his necromantic transgressions, would have found Prospero to be a suspect figure, potentially warranting condemnation—to say nothing of damnation—virtually from the moment he arrived on stage, configuring the theatrical project as one of redeeming a guilty protagonist. This would have been a confronting challenge to the play's original audience, accustomed to the ritual destruction by death of the flawed hero of tragedy. A Jacobean audience would have expected the moral conclusion of Prospero's story, like that of Faust's, to include his destruction.

Four hundred years later, post-colonial readers have found him similarly reprehensible for very different reasons. It is a link that has been observed explicitly by critics such as Stephen Greenblatt, who rightly observes that Prospero's ambiguous statements at the end of the play—including “this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine” and all of the Epilogue, proclaiming a future of “despair” for Prospero if he is not “pardon'd”—only fit into a structural pattern of the drama if one accepts that the depiction of Prospero's power and moral position throughout the play “raise[s] troubling questions about this authority” (Ryan, 1999: 232-3). Greenblatt sees in the movement represented by the Epilogue, “a startling display of the circulation of social energy, from the performer onstage to the crowd of spectators” and in Prospero's acknowledgement of the audience's superior power to judge his actions, a meta-theatrical reference to his own anxiety over the power he has mastered. While Greenblatt may have in mind issues of colonial power exercised over Caliban, his explication of the substance of the Epilogue as a fully-fledged component of the depiction of Prospero—indeed the crucial final step in the character-arc—offers a corrective to the legions of previous readers who have preferred to see any richness of connotation in excess of the formal bounds of the actor's plea for indulgence and applause, as being associated with a supposed authorial valediction.

One of the most telling points against the argument that Shakespeare was writing in Prospero a defence of John Dee and Agrippa, by portraying an unambiguously ‘white’ magus, is the complete absence in Prospero's verbiage of humility before, and supplication to God. Indeed, Prospero appears to have no need of God, possibly because he regards himself for most of the play as God's equal, all the way through to the climactic admission of necromancy. This boast can barely be called a confession, but immediately afterwards, in the acknowledgement that the music he summons is in fact “heavenly” in origin, and consistently in the minutes that remain of the drama, the presence of God

seems to flood back into Prospero's awareness. "Every third thought shall be my grave" is a stunning declaration from a man who has previously shown no sign of humility, and finally in the Epilogue he professes his intent to seek recourse from "prayer". In that context, what he says next represents a shock which reveals a circulation of more than just "social energy".

*As you from crimes would pardon'd be,  
Let your Indulgence set me free.*

His prayers are to be directed to us. The role of God, in this meta-theatrical schema, is to be undertaken by the audience itself. As the theatrical illusion of a real soul, Prospero must seek his salvation and release from those 'in the gods'. This meta-theatrical resolution contributes to perhaps the play's most authentic metaphysical effect: throughout the final scene, the 'Prospero' that the audience has come to know throughout the play dissolves before our very eyes. The final exhalation implied by the repeated 'ee's of the final couplet evoke the final fading into oblivion, into pure air or spirit, of a figment who began obscuring himself at the very moment he revealed the full scope of his nature, and simultaneously abjured it. This self-obscuration includes an explicit 're-dressing' in the robes of temporal power; a power rendered utterly trivial by the infinitely greater force he has wielded throughout the performance and now renounces. In this context, such robes take on more the quality of the magician's cape, beneath which the magus means to disappear, than a gown of office, symbolising a real intent to return to ordinary life and the duties of temporal power in Milan.

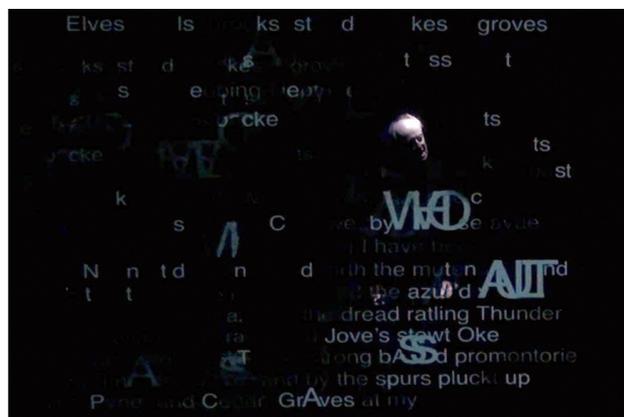
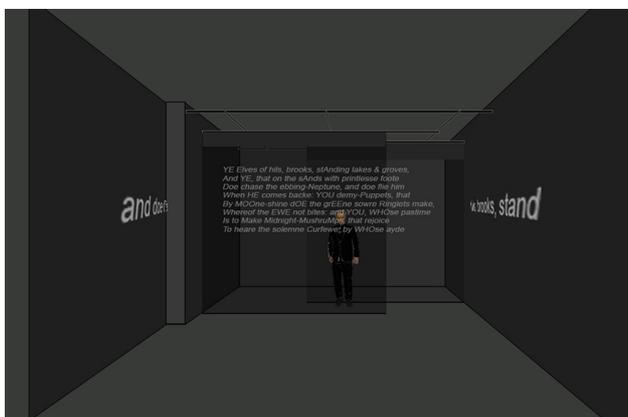
This supplication to the audience-as-God is the final act of self-abnegation of a guilty soul unable to repent. As the godless man goes through life ignoring the presence of God despite His omnipresence, so Prospero—who alone amongst Shakespeare's protagonists has no true soliloquies and is therefore able to ignore the audience's presence—nevertheless fears our judgment. Finally, he cannot escape the confines of the illusion he has made and inhabited without confessing his awareness of our presence and seeking freedom through our indulgence. Even here though, he maintains a defiance. In a meta-theatrical drama of the soul's tortuous journey, the protagonist finally locates the audience as his 'God', looks him in the eye and demands forgiveness and release, but can never quite bring himself to the humility of penitence.

**Clip 25.** *Hear My Soul Speak* – Performance – April 2018 (40 minutes).  
Gerrard McArthur as Prospero/Caliban, Alice Haig as Miranda, Russell Harcourt as the singer/Ariel, projection design by Ben Glover, directed by Christopher Hurrell. April 2018.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25054/> or scan the QR code.)



## Hear My Soul Speak - Annotated Performance Text

### Prelude – The Storm



**Pros.** *YE* Elves of hils, brooks, stAnding lakes & groves,  
 And *YE*, that on the sAnds with prinlesse foote  
 Doe chase the ebbing-*Neptune*, and doe flie him  
 When *HE* comes backe: *YOU* demy-Puppets, that  
 By MOOne-shine doE the grEEne sowre Ringlets make,  
 Whereof the *EWE* not bites: and *YOU*, *WHOSE* pastime  
 Is to Make *Midnight-MushruMps*, that rejoice  
 To heare the solemne *Curfewe*, by *WHOSE* ayde  
 (Weake Masters though ye be) I have bedymn'd  
 The Noone-tide Sun, call'd forth the mutenous windes,  
 And twixt the grEEne SEA, and the azur'd vAULT  
 Set roARing WARRE: To the dread ratling Thunder  
 Have I given fire, and rifted *Jove's* stowt Oke  
 With his owne BOLT: The strong bAss'd promontorie  
 Have I mAde shAke, and by the spurs pluckt up  
 The Pyne, and Cedar. GrAVes at my command  
 Have wAk'd their sleepers, op'd, and let 'em forth  
 By my so potent Art.

**LX:** Prospero behind Gauze. Initially not lit. Then head only visible

**Audio:** atmos? And triplet Heart Drum  
 MIC ON

**Projection:** wipe reveal of text line by line, animations highlighting sonic patterns across words.

Long standing text, grows and disappears  
 Dust particle reveal for Sssss sound  
 show grid one on screen 2 show grid two on screens 1&3..

**Projection:**  
 Tide coming out  
 Tide coming in  
 Text grows, (cut on 'backe')

**Projection Text:**  
 GRID ONE – the nexus of alliterative patterns  
 GRID TWO – the triple stress beats

**Projection:**  
 Fast, large effect

Expand, stay  
 Shrink

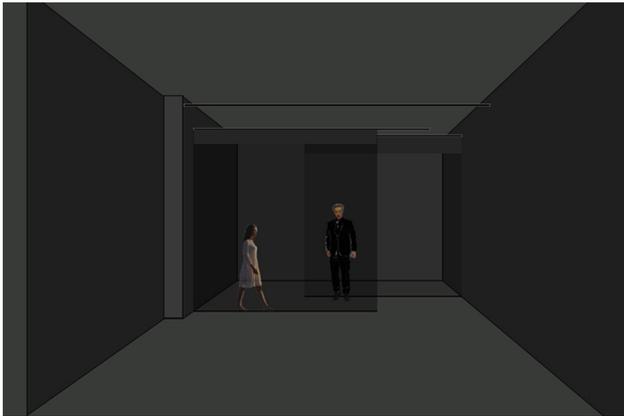
Shrink

Expand  
 Expand, stay  
 Bolt appears large and sucks up all the remaining words from expand and cuts out.

**Text Notes:** Language shows us the processing tortured artist. *J V Z Nexus*  
 Counterpoint with the constriction/catch and the release *Nexus of S*  
 pulsating alliteration  
*ST TS / EL VS / K*  
*Stand / sand*  
*M's and B – another pulsating alliteration*  
**Interpretative Notes:** obsessive meditation  
 the rule of three: Trinity God incantatory rhythm  
 His speaking is illustrative of what they are seeing the "lab realm" we are in at this stage.  
 Simple dialectic: EEEEE's are his meaner ministers. O OO's are him self/god

## First Movement: *Grievance*

LX: Prospero lit full body.



*Mira.* If by *yOUR* Art (my deerest father) you have  
Put the *wild wA*ters in this *rORE*; alay them:  
The *skye* it *seems* would *pOWRE* down *stinking pitch*,  
But that the *Sea mounting* to th'welkins *cheeke*,  
Dashes the *fire* out.

**OH!** I have suffered

With th*Ose* that I saw suffer: A brave vessel  
(Who had **nO** doubt some **nO**ble creature in her)  
Dash'd all to peeces: **O** the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: *pOORE sOU*les, they *perish*'d.

Had I byn any God of **p**ower, I would  
Have suncke the *Sea* within the Earth, **OR** ere  
It *should* the **good Ship** so have swallow'd, and  
The *fRAUGH*ting *sOU*les within her.

*Pros.* Be collected,  
**NO mORE** amazement: Tell your pitteous heart  
there's **nO harme done**.

*Mira.* **O wOE**, the day.

*Pros.* **NO harme:**  
I have *done* nothing, but in care of **thee**  
(Of **thee my** deere one; **thee my dAUGH**ter) who

**Projection:**  
Video avatar (Miranda)

**Projection:** Additional Miranda avatar appears stage right.

**Original Projection Concept:**  
fill 3 screens. Starts small and grows.  
Soothing sound words appear on side screens?  
Start of long monologue  
Words wrap around the whole space (3 screens) line by line, ending in a cage completely filled. On top of O WOE DAY.

Text diversions (as a drop-in lines that are drawn) where highlighted with | (need all highlights).

T and D's twinkle

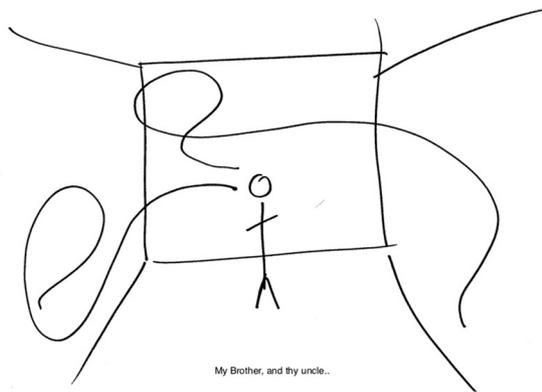
**Interpretative Notes:**  
*He needs/wants to be thought of as a good person. The literary critics have believed him.*  
*So soothing her becomes the smothering of her.*

**Art** ignorant of what thou **art**, *nAUGHt* knowing  
 Of whence **I am**: nor that **I am** *mORE* better  
 Than [*Prospero*, Master] of a full pOORE cell,  
 And thy no [greater Father].

Have comfort, /  
 The direfull spectacle of the wracke which touch'd  
 The *very vertue* of compassion in thee: /  
 I have with such provision in mine Art  
 So safely ordered, that there is *no soule* /  
*No not so much perdition* as an hayre /  
 Betid to any creature in the vessell  
 Which thOU heardst cry, which thOU saw'st sinke: Sit dOWne,  
 The hOWr's nOW come, for thOU must nOW know farther.

**D, D, D T, D T, S P, S P, D T S P,**  
 call'd Antonio,  
 so perfidious,  
 etc.

**LX:** blackout  
**Audio:** MIC OFF,  
 (*G.McA standing SL beside the gauze entrance*)  
**LX:** flat bright light – as if the show has stopped.  
 All the atmosphere and mystery of the previous  
 wiped away.



**Twelve yere since** (*Miranda*) **twelve yere since**,  
 MY brother and THY uncle, call'd *Antonio*:  
 I pray thee marke me, that a brother should  
 Be so *perfidious*: / he, whom *next* thy selfe  
Of all the world I lov'd, and to him put  
 The mannage of my *state*, / as *at that time*  
 Through all the signories *it* was the *first*, /  
 And *Prospero*, the prime Duke, being so reputed  
In dIgnIty; / and for the liberall Artes,

**TECH:** LIGHTING TRANSITION TO  
 'RIBBONS' STATE  
 Spoken into the side of the cloth –  
**Projection:** 'ribbons' begin.  
 Lines filling the space – could be the one coming  
 out of his head – DIM/MOOD LIGHT  
 My brother – upward SR stream  
 He whom next downward SR stream  
 As at that time – upward stage left, etc

(*G.McA moves to centre of the gauze (in front)*)

Without a **paralell**; / *those being all my stUdie,*  
*The GOvernment I cAst Upon my brOther,*  
*And to my State grew stranger, being transported*  
*And rapt in secret studies,*

thy false uncle

Being once perfected how to grAUNt sUItes,  
 hOW to denY them: who t'advANce, and who  
**To** trash for over-topping; new created  
 The creatures that were mine, LsAY, (or chANg'd 'em,  
 Or els new fORm'd 'em; having both the key,  
 Of Officer, and office,) set all hearts i'th state  
 To what tune plEAs'd his EAre, that nOW he was  
 The Ivy which had hid my princely Trunck,  
 And suckt mY Verdure out on't.

I thus neglecting WORLDly ENDS, ALL **dedicated**  
 To closenes, and the **bettering** of MY MIND  
 with that, / which but by being so RETIR'd  
 ORE-PRIZ'd all popular rate: / in my false brother  
 Awak'd an evill nature, / and my **trust**  
 Like a good parent, **did** beget of him  
 A falsehood, in it's contrarie as great  
 As my **trust** was, / which had **indeede** no limit,  
 A confiDENCE SANS BOUND. HE BEING thus Lorded: /  
 Not onely with what my renew YEELded,  
 But what my power might els exact: / like one  
 Who having into truth, by telling of it,  
 Made such a synner of his memorie  
 To credite his owne lie, / he did beleeVE  
 He was inDEED the Duke, out o'th' Substitution  
 And executing th'outward face of Roialtie  
 With all prerogative:

hence his Ambition growing:

To have no SCHREENE BETWEEN this part he PLAID,  
 And him he PLAID it for, he NEEDES will BE  
 Absolute *Millaine*, / ME (poore man) my Librarie

**Interpretative Notes:**

Setup narrative – the inability to retell without **reliving**  
 There is a 'nexus' between oscillating t's and d's that runs throughout the speech.  
 There is an accordion effect of speeding up and slowing down that is marked by clusters of short spitting consonants followed by and sometimes over-lapping with clusters of long vowels. The long legato vowels and related sounds have been capitalised.  
 Little passing alliteration patterns have been underlined.  
 The sonic pattern of the whole speech is a dramatization of the last couplet – sound of insidious, fast-growing parasitic ivy wrapping and tangling itself around a strong, stately oak tree. This self-image is what preoccupies Prospero's psyche.

2<sup>nd</sup> Movement – Largo – ebbs and eddies

rumbling – alliterative and assonant (paired vowels)

Analysis of what happened – activated reflection

Vowel sounds in more prominent 'spreading' positions.

Sonic revelation – D's – a rumbling

Keening. Blocked release a building of non-release

keening through a brightening dissonance.

Diphthong into E – reminder the build of-self obsession

Release

Was **Dukedome** large enough: / of temporall roalties  
 He thinks me now incapable. / **Confederates**  
 / (so **drIE** he was for SWAY) / with King of *Naples* /  
 To give him Annuall tribute, / doe him homage /  
 Subject his Coronet, to his **CROWNE AND BEND**  
 The **Dukedom yet UNBOW'D** / (alas **POORE MILLAINE**) /  
 To most ignoble stooping.

