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FIGURES OF VOICE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Ariane Nada Helou

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2015

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FIGURES OF VOICE IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

Ariane N. Helou

ABSTRACT

This multidisciplinary dissertation explores theories of vocality in modern and early modern sources and examines the status of voice as a nexus of lyrical expression, affect, and embodiment in Renaissance poetry, drama, and music.

Renaissance writers were keenly aware of the power of the human voice: its persuasiveness, its capacity to move the affections, its uniqueness to the body from which it emanates. Yet modern philosophy and critical theory, fields that substantially inform Renaissance studies today, generally use the term “voice” as a metaphor that points to psychoanalytical, political, and structural questions. I argue that if we take voice to be only a metaphor, we overlook both its obvious bodily properties and the importance of oral culture and performance in Renaissance literary production; at the same time, if we consider only the faculty of vocalization, we miss the philosophical and poetic resonances of voice. In charting a genealogy of both embodied and literary voices in sixteenth-century literature, my project restores an often-overlooked dimension of vocality to considerations of early modern texts and their relation to bodies, gender, and power.

Following a theoretical introductory chapter, each subsequent chapter presents case studies of vocal archetypes from ancient myth and their afterlives in Renaissance literature and culture: the Sibyl, Philomela, Orpheus, and Echo. These figures of voice were present in the humanist consciousness, articulating the tenacious, often

enigmatic relation of voice to body, affect, gender, and subjectivity that seems to have been so crucial to Renaissance theories of meaning. In these studies I draw upon literary and musicological scholarship, critical theory and philosophy, and performance histories and practices; my primary texts include sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century literature in Italian, English, and French, in conversation with their ancient Latin and Greek sources. In tracing a more theoretically grounded relation between embodied and figurative voices, my study expands our understanding of early modern literature, music, and performance practices, and connects our contemporary culture's attentiveness to voice to some of its most important historical roots.

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INTRODUCTION

Les petitz corps, culbutans de travers,
Parmi leur cheute en byais vagabonde
Hurtez ensemble, ont composé le monde,
S'entracrochans d'acrochementz divers.
L'ennuy, le soing, et les pensers ouvers,
Choquans le vain de mon amour profonde,
Ont façonné d'une attaché féconde,
Dedans mon cuoeur l'amoureux univers.
Mais s'il avient, que ce tresses orines,
Ces doigtz rosins, et ces mains ivoyrines
Froyssent ma vie, en quoy retournera
Ce petit tout? En eau, air, terre, ou flamme?
Non, mais en voix qui toujours de ma dame
Par le grand Tout les honneurs sonnera.¹

-- Pierre de Ronsard, *Les Amours* (1552)

This sonnet by Pierre de Ronsard, one of the greatest poets of the French Renaissance, espouses an Epicurean materialist worldview: a universe made up of colliding, reeling, interlocking atoms. These infinitesimally tiny entities are capable of creating a cosmos vast enough to encompass all of creation and yet compact enough to be enclosed within a human heart. The blazon apportions the beloved—her golden hair, her rose-and-white hands—into an atomic assemblage. But Ronsard goes further in reducing the microcosmic *petit tout* into its fundamental components. He imagines that if the beloved's beautiful atomic particles destroy the poet's life, his material body, then the atoms that make up his body would be further reduced to their most basic, essential component. The quantum is not, as one would predict, one of the

¹ "These little bodies, tumbling about, collide together through their wandering sidelong fallings and created the world by intercrossing their crossed paths. Boredom, care, and open thoughts, shocking the void of my deep love, have fashioned from a fertile attachment the loving universe within my heart. But if it happens that these golden tresses, these rosy fingers, and these ivory hands shatter my life, to what shall this little all return? Into water, air, earth or fire? No, but into voice, which will always resound my lady's honors throughout the great All." All translations mine unless otherwise noted. Pierre de Ronsard, *Les Amours* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1981), 73-74.

four elements of earth, air, fire, or water: it is the poet's voice. Voice translates the microcosmic into the macrocosmic: voice makes the *petit tout* resonate throughout the *grand Tout*. Voice is material, resonant and affecting; voice is the measure of existence.

Ronsard's poem illustrates a preoccupation with voice and vocality in early modern thought. Renaissance writers, thinkers, and artists were attuned to the power of voice: its persuasiveness, its capacity to move the affections, its uniqueness to the body from which it emanates. This sensitivity to vocality, however, is infrequently taken into account by literary-historical studies of that period. Contemporary philosophy and critical theory, fields that shape literary studies, typically use the term "voice" as a metaphor that points to psychoanalytic, political, or structural questions, or to refer to an act of ventriloquism by a literary author. But that "voice" is different from the physical, resonating, bodily voice of a speaking or singing subject. I argue that if we take voice to be only a metaphor, we overlook its obvious bodily properties; at the same time, if we consider only the faculty of vocalization, we miss the philosophical and poetic resonances of voice. Moreover, of course, Renaissance literary culture encompassed more than just the written word. Poets composed with the understanding that their verse would be read aloud or perhaps sung, so that writing was often accompanied by a dimension of vocal performance. While print technology made published texts more widely available in the sixteenth century, it did not immediately or entirely replace a culture of reading aloud, recitation, and performance in both public and private contexts.

This dissertation restores an often-overlooked dimension of vocality to considerations of early modern texts and their relation to bodies, gender, and power. As a literary scholar with a background in early music performance, I aim to bring literary and musicological scholarship into dialogue with each other. I argue that studies of literary voice profit from consideration of bodily voices, while studies of singing and performative, embodied voices should recognize that language and rhetoric play key roles in speech and song. In tracing a more theoretically grounded relation between embodied and figurative voices, my study aims to expand our understanding of early modern literature, music, and performance practices, and connects our contemporary culture's attentiveness to voice to some of its most important historical roots. The distinction that we as twenty-first-century scholars make between metaphorical and material voice is, I argue, ahistorical—even artificial—and that by imposing such a distinction on early modern texts we lose access to essential aspects of their composition and dissemination.

In the following pages I take up questions of vocality—vocal expression, vocal quality, even vocal essentialism—to explore how vocal phenomena draw together aspects of lyric poetry (manifest at the intersections of language, rhetoric, and music), embodiment (the disposition and resonance of the voice within the body; the gendered voice), and affect (the power of the voice to convey emotion and move those who listen). My approach is multidisciplinary and multi-arts, examining lyric poetry, narrative poetry, and drama alongside historical accounts (e.g. descriptions of performances), surviving musical scores, and musicological scholarship. I focus on

Italian, English, and French texts and performances from the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth, as well as the classical Greek and Latin sources that informed humanist authors.

The disjunction between material and textual voice is apparent, as feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero argues, in the Platonic philosophical tradition that has privileged the meaning (*semantikê*) of speech over its sound (*phonê*). At certain historical moments, however, the voice—that is, the material, vibrating, resonating voice—has achieved a particular level of prominence. Such was the case for sixteenth-century Europe.² One of the larger questions I seek to investigate is why the voice came to such prominence at this historical moment: what was happening in the late Renaissance that brought about the strange eminence of the voice (and, by extension, the vocalist)? In the broadest terms, we may observe evolving aesthetics and the emergence of new musical genres coinciding with the great paradigm shifts of the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation and the dawning of the age of scientific discovery. During the same period there is a transition in the status of the singer from

² This also seems to be the case in the current decade, with its crush of nationally televised singing competitions and the rise of pop-music stars with “real” voices. Between 2001 and 2015, at least sixteen singing competition programs were broadcast on US television, including American Idol (2002), The X Factor (2011), and The Voice (2011), as well as other performance competitions that are not limited to vocalists but often showcase singers, such as America’s Got Talent (2006). Scripted series with a musical performance component, like Glee (2009) and Nashville (2012) have also proved popular. The enormous critical and popular success of young pop singers on the basis of their vocal style as opposed to dance, music video, or stage performance (e.g. Florence Welch of Florence + The Machine, and especially Adele) also seems to point to a renewed cultural desire for “authentic,” unique, emotive voices—perhaps a reaction against Auto-Tune and other digital effects that have been used to alter and package popular music since the late 1990s. At the extreme end of the voice-centric performance spectrum, a rising star as of this writing is the Australian recording artist Sia, who recently began performing after a long career as a songwriter. Sia does not appear in her own music videos, and even sings with her back to the camera and audience in live performances, including at the 2015 Grammy Awards.

accomplished amateur performing in private settings to public, professional figure, beginning with the star singers of courtly circles in the mid-to-late-1500s and culminating in the establishment of public opera houses in the seventeenth century and the emergence of the diva.

Cavarero locates a deeper historical dimension of these problems in her seminal work on philosophy of voice, *For More Than One Voice*.³ Cavarero explores the tensions surrounding the material, embodied voice in Western philosophy and metaphysics, from Greek antiquity to the end of the twentieth century, tracing a subjugation of modes of voicing/listening to modes of seeing—the etymological root of *theoria*.⁴ In the readings of literary texts that build her arguments, Cavarero brings to light a lacuna: a general lack of accounting for the material, embodied voice in the Western philosophical tradition. That is, not only the authorial voice or narrative voices, but also the bodily mechanism that gives voice to the text by reading it aloud or, as is often the case with lyric poetry, singing it. This lacuna, this disjunction between literary and embodied voice, is a fundamental problem not only of *theoria* and metaphysics, as Cavarero argues, but also, I suggest, of the critical apparatus that we bring to bear on a text.

³ Cavarero's work was originally published in Italian under the title *A più voci: Filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003). In this study I refer to the English translation by Paul A. Kottman, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

⁴ In arguing for an attentiveness to the unique sonorous qualities of each human voice, Cavarero is calling for a political attention to the uniqueness of the personhood in which embodied or material voice originates. See in particular Chapter 3.3 ("Logos and Politics") and 3.4 ("The Reciprocal Communication of Voices").

A useful starting point is perhaps to borrow from Cavarero's analysis of Jacques Derrida's contributions to the question of voice in philosophy, which constitutes the epilogue of *For More Than One Voice*. In Derrida's early work, including his critique of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic inquiries in *Of Grammatology* and his analyses of Edmund Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena*, he maintains the distinction between speech and writing set forth by Saussure.⁵ Saussure, like the ancients, accords speech a primacy or privilege over writing, since writing is a system of signs that refer back to speech and owes its existence to that purpose. Derrida upholds this separation of speech and writing, but he challenges Saussure's claim that the sign (writing) is arbitrary in relation to what it signifies. Rather, Derrida proposes that writing relates to speech through a system of deferral and proliferation of signs, a mode of linguistic representation so slippery and protean that, in Derrida's view, meaning is never present (a phenomenon for which he coined the term *différance*). Thus, on the one hand, *différance* has its roots in writing; speech or voice, meanwhile, is the locus of presence. Therefore, Cavarero points out, "the voice is identified by Derrida as the constitutive feature of metaphysics itself, while the task of destabilizing the phonocentric order of metaphysics is reserved for writing. [. . .]

⁵ *Of Grammatology* (trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) was originally published in France as *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967). *La voix et le phénomène: Introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* was also published in 1967 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France). The English translation by David B. Allison was published in 1973 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), under the title *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. I would like to point out that the original title, *La voix et le phénomène*, might be more accurately rendered in English as "Voice and Phenomenon." The choice of "speech" over "voice" is perhaps appropriate given Derrida's focus on language. Voice, however, encompasses more than language, as Cavarero's work demonstrates by drawing attention to sonority and non-linguistic utterances.

[F]or Derrida, metaphysical logocentrism is a phonocentrism.”⁶ In other words, voice (*phonē*) is at the heart of philosophy; “philosophy in Derrida’s view focuses on the voice in order to make it so that in logos itself, truth is configured as a realm of presence.”⁷ But the question then arises: is this metaphysical voice (that is, voice in the context of metaphysics) a material, sonorous voice? Or is it a silent internal voice, a “voice of thought”?⁸ *Speech and Phenomena* indicates the latter, as it understands presence in terms of a subject who hears himself speak (*s’entendre-parler*), an act of soliloquy meant to illuminate consciousness and subjectivity. Intervocality—the presence of a sonorous voice that carries from the speaking subject to the receiving ear of another—would seem to be outside the scope of Derrida’s work. Cavarero points out that Derrida misses an opportunity to move from the “autoaffection” of *s’entendre-parler* toward a “relational horizon” which “would open a polyphony rather than a monologue for the voice [. . .] where the voice could make itself heard as vibration in a throat of flesh, which announces the uniqueness of the one who emits it, invoking the other in resonance.”⁹ In short, Derrida does not make the leap from metaphorical voice to material voice. I find that his work lends itself better to textual critique than to analyses of the musical and theatrical performances—by their very nature polyphonic or dialogic—that occupy a significant portion of this study.

Of course, the voices of the past are lost to us; their traces have only been transmitted textually, and while musical notation provides some quantitative

⁶ Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 214.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

information about what people sang, it is the textual evidence, the narratives that Roland Barthes in “The Grain of the Voice” accuses of “adjectival tyranny,” that tells us how they sang and sounded.¹⁰ Historical voices—those that existed in the eras before recording technologies—are always mediated through texts of some kind, never denotative but always to be interpreted. Thus approaching the topic of voice and vocality through the field of literature, alongside investigations in history, musicology, and philosophy, promises to be productive.

My readings of classical and early modern texts take into account work on theories of voice and music from antiquity to the present. As noted above, Cavarero’s *For More Than One Voice* and Barthes’s “The Grain of the Voice” are major intertexts. Other works on philosophy of voice and music that I place in conversation with my readings include Julia Kristeva’s *The Revolution of Poetic Language*; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*; and Anne Carson’s essay “The Gender of Sound.” Deleuze and Guattari’s work has been a particularly fruitful point of intersection with my investigations, for *A Thousand Plateaus* features repeated considerations of language and music; the authors invoke musical examples throughout their work, not using music as a metaphor, but treating music as its own system of thought.¹¹

¹⁰ For more on Barthes’s “The Grain of the Voice” and the application of adjective to voice, see Chapter 2, esp. 76.

¹¹ In the foreword to his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi notes that “Deleuze and Guattari would probably be more inclined to call philosophy music with content than music a rarefied form of philosophy.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), xiii.

It is perhaps not obvious why *A Thousand Plateaus* should be relevant to a study of Renaissance and early modern literature and culture.¹² Deleuze, a philosopher, and Guattari, a psychoanalyst, began their collaboration in the aftermath of the student protests in Paris in May 1968, part of the larger movement of social change in the global 1960s. Their first book, *Anti-Oedipus*, critiqued conventional readings of Marx and Freud and synthesized the thought systems of capitalism and psychoanalysis to develop a theory of production as an ontology of change (which they term “becoming”). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari continue to develop their politicized philosophy while extending the disciplinary range of their explorations to include natural and physical sciences (geology, evolution), literature, film, and—most significantly for my project—music. Music figures considerably in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, though their interest is largely in instrumental (especially orchestral) music. Vocal music receives little attention, even though it is a form of musical production and performance that serves productively as a locus for their ideas about the musical aspects of language, as I discuss at greater length in Chapter 1.

Together *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* constitute a larger work called *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The first term is not entirely anachronistic in reference to early modern Europe, with its burgeoning capitalist economies, though of

¹² *Capitalisme et schizophrénie* consists of two volumes: *L’Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972) and *Mille Plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980). These were published in English as *Anti-Oedipus* (trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, New York: Viking Press, 1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

course it takes on different shades of meaning post-Marx.¹³ Schizophrenia, too, turns out to be a productive term: not a pathology, but “a positive process [of] inventive connection, rather than withdrawal. Its twoness is a relay to a multiplicity. [. . .] Schizophrenia is the enlargement of life’s limits through the pragmatic proliferation of concepts.”¹⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia is a mode of thinking characterized by interconnectedness and multiplicity, allowing for the possibility of more than one voice.

That interconnectedness characterizes Deleuze and Guattari’s thought throughout their collaborative work, and is performed explicitly by the structure of *A Thousand Plateaus*—not as chapters building sequentially to a unified argument, but as “plateaus” that may be read out of order or selectively—and the notion of the “rhizome.” Rhizomatic thought is a way of thinking that embraces variation and continuity, the lines to be drawn among the potentially infinite points on the surface of a rhizome. They contrast this with the “arborescent” model of a tree of knowledge, with branches and roots stemming from a single trunk with clearly traceable trajectories of beginning- and end-points. Rather, the rhizome operates on “[p]rinciples of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be.”¹⁵ The rhizomatic model thus lends itself to a generically and historically heterogeneous study such as this one, which

¹³ There is a vast scholarship on the economic history of early modern Europe, but just to point to one recent example, Richard Goldthwaite’s *The Economy of Renaissance Florence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) provides a detailed case study of the development of a capitalist economy in Florence up to the year 1600.

¹⁴ Brian Massumi, *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 1.

¹⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.

encompasses classical antiquity and the long sixteenth century and reads musical and literary texts of several genres and languages alongside performance histories. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari maintain, in the context of linguistic analysis, “not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature.”¹⁶ The rhizomatic model is flexible enough to accommodate a range of linguistic and non-linguistic critiques, and therefore well suited to a project that both analyses literary texts and seeks to restore to those texts their non-linguistic dimensions (vocalization, musicality, emotion, bodily presence). Deleuze and Guattari’s book lends itself, conceptually and structurally, to eclecticism, multidisciplinary, and interconnectivity, inviting the reader to search its “plateaus” for points of entry to new concepts, new connections, new “pragmatics.”¹⁷ Therefore both in its philosophies of music and language and in its schizophrenic, rhizomatic form I have found *A Thousand Plateaus* a productive and useful point of intersection with my work.

Chapter 1 of my study maps the intricate networks and intersections of the speaking or singing voice with language, music, and rhetoric (in the classical sense of persuasive discourse). I connect the ongoing debates about the status of vernacular language and literature in sixteenth-century Italy and France to the development of a new singing style, florid monody, through their point of intersection in the settings of lyric verse to music as theorized by Pietro Bembo and Pierre de Ronsard, among others. Chapters 2-4 are organized around “case studies” of figures from classical

¹⁶ Ibid. The authors offer this as an alternative to the “linguistic tree” model, with its dichotomous splitting of evolutionary branches.

¹⁷ See “Pleasures of Philosophy” in Massumi, *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, esp. 8.

mythology—each an archetype of a certain defining vocal characteristic—and their afterlives in Renaissance literature and culture: the Sibyl, the embodiment of a divine prophetic voice; Philomela, the traumatized voice that substitutes music for language; and Orpheus and Echo, who as a pair represent the tendentious binaries of male/female, creative/imitative, and embodied/disembodied voice. These figures from ancient myth were ever-present in the humanist consciousness, articulating the tenacious, often enigmatic relation of voice to body, affect, gender, identity, and subjectivity that seems to have been so crucial to Renaissance theories of meaning.

I. VOCAL DISPOSITIONS: LANGUAGE, MUSIC, AND RHETORIC

“The solo voice contains all the purity of music [. . .] But above all, singing poetry accompanied by the viola seems especially pleasurable, for the instrument gives the words a really marvelous charm and effectiveness. [. . .] The human voice adds ornament and grace to all these instruments.”

-- Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528)¹

“It is so much more distressing when you find some who have the temerity to say that the words are not the principal thing in music. This is directly opposed to the good, right, honest, and fitting.”

-- Giovanni de' Bardi, *On Ancient Music and Good Singing* (1578)²

“Have no compunction in pillaging for me the sacred treasures of this Delphic temple, as you have done before: and fear no more that mute Apollo, his false oracles or his stopped-up arrows. Remember your ancient Marseille—a second Athens—and your Gallic Hercules, pulling the people behind him by their ears with a chain attached to his tongue.”

-- Joachim Du Bellay, *Defense and Illustration of the French Language* (1549)³

“Minor authors are foreigners in their own tongue.”

-- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)⁴

¹ Baldasar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 2003), 120-21. “Ma sopra tutto parmi gratissimo il cantare alla viola per recitare; il che tanto di venusta ed efficacia aggiunge alle parole, che è gran maraviglia. [. . .] Dà ornamento e grazia assai la voce umana a tutte questi instrumenti de' quagli voglio che al nostro cortegian basti aver notizia” (Baldassar Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano* (Milan: Garzanti Editore, 1987), 137). The statement is made by Gaspare Pallavicino in Book 2, Chapter 13. The *viola* referenced here is not a modern viola (as Bull's translation suggests), but refers to a category of plucked or bowed string instruments that included the lute, lira da braccio, and viola da gamba, among others.

² “[. . .] e tanto più che si troua di quelli tanti arditì che imprendono à dire che le parole nella musica principale non sono: cosa contraria direttamente al buono, al giusto all'honesto, et al conueneuole.” Italian text and English translation both published in Giovanni de' Bardi, “Discorso mandato a Giulio Caccini detto Romano sopra la musica antica, e'l cantar bene,” in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations*, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 121.

³ “Pillez-moi sans conscience les sacrés trésors de ce temple delphique, ainsi que vous avez fait autrefois : et ne craignez plus ce muet Apollon, ses faux oracles, ni ses flèches rebouchées. Vous souviene de votre ancienne Marseille, seconde Athène, et de votre Hercule gallique, tirant les peuples après lui par leurs oreilles avec une chaîne attachée à sa langue” (Joachim du Bellay, “Défense et illustration de la langue française,” in *Les Regrets. Les Antiquités de Rome.*, ed. S. de Sacy (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 263). My translation (all translations mine unless otherwise noted).

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 105. “L'auteur mineur est l'étranger dans sa propre langue” (*Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2: Mille plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 133).

Rhetoric: Inventio

In sixteenth-century Europe, questions concerning the relation of music to language were situated within two larger contexts. The broader of these was an ongoing series of debates about the status of vernacular languages in relation to classical ones. Following the trajectory of *translatio studii et imperii*, French and Italian writers sought to elevate their vernacular literatures to the prestige of Greek and Latin poetry. In Italy, the language debate (*questione della lingua*) was less concerned with whether vernacular literatures could achieve greatness; Dante had done this at the turn of the fourteenth century, both in theory, with his *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On Eloquence in the Vernacular*, ca. 1305), in which he suggested that literary language should make use of the best aspects of multiple dialects, and in practice, in composing the *Divine Comedy*. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the *questione della lingua* was concerned instead with creating a more standardized literary language, given the rise of printed books.⁵ In mid-sixteenth-century France, meanwhile, the cluster of poets known as the Pléiade advocated imitation of classical forms while rejecting their (medieval) native French genres.⁶ In both France and Italy,

⁵ Robert Hastings, “Questione della lingua” in Peter Hainsworth and David Robey, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 495-96. See also Maurizio Campanelli, “Languages,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Michael Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁶ The Pléiade was a group of poets active in mid-sixteenth century France, dedicated to neoclassicism in French vernacular poetry. Its core members—Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, and Jean-Antoine de Baïf—studied under the classical scholar Jean Daurat (1508-1588) at the Collège de Coqueret beginning in the 1540s. Other poets collaborated with the group, but the core members made the most notable contributions to the project of building a French vernacular literary tradition based on classical models: Ronsard’s collections of odes and sonnets published between 1552 and 1584, as well as his unfinished national epic, the *Franciade*, modeled on Homer and Vergil; de Baïf’s *Étrénes de poésie françoese en vers mezurés* (1574), which utilized an alphabet of his own invention that drew heavily on Greek characters; and, of course, the manifesto of the group’s aesthetic-political project, Du

this linguistic consolidation—the development of standard literary languages—was linked to questions of political consolidation. In France, the desire of writers to develop a unified language and neoclassical literary tradition was motivated at least in part by its growing power as a nation under François I (1494-1547), and by François’s efforts as a patron of arts and humanist letters. In Italy, by contrast, political unity was not yet on the horizon—the peninsula was ruled by a number of independent states—but literary consolidation was a means of creating a linguistic and cultural unity in a region still traumatized by the invasion of Charles VIII and the wars of 1494-98.

The second context was a debate over the suitability of musical styles for settings of lyric poetry; poetry and music were seen as complementary and related arts. Poets in both Italy and France were interested in matching their poems with appropriate musical settings, often with a view to restoring what they understood to be the practices of ancient poetry: uniting lyric and music in a coherent structure, and moving the emotions of the listeners.⁷ In the early sixteenth century, this frequently meant a strophic form that would follow the poem’s structure and syntax, such as the

Bellay’s *Défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549). For more see Marc Bensimon, “Introduction” in Pierre de Ronsard, *Les Amours* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1981), 14 ff.

⁷ For an overview of French humanist understanding on ancient music, see Frances A. Yates, *The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century*, ed. F. Saxl, vol. 15, Studies of the Warburg Institute (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1968), 36-42; for Italian musical humanism, see Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), esp. 23-50. There is significant overlap in the sources for both French and Italian musical humanism—Aristotle and Plato loom large in both, for example—but differences in reception. Musical humanism in France seems to have had a stronger theoretical bent, and was not put into practice as widely as it was in Italy, nor with such influence on later musical aesthetics across Europe.

Italian *frottola*.⁸ Madrigal composers beginning in the mid-to-late sixteenth century, however, generally privileged the overall emotional tone of the poem rather than the form, structure, or semantic meaning of individual lines of verse. Finally, toward the end of the sixteenth century, a new musical movement sought to restore primacy to the lyric by privileging the words of a song in performance. Discourses around florid monody, which rose to prominence in Florence beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, emphasized the singer's ability to create and execute melodic embellishments designed to heighten the affect of the performer and elicit the emotional response of the audience.⁹

At the core of these movements and networks—linguistic, poetic, musical, political, rhetorical—is voice itself. For subjects striving to assert political identity through language and writing, the voice and the body from which it issues contribute as much as words and their meanings; more so, perhaps, since identity markers such as gender and ethnicity may be elided from written language and yet visible or audible in body and voice. In other words, as Adriana Cavarero argues, language as a semantic code—as a mechanism purely for the conveyance of information—“renders imperceptible what is proper to the voice.” But the voice itself, at least in the context

⁸ The musical terms used in this chapter, including *frottola*, florid monody, madrigal, and others, are defined later in this chapter, pp. 42-45.

⁹ An early discussion of the practice is found in a letter by Giovanni Camillo Maffei, published in 1562; see Howard Mayer Brown, “The Geography of Florentine Monody: Caccini at Home and Abroad,” *Early Music* 9, no. 2 (1981): 154-58. This style of vocal performance, described in more detail later in this chapter, involved ornamenting a melody with intricate passagework (*passaggi*). Although this style was in use by the mid-1500s, most of the written record of this practice, including both treatises and musical scores, dates from the 1580s and later. Not until the 1580s did it begin to become common practice in Italy to write out florid *passaggi* in musical notation. This shift in notational practice—the desire to record the ornaments rather than just the bare-bones melody—seems to be connected with an increasingly theoretical focus on the relationship between text, music, and emotion.

of poetry, “turns out not only to organize poetic song but also the poetic text, if not the text in general and therefore writing as such.”¹⁰ When language threatens to efface the embodied, material voice—that is, when semantics start to supersede what is sonorous or resonant—voice reasserts itself as an organizing principle of literary production, especially of lyric poetry. In other words, Cavarero asserts, all writing, all text—beginning with but not limited to poetry—emerges under the organizational principle of vocality.¹¹

In this chapter I examine how vocality illuminates the relational networks between language and music in sixteenth-century Italy and France, and how the production of poetry and music is governed by principles of rhetoric that are in turn linked to the generation of affective responses. I argue that these rhetorical tools, beyond merely prescribing and describing the compositional techniques of Renaissance poets and composers, also served an important political function, and

¹⁰ Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 10-11. Cavarero is here referring to oral poetry, but the statement also applies to poetry in sixteenth-century Italy and France. The distinction between oral and literary modes of poetic composition and reception in Renaissance literary culture is, as I argue throughout this work, something of a false dichotomy, and certainly ahistorical. In Italy especially, poetry circulated through oral performance as well as through print media: “Verse of many sorts circulated in medieval and Renaissance manuscripts, and later in commercially printed editions, but these compositions reached their widest audience by traveling through the air, in vocal performance. [. . .] Because [poems] were often recited or sung in company, to pass time after a meal or on long journeys, they were, in fact, forms of entertainment and community building for early modern Italians of all classes, both those who could read and those who could only listen.” Deanna Shemek, “Verse,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Michael Wyatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 179.

¹¹ For a brief summary of other approaches (Derrida, Saussure) to the relation between text and voice, or writing and speech, see my Introduction.

were deployed by Italian and French writers in the creation of emerging national identities.¹²

The elements of classical rhetoric, invoked in discussions of both literary and musical composition, were adopted by humanist writers from classical works on oratory, such as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (ca. 90 BCE, formerly attributed to Cicero), a number of Cicero's works including *De oratore* (*On Oratory*, 55 BCE), and, most notably, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (*The Orator's Education*, ca. 95 CE), a twelve-book manual on the pedagogy of oratory.¹³ In Book 3 of the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian outlines the five principles (or "parts," in his term) of rhetoric: *inventio* (invention), the search for arguments and examples; *dispositio* (disposition), the arrangement or sequence of words and ideas; *elocutio* (elocution), which referred

¹² Italy and France present an interesting pair for a case study, since although they are both home to Romance languages (Latin-derived vernaculars), their linguistic-political histories are rather different. In the early sixteenth century France was emerging as a unified nation-state under a strengthening monarchy, while the Italian peninsula was still occupied by fractious independent city-states. Yet Italians claimed the longer elite vernacular literary tradition; Cavalcanti, Dante, et al. were writing sonnets in Tuscan in the thirteenth century, while the French sonnet only emerged with Clément Marot in the 1530s (Ronsard, *Les Amours*, 17). At the same time, there is a long history of porous borders and literary exchanges between Italy and France. Petrarch lived and wrote in Avignon, Marot in Ferrara and Venice. Most importantly, both literary traditions share a common ancestor in medieval Provençal poetry—especially in troubadour verse, which fully integrated lyrical and musical composition.

¹³ The works of Cicero and Quintilian were known during the Middle Ages, but circulated in incomplete versions; the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* was the primary classical text used for rhetorical training during the medieval period. Petrarch owned a manuscript of the *Institutio oratoria*, to which he alluded in a letter of 1374. His *Epistolae familiares* (*Familiar Letters*) includes literary epistles to ancient writers, such as Cicero, Livy, and Horace. To Quintilian, Petrarch writes: "I became acquainted with your intellect when your work *De institutione oratoria* came into my hands, but, alas, mangled and mutilated. [. . .] May whoever had the good fortune to discover you know that in his possession is this object of great value, which, if he is at all wise, he will consider among his greatest treasures" (Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters (Rerum Familiarum Libri)*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, vol. 3 (New York: Italica Press, 2005), 329). A complete manuscript of Quintilian was discovered in 1416, and over the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries became one of the canonical texts for humanist educators including Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) and Erasmus (1466-1536). For a broad overview of Quintilian's textual history, transmission, and influence, see the General Introduction to Quintilian, *The Orator's Education Volume I: Books 1-2*, ed. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 19-29.

to style, diction, or register; *memoria* (memory), including memorization of both a prepared speech and of general knowledge for use in extemporaneous debate; and *pronuntiatio* (delivery; Quintilian notes that *actio*, action or performance, is used interchangeably with *pronuntiatio*).¹⁴ Most of the rest of the work (Books 3-11) is taken up by explorations of how to teach and practice these five core parts. To each of these parts can be applied several techniques or practices related to language and performance, described by Quintilian, Cicero, and others. These include *imitatio* (imitation), a concept key to Renaissance practices of writing and translation; *ornatum* (ornament); *decorum* (propriety in presentation and subject matter); and *varietas* or *variatio* (variation, the ability of the rhetorician to employ a wide range of figures of speech to avoid sameness and tedium; a concept brought to prominence in humanist education by Erasmus in *De duplici copia verborum et rerum*, 1512). In the following sections I explore how some of these rhetorical principles are taken up by Italian and French humanist poets and musicians, and what their use in the debates over vernacular language and musical style reveals about the status of voice in sixteenth-century thought.

¹⁴ “Omnis autem orandi ratio, ut plurimi maximique auctores tradiderunt, quinque partibus constat: inventione dispositione elocutione memoria pronuntiatione sive actione (utroque enim modo dicitur)” (*Institutio Oratoria* 3.3.1). All citations of the Latin text are from Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, 5 vols., ed. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Language: Elocutio and Variatio

One of the most influential and widely read documents in the sixteenth-century *questione della lingua* is Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525).¹⁵ For Bembo, the core of the language question is what Italian dialect is best suited to literary writing; for him, the answer is undisputably Tuscan, mainly because of the stylistic precedents set in that language, both in prose (by Boccaccio) and in poetry (by Dante and Petrarch).¹⁶ But the stakes are not merely aesthetic; in promoting a

¹⁵ Pietro Bembo (1470-1457) was a Venetian nobleman and poet, who spent time at the courts of Ferrara and Urbino and wrote both in Latin and in the Tuscan vernacular; his most famous work in the latter is the dialogue *Gli Asolani* (1505), dedicated to Lucrezia Borgia. Bembo composed the first two books of the *Prose* in Urbino in 1512-13; early versions of the treatise circulated in manuscript, including as a letter from Bembo to Giovanfrancesco Pico. The third book of the *Prose* was composed in Rome around 1522-24 and the entire work was revised and published in 1525. See "Bembo, Pietro" in Hainsworth and Robey, *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*, 56 and Campanelli, "Languages," 156.

¹⁶ Bembo also identifies in the *Prose* the two other major currents in the *questione della lingua*: courtly language, and archaicizing language. The interlocutors discuss the work of Il Calmeta (Vincenzo Colli, 1460-1508) on the suitability of courtly language (*lingua cortigiana*) for literature (1.13). Calmeta points to the language of the Roman court as a superior example of *cortigiana* speech and writing. Courtly language is defined by its blending of the local dialect (in this case, Roman Italian) with loan words and influences of the international members of the court community: "not Spanish or French or Milanese or Neapolitan by itself, or any other, but that which is born of the mixture of all of them" ("non la spagniuola o la francese o la melanese o la napoletana da sé sola, o alcun'altra, ma quella che del mescolamento di tutte queste è nata," 1.13) (All citations of the *Prose* are from Pietro Bembo, *Prose della Volgar Lingua; Gli Asolani; Rime*, ed. Carlo Dionisotti (Turin: UTET, 1966); translations are mine unless otherwise noted.) Bembo criticizes courtly language because of its instability; a change of power, especially at the Papal court where each new pope heralds an influx of a new expatriate community, results in an alteration of the linguistic landscape. He writes, in the voice of Giuliano de' Medici: "But the Roman [languages] change according to the changes of the lords that make up the court, whence that one [language] that is generated from it does not stand firm, thus, like an ocean wave, that now swells in this part because of one wind, now leans that way because of another, thus this language, which a few years ago was all ours, now has changed and become in large part foreign. For that reason ever since Spain sent her people to Rome to serve their pope, and Valencia has occupied the Vatican hill, today it pleases our men and our ladies to have in their mouths no other words [or voices (*voci*)], no other accents than Spanish. Thus eventually, if the Christian shepherd who takes the place of the one of today were to be French, the speech of France would pass into Rome together with those people, and the courtly language, which today has been so Hispanified, would suddenly Frenchify itself, and would take on a new form every time the keys of St. Peter came into the hand of a possessor of a different nationality than the previous one." ("Ma le romane si mutavano seconde il mutamento de' signori che facevano la corte, onde quella una che se ne generava, non istava ferma, anzi, a guisa di marina onda, che ora per vento a quella parte si gonfia, ora a questa si china per un altro, così ella, che pochi anni adietro era stata tutta nostra, ora s'era mutata e divenuta in buona

pan-Italian language, Bembo “insisted on linguistic unity in the absence of the political unity of the Italian peninsula [. . .] an effort all the more urgent in the wake of the political disasters that befell Italy in the early decades of the sixteenth century.”¹⁷ Bembo promoted Tuscan as the most suitable literary dialect over his native Venetian because of the precedents already set by Tuscan writers, even though Venice was a larger and better-established publishing center than Florence in the early sixteenth century.¹⁸ Bembo’s treatise on linguistics and poetics, *Prose della volgar lingua*, is framed as a debate that took place in 1502 over the course of three days, as recounted to the author by his brother Carlo (d. 1503), a participant in the debate. The treatise is scripted as a dialogue and divided into three books, one for each day of conversation. On the first day (Book 1), the interlocutors—Carlo Bembo,

parte straniera. Perciò che poi che le Spagne a servire il loro pontefice a Roma i loro popoli mandati aveano, e Valenza il colle Vaticano occupato avea, a’ nostri uomini e alle nostre donne oggimai altre voci, altri accenti avere in bocca non piaceva, che spagniuoli. Così quinci a poco, se il cristiano pastore, che a quello d’oggi venisse appresso, fosse francese, il parlare della Francia passerebbe a Roma insieme con quelle genti, e la cortigiana lingua, che s’era oggimai cotanto inispagnuolita, incontanente s’infranceserebbe, e altrettanto di nuova forma piglierebbe, ogni volta che le chiavi di S. Pietro venissero a mano di possessitore diverso di nazione dal passato,” 1.13). Note that the current pope was Rodrigo Borgia, a Spaniard (Alexander VI). Bembo rejects archaic writing for the opposite reason: that it does not change enough. If all writers were to simply imitate their ancient models, he argues, literature would become static and stale; aesthetic interest depends upon innovation. Dante, he points out, “changed according to the change of language, in order to be able to please the people of that time in which he was writing” (“secondo il mutamento della lingua si mutava egli, affine di poter piacere alle genti di quella stagione, nella quale esso scrivea,” 1.17). He continues, still through the persona of Giuliano de’ Medici: “Now I say to you, that just as for Petrarch and for Boccaccio it could not be said that they be given to writing in the language of these ancient men leaving to them, as much as they had and could and knew how to do, thus no more no less it seems that to us it is not suitable, leaving the [language] of our century for setting ourselves to compose in that of theirs, so that one can say, messer Carlo, that we would like to write for the dead rather than for the living” (“Ora vi dico, che si come al Petrarca e al Boccaccio non sarebbe stato dicevole che eglino si fossero dati allo scrivere nella lingua di quegli antichi lasciando la loro, quantunque essi l’avessero e potuto e saputo fare, così né più né meno pare che a noi si disconvenga, lasciando questa del nostro secolo, il metterci a comporre in quella del loro, ché si potrebbe dire, messer Carlo, che noi scriver volessimo a’ morti più che a’ vivi,” 1.17).

¹⁷ Campanelli, “Languages,” 155.

¹⁸ “Printing,” Hainsworth and Robey, *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*, 483.

Giuliano de' Medici, Ercole Strozzi, and Federigo Fregoso—have gathered at the home of Carlo Bembo, in Venice.¹⁹ Pietro claims not to have been present, but to have heard about the conversations secondhand from his brother. Although the *Prose* was published in 1525, the events mentioned in the text indicate that the action of the narrative (i.e. the purported series of discussions) takes place in 1502, a generation before its publication. Giuliano de' Medici was living in Venice as an exile, having been banished from Florence with the rest of his family after the invasion of Charles VIII and the restoration of republican Florence in 1494. During a gathering at Carlo Bembo's house, the discussion turns to language: whether Latin or vernacular Italian is a better language for writing, and if the latter, which dialect of the vernacular is most suitable.

Book 1 begins as a disquisition on the art of good writing, which, Bembo asserts from the outset, is inseparable from the art of good speech: *non è lo scrivere che parlare pensatamente* (“writing is nothing other than speaking thoughtfully,” 1.1). Bembo later refines this statement, noting that although speaking and writing are interrelated practices, more care ought to be taken in composing writing because it produces a lasting artifact; literature is more durable than speech (1.18). Consistently throughout the *Prose*, however, Bembo draws parallels between the arts of oral and literary expression, frequently pointing out how the sonic qualities of language—the sounds of certain vowels and consonants, the occurrence of hiatus or elision, the

¹⁹ Giuliano de' Medici, duke of Nemours (1479-1516) was one of the sons of Lorenzo I de' Medici (Il Magnifico). Ercole Strozzi (1470/5-1508) was a Latin poet from Ferrara. Federigo Fregoso (1480-1541) was a Genoese nobleman raised at the court of Urbino; he was made a Cardinal in 1539. Pietro Bembo, Giuliano de' Medici, and Federigo Fregoso also appear as interlocutors in Castiglione's *Il Libro del cortegiano* (1528), which is set at the Urbino court in 1507.

varying numbers of syllables—contribute to the aesthetic qualities of a written work (see, for example, Chapters 6, 8, and especially 10 of Book 2).²⁰ Another of the central points of contention in this debate on good writing is the use of suitable word choices, a topic that Bembo introduces indirectly when one of his interlocutors, Ercole Strozzi, urges his companions to draw nearer the fire against the chill of the *rovaio*, a dialect word for a cold north wind. This unfamiliar word, *rovaio*, leads to a discussion of its etymology and current usage, in turn opening up a broader discussion of the relationships among languages and dialects and among the populations, governments, and political and social forces that have shaped linguistic evolution.