Now the condition.

Now the condition.

Me and mine.

Me and mine.

**Now the Condition.**

This **King** of *Naples* / being an Enemy  
 To **me inveterate**, / hearkens **my** Brothers suit, /  
 Which was, That he in lieu o'th' **premises**,  
 Of **homage**, / **and I know not** how **much** Tribute, /  
 Should presently extirpate **me and mine**  
 Out of the Dukedome, and **confer faire *Millaine***  
 With all the Honors, on my brother:

**Projection:** 3 Steps  
 Now the **Condition**  
**N C n n**  
**Confer Faire Millaine**  
 Miranda returns – 3 faces of Miranda

**Interpretative Notes:** Repeats  
 Now the **Condition**  
 extirpate ... **MEE and Mine**  
 Condition is *Latin*ate – so all legal documentation  
 written in *Latin*

*N C M N* - close tight consonant sounds are the  
 effort to regain self possession, poise and control

**Projection:** Ribbons end here.



Whereon  
 A treacherous Armie levied, one mid-night  
 Fated to th'purpose, did Anthonio open  
 The gates of Millaine, and ith' dead of darkenesse  
 The ministers for th' purpose hurried thence  
 Me, and thy crying selfe.

**Audio:** Low rumbling sound

In few, they hurried us **a-BOORD a BARKE**,

**AUDIO:** Low rumbling sound gradually replaced  
 by air/breath sound.

**BORE** us some LEAguesS to SEA, where they prepared  
 A rotten carkasse of a **Butt**, not rigg'd,  
 Nor **tAckle**, **sAyle**, nor **mAst**, the very **rAts**  
**InstInctI**vely have **quIt It**: There they **hOYst** us  
 To cry to th' Sea, that **rOARD** to us; to **sigh**  
 To th' **wIndes**, whose **plTty sighing** backe agaiNe  
 Did us but loviNG wroNG.

**Interpretative Notes:**  
 The 'Lyric Poetry' passage.

**Tech:** Video/sound/light all cut here.  
**Interpretative Notes:**  
 Old fashioned' dramatic story telling – gothic -  
 precursor to the magus.  
 But fear/dread  
 He needs to pump himself up into the Magus stuff  
 –because the reliving has had its cost.



**Ariel Song.**

*Come unto these yellow sands,  
 And then take hands:  
 Curtsied when you have, and kist  
 The wiled waves whist:  
 Foote it featly heere, and there,  
 And sweete Sprights the burden beare.  
 Harke, I heare the watch-Dogges barke,  
 Hark, now I heare, the straine of strutting Chanticleere*

**Projection:** Ariel (singer) projections on screens.  
 Trio of projections.

**Tech:** (G.McA remains centre) Prospero observes  
 the apparition (projection)

(Lights change and G.McA moves behind gauze)

*Cockadiddle-dowe (bowgh-wawgh, bowgh-wawgh).  
 Cockadiddle-dowe (bowgh-wawgh, bowgh-wawgh).  
 Cockadiddle-dowe*



Harke, I heare the watch-Dogges barke,  
Hark, now I heare, the straine of strutting Chanticleere

Hums

**Pros.** BY accident most strange, bountifull Fortune

(Now mY deere Lady) hath mIne enemies

Brought to this shore: And bY mY prescience

I finde mY Zenith doth depend upon

A most auspicious starre, whose influence

If now I court not, but omit; mY fortunes

Will ever after droope:

**Pros. (v.o.)** MI – Ti – GAB

(continues underneath....)

**AUDIO:** Mic on

(G. McA speaks on singer's humming chorus-  
behind gauze, face in light only)

**Interpretative Note:**

Sensuous sounding MAGUS

Strange to have a feeling of HOPE.

**AUDIO:** Mi-Ti-Gab "Steve Reich" loop.

MI-TI-GAB

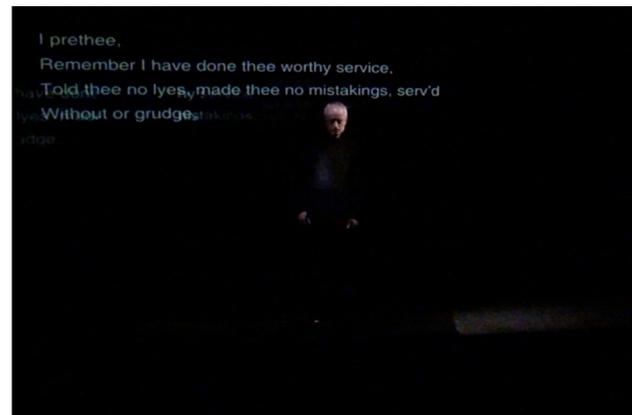
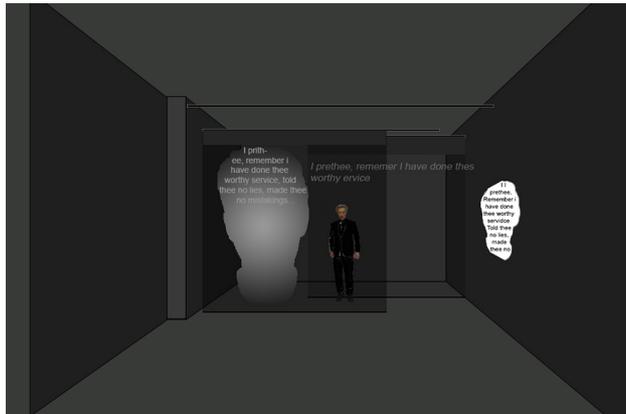
LIG-NANT-THING

FOWLE WITCH SYC

BLEW-EYED-HAG

MADE-GAPE-PINE

LET-THEE-OUT



**Projection:** Projection of text on pro 1 2 3

**Ari. (v.o.)**

I prethee,

Remember I have done thee worthy service,

Told thee no lyes, made thee no mistakings, serv'd

Without or grudge, or grumblings; thou did promise

To bate me a full yeere.

**Pros.** Do'st thou forget

From what a torment I did free thee?

**Interpretative Note:**

The smashing rhetoric of threes: mi-ti-gab

**Ari. (v.o.)**

I doe not Sir.

**Pros.** Thou liest, malignant Thing: hast thou forgot  
The fowle Witch *Sycorax*, who with Age and Envy  
Was growne into a hoope? hast thou forgot her?

**Ari. (v.o.)** No Sir.

**Pros.** This blew ey'd hag, was hither brought with child,  
And here was left by th' Saylor; thou my slave,  
As thou reportst thy selfe, was then her servant,  
And for thou wast a Spirit too delicate  
To act her earthy, and abhord commands,  
Refusing her grand hests, she did confine thee  
By helpe of her more potent Ministers,  
And in her most unmittigable rage,  
Into a cloven Pyne, within which rift  
Imprison'd, thou didst painefully remaine  
A dozen yeeres: within which space she di'd,  
And left thee there: where thou didst vent thy groanes  
As fast as Mill-wheeles strike: thou best know'st  
What torment I did finde thee in; thy grones  
Did make wolves howle, and penetrate the breasts  
Of ever-angry Beares; it was a torment  
To lay upon the damn'd, which *Sycorax*  
Could not againe undoe: it was mine Art,  
When I arriv'd, and heard thee, that made gape  
The Pyne, and let thee out.

*Enter Caliban.*

**Cal.** As wicked dewe, as ere my mother brush'd  
With Ravens feather from unwholesome **Fen**  
Drop on you both: A Southwest **blow** on yee,  
And **blister** you all ore.

**Original Projection Concept:** Grid 2 – Pattern of 3s  
Trio of Ariels  
White out (fade back to reveal face then White out) In pattern of 3s

**Interpretative Notes:**

1. *Cruel*
2. *Rage at the injustice or at ingratitude, which part of him leads us to Caliban*

**HIDDEN ALLITERATIONS**

*D – T  
M B P  
G CH*

*Irony of this unmittigable rage: a howl that people could be so ungrateful. He has transferred his own rage onto the image of her (Sycorax) He never actually knew her to know whether she was rage-filled or not.*

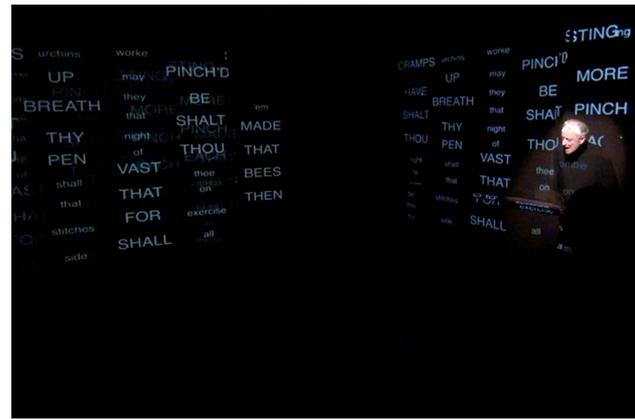
**LX:** Blackout behind gauze

**Audio:** mic off, audio 'Steve Reich' trails off

*(G.McA to front stage – side of gauze SL)*

**LX:** Blackout

*(G.McA to SL side wall)*



**Pros. (mic)** For this be sure, to night thou shalt have cramps,  
 Side-stitches, that shall pen thy breath up, Urchins  
Shall for that vast of night, that they may worke  
 All exercise on thee: thou shalt be pinch'd  
 As thicke as hony-combe, each pinch more stinging  
 Then Bees that made 'em.

**Cal.** **I** Must eat **MY** dinner:  
 This **I**sland's **MI**ne **BY** *Sycorax* **MY** mother,  
 Which thou tak'st from **ME**: when thou cam'st first  
 Thou stroakst **ME**, & made much of **ME**: wouldst give **ME**  
 Water with berries in't: and teach **ME** how  
 To name the bigger **LI**ght, and how the lesse  
 That burne **BY** day, and n**I**ght: and then **I** lov'd thee  
 And shew'd thee all the qualities o'th' Isle,  
 The fresh Springs, **Br**ine-pits; barren place and fert**II**l,  
 Curs'd **BE** **I** that did so: All the Charmes  
 Of *Sycorax*: Toades, **Be**etles, **Batts** **LI**ght on you:  
 For **I** am all the Subjects that you have,  
 Which first was **MI**n owne King: and here  
 you st**Y**-**ME**  
 In this hard **Roc**ke, whiles you doe keepe  
 from **ME**  
 The rest o'th' Island.

**LX:** lights up snap  
**Audio:** mic on  
**Projection:** Prospero – Rigid design on left wall  
 (brick layout appear)  
 Organic appearance on right wall

**Interpretative Notes:**  
 'High stress' monosyllables low intense  
 articulated into mic

**Projection:** Kinect tracking – Ghost (Caliban  
 'monster') shape

**Projection:**  
 Huge I M Y  
 Kinect to pick up ghost shading  
 Changes to  
 I M E  
 Changes to  
 I B E

Yearning: love-memory

**Interpretative Notes:** *I (MY) / ee's cluster*  
*Big monosyllables disrupt the iambic*  
**I ME MY**

Sonic build-up  
 9 beat line

Meaning: I was a king and didn't even know it

**Interpretative Notes:** *Caliban is more civil (ized)*  
*than is Prospero*  
*The face of their asperity – what he has to put*  
*into it*



**Mira.**

Abhorred Slave,

Which any *print* of goodnesse wilt not take,

Being capable of all ill: I *pittied thee*,

Took pains to *make thee speak*, taught thee each houre

One thing or other: when thou didst not (Savage)

Know thine owne meaning; but wouldst gabble, like

A thing most bruish, I endow'd thy purposes

With words that made them knowne: But thy wild race

(Tho thou *didst learn*) had that in't, which good natures

Could not *abide* to be with; therefore wast thou

*Deservedly* confīn'd into this Rocke, who hadst

Deserv'd more then a prison.

**Cal.** You taught me Language, and my profit on't

Is, I know how to curse: the red-plague rid you

For learning me your language.

**Ariell Song.**

*Full fadom five thy Father lies,*

*Of his bones are Corrall made:*

*Those are pearles that were his eies,*

*Nothing of him that doth fade,*

*But doth suffer a Sea-change*

*Into something rich, & strange:*

*Sea-Nymphs hourly ring his knell.*

*Harke now I heare them, ding-dong bell.*

**Interpretative Notes:**

*A Prospero template but more emotionally difficult*

*"Symphony of N's" feeling – frustration*

*Take the n closing into your body when you're holding on to upset*

**Projection:**

Prospero words on screen 1

Miranda face on 2

Miranda words on 3

**Interpretative Notes:**

*(The incident?)*

*A confrontation between the emotionally literate and illiterate (on the surface)*

*Monosyllables*

*Sitwell dissonance – platform to expansive 'I'*

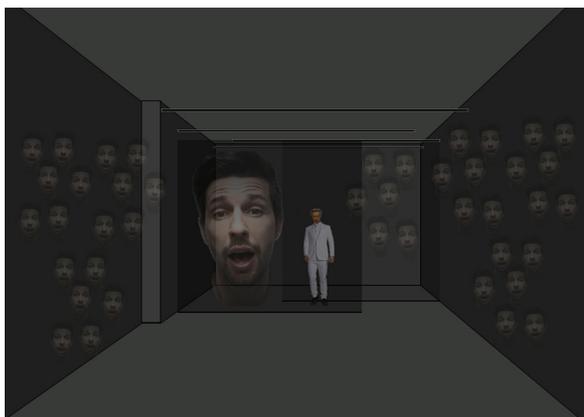
*... short line – Caliban at a loss (of sorts)*

**Projection:** Big Ariel Head surrounded by lots of little Russell heads.

Pros 1 2 3

*(G.McA holds centre to listen)*

*(G.McA moves to SL wall)*



(3 Part Canon)

*Ding, dong, ding, dong bell.*

*Ding, dong, ding, dong bell.*

*Ding, dong, ding, dong bell.*

*Sea-Nymphs hourly ring his knell.*

*Harke now I heare them, ding-dong bell.*

**Mir.** Where shold this Musick be? I th'aire, or th'earth?

(3 Part Canon continues underneath)

This is **no** mortal business, **nor no** sound

That the earth owes: I hear it now above me.

**Pro.** The fringed Curtaines of thine eye advance,

And say what thou see'st yond.

**Mira.** What is't a Spirit?

Lord, how it lookes about: Beleeve me sir,

It carries a brave forme. But 'tis a spirit.

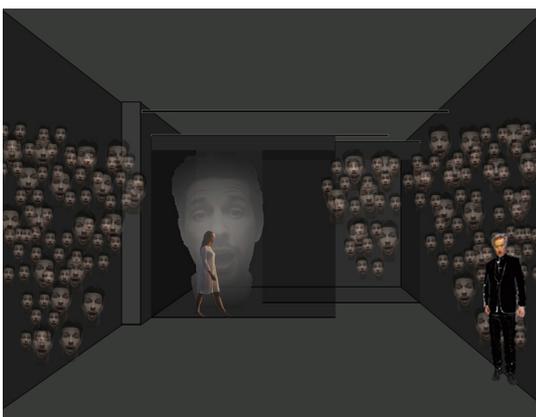
**Projection:** Little Ariels on either side wall

**Projection:** Miranda appears, and Long vowel sound words Pro 2

O N S

**Projection:** N sounds on Pro 1

**Projection:** S sounds on Pro 3



**Pro.** No wench, it eats, and sleeps, & hath such senses

As we have: such. **Sitting** on a banke,

Weeping againe the King his Fathers wracke.

This Musicke crept by him upon the waters,

Allaying both their fury, and his passion

With it's sweet ayre: **and** but hee's something stain'd

With greefe (that's beauties canker) you might'st call him

A goodly person:

**Mir.** I might call him

A thing divine, for **nothing** naturall

I ever saw so **Noble**.

**Pro.** It goes on I see as my soule prompts it:

**Projection:** N and S sounds Pro 2 (combine pros 1 and 2, move content to middle on pro 2)

**Projection:** Miranda appears, and Long vowel sound words Pro 2

Song ends, cut projection and light.