In the early chapters of Book 1 of the *Prose*, the interlocutors examine the relationships of people to the language(s) they speak. Like all good humanists of their generation, they draw parallels between themselves and the ancients and seek to place their own struggles to define their linguistic identity within the broader historical context of *translatio studii*. Carlo Bembo suggests that Tuscans have the same relationship to the Latin language as the ancient Romans did to Greek: that is, that Greek was the second language of the educated classes, learned from an early age, though by academic instruction rather than immersion: “not in the cradle from nursemaids, but in schools from masters” (*non dalle nutrici nelle culle, ma da’*

²⁰ Most scholarship on the *questione della lingua* and the role of Bembo’s *Prose* in the language debates has focused on the question of writing: that is, *lingua* not as a spoken language, but as a purely literary one. Certainly Bembo’s focus is explicitly on the written language, but his attentiveness to sound and speech is an important reminder that even literary language was bound up with orality in reception (reading aloud, hearing a recitation) and in composition (balancing the acoustic elements of the verse).

maestri nelle scuole, 1.3).²¹ More importantly, the language of education (Greek in antiquity, Latin in Bembo's day) is also the language of cultural and intellectual prestige—and, since its use belongs primarily to the educated upper classes, the language of political power. Indeed language itself is a tool of political control, as a means of both governmental discipline and cultural dominance. Humanists of Bembo's generation understood this; at least as modeled by the expansion of the Roman Empire and the spread of the Latin language, even its evolution and (re)codification into the vernacular languages spoken and written throughout Italy, France, and Iberia. The impulse of early modern writers to shape their vernaculars into unified linguistic systems to rival or eclipse Latin reflected an explicit desire for political sovereignty. This was perhaps especially true in Italy, where the multiplicity of dialects and frequently shifting allegiances of independent city-states produced a region whose political stability or unity was more comparable to that of pre-Alexandrian Greece than to that of post-Augustan Rome. Although the production of a mutually comprehensible Greek language (*koinē*), derived from four stable and codified dialects, eventually became possible, the dialects and languages spoken in Italian cities were deemed too numerous and too unstable to produce a similarly cohesive Italian *koinē*.²² And while by the turn of the sixteenth century Latin was still in use as a common language of formal education, government, and science, and as a

²¹ Walter J. Ong discusses how languages disseminated primarily through writing (in chirographic cultures) differ from languages or dialects that do not have a written tradition. See Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 103 ff.

²² Bembo raises this point in Book 1, Chapter 13 of the *Prose*, during a discussion of the so-called "courtly language." Carlo Bembo rephrases the rebuttal of Trifone Gabriele (1470-1549), a contemporary and friend of Pietro Bembo, to the pro-courtly-language argument of Calmeta (see n. 12, above).

lingua franca across European borders, it was no longer the (native) language of a people and represented a history of fallen empires to early moderns aspiring toward political expansion, not collapse. Thus Bembo and his contemporaries argued for a unified vernacular with some urgency; they understood that, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue, “The unity of language is fundamentally political,” with shifts in linguistic homogeneity or variation reflecting or reflected by changes in political power structures.²³

In their essay “Postulates of Linguistics,” Deleuze and Guattari examine four linguistic principles: the informational and communicational nature of language; the functioning of language as an “abstract machine”;²⁴ the homogeneity of language; and the dichotomy of “major” and “minor” languages.²⁵ Through systematic consideration of each of these postulates, the authors present alternative modes of understanding language according to several characteristics. These include the aspects of command (*mot d’ordre*, “order-word”) and indirect discourse, and the nature of the “abstract machine” as a matrix of signs and assemblages, at once individually and collectively generated (“enunciated”). They also suggest that we can understand the heterogeneity of language by the ways it is marked by “tensors” (atypical expressions

²³ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 101. For a brief introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* and its use in this study, see my Introduction, 9-11. For the development of national written languages (“grapholects”) out of dialects, see Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 104-06.

²⁴ For more on the “abstract machine,” including a general definition and its function as a process of interpretation, see Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 140-45 and Brian Massumi, *A User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 17.

²⁵ It should be noted that Deleuze and Guattari use *major* and *minor* to refer to political status, not to major-minor tonality in music, though the resonances of these terms with musical vocabulary are surely deliberate, given the way in which their argument implicates music in a discourse on language and power.

that disrupt the homogeneity of language), variation, and, in an analysis that posits music and language as almost analogous, “chromatic” tendencies. Finally, they argue that rather than distinguishing between major languages and minor languages, one can consider language on a spectrum from major to minor to becoming-minor, suggesting a continuum rather than sets of oppositions. The last of these linguistic postulates in particular presents a useful framework for understanding the stakes of vernacular language movements in early modern Europe. Deleuze and Guattari first posit two categories of language: major, “defined precisely by the power (*pouvoir*) of constants,” and minor, defined by “the power (*puissance*) of variation.”²⁶ In other words, the major language is unified; the minor may be a single language, or a “multiplicity of dialects” of the major language. But rather than categorizing languages by the dichotomy of major *or* minor, the authors argue that “each dialect has a zone of transition and variation; or better, each minor language has a properly dialectical zone of variation,” a schema that groups languages on a continuum and accounts for liminal and overlapping spaces between dialects and languages.²⁷

Thus, to use an example from Bembo, Latin is a major language with respect to the Italian vernacular dialects (Tuscan, Venetian, *lingua cortigiana*, et al.). In this context Latin is the major language not only because of its prestige and association with imperial power but because of its long constancy and stability. But to the Romans of an earlier era—say, to Vergil and Cicero—Latin was a minor language with respect to Greek, which enjoyed cultural prominence because of its centuries-old

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 101.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

literary tradition: the constancy and stability of fixed text, even across several dialects. The constant shifting of languages along a continuum, propelled by the “*puissance* of variation,” allowed Latin to transition from minor to major, or even to simultaneously occupy both ends of the spectrum. Major and minor are not two kinds of languages, but two possible treatments of the same language, depending on whether one views it from the perspective of constancy or of variation.

The interlocutors of the *Prose* embody these tensions between plurality and unity, variation and stability. They are native speakers of different dialects (Giuliano de’ Medici: Tuscan, Carlo Bembo: Venetian), and writers in still others (Ercole Strozzi: Latin). This, of course, makes them ideal spokespersons in a spirited debate about linguistic unity, while also dramatizing the high stakes of their discourse: the fractious and variable status of their differing political identities. Each speaker in the dialogue has a relationship to his native language just as he does to his home city. Bembo extends this into a metaphor of language as a space that the speaking subject inhabits: for modern-day Tuscans, Latin speech is “distant” (*il latino parlare ci sia lontano*, 1.3). This principle also extends to an accounting for the difference in prestige between the minor language (Tuscan, Latin) and the major language (Latin, Greek). Cultivating proficiency in the major language is a way of identifying oneself as a member of the elite, though Carlo Bembo disparagingly compares those who prefer the major language at the expense of the minor to people who build grand mansions abroad, furnished with gold and marble, but meanwhile live in the basest

houses in their hometowns.²⁸ Bembo thus suggests that the prestige of the major language contributes actively to the neglect of minor languages, as citizens put their resources into building the faraway *palazzi* in which they spend little time, rather than into improving the *vilissime case* that are their everyday dwellings. He also seems to criticize this aspect of language appropriation as a way of shaping identity: that is, that people should attend more to their native, “home” language than to the “distant” language of empire in order to lay claim to a literary heritage and thus a cultural or national identity. But this claim is problematized within the *Prose*. First, the political goal Bembo outlines is not to resist empire, but to reclaim it. This, after all, was the situation for the Romans as Bembo’s interlocutors describe it: Greek was the major language of letters and science until the Latin authors of the so-called Golden Age translated and appropriated its lexicon, its poetics, and its rhetoric into their own language, resulting in a flowering of literary activity and the canonization of model authors for both poetry (Vergil) and prose (Cicero). This period of literary growth took root in the late Republican period (Cicero, Catullus), and grew rapidly along with the rise of the Roman Empire, due in large part to the patronage efforts of the circle of Augustus.²⁹ By the logic of *translatio imperii et studii*, the growing prestige of vernacular literature should augur or contribute to the growing political power and

²⁸ “Anzi ho io degli altri ancora, dotti e scienzati solamente nelle latine lettere, già uditi allui medesimo [Pietro] dannare questo stesso e rimproverargliele, a’ quali egli brevemente suole rispondere e dir loro, che a sé altrettanto incresce di loro allo ’ncontro, i quali molta cura e molto studio nelle altrui favelle ponendo e in quelle maestrevolmente essercitandosi, non curano se essi ragionar non fanno nella loro, a quegli uomini rassomigliandoli, che in alcuna lontana e solinga contrada palagi grandissimi di molta spesa, a marmi e ad oro lavorati e risplendenti, procacciano di fabricarsi, e nella loro città abitano in vilissime case” (1.3).

²⁹ The most famous of the Augustan-era patrons was Gaius Cilnius Maecenas (ca. 70-8 BCE), whose stable of poets included Virgil, Horace, and Propertius.

influence of the speakers of that language. Yet this logic is complicated by the proliferation of dialects and shifting political structures on the Italian peninsula at the turn of the sixteenth century, as noted above.

This brings us to the second way in which the minor language's trajectory toward majority is problematized in the *Prose*. Pietro Bembo's native language was not Tuscan, but Venetian. His argument in favor of Tuscan as the best language for Italian vernacular writing is based on the preeminence of its early authors: Petrarch and to a lesser extent Dante for poetry, and Boccaccio as a model prose stylist. Bembo does not name any writers of Venetian dialects; in fact, he seems to consider the status of a language contingent upon its literature: "It cannot be said that any dialect that does not have a writer is really a language" (*non si può dire che sia veramente lingua alcuna favella che non ha scrittore*, 1.14).³⁰ But rather than advocate for the creation of new literature in a dialect or minor language (*favella*), Bembo prefers to work within an already-established literary tradition in a major language (*lingua*). Thus it is important to note Bembo's relationship to the dialect that he supports: not as a native speaker, but as someone who has had to learn proficiency in Tuscan much as he had to learn Latin. Indeed, in advocating Tuscan as a literary language, he makes a move toward divorcing speech from writing, as he encourages writers to learn Tuscan for literary endeavors but does not concern himself much with proficiency in speaking Tuscan. Even though Tuscan is a "minor" language relative

³⁰ Campanelli argues that this claim of Bembo's "both marginalizes the oral aspects of linguistic culture and renders impossible any recognition of the impact of orality on the development of more codified forms of language in writing" ("Languages," 157). I agree that Bembo's position privileges writing over orality, but I find that orality cannot be so easily dismissed from the *Prose*; see, for examples, the discussions of sound, voice, and phonetics in 2.6, 8, 10.

to Latin because of its vernacular status, it still bears the same relationship of foreignness to non-Tuscan writers as Latin does. At the same time, the relation of the speaking subject to the language is not one of major-minor, but rather of minor-minor.

Meanwhile, Castiglione defended his use of his native Lombard in *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), claiming that the authentic use of one's own dialect was preferable to affecting a foreign, antiquated Tuscan accent in order to follow literary precedent. He did, however, accept the use of loan words from other dialects and languages, for which there was precedent.³¹ Where Bembo offers prescriptive rules for an idealized writing style, based on centuries-old texts, Castiglione chooses a linguistic style that reflects current, real-world language usage. In discussions of

³¹ Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) was a professional courtier born near Mantua; he resided at the courts of Milan, Mantua, and Urbino, the latter of which was the setting and inspiration for his *Libro del cortigiano* (*Book of the Courtier*). Castiglione describes the linguistic choices in his writing style at the beginning of the work: "E quando ancora questo rispetto non m'avesse mosso, io non poteva nel subietto imitarlo, non avendo esso mai scritto cosa alcuna di materia simile a questi libri del Cortegiano; e nella lingua, al parer mio, non doveva, perché la forza e vera regola del parlar bene consiste più nell'uso che in altro, e sempre è vizio usar parole che non siano in consuetudine. Perciò non era conveniente ch'io usassi molte di quelle del Boccaccio, le quali a' suoi tempi s'usavano ed or sono disusate dalli medesimi Toscani. Non ho ancor voluto obligarmi alla consuetudine del parlar toscano d'oggi, perché il commercio tra diverse nazioni ha sempre avuto forza di trasportare dall'una all'altra, quasi come le mercanzie, così ancor novi vocabuli, i quali poi durano o mancano, secondo che sono dalla consuetudine ammessi o reprobati; e questo, oltre il testimonio degli antichi, vedesi chiaramente nel Boccaccio, nel qual son tante parole francesi, spagnole e provenzali ed alcune forse non ben intese dai Toscani moderni, che chi tutte quelle levasse farebbe il libro molto minore" (1.2; Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, 7-8). ("Even if I had not been influenced in this consideration [of Boccaccio's style], I could not imitate Boccaccio in subject matter, since he never wrote anything on the lines of these books on the courtier; and I thought it wrong to do so in the matter of language, since the power and correct rules of good speech consist more in usage than in anything else and it is always wrong to employ words which are not current. So it was inappropriate for me to employ many of those used by Boccaccio, which were current when he was alive but which have now fallen into disuse among the Tuscans themselves. At the same time, I was unwilling to commit myself to using contemporary Tuscan. After all, intercourse between different peoples has always carried new words from one place to another, just like articles of trade, after which they either take root or disappear, depending on whether they are admitted or rejected by usage. And not only is this proved by what happened in the ancient world but it can also be clearly seen in the case of Boccaccio, in whom there are so many French, Spanish and Provençal words, as well as some that are probably meaningless to Tuscans today, that it would greatly reduce the size of the book if they were all cut out." Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 33-34.)

language within his treatise on courtly life and comportment, Castiglione seems to support a version of the *lingua cortigiana*, a flexible style of language, less restrictive than Bembo's pure neoclassical Tuscan, and derived from multiple Italian vernaculars. The ideal courtier thus would not speak a constant (major) language such as Latin, but one that would allow for loan words, new coinages, and idioms from multiple sources: "And if it did not then have the purity of old Tuscan, it would yet be Italian, universal, rich and varied, like a delightful garden full of all kinds of flowers and fruits" (1.35).³²

The *questione della lingua* as articulated by early-sixteenth-century Italian writers was taken up a few decades later in France, under a somewhat different guise. Here the concern was not with choosing among competing dialects, but with establishing a French literary tradition, especially in poetry, that would rise to the level of the classical authors. France enjoyed a great flourishing of vernacular literature in the Middle Ages, particularly in the genres of romance and heroic epic (the *chansons de geste*). But these works pre-dated the humanist movement that defined Renaissance literature, and from the point of view of sixteenth-century writers, belonged to a more primitive literary tradition. In his landmark treatise on French language and poetics, *La défense et illustration de la langue française* (1549), Joachim Du Bellay urges his contemporary poets to model their works not on their native literary heritage—the *romans*, *ballades*, *rondeaux*, and other medieval French

³² *The Book of the Courtier*, 79. "E se ella non fosse pura toscana antica, sarebbe italiana, commune, copiosa e varia, e quasi come un delizioso giardino pien di fiori e frutti" (Castiglione, *Il Libro del Cortegiano*, 76).

vernacular forms—but on humanist and classical examples, the sonnets of Petrarch and the odes of Horace. By inserting themselves into the classical tradition, Du Bellay argues, French authors can lay claim to the cultural and political legacy of the Roman Empire, with *translatio* following a trajectory from Greece to Rome to France, where, as a cohesive and increasingly powerful kingdom united under François I, France has greater potential than fractured Italy to build itself into a sovereign nation-state.

Of the several common threads that run through the Italian and French language debates, two are particularly important for tracing the relationship networks among language, music, and rhetoric. The first is the shared heritage of Provençal (Occitan) language and poetry in the French and Italian literary traditions. The second is the multiplicity of languages and dialects, and more specifically, how the creation of a national literature still accommodates the presence of loan words, varying registers, and foreign etymologies through the principle of *variatio*. In Book 2 of the *Prose*, Bembo describes *variatio* as part of a schematic for the production of good writing. The two aesthetic aspects that make writing beautiful, he says in Carlo's persona, are its solemnity (*gravità*) and its pleasing quality (*piacevolezza*). These two aspects are in turn produced by three elements: sound, number, and variation (2.9). Of these three elements, variation occupies the least amount of space in the discourse, as the final quality summarized in a single chapter (as compared to four chapters each on sound and number). But it is also an anchoring principle, applied across all elements; throughout this section of the debate, Bembo reminds readers of the importance of variety in types of sounds, rhymes, verse meters, and of course word choice,

especially as this variation increases the pleasure (*piacevolezza*) of reading the text. Bembo also of course actively demonstrates the device of *variatio* in his writing, not only drawing on exempla from the trinity of Tuscan authorship (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio), but also in his own prose style. Within strict verse forms such as the sonnet or sestina, some structural rules must be followed, but the poet still has the freedom to choose rhymes and sound plays. Similarly, while repeating the language of certain key concepts in order to anchor its argument, the author also takes advantage of every opportunity for extended metaphors and other illustrative language (for example, the image in Book 1 of the foreign language as a showy summer palazzo and the native language as a shabby townhouse). Variation is necessary, Bembo maintains, in order to prevent the reader from experiencing either surfeit or tedium (*sazietà, fastidio*), which can often occur even when the poet strives to engage the reader's sense of delight (2.18). But in addition to varying aspects of sound (phonetic qualities, rhyme) and number (meter, syllabic quantity), Bembo instructs writers to vary the type of language used, including register and dialect:

And thus in the selection of words, among those most exquisite ones seek to place one taken from the middle of the populace, and among the popular words insert one taken almost from the thrones of kings, and among ours a foreign word, and an ancient one among modern ones, or a new one among familiar ones, it cannot be said how much at times it reawakens and satisfies the soul of one who reads; and thus a slightly harsh word among many delicate ones, or among many resonant words a quiet one, or the other way around. And in the same way in the arranging of words, it is not fitting to use any of the eight parts of speech, no order, no manner and figure of speaking everywhere all the time; rather, find ways to express something now by its own words, now by some turn of phrase; and compose these and other turns, sometimes from many elements, and sometimes from few, now long, now short, and in sum in each manner of composition avoid surfeit, and avoid

surfeit of this same avoidance, and do not use variety continuously.³³ (2.18; emphasis mine)

The principle of *variatio* also engages the politics of vernacular poetics. Embedded in Bembo's highly detailed discourse on prosody, phonetics, and rhetoric is the statement that linguistic variation, in order to be aesthetically and emotionally effective, must borrow language from all tiers of society. Good writing must interweave highflown language and common speech, native and foreign words, archaisms and neologisms. To create an aesthetically cohesive authorial voice, Bembo argues, the author must draw on a multiplicity of voices in both major and minor linguistic modes.

It is precisely that multiplicity that characterizes a language's minor status. Variation is a key principle in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of language—and, in the twentieth century as in the first and the sixteenth, one of the rhetorical elements that links music and language. Continuous variation is at work within both fields. In music, chromaticism is created by introducing pitches that are not found in the mode or diatonic scale of a composition; in other words, chromaticism is a deviation from or a variation on the tonality of a piece of music. Deleuze and Guattari

³³ “Perciò che e nella scielta dele voci, tra quelle di loro isquisitissimamente cercate vederne una tolta di mezzo il popolo, e tra le popolari un'altra recatavi quasi da' seggi de' re, e tra le nostre una straniera, e una antica tra le moderne, o nuova tra le usate, non si può dire quanto risvegli alcuna volta e sodisfaccia l'animo di chi legge; e così un'altra un poco aspera tra molto dilicate, e tra le molte risonante una cheta, o allo 'ncontro. E nel disporre medisamente delle voci, niuna delle otto parti del parlare, niuno ordine di loro, niuna maniera e figura del dire usare perpetuamente si conviene e in ogni canto; ma ora isprimere alcuna cosa per le sue proprie voci, ora per alcun giro di parole, fa luogo; e questi medesimi o altri giri, ora di molte membra comporre, ora di poche, e queste membra, ora veloci formare, ora tarde, ora lunghe, ora brevi, e in tanto in ciascuna maniera di componimenti fuggir si dee la sazietà, che questo medesimo fuggimento è da vedere che non sazii, e nell'usare varietà non s'usi continuazione” (Bembo, *Prose*, 170). Bembo's term *sazieta*, which might be translated literally as “satiety” or “sufficiency,” seems here to carry a sense of glut or excess; I've rendered it as “surfeit.”

suggest that variation of language, a means of establishing an aesthetic style in writing, can similarly be characterized as chromatic.³⁴ The “immanent continuous variation” that is always present in both music and language give rise to a “generalized chromaticism,” a condition which “in principle bears on the voice, speech, language, and music simultaneously.”³⁵ *Variatio* is one means by which the interplay of major and minor creates the possibility for mutual exchange: for minor becoming major (through the incorporation of elements and structures of a major language), or major becoming minor (through variation and inconstancy). The debates over the relative statuses of languages and dialects are always politically as well as aesthetically rooted; as Deleuze and Guattari note, there is tension between the constancy and *pouvoir* of major languages (in this case Greek—culturally majoritarian if not widely spoken—Latin, and Tuscan) and the variation and *pouissance* of minor languages (other Italian languages, French). Bembo’s and Castiglione’s philosophies of language differ in important ways: Bembo mandates a prescriptive usage grounded in historical and literary models, while Castiglione advocates a descriptive usage, flexible enough to change in real time with fashions and practices. Yet variation is a fundamental principle of both systems, in Castiglione’s varying idioms and loan words and in Bembo’s rhetorical and poetic *variatio*, thus lending to a sense of “generalized chromaticism” to both approaches to speech or writing. For Deleuze and Guattari, the status of minority or the state of becoming-minoritarian is characterized by potentiality, creativity, and variation,

³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 95-97.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

which are the characteristics that imbue language with musicality.³⁶ For them, musicality of language is distinct from music itself; in the following section, however, I will show how these aspects of musicality in language belong to music as well, and how Renaissance thinkers understood the shared characteristics of language and music.

Music: Dispositio

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the musicality inherent in the structure of language is expressed at least in part through the tendency of a given language toward variation and minor status. And indeed sixteenth-century proponents of vernacular (minor) literatures were attuned to musicality, especially in verse forms. The Italian treatises by Bembo and Castiglione stake out a proud claim to musical-poetic forms such as the *ballata*, the *canzone*, and the madrigal, in their assertion of Italian vernaculars as languages becoming-majoritarian. In France, however, although their motive was likewise to establish French as a major (dominant and constant) language, the poets of the Pléiade demonstrated a more tendentious relationship to their vernacular forms. Du Bellay, for example, in Book 2, Chapter 4 of the *Défense*, while urging poets to turn away from native French poetic forms (*toutes ces vieilles poésies françaises*)—the *ballades*, *virelais*, *rondeaux*, *chansons*—seems to be also resisting an association with the minor status that the French vernaculars held relative to Latin during the

³⁶ “The closer a language gets to this state, the closer it comes not only to a system of musical notation, but also to music itself” (ibid., 104). (“Et plus une langue entre dans cet état, plus elle est proche, non seulement d’une notation musicale, mais de la musique elle-même,” *Mille plateaux*, 132.)

Middle Ages.³⁷ Instead, he demands that French poets take as their models classical forms such as the epigram, the elegy, the ode, and the eclogue; the only vernacular European form to which he points as a model is the Petrarchan sonnet (2.4).³⁸

All the poetic forms Du Bellay names, both vernacular and classical, moreover, are associated with some form of musical accompaniment. The vernacular forms are inherently musical; that is, the *ballade*, *virelai*, and *rondeau* are genres of song with formal rules governing melodic composition as well as verse structure. The classical forms, meanwhile, also seem to be associated with musical accompaniment and sung performance, though perhaps this association is idealized rather than borne out in practice. For example, with regard to the ode, Du Bellay exhorts his fellow French poets: “Sing for me these odes that are as yet unknown to the French Muse, to a lute well tuned to the sound of the Greek and Roman lyre; and let there be no verse in which there does not appear some trace of that rare and ancient erudition.”³⁹

Similarly, Du Bellay invokes pastoral poetry in terms of its musical accompaniment: “Sing for me with beautifully resonant bagpipes and a well-joined flute these pleasant

³⁷ Generally speaking, *chanson* is used as an umbrella term for a number of genres of French secular song, including the *ballades*, *virelais*, and *rondeaux* mentioned above. In the late medieval period it typically referred to polyphonic compositions such as those by Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300-1377) and Guillaume Dufay (1397-1474). In the early-to-mid-sixteenth century, at the time Du Bellay was writing, the *chanson* may have referred to one of two styles: the texturally dense polyphonic compositions by composers of the Franco-Flemish school, such as Adrian Willaert (1490-1562) and Jacobus Clemens non Papa (ca. 1510-ca. 1556), or the simpler, often homorhythmic settings emphasizing melody, such as those by Parisian composers including Clément Janequin (ca. 1485-1558) and Claudin de Sermisy (1490-1562). (For more, see Howard Mayer Brown et al., “Chanson,” in *Grove Music Online*.) It is not clear to which of these styles Du Bellay is referring here, though Frank Dobbins suggests that Du Bellay may have collaborated with Franco-Flemish composer Jacob Arcadelt (1507-1568), who set several of his poems to music (Frank Dobbins, “Du Bellay, Joachim,” *ibid.*)

³⁸ Bellay, “Défense et illustration de la langue française,” 238-39.

³⁹ “Chante-moi ces odes inconnues encore de la Muse française, d’un luth bien accordé au son de la lyre grecque et romaine: et qu’il n’y ait vers où n’apparaisse quelque vestige de rare et antique érudition” (*ibid.*, 238).

rustic eclogues, following the example of Theocritus and Virgil.”⁴⁰ These references seem to be for rhetorical effect, rather than following actual performance practice; in the same section, Du Bellay’s wordplay invoking the musicality of the sonnet (“Sonne-moi ces beaux sonnets,” playing up the Italian etymology of *sonetto*, “little sound”) seems to be a stylistic flourish rather than a literal call to song. In moving away from the French vernacular forms, Du Bellay seems to be indicating a move away from familiar musical forms as well: from the stable structure of the *ballades* and *rondeaux* to the more amorphous, fluid harmonics of the Greek lyric ode (at least as it was understood by humanists), a more aesthetically and affectively supple musicality that was understood to underscore the poetic text at least metaphorically if not in actual practice.⁴¹

This is not to say, of course, that the musicality of mid-sixteenth-century French lyric poetry was entirely metaphorical. Pierre de Ronsard, a contemporary of Du Bellay and a colleague in the Pléiade, was a master of the new French lyric style, particularly the Petrarchan sonnet and the classicizing “ode” that Du Bellay in 1549 stated had yet to appear in France. Ronsard also published a discourse on poetics, *L’Abbrege de l’art poétique françois* (1565).⁴² In the *Abbrege*, Ronsard links poetry

⁴⁰ “Chante-moi d’une musette bien résonnante et d’une flûte bien jointe ces plaisantes églogues rustiques, à l’exemple de Théocrite et de Virgile” (ibid., 239).

⁴¹ The relationship of treatises on music, printed music, and actual performance practice is always a bit sticky to unravel. Consider, for example, the musical supplement to Ronsard’s first book of the *Amours* (1552), which, for all the Pléiade’s rhetoric of poetic voice singing to the lyre, consists of four-part polyphonic settings rather than songs for solo accompanied voice; a reminder that, as Howard Mayer Brown points out, “sixteenth-century music as it appears on the printed page is not always what it seems” (Howard Mayer Brown, “‘*Ut Musica Poesis*’: Music and Poetry in France in the Late Sixteenth Century,” *Early Music History* 13 (1994): 10.

⁴² For more on Ronsard’s views on music and poetry in his other writings, see ibid. and Jeanice Brooks, “Ronsard, the Lyric Sonnet and the Late Sixteenth-Century Chanson,” ibid., 65-84.

with music from the outset: “for Poetry without instruments, or without the grace of one or several voices, is not at all agreeable, no more than instruments that are not enlivened by the melody of a pleasant voice.”⁴³

Ronsard’s treatise seems to owe something to Bembo’s *Prose* in structure and argument, though it is much shorter. He directs his readers to look to the authors who have exemplified this effort “for the past fifteen years” (*depuis quinze ans*), a clear reference to the publication of Du Bellay’s *Défense*.⁴⁴ Unlike Bembo and Castiglione, who couch their arguments about language and rhetoric within fictionalized accounts of long-ago events that they as authors claim to have been absent from, Du Bellay and Ronsard situate themselves in the present moment and make explicit their relation to current political and aesthetic movements. The *Défense* and the *Abbrégé* are essays rather than dialogues; what they lack in dramatic and narrative flourish they make up for in urgency, indicating much higher stakes in the evolution of their vernacular tradition. Where for the Italians the existence of an elite vernacular literature is a given—established generations before Bembo and Castiglione—it is a hard-won right for the French, and deserving of highest honor: “Whoever were the first who dared to abandon the language of the ancients to honor that of their country, they were truly good children and not ungrateful citizens, and worthy of being crowned on a public monument, so that from age to age we see an eternal memory of them and of their

⁴³ “Car la Poësie sans les instrumens, ou sans la grace d’une seule, ou plusieurs voix n’est nullement agréable, non plus que les instrumens sans estre animez, de la melodie d’une plaisante voix” (Pierre de Ronsard, *Abbrégé de l’art poétique françois* (Paris: Gabriel Buon, 1565), 4r). I have maintained the spelling and punctuation of the 1565 edition while regularizing the type (*v* and *u*, e.g.). All translations my own unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 6r.

virtues.”⁴⁵ Compared to their Italian predecessors, the poets of the Pléïade expressed more anxiety about their status as authors in a minor language and created a dramatic sense of their continuing struggle toward majority.

Ronsard, like Bembo and like their predecessor Quintilian, allocates a section of the *Abregé* to each of the three most important rhetorical practices: *l’invention*, *la disposition*, *l’élocution*. He also addresses verse structure; rhyme; sounds of vowels and consonants; and differences among French dialects, including orthographic variations. Ronsard emphasizes *inventio* as the guiding principle of rhetoric in much the same way that Bembo emphasized *variatio*. But in both the *Abregé* and the *Prose*, the principle of *dispositio* follows closely in importance and is a common thread that connects poetic composition with musical arrangement. For Bembo, the practice of *dispositio* (arrangement) is at the core of all three elements of good writing (sound, number, and variation) outlined in Book 2. For Ronsard, *la disposition* is the partner practice of *l’invention* (Quintilian’s *inventio*). In the introduction to his treatise, Ronsard elicits invention as the principal element in a poet’s success, which “comes as much from a good nature as from the lessons of good and ancient authors.”⁴⁶ Ronsard defines *inventio* as “nothing other than the natural good of an imagination that conceives Ideas and forms of everything that can be imagined, celestial as well as terrestrial, animate or inanimate, in order to then be

⁴⁵ “Quiconque furent les premiers qui oserent abandonner la langue des anciens pour honorer celle de leur país, ilz furent veritablement bons enfans & non ingratz citoyens, & dignes d’estre couronnez sur une statue publicque, & que d’aage en aage on fave une perpetuelle memoire d’eux & de leurs vertus” (ibid.).

⁴⁶ “Car le principal poinct est l’invention, laquelle vient tant de la bonne nature, que par la leçon des bons & anciens autheurs” (ibid., 3r).

able to represent, describe, and imitate them.”⁴⁷ These endless possibilities are at the disposal of the poet, who “must never doubt that after having well and loftily invented, the beautiful disposition of verses will follow, inasmuch as disposition follows invention, the mother of all things, as the shadow follows the body.”⁴⁸ Thus invention and disposition are closely linked in the process of poetic composition, just as in oratory. Once the imagery is chosen or uncovered (“invented”), the orator or poet will know how to arrange its elements for best effect. As the poet’s first step is to discover the words through inspiration and imitation, the natural next step is to arrange them in an order “governed . . . by craftsmanship, study, and labor.”⁴⁹

In early-to-mid-sixteenth-century poetics, *dispositio* refers to arrangements of words, rhymes, and verse structures. But in mid-to-late sixteenth century in Italy, *dispositio* also came to have a specific musical meaning. Bembo’s *disposizione delle voci* (“arrangement of words”) reemerges in musical discourse a generation later as *disposizione di voce* (“arrangement of voice”), a specific type of singing technique that facilitated the ornate style of vocal music that was growing in popularity from the 1550s and 1560s onward.

⁴⁷ “L’invention n’est autre chose que le bon naturel d’une imagination concevant les Idées & formes de toutes choses qui se peuvent imaginer tant celestes que terrestres, animées ou inanimées, pour pres les représenter, descrire, & imiter . . .” (ibid., 5v).

⁴⁸ “& ne fault point douter, qu’après avoir bien & hautement inventé, que la belle dispositio[n] de vers ne s’ensuyve, d’autant que la disposition suit l’invention mere de toutes choses, comme l’ombre faict le corps” (ibid.).

⁴⁹ “Tout ainsi que l’invention despend d’une gentille nature d’esprit, ainsi la disposition despend de la belle invention, laquelle consiste en une elegante & parfaite collocation & ordre des choses inventées, & ne permet que ce qui appartient à un lieu, soit mis en l’autre, mais se gouvernant par artifice, estude & labeur, aiance & ordonne dextreme[n]t toutes choses à son point” (ibid., 6r).

The practice of *disposizione di voce* or *disposizione di gorgia* (“disposition of the throat”) was associated with the performance of florid monody, a singing style that probably originated in Naples and spread northward to Rome, Florence, and other Italian courts beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁵⁰ To put this musical style in its historical context, a very brief overview of some popular forms of solo vocal music in the *Cinquecento* follows:

The *frottola*, a popular song form, flourished in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and was familiar to Bembo; it is also described in Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* and in the letters of Isabella d’Este (1474-1539), the marquess of Mantua, who was an accomplished musician and commissioned *frottole* for her own enjoyment. She wrote to the poet Galeotto dal Caretto in 1499, “As all your works are wont to do, these pleased us greatly, and we gave them immediately to [Bartolomeo] Tromboncino to make a melody for singing them.”⁵¹ Indeed, Isabella was crucial in the rise of the *frottola* as a genre. It had in its origins in an improvisatory, unwritten performance form, but Isabella, though by all accounts a skilled musician, was not a composer or a sufficiently practiced improviser to perform in that style; instead, she hired composers to write *frottole* for her, apparently the first amateur noble musician to do so. She also seems to have originated the trend of using Petrarchan verse in

⁵⁰ For some of the history of this path of transmission, see Brown, “The Geography of Florentine Monody.”

⁵¹ Isabella d’Este, letter to Galeotto da Caretto, 21 November 1499, “Selected Letters of Isabella d’Este,” ed. and trans. Deanna Shemek. Unpublished manuscript (2010). Bartolomeo Tromboncino (ca. 1470-1535) was a famous composer of *frottole*, born in Verona and employed at the courts of Mantua and Ferrara. For an overview of Isabella d’Este’s musical education and performance practices, see William F. Prizer, “Una ‘Virtù Molto Conveniente a Madonne’: Isabella D’Este as a Musician,” *The Journal of Musicology* 17, no. 1 (1999): 10-49.

frottola settings.⁵² The *frottola* setting typically followed the structure of the poem, for example with clear divisions of stanzas and a simple melody that could be repeated with variations.⁵³ Polyphonic madrigals, which came into style in the early sixteenth century, were typically published in part-books for four voices; although the print record would suggest that this was the dominant mode of performance, musical practice in Bembo's time was more varied.⁵⁴

Bembo characterizes the madrigal form by its freedom, as the verse may have any rhyme or metrical structure (2.11). Therefore the musical setting, too, was freed from the restrictions of a fixed strophic form. In the early 1500s, this typically meant that the setting would follow the poem's syntax and verse structure. Madrigal composers of the mid-to-late sixteenth century, however, generally privileged the overall affective mood of the poem rather than its formal aspects, with musical form taking precedence over semantic meaning and syntactical phrasing—for example, in the works of Cipriano de Rore (1515-1565).⁵⁵ The singing style of florid monody can

⁵² Prizer, "North Italian Courts, 1460-1540," in *The Renaissance (Music and Society)*, ed. Iain Fenlon (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1989), 143-47.

⁵³ For detailed description of the *frottola* form and historical performance practice, see Prizer, "Performance Practices in the Frottola: An Introduction to the Repertory of Early 16th-Century Italian Solo Secular Song with Suggestions for the Use of Instruments on the Other Lines," *Early Music* 3, no. 3 (1975): 227-35.

⁵⁴ For a succinct overview of the madrigal form in Italy, see Denis Arnold and Emma Wakelin, "Madrigal," in *The Oxford Companion to Music*. For a comparison of the madrigal to the *frottola* and the relation of both genres to poetic forms, see Dean T. Mace, "Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal," *The Musical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1969): 65-86.

⁵⁵ Cipriano de Rore, a Flemish composer, spent much of his career in Italy, including about twelve years at the court of Ercole II d'Este in Ferrara. He was a prolific composer of polyphonic works, including masses and motets, but madrigals make up the largest part of his oeuvre and were where he demonstrated the greatest stylistic innovations. Most of Rore's madrigals are written for five voices, a departure from the four-part style that was most common in the second quarter of the sixteenth century (*Madrigali a cinque voci*, Venice: Girolamo Scotto, 1542). The addition of a fifth voice allows for a greater harmonic richness and experiments with tempo and chromaticism. Rore's sense of musical drama highlighted the emotional tone of the texts he set, and may have influenced the later musical

thus be seen as an extension of that “freedom” or pleasure-driven compositional style described by Bembo, extending from liberality of verse structure to liberality of vocal ornament. It has been argued that Bembo’s poetics—particularly his interest in the affective qualities of sound—was one of the driving influences on the evolution of the madrigal in the second half of the sixteenth century, since the polyphonic madrigal could more fully realize the element of *variazione* than could the simple monody of the *frottola*.⁵⁶

Madrigals were typically written for vocal ensembles of four or more parts, they were also frequently performed by a solo singer accompanied by an instrument such as lute or viol, playing chords that substituted for the lower voice parts in the madrigal. Typically the soloist would sing the melody (usually the highest vocal part), but basses could also employ a technique called *basso alla bastarda*, so called because the bass singer would “bastardize” the madrigal by singing pieces of every vocal line, from his natural lower range up to the treble line in falsetto.

Although the practice of solo singers performing lyric poetry had been well established in Italy for about a century, in the 1580s the activities of the musicians and poets known as the Florentine Camerata or the Camerata of Giovanni de’ Bardi

experiments of Giovanni de’ Bardi and the compositional style of Claudio Monteverdi. The succinct foundational critique of Rore in the modern era is Alfred Einstein, “Cipriano di Rore and the Madrigal,” *Bulletin of the American Musiological Society* 6 (1942). For a general overview of his career, works, and reception, see Jessie Ann Owens, “Rore, Cipriano de,” in *Grove Music Online*. For more detailed readings of Rore’s compositional style and experimentation in the context of his contemporaries, see, for example, James Haar’s essays “False Relations and Chromaticism in Sixteenth-Century Music,” “The *Note Nere* Madrigal,” and “The ‘Madrigale Arioso’: A Mid-Century Development” in James Haar, *The Science and Art of Renaissance Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 93-120 and 201-38.

⁵⁶ See Mace, “Pietro Bembo and the Literary Origins of the Italian Madrigal.”

gave a new prominence to monodic song.⁵⁷ The musical practice of Bardi's Camerata drew on Renaissance readings of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the belief that Greek poetry and music had a unique capacity to move the emotions and create an affective relationship between vocalist and auditor.⁵⁸ This idealized understanding of Greek lyric led them in their writings to reject high Renaissance polyphony and excessive floridity in order to privilege text and affect by embracing monodic composition and more refined vocal ornamentations.

These vocal ornaments—both the dynamic, wide-ranging passagework of the *basso alla bastarda* style and the affect-driven ornaments advocated by Caccini and the musicians of Bardi's Camerata—were made possible by the technique of

⁵⁷ The term "Florentine Camerata" has been used to refer to a large group of poets and composers working together in Florence in the late sixteenth century; not an academy, but a more informal group that might be characterized as a literary musical salon. Although various members of this group were active in Florence over several decades, it is important to distinguish between two different movements under different patrons. The first group consisted of Florentine noblemen, poets, and musicians who met under the patronage of Giovanni de' Bardi, Count of Vernio (1534-1612) from the early 1570s through the late 1580s. Figures associated with the group during this time include Giulio Caccini (1551-1618), composer; Emilio de' Cavalieri (1550-1602), composer; and Vincenzo Galilei (1520-1591), lutenist, composer, and father of Galileo. In 1592 Bardi moved from Florence to Rome, but some of the musicians and poets active in the later activities of Bardi's Camerata, such as the Medici wedding entertainments, worked under the patronage of Jacopo Corsi (1561-1602) beginning in the 1590s. These included Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), singer, composer, and young rival of Caccini's; and Ottavio Rinuccini (1562-1621), poet and librettist. The members of Bardi's Camerata worked under his direction to produce the interludes for *La Pellegrina* at the Medici wedding of 1589, along with Peri and Rinuccini, who would later collaborate with Corsi. The two generations of the so-called Camerata also differed in their ideological and artistic approaches. Bardi's Camerata was invested in the humanist project of reviving ancient music, based on the work of the historian and philologist Girolamo Mei (1519-1594), who was based in Rome but corresponded with Vincenzo Galilei. Corsi's Camerata, meanwhile, was dedicated to the development of musical dramas, which was not an activity of the earlier Camerata nor explicitly tied to a project of recreating ancient forms. (Indeed, the *dramma per musica* produced by Corsi, Peri and company belongs to the genre of pastoral tragicomedy, which is in many ways anti-classicizing.) The Medici wedding performances are discussed in Chapter 2; the musical drama of Rinuccini and Peri is further discussed in Chapter 4. See also Claude V. Palisca, "The Florentine Camerata," in *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-12 and John Walter Hill, *Baroque Music: Music in Western Europe 1580-1750* (New York: Norton, 2005), 25-26.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Girolamo Mei's letter to Vincenzo Galilei of May 8, 1572 in Palisca, *The Florentine Camerata*, 45-77.

disposizione. As Deleuze and Guattari note, “The voice in music has always been a privileged axis of experimentation, playing simultaneously on language and sound.”⁵⁹ Situating the rhetorical practice of *dispositio* in the voice allowed it to work on language (text, meaning) and sound (vowels, consonants, melody, harmony) simultaneously.

The technique is described in a number of early modern music treatises.⁶⁰ The voice is centered in the throat (*dispositione di gorgia*); correct “disposition” facilitates speed and accuracy of intonation by allowing for clean, detached, separately articulated pitches. Modern classical singing practice, based in the *bel canto* style developed in the eighteenth century, teaches singers to engage the diaphragm in articulation; by contrast, sixteenth-century treatises suggest that articulation takes place in the throat, described as a “beating” action. Diaphragm articulation was actively discouraged, though of course diaphragm support is necessary to provide enough breath for the embellishments.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 96.

⁶⁰ Some description of singing performance practices is included in the texts cited in this chapter, including Castiglione’s *Libro del cortigiano*, Bardi’s “Discorso,” and Caccini’s *Nuove musiche*. Other noteworthy sources include Gioseffo Zarlino’s *Le Istitute harmoniche* (1558); Giovanni Camillo Maffei’s “Letter on Singing” of 1562 (cited in Richard Wistreich, *Warrior, Courtier, Singer: Giulio Cesare Brancaccio and the Performance of Identity in the Late Renaissance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 141-42; and Lodovico Zacconi’s first volume of *Prattica di musica* (1592). For a comprehensive overview of sixteenth-century singing styles, see Wistreich’s *Warrior, Courtier, Singer* (especially Chapter 4) and “Reconstructing Pre-Romantic Singing Technique” in *The Cambridge Companion to Singing*, ed. John Potter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; see also Robert Greenlee, “*Dispositione di voce*: Passage to Florid Singing,” *Early Music* 15, no. 1 (1987): 47-55.

⁶¹ Greenlee, “*Dispositione di voce*,” 52. It should be pointed out, of course, that for a specific technique to be discouraged it was likely to have also been in practice at the same time. See also *ibid.*, 52-53 for notes on the inadequacies of modern singing techniques in achieving *dispositione di voce*.

Giulio Caccini, a composer and vocalist and a core member of Bardi's Camerata, was one of the major proponents of the "new" style of florid monodic style, which he described at length in the *Nuove musiche* or "New Music," published in 1601 but reflecting his musical activities as far back as the 1570s. The *Nuove musiche* is a collection of songs for solo voice and basso continuo, and Caccini's preface describes a compositional and performance style governed by the outward expression of emotions (affect) and intended to elicit specific emotional responses from auditors. Caccini writes: "Thus in both madrigals and arias I have always sought out the imitation of the concepts of the words, according to their sentiments seeking out chords that are more or less affecting, and that are especially graceful. . . ." ⁶² Caccini also outlines specific types of vocal ornaments and the contexts in which they are appropriate; for Caccini, ornamentation must be decorous as well as decorative. Caccini's *Nuove musiche* concretizes how the style of florid monody utilized the principle of disposition in both music and language, at all levels of creating and performing a vocal piece: *dispositio* governs the arrangement of words in the poem, and the arrangement of melody and harmonies in the score; *disposizione di gorgia* makes it possible to execute the vocal part. The key rhetorical principles of variation and invention are also crucial in this context for both composer and performer; the former allows for the alternation of, for example, "chords that are more or less

⁶² "Così ne madrigali come nelle arie ho sempre procurata l'imitazione de i concetti delle parole, ricercando quelle corde più, e meno affettuose, secondo i sentime[n]ti di esse, e che particolarmente havessero grazia..." Giulio Caccini, *Le Nuove Musiche* (Florence 1601), 5. This compositional style characterized Caccini's other works, including the interludes for *La Pellegrina* (see Chapter 2) and the opera *L'Euridice* (see Chapter 4).

affecting,” while the latter guides the selection or creation of innovative, expressive vocal ornaments.

The florid passagework exemplified by singers such as Giulio Cesare Brancaccio (1515-1586) and Vittoria Archilei (fl. 1582-1620; see Chapter 2) demanded considerable technical ability. Alongside other arts such as writing poetry or dancing, good singing was also considered to be an important courtly skill, and many sixteenth-century music treatises were aimed at guiding amateur aristocrats as well as professional musicians in courtly singing (*cantar cavalaresco*). Successful execution was a spectacle of *meraviglia*, or marvel, which, in addition to communicating an emotional narrative, inspired audiences to react viscerally with awe and wonder.⁶³ A vocal line that was decorated gratuitously or excessively—in other words, florid and highly ornamented but without regard to the lyric—might impress listeners with the singer’s prowess, but fail, according to Caccini and others, as a decorous performance or one that demonstrated the appropriate affect or elicited the desired emotional response. Part of Caccini’s project in the preface to the *Nuove musiche* is to advocate control and restraint for effectively affective singing, and to exhort singers to be conscious of the text.⁶⁴ As in discourses of rhetoric, excessive floridity was to be avoided (recall Bembo’s cautioning against *sazietà e fastidio*), but

⁶³ Wistreich, *Warrior, Courtier, Singer*, 141-45.

⁶⁴ Although Caccini and Bardi’s Camerata frame their musical accomplishments and style as uniquely Florentine—in part to glorify their Medici patrons—florid ornamentation in solo song was strongly influenced by musical practice in Naples. Caccini’s teacher, Scipione della Palla, had a musical career in Naples before arriving in Florence; Brancaccio, who gained fame at the Ferrarese court, was Neapolitan; and Vittoria Archilei, Roman by birth, was strongly influenced by the Neapolitan florid style and was one of its major proponents in Florence. See Brown, “The Geography of Florentine Monody.”

flourishes applied judiciously would succeed in moving and delighting audiences; and as in discourses of rhetoric, contradictions abounded between prescription and practice. But discourses on rhetoric and music do seem to chart a movement, over the course of the sixteenth century, toward an emphasis on a kind of affective range and subtlety—from generalized terms of sweetness and charm (*dolcezza, vaghezza*) toward more nuanced musical depictions of a spectrum of passions, a process of experimentation that culminated in the dramas set entirely to music (*dramme per musica*) that were staged in Florence around 1600 and were brought to new dramatic heights by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) and his peers in the first decades of the seventeenth century.⁶⁵

Figures of Voice: Memoria and Pronuntiatio

This web of relations and interactions among language, music, rhetoric and affect informs the inquiries into the “figures of voice” in chapters two to four of the present study: the Sibyl, Philomela, and Orpheus and Echo. These mythological characters are also vocal archetypes drawn from classical myth and reimagined (re-figured) by humanist authors in narrative and dramatic poetry. In these genres—just as in the lyric forms discussed by Bembo, Castiglione, Du Bellay and Ronsard—poets follow

⁶⁵ The scholarship on Monteverdi is vast. A major recent study on Monteverdi’s dramatic work is Tim Carter’s *Monteverdi’s Musical Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). For an analysis of Monteverdi’s music and performance history that addresses gender and body, see Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi’s Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For a comprehensive introduction to Monteverdi’s first opera, *L’Orfeo* (further discussed in Chapter 4), see John Whenham, ed. *Claudio Monteverdi: Orfeo*, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

rhetorical principles to elicit certain kinds of emotional responses from the reader. But the poems and plays also involve additional layers of rhetorical practice, in terms of musical composition and performance. From the cultural and aesthetic movements outlined here in broad strokes—the rise of vernacular literatures, the emergence of florid monody—I narrow my focus in the following chapters to the iterations of particular archetypes on the level of the individual author, character, or performer (and in some cases, as for example with Isabella Andreini, all three embodied in a single person). I began the above discussion by connecting the idea of “vocal disposition” to both a politics of language and a process of affective engagement in order to show how each “figure of voice” reinforces this network of affect, politics, and poetics as a politics of identity: how embodied voice is linked intrinsically to power, and, as the following chapters will demonstrate, to gender and sexuality, qualities that are moderated as much by the affective, nonverbal dimensions of voice as by language.

These explorations are rooted, as I have said, in the genres of narrative and dramatic poetry. For the former, I look to the classical authors that vernacular epic poets from Dante onward took as their models. Vergil’s *Aeneid* is the main source material for the figure of the Sibyl, and the *Georgics* for perhaps the best-known version of the Orpheus myth in Renaissance Europe. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* also offers versions of the Sibyl and Orpheus, and is the foundational literary source for the tales of Philomela and Echo. One of the greatest and most widely read and influential works of epic poetry in the sixteenth century, Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando*

furioso, borrows extensively from Vergil and Ovid, among other classical authors. Like the classical epics, Ariosto's poem bridges literary and oral culture: it was published in multiple editions between 1516 and 1532, and likely disseminated in manuscript form while it was being composed, but it also enjoyed currency as a performance piece, recited or staged or set to music in both courtly and public spaces.⁶⁶ Ariosto, too, is conscious of his status as both writer and speaker of tales. His literary predecessor, Matteo Maria Boiardo, followed Homer and Vergil in presenting himself as a "singer" of heroic poetry; the opening canto of his *Orlando innamorato* (1483) calls upon his audience to listen, quietly and attentively, to his song (1.1.2).⁶⁷ The *Orlando furioso*, by contrast, begins with a narrator who speaks (*dirò*, 1.2.1) while also calling attention to his profession as a writer, presenting his patron with a tangible gift of paper and ink (1.3.5-8).⁶⁸ At several points, however, the authorial voice of the *Furioso* emphasizes the oral/aural dimensions of reading aloud and recitation as performance, for example in the narration of the siege of Paris: "Aspro concerto, orribile armonia / d'alte querele, d'ululi e di strida [. . .] Non più, Signor, non più di questo canto; / ch'io son già rauco, e vo' posarmi alquanto"

⁶⁶ For example, Ariosto's poem was used as a source text for performances by *commedia dell'arte* actresses; see Eric Nicholson, "Romance as Role Model: Early Female Performances of *Orlando furioso* and *Gerusalemme liberata*," in *Renaissance Transactions: Ariosto and Tasso*, ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁶⁷ *Signori e cavallier che ve adunati / Per odir cose dilette e nove, / Stati attenti e quieti, ed ascoltati / La bella istoria che 'l mio canto muove . . .* (Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando Innamorato* (Turin: UTET, 1984). "Lords and knights who gather to hear pleasing new things, be attentive and calm, and listen to the beautiful history that my song sets in motion.")

⁶⁸ *Quel ch'io vi debbo, posso di parole / pagare in parte, e d'opera d'inchostro.* (Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, 2 vols., ed. Lanfranco Caretti (Turin: Einaudi, 1992). "That which I owe you, I can pay in part in words and ink-works.")

(14.134.1-8).⁶⁹ Elements of vocality are present throughout Ariosto's poem, as throughout those of his literary antecedents. Thus threads of both the Roman epics and the *Orlando furioso* are woven into each of the following chapters.

Dramatic poetry is an explicitly performative genre, and thus each chapter also considers works for the stage in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: the pairing of a comedy by Isabella Andreini with musical interludes by Bardi's Camerata in Florence in 1589 (Chapter 2); Shakespeare's tragedies (Chapter 3); and Italian pastoral dramas, including the libretti of some of the earliest operas (Chapter 4). In my analyses of dramatic poetry I consider not only the text (rhetoric in language), but also what is known about vocal performance practice (rhetoric in music) and the audience's responses to specific performances. The synthesis of all these elements not only leads to a fuller, more detailed picture of how voice and vocality were understood in the early modern period, but also illuminates the relation of voice to body, gender, power, and identity.

⁶⁹ "The harsh concert, horrible harmony of high wails, of shrieks and cries [. . .] No more, my Lord, no more of this song, for I am already hoarse and would like to rest a while" (ibid).

II. DIVINITY AND THE INEFFABLE: THE SIBYL

The Italian and French language debates of the sixteenth century worked to establish stable political identities and power through the creation of national literatures. The classical archetype of prophetic voice—the Sibyl of Cumae and her Greek antecedent, the Pythia of Delphi—is one that specifically makes statements about political power and stability. As a woman, the Sibyl or Pythia also raises questions of the role of gender in expressions of political power, both because of her exclusion as a woman from the male citizen body, and because the voice in which she prophesied was understood to be the god Apollo's rather than her own.

Historiographical accounts of the Delphic Oracle—by Herodotus, for example—describe the Pythia's consultation in political matters by men in positions of power. For similar purposes the Roman Senate maintained the Sibylline Books, a closely guarded collection of prophecies in Greek hexameter verse that were an important reference in matters of state. Literary representations of oracular utterance also have political resonance. The Oedipus myth is the most famous of several narratives in which an anxious parent receives a prophecy of a child who will rob him of his power and kingship; the same applies to the tales of Perseus and Kronos/Saturn. In each of these cases, any attempt to escape the fated outcome only proves the impotence of human will in the face of divine determination. In these myths the impact of the Pythian statement is often limited to the immediate descendants of the petitioner—his children or grandchildren—and not concerned with future generations. But the Roman Sibyl takes a longer view. The contents of the

Sibylline Books were said to contain predictions for centuries to come, and the books themselves were part of the institutional fabric of Republican Rome. The stability of the nascent Roman Empire—which reinforced a hereditary power structure for the first time in centuries—depended upon, among other things, depicting a clear line of succession from Mount Olympus to the Julio-Claudian clan. When the Sibyl appears in the literature of the Augustan age, she is the herald of dynastic power. As the guide of Aeneas’s underworld journey in *Aeneid* 6, the Sibyl of Cumae introduces Aeneas to his descendants, a parade of great Roman heroes and the civilization that will result directly from his settling in Italy. This same drive toward dynastic power is characteristic of the Sibylline figures of early modern Italy. Like Aeneas, Bradamante in the *Orlando furioso* learns of her princely descendants, the Este dynasty, from an explicitly Sibylline figure: the sorceress and seer Melissa. The theatrical performances for the wedding of Ferdinando de’ Medici and Christine de Lorraine in Florence in 1589, including those by Vittoria Archilei and Isabella Andreini, celebrate the perpetuation of the Medici line and an expansion of the Grand Duke’s power with the conquests to be carried out by his heirs. In particular, the performances of Vittoria Archilei and Isabella Andreini evoke the Sibyl not only in offering predictions of flourishing Medici power, but in the sonic qualities of their vocal performances. Just as the ancient Sibylline utterances prophesied lineages of dynastic power, these early modern Sibyls were, figuratively speaking, members of such a lineage, descendants of the Sibyl of Cumae as she appears in the literature of

the Augustan era: Vergil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, both of which would have been very familiar to early modern readers.¹

Apollo's Voice: The Sibyl in Antiquity

The Sibyls and Pythias are a conflation of myth and history: they were real (human) women serving in a religious office, whose prophecies were sought by heads of state as well as by private citizens. Yet they were also seen as channels for the divine; they translated the utterances of the gods for human ears and offered up their bodies as resonating chambers for Apollo's own voice. Early modern readers would have known the Sibyl and Pythia from mythology and literature, but also from the historiographical works of Plutarch and Herodotus.² For the Greeks, the figure of the Delphic seer emblemized the philosophical unity between breath and voice, merged in the oracle: "god is breath and vapor that come out of the crevices of the earth in

¹ The earliest complete manuscripts of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* date from the mid-to-late eleventh century, with a flourishing tradition from that point onward; there are over 400 known manuscript copies of the complete poem dating from before the print era (William S. Anderson, ed. *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 38-39. The *Metamorphoses* was first printed in Italy in 1471; for a thorough catalogue of early print editions, see Grundy Steiner, "Source-Editions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1471-1500)," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 82 (1951). Vergil's *Aeneid* is the best preserved of the classical texts and has a longer continuous tradition, with manuscript copies dating to the fifth century (R. Deryck Williams, ed. *Aeneid Books I-VI* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2001), xxviii-xxix.) The *editio princeps* was printed in 1469; see Martin Davies and John Goldfinch, *Vergil: A Census of Printed Editions 1469-1500*, Occasional Papers of the Bibliographical Society (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1992).

² The *editio princeps* of Herodotus was printed by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1502 (David Asheri, *A Commentary on Herodotus, Books 1-4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), xv. Herodotus was first translated into Italian in 1533 by Matteo Maria Boiardo (author of the *Orlando innamorato*) and reprinted multiple times over the next few decades (Dennis Looney, *Compromising the Classics: Romance Epic Narrative in the Italian Renaissance* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 67). Plutarch's writings on the Sibyl are found in two of the essays in the anthology known as the *Moralia: De E apud Delphos* (The E at Delphi) and *De Pythiae oraculis* (The Pythia's Oracles). The *Moralia* was also first printed by the Aldine Press.

order to make themselves into speech, through the hoarse voice of the Pythia.”³ The Greek word for this primal breath, *pneuma*, is rendered in Latin as *spiritus* (not an intangible “spirit,” but deriving from the verb *spirare*, to breathe).⁴ Plutarch suggests that the power of prophecy lies in the Delphic *pneuma* (breath) itself, though the seer must still have the intelligence to interpret what is conveyed in the prophetic air.⁵

Vergil’s *Aeneid* is the source for one of the most famous and detailed depictions of a Sibyl, the prophetess of Apollo’s temple at Cumae. The Sibyl is first referenced in *Aeneid* 3 by another priest of Apollo: Helenus, a son of Priam. Aeneas, commanded by the gods to go to Italy, asks Helenus what course he should take. Helenus tells Aeneas of the lands and sea-monsters he can expect to encounter. He instructs Aeneas that once he arrives in Italy, he should go to Cumae to ask for prophecies of his political future: the peoples of Italy, the wars to come, and how he should address each conflict (3.458-9). Cumae, Helenus explains, is home to the “mad prophetess” (*insanam vatem*, 3.443), who sings oracles (*fata canit*, 3.444) and writes them on leaves. As Helenus describes it, ordinary petitioners have only limited access to the prophetess. She records her prophecies on leaves that she arranges inside her temple *in numerum* (3.446), that is, “in order”—this may refer to the chronology

³ Adriana Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 19.

⁴ Adriana Cavarero points out that *pneuma* and *spiritus* are used to translate the Biblical Hebrew term *ruah*, the breath that inspires life, both in the creation of the world out of chaos (Genesis 1:2) and the animation of Adam (Genesis 2:7). *Ibid.*, 20-23.

⁵ Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, 15 vols., vol. 5 (Harvard University Press, 1962; repr., 1962), 469.

of events predicted or the sequence of the lines of verse.⁶ The problem is that when the wind blows the door open, the leaves are scattered and the Sibyl never bothers to re-order them; petitioners leave dissatisfied, hating the Sibyl's temple (3.448-52). Helenus instructs Aeneas, therefore, to entreat the Sibyl to speak her prophecy to him directly instead of writing it down: *precibusque oracula poscas / ipsa canat vocemque volens atque ora resolvat* ("and with prayers demand that she herself sing her oracles and that her willing mouth release her voice," 3.456-7). The prophecies inscribed on leaves are easily displaced, but the *singing or chanting* of the prophecy is vital to Aeneas's success. Vocalization is thus what makes the prophecies comprehensible to petitioners, who cannot grasp the written oracles—in this case, a double vocalization, since only Aeneas's spoken petition can unlock the Sibyl's voice.

Aeneas and the Sibyl finally meet at the start of Book 6:

At pius Aeneas arces, quibus altus Apollo
 praesidet, horrendaeque procul secreta Sibyllae
 antrum immane petit, magnum cui mentem animumque
 Delius inspirat vates, aperitque futura. (*Aen.* 6.9-12)

But pious Aeneas sought the stronghold over which lofty Apollo presides, and far off the cave and the vast hidden recesses of the awesome Sibyl, into whose great mind and spirit breathes the prophet, god of Delos, and lays bare the things to come.⁷

Already there is a sense of possession or encroachment, as the god breathes into (*inspirat*) the Sibyl—recalling the *pneuma* (Latin *spiritus*) of Delphi. The term *vates*,

⁶ Clyde Pharr, ed. *Vergil's Aeneid Books I-VI* (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, Inc., 1998), 176; Williams, *Aeneid Books I-VI*, 306.

⁷ All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

already used in reference to the Sibyl in Book 3, means “prophet” or “seer,” but in Vergil’s literary generation it also takes on the meaning of “poet”—notably through Horace, who styled himself as *vates* both because he “sang” his odes (*canere*, the same verb used for the Sibyl’s chanting and Vergil’s “singing” of his epic) and because he moved in the rarefied world of the great poets. The Sibylline utterances, too, are composed in verse. Plutarch describes the prophetess as a kind of translator, rendering the divine knowledge granted to her by the god into human language. Thus the Sibyl is not merely a vessel; as *vates* she is also author, a (co)-creator of prophetic language.⁸ The Sibyl is also presented as a figure that inspires awe and wonder: she is described as *horrenda*, from *horreo* “to stand on end,” “to bristle”—her presence gives you goosebumps. The term is used here (and elsewhere in Vergil: Camilla is *horrenda virgo* at 11.507) in a primarily positive sense, but it can also refer to something dreadful or terrifying, as in its English cognates, horrible and horrendous. Both the classical Sibyl and her early modern counterparts evoke awe and marvel from their auditors; *meraviglia* is explicitly cultivated in the 1589 Florentine performances, just as its classical counterpart, *admiratio*, is produced in epic poetry.⁹

⁸ “As a matter of fact, the voice [of the Pythia] is not that of a god, nor the utterance of it, nor the diction, nor the metre, but all these are the woman’s; he puts into her mind only these visions, and creates a light in her soul in regard to the future; for inspiration is precisely this” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 5, 275).

⁹ The question of the marvelous—the elements of narrative that moved audiences to delight by offering something novel or unexpected—was the subject of much theoretical debate among sixteenth-century literary critics. It was linked primarily to epic poetry, though the case was also made for its importance in tragedy and comedy. See Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), especially 96, 170, 340, 492, 587, 622-24, and 748-49.

We learn the Sibyl's name, Deiphobe, just before she speaks for the first time (*fatur*, 6.36), not yet prophesying but greeting Aeneas in her own voice.¹⁰ Having ordered him to prepare the sacrifice, she then calls (*vocat*, 6.41) the Trojans into the temple. The Sibyl's prophetic utterance takes place within her cave, a series of chambers burrowed deep into mountainside at Cuma:

Excisum Euboicae latus ingens rupis in antrum,
 quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum;
 unde ruunt totidem voces, responsa Sibyllae.
 Ventum erat ad limen, cum virgo. "Poscere fata
 tempus" ait; "deus, ecce, deus!" Cui talia fanti
 ante fores subito non voltus, non color unus,
 non comptae mansere comae; sed pectus anhelum,
 et rabie fera corda tument; maiorque videri,
 nec mortale sonans, adflata est numine quando
 iam propiore dei. "Cessas in vota precesque,
 Tros" ait "Aenea? Cessas? Neque enim ante dehiscent
 attonitae magna ora domus." Et talia fata
 conticuit. (6.42-54)

The side of the Euboean [Cumaean] cliff is carved out into a huge cave, into the side of which lead a hundred entrances, a hundred mouths, from which rush out as many voices, the responses of the Sibyl. He had come to the threshold, when the virgin said, "It is time to ask for the oracles; the god, behold the god!" Uttering such words before the gates, suddenly her face and color are not the same, her hair does not remain well arranged; but her chest is breathless, and her heart swells with wild rage; and she appears larger and not sounding like a mortal, inspired by the spirit of the god now that it is nearer. "Do you stop your vows and prayers, Trojan Aeneas?" she said. "Do you stop

¹⁰ "Sibyl" in this context is not a given name, but a title—a job description. It is not clear whether the Sibyls' names were usually known to petitioners. Here Vergil states not only a given name but also a patronym ("daughter of Glaucus") and thus a family identity. This is in keeping with how Vergil, imitating Homer, often introduces characters. But it is also somewhat incongruous since for the Sibyl or Pythia, the very nature of her job is to subsume her identity; can she be Deiphobe, daughter of Glaucus while also being the vessel of Apollo? As to the significance of the name itself: "Glaucus" is not an uncommon name, from the Greek *glaukos* ("gray/green"). It recalls the Homeric epithet of "gray-eyed" (*glaukopis*) Athena, another powerful divine female figure. Deiphobe is the feminine form of Deiphobus, a fellow Trojan, a son of Priam and Hecuba who marries Helen after Paris's death (*Aeneid* 2.310). Thus for Aeneas, the name Deiphobe is familiar but also fraught, associated with the destruction of his home and family.

them? For only before [prayers] will the great mouths of the awestruck temple gape open.” And with these utterances she fell silent.¹¹

Vergil describes a plurality of voices as Apollo’s divine voice ventriloquizes a human body, its utterance reverberating and reduplicating through the hundred mouths of the Sibyl’s caves. Yet for all this emphasis on vocalization and orality, qualitative descriptions of sound are curiously absent from the narration. This seems especially strange in comparison with the vivid descriptions of the Sibyl’s physicality. We can see her—disheveled, breathless, struggling, with the appearance of madness (*rabie*, 6.49), and in a body that seems to grow larger in its state of divine possession (*maiorque videri*, 6.49)—but we cannot hear her. She calls on Aeneas and the Trojans to witness the god’s presence by evoking sight (*ecce*), yet the god is not visible except through the changes forced on the Sibyl’s appearance. He is audible, however, as her (human) voice is silenced in the divine presence. But the voice that emanates from the Sibyl’s body remains undescribed. All the poet chooses to tell us of the Sibyl’s voice

¹¹ In requesting the oracle, the Sibyl uses the same word (*poscere*, “ask” or “demand”) that Helenus instructed Aeneas to use. The Latin word for the prophetic utterance, *fata*, brings us somewhat misleadingly to its English cognate, “fate.” In its postclassical usage, “fate” has come to mean what is not merely predicted, but predestined: what is bound to happen. In Latin, however, *fata* does not necessarily carry with it the same sense of determinacy. It derives from the deponent verb *for*, which means to say or to speak: literally, *fata* (neuter plural) are the things that have been spoken. Thus “fate” is not the destined outcome itself, but a prediction of that outcome; it derives its immutability from the weight given to it in utterance, as the utterance of the prophecy frequently sets into motion the events that lead to its fulfillment. *Fata* are powerful not because of their content or semantic meaning, but because of their source, the god speaking through his human vessel, which lends the *fata* authority in the eyes of the petitioner. The word is repeated several times in this passage: as an indicative verb, *fatur* (6.36); as a noun (direct object) in *poscere fata* (6.45); as a present participle (*fanti*, 6.46); and finally as the perfect participle *fata* (6.53, “utterances”). The etymological roots of *fata* connect it to both speech and divinity. More specifically, because it refers to the human capacity for speaking, rather than the content of speech—as in its cognate *infans*, a child not yet capable of speaking—*fata* comes to be associated with oracular utterance “because it is always impersonal, because there is always something confused about it, always something mysterious just as the first beginnings of speech on the lips of a child are mysterious” (Emile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, trans. Elizabeth Palmer (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1973), 412). This impersonal, mysterious force is also associated with *fas*, “divine law.”

is that it is *nec mortale sonans* (6.50): making a sound that is not mortal. There are no adjectives to describe what the voice is (loud, harsh, melodious, hoarse, deep), only what it is not (mortal: a description that is more ontological than auditory). The divine voice refuses to be, as Roland Barthes puts it, “condemned to the adjective”; it is not only capable of expressing the ineffable, it is itself ineffable.¹² Although Barthes is interested in the voices of singers, his focal point at “the border of contact between music and language” opens up his argument to a range of musically-inflected voices—including that of the Roman Sibyl, who is said to chant or sing (*canere*) her prophecies. The structure of both the narrative and the prophecies in dactylic hexameter verse places the Sibyl’s utterances in a hybrid state between speech and song. The divine voice possesses a body equipped with human vocal cords, and its utterance reverberates and reduplicates through the hundred mouths of the Sibyl’s caves (6.43-44); the voice of the Sibyl is apparently of such magnitude and otherworldliness as to defy description.

Although the quality of the Sibyl’s voice lacks description, the form of her utterances is known and indeed is reflected in poetic language. The Pythian and Sybilline prophecies were normally recorded in Greek hexameters (also the meter of epic poetry). The rhythmic form of these utterances—the particular pattern of

¹² “Est-ce que nous sommes condamnés à l’adjectif? Est-ce que nous sommes acculés à ce dilemme : le predicable ou l’ineffable? [. . .] Pour savoir s’il y a des moyens (verbaux) de parler de la musique sans adjectifs, il faudrait [. . .] déplacer la frange de contact de la musique et du langage.” (“Are we condemned to the adjective? Are we forced toward this dilemma: the predicable or the ineffable? [. . .] To know whether there are (verbal) means of talking about music without adjectives, it would be necessary to [. . .] displace the border of contact between music and language.” This point of contact is what Barthes calls the grain of the voice. Roland Barthes, “Le grain de la voix,” *Musique en jeu* 9 (1972), 58.

emphases—does not produce semantic meaning on its own, but it still participates in the signifying process. Julia Kristeva’s categories of phenotext (“language that serves to communicate”) and genotext (a “process” or “topology”) are useful here: the content of the prophecies falls under the category of phenotext, but their topological characteristics—rhythmic or metric shape, timbre and scale of utterance—also lend them signification.¹³

The Sibyl’s initial declaration of the god’s presence is only the beginning of an incremental possession:

At Phoebi nondum patiens immanis in antro
bacchatur vates, magnum si pectore possit
excussisse deum; tanto magis ille fatigat
os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo.
Ostia jamque domus patuere ingentia centum
sponte sua vatisque ferunt responsa per auras. (6.77-82)

But not yet submitting to Phoebus, the priestess wildly rages like a bacchant inside the cave, as if she could shake the great god off of her chest; so much more he wore down her raving mouth, taming her wild heart, and he broke her with pressure. And now the hundred huge doors of the house are laid open and of their own accord the responses of the priestess are borne on the wind.

Talibus ex adyto dictis Cumaea Sibylla
horrendas canit ambages antroque remugit,
obscuris vera involvens: ea frena furenti
concutit et stimulus sub pectore vertit Apollo.
ut primum cessit furor et rabida ora quierunt,
incipit Aeneas... (6.98-103)

With these words, out of the cave the Cumaean Sibyl sang the awesome riddles and roared in the cave, wrapping the truth in darkness: Apollo shook those reins as she was in a frenzy (*furenti*) and twisted the spurs under her chest. As the frenzy (*furor*) subsided and her raving mouth grew quiet, Aeneas began...

¹³ Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 120-23.

Here, too, Vergil's language emphasizes the mortal Sibyl's affiliations with the divine. Somehow the Sibyl embodies both Dionysian and Apollonian qualities; she is forced to submit to Phoebus (*patiens Phoebi*, 6.77) while raving like a follower of Bacchus (*bacchatur*, 6.78). The image is of the prophetess as a wild horse, and Apollo as the equestrian reining her in by force. The verb *patior*, which means to suffer or endure, also means to submit sexually; in fact the possession of the priestess of Apollo was understood in the ancient world as sexual union or impregnation by the god.¹⁴ The contest between passivity and agency—the Sibyl's determination to resist the god—is reflected in the utterances themselves. Her speech is passively borne on the wind through the apertures of the cave, which open of their own accord (*sponte sua*, 6.82). In this passage as elsewhere, mouths appear throughout the Sibyl's milieu: the *os rabidum* of the prophetess, the *ostia* of the cave, the poetic plural *rabida ora*. This oral fixation resurfaces at 6.155, again in a context that robs the Sibyl of the agency to speak at will: *Dixit, pressoque obmutuit ore* ("She spoke, and, her mouth forced shut, she fell silent"). Finally, even after the moment of Apollonian possession and prophetic utterance has passed, the Sibyl is again linked to vocal plurality. The summoning of Hecate gives rise to a sound that seems like a pack of howling dogs ("visaeque canes ululare per umbram," 6.257). The Sibyl shouts her invocation of the goddess: *conclamat* (6.259) contains a suggestion of multiplicity with the prefix *con-*

¹⁴ Lisa Maurizio, "The Voice at the Center of the World: The Pythias' Ambiguity," in *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society*, eds. André Lardinois and Laura McClure (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 46-50.

(together). And as she crosses the threshold into the underworld, she is *furens* once again (6.262), still exhibiting the affect (or after-effect) of divine frenzy.

The plurality of the Sibyl's voice and the hundredfold mouths of her cave are recalled later in *Aeneid* VI as the Sibyl describes to Aeneas the punishments assigned in Tartarus. Her litany of the tormented culminates with Phlegyas the "most wretched" (*miserrimus*, l. 618), who warns of the danger of flouting the gods in a great voice that permeates the darkness: *magna testator voce per umbras* (l. 619). Phlegyas's punishment is the consequence of his burning the temple of Apollo at Delphi—the most sacred oracle in the ancient world and the seat of the Sibyl's Greek predecessor, the Pythia. The Sibyl concludes her narrative:

Non, mihi si linguae centum sint oraque centum,
ferrea vox, omnis scelerum comprehendere formas,
omnia poenarum percurrere nomina possim. (6.625-627)

Not even if I had a hundred tongues or a hundred mouths, a voice of iron, would I be able to grasp the forms of all these crimes, or run through the names of all these punishments.¹⁵

¹⁵ In his catalogue of the denizens of the underworld, Vergil gestures to Homer. The Sibyl's statement here echoes the preface to the catalogue of ships in Book 2 of the *Iliad*:

πληθὺν δ' οὐκ ἄν ἐγὼ μυθήσομαι οὐδ' ὀνομήνω,
οὐδ' εἴ μοι δέκα μὲν γλῶσσαι, δέκα δὲ στόματ' εἴην,
φωνὴ δ' ἄρρηκτος, χάλκεον δέ μοι ἦτορ ἐνεΐη,
εἰ μὴ Ὀλυμπιάδες Μοῦσαι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο
θυγατέρες μνησαίαθ' ὅσοι ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθον. (*Iliad* 2.488-492)

But I could not recount or name the masses, not if I had ten tongues or ten mouths or an unbreakable voice, or if my heart were bronze, if the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, did not call to mind those who came under Ilion.

Homer's image of the multiple mouths and the tireless, hardened voice is a positive one: such a voice as could hope to name all the heroes, but still not succeed without the Muses' inspiration. Vergil's imaged expands on Homer's, darkly and almost parodically: ten mouths become a hundred; the *ἄρρηκτος* voice (unbroken, unbreakable, or invulnerable) is transformed into a strong but corrodable metal. For Vergil, bronze and iron are also associated with the ages of man (a progression he would have known from Hesiod, though perhaps it was also current in myth around the time the Homeric

The allusion to the hundred tongues and mouths recalls *aditus centum, ostia centum* of 6.43. There is a shift from architectural imagery—*aditus* means approach or entrance, while *ostia* may mean the anatomical mouth but more commonly has the sense of an entrance or harbor—to bodily imagery (*linguae, ora*). The Sibyl has access to a hundred mouth-like resonating chambers (*aditus, ostia*) at her shrine, but those are the trappings of her divine occupation; her human self has only a single *lingua* and a single *os*. The mortal vocal apparatus is too small to encompass the vastness of eternal crimes and punishments. To name them all the voice must be made of iron (*ferrea*): the intangible materialized; expression converted into weaponry.

Ovid also tells the story of Aeneas's petition to the Sibyl in the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid does not depict the moment of possession in the detail that Vergil does, but his brief description uses similar language: when the Sibyl first speaks to Aeneas, she is *deo furibunda recepto*, "mad because of the reception of the god" (*Met.* 14.107). As always, *furor* has a specific meaning of divine frenzy, the madness inspired by the channeling of prophecy. But in this case the divine presence is passive (*recepto* from *recipio*, take back or receive); where Vergil's Apollo is represented as making an assault on the Sibyl, Ovid gives agency to the priestess as the one who takes the god into herself (ironic in the context of this Sibyl's narrative, as the reader is about to learn). Indeed the Sibyl's assimilation of the divine appears

poems were recorded): bronze evokes the virtues of warrior culture, while iron is associated with humankind's fallen state of impiety, dishonor and disorder, such as is on display in Tartarus.

so complete that Aeneas cannot tell whether or not she is mortal: *Seu dea tu praesens, seu dis gratissima . . .* (“Whether you are here as a goddess, or as one most welcome to the gods . . .” 14.123). The *vates* sighs deeply (*suspiratibus haustis*, 14.129) before speaking: she is human, and rejects the hubris of attributing divinity to a mortal. She offers Aeneas her story as an object lesson, *neu nescius erres* (“so that you will not err in ignorance,” 14.131):

lux aeterna mihi carituraque fine dabatur,
 si mea virginitas Phoebō *patuisset* amanti.
 Dum tamen hanc sperat dum praecorrumpere donis
 me cupit, “elige” ait, “virgo Cumaea, quid optes:
 optatis potiere tuis.” Ego pulveris hausti
 ostendi cumulum: quot haberet corpora pulvis,
 tot mihi natales contingere vana rogavi;
 excidit, ut peterem iuvenes quoque protinus annos.
 Hos tamen ille mihi dabat aeternamque iuventam,
 si venerem *paterer*: contempto munere Phoebi
 innuba permaneo; sed iam felicitior aetas
 terga dedit, tremuloque gradu venit aegra senectus,
 quae *patienda* diu est (nam iam mihi saecula septem
 acta vides): superest, numeros ut pulveris aequem,
 ter centum messes, ter centum musta videre.
 Tempus erit, cum de tanto me corpore parvam
 longa dies faciet consumptaque membra senecta
 ad minimum redigentur onus: nec amata videbor
 nec placuisse deo; Phoebus quoque forsitan ipse
 vel non cognoscet vel dilexisse negabit:
 usque adeo mutata ferar, nullique videnda,
 voce tamen noscar; vocem mihi fata relinquent.
 (*Met.* 14.132-153; emphases mine)

Light (life) eternal and without end would have been given to me, if my virginity would have *submitted to* Phoebus as a lover. And as he hoped for this while desiring to corrupt me with gifts, he said, “Choose, maiden of Cuma, what you wish for: you will get possession of your wishes.” I pointed to a mound of drawn dust: for as many bodies (particles) of dust as it had, I, empty-headed, asked to reach so many birthdays; but I forgot to ask also for youthful future years. Yet he would have given me these [years] and eternal youth, if I had *submitted to* his lust; I held out, a virgin, in scorn of Phoebus’s

gifts. But now my happier time of life has turned its back, and feeble old age comes with shaking steps, which must be *endured* for a long time (for now you see me having achieved seven centuries): there remains, equal to the number of dust-grains, [for me] to see three hundred harvests, three hundred vintages. There will be a time when the long day will make me so small in body and my limbs so consumed with age that their substance will be reduced to almost-nothingness. I will not seem to have been loved, nor to have pleased a god; and perhaps even Phoebus himself will either not recognize me or deny having favored me. But even if I am said to have changed so greatly that I am recognized by no one, yet by my voice I will be known: the fates (utterances) will leave my voice to me.

Forms of the verb *patior* appear three times in this passage, recalling Vergil's *patiens* at *Aen.* 6.77; where Vergil only implies sexual force, Ovid makes it explicit in the narrative of the Sibyl's resistance to Apollo's pursuit. But although the Sibyl succeeds in turning away her would-be lover, she is stalked by implacable, inescapable old age. The Sibyl's condition, it seems, is always to be in submission to some outside force; having rejected the short-term suffering of a sexual encounter with Apollo, she is still bound in the long term by the god's possession in giving divine utterances, as well as the gradual loss of agency and action as her body is possessed by old age. In addition to the verbal echo of *patuisset, paterer, patienda est*, the Sibyl's gathered-up sighs in response to Aeneas's inquiry (*suspiratibus haustis*, 14.129) foreshadow the pile of dust (*hausti pulveris*, 14.136) into which her body will eventually dissolve.¹⁶

¹⁶ This version of the story does not appear before Ovid (K. Sara Myers, ed. *Ovid Metamorphoses: Book XIV* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 83). It contains an obvious parallel to the Cassandra myth in the seer's refusal of Apollo's amorous overtures (*Iliad* XXIV.699-706, *Odyssey* XI.421-3, *Aeneid* II.246-9). For Cassandra, however, whose prophecies will always be rejected by listeners, utterance becomes her punishment rather than her mode of survival. The truth of the Ovidian Sibyl's prophecies is never called into question, but she still fears that no one will believe in her former life as an object of godly desire. Her longevity lends the Sibyl's voice a superhuman quality, the authority of a divine gift and survival beyond the confines of her body; but Cassandra's voice, entirely

Even when her physical body disappears, however, the Sibyl's voice remains her essence and means of recognition; it can be separated from her body, but not from *her*. "The *fata* will leave my voice to me," she declares, and though *fata* could mean "fates" in the general sense of fated events or divine will, in the mouth of a priestess it must refer to the divine utterances themselves. Indeed, the placement of *fata*, here echoing *ferar* ("I am said"), highlights its etymological root in speech.¹⁷ The *fata* (oracular utterances) are both the substance of the voice and the agency of its survival.

Early Modern Sibyls

Both the Vergilian and the Ovidian Sibyls are invoked in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1532), in several moments of prophetic speech and most strikingly in the figure of Merlin, a transplant from Arthurian legend. He is introduced in Canto 3 of the *Furioso*, in the thick of a complex web of pursuit and misdirection. Bradamante, a female knight-errant, has been betrayed by her traveling companion, an unrecognized enemy. In Canto 2, intending to rescue a maiden being held captive in an underground chasm, Bradamante is dropped into the abyss by her companion and

human and bound to her body, fails to persuade her hearers of the truth and is permanently silenced at her death.

In the passages of the *Moralia* discussing the Delphic oracle, Plutarch offers a few alternate versions of the Sibyl's fate: "that even after death she shall not cease from prophesying, but that she shall go round and round in the moon, becoming what is called the face that appears in the moon; while her spirit, mingled with the air, shall be for ever orned onward in voices of presage and portent; and since from her body, transformed within the earth, grass and herbage shall spring, on this shall pasture the creatures reared for the holy sacrifice, and they shall acquire all manner of colours and forms and qualities upon their inward parts, from which shall come for men prognositications of the future" (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 5, 281.)