**Second Movement: *Retribution***

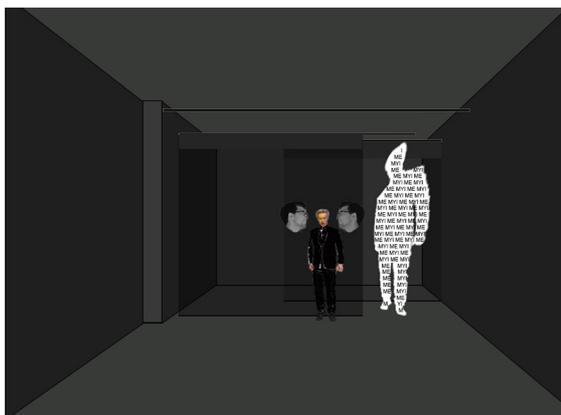
**Audio:** mic off



*Cal.* All the infections that the Sunne suckes up  
 From Bogs, Fens, Flats, on Prosper fall, and make him  
 By inch-meale a disease: his Spirits heare me,  
 And yet I needes must curse. But they'll nor pinch,  
 Fright me with Urchin-shewes, pitch me i'th mire,  
 Nor lead me like a fire-brand, in the darke  
 Out of my way, unlesse he bid 'em; but  
 For every trifle, are they set upon me,  
 Sometime like Apes, that moe and chatter at me,  
 And after bite me: then like Hedg-hogs, which  
 Lye tumbling in my bare-foote way, and mount  
 Their pricks at my foot-fall: sometime am I  
 All wound with Adders, who with cloven tongues  
 Doe hisse me into madnesse:

***Ariell. Solemn Musicke.***

*Care-charming Sleep, thou easer of all woes,  
 Brother to Death, sweetly thyself dispose*



(G.McA forward centre)

**Projection:** Kinect tracking – Body filled with I  
 MY I ME I BE  
 (projection screen 2 – front)  
 Words in green **bold** following avatar  
 Words in red **bold** appearing around screen

**Interpretative Notes:** Pleasure in testing curses.  
 Something ridiculous about him.  
 Triple alliterations (overdone – like FE FI FO  
 FUM)  
 I into i  
 Strong man ends in quivering fragility

On wall – look!  
 Look to opposite walls

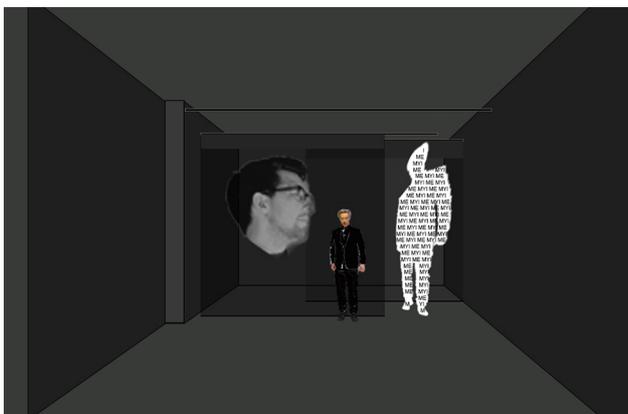
Thicken and darkness  
 So terrible – the height of terror for him.  
 (G.McA hits mark for sensor capture and freeze  
 frame)

**Projection:** Freeze frame monster avatar remains  
 S multiply, grow in size  
 (G.McA ends centre in front of gauze)

**Interpretative Notes:** Caliban, like Prospero is  
 unable to recount past trauma without re-living it  
 – the language does this. The speech is a  
 crude/comedic re-iteration of the usurpation  
 fixation of Prospero's. By the end he is beaten  
 into small sounds – perhaps the recurring ss of  
 the final line is a whimper

**Projection:** 2x Ariel head either side of Suffering  
 Cal/Pros

*On this afflicted prince; fall like a cloud  
In gentle showers; give nothing that is loud  
Or painful to his slumbers; easy, sweet,  
And as a purling stream, thou son of Night,*



*Ari./Pros.* You are three men of *sinne*, whom destiny  
That hath to *instrument* this lower world,  
And what *is in 't*: the *never surfeited* Sea,  
Hath caus'd to *belch up you*; and on this Island,  
Where *man* doth *not inhabit*, you 'mongst *men*,  
Being most *unfit to live*: I have *made you mad*;  
And even with such like valour, *men hang*, and *drowne*  
Their proper selves: But remember  
(For that's my *business* to you) that you three  
From *Millaine* did supplant good *Prospero*,  
*Expos'd* unto the Sea (which hath *requit it*)  
Him, and his *innocent childe*: for which *foule deed*,  
The *Powres*, delaying (not forgetting) have  
Incens'd the Seas, and Shores; yea, all the Creatures  
Against your peace: and doe pronounce by me  
*Lingring* *perdition* (worse then any death  
Can be at once) shall step, by step attend  
You, and your wayes, whose wraths to guard you from,  
Which here, in this most desolate Isle, else fals  
Upon your heads, is nothing but hearts-sorrow,  
And a cleere life ensuing.

**Audio:** MIC ON

**Projection:**

The IMY monster frozen  
The Ariel head frozen  
Prospero in between.

**Interpretative Notes:**

*The speech is a self-immolation: a 'self-circuit' in which the 'three men' can be thought of as the three-headed creature that is Prospero/Ariel/Caliban*

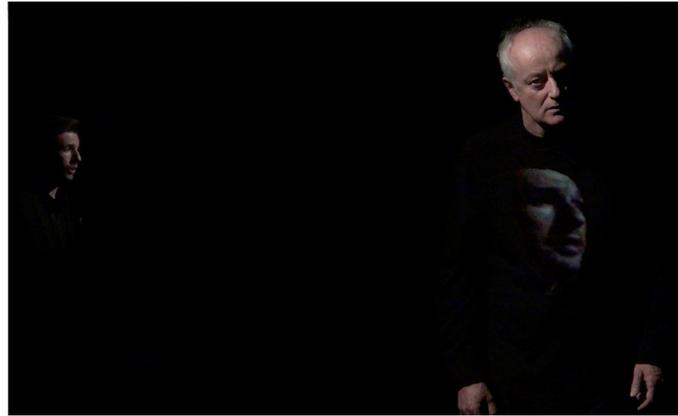
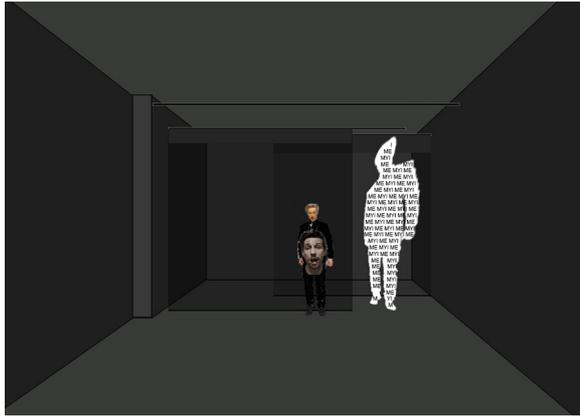
*Relish the 'n's – they taste good.*

*The theme of the second movement is the Prospero figure playing cat and mouse with redemption.*

*The Ariel music repeatedly reveals Prospero's latent capacity for redemption, but he mediates it through Ariel, and does have the connection to it 'himself'. There is an impulse, a 'yearning' in the Ariel music to penetrate its author with the release and redemption that it offers but it is resisted by Prospero's will, here shape-shifting into his other guises, and is finally only fleetingly successful.*

*Through the refraction of Caliban (isle is full of noises) the music gains access and creates a literally illusory moment of redemption, but it fails, tails off and atrophies into something rancid.*

**Audio:** MIC OFF



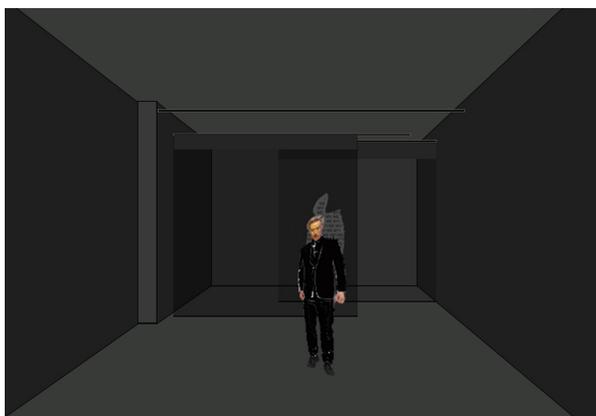
**Ariell.**

*Pass by his troubled senses; sing his pain,  
Like hollow murmuring wind or silver rain;  
Into this prince gently, oh gently slide,  
And kiss him into slumbers like a bride.*

**Projection:** Ariel's face mapped to Prospero's torso.  
Peace finally penetrating Prospero (briefly)

**Cal.** Be not affeard, the Isle is full of noyses,  
Sounds, and sweet aires, that give delight and hurt not:  
Sometimes a thousand twangling Instruments  
Will hum about mine eares; and sometime voices,  
That if I then had wak'd after long sleepe,  
Will make me sleepe againe, and then in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open, and shew riches  
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd  
I cri'de to dreame againe.

**Original Projection Concept:** Words with expanding S – like clouds/breath



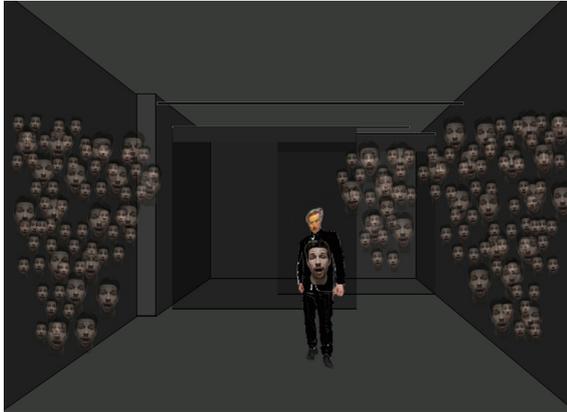
**Ariell.**

*Honor, riches, marriage, blessing,  
Long continuance, and encreasing,*

**Projection:** Large Ariel head singing projector 2  
SL

*Hourly joys, be still upon you,  
 Iuno sings her blessings on you.  
 Earths increase, foyzon plentie,  
 Barnes, and Garners, never empty.  
 Vines, with clustring bunches growing,  
 Plants, with goodly burthen bowing:*

**Projection:** Replaced with myriad small Ariel heads chorus



*Spring come to you at the farthest,  
 In the very end of Harvest.  
 Scarcity and want shall shun you,  
 Ceres blessing so is on you.*

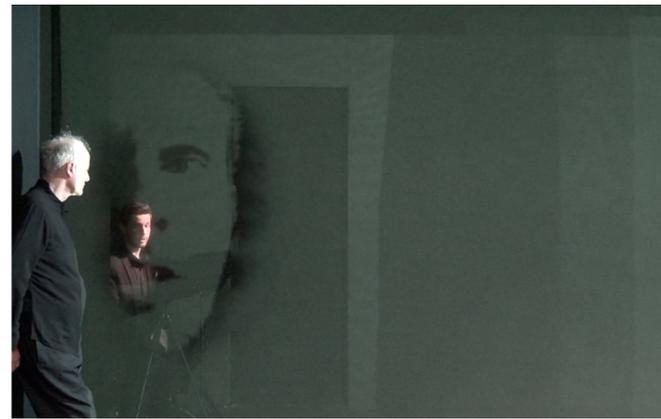
**Audio:** MIC ON

**Pros.** I had forgot that foule conspiracy  
 Of the beast *Calliban*, and his confederates  
 Against my life: the minute of their plot  
 Is almost come: Well done, avoid: no more.

**Projection:** Cut to blank white fill

**Audio:** MIC OFF

Our Revels now are ended: These our actors,  
 (As I foretold you) were all Spirits, and  
 Are melted into Ayre, into thin Ayre,  
 And like the baselesse fabricke of this vision  
 The Clowd-capt Towres, the gorgeous Pallaces,  
 The solemne Temples, the great Globe it selfe,  
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
 And like this insubstantiall Pageant faded  
 Leave not a racke behinde: we are such stuffe  
 As dreames are made on; and our little life  
 Is rounded with a sleepe:



**Ariell.**

*Into this prince gently, oh gently slide,  
And kiss him into slumbers like a bride.*

**Pros.** A Devill, a borne-Devill, on whose nature  
Nurture can never sticke: on whom my paines  
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost,  
And, as with age, his body ouglier growes,  
So his minde cankers: I will plague them all,  
Even to roaring:

**Projection:** Add large Ariel face peering through an aperture in the whiteness.

**Projection:** Words thrown on like paint, bleeding to fill space in black. 1 screen at a time.

1. Devil (Top left projection 2)
2. borne-Devill (bottom right projection 2)
3. Nature (projection 1) Nurture (projection 3)  
Never (projection 1)
4. pAines (projection 3) HumAnely  
(projection 1) tAken (projection 3)

Space filled with black by "cankers" (10 seconds)



**Goe,** charge my **Goblins** that they **grinde** their joints  
With dry **Convultions**, shorten up their sinewes  
With aged **Cramps**, & more pinch-spotted make them,  
Then **Pard**, or **Cat o' Mountaine**.

**LX:** Total darkness.

**Audio:** MIC ON

*G and C are cognates*

**Ari. (v.o.)** Harke, they rore.

**Audio:** Voice a distorted rumble that reverberates through the space into black silence.



Not a frowne further: Goe, release them Ariell,  
 My *Charmes* Ile breake, their sences Ile restore,  
 And they *shall* be themselves.

*YE Elves* of hils, brooks, stAnding lakes & groves,  
 And *YE*, that on the *sAnds* with printlesse foote  
 Doe chase the ebbing-*Neptune*, and doe flie him  
 When *HE* comes *backe*: *YOU* demy-Puppets, that  
 By *MOOne*-shine *doE* the grEEne sowre *Ringlets* make,  
 Whereof the *EWE* not bites: and *YOU, WHOse* *pastime*  
 Is to *Make* *Midnight-MushruMps*, that rejoice  
 To heare the solemne *Curfewe*, by *WHOse* *ayde*  
 (Weake Masters though ye be) I have bedymn'd  
 The Noone-tide Sun, call'd forth the mutenous *windes*,  
 And *twixt* the grEEne SEA, and the *azur'd* *vAULT*  
 Set *rOARing* *WARRE*: To the dread ratling Thunder  
 Have I given fire, and rifted *Jove's stowt Oke*  
 With his owne *BOLT*: The strong bAss'd *promontorie*  
 Have I *mAde* *shAke*, and by the *spurs* pluckt up  
 The *Pyne*, and *Cedar*. *GrAves* at my command  
 Have *wAk'd* their sleepers, *op'd*, and let 'em forth  
 By my so potent *Art*.

**Projection:** Grid 2 – Pattern of 3s (marked by underline) appear randomly on 3 screens

**Audio:** Triplet heart-beat underscoring Grid 2



**Projection:** words disappear.

**But this rough Magicke**

I heere abjure: and when I have requir'd  
 Some heavenly Musicke (which even now I do)  
 To worke mine end upon their Sences, that  
 This Ayrie-charme is for, I'le **breake my staffe**,

Replaced with THIS ROUGH MAGICKE  
 Projector 1 (words stay on pro 3 & 2)

**AUDIO:** Solemn Music – no words – an echo of its former form. (“Care Charming Sleep” hummed)

**Projection:** BREAK MY STAFFE on projector 3

Bury it certaine fadomes in the earth,  
And deeper then did ever Plummet sound  
Ile **drowne my booke.**

DROWNE MY BOOKE on projector 2

*Ariell: Solemne musicke.*

**Projection:**

The Words of the speech fall like rain but assemble like bricks, bricking Prospero into a tomb of his own words.

**Interpretative Notes:**

Issue: 'To still my beating mind'

A sol/emne Ayre, /and the /best com/forter,  
To an /unset/led fan/cie, Cure /thy braines  
(Now use/lesse) boile /within /thy skull: /there stand  
For you are **Spell-stopt.**

**Holy**/ Gonza/llo, **Hon/oura**/ble man,

Mine eyes /ev'n so/ciable /to the shew /of thine

**Fall fell**/owly drops:/ The charme /dissolves /apace,

And as /the mor/ning steales/ upon/ the night

(**Melting**/ the darke/nesse) so/ their ri/sing sen/ces

Begin /to chace /the ig/norant fumes/ that man/tle

Their cleer/er rea/son. O /**good Gon/zallo**

My true / presser/**ver, and** /a loy/all Sir,

To him/ thou fo/llow'st; I/ will pay /thy gra/ces

**Home both** /in word, /and deede/: **Most cru/elly**

Did thou/ Alon/so, use/ **me, and**/ my daugh/ter:

Thy bro/ther was /a furt/herer in/ the Act,

Thou'art **pinch'd** /for't now/ Seba/stian. Flesh, /and bloud,

**You, bro**/ther mine,/ that en/tertaine /ambi/tion

Expelld /remorse, /and na/ture, whom, /**with Seb/astian**

(Whose **in**/ward **pin**/ches there/fore are /most strong)

Would heere /have **kill'd** /your **King**:/ I do /forgive/ thee,

Unnat/urall though /thou art: /Their un/derstand/ing

Begins/ to swell, /**and the** /approach/ing tide

Will short/ly fill /the reas/**ona**/ble shore

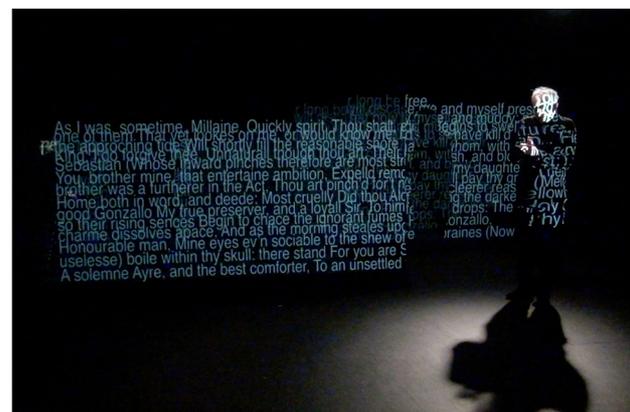
That now /**ly foule**,/ and muddy:/ not one /of them

That yet/ **lookes on** /**me, or** /would know/ me: *A/riell,*

**Fetch me** /the Hat, /and Ra/pier in/ my Cell,

I will /discase/ **me, and** /my selfe /present

**As I** /was some/time *Mill/aïne*: quick/ly Spir/it,



Thou shalt / ere long / be free.

**Tech:** The departing silhouette in doorway reappears-now with face light on the singer.

***Ariel: Song***

*Where the bee sucks, there suck I  
In a Cowslips bell, I lie,  
There I cowch when Owles doe crie,  
On the Batts backe I doe flie  
after Sommer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the Bow.  
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the Bow*

**Pros.** ...Whom to call brother  
Would even infect my mouth...  
And suckt my verdure out on't:  
...I do forgive  
Thy rankest fault – all of them.

**Mira.** Oh Brave New World!

**Pros.** This cell's my court...

**Mira.** Oh Brave New World!

**Pros.** They devour their reason...

**Mira.** Oh Brave New World!

**Pros.** I am woe for't, Sir.

**Mira.** Oh Brave New World!

**Pros.** This demy-devil  
For he's a bastard one...

**Mira.** Oh Brave New World!



**Projection:** Alternating footage on projectors 1 and 2 of Miranda in close up (enlarged) and full body (life size). An insistent tormenting of him with 'Brave New World'

**Text:** The Act V "non-sequiturs" assembled into a verbal collage.

**Projection:** Both Miranda images in unison

**Projection:** Miranda disappears

I

Have lost my daughter.

**Mira.** Oh Brave New World  
That hath such people in it!

**Projection:** Both Miranda images in unison

**Pros.** Tis new to thee.  
This thing of darkness  
I acknowledge mine... .. and  
Every third thought shall be my grave...

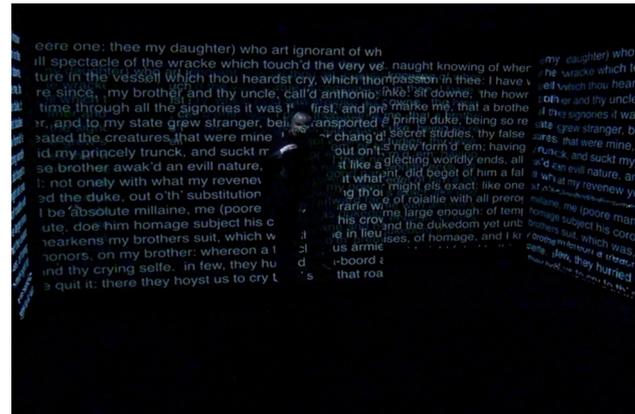
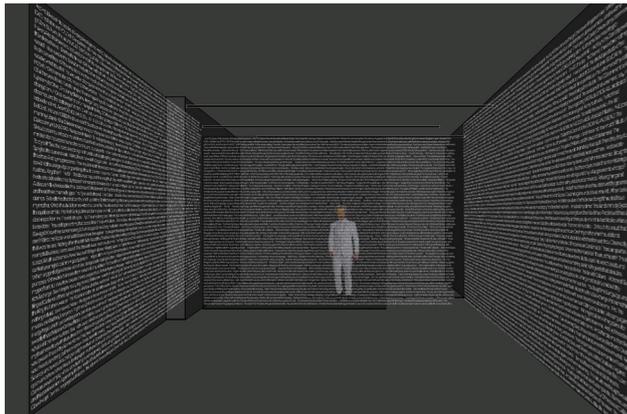
**Projection:** Miranda disappears

**Ariel: Song**

*Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the Bow.  
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the Bow.*

**LX:** blackout except for singer's face.

**LX:** Singer disappears



**Pros.** NOW my ChARmes are ALL ore-thrOWne,

And what strength I have's mine owne.

Which *is* most faint:

now **'tis** true

I must be heere confinde by you,

Or sent to Naples,

Let me not

Since I have my **Dukedome** got, 7

And **pardon'd** the **deceiver**, **dwell**

In this bare Island, // by your Spell,

But release me from my bands

**Projection:** Sides (of text) appear pro 1 and 3  
**Audio:** Breath plus 1x triplet heart beat. Then slow laboured breathing throughout.

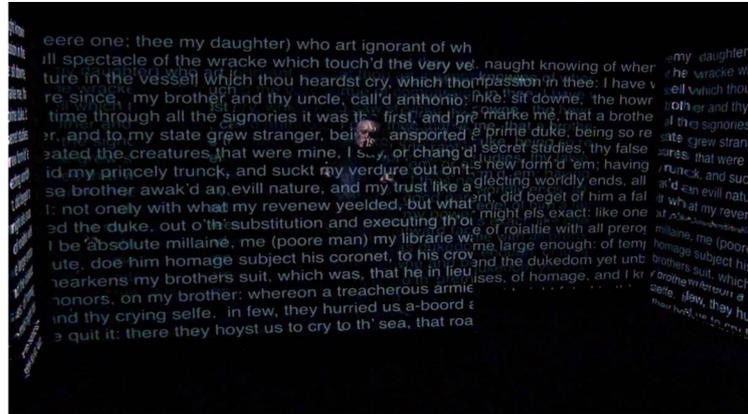
**Projection:** Body (preset avatar) appears in front of text, black body in front of G.McA (behind gauze).

With the helpe of your good hands:  
Gentle breath of yours, my Sailes  
Must fill, or else my project failes,  
Which was to pLEAsE:

**Projection:** The body outline is filled in with more words.

Now I want

Spirits to enforce: // Art to enchant,  
And my ending is despaire,  
Unlesse I be reliev'd by praier  
Which pierces so, that it assaults  
Mercy it selfe, and frEEs all faults.



**Projection:** The head outline is filled in with more words.

As you from crimes would pardon'd bE,  
Let your Indulgence set mE frEE.

**Audio:** final out breath  
**Projection and LX:** fade to black

## Reflection on the Practice Research

**Hurrell:** I'd like to begin by asking you to comment if you can on the ways in which your interpretation of the character of Prospero in our performance came to differ from your experience of the character in the Purcarete production.

**McArthur:** I think the 'sound-text' approach that we made our *modus*, released a greater sense of being incisively and directly plugged-in to the psychic matter of this persona. He has often been described as a very enigmatic character and is considered in one way or another to be ambivalent or difficult to penetrate the surface of. When you're contacting as faithfully as you can the resonances that come out of following the syntactical patterns, that ambiguity seems to dissolve. Whereas I felt in the Purcarete production that he was, in the conventional sense, a master of ceremonies, our approach seemed to reveal a figure not at all in control—of his own emotions and their temperature. And I think that's a valuable insight, because you get a sense of not merely how powerful he is, but actually just how dangerous he is to himself and others.

So, less master of ceremonies and more neurologically fetid and extreme: extreme in his response to Ariel, extreme in response to Caliban, and that's often displayed as being merely dyspeptic and disappointed. Embedding the search for who he was in the syntax, rather than in a more generalised psychology of the flow of narrative and action, led me to a much greater sense of the gravity of his dislocation and the specific nature of it. It explained his overreactions to those around him and his desire for the most absolutist control over them. That desire is not a function of the certainty implied by the traditional master of ceremonies figure, but is revealed, in fact, as symptomatic of his utter *insecurity* about who he *actually* is. His magic has strength but that doesn't mean to say that he doesn't feel under attack in some way. His own psychopathology is attacking him—all these endless bites of the mind that are exploding in him all the time. That becomes incredibly activated when you get into the syntax and allow that to motivate you or resonate through you.

**Hurrell:** And what about the moments when the performance was inviting both you and the audience to focus more on the sounds themselves? We made a decision to adopt performance effects that sought to recreate for the audience our experience of connecting to sounds and patterns of sounds, as if we were creating a performance artefact out of some of our laboratory processes. The obvious example is getting you to sound out the "D, T" and "S, P" before going into the "my brother and thy uncle called Antonio" passage.<sup>28</sup> But I remember also that we were very exercised—and in fact you were in particular—by the desire for the opening sequence to be a bombarding of the audience with our experience in the laboratories of the sound patterns in the language. That was the underlying reason for our decision to begin the piece with the most elaborate projection content in the opening

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<sup>28</sup> See page 218.

and then scale it back, rather than build up to it, which was an alternative strategy we discussed and rejected.

## **Building a Relationship to Sound**

There are, I think, three steps within the first five or ten minutes that are trying to trigger that relationship with the audience: awakening them to word-music as artefact. Firstly, representing simultaneously what we called grids 1 and 2 of the rhythms in the poetry of “Ye Elves of hils...” in both the opening projections, and by underscoring them with the sound effect of triple heartbeats.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the quite didactic sounding of the alliterative letters in isolation, to lead you into the ‘ribbons’ speech, and thirdly the ‘ribbons’ themselves, which are one of the most overwhelmingly elaborate visual images that we used. And I think we agree that in broad terms, it had the desired effect. It alerts the audience that this is going to be about something that you’re not usually asked to think about while you’re watching a performance. I wonder though, whether you’re able to comment on the usefulness, or otherwise, to you as the performer, of having those sometimes textual but often scenographic digressions into the sounds themselves and away from the psyche that is conjured by them. Does it feel like an interruption: “now I’m doing this thing about sound now I’m going back to doing Prospero.”?

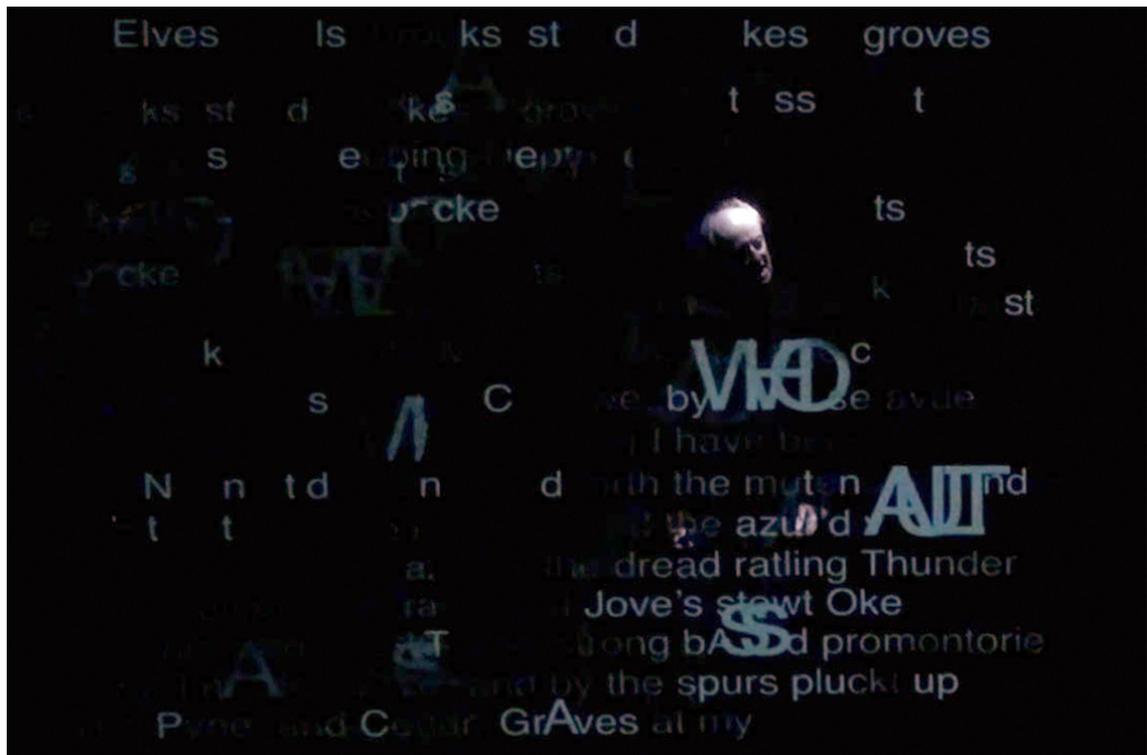
**McArthur:** No, it doesn’t feel like an interruption. It just feels ... ‘performative’, and with respect to the bombardment of effects at the beginning, as a kind of wrenching open of the psychic door into the character.

**Hurrell:** My hypothesis was that the ‘soundscape’ of the speech, in all its complex auricular patterns, is in fact a terrific verbal rendering of the storm that starts the story. In our deconstruction of the story that storm is in his mind and so we don’t want lightning and thunder sound effects; we want a verbal storm of sounds and a visual representation of those sounds that says this personage up there behind the gauze is creating this conflagration out of language and it’s expressed through the sound of those words.

**McArthur:** Good, that’s interesting. Because it’s a palimpsest on a palimpsest isn’t it. Those sonic patterns are a vestigial expression of his state of mind, and the visual representation of that language is in turn a vestige of those sound patterns.

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<sup>29</sup> “Grid 1” was the shorthand adopted for the patterns of alliteration and assonance observed. “Grid 2” refers to the metrical pattern observed in the speech, of frequent three-stress-beat sequences, marked in the performance text by underlining the instances of such repeated stress.



**Fig. 21.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. Prelude – *The Storm*. Gerrard McArthur as Prospero.

**Hurrell:** In the laboratory on the long Act I oration, we paid much attention to the endlessly parenthetical quality—that which the English Literature critic Keir Elam dubbed the “parenthomania”<sup>30</sup>—of its grammatical construction. You gave some interesting observations about how those structures had ramifications for your breathing: how they seem to deny natural breath-points and thus create the sensation of him fighting for breath.<sup>31</sup> The reason that the ribbons in the video imagery were shooting off in different directions rather than being a single ‘swirl’ was an attempt to illustrate that exact structural element. Yet my experience of watching your performance was that the passage did end up seeming like a single continuous stream, rather than this phenomenon that we had hypothesised in the laboratory, of something being ripped out of you from opposing directions at once. Does that square with how it felt to perform it?

**McArthur:** Well, I think it’s a rollercoaster for him. The sheer length of it, the accretion of detail he’s remembering in the telling of it, the terrible pain, and the bile in him about those details. And so, it should be a rollercoaster for the audience too, I think.

<sup>30</sup> See page 143.

<sup>31</sup> See page 132.



**Fig. 23.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. First movement – *Grievance*.  
Gerrard McArthur as Prospero.

**Hurrell:** Well that’s an image that corresponds to the way you performed it, because of the continuousness of the loop that has all the ups and downs and turns. But, to extend the metaphor, the rollercoaster doesn’t ever quite jump the tracks in that completely alarming and unexpected way which I think is the quality we were speculating on at the time of the laboratory. Do you think that’s right, and that the conclusion we reached in the laboratory was wrong, or would you go back and try to manifest that broken-up, parenthetical quality—a quality of constantly breaking and shifting point of focus, that we had identified in the laboratory—more directly in the of the performance.

**McArthur:** Yes, I think I would look for an expression in the physicality of that disjuncture that we identified, because while there is, as I say an accumulating accretion of memory and emotions that are very black and bile-filled, it’s equally important that at any given time he doesn’t really know what he’s about to say, or what he intends to say. He knows what happened but he’s not in a condition to formulate the telling of it, and that’s what leads to the endless opening up of new parentheses:

thy false uncle  
 (Being once **perfected** how to **grAUNt** suites,  
 how to **deny** them: who **t’advANce**, and who  
**To trash** for over-**topping**;) new created  
 The creatures that were mine, I **sAY**, ( or **chAng’d** ’em, (  
 Or els new form’d ’em; ( having both the key,  
 Of Officer, and office, set all hearts i’th **state**  
 To what tune **plEASE’d** hiS **EARE**, ( *that now he was*  
*The Ivy which had hid my princely Trunck,*  
*And **suckt** my verdure out on’t))))*

That last image has only just come to him out of the accumulation of that succession of begun but unfinished thoughts. I think in this instance it is good to feel yourself at the end of breath. He's written it to be extreme in the syntax and so perhaps it should be extreme in the human body as well. I think you have to play it at that edge: he's experiencing this, not just telling it, and is not quite in control of what's going on psychically. I think it should be physically worrying in performance, as a visceral expression of his worrying mental state at this point.