¹⁷ Myers, *Ovid Metamorphoses: Book XIV*, 87.

abandoned there with no means of escape. Like Aeneas, she undertakes a *katabasis*, or a journey to a sort of underworld—in this case begun accidentally, but with a similar result in the revelation of the dynasty she will found.

The cavern Bradamante encounters, like the Vergilian Sibyl's cave, extends into a mountainside. There is a descent of over thirty yards, at the bottom of which, instead of the hundred apertures of the Sibylline grotto, is a single enormous doorway opening onto a spacious chamber (2.70.4-2.71.2). Canto 2 concludes with Bradamante lying dazed and shaken after her fall down to the doorway; Canto 3 begins, as always, with a proem, a momentary departure from the narrative. Although the *Orlando furioso* opens with a nod to both classical epic and the medieval romance (*Le donne, i cavallier, l'arme, gli amori, / le cortesie, l'audaci imprese io canto*), notably absent is any invocation of the Muse. The proem of Canto 1 is dedicated to Ariosto's patron, Ippolito d'Este, while the proem of Canto 2 is an apostrophe to Love. Only in the third canto does the author include the anticipated classical invocation: not of the expected Muse (in fact, the Muses go unmentioned until Canto 37), but of Apollo, the god of oracular utterance and also of lyric poetry and song.

The narrator petitions him:

Chi mi darà la voce e le parole
convenienti a sí nobil soggetto?
chi l'ale al verso presterà, che vole
tanto ch'arrivi all'alto mio concetto?
Molto maggior di quel furor che suole,
ben or convien che mi riscaldi il petto:
che questa parte al mio signor si debbe,
che canta gli avi onde l'origine ebbe:
di cui fra tutti li signori illustri,

dal ciel sortiti a governar la terra,
non vedi, o Febo, che 'l gran mondo lustri,
piú glorïosa stirpe o in pace o in guerra;
né che sua nobiltade abbia piú lustri
servata, e servarà (s'in me non erra
quel profetico lume che m'inspiri)
fin che d'intorno al polo il ciel s'aggiri. (3.1.1-3.2.8)

Who will give me the voice and words appropriate to such a noble subject? Who will lend wings to my verse, which requires so much in order to reach the height of my idea? Much greater than that accustomed frenzy (*furor*) is the one that now ought to burn in my heart: because this part is owed to my lord, that I sing to him the ancestors from which he comes. Among all illustrious lords fated by heaven to govern the earth, you do not see, o Phoebus, illuminator of the great world, a more glorious lineage either in peace or in war; nor one whose nobility has retained more illustrious men, and will maintain (if that prophetic light that inspires me is not in error) as long as the heavens orbit the pole.

Ariosto asks the god for the means to tell his story: first a voice (*voce*), then words (*parole*). The language of these two octaves is rich with images of oracular utterance: the *furor* that burns within the poet, the prophetic light that inspires him, and the possibility of human error even in the presence of a divine truth (*s'in me non erra*). The lyre of Apollo, he continues, is so much more powerful than the poet's own that it was able to quell the revolt of the Titans (*i giganti furori*, 3.3.3). But Ariosto then abandons the image of the oracular instrument for the better tools he might receive from the god (*S'instrumenti avrò mai da te migliori*, 3.3.5). The poet-sculptor, carving both his literary inventions and his Este patrons in stone, is powered not by the divine furor, but by his own wit and labor (*ogni mia fatica, ogni mio ingegno*, 3.3.8).

When Bradamante recovers consciousness after her fall, she is greeted by name by a stranger, Melissa, whose bare feet, loose garment and flowing hair identify

her as a priestess or sorceress. Melissa claims that the “prophetic spirit of Merlin” has forewarned her of Bradamante’s arrival (3.9.4). The cave, she says, was built (*edificò*, 3.10.2) by Merlin himself, and was the site of his betrayal by the Lady of the Lake.

The *maga* continues:

Il sepolcro è qui giù, dove corrotta
giace la carne sua; dove egli, vago
di sodisfare a lei, che glil suase,
vivo corcossi, e morto ci rimase.

Col corpo morto il vivo spirto alberga,
sin ch’oda il suon de l’angelica tromba
che dal ciel lo bandisca o che ve l’erga,
secondo che sarà corvo o colomba.
Vive la voce; e come chiara emerga,
udir potrai da la marmorea tomba,
che le passate e le future cose
a chi gli domandò, sempre rispose. (3.10.5-3.11.8)

The tomb is here below, where his rotting flesh lies; where he, desirous to please her who persuaded him, lay down alive and remained there dead. His living spirit dwells with his dead body, until it will hear the sound of the angelic trumpet from heaven that will banish him or raise him up, according to whether he is a raven or a dove. The voice lives; and as it emerges clearly, you will be able to hear from out of the marble tomb, because he always responds to those who ask him about things past and future.

Like the Ovidian Sibyl, Merlin possesses a voice that will endure after his body dissolves to dust. (It is ironic that where the Ovidian Sibyl will lose her body because of her resistance to a lover, Merlin’s fate is the result of his desire to please the woman he loves.) Indeed, his voice possesses a marked vitality—it lives (*vive la voce*), in contrast to the passive recognition that the Ovidian Sibyl’s voice will achieve (*voce tamen noscar*). Merlin’s tomb, which is intricately carved, recalls Ariosto’s metaphor of poet as sculptor (3.3). The voice that issues from within it is *chiarissima* (3.16.4), very clear or bright: the first description of vocal quality to

appear in any of these texts, yet one that is not sufficiently descriptive to allow us to imagine the sound of this voice. The word that identifies Merlin's speech, *favella* (3.16.4), shares its root with the Latin *fata* and *for* (speaking; prophetic utterance). Merlin's speech is indeed the stuff of prophecy, as it enumerates Bradamante's descendants. After introducing the subject of his discourse, however, Merlin's voice falls silent and leaves the sorceress—Melissa, whose name we do not learn until Canto 7—to take over the narrative, revealing to Bradamante her descendants in the Este dynasty.

Though Melissa would appear to be analogous to the Sibyl figure in Vergil and Ovid, as the (female) source of information about the hero's dynastic future, Merlin is a closer parallel, particularly to Ovid's version. Melissa does share the Sibyl's awesome power: upon meeting the prophetess and hearing her speak, Bradamante is awestruck (*sbigottita*, 3.13.1) and "has a heart so full of wonder that she does not know if she is sleeping or awake" (*et ha sì pieno il cor di meraviglia, / che non sa d'ella dorme o s'ella è desta*, 3.13.3-4). Yet the element of possession or divine frenzy is entirely missing from Melissa's presentation. She embodies, if anything, the opposite of *furor*: she is calm, rational, and calculating—cruelly so, as we learn from the revelation of a past trick in Canto 43. Rather, the poet himself is most closely analogous to the Sibylline here, as he gives himself over to the divine *furor* of Apollo and the gifts of lyric utterance (3.1.5). *Furor*, here as in Vergil, evokes the divine frenzy of the seer. Ariosto positions himself within the ancient

tradition of the vatic poets (poet as *vates*); at the same time, he links himself with his hero Orlando, who is *furioso* (frenzied) in a madness brought on by love.

Staged Sibyls: Florence, 1589

The Medici wedding of 1589 at which Vittoria Archilei and Isabella Andreini performed was crucial for re-invigorating a dynastic lineage that had been threatened in recent years. The groom, Ferdinando de' Medici, had been a cardinal in Rome, but left the Church in order to return to Florence and assume the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany from his brother, Francesco, who died in 1587 without an heir. As a former cleric, Ferdinando had never been married and had no (legitimate) children; thus a successful marriage that would produce children was essential for stabilizing Medici power. His union with a French (Valois) princess, Christine de Lorraine, was meant to ease Tuscany's dependence on Hapsburg Spain and balance power influences between Spain and France.¹⁸ The match also strengthened the cultural and political ties already established between the Medici and the French court; Christine was the granddaughter of Catherine de' Medici. It was a marriage designed to bolster Ferdinando's "territorial and dynastic ambitions."¹⁹

The wedding was marked by a month of *feste* (public festivals), designed to celebrate the marriage, welcome the bride to Florence, and to put the Medici wealth and power on display, specifically by showcasing the brilliance of the artists under

¹⁸ Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for La Pellegrina* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 11.

¹⁹ Karen Newman, "The Politics of Spectacle: *La Pellegrina* and the Intermezzi of 1589," *MLN* 101, no. 1 (1986): 97.

Medici patronage. These celebrations and performances were widely documented in both printed materials and surviving manuscript sources, and have been widely studied by modern scholars.²⁰ The best known of the Medici wedding performances are without question the musical interludes (*intermezzi*) that debuted between the acts of the comedy *La Pellegrina* on May 2, 1589.²¹ These are notable both for the innovative stagecraft (machinery and effects) used in their creation and for their place in music history as the first major public project of the so-called Florentine Camerata under the patronage of Giovanni de' Bardi.²²

Another performance from the 1589 Medici wedding that has gained attention in recent years, due in part to increased scholarly activity on the writings and performances of early modern women, is the comedy *La Pazzia d'Isabella*, created and performed by actress and poet Isabella Andreini.²³ As a *commedia dell'arte* piece

²⁰ For a comprehensive study of the wedding festivities and performances, see James M. Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

²¹ For a comprehensive study of the *Pellegrina* interludes, see Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*. For a modern edition of the music, see Cristofano Malvezzi and Daniel Pickering Walker, *Musique des intermèdes de La Pellegrina* (Paris: Ed. du Centre Nat. de la Recherche Scientifique, 1963).

²² For more on the activities of these groups of Florentine musicians and poets and their different incarnations under the patronage of Bardi in the 1570s-80s and Jacopo Corsi in the 1590s, see Chapter 1, especially page 45 n. 57. For further reading: Claude V. Palisca, *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) and John Walter Hill, *Baroque Music: Music in Western Europe 1580-1750* (New York: Norton, 2005), 25-26.

²³ Recent work on the *Pazzia* includes Anne MacNeil, "The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 120, no. 2 (1995): 195-215 and *Music and Women of the Commedia Dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 32-76; and Robert Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 100-05. Other noteworthy studies of Andreini's broader theatrical and literary output include Ferdinando Taviani, "Bella d'Asia. Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l'immortalità," *Paragone* 35, no. 408-410 (1984): 3-76 and the chapter "Between Stage and Page: The Letters of Isabella Andreini" in Meredith K. Ray, *Writing Gender in Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 157-83.

it has no extant script,²⁴ but eyewitness accounts of the production provide a fairly detailed description of Andreini's performance. Andreini's company, the Gelosi, presented two comedies: *La zingara* (The Gypsy), starring Vittoria Piissimi, on May 5 or 6, and *Pazzia* on May 13.²⁵ The musical interludes that premièred with *La Pellegrina*—and in fact are still referred to as the *Pellegrina* interludes—had additional performances with the Gelosi productions. While the *Pellegrina* interludes and *La Pazzia d'Isabella* are self-contained performances—the interludes so mobile that they were presented with three entirely different comedies without any concern for narrative or thematic continuity—they also fit together suggestively. The pairing of two strong professional female author-performers, Andreini and Archilei, is noteworthy. So too is the interweaving of divine or divinely-inspired female voices, of Archilei as Dorian Harmony and Andreini as the frenzied *innamorata*. Furthermore, the elements of musicality present in the literature of the ancient Sibyl—the association with Apollo as the god of music and lyric, the use of hexameters, the verb *canere* (sing or chant) to describe the act of utterance—are not merely implicit in the early modern sources, but fully realized. In the case of Archilei, a version of her song has survived in the published score to the *Pellegrina* interludes;

²⁴ *Commedia dell'arte* was form of theater that did not use fully scripted dialogue, but was partially improvised from detailed scenarios that described the action scene by scene. These scenarios served as the basis for ever-evolving performances by professional acting companies. Flaminio Scala's *commedia dell'arte* scenarios of 1611 include a scenario of a play called *La Pazzia d'Isabella*, and while this may have elements in common with Andreini's performance—some elements of stage madness, after all, were conventional to the *commedia dell'arte* performance tradition—it is probably not the same scenario from which Andreini and her company worked. See Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell'Arte*, 100-05 and Flaminio Scala, *Il teatro delle favole rappresentative, ovvero la ricreatione comica, boscareccia, e tragica* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Pulciani, 1611), 114-18.

²⁵ Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, 37.

in the case of Andreini, although we cannot identify with precision the songs she performed in *La Pazzia*, we have a wealth of information about the musical forms available to her and can make educated guesses about what she might have used in performance.²⁶ Thus these early modern sibyls, even more than their ancient counterparts, give us access to the Barthesian “grain” of the voice—the point at which language and music intersect:

C’est ce déplacement que je voudrais esquisser, non à propos de toute la musique mais seulement d’une partie de la musique chantée (*lied* ou *mélodie*) : espace (genre) très précis où *une langue rencontre une voix*. Je donnerai tout de suite un nom à ce signifiant au niveau duquel, je crois, la tentation de l’éthos peut être liquidée—et donc l’adjectif congédié : ce sera le *grain* : le grain de la voix, lorsque celle-ci est en double posture, en double production : de langue et de musique.²⁷

It is this displacement [of the border of contact between music and language] that I would like to sketch out, not in relation to all music but only to some kinds of vocal music (*lied* or *mélodie*): a very specific space (genre) where *a language* [or tongue] *encounters a voice*. I will give a name to this signifier right away, at which level, I believe, the temptation of ethos²⁸ can be cleared away – and thus the adjective dismissed: that would be the *grain*: the grain of the voice, while it is in double posture, in double production of language and music.

²⁶ For a discussion of the songs in Andreini’s *Pazzia*, see MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia Dell’Arte*, 61-74.

²⁷ Barthes, “Le grain de la voix,” 58.

²⁸ Barthes asserts earlier in his essay: “l’adjectif musical devient en effet légal, chaque fois qu’on postule un *ethos* de la musique, c’est-à-dire chaque fois qu’on lui attribue un mode régulier (naturel ou magique) de signification” (“The musical adjective becomes legal whenever an ethos of music is postulated, each time, that is, that music is attributed a regular—natural or magical—mode of signification,” *ibid.*, 57). That is, describing music in adjectival terms is acceptable when music consistently signifies something in particular: for example, the “coded” modes of ancient Greek music that were thought to signify and/or produce in the listener certain affects, a theory also current among early modern music theorists (see Claude V. Palisca, *Humanism in Italian Renaissance Musical Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 12-15).

For both Archilei and Andreini, the “grain of the voice” occurs at the meeting place of language and vocal production—and for these Sibylline figures, at the point of contact between divine voice and human language.

The performances of Archilei and Andreini are in many ways characteristic of Sibylline utterance. Appropriately, their placement at the Medici court provides a further link to the ancient figure of the Sibyl. Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century the Medici court adopted Apollo as one of its emblematic figures, with visual and literary allusions to the god and his attributes in artwork and material culture.²⁹ Ferdinando de’ Medici embraced the aura of divine power associated with his role as Grand Duke and “continued to cultivate this association” with the figure of Apollo.³⁰ Indeed, the *Pellegrina* interludes address this association explicitly, as the third *intermedio* depicts a divine intervention by Apollo in the slaying of the Python.³¹

The first *Pellegrina* interlude showcased a solo performance by Vittoria Archilei. The lyrics to her song, “Dalle più alte sfere” (From the highest spheres) were by Giovanni de’ Bardi; the musical setting was most likely composed by Archilei herself, perhaps in collaboration with her husband Antonio.³² Her entrance as Dorian Harmony, descending from the clouds singing and accompanying herself on

²⁹ Barbara Russano Hanning, “Glorious Apollo: Poetic and Political Themes in the First Opera,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (1979): 492-93.

³⁰ Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 105.

³¹ For a reading of the third *intermedio* and its implications in the performance of Medici power, see Treadwell, *Music and Wonder*, 103-112. The Python was a monster that reigned over Delphi until Apollo killed it; Delphi then became the site of the oracle and the *omphalos* (“navel,” the center of the world). This is the source of the Pythia’s title and Apollo’s epithet “Pythian.”

³² For more on the authorship of “Dalle più alte sfere,” see Nina Treadwell, “She Descended on a Cloud ‘from the Highest Spheres’: Florentine Monody ‘Alla Romanina,’” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no. 1 (2004).

the lute, was a moment of pure vocal vibrancy, in which any sense of meaning ceased to matter in the face of the indescribably sweet timbre of her voice and the dazzling virtuosity of her florid singing style. The impact of Vittoria Archilei's crystalline soprano, moving through the *passaggi* with rapid grace, was probably due more to the timbre of her voice and her dazzling entrance than to the power of the lyrics she sang—indeed, the lyrics may not have even been precisely understood by her auditors, according to eyewitness accounts.³³ Furthermore, spectators' records indicate that they identified her not as the platonic allegory she was intended to represent, but as an "angel," thus investing her with divinity. In Kristeva's terms, the phenotext (Barthes's phenosong) loses ground to the genotext (genosong): the non-semantic aspects of the song are the most impactful. In Cavarero's terms, Vittoria Archilei's performance is a compelling examples of the displacement of *logos*, in which the essential, material qualities of the embodied voice supersede meaning and evoke a sense of marvel, wonder, and divine inspiration. Vittoria Archilei's vocal performance evoked a sense of the ineffable not only through the quality of her voice, but through its melodic overabundance, its decorative excesses.

Cavarero's philosophy of voice highlights a tension between the masculine, intellectual aspects of musical theory and composition and the feminine, affective experience of singing or hearing a singer: "Where there is song, melody, and a voice, then there is generally a feminine experience, whether or not the composer or performer is a man [...] When, on the other hand, the words and their meaning come

³³ *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 67-72.

to the fore, then it is a masculine experience in which the intellect reigns sovereign.”³⁴ This tension is vividly illustrated by Vittoria Archilei’s performance in the *Pellegrina* interludes. The (male) authors of the interludes cast Archilei as Dorian Harmony, an allusion to Plato’s *Republic*.³⁵ This nod to humanist learning, however, appears to have been superfluous to auditors captivated by the “ineffable sweetness” of her voice, according to the testaments of those who saw her perform. Eyewitnesses identified her as an “angel,” not an allegory; and “everyone said that it was impossible that a human voice could be so sweet [and she] also so moved all the spectators with her singing that they just could not describe it,” noted German visitor Barthold von Gadenstedt, who recorded his impressions of Archilei’s performance in a manuscript diary.³⁶ At the same time, Archilei’s colleague, the composer and singer Jacopo Peri, attributed her great skill as an improvisatory singer to her *ingegno*, or creative genius, a masculine quality.³⁷ Archilei’s *ingegno* for improvising musical embellishment and the vocal technique that made it possible—*disposizione di voce*—together serve in the production of *meraviglia*.³⁸

Cavarero’s theory of gender difference in music also poses an interesting counterpoint to sixteenth-century ideas of gendered music. Early modern music

³⁴ Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice*, 122.

³⁵ The reference is to the Myth of Er in Book 10 of the *Republic*, which describes the arrangement of the planets in eight concentric circles. On each planet sits a Siren, “singing one sound, one note, so that from all the eight there was one concord”: in other words, the music of the spheres (Plato, “The Republic,” in *Great Dialogues of Plato*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse (New York: Penguin, 1956), 418). Plato does not specify what harmony the Sirens produce; Bardi chose the Dorian mode, which Plato identifies in *Republic* 3 as being superior to other modes in its moral effect on the listener (Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 68-69).

³⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 70.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁸ See Chapter 1, pp. 45-49 for a fuller discussion of *disposizione* as both a singing technique and a rhetorical strategy.

theorists distinguished between “masculine” and “feminine” modalities in composition as well as performance. For audiences in the 1580s and 1590s, it is likely that, as Laurie Stras points out, “masculinity or femininity were not invoked only through vocal tessitura or rhythmic declamation, but also in the arrangement and relationships of pitches within the polyphonic [harmonic] fabric.”³⁹ It is an intriguing thought that Archilei’s *Dalle più alte sfere* and other monodic songs may have invoked gender in their harmonic patterns. Such an analysis, however, is more challenging for Archilei’s song than for madrigals that Stras cites because of the form of the musical notation. The instrumental accompaniment for Archilei’s song was published two years after the performance as a four-part score, in chordal parts rather than the basso continuo line that later became standard. The four-part score represents a much more complex performance arrangement of three plucked-string players: Archilei on the lute as she sang, and two chitarroni accompanying her from offstage.⁴⁰ The four-part score is likely meant to be treated as one bass line, a simplified chordal redaction of what the plucked strings played, but does not tell us much about how Archilei and the other instrumentalists might have realized the accompaniment in performance.⁴¹

Some of the marvel of Archilei’s performance was also generated by the visual presentation, which contrasted her fluid, rapidly moving voice with the stillness of her body. The machinery that lowered Archilei onto the stage moved very

³⁹ Laurie Stras, “*Le nonne della ninfa*: Feminine Voices and Modal Rhetoric in the Generations before Monteverdi,” in *Gender, Sexuality, and Early Music*, ed. Todd M. Borgerding (New York: Routledge, 2002), 125.

⁴⁰ Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 71.

⁴¹ Stras, “*Le nonne della ninfa*,” 125.

gradually, to give the spectators the impression that the singer was floating; moreover, Archilei's movements were limited by the fact that she accompanied herself on the lute as she sang, and had to restrict her movements in order to be able to execute the florid *passaggi*.⁴² Archilei's voice gave the impression of being freed from the constraints of her body, resonating throughout the theater while she herself remained fixed in place; as with Ovid's Sibyl and Ariosto's Merlin, a voice unlinked from the corporeal form, whose divine utterances (sung or spoken) inspired awe in those who heard it.

Similarly, the success of Isabella Andreini's performance in *La Pazzia d'Isabella* depended less on semantic meaning of text than on extratextual elements such as voice, body, and affect. Andreini's performance of madness in fact demonstrates the failures of communicative language (phenotext). In her frenzy the protagonist Isabella speaks in several languages, which may not have been comprehensible to her audience. She also breaks away from the prose dialogue of the comedy in brief passages of verse and song. Although Andreini's scenario for the comedy has not survived, an eyewitness to the Medici wedding festivities, Giuseppe Pavoni, offered a description of the performance. Isabella, having planned to elope with her lover Fileno, is intercepted and abducted by Flavio, an unwanted suitor:

L'Isabella in tanto trovandosi ingannata dall'insidie di Flavio, ne sapendo pigliar rimedio al suo male, si diede del tutto in preda al dolore, & così vinta dalla passione, e lasciandosi superare alla rabbia, & al furore uscì fuori di se stessa, & come pazza se n'andava scorrendo per la Cittade, fermando hor questo, & hor quello, e parlando hora in Spagnuolo, hora in Greco, hora in Italiano, & molti altri linguaggi, ma tutti fuor di proposito: e tra le altre cose si

⁴² Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 71.

mise a parlar Francese, & a cantar certe canzonette pure alla Francese, che diedero tanto diletto alla Sereniss. Sposa, che maggiore non si potria esprimere. Si mise poi ad imitare li linguaggi di tutti li suoi Comici, come del Pantalone, del Gratino, del Zanni, del Pedrolino, del Francatrippa, del Burattino, del Capitan Cardone, & della Franceschina tanto naturalmente, & con tanto dispropositi, che non è possibile il poter con la lingua narrare il valore, & la virtù di questa Donna.⁴³

Isabella, thus finding herself deceived by Flavio's treachery, not knowing how to remedy her harm, gave herself over entirely as prey to sorrow, and thus conquered by passion, and letting herself be overcome by rage and frenzy (*furore*), she went out of herself, and like a madwoman went running through the city, stopping now here and now there, and speaking now in Spanish, now in Greek, now in Italian, and many other languages, but always beyond meaning (*fuor di proposito*). And among these other things she started to speak French, and to sing certain *canzonette* even in the French style, which gave so much delight to the most serene bride, that one could not express a greater one. Then she began to imitate the languages of all her comic actors, like that of Pantalone, of Gratino, Zanni, Pedrolino, Francatrippa, Burattino, Captain Cardone, and Franceschina, so naturally and with such a nonsensical manner (*disproposito*) that one cannot put into words the valor and prowess (*virtù*) of this lady.

Two elements of Pavoni's description are particularly noteworthy. First, the language of Isabella succumbing to madness: love-madness as a predatory force, a type of possession. Isabella "gives herself over as prey," is "conquered" and "overcome" by her frenzy just as the Sibyl is *patiens* in relation to the divine possession. Pavoni, like Ariosto, refers to love-madness as *furore* with full awareness of its oracular associations; *rabbia*, too, recalls the *rabie fera* of the Vergilian Sibyl. Also striking is Pavoni's repeated insistence on the failures of language as a means of communication. Despite speech in multiple languages, only some of which may be understood by any given set of Florentine or foreign audience members, questions of

⁴³ Giuseppe Pavoni, *Diario descritto . . . delle feste celebrate nelle solennissime nozze delli Serenissimi Sposi, il Sig. Don Ferdinando Medici, & la Sig. Donna Christina di Loreno Gran Duchi di Toscana* (Bologna: Giovanni Rossi, 1589), 45.

translation are never raised. All of Isabella's mad speech is categorized as external to *proposito*, or intentional meaning.⁴⁴ The impersonations of the stock *commedia* figures are also linguistically variant; different characters were associated with different cities or regions, so Isabella imitates their dialects as well as their behaviors. Language itself is a means of engendering *meraviglia* for an audience, according to sixteenth-century critics.⁴⁵ Andreini's performance succeeds in producing language-driven marvels by combining verse song with prose speech in a manner that, though heightened, achieves a kind of affective verisimilitude—that is, it convincingly portrays Isabella's emotional states—because it is “adapted to the condition” of the comedy's heroine. But language fails Christine de Lorraine and the rest of the audience, as Pavoni suggests, with the *impossibility of expressing* the delight they took from Andreini's performance—a statement applied to Archilei's singing as well.

Isabella's speech and songs in French were offered as a gift to Christine de Lorraine; according to Pavoni the princess found them pleasing and, one imagines, welcomed the chance to hear a bit of dialogue in her native tongue. While the French-style *canzonette* were not out of place in this humanist spectacle, there is an unmistakable irony in the selection of a highly formalized, academic, classically

⁴⁴ John Florio's 1611 Italian-English dictionary defines *proposito*: “a purpose, an intent, a meaning, a deliberation. Also any subject spoken of” (“Proposito” in John Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionary of the Italian and English Tongues* (London: Melch. Bradwood, 1611), 405).

⁴⁵ “Diction and verse constitute another qualitative part capable of producing the marvelous. In comedy and tragedy the audience is astonished by the fact that verse can so completely resemble prose and that it can so well be adapted to the conditions of the personages” (Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 624). Weinberg summarizes a 1586 treatise on poetics by Giason Denores, *Discorso intorno à que' principii, cause, et accrescimenti, che la comedia, la tragedia, et il poema heroico ricevono dalla philosophia morale, & civile, & da governatori delle republiche*.

idealized style of song in a performance of madness: ordered, eloquent, rational discourse at the height of Isabella's irrationality.⁴⁶

Eventually Isabella's wits are restored by means of a magic potion, and the play ends, presumably with Isabella reunited with her beloved Fileno (Pavoni does not say so explicitly, but the classification of the play as a comedy suggests that it ends with the lovers reunited and bound for marriage):

. . . ritornò nel suo primo essere, & quivi con elegante, & dotto stile esplicando le passioni d'amore, & i travagli, che provano quelli, che si ritrovano in simil panie involti, si fece fine alla Comedia; mostrando nel recitar questa pazzia il suo sano, e dotto intelletto; lasciando l'Isabella tal mormorio, & meraviglia ne gli ascoltatori, che mentre durerà il mondo, sempre sarà lodata la sua bella eloquenza, & valore.⁴⁷

. . . she returned to her original state, and there, in an elegant and learned style explaining the passions of love and the hardships that those people suffer who find themselves caught in similar traps, the comedy came to an end, demonstrating in the performance of this madness her sane and learned intellect. Isabella left such murmuring and marvel among her listeners, that as long as the world endures, her beautiful eloquence and valor will always be praised.

The *passioni d'amore* that Isabella suffered are linked etymologically to *patior*: the sufferings of love, or the things endured for the sake of love (a sense that is all but lost in the English cognate "passion"). *Pazzo* and *pazzia* are also cognates.⁴⁸ There is a continued emphasis on the auditory elements of her performance: her audience are not *spettatori* but *ascoltatori*; the marvel (*meraviglia*) of her performance is manifested in their murmurs. Praise goes to her *virtù* and *valore*, but also to Isabella's

⁴⁶ "[R]eference to this form and style in late-sixteenth-century Italy implies the influence of Pierre de Ronsard and of Jean-Antoine de Baif's Académie de Poésie et Musique in Paris, whose members sought to revive classical ideals" (MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia Dell'Arte*, 62).

⁴⁷ Pavoni, *Diario*, 46.

⁴⁸ Ottorino Pianigiani, *Vocabolario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana*, www.etimo.it.

(Andreini's) learning and eloquence. The evocation of eloquence is strangely placed at the end of a passage whose focus has been on the impossibility of eloquence, the futility of frenzied speech, and the ineffability of marvel and delight. Eloquence belongs to the realm of the *sano intelletto*, the sane intellect; the great *virtù* or *valore* of the author-actress is her skill in deploying eloquence to perform madness.

Madness, it seems, would be by its nature inarticulate. Indeed, nothing in Isabella's speech or language communicates meaning (as "eloquence" implies); her audience must look to nonlinguistic (genotextual) cues, such as her affect, the tone and timbre of her voice, the melodies of the *canzonette*. Yet eloquence is also a frequent trait of the *abbandonata*, the madwoman, and other sexually or morally suspect females⁴⁹ in literature and drama. Vergil's Dido, Ariosto's Olimpia, Monteverdi's Arianna, and other heroines deploy rhetoric as a means of self-preservation: "whether threatened by madness or abandoning *pudicitia* through the sheer inability to shoulder the weight of their misfortunes, they assume the masculine power of rhetoric to speak for themselves."⁵⁰ Furthermore, the type of madness that possesses Isabella is characteristic of the divine *furor* in a state linked with Sibylline prophecy. As a comic heroine, Isabella is able to reclaim her sanity and honor at the end of the play; as a learned and renowned (and, in the public view, happily married)

⁴⁹ "Once a woman becomes sexually aware, not necessarily even to the point of becoming sexually active, her *virtù* was vulnerable, and she whose sexuality was thwarted by whatever means—a betrayal, abandonment, loveless wedlock, bereavement—was considered to be at risk of losing her sanity" (Stras, "*Le nonne della ninfa*," 128).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

actress⁵¹—and more importantly, one whose carefully crafted stage image employs desirable elements of masculinity (erudition) in an “intellectual transcendence of her sex”—Andreini’s display of rhetorical prowess only enhanced her *virtù*.⁵²

Andreini’s authorial voice—that is, her learned intellect—joins her (embodied) speaking/singing voice in a performance of divine madness. The “grain” of her voice is the intersection of language(s) and music, both in the *canzonette alla francese* and in the modulations of pitch and timbre that were part of her performance. The “grain” is also, Barthes suggests, “the body in the voice that sings, in the hand that writes, in the limb that acts” (*le corps dans la voix qui chante, dans la main qui écrit, dans le membre qui exécute*). There is also, Barthes maintains, an erotic relationship between the body of the listener and the body of the singer, the source of the *jouissance* of listening.⁵³ In the humanist view, too, there is an element of pleasure in the experience of *meraviglia*.⁵⁴ Julius Caesar Scaliger’s treatise on poetic arts, *Poetices libri septem* (1561), offers the following definition of pleasure:

For pleasure is an effect produced on the soul in a sound body. The cause of this effect is what the philosophers call an object commensurate with the desire for it. By poetry the soul is sent back upon itself, and it draws forth from its celestial store whatever there is within it of divinity, which part indeed cannot be exhausted even by perpetual drawings off.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Andreini’s virtue was publicly praised by her fellow authors, from Tasso onward, along with her artistic contributions. Her husband Francesco also worked to cultivate and protect her “impeccable image,” even after her death, as editor of her posthumously published letter collections. See Ray, *Writing Gender*, esp. 161-65.

⁵² MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia Dell’Arte*, 60-61.

⁵³ Barthes, “Le grain de la voix,” 62.

⁵⁴ Theoretical and critical discussions of poetry’s purpose in giving pleasure extend at least as far back as Horace’s *Ars poetica*. For a few examples of how sixteenth-century Italian critics link *meraviglia* to pleasure, see Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 170, 96, 624.

⁵⁵ Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, quoted in *ibid.*, 748-49.

Just as *meraviglia* engenders pleasure, pleasure engenders an aspect of divinity within the soul of the one who experiences it. At the intersection of voice, authorship, and performance, Andreini and Archilei exemplify the *grain of the voice* in their representations of Renaissance Sibyls, at once embodying divinity and producing it in their audience.

The mystery and potency of the Sibylline voice—in both its classical and early modern incarnations—lies not only in what it says, but in how it speaks. In the literature of Augustan Rome (Vergil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), the Sibyl is a highly circumscribed figure, placed in a position of political importance but lacking agency. The prophetic voices of the *Orlando furioso* divide the characteristics of the Sibyl: Ariosto gives the task of prophecy to the fictional Merlin and Melissa, but identifies the prophetic *furor* as the source of his own poetic inspiration. Finally, the Medici wedding performances by Archilei and Andreini operate as Sibylline utterances in their evocation of marvel and communication of political authority, reinforcing the power and prestige of the Medici court. They are most intriguing, however, as examples of professional female artists—not born or married into the elite aristocratic classes—who nonetheless were able to participate in the performance of political power by virtue of their voices.

III. VOICE AND VIOLENCE: PHILOMELA

“Every sound we make is a bit of autobiography.”

-- Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony and God*

“. . . and the Lady shall say her minde freely; or the blanke Verse shall halt for 't.”

-- William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The Sibyl's voice carries with it an unexpected political potency, emanating as it does from a female body. The Sibyl's virginal body was considered a sufficiently pure vessel for the divine (male) voice to convey its prophetic utterances, as seen in the previous chapter. Indeed, the Sibyl's voice was actively sought out by men, usually those in positions of power. But when confronted by female voices in bodies that were not sanctioned by the powerful office of a priesthood nor maintained in a state of sexual purity, men often exerted their power by forcing those voices into silence. The Sibyl's song fulfills a particular political function in reinforcing male-centered dynastic rule, but it manifests as an ethereal, out-of-body voice, a phenomenon that hides or elides its femaleness. The Sibylline voice thus aligns itself not with what Adriana Cavarero terms the “dreaded *other*” of the unruly, fleshly female body, but with the “static and bloodless” logocentric masculine body that represents the polis; the Sibyl's voice belongs to the well-ordered body politic.¹ Even the Sibyl's virginal body is subject to discipline: in Vergil, the body of the priestess is possessed by the god at the moment of prophetic utterance, though she seems to resist that possession.

¹ Adriana Cavarero, *Stately Bodies: Literature, Philosophy, and the Question of Gender*, trans. Robert de Lucca and Deanna Shemek (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), ix-x. Cavarero's work considers the body as a metaphor for the state, from antiquity to the early modern period; here, in her introduction, she notes an association in pre-modern thought between, on the one hand, females and “prelogical” corporeality and frail, disorderly bodies, and on the other, males and *logos*, intellect, and disciplined bodies “whose nature has been tamed to the commands of an overbearing reason that determines its functioning and structure” (ibid., x.).

Unchaste female bodies, too, become targets of discipline by (mortal) men as well; but the voice is an element of the body that actively resists discipline. In the efforts to create and manipulate docile bodies, voice defies docility; if speech is restricted, voice slips out through cries, howls, wordless noise, and sometimes a melody. When a subject cannot communicate in words an experience of violence, grief, or trauma, the expression of that suffering finds an outlet in song. In this chapter I trace a genealogy of this substitution of musical utterance for traumatized speech and its sometime reception as a form of madness from Ovid's tale of Philomela in the *Metamorphoses*, to Shakespeare's Ovidian allusions in *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*, to the singing heroines of Shakespeare's tragedies *Hamlet* and *Othello*.

In Chapter 2, we saw links between music and madness in the early modern imagination as figured in the divine frenzy of the Sibyl archetype: the "madness" of prophecy, brought on by an external force (possession by a divine power). The violence of this act of possession is made explicit by Vergil in his characterization of the Sibyl of Cumae in the *Aeneid*, and the heroine of Isabella Andreini's *La Pazzia d'Isabella* also becomes a victim of violence—and is overtaken as much by grief as by love—when abducted by Flavio. But like the Sibyl whose vocal character she takes on, the Isabella character remains a virgin, her sexual purity uncompromised. Her utterances, too, maintain a kind of virtue. Though inscrutable, they nonetheless adhere to decorous forms: classical languages, courtly music; the vernacular languages, if not intelligible to all audience members, would have been understood at least by speakers of those languages. In this chapter, I will consider another kind of

musical madness, but of a distinctly different type. The archetypal figure in this case is Philomela, the girl transformed into a nightingale. Versions of the Philomela tale circulated in Greek mythology and literature; it was narrated by Apollodorus and other poets, and staged by Sophocles and Accius.² Ovid's account, in Book 6 of the *Metamorphoses*, is the fullest and most detailed of these that survives and, moreover, was the only one of these available to early modern readers. Shakespeare would almost certainly have read the *Metamorphoses* in Latin as part of his grammar school curriculum,³ but would also no doubt have been familiar with the first English translation, published by Arthur Golding in London in 1567.

In Ovid's telling of the myth, the princess Philomela travels from her home in Athens to live with her sister, Procne, in Thrace. Procne's husband Tereus, the king of Thrace, is Philomela's escort on the journey, but before she can reunite with her sister, Tereus drags Philomela into the woods and rapes her. He imprisons her and cuts out her tongue so that she cannot accuse him; meanwhile, he tells Procne that her sister died on the voyage. Rather than be a useless prisoner, Philomela is given a loom and made to weave cloth for Tereus's household. In one of these she weaves the tale of her rape and mutilation, and sends it to her sister. Procne rescues Philomela and together they take vengeance by killing Procne and Tereus's young son, cooking him, and feeding him to his father. Tereus attacks the sisters, but they are saved from his sword by a sudden transformation into birds. Tereus becomes a hoopoe, an

² William S. Anderson, ed. *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 206.

³ Stephen Greenblatt et al., eds., *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 43-44.

aggressive bird whose high crest and sharp beak give it the look of a warrior. Procne becomes a swallow, haunting the house where her son lived and died. Philomela becomes a nightingale, returning to the woods where she was brutalized; having once lost her voice, she now sings beautifully and mournfully for the rest of her days.

For the purposes of my argument here, Philomelic song will refer to musical utterances of women (or fictional female characters) who have been subject to violence and are not, at least in the view of late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century audiences, sexually pure. While Sibylline song maintains a kind of courtly propriety in language and musical structure, these forms devolve in Philomelic song. In these utterances, ordered language collapses and becomes unintelligible, or else vanishes entirely; while the Sibyl performed courtly forms of music, Philomela sings popular, often bawdy songs. Where Sibylline vocalization leads auditors to heights of marvel and pleasure, Philomelic utterance issues from an abyss of shock and suffering.

The figure of the singing or otherwise vocally excessive madwoman has a genealogy that has continued into the modern era.⁴ In the English-speaking world, the first of these may be Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (ca. 1600),⁵ whose "mad

⁴ There are of course more examples than can be listed here, but a few incidences of mad song are particularly noteworthy. English Restoration dramas frequently included mad songs as showcases for actresses, for example "From rosy bowers" in Henry Purcell and Thomas D'Urfey's *The Comical History of Don Quixote* (1694). Even more virtuosic are the mad scenes of nineteenth-century opera, the most famous perhaps being the coloratura masterpiece "Il dolce suono" in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835). Other literary genres, too, feature non-speaking madwomen; for example, Bertha Mason, the "madwoman in the attic" of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), seems to have a place in this genealogy, given that she never speaks but only laughs, gurgles, moans, or snarls.

⁵ For the composition and performance of Shakespeare's plays, I use the dates given in Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare*.

scene” has for centuries intrigued scholars and actors alike. Ophelia is the most famous example of this type in Western drama, but as is often the case in Shakespeare’s theater, she is a character that synthesizes and elaborates upon already-familiar tropes and types. Shakespeare’s debts to Italian drama are well documented,⁶ and evidently Ophelia owes something to the *pazza Isabella* character. The singing madwoman remained in the *commedia* repertoire, moreover, after Isabella Andreini’s lifetime and through Shakespeare’s, as evidenced by at least one of Flaminio Scala’s scenarios.⁷ But Ophelia is also one point along a trajectory within Shakespeare’s own corpus. Shakespeare interrogates the relationships among violence, sexuality, madness, and the female voice in a number of his works, beginning with his earliest tragedy, *Titus Andronicus* (1592), an adaptation of Ovid’s Philomela episode in the *Metamorphoses*.⁸ In this chapter I trace Philomelic figures in four of Shakespeare’s tragedies (*Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*), though such

⁶ Every modern scholarly edition of a Shakespeare play includes information about its sources: the specific works of drama or narrative on which Shakespeare likely drew, Italian and otherwise. For a more comprehensive view of Shakespeare’s Italian influences, see, for example, Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁷ On the influence of *commedia dell’arte* on Shakespeare’s plays, see the seminal K.M. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy: A Study in the Commedia Dell’Arte, 1560-1620* (Clarendon Press, 1934) and Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* as well as, among others: Murray J. Levith, *Shakespeare’s Italian Settings and Plays* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989); Jack D’Amico, *Shakespeare and Italy: The City and the Stage* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); and B. Höttemann, *Shakespeare and Italy* (Lit, 2011), 64-79. The plot of Scala’s scenario for *La Pazzia d’Isabella*, published in 1611, diverges significantly from what we know of Andreini’s; both mad scenes, however, share a number of characteristics, including “linguistic transgression” and “mad erudition,” as well as combinations of speech and song (Robert Henke, *Performance and Literature in the Commedia Dell’Arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 100-02). Though Henke notes that Isabella performs a mad scene “worthy of Ophelia” (22, 189), he does not identify the *Pazzia d’Isabella* as a specific source for Ophelia. Nor do I suggest that Shakespeare’s Ophelia was directly based on the mad Isabella, but rather on the genre of the mad scene and the figure of the singing madwoman that appeared frequently on the Renaissance stage. As Clubb points out, “it is not incautious to recognize the family resemblance owed to the repertory that theatrical professionals shared, even if separated by the English Channel” (Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time*, 266).