**Hurrell:** The second idea I want to revisit is the 'granular level' of the individual auricular patterns: the conflagrations of alliteration and hidden alliteration et cetera. The way that makes sense to me as a psycho-physical expression of character, is through what we've discussed about the particular varying muscle efforts of any given sound when repeated over and over. And that kind of physical meditation on an effort in and of itself, regardless of what words those sounds form, has an emotional response that rises up as a consequence of that particular muscle effort: a psycho-physical response. When I suggested staging the moment of sounding the key alliterative sounds in the first speech, before we launch into that speech, it was in that spirit. I was proposing that we reveal to the audience what that psycho-physical meditation experience was. But that's not what we ended up doing with that idea and indeed you latched on quite rightly to the idea of doing something much more, shall we say, 'Brechtian' with it, or at least didactic, in which you step out of whatever this psychic turmoil is that we have just been staging and turn to the audience and say in effect, 'here are some sounds', in a manner that is, as you say, overtly performative.

So the question is what do you think of the way I'm describing the proposed connection between repetitions of sound in the consonants and emotion? Do you think that's right? Or do you think I'm seeing it slightly differently to the way you see it?

**McArthur:** No, I think the same. You're speaking of the conflux, say in this instance, of *t* and *d*, and how that has a psychic matter to it? I agree completely. The thing to say about *t* and *d* is that they are crisply percussive aren't they. To speak simply, if someone takes their knuckles and raps them against your forehead, that's not a particularly pleasant experience and especially not if they continue to do it, and I think that's what the sound pattern is doing. It's not only that he is doing that to the audience in the telling of the tale; it's coming out of him in that way because that's something in him. He is replicating his experience in sound.

**Hurrell:** The very act of vocal production of those sounds is like a painful, pleasureless expectoration without release. Whereas the actual sounds of expectoration, /ss/ and /p/, have the satisfaction of exhalation, making these sounds (/d/, /t/) has a slight difficulty to it, because you have to constrict the breath to form the sound. So there's a 'pain' associated with this speaking.

**McArthur:** Yes, that's right.

**Hurrell:** As Kenneth Burke observes in his comments on hidden alliteration<sup>32</sup>, those two sounds go together for a reason that is physiological. They are variations on the same base-line physiology. They both start in the same place in the mouth, and that contributes to their cost and effortfulness, because you really have to make a decision to go one way to thicken into D, or completely switch direction from that same starting point in the mouth to make the T. That's why we concluded, I think, that the phrase 'Call'd Antonio' was such an important sonic fulcrum for Prospero's vituperative feelings about Antonio.

## Caliban

In the performance, the Caliban persona operates as a release valve for parts of the Prospero psyche of which the magus ego-persona does not permit free self-expression. Caliban has a capacity for the vulnerable expression of suffering and victimhood, in a way that Prospero does not, even though they are. Motivated by parallel betrayals by ones they loved. In our view of the play's dramaturgical design, which is that the Caliban persona is one refraction of the overarching Prospero persona, victimhood is the very essence of that particular refraction. And so, it's crucial that Prospero is not able to express himself as a victim because it's all channelled into Caliban, leaving him only that destabilising vituperation, and the active aggression it bestows.

**McArthur:** You do get a sense in the presentation that Caliban is the obverse side of the same coin that is Prospero. It reveals itself in surprising ways, for example in his humour and his puncturing of Prospero's proud, performative, paternalistic self-image. Everything Prospero does is an imposition of his status above all and Caliban apes that. There is an innate mock of him in Caliban.

**Hurrell:** Yes, his linguistic soundscape is initially very simplistic; it's a really straightforward identifiable verbal styling technique for portraying the monstrous wild man: excessive repetitions of big *B* plosives, and *M* – "Buh, Buh! Muh, Muh!" But then, as you portrayed in the performance, it turns on a dime and has this really surprising aristocratic or even ironic and wry turn of phrase that is clearly there in the text, it's not just you choosing to say it that way...

**McArthur:** ...no, it's clearly there...

**Hurrell:** ...it's in the phrase structure. It's such a 'tell': it's so clearly the Prospero voice processed through the crude instrument of the loud, clanging trumpet and drum that is Caliban...

**McArthur:** ...and therefore a mock and a barb. If he's an ape, in both senses, then he can 'ape' his teacher, and see incisively through Prospero to a degree that nobody else can, which of course would be a source of immense anger to Prospero.

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<sup>32</sup> See page 147.

**Hurrell:** There's a kind of development of mind implied by that ability to send somebody up.

**McArthur:** That imprint of civilisation, let's call it, that he can toy and play with...

**Hurrell:** ...well it's the imprint of Prospero's superciliousness.

**McArthur:** Yes, and actually having had to tolerate Prospero for that long, Caliban is a release for the audience in exactly that way. It's a dramaturgical strategy as well, isn't it?

**Hurrell:** When we hear things like Caliban saying 'this island's mine and you took it from me and I was the sovereign and now I'm not'; they land as a 'Prospero' point of view (as if speaking to Antonio and Alonso regarding Milan). And I think the fact that we get that usurpation story repeated to us in the play as comedy-victim is useful and rich somehow. So to have you play both roles, as it were, created an embodiment on stage of something that is a structural artefact in the play: the same theme repeated in different ways. That repetition becomes manifest to us in way that is rich in evocation and layered meaning when we see a single actor's body handling each of the repetitions. But it's more than that. The Caliban material seems a really important part of the mosaic of the Prospero psyche. It wasn't as if you were now playing Caliban as well as Prospero in a kind of 'funny hats' routine, even though you did give him a different physicality.

**McArthur:** Yes, that arose entirely out of my response to the sound structure of his text: it's totally dictated by the sound. I see, looking at it now that I'm doing something with my head to one side, slightly on my shoulder but it's all out of an attitude arising from his language system.



**Fig. 24.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. First movement – *Grievance*. Gerrard McArthur as Caliban.

**Hurrell:** Certainly when we were doing the laboratories on it, I know when I first suggested the idea that you would perhaps like to perform Caliban as well as Prospero you were pretty horrified.

**McArthur:** I was, I had no idea how that would be.

**Hurrell:** And as soon as you did that session on it where you found all the ‘Buh! Muh!’ sounds, and it made you kind of stand and stomp,<sup>33</sup> that was when you immediately saw how it could be something that you would be interested in performing. And as you know that’s all we did in the rehearsal, we didn’t ask ‘is he a fishy kind of monster or some other kind?’ and what the physicality of that would be, we just said ‘the sound is making these movements and so these movements are Caliban, and the sounds that make those other movements, those movements are Prospero’.

**McArthur:** Yes, we were very pure about it. We followed exactly what we thought the system was going to bestow on us and we didn’t deviate from that.

**Hurrell:** My impression of the audience commentary and feedback is that people found that you were both playing Caliban and not playing Caliban. They knew there was a shift; of course there is and that’s as it should be. But it didn’t present itself as a kind of one-man show where the actor puts on the different hats and does different characters.

**McArthur:** No, that would be vile.



**Fig. 25.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. Second movement – *Retribution*. Gerrard McArthur as Caliban.

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<sup>33</sup> See clip 19, on page 179.

**Hurrell:** It was part of the poem of the persona or psyche that we were presenting. I think it's clear that the presentation does invite the audience to experience it as a single fragmented subjectivity; the mosaic is a good image. It serves as a deconstruction of the play. It's absolutely true that in the undertow of the play, an audience is invited to come to know the protagonist in part through all these things that these other people do and say. As we've discussed, there are really straightforward, strong narrative reasons why that all hangs together. It's his enchanted island, everyone is acting under his enchantments, and so everyone, as much as they may claim they are themselves, are actually refractions of him.

## **Miranda**

**Hurrell:** I think it's right to say that the importance of Miranda to our enquiry derived from the content of that opening speech which seemed like an essential triggering of the Prospero persona's arc. He had to have someone stand up and indict him in order for him to come to life. In those terms, there is an argument for saying that the only other person on the island who is really 'real' is her. That's a crude way of putting it but he has a relationship to her own independent subjectivity the he doesn't have to anyone else in the play. In a sense he's performing the whole play for her, or for her welfare. The entire action is organised with the motivation of getting her off the island. That argument could be a rationale for indeed putting the real body of that actor on the stage and you certainly could do a performance where you had Miranda in it throughout, I guess, for that reason. In terms of what we are interested in about subjectivity, however, it's a rationale that only holds up to a point, because of course she is under his sway and if Caliban is entirely an imprint of Prospero through the act of education then surely Miranda is as well, although she does have an infantile memory of being raised by women.

The question that emerges, to you as the performer, is did you form any particular kind of notional relationship to what this projected apparition of Miranda was? It was, after all, just a presentation of that aspect of the research, which evolved into a performance effect, so the answer may well be 'no'. But did you end up making a decision about whether his daughter really was there or just all in his head?

**McArthur:** I think all I can say is that it worked for me because she was there in my psyche. So, no I didn't think she was 'there' there. I think the whole piece does work, and I did view it, as taking a stroll through somebody's psyche.

**Hurrell:** Yes, that's the aspiration of it both as an audience experience and as a performing experience I think. It's a series of sense impressions that amounts to, as I say, this mosaic portrait of who this personage is.



**Fig. 26.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. First movement – *Grievance*. Alice Haig as Miranda, Gerrard McArthur as Prospero.

### The Function of Ariel's Music

**Hurrell:** The reason the Ariel music is so important is because it's a manifestation of something in the soul (that is repressed in him most of the time by the power of the ego-mind) erupting into the ether.

I thought it was important that we see Prospero changed, at least temporarily, by the exercise of the magic through the artefact of the music. This was a deliberate editing strategy on our part as an outcome of the laboratories. And it's a device we use more than once. First, we see him delivering the painful climactic imagery of "they hurried us aboard a bark... me and thy crying self" in which he comes closest to vulnerability; then beautiful music; and when we see him next he's, in effect, in a cocoon of the sensual comfort of his own magical power, expressed in a suddenly and radically different verbal style: "by accident most strange". Indeed the 'sensual comfort' of that 'cocoon' is created by the sound of that language.

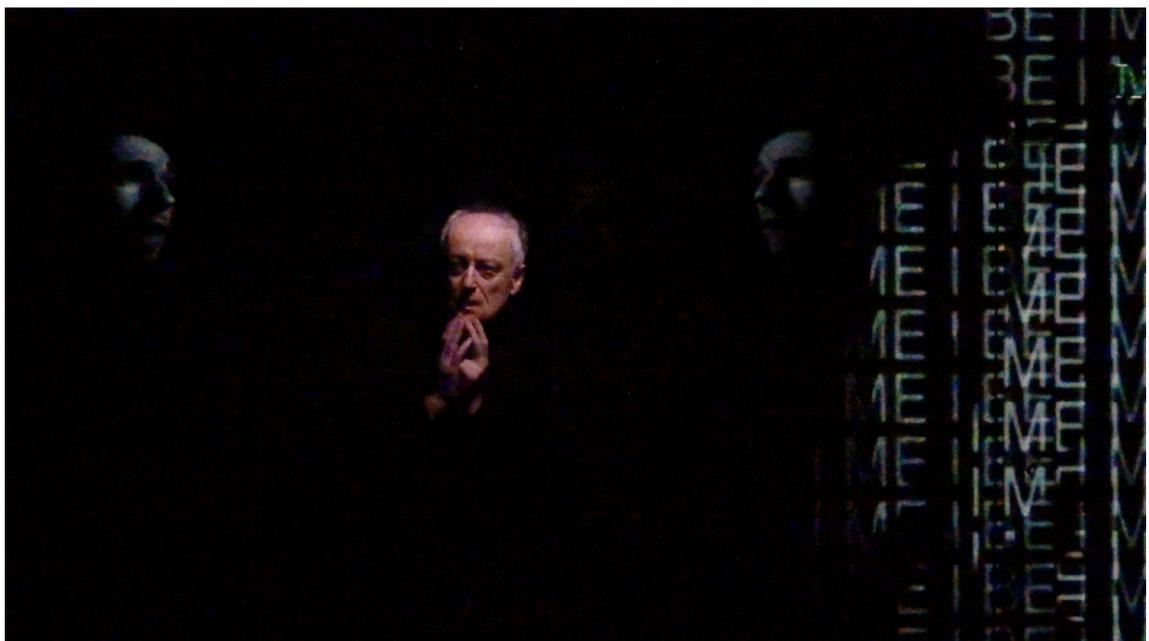
The reason that shift happens in the play, is that he is now reaching forward to the moment when Ariel is going to come on stage. He's firing up to perform magic, which is why "bountiful fortune" shifts its verbiage and syntax. What we're doing by highlighting that change with the music is bringing something that would ordinarily remain subliminal, and therefore often missed in a production of the play, right up into the overt, surface of the performance story.

**McArthur:** That’s a seeding of the essential dramatic structure of the play leading to the lever of “Mine would, sir, were I human”.

**Hurrell:** That’s right, it’s a statement that can seem to come out of nowhere in the play: this instinct for compassion and redemption in Ariel, is nowhere previously explicitly revealed in the text. But in fact in fact it *has* been a constant presence in the play, exclusively represented through the effect of the sound of this music, yearning to be attended to. It’s been constantly presenting itself to Prospero who has been deflecting it and deflecting it and deflecting it.

**McArthur:** And actually, of course, Ariel being a part of Prospero, it’s that part of Prospero trying to talk to himself.

**Hurrell:** Exactly. Hence, the motif I suggested as a way of conceiving the second movement: the “solemn musicke”<sup>34</sup> Caliban/Ariel/Prospero sequence was that it’s Prospero playing a game of cat and mouse with redemption: his mind does not want to give itself over to the humility that is involved in redemption. But there is this kind of compassionate instinct that is manifested in Ariel that is constantly reaching out and trying to penetrate him.



**Fig. 27.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. Second movement – *Retribution*. Russell Harcourt as singer/Ariel, Gerrard McArthur as Caliban.

### Prospero’s Emotional Arc

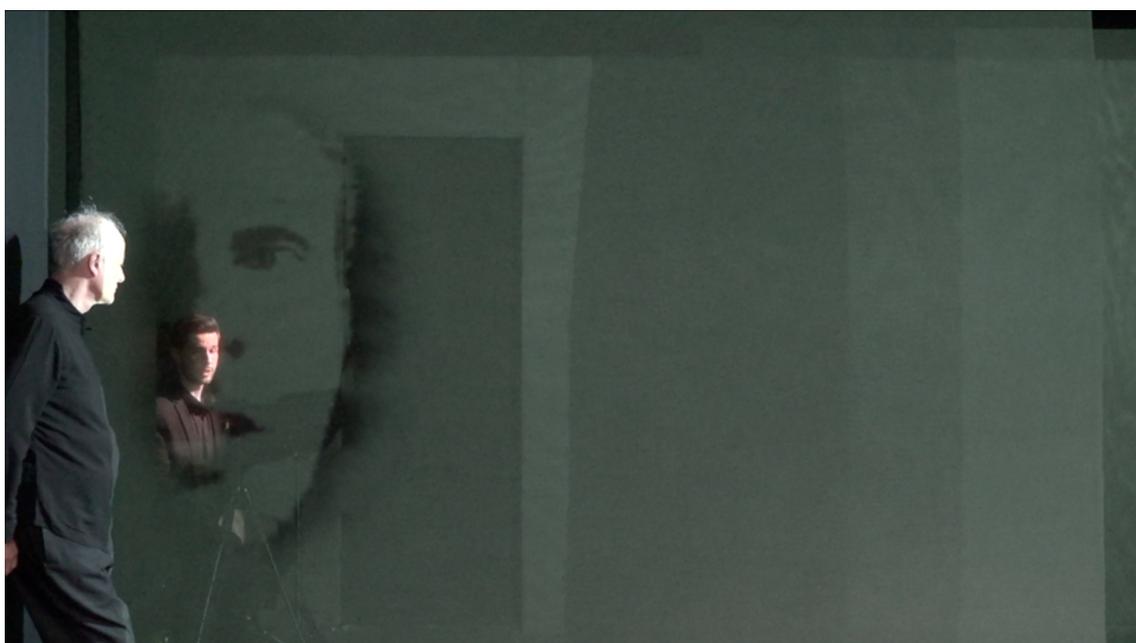
**Hurrell:** There is, in the shape of your performance, an emotional centre, from the Caliban speech “the isle is full of noises”, through the whole ensuing sequence all the way to the decision to forgive. Whatever the loss is that this person we’ve

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<sup>34</sup> The ‘second movement’ of the performance, scripted from page 228

conjured is confronting, that's where it happens. Particularly once you got into the swing of it in the later performances, that's where the mechanism of experience in feeling you had built through language was threatening to overtake the figure. "Our revels now are ended" is the calm centre of this emotional apex in the piece.