⁸ Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare*, 371.

characters may also be found in his comedies, histories, and late-career “problem” plays.⁹ Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus* is the first in a series of young female characters through which Shakespeare explores the effects of violence on the human capacity for communication and vocal expression. While *Titus Andronicus* gives us a literal (literary) Philomela refigured in Lavinia, I argue that later female protagonists—especially Ophelia and Desdemona—are also recastings of Philomela and embody the characteristics of the nightingale. For them, song and sound provide outlets or points of access for emotional states that language cannot convey.

⁹ Setting aside some the prominent male characters—Lear, for example—in whose representation madness and music are intertwined, there are a number of female characters in Shakespeare’s plays whose experiences with trauma lead them toward song or toward unintelligibility (loss of language or speech, as in Philomela’s case). For example, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, shipwrecked and believing her brother dead, declares that she will seek a living as a musician. (Viola was probably originally a singing role, whose songs were reassigned to the character of Feste the fool, perhaps because the boy actor who played her could not sing, or perhaps for the benefit of Robert Armin, who replaced Will Kempe as the company’s Fool ca. 1600; see Tiffany Stern, *Making Shakespeare: From Stage to Page* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 70.) Lady Macbeth in her mad scene speaks coded nonsense and eventually abandons language altogether, crying “Oh, oh, oh!” Several of the comedies are notorious for the silence of their female characters in the final scenes: consider Silvia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (see also note 25 below) and Celia in *As You Like It*. In *Henry V*, nearly all the women are unintelligible: Mistress Quickly speaks in malapropisms, while Katherine and Alice speak French and broken English. Indeed, the significance of their lack of English is evident as their first appearance directly follows the siege of Harfleur; immediately after Henry has threatened swift and gruesome retribution to the citizens of the town if they do not let in his army, the French princess declares she must learn English. While the language-learning scene is lighthearted and bawdy, serving as a moment of comic relief amidst the battles, it also strikes a disorienting note as it directly follows Henry’s speech threatening violence against women and children. While the war is ongoing the women in its wake are, in a sense, speechless, since the only speech they are allowed is largely incomprehensible. The only woman in *Henry V* who speaks good English is Queen Isabel of France, and only after peace has been established; though the female characters have been barred from communication throughout the play, now that the war is over the Queen has a place at the negotiation table, where “Haply *a woman’s voice* may do some good when articles too nicely urg’d be stoon on” (emphasis mine). For a comprehensive study of early modern theories of madness and their representations in Shakespeare’s plays, see Carol Thomas Neely, “‘Documents in Madness’: Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare’s Tragedies and Early Modern Culture,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1991).

Quid faciat Philomela? Ovid's Nightingale

Ovid's tale of Philomela in the *Metamorphoses* is frequently read as a textual parable, given that it is both a story about storytelling (Philomela communicating her plight to Procne) and shares etymological roots (*texere*, weave) with the creation of that narrative tapestry. But doubling the text(ile) is a vocal narrative, in which a young woman loses her voice along with her innocence, and regains it—as wordless sound—when she loses her humanity.

The majority of the tales in the *Metamorphoses* focus on interactions between gods and mortals. In Book 6 in particular, many stories deal with mortals' impiety in challenging the gods or boasting excessively of their own skills. The opening episode features Arachne, who challenges Minerva to a weaving competition; then comes Niobe, who brags about her large family and scorns Latona, the mother of Apollo and Artemis, for having only two children; Marsyas, who takes on Apollo in a musical duel; and, as a transition into the Philomela story, we find a brief reference to Pelops, whose father Tantalus served him up as the only dish fit for a dinner with the gods—prefiguring the horrifying meal that Procne later serves to Tereus. Philomela's story, unexpectedly, then, is concerned exclusively with human relationships: between the sisters Procne and Philomela and their father Pandion; among Procne, her husband Tereus, and her son Itys; and between Tereus and Philomela as rapist and victim. In fact, Ovid explicitly absents the gods from this narrative episode. It is fairly unusual within the *Metamorphoses* as a tale solely about a mortal family, and suggestively

placed in Book 6 to demonstrate that one can be guilty of impiety against fellow humans as easily as against the gods.

The wedding of Procne, daughter of Pandion, king of Athens, and Tereus, king of Thrace, sets the tale in motion, but the expected divinities are not present to lend the nuptials legitimacy: *non pronuba Iuno, / Non Hymenaeus adest, non illi Gratia lecto* (“neither Juno the marriage-goddess, nor Hymen, nor a Grace stood by that marriage bed,” 6.428-30).¹⁰ The only supernatural presence is that of the Furies (*Eumenides*, 6.430-31), who are the underworld deities of vengeance associated specifically with murders of family members.¹¹ Also haunting the wedding-chamber is an owl (*profanus bubo*, 6.431-32), an ill-omened bird that perhaps foreshadows the avian transformations to come. The sonic effects in the tale’s first lines also add to its menacing quality: *Eumenides . . . Eumenides, Hac ave . . . Hac ave, Quaque . . . Quaque*, with the latter two repetitions in particular producing an echo rather like a bird’s squawk (6.430-431, 433-434, 436-437). The absent Grace is invoked by Procne a few lines later when, years into their marriage, she asks Tereus to bring her sister for a visit: to bring grace into Thrace, “if any grace is mine” (*gratata Thracia*, 6.434; *si gratia . . . ulla mea est*, 6.440). Ironically, she “pleads by the quality which is fatefully absent from their marriage, so she is pleading for disaster.”¹² Tereus agrees to go to Athens to fetch Philomela.

¹⁰ The Latin text is from Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*, 50-56. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

¹¹ Barry B. Powell, *A Short Introduction to Classical Myth* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002), 179.

¹² Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*, 210.

Philomela arrives on the scene once Tereus has arrived at her father Pandion's house in Athens. As he negotiates with his father-in-law, he sees Philomela enter the room; her beauty is described indirectly,¹³ from the point of view of Tereus, who immediately upon seeing her is consumed with lust. His instant carnal obsession with the beautiful girl is likened to a wildfire blazing through dry grain (6.455-57), parallel to a simile Ovid uses in Book 1 of the *Metamorphoses* to describe Apollo's instantaneous desire for Daphne. But where the god Apollo is portrayed as a bumbling wooer in a humorous scenario, Tereus, subject to mortal flaws, is turned monster by his obsession. His gaze is invasive, as he imagines bribing Philomela's maids to give him access to her bed (6.146-62); transgressive, as he is willing to risk a war by raping her (6.644); and taboo, as, seeing Philomela embrace her father, Tereus envisions himself in her father's place (6.478-82). Philomela's presence, moreover, dramatically affects Tereus's facility with speech (*facundum faciebat amor*, 6.469). Plain-spoken until now, he is suddenly an impassioned orator. His tears, already a cliché of performance in ancient law courts, are nonetheless effective in persuading Pandion. Throughout this scene, the narrator conveys this rhetorical triumph through paraphrase only; Tereus has no direct speech until he has Philomela in his possession: "Vicimus!" he exclaims ("We've won!"), celebrating both his departure with Philomela and his success in persuading Pandion (6.513). Finally, where the language used to describe Tereus has up to this point been neutral, Ovid now begins to assign him negative epithets. The use of combative language to describe sexual conquest is a

¹³ Ovid seems to remind us, with a wink to the audience, of myth's roots in an oral tradition: Philomela is as pretty as the naiads and dryads "that we usually *hear* about" (*quales audire solemus*, 6.452).

trope we have already seen with Apollo and the Sibyl, in both Vergil and Ovid; this passage is rife with such language, describing Tereus as savage (*barbarus*, 6.515), and in similes as a predator (*praedator*, 6.516) and bird of prey (*raptor*, 6.518).

Once the ship makes landfall in Thrace, the narrative picks up speed, capturing the rapidity of Tereus's actions as he immediately carries off Philomela: *In stabula alta trahit silvis obscura vetustis* ("he dragged her to a deep dark hut in the ancient woods," 6.521.) It is also clear right away that Philomela does not go quietly. She is predictably pale, trembling, and weeping (6.522-23) but also very vocal, protesting and asking questions. As she realizes what danger she is in, Philomela raises her voice, crying out for help from her sister, her parents, and the gods. Elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* when people call on the gods they are heard (even if their prayers achieve something other than the desired outcome); but here, the gods are painfully unresponsive, and Tereus attacks without impediment. Ovid describes this rape, like many others in the *Metamorphoses*, through similes. If his depiction of sexual violence and its aftermath is oblique, it is no less striking, and deeply affecting:

Illa tremit velut agna pavens, quae saucia cani
ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur,
utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis
horret adhuc avidosque timet, quibus haeserat, ungues. (6.527-530)

She trembles like a terrified lamb which, wounded and shaken from the maw of a grey wolf, does not yet think herself out of danger; or as a dove shudders at her feathers so soaked by her own blood and fears the greedy talons by which he clung to her.

Tereus is characterized as a wild, predatory animal—a wolf, a raptor—while Philomela, as lamb or dove, is a domestic, feminine creature. The second simile also suggests the avian metamorphoses to come; that later transformation will also recall the image of dove-Philomela, as the transformed nightingale and swallow appear to have bloodstained feathers (6.670).

Ovid implies a gap in the action before Philomela responds: *Mox, ubi mens rediit . . .* (“soon, when her mind had returned . . .” 6.531). We may take this to mean that Philomela has fainted and is returning to consciousness.¹⁴ But *mens* has a range of meanings: not just conscious thought, but also reason, sanity, purpose, even courage.¹⁵ Or, encompassing all of these, her logic (*logos*) and capacity for reasoned discourse, as at this moment Ovid gives us Philomela’s only instance of direct speech, a rhetorical *tour de force*. Having regained her mind, she speaks it freely:

Mox, ubi mens rediit, passos laniata capillos,
 lugenti similis, caesis plangore lacertis,
 intendens palmas “o diris barbare factis!
 o crudelis!” ait “nec te mandata parentis
 cum lacrimis movere piis, nec cura sororis
 nec mea virginitas nec coniugalia iura!
 Omnia turbasti: paelex ego facta sororis,
 tu geminus coniunx! hostis mihi debita poena!
 Quin animam hanc, ne quod facinus tibi, perfide, restet,
 eripis? atque utinam fecisses ante nefandos
 concubitus! vacuas habuissem criminis umbras.
 si tamen haec superi cernunt, si numina divum
 sunt aliquid, si non perierunt omnia mecum,
 quandocumque mihi poenas dabis! ipsa pudore
 proiecto tua facta loquar: si copia detur,

¹⁴ Golding: “Anon when that this mazednesse was somewhat overpast . . .” Arthur Golding, *The .Xv. Bookes of P. Ouidius Naso, Entytuled Metamorphosis, Translated Oute of Latin into English Meeter, by Arthur Golding Gentleman, a Worke Very Pleasaunt and Delectable*. (London: Willyam Seres, 1575), 83v.

¹⁵ “Mens.” Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879).

in populos veniam; si silvis clausa tenebor,
inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo.
Audiet haec aether, et si deus ullus in illo est!” (6.531-548)

Soon, when her mind had returned, having torn her hair like one in mourning and beaten her arms in lamentation, stretching out her palms she said, “You are a savage because of your ruinous deeds! Cruel man! The orders of a parent with his pious tears does not move you, nor does the care of a sister nor my virginity nor your marriage vows! You have thrown everything into disorder: I am made my sister’s whore, and you a double husband! The enemy must be punished by me! Why don’t you steal away my soul too, traitor, lest some misdeed remain undone by you? And if only you had done it before this unspeakable mating! I could have been a spirit free of pollution. Yet if the gods above perceive these things, if the spirits of the gods are anything, if all things did not perish with me, at some time you will pay the penalty on my account! I will speak your very deeds against banished modesty: if opportunity may be given, I will come among the people; if I am held closed in the woods, I will fill the woods and I will move the rocks, my confidants. Let heaven hear this, and a god if there is any in it!”

Philomela’s gestures are conventional motions of grief (tearing her hair, scratching at her skin) but her speech has a kind of oratorical grandeur. She rails against Tereus not merely because of his injury against her person, but because by violating her he has also violated the codes of kinship, hospitality, and marriage-bonds. He is *barbare* both because of his uncivilized savagery and because of his linguistic and cultural difference: a Thracian whose barbaric otherness is keenly felt both by the Athenian women (Procne and Philomela) and by Ovid’s Roman readers. Philomela also uses the legal terminology of betrayal that Latin poetry, especially love poetry, embraces so eagerly: Tereus is *perfide* (traitor, oathbreaker; 6.539); Philomela makes herself the arbiter of judgment in declaring him “an enemy that must be punished by me” (*hostis mihi debita poena*, 6.538) and heaps a moral judgment onto the legal one (*nefandos*, “unspeakable”). Tereus has upset the natural order of the family structure

and threatened the power balance between Athens and Thrace, as Philomela accuses him: “You have thrown everything into disorder” (*omnia turbasti*, 6.536). Ovid manages to capture both Philomela’s rhetorical power and her emotional distress, the latter through a profusion of short sentences and enjambments. Metrically, Philomela’s speech is more dactylic than spondaic, the short syllables lending a sense of swiftness. Philomela’s wish to have died before the rape is menacingly sibilant: *vacuas habuisssem criminis umbras* (“I could have been a spirit free of pollution,” 6.541). Despite her agitation, Philomela’s speech is sophisticated enough to show that she is in control and to lend power to her oaths of vengeance. Indeed, she threatens Tereus enough to provoke his next assault. Crucially, too, Philomela believes in the power of her voice to lead Tereus to punishment; she believes that the accusations she sends forth will be heard by the public, the gods, or the natural world.

Where Athenian Philomela eloquently speaks the civic language of justice and retribution, Thracian Tereus responds as a savage tyrant (*feri . . . tyranni*, 6.549), with violent action instead of words. Tereus’s first gesture is to free his sword from its sheath: *vagina liberat ensem* (6.551) writes the narrator, a cruel and crude double entendre. The following lines (6.555-556) are mostly spondaic, slowing down for dramatic suspense. Seeing the sword, Philomela offers her throat, hoping to be killed—however, she has not yet stopped speaking (*indignantem, vocantem*) or at least struggling to speak (*luctantem loqui*).¹⁶ At the end of line 556 the reader is

¹⁶ *Vocans* obviously refers to utterance, but *indignans* does as well. To be indignant, to protest, to refuse to tolerate, or to struggle (paralleling *luctantem* in the following line) are verbal gestures, and the implication is that Philomela is speaking until the moment she loses her tongue: “Roman orators

surprised to find that the feminine subject of these participles is not Philomela herself, as we anticipate, but *linguam*: her tongue. Whereas the first act of violence, the rape, was narrated in oblique and affecting terms through a pair of animal similes, here Ovid employs the full force of his imagistic talents in an explicit depiction of graphic violence:

radix micat ultima linguae,
ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmururat atrae,
utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,
palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit. (6.557-560)

the furthest root of the tongue glinted, while [the tongue] itself lies on the black earth and murmurs, trembling, just as the tail of a mutilated snake tends to jump; it palpitates and, dying, seeks the footsteps of its mistress.

Ovid's pulling-away of focus from the whole person to the tongue is startling. He is still working with aural effects here—for example, the repeated *t* in line 558 gives a jerky sense of stopping-and-starting rather than fluid motion, and the rhythm picks up with choppy, swift-moving dactyls—but the reader's attention is almost certainly concentrated on the intensely visual imagery. *Micat* can refer either to a movement (beating, vibrating, trembling: echoed by *salire* and *palpitat*) or to a visual effect (gleaming, sparkling). These are involuntary motions contrasted to the deliberate *quaerit* and *inmurmurat*—the latter particularly evocative, as the *in-* prefix indicates a murmuring “at” or “against” something, a continuing struggle to be heard. The

and poets were well trained to express *indignatio*, and Roman audiences could easily supply what Ovid prudently omitted” (Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*, 223). Ovid also uses aural effects as an oratorical strategy to engage his audience: as Anderson has observed, “the alliteration of the initial *l*'s in the first two words has no simple liquid flow because of the internal consonants *ct*, *qu*, *qu*. Thus the struggle to speak is implied. Then the new consonant clusters in *comprehensam forcipe* help to stir our imagination of this vile alien instrument interfering with speech” (ibid., 223-24).

sudden shift of narrative perspective coincides precisely with Philomela's brutal silencing; in depriving Philomela of her tongue, the author also deprives his readers, however briefly, of her subjectivity. The narrator has offered Tereus's point of view since his arrival in Athens, and Philomela's once they land in Thrace. But at this fulcrum of violence, both perspectives are shuttered. Tereus appears ever less civilized—less human—as he carries out his attack, until his point of view falls out entirely and agency belongs to his weapon (*ense fero*, 557) rather than to his person. Ovid describes Tereus's violent actions without giving the reader access to his interiority as in the earlier scenes. In this passage Tereus's movements are bluntly vicious and lacking the context of his inner thought, in stark contrast to the desiring, fantasizing gaze he directed at Philomela in Athens. And it is not over yet: *Hoc quoque post facinus (vix ausim credere) fertur / saepe sua lacerum repetisse libidine corpus* ("And again after this crime (I would hardly dare to believe it) it is said that he often attacked her lacerated body again with his desire," 6.561-62). In the renewed assault, it is no longer Tereus attacking Philomela, but *libido* attacking *corpus*. Tereus's mutilation of Philomela and his subsequent repeated rapes are his attempt to retain control over her disobedient body, as she has challenged his dominance by speaking freely and calling out for justice against him. In robbing Philomela of her voice, Tereus renders her docile and unthreatening while barring her point of view, her narrative subjectivity—at least for the moment. At the same time, however, Tereus's total silencing of Philomela builds the cause of her eventual eruption into

song and the transformation into the nightingale whose sweet dirges are the perpetual revisiting of her trauma.

A year passes, and *quid faciat Philomela?* (6.572). Her ingenious plan is to weave a tapestry illustrating her story (the textual textile). Philomela sends it to her sister, hoping that Procne will find a way to rescue her. Procne interprets the text as Philomela expects and wishes her to:

Evolvit vestes saevi matrona tyranni
fortunaque suae carmen miserabile legit
et (mirum potuisse!) silet: dolor ora repressit,
verbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae
defuerunt, nec flere vacat, sed fasque nefasque
confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est. (6.581-586)

The wife of the savage tyrant unrolls the cloth and reads the wretched song of her [Philomela's] fortune and (astonishing event!) is silent: pain curbs her mouth, and enough indignant words fail her seeking tongue, nor is she idle in weeping, but right and wrong rush tumbled together and punishments are in all her thought.

Just as Philomela's lost tongue deprives her of speech, here the shocking revelation of her sister's fate also induces Procne's silence. But where Philomela's muteness was an obstacle to her safety, Procne's "astonishing" reticence is the key to Philomela's rescue, enabling Procne to plot her revenge in secret.

The identification of the tapestry as *carmen* ("song") is peculiar. Though it is a conventional term for a written poem, there is an implied convergence of aesthetic forms—or perhaps even an irony—in using a vocally charged word to describe an act of communication defined by the absence of voice. Lewis & Short cites this instance

of *carmen* as meaning oracle or prophecy.¹⁷ Like an oracle, the tapestry is a revelation of truth that sets the rest of the narrative in motion; but Procne never asked for a prophecy, and the Sibyl's *carmen* is never offered unsought. Like the Sibyl's voice, Procne's voice is forcibly suppressed, though not by a god but by her own pain (*dolor*). Her tongue's inability to express its indignation (*indignantia linguae*) echoes Philomela's earlier struggle; indeed this passage contains a number of echoes of Tereus's assault and Philomela's defense (*nefas, quaerenti, poenae*). These verbal cues and Procne's forced silence link the two sisters as narrative reflections of each other, bookending the central episode of Tereus's attack. From Tereus's perspective forcible penetration and silencing are means of asserting his dominance, but his actions in fact ally Procne and Philomela so that, doubling their strength and inverting the expected equation of silence with victimhood, they can bring a retaliative attack upon him.

Bacchic worship rites, which allow Procne to roam freely outside the palace, offer an opportunity for the sisters' reunion. Where Procne has so far been identified only as Pandion's daughter or Tereus's wife, Ovid grants her for the first time her own epithet of royal power, *regina* (6.590). Where *dolor* had suppressed Procne, here it spurs her on (6.595); her own grief and her role as a Bacchant give free reign to the voice silenced earlier: *Exululatque euhoecque sonat portasque refringit* ("She howls out and sounds 'Euhoec!' and breaks open the gates," 6.597). The compound verb

¹⁷ "Carmen." Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*.

exululo is Ovid's coinage;¹⁸ the prefix *ex-* adds a sense of forceful outward motion, expelling sound from one's body. The onomatopoeic verb *ululo*, a howling or crying out, was, like its Greek cousin *ololuzo*, used of women in religious rituals and festivals; indeed, in the Greek-speaking world, such a sound was, as Anne Carson points out, "a specialized female function." Ululation belonged to the world outside the *polis*:

No proper civic space would contain it unregulated. The female festivals in which such ritual cries were heard were generally not permitted to be held within the city limits but were relegated to suburban areas like the mountains, the beach or the rooftops of houses where women could disport themselves without contaminating the ears or civic space of men.¹⁹

Already associated with women and wild(er)ness, *ululo* takes on an animal dimension as well, as it is also used by Latin authors—including Ovid elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses*—to refer to the howling of dogs or wolves.²⁰ Its cognate noun, *ulula* ("screech owl") recalls the ominous owl of Procne's wedding chamber. Procne's vocal freedom here—specifically, a kind of vocality associated with wilderness and wild animals—parallels her newfound agency as her sister's avenger.

Procne brings Philomela, also disguised as a bacchant, home: she shudders and grows pale on entering the *domum nefandam*, "the criminal house" (6.601)—or, to take *nefans* in its literal etymological sense, the "unspeakable" house. Ovid's narrative offers psychological realism without any dialogue: the sisters' reunion is

¹⁸ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*, 229. See also "exululo" in Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*. Ovid also uses *exululo* at *Met.* 1.233, *Tristiae* 4.1.42, and *Ars Am.* 1.507. The word is rarely used by later authors, and almost exclusively in poetry.

¹⁹ Anne Carson, "The Gender of Sound," in *Glass, Irony and God* (New York: New Directions, 1992), 125.

²⁰ "Ululo." Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*.

described in terms of body language (*sustinet oculos*), gestures (*develat; amplexumque petit*) and physiological responses (*horruit, expalluit*) (“she holds up her eyes”; “unveils”; “seeks an embrace”; “shudders,” “grows pale,” 6.602-606). *Develat* (“unveils”) is a unique instance in classical Latin literature of this word, which seems to be another coinage of Ovid’s. Within the narrative, however, it is one in a series of revelations: of Tereus’s true nature; of the tapestry and its meaning; of Procne’s disguise in this scene; and, finally, of Itys in the grisly meal. Their avian metamorphoses, too, like many others in the poem, may be read as “unveiling” the protagonists’ true forms, as each bird retains some traits of its human counterpart.

At that moment of transformation, Ovid is not specific about which sister becomes which bird: *altera . . . altera* could refer to either.

Corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares:
 pendebant pennis. Quarum petit *altera* silvas,
altera tecta subit; neque adhuc de pectore caedis
 excessere notae, signataque sanguine pluma est. (6.666-70; emphasis mine)

You would think that the bodies of Cecrops’s daughters hung with feathers; they hung with feathers. *One of them* sought the woods, *the other* went under the roof; nor has the sign of slaughter yet left their breasts—their plumage is marked with blood.

Ovid does not name the birds that the sisters transform into, though he does identify Tereus as the hoopoe (*epops*, 6.674). Rather, the author seems to rely on his readers’ previous knowledge of the myth: the bird that seeks the woods is a nightingale, the one who dwells under the eaves is a swallow. The Greeks identified Procne as the nightingale, Philomela as the swallow.²¹ But Ovid’s structuring of the narrative

²¹ Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: Books 6-10*, 236.

suggests the reverse. Procne, the swallow, flies to the palace where she lived; the older sister, the perpetrator of violence, haunts the site of her son's life and death. Philomela, the nightingale flies to the woods, to sing in the wild space where she lost her voice. For Ovid's medieval and early modern readers, at least, there seems to have been no ambiguity, as the nightingale is consistently identified as Philomela in literature and scholarship.²² Returning to the wilderness, Philomela makes good on her threat to Tereus to "fill the woods" with her protestations against his crime, and, as Orpheus will do, moves her listeners—even the stones—with the beauty and power of her voice (*inplebo silvas et conscia saxa movebo*, 6.547).

Philomela's transformation into the plumed songstress is a parable of the resistant female voice. It points to a musicality or musical potential that is perhaps perceived as always underlying feminine voices. In fact only male nightingales sing, but this foundation myth imagines nightingale song as having a specifically female origin, one that converts trauma and enforced silence into a form of expression—wordless melody—characterized by beauty, sorrow, and a kind of elusiveness. Verbal communication is not always clear and direct; as Tereus demonstrates in his dealings with Pandion, language can be deceptive. But even if music does not purposefully deceive, neither does it signify in the way that language does. In Ovid's telling of the Philomela myth and its revisitings in Shakespeare's dramas, song seems to find its

²² See, for example, Raffaele Regio's commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, published in 1493, which offers the following gloss on the bird passage: *Progne quae in hirundinem fuit transfigurata. [. . .] Vpupam quae a graecis epops appellatur.* "Procne was the one transfigured into a swallow. [. . .] *Epops* [hoopoe] which was so called by the Greeks is *upupa* [hoopoe]." Publius Ovidius Naso, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Metamorphoseos libri cum comento*, ed. Raffaele Regio (Venice: [Bonetus Locatellus] for Octavianus Scotus, 1493). (Note: pages in Regio's edition are unnumbered.)

way out of the subject through cracks that plain speech cannot breach—even if it remains incomprehensible to its auditors.

Mad Through Sorrow: Lavinia and Juliet

The nightingale's lament is a trope—indeed, a commonplace—that runs through much of Western lyric poetry, from the classical poets to the troubadours to Petrarch and all his early modern imitators. In England, Philomel took her own line of flight from Ovid to the Elizabethan poets, Shakespeare among them—though doubtless they took some of their cues from Petrarch as well.²³ But Shakespeare drew the

²³ For the nightingale as a symbol of England's literary heritage, see Sean Keilen, "Shakespeare's 'Wild Musick'" in *Vulgar Eloquence: On the Renaissance Invention of English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), esp. 99-107.

The nightingale appears in two of Petrarch's poems in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* as the counterpart of the lover in nature. In sonnet 10, the poet flees the palaces and theaters of the city (l. 5) for solace in the woods "and the nearby mountain where we climb and descend poetizing" (*e 'l bel monte vicino / onde si scende poetando*, ll. 7-8). The beauty and peace of the wilderness allow the poet's imagination to soar (*levan di tera al ciel nostr' intelletto*, l. 9), while "the nightingale that sweetly in the shadow every night laments and weeps burdens our hearts with thoughts of love" (*e 'l rosigniuol che dolcemente all'ombra / tutte le notti si lamenta e piagne, / d'amorosi pensieri il cor ne 'ngombra*, ll.10-12). While the woods and mountains give the poet the freedom to craft his works, the nightingale's song reminds him of the painful love that is the subject of much of his poetry. The poet and nightingale are more closely intertwined in sonnet 311, in which their relationship is emulative and somewhat tense: the lover appreciates the nightingale's voice (the references to its "sweetness" and "skill" liken the songbird to a poet), but also envies the nightingale its grief; at least the bird was loved once and can mourn for its loved ones, unlike the poet, whose beloved Laura has died with his love for her unconsummated and unrequited.

Quel rosigniuol che sì soave piagne
forse suoi figli o sua cara consorte,
di dolcezza empie il cielo et le campagne
con tante note sì pietose et scorte,

et tutta notte par che m'accompagne
et mi rammente la mia dura sorte;
ch' altri che me non ò di che me lagne,
che 'n dee non credev' io regnasse Morte. (1-8)

(That nightingale that so sweetly weeps, perhaps for his children or for his dear consort, fills the sky and the fields with sweetness in so many grieving, skillful notes, and all night he

nightingale out of the thicket of lyric and epic poetry and into a new mode of discourse—the public theater—in his early tragedy *Titus Andronicus* (1592).

The eponymous hero is a military commander in the service of the recently deceased Emperor of Rome (the play does not have a basis in history, but is a fictional narrative). Titus, returning victorious from battles abroad, refuses the throne in favor of the late emperor's son Saturninus, to whom Titus offers his daughter Lavinia in marriage. To spite him, Saturninus instead marries the woman Titus has brought back to Rome as a prisoner of war—Tamora, queen of the Goths—which instigates a cycle of revenge between Titus and Tamora. The first major act of aggression in this revenge cycle is committed by Tamora's sons, Chiron and Demetrius, who waylay Lavinia in the woods, rape her, and cut off her tongue and hands so that she can neither speak nor write to identify her attackers. They also kill her husband, Bassianus. Eventually, Lavinia is able to tell her family who attacked her, writing her assailants' names in the dirt with a stick held in her mouth, and nudging open a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to the Philomela episode.²⁴ Enraged,

seems to accompany me and remind me of my harsh fate; for I have no one to complain of save myself, who did not believe that Death reigns over goddesses.)

Sonnets 10 and 311 are the only of Petrarch's poems that feature the nightingale prominently, though there is also a mention of the songbird—with an explicit reference to the Ovidian myth—in sonnet 310, which describes the riotous beauty of a springtime that is hateful to the lover in mourning. Among the blooming meadows and clear skies are "chattering Procne and weeping Philomela" (*garrir Progne e pianger Filomena*, l. 3), foreshadowing the ironic note of the sonnet's final line. The text and translation cited here are from Francesco Petrarca, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 44-45, 488-91.

²⁴ This act of writing is also an Ovidian allusion: Io, transformed into a cow and thus incapable of human speech, identifies herself to her father by writing in the dirt with her hoof (*Metamorphoses* 1.649-50).

Titus exacts his revenge with Procne as inspiration, murdering Tamora's sons and serving them to her as a ghastly final meal.

The play's borrowings from Ovid are explicit, particularly in the metaliterary moment at which Lavinia points to a copy of the *Metamorphoses* in order to describe her attack and identify her rapists (Act 4, Scene 1). Unlike Philomela, Lavinia does not escape the sword in the final act; no songbird afterlife for her. Yet the figure of the nightingale is a recurring one in Shakespeare's dramatic corpus, and a strain of philomelic song runs through the tragedies in the mouths of violated young women who sing, like Philomela, of grief and madness.²⁵

²⁵ While my focus here is on Shakespeare's tragedies, I feel it is worth noting some striking parallels to *Titus Andronicus* in a comedy of the same period, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (ca. 1590-1591). The play as a whole is preoccupied with Ovidian transformations. Fickle Proteus takes his name from a mythological shapeshifter (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8, 11); he is "metamorphos'd" by his love for Julia (1.1.67), and Valentine's servant Speed accuses him of being "metamorphos'd with a mistress" (2.1). And Silvia, one of the female protagonists, explicitly recalls both Philomela and Lavinia.

Her name, first, associates her with wild woodlands, the site of Philomela's and Lavinia's rapes and the nightingale's home. (In classical and humanist texts the woods, of course, are also the realm of Diana, the virginal goddess of the hunt—thus associated both with chastity and with violence—and of nymphs and satyrs and their erotic adventures. The woodlands thus are the site of tensions between brutal violence and the peaceful prosperity of the Golden Age, and between chastity and eroticism. These silvan settings and their relationship to voice—specifically, how they are governed by the authoritative voice of Orpheus inhabited by the disembodied voice of Echo—are further discussed in Chapter 4.) Silvia's lover Valentine associates her presence with nightingale song: "Except I be by Silvia in the night, / There is no music in the nightingale" (3.1.179-180). Later, he flees to the forest to try to reunite with her:

This shadowy desert, unfrequented woods,
I better brook than flourishing peopled towns:
Here I can sit alone, unseen of any,
And to the nightingale's complaining notes
Tune my distresses and record my woes. (5.4.2-6)

While Valentine channels his inner Petrarch, Silvia draws near with Valentine's friend Proteus in hot pursuit. As Silvia continues to refuse his advances, Proteus threatens rape:

PROTEUS: Nay, if the gentle spirit of moving words
Can no way change you to a milder form,
I'll woo you like a soldier, at arm's end,
And love you 'gainst the nature of love—force ye.

Lavinia does not sing, nor does she speak after Act 2, Scene 2. Though there are no songs in *Titus Andronicus*, the stage directions call for substantial incidental music; the play is enacted in a music-filled world, emphasizing the poignancy and frustration of Lavinia's enforced silence.²⁶ But, like Philomela, Lavinia seeks out other means of communication—so eagerly that others see her actions as evidence of madness. A stronger case for madness may be made with Titus, whose overwhelming grief drives him out of his mind.²⁷ The repeated association throughout this play

SILVIA: Oh heaven!

PROTEUS: I'll force thee yield to my desire. (5.4.57-62)

Valentine emerges and Silvia is saved. But she is also silent from this point on: "Oh heaven!" are the last words she speaks, though she remains on stage for the rest of the play. Through Valentine's baffling conciliatory offer to Proteus ("All that was mine in Silvia I give thee," 5.4.88), Julia's revelation of her identity, and the return of Silvia's father to give his approval of her marriage to Valentine, Silvia says nothing. It is easy to dismiss this as the dramaturgical stumbling of a young playwright (and, indeed, such oddities are not uncommon in Shakespeare's early plays), but this vivid causal link between sexual violence and female silence in two contemporaneous plays is hardly coincidental. Silvia is—figuratively, at least—robbed of her tongue. (Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare*, 77-131.)

²⁶ "However, there are more musical stage directions in *Titus* than in most of Shakespeare's other plays, including (depending on the version employed) a large number of flourishes, trumpet calls, hunting horns, oboes, and drumbeats" (Joseph M. Ortiz, *Broken Harmony: Shakespeare and the Politics of Music* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 28-29). For a full exploration of the musical elements in this play, see Ortiz's Chapter 1: "*Titus Andronicus* and the Production of Musical Meaning," 18-44.

²⁷ Grief-driven madness begins to emerge around the midpoint of the play, at the end of the third act and the beginning of the fourth. In Act 3, Scene 2, Titus gathers his family—daughter Lavinia, son Marcus, grandson Lucius—for a shared meal that foreshadows the grim feast of the final act. Inviting them to sit at the table, he says that when his heart is "all mad with misery," his remedy is to beat on his chest and "thump it down" (3.2.9-11). Lavinia, lacking hands to beat her breast, he urges to "Wound [your heart] with sighing, girl, kill it with groans: / Or [. . .] Drown the lamenting fool in sea salt tears" (3.2.15-20). When Marcus protests that this is an incitement to violence, Titus replies, "How now! Has sorrow made thee dote already? / Why, Marcus, no man should be mad but I" (3.2.23-24). If sorrow makes one dote (become foolish), then the extreme grief of Titus and Lavinia is cause for madness. Titus's exaggerated reactions to Marcus's killing a fly do indeed seem to bear the stamp of madness (or a performance of madness): first he is outraged on behalf of the fly ("How if that fly had a father, brother?" 3.2.60), then he makes the fly the target of the violence he hopes to do against his enemy Tamora and her lover Aaron. Marcus understands Titus's disproportionate reaction as madness brought on by grief: "Alas, poor man! Grief has so wrought on him / He takes false shadows for true substances" (3.2.78-79). This famous fly-killing scene, it should be noted, does not appear in any of the first three quarto editions of the play (1594, 1600, and 1611), but was added to the 1623 Folio edition, likely from manuscript copy (William Shakespeare et al., *Titus Andronicus, 1594* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), vii). This scene comes immediately before Lavinia's

between grief and madness is also embodied by each of the female protagonists that I discuss further on (Juliet, Ophelia, and Desdemona). Titus's patent madness even serves as a kind of foil to Lavinia's apparent lucidity in much the same way that Hamlet's feigned, performed madness contrasts with Ophelia's genuine insanity.

Speechless Lavinia's grief, terror, and experience of violence—her trauma—match or exceed her father's, though she does not appear to share his madness. But her frenzied behavior, especially in her attempts to communicate, causes others to attribute madness to her. In Act 4, Scene 1—in which Lavinia finally succeeds in telling her family who attacked her—Lucius, Titus's grandson, enters the house with Lavinia in pursuit. The stage directions read: "Enter Lucius' son and Lavinia running after him, and the boy flies from her with his books under his arm."²⁸ Lucius cries out to Titus for help. What frightens Lucius, however, is not Lavinia's altered appearance—her wounds and scars—but her insistence on trying to communicate with him. When Titus asks Lucius if he can guess why Lavinia "plies" him, the boy replies:

My Lord, I know not, I, nor can I guess,
Unless some fit or frenzy do possess her:
For I have heard my grandsire say full oft,
Extremity of griefs would make men mad.
And I have read that Hecuba of Troy
Ran mad through sorrow. That made me to fear,
Although, my lord, I know my noble aunt
Loves me as deare as e'er my mother did,
And would not *but in fury* fright my youth,

revelation of her attackers' identity in 4.1. All citations are from Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare* unless otherwise noted.

²⁸ These directions are identical in Q (Shakespeare et al., *Titus Andronicus*, 1594, 44) and F (William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies. Published According to the True Originall Copies* (London: Isaac Jaggard and Ed. Blount., 1623), 43).

Which made me down to throw my books and fly,
Causeless, perhaps. But pardon me, sweet aunt;
And, madam, if my uncle Marcus go
I will most willingly attend your ladyship. (4.1.16-28; emphases mine)

Lucius's resolve not to fear Lavinia leads directly to uncoding her efforts at communication. Titus invites Lavinia to "take choice of all my library," and Lucius identifies the tome she lands on as "Ovid's *Metamorphoses*"; Lavinia turns the pages to "the tragic tale of Philomel" (4.1.34-47). (Here, as with Philomela's weaving, writing/text steps in when voice is absent.) But Lucius's fear of Lavinia has nearly prevented this revelation. He feels threatened by the unknown territory of "fit," "frenzy," and "fury"—a language of possession that recalls the Sibyl, who, like Lavinia, is difficult to interpret (and also an object of sexual violence, having escaped rape but still subject to Apollo's oracular possessions).²⁹ Mad Hecuba is also a frightening figure; like Lavinia, she is robbed of speech, first in the shock of seeing her dead son, then in her transformation into a barking dog (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13).³⁰ Extremity of grief spurs transformations: a woman becomes a fury, a thing possessed, a violent creature, a speechless animal. What makes Lavinia so terrifying to the child, so monstrous, is not her physical mutilation, but the psychic disfigurement of her "madness." Yet this appearance of madness is due almost entirely to her inability to speak. Lavinia's attackers, in trying to force her into silent

²⁹ Titus refers to the Sibyl's prophecies later in this scene. After Lavinia has written the narrative of her attack in the dirt, Titus declares that he will engrave the words on a metal plate to record them permanently, since "The angry northern wind / Will blow these sands like Sibyl's leaves abroad, / And where's our lesson then?" (4.1.103-05). The Sibyl's practice of writing prophecies is described by Vergil in Book 3 of the *Aeneid*; see Chapter 2, pp. 56-57.