**McArthur:** I agree with you, there is an absence of the neurotic noise that has consumed him: it consumes him before and it will ultimately consume him afterwards, but in between there is a lacuna: a glass box of absolute clarity. Because it's a speech about the actual truth of the hollowness of all of these images of power and solidity and grandeur: a realisation of the absolute unreality and ultimate evanescence of everything that seems to be solid. That's why it worked so brilliantly for all the elaborateness of the projections to suddenly drop away, displaced by bright light and for the first time, a blank canvas.



**Fig. 28.** *Hear My Soul Speak* - performance. Second movement – *Retribution*. Gerrard McArthur as Prospero, Russell Harcourt as singer/Ariel.

The conclusion "...to still my beating mind" is perhaps the first, genuine moment of self-awareness in the play: an acknowledgement that the previous noise in his head that the syntactical twistedness has represented suddenly disappears here in an odd, momentary, sour peace. It's the 'beating mind' of realisation; a moment of full lucidity. It's as if the manner of his engagement with the world through sound—knotted, angular and difficult—has been a stress-testing of himself. Here, it's suddenly and notably free. And, because it is vocally free and generous, with its expansive—even grand—vowels, its tone can be misinterpreted as being simply that; elevated and joyous in some strange way, whereas in fact it is about emptiness. If you don't seek a context for what the language is doing, then you're going to say "oh what a beautiful speech" and "gosh, how moving". It's got nothing to do with that. It's much more likely that the lucid sourness here is a prelude to the otherwise unexpected '...where every third thought shall be my grave'. The keyword is "stuff" and its placement at the end of the line. It's not a long releasing vowel sound but a short, monosyllabic (he

beats it out) “We. Are. Such. Stuff.” The way the sharp, sardonic nature of that even tolling: ‘bum, bum, bum, bum’ at the end of the line then expands into the stretch of “dreammms” at the start of the next, indicates that that stretch is not largesse, it’s a ratchet.

### **On the Use of Sound Effects**

**Hurrell:** Can we discuss the soundscape of triplet syllables that we applied as a background to the dispute with Ariel. I think this was your idea. I have a memory that you had seen a Steve Reich documentary that inspired the concept.

**McArthur:** I had, you’re right. As you’ve written in the annotations to the script, it comes from the hidden alliterations.<sup>35</sup> Very simply, the way I thought to reveal the hidden alliterative sound-making was to pull out those words and construct them into a sound literalism: to create a sonic artefact of those alliterations.

**Hurrell:** Quoting from the laboratory reflection on this passage, you observed at the time, “There is something unremittingly pressing about this that gives Ariel no space at all.”

**McArthur:** Yes, I think that’s what makes the link in my mind to the minimalism: it leaves no space. The minimalism can pound at you.

**Hurrell:** It creates a kind of texture-bed doesn’t it, as opposed to a music in which you can identify a melodic line. It’s a pressing of sound.

**McArthur:** Yes, and then any slight change in the repetition becomes accentuated and meaningful. Prospero, we speculated, is actually filling up the entire bandwidth here, implacably pressing down on Ariel. It’s in the structure of the verse; the absolutely continuous nature of it.

**Hurrell:** So, in effect it’s the sonic representation of threatened enclosing of him in the oak. And it’s in the structure of the scene too. It’s another variation of the phenomenon you see in the earlier sequence with Miranda. Superficially it is just exposition: the narrative creates excuses for Prospero to have speeches, ostensibly so that he can fill in the back story. But in fact the drama lies in the way Prospero uses those speeches to verbally dominate and entrap. In this instance, just one fairly weak remonstrance from Ariel “is there more toil? let me remind you what you have promised me” is enough to unleash in Prospero a veritable torrent of sound which pours out to shut him down. For the rest of the sequence he barely gets out more than “yes sir, no sir, I do not sir”.

**McArthur:** The drama is this absolute oppressive filling up of the space so that Ariel is just pressed against the wall by this wall of sound. It’s the sound of absolute

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<sup>35</sup> See page 222.

overpowering dominance and ire: this eruption, which seems excessive as it always is in Prospero when he is challenged or confronted or accused of injustice.

**Hurrell:** That puts a different colour on the monosyllabic passages of that speech—they contribute to that pressing effect. This effect continues in the ensuing speech to Caliban and we responded to that in a similar way but this time visually using the columns of words as bricks. It’s a sonic rendering of oppression.

**Clip 26.** “Mi-Ti-Gab” vocal sound circuit. Soundscape track from the performance *Hear My Soul Speak*.  
(Click link: <http://research.gold.ac.uk/25702/> or scan the QR code.)



**Hurrell:** So, yes, there’s this overall wall-of-sound effect, but obviously what we did to create that was inspired by what we found to be another pattern of triple stresses. It was actually the alliterative patterns that appealed to us. We were drawn to these ugly sounds. It’s heavy with instances of the ‘C G’ cognate, amongst other sounds. It’s almost as if the whole speech is him saying “sycorax sycorax sycorax sycorax...” Can you recall what it gave you to have to play against that, once we’d created the idea?

**McArthur:** To be honest, against the sound I simply had to keep my speech going, so really it’s for receivers to tell me what it gave me.

**Hurrell:** Well that itself is actually really apt. The whole idea of the wall of sound and him pushing Ariel out of space—that oppressive quality—is something that we wanted Prospero to be going through himself, as well as manifesting it on somebody else. And it sits in profound contrast to what we characterised as the lovely, sensual, warm cocoon of being in his state of magic-making; which is the speech you’ve just done before this (“most auspicious starre”). In that highly sensate state, a little earworm says “when are you going to honour your promise to me?” and just the tiny trigger of that nagging unleashes this drumbeat of oppressive sound. As you said you had to fight to make that sound and that texture of struggle seems to me to be right. And the fact that it’s completely preposterous and self-inflicted is terrific for our vision of him and what he’s going through.

**McArthur:** Yes, that’s right, I was having to struggle against the sound, which was the sound of my own struggle.

**Hurrell:** I don’t remember us consciously identifying the /G/ sound pattern, but when we look at the list that we assembled here that clearly is what we were doing, and actually we even cheated on occasion to intensify the effect. We shortened “made gape the pine” to “made gape pine” for example. G and its cognate c kept attracting us. But consciously I think we were just more engaged in the feeling connoted rather than the technical auricular pattern itself. And those /g/’s and /c/’s are hard and low in the throat.

However, the phenomenon of the three even stresses: the triplet beat, is clearly the principal artefact that got us onto the idea.

## The Rhythmic Motif

The three-beat stress is definitely a rhythmic motif in the play. It tends to form part of a larger pattern of a rolling rhythm because usually what happens is that in addition to putting three stresses together, he subtracts them from elsewhere in the line, so you end up with:

Ba-da-da bum bum bum

It's a rhythm that seems to have often a militaristic, grandiloquent, aggressive forcefulness to it. Imperious, dark and pressing.

That's why I really wanted the three-beat drum sound-effect to sound of a heart-beat rather than a drum-beat. I liked the idea of a sound that sounds fleshy and organic but there's something unnatural about it: so instead of there being two beats there's this unnatural three-beat heart. It's a little image in my mind of him having transcended humanity with his necromancy, and become supernatural.

**McArthur:** That insistent DUM DUM DUM is oppressive, it's a kind of foreboding: the imminence of something about to explode. And it's demonstrated early in the play that he is always on the point of exploding.

**Hurrell:** You observed early in the laboratories, a recurring rhythm that you felt was like a wave motion: that the sea was in the rhythm of the play. I think this triplet effect is part of that. An oscillation between short, abrupt intakes and legato outflow phrases.

**McArthur:** Those mono beats leading to legato expansion does seem to happen an enormous amount. You're making short sounds, then making big sounds, then back to short, it is a continuous wave motion. "Ye Elves of hills..." is also marked by that quality.

**Hurrell:** There is a roiling rhythm in him that sometimes just rumbles along quietly and sometimes roars with the quality of the necromancer and climaxes with "graves at my command". But that 'seethe' has been going all the way through the play whenever he's on stage.

**McArthur:** Yes. You could call that a seethe couldn't you.

**Hurrell:** Looking at the log here one of the earliest times you identify this rhythmic effect, was actually in a passage that ostensibly has nothing to do with these kind of dark psychic qualities that we're talking about, it's the calming of her: "no harm – I have done nothing..."

**McArthur:** Yes, there it seemed to be like the sea lapping the shore – “don’t worry – calm yourself, the sea will calm you”.

**Hurrell:** At the time I held back from that idea a bit because it seemed too easy to say, “oh it’s the sea in a play set on an island”. But the ‘seethe’ is not a bad way of thinking of it.

**McArthur:** Like a sea after a storm.

**Hurrell:** Yes, the storm is in him—the waters are calm but always ready to erupt again, and there’s something in the air ready to ignite.

**McArthur:** And this rhythm in the verse starts right after the storm in the play.

**Hurrell:** I think this is why when “Ye Elves of hills...” happens at the climax of the play, it seems to be the revelation of something that we’ve felt but not known all the way through the play. Finally it comes into terrifying focus. The rhythm pulses quietly early on, rises and recedes from time to time, and then thunders at the climax:

**Waked their sleepers o’pd and let’em forth**

**McArthur:** It’s interesting that the declaration “Every third thought shall be my grave”, which can seem so weird and unjustified and apropos of nothing in a naturalistic reading of the text, suddenly takes on a shade of significance in the context of the subliminal constant presence of threes throughout the play’s rhythm.

### “Ye Elves of hills...”

**Hurrell:** We observed in the early discussions that claims of necromancy, don’t actually bear up to forensic analysis. The play seems to imply very strongly that this great necromantic skill has emerged as a function of his exile. Whether he’s learnt it on the island, or it came to him on the raft or whatever, you don’t really feel that he was raising people from the dead back in Milan.

**McArthur:** Oh no, no, I agree. I think the narrative is that having been afforded the mercy by Gonzalo of being sent away with his most important books, that it’s 12 years of study with those books that brings him to the power he has now.

**Hurrell:** And yet of course, if that’s true then he’s not telling us the truth because there is no one on the island to raise from the dead. In that respect, this declaration is an example of a device that is used repeatedly in the play in which an action or a declaration lacks motivation derived from narrative logic, or indeed psychological detail, and yet seems important and true on, shall we say, an ineffable level of resonance. It’s important that this little piece of the mosaic, “I am a necromancer”, seems true, and we feel it as real and we are shocked by it. The fact that it doesn’t fit into a linear narrative is not only *not* disqualifying but actually an essential part of the enigmatic styling of the piece because the sense of dislocation that accompanies the revelation, its apparent destabilising discontinuity with other pieces of the mosaic, is part of its impact.

**McArthur:** I think that's right. It's an utterly startling taboo-busting claim that goes way beyond the bounds of anything we've seen him do. We're certainly aware of his powers: he's caused a shipwreck, there's the back story about releasing Ariel, there's the control he has over Caliban, with urchins and threats of pinching him and the like, and other matters of control that he has over sprites and spirits, but nothing even approaching the level of this revelation. It takes us to the cliff edge with him and gives us a glimpse of the darkness that lies beyond. And the fact that it doesn't fit in to a logical linear narrative makes its impact more emphatic. It's vital that it have a dislocating impact on us because we suddenly realise that we simply don't know who he is, and how far and how extreme things have become within him. If you like, Shakespeare has all the time been playing with an unreliable narrator. It reminds us of something that the knotted-ness of the language has been telling us, subliminally, all along: just how dangerous he might be.

**Hurrell:** Yes, the sonic has inculcated the sensation that something else is operable, under the surface. It's an unsettling, incongruous sensation that doesn't seem to fit with the ostensible scenario of an old guy teaching his daughter the family history. So when an audience does finally hear the "Ye Elves of hills..." speech at the climax of the play, they find themselves feeling that this revelation feels intuitively true and supported by the experience of the play.

**McArthur:** Whenever I do that speech, I always feel like "now you're going to see the real me" and it hits me with a feeling of surprise about just how deeply the speech itself is the exposing of something very private about his mind. No one else has ever seen this. It's personal and revelatory to the audience within a rhetorical form.

**Hurrell:** Well I think one of the reasons we were attracted to it, is that it is the ultimate example of a profoundly formal and therefore supposedly public rhetorical construct, being deeply, subliminally, revealing of the most darkly private impulses.

**McArthur:** Yes.

**Hurrell:** And so, it represents, in the most distilled manner, what we are suggesting is the aesthetic project of the writing style in which the play is constructed. He is finding a way to use this very formal construct, not just formal in its use of the poetic devices and auricular ornamentation but also confining himself to something that is ostensibly a very formal speech: a spell or incantation. Yet, something in the sensation of that speech, through its verbal music, evokes that weird headspace that we think he's in, that you've described right at the beginning of this process as: "god heroin is great, but I know I have to stop".<sup>36</sup> And it seems to me your wording was carefully chosen and quite precise. The sentiment does not extend as far as "I'm sorry I'm a heroin addict", or "I wish I wasn't a heroin addict", nor does it retract into pure indulgence, "god I love being a heroin addict". The mindscape of the

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<sup>36</sup> See page 27.

speech is simply “This feels good, and without denying that, I am going to rip it out of myself”. A pure abjuration.

That this personal struggle is inculcated in sound, rather than described overtly, is what, I’m speculating, permitted its original audience to make the cognition that this moment is not really about magic, or whether one should practice black magic or not, but rather about the darker impulses in us all. He’s meant to be experienced as a dark Everyman. The audience experiences this self-abnegation as a phenomenon or a theme that reaches beyond the supernatural given circumstances of this character, in this story. Instead it confronts them with their own darker impulses, their own vanities and lusts. It’s the ultimate extension of something that is also the ambition in the writing of Macbeth: “how can I get an audience to look through a glass darkly at the most buried and doubtful parts of their own moral experience and psyche.”

**McArthur:** Yes, they were hearing the human experience and the meaning, rather than seeing it in behaviours or images primarily.

**Hurrell:** It’s why the abjuration moment, set to the solemn music, is so moving.. And what it looked like for you to be so upset and suffering as you were doing that, was something like: “this is the last time I’m going to hear this beautiful music because I am giving it up”. So, by playing the music as he says it, it allows him to still be experiencing the last heroin high even as he is in the act of giving it up.

**McArthur:** That’s true: that is what I am experiencing in that moment. That renunciation is not a noble, grand gesture; it’s somebody doing something incredibly painful and difficult.

## Further Reflection

**McArthur:** Our process has been to allow a channelling of the sonic properties in the language to have a very practical somatic and psychological consequence.

**Hurrell:** The guiding principal in constructing the performance text, therefore, has been to extract the ‘verbal juice’ from the piece leaving aside the dramaturgical structures like plot and tropes such as master-servant relationships and all the cultural accretion out of which the play as a whole is constructed, which at the time of writing would have been perfectly serviceable in assisting an audience of the period to discern meaning, but have all come to mean something else and so may serve as radio-static, disrupting the reception of the play’s thematic core. We’re trying to excavate not only the idea of who the character is but also the meta-idea of how that character is represented through an evocation.

**McArthur:** Was Shakespeare pushing to the furthest his interest in the sonic communication of the matter of a psyche? If so, it would be a significant correction to the idea of Anne Barton’s observation that you have spoken about; that Prospero

is 'opaque', and that he doesn't have any true soliloquies. Isn't it, rather, more true to say that the 'language material' in which the whole play is composed, is an attempt intimately to connect an audience through a radical concentration on sonic patterning and manipulations of syntax, to the workings of the 'soul-mind' of this character, Prospero. If all the other characters are in some way directly related to him, then it might be said that the entire play is, in fact, Shakespeare's ultimate soliloquy; an extraordinarily radical, but logical, final piece of artistic daring.