³⁰ See also the references to Hecuba in Hamlet's soliloquy at the end of Act 2, Scene 2: her "instant burst of clamor" on seeing Priam's body, which makes the heavens weep and, when performed by an actor, inspires Hamlet to use a play to "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.526-82).

replies that lover's speech is "silver-sweet [. . .] / Like softest music to attending ears" (2.2.203-11). Moments later Juliet imagines Romeo as her warbling pet, "a wanton's bird" (2.2.222). After the tragic turn, however—the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt, followed immediately by the consummation of Romeo and Juliet's marriage—the bird imagery takes on a darker aspect. At the close of Act 3, after spending the night together, the lovers debate whether the birdsong they hear is the morning lark or the nightingale. The stage directions specify that Romeo and Juliet are "aloft" in this scene, that is, on the upper level of the stage: the "heavens," and thus the realm of birds. Here, rather than evoking playful love and sexuality as in Act 2, bird imagery and birdsong figure the lovers' separation in the language of death and violence. The philomelic melody "pierced the fear-full hollow of [Romeo's] ear" (3.5.3), an image of violent penetration that implies rape (somewhat strangely displaced onto Romeo, given that the question of Juliet's sexual readiness is a fixation of the first half of the play)³⁴ while also recalling the piercing sword wounds that killed Mercutio and Tybalt. There is also significance in the nightingale's perch "on yon pom'granate tree" (3.5.4). In classical mythology, the pomegranate is associated with female sexuality and with death: eating pomegranate seeds forces Proserpina to remain in the underworld after her abduction and rape by Pluto (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5). The

³⁴ Even from before Juliet's first appearance, jokes and statements in reference to her sexual initiation abound. When Lord Capulet suggests that his daughter is too young to marry, her suitor Paris replies, "Younger than she are happy mothers made" (1.2.12). Juliet's Nurse tells how even as a toddler her charge was teased goodnaturedly about her future sex life: "dost thou fall upon thy face? / Thou wilt fall backward when thou hast more wit, / Wilt thou not, Jule? And by my halidom, / The pretty wretch left crying and said 'Ay'" (1.3.43-46). Though there are also numerous references in the play to Romeo's sexual escapades, they come from his young male peers (Mercutio in particular)—not, as is the case for Juliet, from caretakers and adult strangers.

lark's song marks daybreak and Romeo's banishment to Mantua, or death if he is caught in Verona, so the lovers wish for the nightingale: "Come, death, and welcome; Juliet wills it so" (3.5.24). But when Romeo capitulates to the nightingale, Juliet protests:

It is, it is. Hie hence, be gone, away.
It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.
Some say the lark makes sweet division;
This doth not so, for she divideth us.
Some say the lark and loathèd toad changed eyes.
O, now I would they had changed voices, too,
Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,
Hunting thee hence with hunts-up to the day.
O, now be gone! More light and it light grows. (3.5.26-35)

Juliet's complaint that the lark sings out of tune is a rhetorical flourish; she employs musical terms, "harsh discords and unpleasing sharps," to convey her own displeasure at her circumstance. But it is also interesting that she imagines birdsong as following formal musical rules, fixed in a certain mode or harmonic progression, any deviation from which produces discord; even "mak[ing] sweet division" assumes the framework of an established melodic and harmonic structure, improvising variations upon a ground bass.³⁵ Juliet employs voice as an exemplum in her persuasive speech to Romeo, metamorphosing it to make her case. The nightingale's voice becomes the lark's voice; the lark takes on the attributes of a human musician, abiding by the rules of musical theory; the lark's voice becomes the toad's, which in turn becomes the

³⁵ Simon McVeigh, "Divisions," *The Oxford Companion to Music*.

voice of (human) hunters, whose quarry is young Montague.³⁶ And through Juliet's witty transformation of the nightingale into a lark, a toad, and a hunter, literate audiences may be reminded of the nightingale's original metamorphosis from the brutalized Philomela.

Though Juliet is not subject to the same horrific violence as Lavinia, both heroines fight fiercely against their circumstances, struggling to make their voices heard. Lavinia uses perseverance and ingenuity to reveal the identity of her attackers to her family, while Juliet is relentless in voicing her desires in opposition to her parents. In the end, though, both meet a tragic end. Juliet's death is unambiguously a suicide; she stabs herself and dies with Romeo's name on her lips. But she is also, like Lavinia, faced with the stigma that would make social survival all but impossible after a scandalous secret marriage.³⁷ For both Juliet and Lavinia, the perceived corruption of their bodies is ultimate cause of their silencing.

³⁶ Juliet puts voice at the center of another argument in Act 4, Scene 3, when she contemplates the sleeping potion that Friar Laurence has given her. She considers various outcomes (taking on an assortment of voices, so to speak) before drinking it: that it may be ineffective, or poisonous, or wear off before Romeo's arrival. Juliet imagines herself suffocating in the Capulet mausoleum, or, worse yet, living there until madness sets in. But the catalyst for madness is not merely fear, grief, or the gruesome occupants of the tomb "Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth, / Lies fest'ring in his shroud" (4.3.41-42). The ghosts Juliet envisions are noisy, uttering "shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth, / That living mortals, hearing them, run mad" (4.3.46-47). These supernatural voices, Juliet dreads, will make her "distracted," cause her to "madly play with [her] forefathers' joints," and, finally, "in this rage [. . .] dash out [her] desperate brains" (4.3.48-53). Juliet once again powerfully imagines voice, this time as the instigator of terror.

³⁷ If Lord Capulet's threats in Act 3, Scene 5 are to be taken seriously, Juliet's life may genuinely be in danger: "An you be mine, I'll give you to my friend. / An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets, / For by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee" (3.5.191-93).

The Poor Soul Sat Singing: Ophelia and Desdemona

Both *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet* consider the effects of grief and the experience of violence in leading to madness, a phenomenon explored more fully in *Hamlet*. The titular Prince of Denmark, mourning his father's death and his mother Gertrude's over-hasty marriage to the new king Claudius (the brother of old King Hamlet), learns from his father's ghost that Claudius murdered the old king. Hamlet, melancholy and philosophical, is torn between his desire to avenge his father and his indecision about how, when, where or whether to kill Claudius. Confiding only in his friend Horatio, Hamlet presents himself as a madman to his family and the Danish royal court in order to trap Claudius into confessing his guilt.

The melancholy protagonist dances at the edge of sanity; his declaration in Act 1 of his intent "to put an antic disposition on" (1.5.173) suggests that while his emotional distress and anxiety are very real, his "madness" is performance—he maintains possession of his wits, acting with intent and purpose.³⁸ Hamlet may see his own erratic behavior as a mere act, but ironically it leads directly to the mental breakdown of his lover Ophelia. Hamlet is responsible for the two major events that seem to drive Ophelia mad: first, a romantic relationship that turns sour as Hamlet grows more obsessed with his revenge plot and makes Ophelia the object of his angry outbursts; second, the murder of her father by Hamlet, who kills him in a burst of rage, mistaking him for Claudius. These factors are complicated by Ophelia's family's disapproval of her relationship with Hamlet: her father Polonius and brother Laertes

³⁸ All citations are from Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare* unless otherwise noted.

warn her not to be too free with either her body or her affections,³⁹ even though Gertrude is ready to consider her a daughter-in-law.⁴⁰ Ophelia's mad scene in Act 4, Scene 5 appropriates the antic aspects that Hamlet assumed in Act 2—language play, nonsequiturs, and song—with deadly serious consequences.

Ophelia provides the play's first description of mad behavior in the scene immediately following Hamlet's encounter with his father's ghost and his stated intent to put on an antic disposition. Bursting in to Polonius's room, she describes a run-in with Hamlet moments earlier. Ophelia describes the prince's state of undress ("his doublet all unbraced, / No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled, / Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle," 2.1.79-81) and his apparent anguish ("a look so piteous in purport / As if he had been loosèd out of hell / To speak of horrors [. . .] He raised a sigh, so piteous and profound / That it did seem to shatter all his bulk / And end his being" 2.1.83-97). Hamlet does not speak, only stares and sighs; Ophelia also suggests he is physically forceful with her: "He took me by the wrist, and held me hard, / [. . .] Long stayed he so. / At last, a little shaking of mine arm, / [. . .] That done, he lets me go" (2.1.88-97). Polonius understands this as proof of Hamlet's madness, brought on by his love for Ophelia and her dutiful rejection of his advances. Polonius's interpretation is too easy, and the first of many misreadings on his part in the play, but the audience is presented with many ambiguities as well: Is Ophelia

³⁹ For example, Laertes in Act 1: "Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain / If with too credent ear you list his songs, / Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open / To his unmastered importunity" (1.3.29-32). Polonius, in the same scene though somewhat less poetically: "Tender your self more dearly, / Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, / Running it thus—you'll tender me a fool" (1.3.107-09).

⁴⁰ "I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife. / I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid, / And not t'have strewed thy grave" (5.1.227-29).

telling us everything that happened in this encounter? Is she really shunning Hamlet, or just telling her father that? Is Hamlet genuinely seeking solace from Ophelia in this moment, or merely performing his first mad scene? But despite these ambiguities, Ophelia's speech does teach the play's audience to recognize the symptoms of (stage) madness: dishevelment, sighing, unintelligibility.⁴¹

The play continues to emphasize the effects of madness and violence on voice and language as linguistic difficulties proliferate in the second and third acts. Hamlet continually proves himself a master of language, punning and playing, always trying to keep a few steps ahead of his interlocutors. The game of "Words, words, words" is both defense and offense. In Act 2, Scene 2, for example, Hamlet uses language to display madness—identifying Polonius as a fishmonger (2.2.175)—and to dismiss it: "I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw," 2.2.361-62). Ophelia speaks confidently, eloquently, and volubly in her first two scenes (1.3 and 2.1), but when conversing with Hamlet her responses suddenly shrink into short, uncertain phrases. Indeed, in 3.1 and 3.2 Ophelia seems hesitant to express her own views as she has done earlier:

⁴¹ The two later editions of the play—the Second Quarto (1604) and First Folio (1623)—leave the question of Hamlet's madness to unfurl over the course of the whole play. In the First Quarto (1603), however, ambiguity is dispensed with: Ophelia (Ofelia) announces to her father (here named Corambis) that Hamlet's "wit's bereft him" (D2v; Act 2, Scene 1 in later editions). In the next scene, the King declares that "our deere cosin Hamlet / Hath lost the very heart of all his sence" (D3r); by contrast, in Q2 and F he is much more circumspect, describing Hamlet's "transformation" (2.2.5) as the effect of sorrow. While the text of Q appears hopelessly corrupt in comparison to the later, authoritative versions, it is nonetheless valuable. If it is indeed a memorial edition, it may offer a documentation of performance practice—especially in the stage directions—that is superior to the more carefully edited Q2 and F. See Greenblatt et al., *The Norton Shakespeare*, 1666-67, and William Shakespeare, *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke* (London, 1603) and *The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet Prince of Denmarke. Newly Imprinted and Enlarged to Almost as Much Againe as It Was, According to the True and Perfect Coppie* (London: I.R. for N. L., 1604).

HAMLET Lady, shall I lie in your lap?
 OPHELIA No, my lord.
 HAMLET I mean my head upon your lap?
 OPHELIA Ay, my lord.
 HAMLET Do you think I meant country matters?
 OPHELIA I think nothing, my lord.
 HAMLET That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.
 OPHELIA What is, my lord?
 HAMLET Nothing.
 OPHELIA You are merry, my lord. (3.2.101-10)

The effect of Hamlet's lewd double entendre at his reference to female genitalia ("nothing," "country matters") is more sinister than comical, given Ophelia's evident reticence in her responses and her apparently inadvertent serving of a naughty "nothing" to Hamlet's verbal volley. But "nothing" also characterizes the trajectory of Ophelia's speech: the further the play progresses, the less she is able to communicate. In Act 3, Hamlet blocks all of Ophelia's attempts at rational discourse, turning her responses against her or spinning them out into jabs at Gertrude, Claudius, and Polonius—so that when Ophelia finally re-enters at the end of Act 4, her discourse has radically transformed from "rational" speech into a strange medley of childlike ramblings and ballads, bawdy and melancholy. Indeed, in first description of Ophelia's mad state, Horatio tells the queen, "Her speech is nothing" (4.5.7).⁴²

Ophelia's assessment of Hamlet's instability is framed with a musical metaphor, thus rhetorically linking music and madness: "that noble and most sovereign reason / Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh" (3.1.156-57); she

⁴² This speech (beginning "She speaks much of her father...") is assigned to Horatio in F, and to an unnamed Gentleman in Q2. The speech is not included in the text of Q; there, rather than having to be told of Ophelia's madness, Gertrude informs Claudius "That she, poore maide, is quite bereft her wittes."

herself has “sucked the honey of his music vows” (3.1.155).⁴³ In fact music is associated with madness throughout the text of the play. Ophelia’s first report to her father of Hamlet’s madness comes immediately after Polonius has dispatched an envoy to his son Laertes with a reminder to “let him ply his music” (2.1.73). When Gertrude questions Hamlet’s sanity as he converses with the Ghost in 4.5, the prince’s defense is based in principles of music: “My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time, / And makes as healthful music. It is not madness / That I have uttered” (3.4.131-33). A rational mind is in time and in tune; madness is dissonance.⁴⁴ Ophelia’s songs, a jumble of moods (and modes) and genres, manifest the discordance of a mind overthrown.⁴⁵

Even before Ophelia starts speaking (singing), the audience is presented with visual cues to her state of mind. The stage direction in F—“Enter Ophelia distracted”—is not very specific, but it sets a tone. We get a fuller picture, however, from Q: “Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing” (G3v). The

⁴³ Q2 has “out of *time*” instead of “out of tune,” which places an interesting emphasis on rhythm instead of melody and harmony; also “*musicke* [musicked] vows” suggests even more strongly than F’s “musicke” that Hamlet’s love poems, like the one Polonius reads aloud (“Doubt thou the stars are fire,” 2.2.116) were set to music. Q greatly abridges this speech and leaves out the music references. Note, too, how Hamlet’s reason and Juliet’s lark are both “out of tune.”

⁴⁴ Madness and musicality continued to be linked throughout the early modern period. An eighteenth-century theory described mania as a tension in the body’s nerves, “the maniac a sort of instrument whose strings, by the effect of an exaggerated traction, began to vibrate at the remotest and faintest stimulus. [. . .] In the psychology of madness, the old idea of truth as ‘the conformity of thought to things’ is transposed in the metaphor of a resonance, a kind of musical fidelity of the fibers to the sensations which make them vibrate” (Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (Vintage Books, 1988), 126).

⁴⁵ It is worth noting that for all the textual strangeness of Q, the song lyrics almost exactly match those in later editions, although neither the stage directions nor the typeset distinguishes sung from spoken text as they do in F. Tiffany Stern suggests that song lyrics—like letters, prologues, and epilogues—may have been modular pieces of text that were recorded in the play-books with the rest of the dialogue. For more on textual issues regarding song texts and the significance of their preservation, see Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 113-18.

loose hair is, like Hamlet's open doublet and sagging stockings, a sign of disorganized thought. The lute, too, may have appeared inappropriate in a young woman's hands: William Prynne, writing in 1633, frets, "What a miserable spectacle it is to chaste and wel-mannered eyes, to see a woman . . . to sing to a Lute?"⁴⁶ Thus Ophelia is visually marked as mad and unchaste from the start of the scene; moreover, her performance of the bawdy ballad "Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day" later in the scene will mark her aurally/orally as lascivious. Ophelia's first utterance upon entering is a question: "Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?" (4.5.21); her second, a sung riddle: "How should I your true love know / from another one?" (4.5.23-24).⁴⁷ Ophelia's attempts to engage her interlocutors—"Pray you, mark"—fail because her language has transformed. Like Hamlet's antic speech, hers is peppered with nonsequiturs: "Come, my coach!" (4.5.69); "O, how the wheel becomes it!" (4.5.170); and, recalling Ovid's ominous bird, "They say the owl was a baker's daughter" (4.5.41). But whereas Hamlet uses language as a tool to manipulate those around him, Ophelia tries to work *through* language: even, perhaps, against it. For Ophelia, language is a barrier; what Claudius diagnoses as "the poison of deep grief" (4.5.72) has deprived her of intelligible speech. But in trying to speak through music, Ophelia chooses "a discourse [that] is radically 'other,' breaking the 'accepted rules'

⁴⁶ Quoted in Ortiz, *Broken Harmony*, 27. This association of the lute with unchastity was perhaps specific to England; during the same period in Italy, for example, it was not uncommon for noblewomen to play the lute and sing, not to mention the growing population of professional female musicians employed at courts.

⁴⁷ For the melodic settings of this and other songs in Shakespeare's plays, see Ross W. Duffin, *Shakespeare's Songbook* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004).

of conversation and hence ambiguous in its meaning.”⁴⁸ Like Philomela weaving her tapestry and Lavinia gesturing at her books—discourses that are similarly “radically other”—Ophelia uses snatches of songs and a floral iconography (“There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance,” 4.5.173) to convey her despair. But Ophelia does not share Lavinia’s success in getting her family to decode her communications. Instead, she runs away and drowns, singing, amid her floating flowers.⁴⁹

Ophelia also shares the bodily corruption of Lavinia and Juliet. Her sexual relationship with Hamlet is only hinted at, but the circumstance of her death is publicly known, and the sin and stigma of suicide hover over her burial. When Laertes demands further ceremony at her funeral rites, the priest replies that “her death was doubtful” (5.1.209), and that it is only because of Claudius’s command that she is buried in hallowed ground. Furthermore, her body is literally corrupted, already decaying after death in its final appearance onstage.⁵⁰ As Adriana Cavarero observes, “the funeral of the drowned virgin [. . .] is also the final fall of Ophelia’s virginal body, a surface of beautiful female forms, into the gravepit of Hamlet’s fantasies of decay. The circle of excess closes, and corruption triumphs over the external,

⁴⁸ Leslie C. Dunn, “Ophelia’s Songs in *Hamlet*: Music, Madness, and the Feminine,” in *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*, ed. Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 58.

⁴⁹ Adriana Cavarero suggests additional symbolism in Ophelia’s watery death: singing in the water, she becomes a mermaid or siren, while also immersing herself in an element strongly associated with the female. (Cavarero, *Stately Bodies*, 152-53.)

⁵⁰ The stage direction for Ophelia’s funeral procession in F reads, “Enter King, Queene, Laertes, and a Coffin, with Lords attendant” (278). Both F and Q specify a coffin rather than the body of Ophelia, presumably so that it could be lowered into the trapdoor “grave” on the stage without concern of trapping or injuring the actor (and perhaps to relieve the actor of the challenge of playing dead for the entirety of the scene). However, many theater and film productions have Ophelia visible on stage in the funeral scene.

transient beauty of the female body.”⁵¹ But the triumph of corruption over her body occurs only after Ophelia’s voice is permanently silenced. Her singing was both a means of attempting communication and of resisting the forces that throughout the play had tried to control her body and her sexual and social destiny: forces embodied by Polonius, Laertes, Gertrude and Claudius, and of course Hamlet.

Another tragedy of Shakespeare’s mid-career, *Othello, the Moor of Venice* (ca. 1603-1604) also features a doomed, singing heroine.⁵² Desdemona is probably a little older than Ophelia, and certainly bolder. In a radical act of rebellion, this daughter of aristocratic Venice refuses her noble Venetian suitors and elopes with the Moor Othello against her father’s wishes; she then chooses to follow her husband to his military post in Cyprus rather than stay in the security and comfort of her home in Venice. The tragic turn occurs after the couple’s arrival in Cyprus, where Othello proves susceptible to the false allegations of Desdemona’s infidelity by Iago, Othello’s villainous second-in-command, which leads the loving but irrationally and violently jealous Othello to murder his wife. The drama hinges on the suggestive power of Iago’s language, which does more than any “ocular proof” to persuade Othello of Desdemona’s infidelity. Indeed, voice is a powerful motivator from the beginning, as Othello describes how Desdemona fell in love with him because of his

⁵¹ Cavarero, *Stately Bodies*, 135-36.

⁵² The appearance of these two singing female characters within a few years of each other is very likely due to the presence of a musically gifted boy actor in Shakespeare’s company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (later called the King’s Men after they came under the patronage of James I). The identity of this adolescent actor/singer is unknown, but he seems to have joined the company around 1600 or 1601, and probably played both Ophelia and Desdemona. For more on how the talents and needs of Shakespeare’s acting company helped shape the plays, see Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 62-90, esp. 71.

skill as a storyteller.⁵³ One of the central conflicts in the play is between equivocating voices: Iago's aggressive campaign to sow suspicion, and the (ultimately ineffectual) verbal self-defense of Desdemona and Iago's other targets.

Though Desdemona disappoints her family by marrying Othello, she is essentially of a loving disposition, as evidenced by her deep affection for Othello and her friends Emilia and Cassio. Desdemona is intelligent and skilled with language; she holds her own in a verbal skirmish with Iago in Act 2, Scene 1, and with more dexterity than Othello does. She is also a skilled musician, as Othello attests even when questioning her virtue: "Hang her, I do but say what she is [. . .] an admirable musician. O, she will sing the savageness out of a bear! Of so high and plenteous wit and invention" (4.1.179-81). Othello praises both the sweetness of Desdemona's singing (the antidote to the bear's savageness) and her virtuosity in "wit and invention"—that is, in improvisation and ornament.⁵⁴ The audience gets a glimpse of these musical skills when Desdemona sings the famous "willow" song of Act 4, Scene 3, as we will see shortly.

⁵³ Desdemona's father Brabantio accuses Othello before the Doge and the Venetian Senate of using witchcraft to seduce Desdemona. Othello explains that Brabantio befriended him first, inviting him to his house and asking Othello to tell his life story and adventures:

These things to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline,
But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse. (1.3.144-49)

⁵⁴ For another type of musical wit, cf. Vittoria Archilei's *ingegno* in Chapter 2, p. 79 and the practice of *disposizione di voce* in Chapter 1, pp. 45-49.

The reference to Desdemona's singing, as well as her performance of the song, comes after the turning point in Act 4 when Desdemona's confidence and trust in Othello is shaken as they speak for the first time since Iago has sown the seeds of suspicion in Othello's mind. In Scene 1, Othello strikes Desdemona; in Scene 2, he insults her as a "whore" and "strumpet," though without ever specifically accusing her of adultery with Cassio (he does not do this until the murder scene, 5.2).

Desdemona is so taken aback by Othello's rage—indecipherable to her—that, like Ophelia, she falls into the faltering speech of half-lines, questions, and repetitions.

She actively refuses to speak the word that holds the greatest blame for her:

DESDEMONA	Am I that name, Iago?
IAGO	What name, fair lady?
DESDEMONA	Such as she [Emilia] said my Lord did say I was.
EMILIA	He call'd her whore. [. . .]
DESDEMONA	[. . .] I cannot say 'whore.' It does abhor me now I speak the word. To do the act that might the addition earn, Not the world's mass of vanity could make me. (4.2.121-68)

Desdemona's resistance indicates a fear of contamination: that by saying "whore" she becomes vulnerable to that label, suffering its effects even though her behavior does not merit it. Moreover, her refusal to use vulgar language is noteworthy in a play that is so rife with profanity.⁵⁵ "Whore" does not appear in the text until late in Act 3, Scene 3, when Othello commands Iago, "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore" (3.3.364); but after this, the floodgates open, and the word appears a dozen

⁵⁵ The strong language is especially evident in Q, though "More than fifty instances of 'profanity,' printed by Q, were deleted in F or replaced by less offensive words. Editors once assumed that F was purged because of the Act of Abuses (1606), which prohibited profanity and swearing on the stage [. . .] Editors think that the profanity was Shakespeare's (he wrote the play before 1606) and revert to Q's readings" (E. A. J. Honigmann, ed., *Othello* (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2002), 352).

more times in Acts 4 and 5 (including Emilia’s inventive compound “bewhor’d,” 4.2.118; 332).⁵⁶ The insistent repetition of the word invests it with power and an authority of truth: even after he has murdered Desdemona, Othello stubbornly insists, “She turned to folly, and she was a whore” (5.2.141). Desdemona, by contrast, refuses to take words at their face value. When Othello begins to rant at her, Desdemona’s first recourse is to question the language he uses: “Upon my knees, what doth your speech import? / I understand a fury in your words, / But not the words” (4.2.33-34).⁵⁷ Othello’s speech is unintelligible to Desdemona; his “fury” suggests madness or a possession, as does his fainting fit in 4.1. “Fury” also recalls Othello’s earlier warning to Desdemona about the treasured handkerchief he gave her as a gift, which Iago contrives to steal and plant at Cassio’s house as “proof” of Desdemona’s infidelity.

’Tis true. There’s magic in the web of it.
A sibyl that had numbered in the world
The sun to course two hundred compasses
In her prophetic fury sewed the work. (3.4.67-70)

The handkerchief weaves together sibylline and philomelic threads. The Sybil who embroidered the handkerchief invested it with her magic and prophetic power; Ovid’s epithet of *carmen* for Philomela’s tapestry would be equally apt here. Othello’s invocation of the “fury” of the prophesying Sibyl (however mystifying the tale of the

⁵⁶ The Oxford English Dictionary cites this as the first occurrence of the word (“bewhore, V,” Oxford University Press).

⁵⁷ From the First Quarto: William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moore of Venice. As It Hath Beene Diuerse Times Acted at the Globe, and at the Black-Friers, by His Maiesties Seruants.* (London: N. O. for Thomas Walkley, 1622). F is missing “But not the words.” For the textual history, see Michael Neill, ed. *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, The Oxford Shakespeare (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 405-33.

handkerchief's origin) lends authority to his account. Othello is willing Desdemona to believe that what he says about the handkerchief is true and bound to happen. And since he also exhibits this same "fury," what he says about Desdemona—that she is unfaithful to him—should logically also prove true.

Desdemona is deeply unsettled by these accusations and gives voice to her fears in song. In Act 4, Scene 3, as she prepares for bed, she confides some of her anxiety to Emilia:

My mother had a maid called Barbary.
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad
And did forsake her. She had a song of willow.
An old thing 'twas, but it expressed her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song tonight
Will not go from my mind. I have much to do
But to go hang my head all at one side
And sing it, like poor Barbary. Prithee, dispatch.⁵⁸ (4.3.25-32)

⁵⁸ Q contains an abridged version of the same speech, but without the song lyrics or any stage directions indicating that Desdemona sings:

Des. My mother had a maid cald Barbary,
She was in loue, and he she lou'd, prou'd mad,
And did fosake her, she has a song of willo,
An old thing 'twas, but it exprest her fortune,
And she died singing it, that Song tonight,
Will not goe from my mind -- harke, who's that knocks?
Em. It is the wind.
Des. Now get thee gone, good night: . . . (76)

Q2, however, contains the same text and song lyrics as F (William Shakespeare, *The Tragoedy of Othello, the Moore of Venice. As It Hath Beene Diuerse Times Acted at the Globe, and at the Black-Friers, by His Maiesties Seruants* (London: A. M. for Richard Hawkins, 1630)). Tiffany Stern suggests that the absence of the song from Q might be due to the aging or departure of the boy who originally played Desdemona; if the play was revived with an actor who did not sing, the song might have been omitted in performance and in some versions of the playbook. "Though it is hard to date the writing of the two *Othello* texts, the difference probably relates to the fact that major Shakespearean heroines sing between 1601 and 1604, and that they then all stop until 1609 (when the company moved to the Blackfriars theatre and there was a general increase in the music used for plays)" (Stern, *Making Shakespeare*, 71). It is not clear, however, to which "major Shakespearean heroines" Stern is referring. Between 1600 and 1604, Ophelia and Desdemona *are* the major singing heroines, with the possible inclusion of Viola (see note 9 above). But if there is a dearth of Shakespearean stage songstresses between 1604 and 1609, it is not necessarily clear that there is an increase in singing female characters

In identifying herself with Barbary—they both have the willow song in mind—Desdemona implies that she, too, fears that Othello will prove mad and forsake her, as indeed he has already shown signs of madness. Desdemona’s and Emilia’s conversation continues for a few more lines before Desdemona starts singing to herself.

DESDEMONA	<p>‘The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore tree, Sing all a green willow. Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee, Sing willow, willow, willow. The fresh streams ran by her and murmured her moans, Sing willow, willow, willow. Her salt tears fell from her and softened the stones, Sing willow’— Lay by these. — ‘willow, willow.’ Prithee, hie thee. He’ll come anon. ‘Sing all a green willow must be my garland. ‘Let nobody blame him, his scorn I approve’— Nay, that’s not next. Hark, who is’t that knocks? It’s the wind.</p>
EMILIA	
DESDEMONA	<p>‘I called my love false love, but what said he then? Sing willow, willow, willow. If I court more women you’ll couch with more men.’ So, get thee gone. Good night. (4.3.38-56)⁵⁹</p>

Unlike Ophelia’s songs, which are overtly performative and consciously directed to her audience (onstage and off), Desdemona’s willow song has an introspective quality. She is not explicitly singing *to* anyone else. Though Emilia is present, the song is not performed for her sake; the context of the scene, including Desdemona’s spoken

after the move to Blackfriars. Marina in *Pericles* is one, but there are no singing heroines in, for example, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* (Dorcas and Mopsa sing but are minor characters) or *The Tempest* (though the boy actor/singer playing Ariel may have performed female roles on other occasions).

⁵⁹ There is one discrepancy in the two printed versions: in the first line of the song, F has “singing,” Q2 has “sighing” (77). For sources of the musical setting(s), see Duffin, *Shakespeare’s Songbook*, 467-70.

asides, makes it clear that Emilia is busied with other tasks as they converse and as Desdemona sings to herself. Barbary, Desdemona, and the subject of the willow song are all moved to sing (or sigh) by a lover's betrayal—a "poison of deep grief" as potent as Ophelia's. Barbary and Ophelia both die singing; we may expect that Desdemona will do the same, but in fact it is Emilia who hits the final note:

What did thy song bode, lady?
Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan,
And die in music. 'Willow, willow, willow.' — ⁶⁰
Moor, she was chaste. She loved thee, cruel Moor.
So come my soul to bliss as I speak true.
So, speaking as I think, alas, I die. (5.2.253-58)

In the final scene of *Othello*, prophetic power and the authority of truth turn out to belong to female voices: to Desdemona's song and her rejection of damaging language, and to Emilia's insistence on free and honest speech—the sibylline handkerchief, as we knew all along, signifying nothing.

Iago and Othello—like Hamlet, Demetrius and Chiron, and Tereus before them—fail to fully silence the women who are the objects of their physical and/or psychological violence. Emilia and Desdemona speak after the fatal blows are struck; Philomela and Procne sing eternally in avian reincarnation. Thus Philomelic song, I argue, works on two levels: both as a personal expression of trauma or grief by the subject, and as a mode of resistance to those who inflicted the trauma on her. Philomelic song is a substitution of melody for speech when a traumatized subject loses the capacity for language as a result of either physical or psychological violence. And as we have seen in the preceding examples, the definition of Philomelic

⁶⁰ "What [. . .] willow" is not in Q.

discourse can be extended to also include nonverbal sounds; gestures; textual or visual communications, including Philomela's tapestry and Lavinia's books; and metaphorical language, such as Juliet's discourse on the nightingale and the lark. The last of these in particular is also an example of how Philomelic discourse is resistant to authority: Juliet rebels against parental and social authorities, and her choosing to recognize the birdsong as belonging to the lark or the nightingale—like her entire relationship with Romeo—is a means of establishing some small degree of control over a life ruled by others. For Philomela and especially for Ophelia and Desdemona, Philomelic song is a subversive mode of expression, a coded form of communication that the listener hears as pretty melody and nonsense words, but through which the violenced female subject insists upon making herself heard.

IV. (DIS)EMBODIED VOICES: ORPHEUS AND ECHO

A bird doesn't sing for practice. She sings because she's happy or sad. So I say: store it up. The music sounds better in my head than it does in the world. When songs are pressing against my throat, then, only then, I will go down and sing for the devils and they will cry through their parched throats.

-- Sara Ruhl, *Eurydice*¹

septem illum totos perhibent ex ordine mensis
rupe sub aëria deserti ad Strymonis undam
flesse sibi, et gelidis haec euoluisse sub astris
mulcentem tigris et agentem carmine quercus:
qualis populea maerens philomela sub umbra
amissos queritur fetus, quos durus arator
obseruans nido implumis detraxit; at illa
flet noctem, ramoque sedens miserabile carmen
integrat, et maestis late loca questibus implet.

They say that for seven months in a row he [Orpheus] wept to himself under high cliffs by Strymon's wave, and unfurled this [song] under the frozen stars, mollifying the tigers and moving the oak trees with his song: just as the nightingale, mourning in the shade of the poplar tree, laments her fallen young, which the harsh plowman, catching sight of them, dragged unfledged out of the nest; but she weeps through the night, and perched on the branch she renews her wretched song, and fills the spaces on all sides with her mournful lamentations.

-- Vergil, *Georgics*²

Vergil's nightingale appears in a simile that bridges the animal and human worlds, the mythological and the realist. Unlike Ovid's metamorphosed bird, who laments the tragedies of her human past, Vergil's bird warbles an elegy for her chicks carried off by an unfeeling farmer, the human enemy of wildlife. Yet in calling the nightingale *philomela*, Vergil also summons up the songbird's mythic past. The nightingale stands in for Orpheus mourning his dead wife, Eurydice, whom he has tried and failed

¹ Sarah Ruhl, "Eurydice," in *The Clean House and Other Plays* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006), 386.

² 4.507-15. The edition of the *Georgics* cited throughout is Richard F. Thomas, ed. *Virgil Georgics Volume 2: Books III-IV*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 33-34. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

to rescue from the underworld.³ The nightingale’s song resonates with Orpheus’s forest-charming music of the past and foreshadows the echoing of his last words as his severed head floats down the Hebrus after his violent death.

Whereas Philomela’s voice is a manifestation of violence and trauma, the post-traumatic voice belongs to Orpheus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10-11 and Vergil,

³ Vergil’s choice of the allusive *philomela* rather than the more technical *luscinia* for nightingale in this passage is surely not accidental. Orpheus, like Tereus, is a king of Thrace; Orpheus is that region’s most famous scion, perhaps, where Tereus is one of its most infamous. *Luscinia* has its etymology in the Greek κλύω, meaning “hear,” and its related form κλυτός, “famed” or “glorious”; thus a *luscinia* (nightingale) is literally a “famous/glorious singer” (Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), s.v. “luscinia”). Since Orpheus is already the archetype of the famed singer, *philomela* lends this simile a richer, more unexpected texture than *luscinia* would have. Furthermore, Vergil here imitates a passage from the *Odyssey*. Penelope speaks to the disguised Odysseus, moments after his old nurse has recognized him by the scar on his leg:

ὥς δ’ ὅτε Πανδαρέου κόυρη, γλωρηῖς ἀηδῶν,
καλὸν ἀείδησιν ἔαρος νέον ἰσταμένοιο,
δενδρέων ἐν πετάλοισι καθεζομένη πυκνοῖσιν,
ἧ τε θαμὰ τρωπῶσα χέει πολυηχέα φωνήν,
παῖδ’ ὀλοφυρομένη Ἴτυλον φίλον, ὃν ποτε χαλκῷ
κτεῖνε δι’ ἀφραδίας, κοῦρον Ζήθιοιο ἀνακτος,
ὥς καὶ ἐμοὶ δίχα θυμὸς ὀρώρεται ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,
ἢ ἐ μένω παρὰ παιδί καὶ ἔμπεδα πάντα φυλάσσω,
κτῆσιν ἐμήν, δμῶάς τε καὶ ὑπερεφές μέγα δῶμα,
εὐνήν τ’ αἰδομένη πόσιος δήμοιό τε φῆμιν,
ἢ ἤδη ἄμ’ ἔπωμαι Ἀχαιῶν ὅς τις ἄριστος
μνάται ἐνὶ μεγάροισι, πορῶν ἀπερείσια ἔδνα. (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.518-529)

(Just as the daughter of Pandareus, songstress of greenery, sings when beautiful new spring arrives, sitting among the dense leaves of the trees, and she often turning pours out her many-toned voice, lamenting her dear child Itylus (the son of lord Zethus) whom once with a bronze sword she, unthinking, killed: just so my divided heart is urged now this way, now that way, whether I should stay with my son and keep everything secure, my property, slaves and great high-vaulted house, respecting my husband’s bed and people’s talk, or whether I should follow whomever is best of the Achaeans who pursues me in my great halls, furnishing countless wedding gifts.)

Penelope identifies herself with the nightingale, who in the Greek version of the myth was Procne, not Philomela. But in these two similes, both Penelope and Orpheus are likened to nightingales in a shared context: mourning a lost love while rejecting any notion of a future marriage.

There is an additional irony in Vergil’s choice of simile, which describes a plowman removing a bird’s nest in order to cut down the tree for access to arable land. It is an illustration of man taking control of his environment: the very control that Orpheus, whose song was powerful enough to move the trees without the violence of the axe, risks losing.

Georgics 4), whose voice endures beyond both bodily destruction and violent emotional turmoil. Orpheus—and Orphic figures in Renaissance literature—frequently appear in the company of a disembodied voice that inhabits the same idyllic natural landscape: Echo (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3). As a pair, Orpheus and Echo illustrate certain vocal polarities: a male voice and a female voice; a singing voice and a speaking voice; a creative, original voice, and a voice that repeats (leading us to inquire whether repetition can generate meaning). Renaissance reimaginings of these figures include the virgin martyr Issabella in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*; the nymphs Filli and Ardelia in Isabella Andreini's *La Mirtilla* (1588); and the protagonists of the early *dramme per musica*, Ottavio Rinuccini's *Euridice* (1600), scored by Giulio Caccini and Jacopo Peri, and Alessandro Striggio's *L'Orfeo* (1607), scored by Claudio Monteverdi.

But Orpheus and Echo also resist being categorized into the easy binaries of male-female, singing-speaking, creative-imitative. Rather, as vocal archetypes they present a kind of fluidity of gender. The myths of Orpheus and Echo are tales of voice separated from body, and thus, especially in the case of Orpheus, separated from the biological sex of that body. Orpheus is reimagined in early modern literature as female characters: Ariosto's Issabella and Andreini's Filli. Vergil's nightingale simile draws attention to the powerful, moving qualities of Orpheus's voice, but it also refigures Orpheus as animal (bird), and as feminine, both in the explicit reference to maternal bereavement and in Orpheus's appropriation of the lament, a female genre. Echo, meanwhile, though represented as female, takes on the pitch and timbre of male

voices when repeating their words: a speaker hears himself echoed in his own voice. In breaking away from their gendered bodies, the voices of Orpheus and Echo slip into or through what Eve Sedgwick calls “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be made*) to signify monolithically.”⁴ Sedgwick’s definition of “queer” opens onto a range of potential significations, appropriate for mapping the ways in which the voices of Orpheus and Echo express desire (hetero and same-sex), perform gender(s), and inhabit bodies (or not).

The retellings of the Orpheus myth also share a setting in the fields and woods of the classical pastoral landscape. Vergil, Ovid, and Ariosto place their narratives in the forest. Ariosto’s trees inscribed with lovers’ names and Ovid’s arboreal catalogue both allude to Vergil’s *Eclogues*; Vergil situates his Orpheus narrative within a didactic text on agriculture that explores humans’ relationship to the natural world. These themes are explicitly taken up by Italian pastoral dramas of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including those that are set entirely to music (i.e. the first operas). Andreini, Rinuccini, and Striggio—like Ariosto before them—set their dramas within the *locus amoenus*, with a language, an aesthetic sensibility, and a set of allusions drawn from classical eclogues. The Echo and Orpheus myths relocate disembodied voice in the natural world. The potent voice of Orpheus expands to fill

⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.

its environment; Echo's voice, freed from the bodily confines of the vocal apparatus, is everywhere at once.

In the following sections, I examine literary representations of Orpheus and their points of intersection with the Echo myth, beginning with Vergil's *Eclogues* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; then female versions of Orpheus in *Orlando furioso* and *La Mirtilla*; and finally, the earliest operatic settings of the Orpheus tale. In both the classical and early modern sources, representations of Orpheus and Echo are embodied as both male and female, and speak and sing with both masculine and feminine styles of rhetoric. Each of these figures of voice seems all-encompassing in its manifold identities and its saturation of the natural world, but also stands alone in defying categorization or inclusion, exiled from the body into the wilderness.

Orphea vox: Vergil and Ovid

While the versions of the Orpheus myth in the *Georgics* and the *Metamorphoses* differ notably, including in length and narrative scope, they have the basic outline of the story in common. Orpheus, a semidivine king of Thrace, is a musician of godlike skill.⁵ Not only is his music impossibly beautiful, it also possesses the power to move elements in nature: to tame wild beasts, to charm supernatural beings, to make trees uproot themselves and come nearer to him to listen.⁶ As a young man Orpheus falls in

⁵ Orpheus is the son of Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry. His father is, in some traditions, Oeagrus, a (mortal) king of Thrace; in others, Apollo. Pindar refers to Orpheus by both patronymics: see William Smith, *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (London: John Murray, 1873), s.v. "Orpheus."

⁶ Orpheus is not the only figure from classical myth whose music has power over nature. Other examples include Amphion, whose lyre summoned stones into place to build the city wall of Thebes,

love with and marries a wood-nymph named Eurydice. Eurydice is bitten on the heel by a poisonous snake and dies. Orpheus, grief-stricken, goes to the underworld determined to get her back. His plea, aided by a musical performance, so moves Pluto and Proserpina, the reigning deities of the underworld, that they allow Eurydice to return to the living world, on the condition that she walk behind Orpheus and that he not turn to look at her until after they have reached the upper world. Orpheus agrees to these conditions, but he succumbs to temptation along the way; he looks too soon, and Eurydice is lost once more. Orpheus's grief at this second loss verges on madness as he sings endlessly, day and night. In Vergil, Orpheus vows never to marry again. Ovid adds that Orpheus will never love another *woman* again, but directs his erotic energies toward male youths. A band of Thracian women—bacchantes or maenads—is provoked to violent anger by Orpheus's rejection of their sex, and they tear the singer limb from limb, tossing his body in pieces into the Hebrus. His disembodied head still speaks as it drifts downriver.

Vergil, more than Ovid, is invested in the affective power of Orpheus's voice and music. He does not presume to write the lyrics that Orpheus sings in the underworld scene. Nor does he describe the sound of Orpheus's voice or music (the

and Arion, who saved himself from drowning at sea by singing to a dolphin who then carried him back to shore. (Arion is the subject of the fifth of the *La Pellegrina* interludes; Jacopo Peri composed and performed the virtuoso solo song, which makes use of an echo effect, to great acclaim. See James M. Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589: Florentine Festival as Theatrum Mundi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 32-33, and Nina Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court: The 1589 Interludes for La Pellegrina* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 147-58.) Of these figures, however, Orpheus has had by far the longest and richest afterlife in post-classical literature. Frederick Sternfeld points out that this is likely because of Christian readings of Orpheus's underworld journey (*katabasis*) as an allegory for Christ's harrowing of Hell, and thus of Orpheus himself as *figura Christi*. See Frederick W. Sternfeld, "Orpheus, Ovid and Opera," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 113, no. 2 (1988): 179-84.

divine ineffable).⁷ Instead, Vergil describes Orpheus's lamentation in the underworld purely in terms of its effect on his auditors:

at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum,
quam multa in foliis auium se milia condunt
Vesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber
[. . .]
quin ipsae stupuere domus atque intima Leti
Tartara [. . .] (Vergil, *Georgics*, 4.471-482)

But the shades, moved by his song, went from the deep dwelling-places of Erebus, and delicate shadows cut off from the light, as many as the thousand birds that take themselves into the leaves when the evening star or winter rain drives them from the mountains [. . .] Why, even the very halls of Tartarean Death were awestruck [. . .]