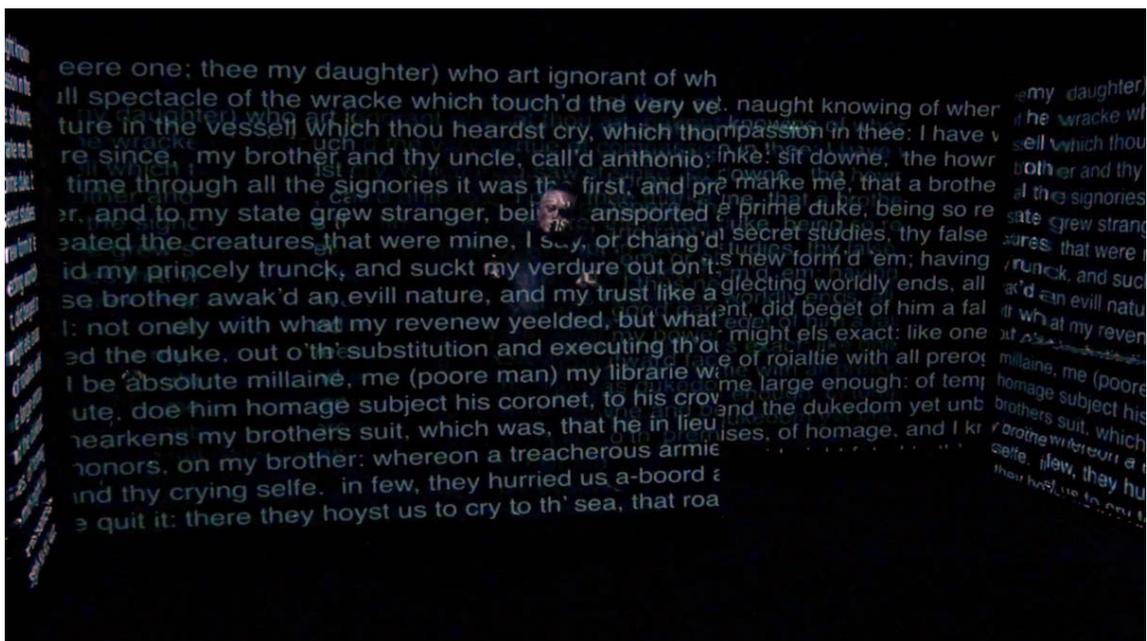
And that's what we tried to replicate in some form in the performance, and as you describe, because that's not readily culturally transferable we had to create an experience where they could see the sound artefact and hear it at the same time.

**Hurrell:** It occurs to me when you look at all these images we created in the production, that a number of them are different riffs on imprisonment: entombing him in words, or tangling him in his sentences or putting him behind a wall of words.

**McArthur:** Which is thematically right.

**Hurrell:** Even though that's not what I set out to do with the projection – it wasn't my conscious motivation. But, as we discussed with Ben different ways of showing the sonic structures we were interested in, instinctively when we landed on something that evokes in different ways this entrapping of him, that was the image we were drawn to.

**McArthur:** I think that's because Prospero's journey is one of discovering that his magic, which is to say his ego, has really imprisoned him. The source of the drama at the centre of that theatrical experience, that island of language, is Prospero's turmoil of the discovering presence of himself: a self-discovering psyche, represented in sound, which is immensely, continuously dramatic.



**Fig. 29.** *Hear My Soul Speak* – performance. Third movement – *Renunciation*. Gerrard McArthur as Prospero.

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## Appendix I

### Co-informants to the Practice Research

#### Gerrard McArthur

Gerrard McArthur is an actor, director and workshop leader with experience of classical and heightened texts, Greek, Shakespearean, Jacobean, 19th century - and stylized modern, in the works of such as Barker, Muller, Pinter, and Botho Strauss.

He has had an extensive association as a leading player with the Citizen's Theatre Glasgow, a company that accrued a renowned reputation in Britain and on the European continent as one of high design, austere beauty and a recognized intellectual fierceness, with a devotion to producing the European classics, under the leadership of the influential designer Philip Prowse, the distinguished translator & playwright Robert David Macdonald, and director Giles Havergal.

This interest nurtured in him for complexity of language, and the sense of the physicality that produces such language, in forms of theatre highly alert to the sensation and communication of both, brought him into the orbit of the work Howard Barker, 'Britain's greatest living playwright' (the Times). Since 1996, when he played Vanya in '(Uncle) Vanya' through a European tour under Barker's own direction, his association with The Wrestling School (TWS- the company set up by actors and directors solely for the production of Barker's work) has become deep. He is a member of the board of that company and has been deeply engaged in developing and leading a new practice for the company: over some years a series of lab/workshops that explore the processes at work, the war of articulacy against silence, that is the rhetorically raised soundscape, and the emotional landscape, of Barker's Theatre of Catastrophe.

Immediately prior to beginning this long association, McArthur played Prospero in the celebrated Romanian director Silviu Purcarete's only English-speaking production, *The Tempest*, performing throughout Europe and Japan.

#### Further Co-informants to the Research

The additional principal co-informants to the practice research were the actress Alice Haig who participated in laboratory sessions on Miranda, and the operatic countertenor Russell Harcourt who participated in the interpretative exploration of the songs of Robert Johnson. Both artists appeared in the final performance presentation via live and pre-filmed video content.

#### Russell Harcourt

Russell Harcourt appeared as Nerone in *Agrippina* at Brisbane Baroque which earned him an OperaChaser Awards Special Commendation and a Helpmann Award Nomination, Rosenkrantz (cover) in Brett Dean's *Hamlet* for the Glyndebourne Festival, Athamas *Semele* under the late Sir Charles Mackerras, the title role in Handel's *Oreste* for the Royal Opera, Armindo in *Partenope* Opera Australia under Christian Curnyn, working with the acclaimed director Peter Sellars in John Adams' *Gospel According to the Other Mary* for Theater Bonn and Andronico in Vivaldi's pasticcio *Bajazet* and Corrado *Griselda*, both with Sydney's Pinchgut Opera. Other engagements include Volano *Il Giasone* under Jane Glover (RAM); Fox/Coachman (cover) *The Adventures of Pinocchio* Opera North; Zelim (cover) *La verità in cimento*, Licida

(cover) *L'Olimpiade* both for Garsington Opera, Hunahpù (cover) *The Indian Queen* for Peter Sellars at ENO and David (cover) *SAUL* for Glyndebourne on Tour. In 2018 he has performed the role of Sesto in Handel's *Giulio Cesare* Bury Court Opera, and will return to Sydney later in the year to appear as Megabise in Hasse's *Artaserse* for Pinchgut Opera.

## **Alice Haig**

Alice Haig is from London and trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Upon graduating, she was cast in 'Holding Fire!' at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, a coming of age tale and political epic about the Chartist movement in Victorian Britain. Since then, she has worked extensively and predominantly in theatre. From productions of classical texts and great 20th century works to new writing and the workshopping and development of exciting new pieces in their early stages. She has played a wide range of characters, from Emma Tate in the visceral violent mid-western world of Sam Shepard's 'Curse of the starving class', Celia and Hermia in Shakespeare's comedies 'As you like it' and 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', to Sorrel Bliss in Noel Coward's eccentric 'Hay Fever', and most recently social carer Ellen in the English premiere of Stewart Conn's poetic memory play 'I didn't always live here' about the decaying lives and homes of the inhabitants of a 1970s Glasgow tenement block. Amongst others, she has worked at West Yorkshire Playhouse, the Royal Exchange Manchester, the Royal Lyceum Edinburgh, BAM (New York), Glyndebourne, The Finborough, Theatre 503 and The Soho theatre.

Haig previously participated in two iterations of the initial practice-dialogue workshops described in Appendix II. In total three practice laboratory ensemble workshops were conducted through 2013 and 2014. Participation was limited to practicing professional actors, acting teachers and recent graduates of professional UK actor training, all of whom volunteered their time.

## **Practice-Dialogue Workshop Participants**

Julia Tarnoky (Birmingham University) – The Wrestling School/Young Vic

Oliver Bennett (RADA) – The Wrestling School/Belarus Free Theatre/Arcola/Salisbury Playhouse

Liam Smith (Rose Bruford College/Mountview) – The Wrestling School

Alison Mackinnon – Acting Lecturer, Rose Bruford College

Thomas Morrison (Guildhall School of Music and Drama)– National Theatre/Royal Court Theatre

Alice Haig (Central School of Speech and Drama)– Shakespeare's Globe/West Yorkshire Playhouse

Emily Loomes (Rose Bruford College) – Park Theatre/Arcola Theatre

Richard Pyros (Victorian College of the Arts) – Sydney Theatre Company/National Theatre/Royal Court Theatre

Garth Holcombe (NIDA) – Sydney Theatre Company/Bell Shakespeare Company

Dimitra Barla (East 15 Acting School)

Patrick McBrearty (Central School of Speech and Drama)

Harry James (Rose Bruford College)

Rosalind Othen (Rose Bruford College)

Nina Millns (East 15 Acting School)

Jonathan Leinmuller (Drama Centre London) – Southwark Playhouse/Theatre 503

Joel Gorf (Drama Centre London) – Southwark Playhouse/Theatre 503

Giovanni Bienne – Punchdrunk/Arcola

Bernadette O’Brien – Lecturer – Rose Bruford College

Emmeline Prior (University of Leeds) – Shakespeare’s Globe

Connor Baum (Rose Bruford College) – Lecturer – Brighton Institute for Contemporary Theatre Training

## Appendix II

### Practice Research Methodologies and Processes

#### “Practice-Dialogue” Ensemble Workshops

##### 1. Preparatory Exercise. Embodied Listening.

The purpose of this exercise is to develop ensemble inter-attention that is attuned to language, vocal tone, and physical gesture simultaneously. It takes the form of an apparent warm-up activity, but its scope (and duration) are far greater. Later it expands to incorporate elements of other exercises that follow. It is deliberately revisited throughout the day and on successive days. It's an exercise that requires a minimum of about ten participants to be effective, though it can be attempted with less.

##### Phase One - Preparation

- 1) The number of participants (X) are each assigned a fixed number (from 1 to X). It's important that the number order not be sequential around the circle, but random. Participants call out their number in order, delivering the sound of the word clearly, in a measured pace and tone into the centre of the circle, leaving space between each number. (First Sequence)
- 2) Each participant calls another participant by name until all have been called. This sequence of name-calling is then fixed as the Second Sequence. The task is to deliver the word to the ear of the named participant. It need not, but may, be accompanied by eye-contact with the named recipient.
- 3) The Third Sequence is created by each participant selecting another to whom they point, make eye-contact with, and speak to them the word, “YOU”. The sequence order is established in a manner to ensure that the recipient of the ‘You’ is not the same person as the next in order for either of the two other sequences.

##### Phase One - Activity

- 1) Participants stand in a circle, knees soft, stance slightly widened, body engaged, point of focus all the other members of the circle, through both peripheral vision and regularly shifting direct eye-contact.
- 2) The exercise begins with the delivery of the First Sequence above, in continuous loop. A slow and measured pace is important, allowing plenty of silence between each number in the sequence. Even at this early stage the participants are directed to begin thinking of the activity as an exchange of energy through the voice. The energy of the number is delivered into the centre, and if it's my ‘cue’, I take it from the centre, absorb its tone and timbre, and in due course utter my response. Vocal energy is also important, clearly enunciated, breath-supported, energetically present, but not over-loud or forced.
- 3) When the First Sequence loop is established, the beginner of the Second Sequence, at their own discretion, begins the Second Sequence Loop running in tandem with the first. Participants are now simultaneously listening for two cues: the number delivered into the space, and their own name delivered to their own ear. Participants are encouraged to establish

a different vocal quality for the naming sequence, and to repeat the vocal quality as faithfully as possible through each loop.

- 4) Similarly, the beginner of the Third Loop, at their own discretion, when first two sequences are running smoothly and successfully together, commences the first physical sequence, the pointing gesture/YOU. The idea of each sequence as energy-transfer begins to clarify now. The pointing gesture, and the YOU originate low in the body and travel up and out along the arm in the act of gesturing. The recipient is not just listening and watching for a cue, but sensitising themselves to receiving energy from the sender, absorbing it and transmuting it into their own act of outward-emanating energy.
- 5) The measured pace is by now crucial. With three loops running simultaneously, interweaving each other, allow plenty of space between each delivery is crucial, and the participant is encouraged to seek to place each delivery into silent space, rather than competing with each other.
- 6) Problem-Solving.
  - a) The deliverer and recipient have shared responsibility in each moment for maintaining the loop. If the recipient fails to respond, in due course the deliverer must aim to repeat the cue, and continue to repeat until the loop continues.
  - b) From time to time a participant will receive two sequences simultaneously. The discipline is not to panic, slow the hear-beat, absorb both sources of energy, hold them both momentarily, and deliver first one, then moments later, the second.

## Phase Two

- 7) The Fourth Sequence, is *sung objects*. Participants each select an object visible in the room, and sing the name of the object to a self-selected phrase/cadence. It's important to practice this a few times and memorise it. The objective here is to create a different kind of auditory cue for the receiver from that of the spoken voice, in whatever tone. The sequence is established as per the first three. Again its important to aim for an order than does not overlap the deliverer/receiver patterns of any of the previous three.
- 8) Ostensibly therefore it is possible to create as many sequences as there are participants in the circle, such that ultimately everyone is receiving a cue from every other member of the circle. (N.B. we've never succeeded in taking the exercise that far – it takes days!)
- 9) Further sequences may include non-vocalised ones, such as a sequence of silent gestures, or a sequence of movements. The sequence of movements may be either
  - a) One participant starts in the centre of the circle. The next participant walks into the centre of the circle so that the two are momentarily in each others personal space, eye-ball to eye-ball, before the first gives way and returns to the circle – to the position just vacated by the 'receiver'
  - b) The movement is directly to the receiver's position in the circle, passing across the centre of the circle and coming into position behind the receiver. When the receiver senses that the deliverer has come to rest inhabiting their position, they vacate and move on. This version, lacking an eye-contact transfer, may include for example a whispered key-word cue and physical touch on the shoulder.
- 10) Often it will be helpful to commence the Sequences in a different order – i.e. starting up the loops with the most recently added first, then adding in the older, simpler and more familiar loops later. In all cases it is the responsibility of the 'beginner' of each sequence to identify the moment when the ensemble is ready for the a further layer of cues.
- 11) Later sequences will include words and phrases from, for example, the 'Middle English' Exercise that follows here.

## Notes

Once an optimum number of sequence loops has been established and are successfully circulating in concert with each other—this can take hours—a meditative state of conscious awareness is inculcated. At that point the exercise may be paused at any time and the participant left in the centre at the moment of stopping as per point 9.a. above may deliver the speech from Shakespeare they've been exploring on in other phases of the workshop, in order to re-encounter sound-patterns identified in that speech, in order for both deliverer and recipient to experience their different sensate and emotional ramifications in this state of conscious awareness and heightened auditory sensitivity to language and the voice.

## 2. 'Middle English' Sounding – Chaucer to First Folio Shakespeare.

This exercise was developed initially as a strategy for disrupting the cognitive act of reading with a view to reorienting the participant's attention to text as notation of sound. The first eighteen lines of the General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are used in part because the text looks broadly familiar – i.e. it looks like a form of English, and yet it is incomprehensible. The only way to 'read' it, is to sound it out. Rather than attempting to 'teach' Middle English pronunciation directly, a series of rules are practised for decoding the text as sonic notation. The effect is a bowdlerised version of Middle English pronunciation, that is not so much interested in historical accuracy as in the idea of seeing afresh notations letters and letter-grouping (and sometimes even full words) that are broadly over-familiar.

The primary task is to sound out all the letters present on the page.

### The Text Provided

1        Whan that Aprille, with hise shoures soote,  
2        The droghte of March hath perced to the roote  
3        And bathed every veyne in swich licour,  
4        Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
5        Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth  
6        Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
7        The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
8        Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,  
9        And smale foweles maken melodye,  
10       That slepen al the nyght with open eye-  
11       So priketh hem Nature in hir corages-  
12       Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages  
13       And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes  
14       To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;  
15       And specially, from every shires ende  
16       Of Engelond, to Caunturbury they wende,  
17       The hooly blisful martir for the seke  
18       That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seeke.

### The Rules Provided for sounding out the text

1) The number of different vowel sound variations is much less than in Modern English. The vowels are all short-sounded

- i) a is always pronounced /uh/ as in run
  - ii) e is always pronounced /eh/ as in bed
  - iii) i is always pronounced /i/ as in bid
  - iv) o is always pronounced /o/ as in cot
  - v) u is always pronounced /oo/ as in 'put'
- 2) This applies even to words with an 'e' on the end, in which the final letter is simply pronounced /eh/.
- 3) Compound vowels are true diphthongs, created simply by eliding from one of the above five vowel sounds to another. The word  
     'shoures'  
 is pronounced not with an /ow/ sound as in the modern about, or with an /aw/sound as in the modern court, but  
     Sh-oh-oo-ress
- 4) Similarly double vowels, are double-length enunciations of the short-vowel sound.  
     Root  
     is not R/oo/t as in the modern pronunciation but  
     R/oh/oh/t
- 5) The R is rhotic.
- 6) The use of H as a modifier, familiar to us in Modern English is used.
- i) T adjacent to H in a word indicates 'th'
  - ii) S adjacent to H in a word indicates 'sh'
  - iii) C adjacent to H in a word indicates 'ch'
  - iv) P adjacent to H in a word indicates 'ph'
- 7) Furthermore the H shall modify the W and the G to aspirated (almost non-tone) sounds.
- 8) There are some exceptions, and difficult areas that invite a subjective response. The guiding principal is to seek a sounding that honours all the notation on the page. So, for example:
- a) the 'y' sound which is quite distinct from the modern E or 'ee' as in every: "eh-veh-r-yi" or as in nyght: 'n-yi-gh-t'
  - b) apparently arbitrary first letter capitalization within phrases, such as the Upper-case N in "Nature"
  - c) The single s is always pronounced s as in sailor rather z as in "phase"
  - d) 'g' which as in modern English can be pronounced either G as in goat or juh as in rage.
  - e) 'c' which as in modern English can be pronounced either as K as in cat or S as in citation.
  - f) Lingering/thickening the sound to make a double consonant sound for words like 'Aprille' or 'sonne'

### **Phase One – The Basic Exercise**

- 1) The group stands in a fairly broad circle with each participant standing comfortably outside the personal space circumference of those neighbouring. Initially all members of the group hold a copy of the entire text.
- 2) Each member of the circle speaks a line. Go round the circle several times so people get to have a go at different lines, and hearing how each other do different lines. The detailed rules above may be introduced gradually as they arise in the text. The pronunciation is discussed and corrected until the participant is able to slowly speak their line applying the rules of pronunciation adopted above.
- 3) Eventually, each member of the group is assigned a single line from the text, moving sequentially around the circle.

- 4) Think a little bit about rhythm – begin by observing where long sounds and short sounds fall. This is sometimes about the length of the vowel, but much more often about the pattern of consonants, e.g. the ‘a’ in *Whan* is short but enunciating the breathy ‘h’ and the ‘n’ at the end, lengthens the syllable. From these observations start to observe the rhythm, and accentuate/exaggerate it. Still going round the circle.
- 5) After a while, and with occasional corrections on the trickier ones, a pronunciation not too far from Middle English begins to emerge.

### **Notes and Observations**

These may be provided to the group as appropriate:

- 1) Explain that this is the beginning of a long story; a story being told orally.
- 2) Discuss which little snippets of meaning are clear. Keep sounding out, and begin to intuit the possible meaning, or rather the resonance, of what is obscure.
- 3) Observe that this is only about 150 years before Shakespeare. 150 years ago from now, was Dickens. 200 years ago was Austen. And yet we read the English of those books as substantially the same as our own. Yet in Shakespeare’s time, language had changed massively over the preceding 150 years.
- 4) Writing was the notation of sounds. ‘Rules’ of spelling, as a literate code, were still being developed. Chaucer, like Shakespeare was written to be heard, to be relished by the ear.
- 5) Story telling was important, the precursor of the Shakespearean actor speaking verse as persuasive oratory, was the Chaucerian story-telling reciting verse. Being a thrilling, persuasive story-teller was part of being a Shakespearean actor. Pleasuring the audiences ears with rich language and a story.

### **Phase Two – Sharing and Listening**

- 1) The designated speaker, speaks their line directing it to a single individual in the group, chosen at random
- 2) (the selected target individual may not be the next person in the circle to the speaker’s right).
- 3) Only the designated speaker may look at the text; other members of the group hold the text down at their side.
- 4) The recipient repeats the line as they have heard it, usually in fragments as recall of an entire line proves difficult or impossible. The initiator corrects the recipient only by repeating the line or line fragment. No discussion is permitted.
- 5) Once an aurally accurate repetition of the line has been achieved, the recipient selects another member of the group and delivers the line to them.
- 6) This process continues for a random number of iterations, until the line has made its way to the person immediately to the right of the original designated speaker of the line. This person is the designated speaker of the next line in the text. So they repeat the line they have received, and then proceed to delivering their own line, and the process repeats for this next line of text.

### **Variant**

The exercise may be reduced to merely the favoured single word, or pair of words, in each participants designated line.

1. Sharing back and forth is an option but the default mode is passing it around the circle. As the receiver I can choose whether or not to radiate the word-sound back to the originator<sup>37</sup>.
2. The observer will provide a signal (hand-clap) when it feels time to move on to the next word, at which point the next person in the circle from the originating radiator will start radiating the next word around the circle.

## Reflection

Participants looking at the page in close to 100% of cases declare themselves to be looking at something they have never seen before. This was a crucial discovery in the development of the exercise. Having encountered the General Prologue (and been taught how to pronounce it) as a school-boy, the researcher expected to find at least a significant minority, especially in groups of professional actors with a declared interest in Shakespeare, language, and early modern drama, who were also familiar with the text. Early experiments in masterclasses indicated that this might not be the case and that on the contrary the text was as universally unknown to young professional actors as it was to acting students and school students.

So the exercise was trialled with the ensemble – which is a mix of young to mid-career actors – (up to mid-fifties) and it was found that even when the odd individual was able to identify that the text was probably from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer, they had no pre-existing knowledge of how it was pronounced or what it meant.

This offers enormous potential value to as a device for intervening in the habituated cognitive process of reading written English aloud, engendering:

- Slowness.
- The familiar in conflict with the unfamiliar.
- Encountering sound in word without reference to literal meaning.
- Cultivating *apprehension* rather than *comprehension*.
- The attention to sound as a prioritized feature of the written word.

The slowness, difficulty and frustration attendant to this exercise is fruitful.

- The recipient's visual memory of the written text – although brief, passive, (the recipient was never themselves asked to read the line from the page) and by this time some minutes distant, is far more powerful than their aural memory of the ten syllables spoken to them in the moment immediately prior to their attempt to repeat them. Repeatedly, the recipient will repeat not the sound they hear but the sound the mind expects from the corresponding pattern of letters on the page.
- The exercise is most difficult for the participant when one of three situations arises:
  - The musculature required to create a particular sound is unfamiliar and unhabituated. (for example enormous difficulty is encountered in the task of pronouncing the 'y' every as "eh-veh-r-y" or specially as speh-si-ah-ll-yi. Interestingly, the 'wh' sound as in 'whan' is also difficult on an apparently muscular level, despite its putative survival into the present as a rule of Received Pronunciation in words such as 'when' and 'what')

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<sup>37</sup> The shift into the sounding of individual words here, and to physical gesture in the next phase, was contextualized for participants by appropriating the terms 'radiating' and 'receiving' from the work of Michael Chekhov. Whereas Chekhov invoked radiating and receiving fairly broadly to think of the actor's natural energy or charisma, and the character energy. We use the terms here more with reference to Peter Brook's idea of the verse line as an atom containing energy. Participants are encouraged to identify the energy in the sound of a word or phrase and focus their attention on delivering 'radiating' that energy to the recipient. The physical gesture then is the physical expression of that act of radiation, rather than a gestural system depicting the sound pattern.

- Where an established modern spelling code must be ignored. (For example both the eye and the ear rebel doggedly against the task of pronouncing ‘ou’ as ‘oh-oo’ rather than ‘ow’ or ‘aw’)
- Where the spelling or apparent meaning of the word is the same or similar to its Modern English equivalent. A case for which the examples above of ‘every’ and ‘specially’ may again be cited.

### **Phase Three – Sensing the Sound of Language in the Body. Version 1 – Direct Physical Gesture**

- 1) This begins with a good vocal warm-up that focuses on facial massage and working out the articulators, etc and a physical warm-up that is yoga and breathing based.
- 2) Identify the dominant sound pattern in the line. This instruction is deliberately vague. It may be that a pattern of alliteration or assonance is discernable, it may be something less quantifiable and more subjective: what seems to the participant to be the important sequence of sounds. It may simply be the participant’s ‘favoured sounds’ the sounds in the line that are most pleasurable to enunciate.
- 3) It’s helpful for participants to be able to spend time investigating a single line or phrase for it’s sonic pattern, but also to be able to move on to new sounds. In a small group this may be accomplished by each participant having more than one line to deliver. Alternatively, the sharing and listening phase above may be used to permit after a time the exchanging of lines, or even further shared repetition of a line around the circle.
- 4) The initial task, picking up from the last phase, is to focus attention on the particular muscle effort involved in making the dominant sound pattern. To observe how muscle-effort shifts over the course of the line; observe where the muscle energy is to make those sounds, what does it do to the mouth, the throat, the lips, the forehead.
- 5) Having identified that pattern of efforts, exaggerate them, without recruiting other parts of the voice production system and body.
- 6) Start to observe where else in your body muscle tension begins to be recruited; where in the body is the effort ‘referring’ to for each part of the phrase.
- 7) Create a simple gesture simply by indicating in some way where and how the energy is coalescing in the body through the phrase, or simply by accentuating those referred bodily muscle efforts into movements.
- 8) Now release that gesture into abstraction. Try this while already having the body already in slight motion, even just swaying side to side.
- 9) Observe the feelings and stresses, first physical, and later any emotional or sense references that arise through repetition of the accentuated muscle-efforts. Do emotions/feelings start to come up from the image/the sound/the sound making

### **Version 2 – The Mediated Physical Gesture – The Ball.**

This version of the exercise arose because we found that in some cases, notwithstanding the detailed steps above designed lead participants into a physical abstraction, drawn from the physiological effort of enunciating, that participant groups were on occasion inclined to become ‘illustrative’ of the sounds they were hearing themselves make, rather than simply following the physical tension points ramifications in the body of the sound-making act.

The ball (actually a scarf tied into a ball – or something else very soft and pliable) is a ‘distractor’, drawing the participant’s attention away from self-conscious effort to use their body to ‘create’ a gesture. In this instance the ball is thrown at the end of the line, but it follows a pattern of movement in the speaker’s hand as the line is being enunciated, culminating in the passing of the ball to the next speaker.

## Phase Four - Sounding First Folio Shakespeare.

The goal of this phase of the exercise is to carry over the sensation cultivated from the Chaucer, of experiencing the language *as sound artefact*, to a piece of Shakespeare, in order to bring to the actor's initial speaking of Shakespeare, some of the phenomena observed above when engaging with the passage from Chaucer. Namely:

- Slowness.
- The familiar in conflict with the unfamiliar.
- Encountering sound in word without reference to literal meaning.
- Cultivating *apprehension* rather than *comprehension*.
- The attention to sound as a prioritized feature of the written word.

Previous attempts to invite a group to move from sounding lines from the General Prologue in their self-developed Middle English to sounding lines of Shakespeare, in modern pronunciation, whilst retaining some of the experiential qualities above proved strikingly unsuccessful. The cognitive habit of reading as deciphering signifying 'code', shaped by a movement from punctuation mark to punctuation mark to grasp 'sense' immediately swamps the fledgling reading process of encountering text as sound notation. This was notable even when the participants did not fully understand what it was they were speaking – having been given no time to pre-examine at text. Similarly presenting a First Folio facsimile, presented no significant disruption to the instinctive determination to (at least seem to) make sense as one reads aloud.

A new exercise was therefore trialled in the later practice research laboratory sessions. The group is asked to pronounce a piece of the First Folio, *as if* it were written in Middle English, i.e. – applying the same rules of pronunciation they have developed in order to speak the Chaucer. The piece selected was a chorus from Henry V, because the mode of story-teller carries over from the Chaucer, and because of the high instance of onomatopoeic effects.

### The Text Provided

Now entertaine conjecture of a time,  
When creeping Murmure and the poring Darke  
Fills the wide Vessell of the Universe.  
From Camp to Camp, through the foule Womb of Night  
The Humme of eyther Army stilly sounds;  
That the fixt Centinels almost receive  
The secret Whispers of each others Watch.  
Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames  
Each Battaile sees the others umber'd face.  
Steed threatens Steed, in high and boastfull Neighs  
Piercing the Nights dull Eare: and from the Tents,  
The Armourers accomplishing the Knights,  
With busie Hammers closing Rivets up,  
Give dreadfull note of preparation.

Phases Two and Three above are repeated for this passage of text.

## Reflection

It is not suggested that Shakespearean Original Pronunciation can be approximated by applying precepts of Middle English pronunciation—not least because much of the Great Vowel Shift in English of the late Middle Ages occurred during the years separating the composition of *The Canterbury Tales* from that of *Henry V*—and no such claim should be imputed from the development of this exercise. Although the result of this exercise is historically and linguistically a nonsense, it has repeatedly proven a useful access point to cold-reading as a sensory experience of exploring sound.

For the first time, we saw Shakespeare spoken as slowly and with a relationship to the text as sound notation. A few things were immediately apparent:

- 1) Patterns of Rhyme, consonance and assonance immediately are foregrounded as a result of the reduced pool of vowel sound variations permitted.
- 2) Triggers to evocation buried in First Folio spelling and punctuation surface.
- 3) Onomatopoeic properties are foregrounded – leading to the immediate observation that onomatopoeia is far more widely and diversely employed than is first assumed, when considering Modern English and a narrow, literal definition of onomatopoeia. For example, finding ways to sound the First Folio ‘Vessell’, transformed a word that for the modern speaker is both sonically abrupt in its modern sounding ‘vehss’l’ and technical in its significations as a ship or scientific container, into an apposite and evocative signifier of the dark unknowable void, connoted here in its usage ‘wide vessel of the universe’. A sonic justification for the original choice of the word is revealed.
- 4) Triggers to imaginative and emotional response in both the speaker and the listener are felt immediately, despite the absence of recourse to:
  - Analysis of meaning of the language or imagery
  - Any notion of the character-speaker’s point of view or psychological make-up.

## Laboratory Additional Materials

### Miranda “If By Your Art” Sonic Mark-ups

#### Marked-up Rehearsal Text

If by *yOUR* Art (my deerest father) you have  
Put the *wild wA*ters in this *RORE*; alay them:  
The skye it seems would *pOWRE* down stinking pitch,  
But that the Sea mounting to th’welkins cheeke,  
Dashes the *fire* out.

**Oh!** I have suffered

With those that I saw suffer: A brave vessel  
(Who had **no** doubt some **noble** creature in her)  
Dash’d all to peeces: **O** the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: *pOORE* soules, they **perish**’d.

Had I byn any God of **power**, I would  
Have suncke the Sea within the Earth, **OR** ere  
It *shou*ld the **good** *Ship* so have swallow’d, and  
The *fRAUGH*ting Soules within her.

#### Primary Bass Note Cluster - /or//au/

If by *yOUR* Art (my deerest father) you have  
Put the wild wAters in this RORE; alay them:  
The skye it seems would pOWRE dOWn stinking pitch,  
But that the Sea mOUNting to th’welkins cheeke,  
Dashes the fire OUt.

Oh! I have suffered

With those that I sAW suffer: A brave vessel  
(Who had no doubt some noble creature in her)  
Dash’ d all to peeces: O the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: pOORE soules, they perish’ d.

Had I byn any God of pOWer, I would  
Have suncke the Sea within the Earth, **OR** ere  
It should the good Ship so have swAllow’ d, and  
The fRAUGHting Soules within her.

### Variant Bass Note Cluster - /oh/ /ow/

OH! I have suffered  
With thOse that I saw suffer: A brave vessel  
(Who had nO doubt some nOble creature in her)  
Dash'd all to peeces: O the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: poore sOUles, they perish'd.

Had I byn any God of power, I would  
Have suncke the Sea within the Earth, or ere  
It should the good Ship sO have swallow'd, and  
The fraughting SOUles within her.

### Sibilant s Sub-set 1 – fricative/plosive/closed vowel adjacent

If by your Art (my *dearest* father) you have  
Put the wild wAters in this Rore; alay them:  
The *skye* it *seems* would powre down *stinking* pitch,  
But that the *Sea* mounting to th'welkins cheeke,  
Dashes the fire out.

Oh! I have suffered  
With those that I saw suffer: A brave vessel  
(Who had no doubt some noble creature in her)  
Dash'd all to *peeces*: O the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: poore soules, they perish'd.

Had I byn any God of power, I would  
Have *suncke* the *Sea* within the Earth, or ere  
It should the good Ship so have swallow'd, and  
The fraughting Soules within her.

### Sibilant s Sub-set 2 – open vowel/soft consonant adjacent

Oh! I have *suffered*  
With those that I saw *suffer*: A brave *vessel*  
(Who had no doubt *some* noble creature in her)  
Dash'd all to peeces: O the cry did knocke  
Against my very heart: poore *soules*, they perish'd.

Had I byn any God of power, I would  
Have suncke the Sea within the Earth, or ere  
It should the good Ship so have *swallow'd*, and  
The fraughting *Soules* within her.