Orpheus's song draws the ghosts towards him and stupefies the palace of Hades and the shades dwelling within it. The affect that "moves" the shades is the same impulse that drives birds to shelter in trees during a storm, suggesting that Orpheus's voice attracts them by a similar promise of safety and comfort. His voice is, after all, the sole living force in the realm of the dead.

Ovid, by contrast, gives his Orpheus a long speech full of rhetorical flourish, which successfully persuades Pluto and Proserpina to return Eurydice to him. Indeed, thanks at least in part to Ovid's narrative, Orpheus seems to have had something of a reputation as a rhetor among Renaissance humanist readers.⁸ The denizens of the

⁷ See Ch. 2, pp. 59-61.

⁸ For just one example, see the translation of and commentary on the *Metamorphoses* by Niccolò degli Agostini (1547). Agostini's allegorical reading of this episode in Ovid describes Orpheus as *uno grande philosopho* (122v) who was also *bello parlatore & molto sapiente* (112v). ("A great philosopher [. . .] a beautiful speaker and very wise.") Publius Ovidius Naso, *Di Ovidio le Metamorphosi, cioè Trasmutationi, tradotte dal latino diligentemente in volgar verso, con le sue allegorie, significationi, & dichiarazioni delle favole in prosa*, trans. Niccolò degli Agostini (Venice: Federico Toresano, 1547).

Ovidian underworld are moved first by speech, then by music: “Talia dicentem nervosque ad verba moventem / Exsanguis flebant animae” (“As he was saying these things and moving the strings [of his lyre] to his words, the bloodless spirits wept,” 10.40-41).⁹ Ovid also echoes the Vergilian *stupuere*, though this time it is not the whole royal house of the underworld, but only Ixion’s wheel that is astonished (*stupuitque Ixionis orbis*, 10.42). Where Vergil’s narrative is poignant, Ovid’s is irreverent: the vultures take a break from pecking at Tityus’s liver, and Eurydice limps on her snakebitten ankle. Vergil emphasizes the emotional power and beauty of Orpheus’s music, while Ovid seems more interested in his powers of persuasive speech.¹⁰ Both Vergil and Ovid depict a tension between masculine and feminine aspects of Orpheus’s identity, shifting between representations of Orpheus as an assertive masculine presence exhibiting the manly skill of oratory, and as a feminine figure uttering the *planctus* of the bereft mother or abandoned lover. Ovid further complicates the metamorphosis of Orpheus by narrating a change of sexual preference.

⁹ All citations from Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* are from William S. Anderson, ed. *Ovid’s Metamorphoses: Books 6-10* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972). For the conclusion of the Orpheus episode, G. M. H. Murphy, ed. *Ovid: Metamorphoses XI* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Ovid also uses Orpheus as part of a larger narrative framework: he is the narrator of the tales that make up the rest of Book 10, perhaps another reason for his reputation among humanists as a great speaker. The Orpheus episode is thus one of the longest in the *Metamorphoses*, spanning all of Book 10 and the first 84 lines of Book 11. Vergil, too, weaves the Orpheus tale into a larger story arc: in his version, Eurydice is bitten by the snake as she is fleeing the shepherd Aristaeus, the patron deity of beekeepers. (Aristaeus is the son of Apollo and a nymph named Cyrene, thus in some traditions a brother to Orpheus; see Richard F. Thomas, ed. *Virgil Georgics Volume 1: Books I-II*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 71.) Aristaeus learns of Eurydice’s and Orpheus’s fates when his bees start dying mysteriously; he seeks the reason from the oracular shapeshifter Proteus, who narrates the story and reveals to Aristaeus that his pursuit of Eurydice led to her death and the collapse of the bee colonies. Vergil devotes just over a hundred lines out of the 566 in *Georgics* 4 to the Orpheus tale.

In both the Vergilian and the Ovidian narratives, the Orpheus tale creates its own echo effects. Both versions produce literary echoes in allusions to other myths (Philomela, Ixion, et al.); plot elements (in *Metamorphoses* 3, which contains Echo's tale, Pentheus is also killed by bacchantes); and earlier versions of the story. Just as Ovid refers back to Vergil, Vergil makes use of Homeric intertexts, as in the nightingale simile, and is also no doubt citing (lost) Greek versions of the Orpheus tale.¹¹ Both poets also incorporate sonic echo effects in the repetitions of words and sounds, such as Vergil's repetition of Eurydice's name (4.525-527). *Stupuitque* (above) is one example of Ovid re-appropriating the Vergilian lexicon; a moment later the poet reduplicates the sibilance of that line with comic exaggeration: "tuo sedisti, Sisyphoe, saxo" ("Sisyphus, you sat on your stone," 10.44). And in the world of classical myth, the natural sound phenomenon of an echo is not distinguished from the nymph Echo who gave the sound its name. Bodiless Echo is an omnipresent figure in nature, and because she belongs to the pastoral landscape that Orpheus also inhabits, she appears frequently in his company. This pairing of Orpheus with echo, along with the tensions between masculine and feminine identities introduced by Vergil and Ovid, establish Orpheus as a queer figure and a rich site for aesthetic and ideological experimentation for future artists. Orpheus is perhaps the ultimate archetype of vocal power, and thus frequently invoked by humanist writers and musicians. Through the following readings of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth re-imaginings of Orpheus that focus on vocality (the quality of the material voice, its

¹¹ For some detective work on Vergil's possible lost Greek sources, see the classic article by C. M. Bowra, "Orpheus and Eurydice," *The Classical Quarterly* 2, no. 3/4 (1952): 113-126.

persuasive and affective power), beginning with Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, I demonstrate how early modern poets and composers exploit the multivalent, polysemous possibilities of Orphic and echoing voices to enact ideas about the relationship of voice to body and gender.

Vox ipsa: Orphic Resonance in Orlando furioso

A significant character in the first half of the *Orlando furioso* is the virgin martyr Issabella, whose story is interwoven in cantos 12-29. She is a Saracen princess of Galicia, apparently about fifteen years old, whom Orlando finds imprisoned in a cave. Issabella's beauty has a beatific effect on the wilderness she inhabits, making the cave and the woods surrounding it seem like a paradise (*et era bella sì, che facea il loco / salvatico parere un paradiso*, 12.91.5-6). Though he describes her appearance only in generic terms (*giocondo viso*, "a lovely face," 12.91.2; lily-white and rose-red complexion, 12.94), Ariosto also paints a vocally vivid picture of Issabella:

La vergine a fatica gli rispose,
interrotta da fervidi signiozzi,
che dai coralli e da le preziose
perle uscir fanno i dolci accenti mozzi. (Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, 12.94.1-4)¹²

The virgin replied to him with effort, interrupted by impassioned sobs that cut off her sweet inflections issuing from her coral [lips] and precious pearls [teeth].

Indeed, there is notable attention to vocality in the stanzas surrounding Issabella's entrance. Ariosto describes her as having sweet and mellifluous speech (*dolce e*

¹² All citations are from Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, ed. Lanfranco Caretti, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1992). Passages are cited by canto, octave, and line numbers.

suavissima favella, 13.2.5). The explicit allusions to the Orpheus myth are in canto 29, but Ariosto subtly begins the work of identifying Issabella with Orpheus in these earlier descriptions of her eloquence and vocal beauty.

Issabella relates her adventures to Orlando: how she fell in love with Zerbino, a Scottish knight, and planned to elope with him since her father would not permit her to marry a Christian; how Zerbino's companions escorted her by ship to meet him and were shipwrecked along the way, escaping by rowboat and landing in the wilderness; and how the men fought amongst themselves when Zerbino's trusted friend Odorico threatened to rape Issabella while those faithful to Zerbino tried unsuccessfully to defend her. In contrast to the slippery Angelica, who takes advantage of the magic ring and her own fleet foot to make herself invisible and run away from danger, Issabella actively fights off her attacker, using her voice as one of her defensive weapons:

a me venía, come famelico orso;
io me difesi con piedi e con mano,
et adopra'vi sin a l'ugne e il morso:
pela'gli il mento, e gli graffiai la pelle,
con stridi che n'andavano alle stelle. (Ariosto, *OF*, 13.28.4-8)

He [Odorico] came toward me like a ravenous bear; I defended myself with feet and hands, and I even used my fingernails and biting: I tore at his chin and I scratched at his skin, with screams that went up to the stars.

Issabella's far-reaching cries draw the unwanted attention of a mob of bandits who save her from Odorico but imperil her further by deciding to keep her prisoner until they can sell her to the highest bidder. When Orlando arrives, Issabella has been imprisoned in the cave for eight months and has just learned of her purchase by a

sultan. She despairs of ever finding Zerbino again; Zerbino, meanwhile, as we learn in Canto 20, believes Issabella drowned in the shipwreck.

Orlando is moved by Issabella's tale. Her angelic voice, punctuated by sighs and sobs, has the capacity to inspire compassion in even the most vicious creatures (*l'angelica favella / da muovere a pietade aspidi e tiri*, 13.32.3-4); the description recalls Orpheus taming the wild beasts with his song. Orlando frees Issabella, kills the bandits, and brings her along on the next leg of his journey. Ariosto picks up their thread again in Canto 23, where Orlando frees a young prisoner who turns out to be Zerbino. Once the young lovers are united, Orlando leaves them to pursue another adventure.¹³

Issabella and Zerbino, after encountering Zerbino's former companions and punishing Odorico for his attempted rape of Isabella by saddling him with the nasty hag Gabrina, spend much of Canto 24 trying to catch up to Orlando. Before finding the knight himself, they see the evidence of his madness: trees destroyed, horse and arms abandoned (24.48-49). Zerbino collects Orlando's armor to build a trophy in his honor, but one of his Saracen antagonists, Mandricardo, appears to claim Orlando's

¹³ This departure sets Orlando on the path toward madness. His journey leads him to a pastoral paradise: a crystal stream edged by graceful trees, on whose trunks are carved the names of his beloved Angelica and her new husband Medoro. The sight drives Orlando mad (*furioso*) with jealousy (23.100ff). Indeed, Orlando's descent into madness in some ways foreshadows Issabella's death, including in its orphic shadings. His initial shock at seeing Angelica's name entwined with another man's stuns him into silence (*né poté aver (che'l duol l'occupò tanto) / alle querele voce*, 23.112.7-8). When he finally gets the whole story from a shepherd—the ultimate proof that Angelica will never be his—the news “takes his head off his shoulders at one blow” (*Questa conclusion fu la secure / che 'l capo a un colpo gli levò dal collo*, 23.121.1-2). Though he could not speak or weep before, immediately following this metaphorical beheading Orlando's sighs and tears, cries and howls escape him with ever-increasing ferocity (23.122, 124, 125). At the peak of his madness, Orlando exacts vengeance upon the trees that led him to learn of Angelica's marriage, uprooting at least seven species. Listing them, Ariosto imitates Ovid's catalogue of the trees charmed by Orpheus (*Metamorphoses* 10.86-105).

sword (Durindana, which formerly belonged to Hector of Troy). In the fight over possession of the sword, Zerbino is mortally wounded.

Ariosto's reworking of the Orpheus myth, with Issabella as a female Orpheus, becomes explicit beginning at this point with the impending death of Zerbino. Issabella, like Orpheus, despairs at losing her lover with their marriage just on the horizon. Ovid opens his Orpheus episode, memorably, with Hymenaeus rushing to that wedding from another, his smoking, feeble-flamed torches an ill omen for the marriage (*Metamorphoses* 10.1-7). Like Orpheus, Issabella also insists that she will follow her beloved into an afterlife, refusing to allow death to come between them:

. . . Non vi pensate già, mia vita,
far senza me quest'ultima partita.
Di ciò, cor mio, nessun timor vi tocchi:
ch'io vo' seguirvi o in cielo o ne lo 'nferno.
Convien che l'uno e l'altro spirto scocchi,
insieme vada, insieme stia in eterno. (Ariosto, *OF*, 24.80.7-81.4)

Do not think, my life, of making this final journey without me. Let no fear of this touch you, my heart: for I will follow you either into heaven or into hell. Let our spirits fly with one another, go together, be together for eternity.

Issabella's willingness to die with (for) Zerbino—that is, to take action on his behalf—puts her in the position of the masculine hero, while Zerbino's disabling wounds render him passive and frail. With his body failing, Zerbino puts all of his remaining strength into his weakened voice (*la debil voce riformando*, 24.83.1), using it to persuade Issabella that there is greater virtue in living: death should only be a last option when the alternative is a greater evil (*e se pure avverrà che poi si deggia / morire, allora il minor mal s'elleggia*, 24.84.7-8). Ariosto here interjects a narratorial opinion:

Non credo che quest'ultime parole
potesse esprimer sì, che fosse inteso;
e finì come il debil lume suole,
cui cera manchi od altro in che sia acceso. (Ariosto, *OF*, 24.85.1-4)

I do not believe that he [Zerbino] could have expressed these final words so that they were understood; and he ended as a weak light is accustomed to do, one that lacks wax or whatever else by which it is fueled.

Just as a flame flickers out once it has burnt all its fuel, the voice dies away when all the strength remaining the body has been consumed. The vocal apparatus, too, is positioned at the top of the body just as the flame forms the head of a taper, an image that again recalls Hymenaeus's sputtering torches refusing to stay lit for Orpheus and Eurydice. Zerbino's fading voice contrasts sharply with Issabella's powerful one as she reacts to his death: "and she screams so that for many miles the woods and countryside echoes with her voice [. . .] always calling in vain the beloved name" (*e stride sì, ch'intorno ne risuona / a molte miglia il bosco e la campagna [. . .] chiamando sempre invan l'amato nome*, 24.86.3-4, 8). The lamenting voice that fills the pastoral space is that of Orpheus, again, with echoes of the nightingale as well as a literal Echo (*risuona*). But Orpheus's voice here emanates from the body of a woman who enacts both the feminine virtues of chastity and fidelity and the masculine *virtù* of courage and honor.

Like Orpheus, Issabella rejects the prospect of any future marriage. She determines to follow Zerbino in death, but an old hermit finds her before grief drives her to suicide, and persuades her to live instead and dedicate her life to God (24.88-89). This encounter also assures Issabella's conversion to Christianity, which might have been thwarted along with her marriage to Zerbino. The hermit offers to

accompany Issabella to a convent in Provence, where she can live permanently and bury Zerbino's body, from which she refuses to be separated.

On their journey Issabella and the hermit encounter the biggest and baddest of the bad guys: the Saracen champion Rodomonte. After Rodomonte dispatches the hermit, Issabella is left at the mercy of the predatory warrior, like a mouse trapped by a cat (*qual topo in piede al gatto*, 29.10.4), and devises an escape plan that she can execute even without allies or protectors. Issabella offers to give Rodomonte an invulnerability potion if he will promise not to rape her. (Rodomonte, of course, has no intention of keeping this promise after he gets the potion.) Their location, an abandoned chapel where Rodomonte has set up camp, bridges the natural and civilized worlds. It is a manmade structure, associated with a cultural institution (the Church), on the outskirts of a village; but the buildings are ruined and deserted and the chapel is in a near-wilderness, "far away from cities and country houses." In the hills and valleys of this *locus amoenus*, Issabella gathers the ingredients for her potion (*per balze e per valloni oscuri / da le città lontana e da le ville*, 29.19.5-6). Issabella boils a cauldron of herbs, ostensibly to brew the potion, but really to heat up the space and make Rodomonte thirsty; she sets out wine for him and his companions, a beverage whose flavor and intoxicating effects they find new and wholly welcome.

When the wine has set the Saracens' heads spinning (*Fece il buon vino [. . .] / girare il capo a tutti come un torno*, 29.22.7-8), Issabella offers Rodomonte a demonstration of the potion's power, as a show of her good faith. She pours the potion over herself and invites Rodomonte to test his sword against it:

Bagnossi, come disse, e lieta porse
all' incauto pagano il collo ignudo,
incauto, e vinto anco dal vino forse,
incontra a cui non vale elmo né scudo.
Quel uom bestial le prestò fede, e scorse
sì con la mano e sì con ferro crudo,
che del bel capo, già d' Amore albergo,
fe' tronco rimanere il petto e il tergo. (Ariosto, *OF*, 29.25)

She bathed herself, as she said, and, happy, offered her bare neck to the reckless pagan: reckless, and perhaps also conquered by the wine, against which helmet and shield are worthless. That savage man put his faith in her, and was in such a hurry with his hand and his vicious sword that her beautiful head, once the dwelling-place of Love, he cut off and left remaining the breast and the back.

Issabella takes Zerbino's advice to accept death only as "the lesser evil." She dies with her honor intact, in terms of both her chastity and her spirituality: a newly converted Christian, she avoids damnation for suicide. The image of Issabella baring her throat to the rapist's sword, preferring death before dishonor, is thematic of Philomela (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.553-54),¹⁴ but Orpheus is the main subtext here.¹⁵ Rodomonte, drunk on the beverage of Bacchus, takes the place of the bacchants. Like them, Rodomonte is driven by the fury of sexual rejection, maddened by Issabella's refusal of his advances just as the Thracian women are enraged by

¹⁴ Valeria Finucci points out that the image of the wounded neck is, itself, an image of rape; see "(Dis)Orderly Death, or How to Be in by Being Out: The Case of Isabella," in *The Lady Vanishes: Subjectivity and Representation in Castiglione and Ariosto* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 186. Finucci's chapter offers a detailed psychoanalytic reading of the Issabella episode. While my interest in this narrative centers on themes of voice, other studies on Issabella—"a crucial if underanalyzed figure in the *Furioso*," as Albert Ascoli points out—have focused on her body. See also Albert R. Ascoli, "Like a Virgin: Male Fantasies of the Body in *Orlando furioso*," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*, eds. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), which considers Rodomonte's desire to possess Issabella's virginal body in the context of his own fantasy of masculine impenetrability.

¹⁵ Ariosto's reworking of the Orpheus myth in the Issabella episode has been widely noted; see, for example, the critical edition of the *Furioso* by Emilio Bigi (Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Milan: Rusconi, 1982), 1235).

Orpheus's spurning of all females. Issabella, like Orpheus, possesses a resonant, wilderness-encompassing voice that refuses to be silenced even when her head is separated from its body: "It bounced three times; and from it was heard a clear voice, that as it came forth uttered Zerbino's name" (*Quel fe' tre balzi; e funne udita chiara / voce, ch'uscendo nominò Zerbino*, 29.26.1-2).¹⁶ Zerbino's dying words in canto 24 illustrate a particular relationship between voice and body, in which the body's strength is the fuel for vocal production: what a marvel, then, for this voice to continue to speak when it is literally cut off from its source of breath and energy.¹⁷ Issabella's prodigious utterance of her beloved's name is a clear allusion to Vergil's Orpheus:

tum quoque marmorea caput a ceruice reuulsum
 gurgite cum medio portans Oeagrius Hebrus
 uolueret, Eurydicen *uox ipsa* et frigida lingua,
 a miseram Eurydicen! anima fugiente uocabat:
 Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripae.
 (Vergil, *Georgics*, 4.523-27; emphasis added)

Even then, as Oeagrian Hebrus carried [it] in the middle of its vortex, the head spun, torn off his marble-white neck, *the voice itself* and chill tongue called "Eurydice," as his soul fled, "Ah, poor Eurydice!" The banks echoed "Eurydice" along the whole river.

The sense of the marvelous is intensified by the appearances in these parallel stories of the number three, significant both in folklore (narrative events and magical items come in threes) and in Christianity (the number of the Trinity). Eurydice's name

¹⁶ The bouncing head may also be an allusion to the legend of St. Paul, whose head was said to have bounced three times after being cut off by the executioner; a fountain sprung forth at each place his head struck the ground (ibid., 1234-35).

¹⁷ This separation of voice from body is perhaps what marks the former voice as divine or supernatural; see, for example, the Cumaean Sibyl in the *Metamorphoses* and Merlin in the *Furioso*, Chapter 2, 65-72.

resounds three times, Issabella's head rebounds three times, and Issabella instructed Rodomonte to apply the potion to his body three times for it to take effect (29.15.6-8). But the central and highest marvel is the voice itself—*vox ipsa*—that emanates from the disembodied head and is amplified by its surroundings. Nature resonates what the voice articulates: the riverbanks take up Orpheus's cry of "Eurydice!"¹⁸ The natural world also amplifies Issabella's name, though on a much grander scale: mountains, not shallow banks, will echo "Issabella" by divine mandate.

Following Issabella's astonishing feat (*atto incomparabile e stupendo*, 29.28.1) comes an even greater marvel: the voice of God emanating from the heavens (*dal cielo il Creator . . . / disse*, 29.28.2-3):

Per l'avvenir vo' che ciascuna ch'aggia
 il nome tuo, sia di sublime ingegno,
 e sia bella, gentil, cortese e saggia,
 e di vera onestade arrivi al segno:
 onde materia agli scrittori caggia
 di celebrare il nome inclito e degno:
 tal che Parnasso, Pindo et Elicone
 sempre Issabella, Issabella risuone. (Ariosto, *OF*, 29.29)

In the future I want every woman who has your name to be of sublime intelligence, and to be beautiful, kind, courteous, and wise, and to achieve the sign of true honor: whose subject will be cause for writers to celebrate your glorious and worthy name: so that Parnassus, Pindus, and Helicon will always echo "Issabella, Issabella."

The mountains that echo ("risuone," 29.29.8) Issabella recall the earlier echo ("risuona," 24.86.3) of her lamentation over Zerbino's body. Again, the repetition of "Issabella, Issabella" mimics Vergil's "Eurydice, Eurydice." For both Vergil and

¹⁸ A form of the same verb (*refero*) is used by Ovid to describe Echo's repetition of Narcissus's speech: "coeamus' rettulit Echo," *Metamorphoses* 3.387 (emphasis added).

Ovid, Orpheus's head becomes an oracle; God's statement, addressed to Issabella's head, also serves as a prophetic utterance, with the poet as the medium who relates it to an audience. (And this divine voice, as we might expect, is presented without any description of its quality.) This episode, of course, like Bradamante's encounter with Melissa in canto 3 (see Chapter 2), is also designed to cultivate the goodwill of Ariosto's patrons: the virtue, wisdom, and literary inspiration of the Saracen Issabella foreshadows that of Isabella d'Este as well as her contemporaries.

Elsewhere in the *Orlando furioso* Ariosto attributes elements of divine inspiration, and thus of divine voice, to his own poetic persona; consider, for example, his appropriation of vatic *furor* discussed in Chapter 2. It might be expected that as a poet and singer of tales he would identify himself with Orpheus, a common trope in Renaissance poetry.¹⁹ Yet Ariosto instead unexpectedly assigns Orphic voice to Issabella, a relatively minor female character. But this choice may be significant because of Issabella's association with Isabella d'Este. Isabella was not only a patron of the arts, but was herself a musician. Her skill was praised by her contemporaries, and moreover she identified herself as a virtuoso singer.²⁰ Thus Issabella appears in the narrative not only as a humanist reimagining of Orpheus, but as a figure for

¹⁹ For one example of this, see Du Bellay's sonnet in my Conclusion, pp. 5-7.

²⁰ A brief overview of Isabella d'Este's musical reputation and her contributions, especially in the development of the *frottola* as a genre, may be found in Chapter 1, p. 42. See also William F. Prizer, "North Italian Courts, 1460-1540," in *The Renaissance (Music and Society)*, ed. Iain Fenlon (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1989), 144-45. Prizer cites an excerpt from Giangiorgio Trissino's treatise on female beauty, *I ritratti* (1524), which describes Isabella's musicianship: "When she sings, especially to the lute, I believe that Orpheus and Amphion who knew how to bring inanimate objects to life with their song, would be stupefied with wonder on hearing her [. . .]" Though extravagant, Trissino's praise nonetheless points to an association of Isabella d'Este with Orpheus of which other writers and courtiers, including Ariosto, may have been aware.

powerful, virtuous female voice with far-reaching influences in the realms of politics and art.

Issabella's vocal power and *virtù* are manifest in her screams that repelled Odorico, and she proves herself a skilled rhetorician in moving Orlando with the story of her misadventures in order to secure his protection. Yet Issabella's rhetoric also fulfills the stereotypically female function of seduction and deceit, as she tricks Rodomonte into killing her (even if with the laudable goal of preserving her chastity). At the same time, Issabella's voice is a sign of her vulnerability, as the same cries that warded off an attack by Odorico also attracted the bandits who imprisoned her. Finally, the pacifying effect of God's voice on the world that hears it (29.30.1-2) is Orpheus's natural charm writ large. Orpheus—and Issabella after him—fully inhabits the natural world. The vocal expression that most potently combines masculine and female attributes is Issabella's keening at Zerbino's death, which fills the forest with the sounds of her grief: it exemplifies both power (her voice penetrating the environment “for many miles”) and vulnerability (the lament of the abandoned lover); it is the ultimate instance of Orphic vocality. The Orphic voice resonates throughout the wilderness, at home with the trees, rivers, and mountains that populate every *locus amoenus*.

Vocalis nymphe: Isabella Andreini's *La Mirtilla*

La gratiosa Isabella decoro delle scene, ornamento dei Theatri, spettacolo superba non meno di virtù, che di bellezza, ha illustrato ancor lei questa professione in modo, che, mentre il mondo durerà, mentre staranno i secoli,

mentre hauran vita gli ordini, e i tempi, ogni voce, ogni lingua, ogni grido
risuonerà il celebre nome d'Isabella.

The graceful Isabella, dignity of the stage, ornament of the theater, an
outstanding spectacle no less of virtue than of beauty: she too has exalted this
profession [acting] in such a way that as long as the world endures, as long as
the centuries persist, as long as life has order and seasons, every voice, every
tongue, every shout will echo Isabella's celebrated name.

-- Tommaso Garzoni, 1588²¹

In an obvious allusion to Ariosto's encomium of Isabella, Tommaso Garzoni heaps
praises upon the virtues of one of her real-world namesakes: Isabella Andreini, whose
pastoral comedy *La Mirtilla* (1588) was published around the same time as Garzoni's
tome on the world's professions, which includes a section on actors both classical and
contemporary.²² Garzoni praises Andreini among actors, but does not include her in
his list of (all male) praiseworthy dramatists—Ariosto, Dolce, Trissino, Cinzio, *et
al.*—perhaps because he wrote his book before she published *Mirtilla*, or because he
did not consider the development of *commedia dell'arte* scenarios as playwriting,
strictly speaking.²³ While Andreini's fame did come initially from her success as an
actor and as co-director of one of Italy's foremost professional acting troupes, I
Gelosi, she was also an accomplished writer, as demonstrated by her published

²¹ Tommaso Garzoni, *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Somasco, 1588), 738. The first edition was published in 1585. See Peter Hainsworth and David Robey, eds., *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 256.

²² Garzoni does seem to embrace the view that naming is significant and may influence the character both of the nameholder and of those who interact with her (or him). For example, he holds forth at length on the alluring power of women's names in his chapter on *meretrici* (prostitutes). Garzoni maintains that courtesans choose names from classical literature (including the modern classics: Isabella and Olimpia are from the *Furioso*) because of their positive associations with lovely and virtuous women. Names are crucial for constructing the fantasies that will captivate a young and impressionable lover/client, who, seeing a courtesan perform longing, will ask himself, "These tears, are they the tears of Dido for Aeneas? Are these laments the laments of Echo for Narcissus?" (*quelle lagrime, sono le lagrime di Didone per Enea? quei pianti sono i pianti d'Echo per Narciso?* Garzoni, *Piazza universale*, 598).

²³ *Ibid.*, 740.

collections of letters and poems. *La Mirtilla* is the only play she published, but she was almost certainly involved in developing the scenarios for the Gelosi. Even though the *commedia dell'arte* scenarios were largely unscripted and/or improvised, what we know of them suggests that they would have displayed the same kind of humanist erudition and poetic craftsmanship that characterized Andreini's published literary works.²⁴ Andreini herself, while renowned for her improvisatory skill, was also famous for her performances of scripted roles, including the titular (male) protagonist of Torquato Tasso's *Aminta*.²⁵ Her long and successful career as a performer and writer indicates that she had a great facility with unscripted, improvisatory forms as well as with complex poetic language. The text of the *Mirtilla* demonstrates this in the way it combines lofty verse with physical comedy gags or *lazzi* (for example, in the skirmish between the nymph Filli and the Satyr in Act 3, Scene 2) as well as with opportunities for verbal and musical improvisation (the singing contest in Act 3, Scene 5).²⁶

One of the ways in which Andreini performs erudition in *La Mirtilla* is through the play's literary allusions and intertextuality. Andreini weaves in tropes from classical poetry, including Vergil's *Eclogues* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. She

²⁴ For more on an unscripted performance created by Isabella Andreini, *La Pazzia d'Isabella* (1589), see Chapter 2, pp. 81-86.

²⁵ For evidence of Isabella Andreini in the role of Aminta, see Ferdinando Taviani, "Bella d'Asia. Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l'immortalità," *Paragone* 35, no. 408-410 (1984): 7. Tasso's *Aminta* was printed in 1580, but its debut production was in 1573; it is likely that the *Aminta* was staged frequently during the 1570s. See Maria Galli Stampino, *Staging the Pastoral: Tasso's Aminta and the Emergence of Modern Western Theater* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 18.

²⁶ The *Mirtilla*, although entirely scripted, still contains vestiges of oral performance and moments at which the text may open itself up to improvisation. Kathleen McGill suggests that some of Andreini's composed stage dialogues have their roots in an oral poetic tradition, and are structured in a way that facilitates improvisation ("Women and Performance: The Development of Improvisation by the Sixteenth-Century Commedia Dell'Arte," *Theatre Journal* 43, no. 1 (March 1991): 67).

also draws on major Renaissance authors: Petrarch's lyrical language infuses the speech of the amorous nymphs and shepherds, while the descriptions of trees carved with lovers' names refer as much to Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* as to his (and Andreini's) source-text for that scene, Vergil's *Eclogues*. Finally, the overall structure of the *Mirtilla*, from the prologue of Cupid and Venus to plot elements and character names, is a satirical yet respectful reworking of Tasso's *Aminta*, which Andreini knew from the inside out, as an actor as well as a reader. Her proto-feminist spin on pastoral drama is situated at a high point in the genre, between two of its most celebrated examples, the *Aminta* and Guarini's *Il pastor fido* (1590), a mere decade before Italian pastoral drama became the basis for fully scored *dramma per musica*.

Andreini's text is also preoccupied with voice (sound, song, language) and its relationship with the body that produces it. The play's interlocutors embody particular vocal qualities or attitudes, which in turn reflect on their character; they also shift between oral and written, spoken and sung discourses, reflecting the theatrical, literary, and musical influences on the text of the play.

One of the general themes Andreini explores in *La Mirtilla* is the power of music to move the affections and to satisfy the senses and spirit. The shepherd Coridone—the play's sole example of a happy lover (though, ironically, his beloved never appears onstage)—tries to persuade the shepherd/hunter Tirsi to embrace love as the greatest human experience (Act 4, Scene 2). Coridone first cites other sources of pleasure and contentment: skill in agriculture and animal husbandry, knowledge of

astronomy, the prosperity of one's flock. Among all these, he heralds music-making as a source of spiritual gratification:

E pensi tu, che sia d'alma gentile
Felicità l'hauer le MVSE amiche,
Saper con dolce, e dotta maestria
Dar fiato a le incerate inegual canne,
Cantar al suon di boscareccia auena
Soaui versi, e l'insegnare à i sassi,
Oue sepolta stassi
L'infaticabil ECO, di ridire
G'vltimi accenti . . . (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 41)²⁷

And do you think that for a gentle soul it would be happiness to have the Muses as friends, to know with sweet and learned mastery how to give breath to the waxen uneven reeds, to sing sweet verses to the sound of the woodland pipes,²⁸ and to teach the stones, where tireless Echo is buried, to repeat the final accents . . .

While mastery of singing and instruments is a worthy pursuit and one that brings contentment to the soul, Coridone maintains that love is a source of still greater happiness. To persuade Tirsi of this, he offers an irresistible scenario of music's sensual pleasures when placed at the service of a lover:

²⁷ All citations give page numbers and refer to the first printed edition of the play: Isabella Andreini, *Mirtilla Pastorale d'Isabella Andreini Comica Gelosa* (Verona: Girolamo Discepolo, 1588). The original spelling and punctuation are maintained. I have also consulted two other editions, from 1599 and 1602, and note textual variations where applicable. The 1588 edition is held at the British Library; the two later editions are at the Huntington Library: *La Mirtilla, favola pastorale, della Signora Isabella Andreini, Comica Gelosa. Di nuovo dall'istessa riveduta, & in molti luoghi abbellita* (Verona: Francesco dalle Donne & Scipione Vargnano, 1599) and *Mirtilla Pastorale d'Isabela Andreini Comica Gelosa. Nuovamente corretta, & ristampata* (Venice: Lucio Spineda, 1602). The modern critical edition is *La Mirtilla*, ed. Maria Luisa Doglio (Lucca: Maria Pacini Fazzi Editore, 1995). All translations given here are my own, though there is also a published English translation of the play: Isabella Andreini, *La Mirtilla*, trans. Julie D. Campbell (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002).

²⁸ *Avena* is literally "oat," but in this context refers to a musical instrument—a flute or perhaps a bagpipe—made from reeds. This *avena* is one of the hallmarks of bucolic poetry, and is mentioned, among other places, in Tasso's *Aminta*. (*Vocabolario Treccani della lingua italiana*, www.treccani.it/vocabolario). Florio's dictionary suggests "an oaten-pipe" (John Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words, or Dictionary of the Italian and English Tongues* (London: Melch. Bradwood, 1611)).

Deh proua vn poco di qual gioia sia
 Sedersi à l'ombra de i fioriti poggi,
 Cantando hor gli occhi, hor le dorate chiome²⁹
 Di bella Ninfa, e far sonar le sponde
 Del suo bel nome, e come dolce sia,
 Ch'ella interrompa le parole spesso
 Con cari, e dolci baci:
 Proua deh proua, di qual gaudio³⁰ sia
 Trouarsi in Antro di fresch'ombre grato,
 Allhor, che'l Sol co' suoi cocenti raggi
 Arde la terra, in grembo à vaga Ninfa,
 [Che dopo mille amorosetti scherzi,
 E parole soauì, e sospir dolci,
 Ti leui i panni acciò che l'aura grata
 Co'l fresco ti ristori,]³¹
 E dolce canti, amorosetti versi,
 Per allettarti al sonno . . . (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 43v-44r)

Oh, see a little of what joy there is in sitting in the shade on a flowering hillside, singing now of the eyes, now of the golden hair of a beautiful nymph, and making the waves echo with her beautiful name, and how sweet it is when she often interrupts your words with dear and sweet kisses; see, oh, see what delight there is in finding yourself in a cave, welcome with its cool shadows when the sun with its searing rays burns the earth, in the lap of a charming nymph, [who, after a thousand loving little jokes and tender words and sweet sighs, takes off your clothes so that the welcome breeze refreshes you with its coolness,] and sweet songs, loving little verses, to entice you to sleep . . .

Coridone describes music's influence on lovers, and in particular the joy that music gives to both partners: singing to (or about) the beloved, as well as being serenaded. The waves resounding the nymph's name recall Vergil's riverbanks echoing Eurydice. Song, too, is mingled with other amorous vocalizations: sighs, loving words, poetic verses. The description of song lends to the seductiveness of the whole discourse, as

²⁹ The 1599 edition gives "Cantando hor de begli occhi, hor de le chiome."

³⁰ 1599: "gioia."

³¹ The lines in brackets are missing from the 1602 edition, but are present in 1588 and 1599.

Tirsi, some 250 lines into the scene, finally admits to some interest in this love business:

Se ben mi pare vna incredibil cosa,
Che quel, che tu racconti,
Sia di tanto diletto: nondimeno
Prouo qualche piacer ne l'ascoltarti;
Di dunque, s'altro a dire in ciò ti resta. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 44r)

Even if it seems an incredible thing to me that what you recount should be so delightful, nonetheless I feel some pleasure in listening to you. Tell me, then, if you have anything left to say.

Auditory pleasures succeed in seducing Tirsi, the reluctant lover. Tirsi enjoys *hearing* Coridone describe the love songs and other sensual pleasures; thus voice and music frame Tirsi's whole understanding of amorous interactions. In fact, when he first meets Mirtilla, he brags about his skills in singing and playing the lyre (*cetra*) in his first speech to her (Act 4, Scene 3). And indeed this is in keeping with the traditions of pastoral literature, whose population of nymphs and shepherds have since antiquity frequently expressed their desires through music. But for Andreini, musical skill is not only a narrative device; it is also a measure of worth. In Act 3, Scene 5, the old shepherd Opico is invited to judge a singing contest between the nymphs Mirtilla and Filli, who are rivals for the love of the shepherd Uranio. (Uranio, meanwhile, is in love with Ardelia, a nymph dedicated to the goddess Diana and therefore sworn to chastity.)

Filli and Mirtilla describe their relationship using a musical metaphor: they are in “discord” because they are rivals in love, but ought to be in “harmony” with one another:

MIR. Amo Vranio, tu 'l sai, & io no'l nego,
E tu l'ami, e no'l neghi; adunque è forza,
Che sia fiera tra noi discordia, e guerra.³² (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 32v)

MIRTILLA: I love Uranio, you know it, and I do not deny it; and you love him, and do not deny it. Thus inevitably there is discord between us, and war.

FIL. Hor voglia il Ciel, che quando hauremo noi
Co'l suo suono accordato il nostro canto,
Egli accordi le nostre
Amorose contese. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 33r)

FILLI: Now let it be Heaven's will that when we have made our song accord with his [with the music of Opico, the wise shepherd who has promised to settle the nymphs' dispute], he will put in accord our loving disputes.

This musical metaphor frames the musical contest in which, perhaps, the audience may hear manifestations of these discords and harmonies.³³ In the contest itself, the beauty of Filli's and Mirtilla's voices and the ingenuity of their musical and lyrical improvisations will determine their worthiness. The nymphs' voices are both a manifestation of *virtù* (prowess) and an outward indication of their inward virtues—the ultimate means of assessing their relative worth when they have been deemed equal to each other in all other aspects. Indeed, the contest is indecisive, as Opico declares them equal in song as well: “Let there be no strife between you, where there is such equivalence of valor” (*Lite non sia tra uoi, doue è cotanta / Parità di ualore*, 32v). Where Coridone had touted music's power to move the senses and emotions, Opico fixates on music's moral capacity as a measure of worthiness.

³² 1602: “Che sia trà noi aspra discordia, e guerra.”

³³ No musical score for this scene survives. The script does not indicate whether the nymphs sing together (harmonize) at any point, but this could perhaps have been a staging choice, depending on the type of music that was performed. The actresses were likely accompanied by musical instruments. For more on the musical performance of the singing contest, including the use of instruments and likely forms of musical settings, see Anne MacNeil, *Music and Women of the Commedia Dell'Arte in the Late Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 41-46.

Andreini's characters also consider the negative influences of music and song. The play text employs imagery not only of songbirds, as one would expect in a pastoral, but of ill-omened owls (Act 1, Scene 2; Act 4, Scene 1); Somnus (Sleep), whose influence dulls the senses and destroys consciousness, is imagined as a haunting birdlike figure with dark feathered wings (Act 2, Scene 1).³⁴ Act 4, Scene 1 is devoted almost exclusively to a discussion of bird traps between Opico and Tirsi: a peculiar and very lengthy didactic discursus that seems to have little to do with the plot of the play (though it is a fine showcase of the author's erudition). In this context, vocal music is a form of entrapment, as Tirsi instructs his pupil Opico that birds are most reliably lured by hunters who imitate their song.³⁵ Opico cautions Tirsi that lovers are just as easily deceived:

Simil à questi augelli
 Sono gli incauti Amanti,
 Che lusingar si lasciano dal canto,
 E da le soauissime parole
 De le lor Ninfe, e poi
 Sù le tenaci panie

³⁴ Recall the appearance of the owl in Ovid's tale of Philomela (see Chapter 3, p. 95).

³⁵
 Noi poi taciti, e chiusi,
 Nel picciolo alberghetto,
 Fatto di molli [1599: mille] giunchi,
 Con inganneuol canto
 Imitiamo la voce
 De' Tordi, che passando
 Si lasciano ingannar dal finto suono,
 E con più lento volo,
 Vanno girando a la lor morte intorno. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 36r-36v)

("Then we, silent, and closed up in a little shelter made of soft rushes, with deceptive song imitate the voices of the thrushes, which, passing by, let themselves be deceived by the feigned sound, and with slower flight go circling around toward their own death.")

The image of the hunters lying in wait and mimicking birdsong to lure their prey recalls the scene of Helen walking around the Trojan Horse and mimicking the voices of the Greek soldiers' wives to draw them out (Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.277-89).

De la lor ferità perdon la uita. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 36v)

Similar to these birds are the reckless lovers, who let themselves be flattered by the singing and too-sweet words of their nymphs, and then, on the fast-holding birdlime, because of their wildness they lose their life.

Tirsi is made aware of the seductive dangers of song, yet nonetheless allows himself to be charmed by Coridone in the following scene.

Finally, the very last speech in the play, uttered by Coridone, includes a songbird reference:

Andiam lodando Amore,
E la sua bella Madre,
Poi che, la lor mercè, tante suenture
Hanno hauuto felice, e lieto fine:
E sia propitio sempre à questo sito,
Il Fato:³⁶ e i Rosignuoli
Fra questi verdi rami
Temprino a proua lasciuette note,
E con nuoue vaghezze
Cantin sempre d'Amore l'alte dolcezze. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 65r)

Let us go praising Love and his beautiful mother, since by their mercy, so many misadventures will have a fortunate and happy end: and let Fate always be favorable to this place: and let the Nightingales, among these green branches, temper³⁷ by experience their lustful little notes, and with new charms let them sing always of Love's high sweetness.

Coridone asks for a blessing on the place where the nymphs and shepherds have gathered and attributes the power of beatification to three parties: to Amore (Love/Cupid) and his mother Venus, who have successfully demonstrated the extent of their powers as they promised to do in the Prologue; to Fate; and to the nightingales,

³⁶ The 1602 edition reproduces the whole speech except for "Il Fato."

³⁷ *Temperare* here has a specifically musical meaning: to play an instrument in harmony or accord, thus imagining the nightingales as musicians playing together in a consort, a departure from the more frequent image of the nightingale as the lamenting soloist (*Vocabolario Treccani della Lingua Italiana*). In English, "temper" also means to put in tune; the most common current usage is in perhaps in the context of tuning systems, or *temperaments*.

engaged in a perpetual singing contest that recalls the competition of Filli and Mirtilla in Act 3, Scene 5. The nightingales' song is flirtatious (*lascivette*) and attractive (*vaghezze*). Indeed, the nightingale was commonly employed in Italian Renaissance poetry as a trope heralding the arrival of spring.³⁸ Yet any allusion to the nightingale also carries with it a subtext (or intertext) of lamentation because of its origin myth. There is something foreboding about a celebration of love that invokes Philomelic song. As Ann Rosalind Jones has pointed out, female poets in the Renaissance often addressed the aspects of violence and repression inherent in the Philomela tale where their male counterparts glossed over them. Jones identifies Philomela, along with Echo, as mythological allusions "frequently invoked by women poets as figures for enforced speechlessness."³⁹ Here at the end of the play, the romantic comedy plot has been neatly tied up, with all the nymphs and shepherds paired for marriage. Andreini's invocation of the nightingale at this ostensibly happy moment is a reminder of the darker aspects of love, lust, and marriage for early modern women: suppression of female agency, violence, forced silence.

In addition to these overarching themes of vocality and musicality, individual character arcs also engage with musical thinking, vocal expression, and the relation of voice to body. The shepherd Uranio, for example, is reported to be a great musician by Mirtilla, who finds his musical skills enchanting:

³⁸ See Ann Rosalind Jones, "New Songs for the Swallow: Ovid's Philomela in Tullia D'Aragona and Gaspara Stampa," in *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, eds. Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 270-71.

³⁹ Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 28.

Tu solo Vranio fosti,
 Che di tenace nodo,
 L'anima mi legasti,
 Allhor, che dolcemente,
 Con la dotta zampogna accompagnaui
 I tuoi soaui accenti, à i quali [. . .]
 [. . .] rispondeua
 Da questi caui sassi Eco infelice. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 17v)

You alone, Uranio, were the one who bound my soul with a stubborn knot, when, sweetly, you accompanied your pleasing accents with the learned shepherd's pipe, to which [. . .] unlucky Echo replied from these hollow rocks.

Mirtilla experiences Uranio's voice and music as a force that binds her soul: immaterial, but with the tactile strength to knot up a spirit. Yet Uranio himself appears wholly uninterested in sound or music. He falls in love with Ardelia by indirect discourse—a secondhand report of something she said—and he comments far more on her looks than on any other qualities (Act 1, Scene 1). In Act 5, Scene 5, when Ardelia has decided to pursue a relationship with Uranio, Uranio's responses are, again, fixated on the physical. He offers a mock-blazon of Ardelia's beautiful features, describing how they will fade in old age. Uranio also invites Ardelia back to his hut, where he insists that she will see the visual documentation of his lovesickness (her name written on the walls—recalling *Orlando furioso*—and the gifts she previously refused). Here, he says, she may tangibly remove his pain by holding those gifts with her “beautiful hand” and erasing and over-writing a declaration of love with her “frank finger” (*con la bella man [. . .] con lo schietto dito*, 57r). For Mirtilla, falling in love with a voice is the first step in loving the body to which it belongs; Uranio, however, sees physical objects (text; body parts—hands, eyes, and the rest—

divided up in blazon) as pieces of the embodied whole he desires. In other words, Mirtilla loves by metonymy, Uranio by syndecdoche.

In fact, Uranio's emphasis on physical, visual, or textual elements as representative of a whole affective experience is typical of the lovelorn shepherds—that is, the young, single males—in the play. Uranio dwells on writing, erasing, and rewriting as proof of his love, his suffering, and his suffering ended by Ardelia's love. Inscription is also an act of love for Tirsi in Act 5, Scene 1 and Igilio in Act 5, Scene 2, as they carve their beloveds' names on trees. In Act 5, Scene 3 Filli catches Igilio in the act, knife in hand—he has carved her name, some lines of poetry, and even his own epitaph—suggesting that the carvings were visible as part of the stage scenery.⁴⁰ As the shepherds sort out their love affairs in the final act, they rely on text and writing as ocular proofs of their love and as a means to persuade the reluctant nymphs to requite their affections. The nymphs Mirtilla and Filli, on the other hand, choose their lovers not merely because of what they *see*, but what they *hear*. Filli is suddenly moved to love Igilio instead of Uranio partly out of compassion, but mostly because of the former's persuasive utterance: “Oh words that could soften stones!” she exclaims (*O parole, che i sassi / Potrebbero ammollire*, 53v). Igilio, trusting less in vocal expression than in physical expression, refuses to believe Filli's change of heart until she offers him tangible evidence:

S' à gli occhi tuoi non credi, & à l' orecchie,
Almen credi à le mani, che s' stretta

⁴⁰ Carved trees and stones were typically included in the set decoration of pastoral plays. See Angelo Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa e del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche* (Ferrara: Vittorio Baldini, 1598), 47-48.

Mi tengono . . . (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 54r)

If you do not believe your eyes and ears, at least believe your hands, which hold me so tightly . . .

Both Igilio and Uranio look for proof of love in hands (physicality and action), while Filli and Mirtilla are persuaded to love through speech and sound. Mirtilla first falls in love with Uranio because of his singing. Tirsi brags to Mirtilla that he can sing as well as the legendary Mopsus (Act 4, Scene 3; see also Vergil, *Eclogues* 5 and 8), and in the end it is his voice that wins Mirtilla's compassion: "I heard, my Tirsi, everything that you said out of so much pain" (*Hò sentito, mio Tirsi, tutto quello*⁴¹ / *Che per troppo dolor diceui*, 58v). Both to express emotion (I am in love and/or pain!) and to judge the authenticity of another person's affect (is s/he in love?) or worth (does s/he deserve to be loved?), the shepherds rely on physical and visual cues while the nymphs use aural/oral ones. The only male characters that privilege voice and music are Coridone (happily partnered) and Opico (a sagacious elder). Coridone and Opico are also the wisest characters in the play, guiding their young friends through their tangled web of social relationships. These wise, mature men understand voice as both an extension of the body and a reflection of the spirit that inhabits it; and in this female-authored play, only the female characters share their wisdom.

One of these female characters, Filli, is the Orpheus figure of *La Mirtilla*. Some instances of Filli's musical discourse have already been noted, such as her assessment of her relationship with Mirtilla in terms of harmonic accord or discord and her participation in the singing contest. She first appears in Act 1, Scene 2: the

⁴¹ 1599: Vdito hò qui in disparte tutto quello . . .

whole scene is a soliloquy in which she expresses her heartache over Uranio. Yet even as Filli complains about her powerlessness to make Uranio love her, she demonstrates considerable vocal power of her own. Her utterances have a kind of Orphic authority over her environment: “and the winds, too, know [about my unrequited love for Uranio], because when they hear my harsh suffering they often stop” (*e i uenti ancora / Lo san, che per vdir l’aspra mia pena, / Si fermano souente, 11r*). Filli also refers to Echo not as a natural phenomenon, but as a personification of sound that is particularly sensitive to her discourse:

Indarno Vranio chiamo, e mentre chieggio
 Al Ciel s’ei mi sarà spietato sempre:
 Da i caui sassi accresce il mio tormento
 Eco, ch’al mio parlar risponde SEMPRE. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 11v)

I call Uranio in vain, and while I ask Heaven if he will despise me always, out of her hollow rocks Echo increases my torment, because to my speech she replies ALWAYS.

Filli is also sensitive to the noises around her; she imagines that not only Echo, but also the birds, springs, and breezes participate in a dialogue with her misery: *’l garrir de gli augelli, / Il mormorar de’ fonti, / E’l dolce susurrar de l’aure lieui* (12r; emphasis mine). Through Filli’s speech, Andreini demonstrates an attentiveness to the vocalizations of the natural world: the “chirping,” “murmuring,” and “whispering.” Filli’s Orpheus-like influence over nature is suggested again in Act 3, Scene 1 by Satiro (a satyr, naturally), who is in love with her. Satiro bemoans the cruelty of Love and of his lovely nymph. Satiro longingly says that in Filli’s presence

. . . gli augelletti
 Cantano sopra i rami i loro amori;
 E per le caue grotte,

Senza toscò i serpenti,
E senza ferità stanno le fiere,
E ne l'erboso fondo de' correnti,
E fuggitiui fiumi,⁴²
Lieti, e tremuli pesci
Stanno . . . (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 24v)

The birds sing [of] their loves upon the branches; and through the hollow caverns the snakes are without venom, and the wild creatures without savagery, and in the weedy bottom of the rushing and elusive rivers there are happy and trembling fish . . .

Satiro attributes to Filli an Orphic power to tame wild beasts and inspire cheer. But he grants her a power that goes farther than that of Orpheus: Filli's charm is literally disarming, as it robs the animals of their natural defenses (the snakes lose their venom). Filli's voice does prove to have such influence at least over Satiro, as she employs sweet, flirtatious speech to distract and cajole him—to neutralize the threat he presents—as she exacts her revenge on him for attempting to rape her (Act 3, Scene 2). Finally, when Filli is granted the first turn in the singing competition, she invokes Orpheus in her first strophe (Act 3, Scene 5):

Dotta Calliopea,⁴³
Madre di quel buon Trace,
Ch'ogn'animal più fero, e più fugace,
Con la sonora voce a se trahea⁴⁴
Inspira, ò Diua, a questa voce mia,
Soaue melodia. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 32v)

Learned Calliope, mother of that good Thracian who with his sonorous voice drew to him all the most wild and elusive animals, o Goddess, breathe sweet melody into this my voice.

⁴² 1599: E ne l'erboso fondo / De i risonanti fiumi

⁴³ 1599: Calliope al biondo Apollo amica tanto

⁴⁴ 1599: A sè trahea, col suo lodato canto

In her first songburst, Filli invites the audience to fall under the spell of her voice. She calls on the divine influence of the Muse Calliope to “breathe in” to her own voice (*inspira*), an allusion to the sibylline mode of inspiration (a divine voice speaking/singing through a human body).⁴⁵ Yet Filli also cites Orpheus (“that good Thracian”), whose voice unites the divine and the human: a god-voice that does not merely possess or inspire a human body, but inhabits it for that body’s whole life. The orphic voice, like a soul, exists within the body but also independently of it, resonating into eternity, or in the cases of Orpheus and Issabella, vocalizing though separated from the body.

Filli’s invocation of the Muse is just one of the dozens of classical references that punctuate Andreini’s text. The most elaborate of these is a solo scene (Act 4, Scene 4) of just over a hundred lines—close to ten minutes in performance—in which the nymph Ardelia falls in love with her own reflection, a re-imagining of the Echo and Narcissus myth from Book 3 of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Ovid himself suggests a connection between Echo and Orpheus, not only in the sylvan setting that characterizes so many episodes of the *Metamorphoses*, but by the placement of the Echo and Narcissus tale within the narrative. Echo and Narcissus appear toward the end of Book 3, immediately before Pentheus and Bacchus: an episode that explicitly foreshadows the Orpheus story, as Pentheus, like the Thracian singer, meets a violent death at the hands of a band of bacchants.

⁴⁵ In the context of a link between Orpheus and inspiration, I would be remiss in leaving unmentioned Maurice Blanchot’s classic essay “The Gaze of Orpheus,” which identifies the transgressive look back toward Eurydice in the underworld as the paradigm of artistic inspiration. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 172-73.

Echo is referenced by a number of characters in the play: as we have already seen, by Filli in Act 1, Scene 2; by Mirtilla in Act 2, Scene 2; and by Coridone in Act 4, Scene 2. The other allusion to Echo is by Ardelia in Act 2, Scene 1, a soliloquy in which, tired from the hunt, she longs for silence and sleep:

Ma folle, mentre parlo,
Interrompo il Silentio,
E, se pur senza lui nulla tu puoi
Forz'è, ch'io taccia, o venti,
O piante, o caui sassi, oue sepolta viue
Echo, nulla ridite
Di quel, che vdito hauete.⁴⁶ (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 17r)

But, foolish girl, when I speak I interrupt Silence, and, since without him you can do nothing, perhaps I must be quiet. O winds, o plants, o hollow rocks where buried Echo lives, repeat nothing of that which you have heard.

Toward the end of the soliloquy, Ardelia notes wryly that neither Silence nor Sleep will come near her if she keeps talking. In this respect she is more akin to Echo than to Narcissus; Ovid's *vocalis nympe* was reduced to imitative speech as a punishment for talking too much.⁴⁷ And though Ardelia, too, is an energetically vocal nymph—

⁴⁶ The 1599 edition differs significantly:

Ma folle, mentre parlo,
Interrompo il Silentio,
Da te bramato tanto
Senza del quale, ò nulla, ò poco puoi:
Forz'è, ch'io taccia adunque, ò venti, ò piâte,
O caui sassi, oue sepolta viue
Echo, nulla ridite
Di quel, che vdito hauete.

⁴⁷ Echo is introduced by her vocality before we actually hear her name: *vocalis nympe, quae nec reticere loquenti / nec prius ipsa loqui didicit, resonabilis Echo* (“the vocal nymph, who had neither learned to hold back from speaking nor to speak before herself, resonant Echo,” Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.357-8). *Resonabilis* means, more than simply “resonant” or “echoing,” capable only of echoing: “Ovid has coined this word here as the definitive epithet to go with the name” (William S. Anderson, ed. *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 375. Echo's loquaciousness characterizes her even when she is still embodied, not yet only voice (“corpus adhuc

her two soliloquy scenes are among the longest in the play—she still snaps at Uranio when he talks too much (Act 2, Scene 3): “O more annoying than the strident cicada [. . .] I’m leaving so I don’t have to listen to you anymore” (*O più noioso, che Cicala stridula [. . .] io mi parto, / Per non sentirti più, 22r*). Ardelia often displays an ironic self-awareness; all of 2.1 is an ode to silence, yet in a masterful deployment of *praeteritio* she dedicates nearly a dozen lines to illustrating all the sounds she will not hear.⁴⁸ In Act 4, Scene 4, too, despite expressing a sort of helplessness under Love’s influence, Ardelia is also fully conscious of the ludicrousness of her situation as well as its classical precedent, saying at the end of her second soliloquy, “I have renewed the cruel torment of unfortunate Narcissus” (*hò rinouato / Di NARCISO infelice il crudo scempio, 50r*). And although she dismisses Uranio’s vociferousness as a nuisance, Ardelia is distressed to find that the object of her desire does not speak:

Echo, non vox erat,” 3.359). But her limited capability—repetition only—is already established when she meets Narcissus. Echo’s chatting had kept Juno from catching Jove *in flagrante* with other nymphs; when Juno discovered this, enraged, she cursed Echo by making her unable to speak in any way but by repeating others’ words. Echo’s encounter with Narcissus does not de-vocalize her—she already echoes—but it does disembody her. Echo’s body shrinks away with longing, but her voice survives, immortal and omnipresent.

⁴⁸ . . . quì non muggia Toro,
 Non bela Capra, non abbaia Cane,
 Quì non vlula Lupo,
 Quì non stride Cicala,
 Quì non gracida Rana,
 Quì non s’ode l’augel nuntio del giorno,
 Quì non s’ode altra cosa,
 Che’l mormorio di questa chiara fonte;
 La qual [. . .]
 [. . .] imita quasi il suono
 De le notturne cetre de’ Pastori. (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 16v)

(“Here the bull does not bellow, the goat does not bleat, the dog does not bark; here the wolf does not howl, the cicada does not shriek, the frog does not croak; here the bird, herald of the day, is not heard; here nothing is heard but the murmur of this clear spring, which almost imitates the sound of the shepherds’ nighttime lyres.”)

Ma l'armonia non sento⁴⁹
 De la sua voce; hor uò tacere, e mentre
 Taccio, concedi a me, cortese Diua,
 Ch'io senta le tue care, alme parole;
 Ohime, s'io taccio, & ella tace, e s'io
 Mostro d'auer desio, ch'ella ragioni,
 Anch'ella di bramar mostra il medesimo . . . (Andreini, *Mirtilla*, 48v)

But I do not hear the harmony of her voice; now I will be silent, and while I am silent, grant, courteous Goddess, that I hear your dear, nurturing words; oh, if I am silent, and she is silent, and if I show that I have a desire for her to speak, she also shows that she craves the same thing.

Ardelia imagines that her reflection's voice has the layered richness of harmony (*armonia*), loveliness (*care, alme parole*), and intelligent/intelligible discourse (*ch'ella ragioni*). In other words, beauty is in the ear of the beholder: Ardelia imagines a beautiful voice in her beloved, but scorns Uranio's voice as the irritating buzz of a cicada. (Ironically, of course, the voice that belongs to Ardelia's reflection is her own, or, perhaps more accurately, an echo of her own.) What Ardelia and Uranio share, in fact, is a preoccupation with the visual. In this respect Ardelia is rather like the young men in the play, who fixate on their beloved objects because of their beauty or through distant observations or hearsay, rather than through direct interactions. Ardelia expresses her desire in much the same way that Satiro, Uranio, Igilio and Tirsi do. Unlike them, however, she is unable to pursue the one she loves; her desire for her own body—or, rather, the reflection or “shadow” (*ombra*) of her body—traps her within her body. In the end, Ardelia's sudden awakening to erotic desire in response to a beautiful female body is, ironically, what brings her around to Uranio. Frustrated by the impossibility of satisfying these desires by herself, Ardelia

⁴⁹ 1599: non odo

declares, “Amare il corpo io uoglio, e non più l’ombra” (“I want to love a body, and not a shadow any longer,” 56v). To whom the body belongs seems a matter of little importance. Whereas Filli and Mirtilla are eventually drawn to their lovers out of compassion, Ardelia’s desires are entirely narcissistic. Uranio, or at least Uranio’s body, is the means by which Ardelia can take pleasure in herself (her own body), as he teasingly points out to her: “If you want to take pleasure in yourself, love your faithful Uranio [. . .] taking pleasure in him, you will take pleasure in yourself” (*se vuoi godere / Di te medesima, ama il tuo fido Vranio [. . .] me⁵⁰ godendo, goderai te stessa*, 55v). Rather than languish like Narcissus, Ardelia chooses to direct her passion toward a body outside of herself, even if doing so means capitulating to heteronormativity; she chooses self-preservation and the possibility of pleasure. And like a good humanist, she also embraces a Platonic model of love, expanding her love of a single beautiful body (her own) into a love that is capable of valuing all bodies equally (Uranio’s included).⁵¹ Uranio, like a more tempered Echo to Ardelia’s more tempered Narcissus, surrenders his body to her use; but since he does in fact achieve his desires, he, unlike Echo, remains in possession of a whole body.

Every appearance of Echo in Andreini’s text refers to her as being “buried” (*sepolta*) or residing within “hollow rocks” (*cavi sassi*). In addition to the literary

⁵⁰ 1599: *lui* godendo

⁵¹ An abbreviation of the philosophy of love described by Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*. The theme is also taken up in Book 4 of Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier*, in a speech by the fictionalized Pietro Bembo. See Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin, 2003), 336-44.

allusion,⁵² Andreini is also calling attention to current staging practices, since pastoral plays in the late Cinquecento—the genre within which the Orpheus tale was often framed—frequently included “echo” devices. Angelo Ingegneri’s treatise on stagecraft, published in Ferrara in 1598, addresses the three main genres of plays performed in Italy in the late sixteenth century: tragedy, comedy, and pastoral.⁵³ The first part of the treatise, *Della poesia rappresentativa* (“On Dramatic Poetry”), is concerned with the structure and composition of play texts. The second, *Del modo di rappresentare le favole sceniche* (“On the Manner of Performing Tales for the Stage”), addresses staging and performance practices. In the first section, Ingegneri offers a five-page-long discourse on “an Echo” that, he says, many pastoral dramatists incorporate into their plays.⁵⁴ For Ingegneri, Echo may be either a stage device or a person: Ingegneri demonstrates a concern with verisimilitude. He criticizes the poets who rely too heavily on the Ovidian model of Echo, that is, taking literally the repetition of certain syllables or words, rather than creating a sound effect that sounds like an echo in the natural world.⁵⁵

⁵² Ovid’s Echo, embarrassed at being rejected by Narcissus, hides in lonely caves (“solis . . . vivit in antris,” Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.394).

⁵³ Ingegneri (1550-ca. 1613) was an academician and organizer of theatrical productions. He is best known for directing and producing the musical tragedy *Edipo Re* (Vicenza, 1585; book by Orsatto Giustiniani, score by Andrea Gabrieli). Many aspects of this production are documented in Ingegneri’s treatise of 1598. Ingegneri was familiar with *La Mirtilla*, which he mentions in the treatise.

⁵⁴ “Molti de i Compositori delle moderne Pastorali si sono dilettrati d’introdurre in esse vna Echo, dalle cui risposte hanno tratto qualche argutia, od ambiguità, ouero altra cosa tale, di gran vaghezza della fauola, e talhora adoprata per istringere il nodo, od ageuolarne la solutione.” (“Many of the composers of modern pastorals take delight in introducing in these an Echo, whose replies they have handled with certain subtlety or ambiguity, or other such thing, for the great charm of the play, and sometimes adopted to tighten the plot, or to simplify the resolution,” Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa*, 45).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 46. Echo is also present in the first interlude of *La Pellegrina*; for a reading of the echo effects and the Echo figure in the Medici spectacle, see Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*, 75-77.

Isabella Andreini figured Orpheus and Echo into her pastoral drama, but she herself became an almost mythic figure at the height of her fame and perhaps even more so after her death. Through the namesake character she created in *La Pazzia d'Isabella*, Andreini embodied the vatic frenzy of the Sybil, whose divinely inspired madness was the point of access to a divine voice. *La Mirtilla*, too, offers a late-sixteenth-century humanist characterization of mythological figures, this time with a gender-switching (and proto-feminist) angle: Narcissus reimagined as Ardelia, and Orpheus reimagined as Filli. It is telling that Filli was the role Andreini created for herself.⁵⁶ Like the Thracian musician she comes to embody through her performance, Andreini possessed the power to enthrall and move her auditors.

Even outside of Filli and *Mirtilla*, Andreini seems to have had an Orpheus-like status.⁵⁷ She achieved fame on the strength of her own artistic accomplishments, but her supporters were also “determined to make Isabella into an unforgettable legend,” as Rosalind Kerr points out.⁵⁸ Andreini’s performance in *Aminta* linked her professionally to Torquato Tasso, and they may have been personal friends as well;

⁵⁶ Taviani, “Bella d’Asia,” 8.

⁵⁷ Andreini’s Orphic attributes are to be found in her lyric poetry and letters as well as in the *Mirtilla*. Meredith Ray suggests that Andreini’s *Lettere* are hybrid theatrical-literary texts: “Many of the letters derive from Isabella’s stage practice, but the monologues and exchanges she performed onstage were equally likely to have been shaped by the pages of literary texts, commonplace books, and indeed epistolary literature (especially love letters)” (*Writing Gender in Women’s Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 165). In her reading of the *Lettere*, Ray argues that Andreini used her writing as experimentation in the performance of gender, creating a “hermaphroditic” authorial voice that blended feminine and masculine attributes. Anne MacNeil points out that in one of her lyric poems, a memorial *canzone* for the poet Laura Guidiccioni Lucchesini, Andreini writes “a ritual re-enactment of the Orpheus myth [. . .] thus achieving the catharsis of emotion desired with all such poetry” (Isabella Andreini, *Selected Poems of Isabella Andreini*, ed. Anne MacNeil, trans. James Wyatt Cook (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), 7, 107-11).

⁵⁸ Rosalind Kerr, “The Imprint of Genius: Tasso’s Sonnet to Isabella Andreini. A Commentary on Ferdinando Taviani’s ‘Bella d’Asia: Torquato Tasso, gli attori e l’immortalità’”, *Quaderni d’italianistica* 22, no. 2 (2001): 88.

Tasso dedicated at least one poem to Andreini, which, “Rather than attaching her fame to an actual existence as an historical figure . . . exalts it to the more eternal plane of immortal genius.”⁵⁹ And if, as Ariosto suggests, *nomen est omen*—that is, if every Isabella shares the grace, wisdom, and virtue of the martyred princess—then Andreini’s fame too owes something to her name, a notion that, if Garzoni’s effulgent praise is any indication, had some currency among her contemporaries. Finally, Andreini also shared with Issabella and Orpheus a kind of posthumous glory.⁶⁰ Although *La Mirtilia* and some of her poems were published during her lifetime,⁶¹ Andreini’s *Lettere* (not letters in the literal sense, but points of view of characters in her repertoire) were published by her husband Francesco in 1607, three years after her death: a literary and performative voice still echoing after the body that generated it was dust.

Un corpo solo di musica: Orpheus at the Opera

Nelle fauole, c’harranno i Chori, se oltra dilloro vi saranno intermedi, ouero altre musiche, in queste serbandosi il sopradetto stile, basterà, che i detti Chori sieno cantati semplicissimamente, e tanto, che paiano solo differenti dal parlare ordinario. Ma doue i Chori varranno per intermedi, ò doue non sarà altra musica, si deuranno cantare con arte maggiore: & non sia perauentura male à proposito il dar loro alcuna compagnia d’istromenti posti dalla parte di dentro della Scena, con riguardo però, *che tutti insieme facciano vn corpo solo di musica, & non paiano due chori, ouero l’vno simigli l’Echo dell’altro.*

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ray, *Writing Gender*, 180-81.

⁶¹ Isabella Andreini, *Rime d’Isabella Andreini Padovana: Comica Gelosa* (Milan: Girolamo Bordone & Pietromartire Locarni Compagni, 1601).

In plays that have Choruses, if in addition to these there are interludes, or other musical pieces, in these making use of the above style will suffice so that the said Choruses are sung very simply and just enough that they only appear different from ordinary speech. But where the Choruses are suitable for interludes, or where there is no other music, they ought to sing with greater art: and perhaps it would not be bad for that reason to give them some accompaniment by instruments placed on the inner part of the Stage, but taking care *that all together they make up a single body of music*, and do not appear to be two choruses, or else that one seems like an Echo of the other.

-- Angelo Ingegneri, 1598⁶²

In his treatise on stagecraft, Angelo Ingegneri touches upon one of the defining characteristics of *dramma per musica*: the unification of voices, instruments, and staging practices to give the impression of a single musical body in performance.

No study of Orpheus figures in late-sixteenth-century Italian drama would be complete without consideration of the first operas based on that myth. My goal here is not to present a new argument about the sources or influences in the history of opera's development.⁶³ Rather, I am interested in how two dramatic-musical versions of the Orpheus myth from the first decade of the seventeenth century—Ottavio Rinuccini's libretto *L'Euridice*, in two settings by Jacopo Peri and Giulio Caccini (1600), and Alessandro Striggio's libretto *L'Orfeo* in a setting by Claudio Monteverdi (1607)—stage the relationship of voice to body and affect. Though the art form in which they worked was still evolving and as yet undefined as a genre, both librettists and composers were aware of how their interpretive and aesthetic choices shaped the drama. Rinuccini, Caccini, and Peri in particular were engaged in the discussions of

⁶² Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa*, 79. Emphasis added.

⁶³ (I do not suggest that there are not new arguments to be made, but simply that this topic does not fit within the scope of the present chapter.) The bibliography on the historical trajectory of *dramma per musica* and opera is vast, but for a brief summary see Tim Carter, "The Seventeenth Century," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Opera*, ed. Roger Parker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

ancient music and theater taking place amongst members of the Camerata in Florence—Caccini with the old guard under Bardi’s patronage, and Peri and Rinuccini with Jacopo Corsi—and with scholars and academicians elsewhere in Italy.⁶⁴ They were also, along with Striggio and Monteverdi, intimately familiar with classical versions of the Orpheus story as well as with their more immediate generic predecessor, the *favola pastorale*. These literary and dramaturgical elements, in addition to neo-Aristotelian theories of dramatic music, helped to shape the earliest operas’ integration of dramatic lyric with a narrative musical score and the creation of an affective embodied performance.

The poet Ottavio Rinuccini, author of several early opera libretti, was a native of Florence and an active member of the research cluster known as the Camerata Fiorentina.⁶⁵ He contributed lyrics for the 1589 *Pellegrina* interludes⁶⁶ and also wrote the libretti for the two earliest operas. *Dafne*, with a score by Jacopo Peri, was performed in Florence in 1598 under the patronage of Jacopo Corsi and printed in 1600.⁶⁷ The music has not survived, though an updated version of the libretto was later set by Marco da Gagliano and performed in Mantua in 1608.⁶⁸ Rinuccini’s second opera libretto, *Euridice*—a retelling of the Orpheus myth—was scored by

⁶⁴ For the two generations of the so-called Florentine Camerata, see Chapter 1, p. 45 n. 57.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the musical activities of the Camerata, including writings by Caccini and Bardi on monody and affective singing, see Chapter 1, pp. 44-49. For further reading: Claude V. Palisca, *The Florentine Camerata: Documentary Studies and Translations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the 1589 interludes and Medici wedding performances, see Chapter 2, 73-81. For comprehensive studies of these interludes, including Rinuccini’s role in scripting them, see Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589* and Treadwell, *Music and Wonder at the Medici Court*.

⁶⁷ Carter, “The Seventeenth Century,” 8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

both Peri and Giulio Caccini, who had their scores printed (independently and within weeks of each other) in 1600-1601.⁶⁹ Rinuccini also had his libretto printed, without a score, in 1600.⁷⁰ He went on to collaborate with Claudio Monteverdi on the composer's second full-length opera, *L'Arianna*, which was presented at Mantua in 1608.⁷¹ Like the *Arianna*, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (1607) had its debut at the Mantuan court. The libretto was written by Alessandro Striggio (1573-1630), son of the noted composer of the same name (1537-1592). Rinuccini and Striggio were of course not the first to choose Orpheus as the subject of a pastoral play; that precedent had been set by Angelo Poliziano with *La Favola di Orfeo*, written and performed around 1480 and printed in 1494.

In a chapter of this length it is not possible to do an exhaustive analysis of the several versions of these dramas; even setting aside Poliziano's fifteenth-century *Orfeo*, we are left with a number of variations. Rinuccini's libretto was presented with two different musical settings.⁷² Striggio's libretto, moreover, exists in two completely different forms. It was first published as a standalone text in 1607,⁷³ then with Monteverdi's score in 1609 and 1615.⁷⁴ Nowhere are the differences among

⁶⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

⁷⁰ Ottavio Rinuccini, *L'Euridice* (Florence: Cosimo Giunti, 1600).

⁷¹ The complete score of Monteverdi's *Arianna* has not survived, but the libretto was published: *L'Arianna Tragedia* (Florence: La Stamperia de' Giunti, 1608).

⁷² Giulio Caccini, *L'Euridice composta in musica* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1602). Jacopo Peri, *Le musiche sopra l'Euridice* (Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1600).

⁷³ Alessandro Striggio, *La favola d'Orfeo rappresentata in musica il Carnevale dell'anno MDCVII* (Mantua: Francesco Osanna, 1607).

⁷⁴ Claudio Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo favola in musica* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1609); *L'Orfeo favola in musica* (Venice: Ricciardo Amadino, 1615). For the print history and differences among the editions, see Tim Carter, "Some Notes on the First Edition of Monteverdi's 'Orfeo' (1609)," *Music and Letters* 91, no. 4 (November 2010): 498-512.

these versions more intriguing than in the final act, so rather than begin at the beginning, let us begin at the end.

Rinuccini's libretto departs entirely from the Vergilian/Ovidian model. Rather than the tragic ending we might expect, he scripts a fortunate turn of events in which Orpheus successfully brings Eurydice back to life.⁷⁵ The piece was first presented at the wedding of Maria de' Medici, and Rinuccini argues in his preface that a happy ending was more suitable to the occasion (*così mi è parso conuenevole in tempo di tanta allegrezza*).⁷⁶ Moreover, the aim of pastoral—more than tragedy or even comedy—is to delight audiences: *il Pastorale [. . .] ha più de gli altri due per fine il diletto*.⁷⁷ Thus, in addition to the classical and Dantean precedents that Rinuccini cites, his decision to change the ending of the tragic story appears theoretically and dramaturgically sound.

Striggio's libretto was published with two different endings. In the 1607 edition, the final scene of Act 5 depicts an encounter between Orfeo and the bacchantes. The text does not explicitly refer to Orfeo's death, and there are no stage directions; however, Orfeo falls silent early in this scene, and the text ends with the bacchantes singing praise to Dionysus. The title page of the libretto declares that it was staged for Carnevale in Mantua in 1607, presumably in this version. But the musical

⁷⁵ There may be a (lost) classical precedent for this. The version of the myth in the *Georgics* may have been Vergil's innovation, as it is "a version which is not found before V. (Orpheus traditionally succeeds)" (Thomas, *Georgics*, 225). It is also worth noting that Poliziano keeps the classical Roman ending in which Orpheus is killed by the bacchantes: in fact, the stage directions indicate that in the final scene, a bacchant enters holding Orpheus's head. Angelo Poliziano, *Fabula di Orfeo* (Milan: Edizione Garzanti, 1992).

⁷⁶ Rinuccini, *L'Euridice*. There are no page numbers in this edition. The statement cited is at the end of the dedication letter to Maria de' Medici.

⁷⁷ Ingegneri, *Della poesia rappresentativa*, 51.

scores of *Orfeo* published in 1609 and 1615 tell an entirely different story. Rather than the bacchants, it is Apollo, *ex machina*, who comes upon Orfeo in Act 5 as he laments his second loss of Euridice. The god of music invites his son to apotheosis, promising him that he will find greater happiness in heaven than on earth. Orfeo bids farewell to earthly desires and ascends with Apollo. This “happy” ending is a strange contrast to the tragic undertones of the rest of the libretto. For example, Orfeo’s shepherd friends frequently refer to his love for Euridice as having been long unrequited before she agreed to marry him. This narrative innovation seems to be Striggio’s, as it does not allude to the classical myth but to the conventions of late-sixteenth-century pastoral drama. In this version of the story, Orfeo and Euridice could just as easily be Aminta and Silvia (or Uranio and Ardelia). Orfeo’s failure to retrieve Euridice, moreover, is given an entirely different cause than in the classical versions. The tragic irony of the classical Orpheus is that although he holds sway over the emotions of his listeners, he cannot keep his own in check:

cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem,
ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes:
restitit, Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa
immemor heu! uictusque animi respexit. (Vergil, *Georgics*, 4.488-91)

. . . when a sudden madness seized the reckless lover, perhaps forgivable, if the gods of the underworld knew how to forgive: he stood in place, and to his Eurydice, now under the light itself (ah, forgetful!) defeated in his intent, he looked back.

The cause of Eurydice’s second death, in Vergil’s narrative, is clearly Orpheus’s lack of control over his emotional impulses and desires. But Striggio produces a minor plot twist that clears Orfeo of guilt: the stage directions, both in the 1607 libretto and

in the later scores, state that a noise causes Orfeo to turn around.⁷⁸ His impulse to turn around—his capitulation to his curiosity—is externally rather than internally motivated, and thus a less shameful action. It does not save him from the bacchants, but neither does it bar him from the eternal joy promised by Apollo, despite what the chorus of infernal spirits proclaims:

ORFEO vinse l’Inferno e vinto poi
Fu da gli affetti suoi.
Degno d’eterna gloria
Fia sol colui c’haurà di sè vittoria.

Orfeo conquered Hell and then was conquered by his emotions. Only he who has victory over himself is worthy of eternal glory.

Orfeo’s lack of emotional self-control is an important aspect of his musical and dramatic characterization. His emotional outbursts after losing Euridice undermine the rhetorical prowess he has shown earlier in the opera. As Susan McClary argues in her masterful study of gender construction in Monteverdi’s operas,

Orfeo’s involuntary utterances appeal to the *pity* of the listener [. . .] in thus having his innermost thoughts exhibited as public spectacle, the figure of Orfeo is rendered vulnerable. The audience itself has auditory mastery over him [. . .] Orfeo’s masculine authority is severely threatened.⁷⁹

McClary points to two different “discursive practices” that Monteverdi employs for Orfeo’s music: a “rhetoric of seduction,” which grants Orfeo an authoritative, manipulative, masculine voice, and the lament, a female genre marked by loss of verbal and emotional control.⁸⁰ These registers alternate throughout the opera; Orfeo

⁷⁸ “Qui si fa strepito dietro alla Scena. [. . .] Qui si volta.” Striggio, *La favola d’Orfeo*, 27-28.

⁷⁹ Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 46.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 39, 46.

usually sings in the rhetoric of seduction, but breaks into lamentation after Euridice's death and her loss in the underworld.

At the start of Act 5, Orfeo has only just escaped from hell back into the living world; he appears alone on stage to sing a lament, a soliloquy set to music. Midway through, he cries, *Ahi doglia, hai pianto!* A voice labeled Eco replies, *Hai pianto*. Orfeo responds as though to an embodied person, addressing the voice graciously as *Cortese Eco amorosa* as they begin to converse.⁸¹ Monteverdi's instructions for doubled instruments on opposite sides of the stage suggest that the singer voicing Eco might have been placed on the side of the stage opposite Orfeo with his own accompaniment—offstage, in all likelihood, since Orfeo only hears Eco but does not see her.⁸² Even though the part is written for a tenor (same range as Orfeo) and would have been sung by a man in the original all-male cast,⁸³ the voice is treated as a female character: one who has suffered great loss for love, and with whom Orfeo can commiserate.

Eco's voice fades from three syllables (*Hai pianto*) to two (*Basti*) until her final utterance transforms Orfeo's *guai* into a sympathetic *Ahi*.⁸⁴ She retreats, leaving Orfeo alone to be discovered either by the bacchantes or by Apollo. But for a brief moment, Orfeo finds a kindred spirit in his emotional experience: two voices in the wilderness, weaving an open mesh of dissonances and resonances, authority and vulnerability.

⁸¹ Striggio, *La favola d'Orfeo*, 30.

⁸² Monteverdi, *L'Orfeo* (1609), 89.

⁸³ See Tim Carter, "Singing Orfeo: On the Performers of Monteverdi's First Opera," *Recercare* 11 (1999): 87, 89.

⁸⁴ Striggio, *La favola d'Orfeo*, 31.

Already in the works of Vergil and Ovid, Orpheus is a provocative figure, a semi-divine symbol of great vocal power, and yet unstable in the varied and shifting ways he signifies gender, sexuality, and agency. This is perhaps appropriate for the archetype of the affecting voice, whose capacity to communicate and elicit emotion is so great that it sways gods, appeases beasts, and uproots forests; it seems natural that a master of rhetoric, expert in persuasive performance, should be of such changeable identity. That changeability is used to advantage by early modern Italian writers who reimagine the Orpheus figure. Andreini embraces Orpheus's gender ambiguity and rhetorical prowess, writing herself an Orphic role in *La Mirtillo* to bolster her real-life status as a celebrated poet and performer; Ariosto, too, refigures Orpheus as a woman who is both virtuosic and virtuous. The Orfeo of early opera embodies both masculine and feminine attributes through the gendered discourses of oratory and lamentation. Echo, meanwhile, inhabits the pastoral landscape of each of these Orpheus narratives. In breaking from the confines of the body, the voices of both Orpheus and Echo have the potential to signify as masculine or feminine (or both at once), and to occupy spaces infinitesimal or vast.

CONCLUSION

Voice signifies on multiple levels: semantically (the meaning of words being spoken), linguistically (language or dialect spoken), and in the non-linguistic aspects of pitch, timbre, rhythm, and articulation, which are common to both speaking and singing voices. In addition, voice signifies in relation to the body. We recognize voices much as we recognize faces, but even from an unfamiliar voice we can guess the speaker's gender, age, and place of origin (by accent or dialect). Uncanny effects are produced when voice and body seem disconnected from each other, as with ventriloquism, mimicry, lip-synching, or dubbing. While the last of these is a phenomenon of modern video and audio recording technology, similar kinds of voice-body disconnections have been imagined in pre- and early modern periods, especially in mythological and literary narratives, as we have seen in the preceding chapters. Bodiless voices ring in the air (Echo, Merlin) and decapitated heads sing (Orpheus, Issabella); a voice moves out of one body and into another (Apollo/Sibyl); a bird's voice speaks human loss (Philomela). These body-swapping, body-shedding voices open up questions about the relation of voice to gender, agency and identity. For example, Orpheus's voice is imagined in early modern literature as inhabiting both male and female bodies, suggesting a kind of fluidity of gender identity. The Sibyl's voice, too, suggests some crossing of gender boundaries as a divine male voice (Apollo's) speaks out of a mortal female body. The melancholy singing of the nightingale, meanwhile, is imagined to have its origins in traumas (rape and bereavement) typically associated, especially in antiquity and the early modern

period, with womanhood. This relationship of voice to body and gender is one of the broader themes I have tried to elucidate in this work, and it will continue to be a focus in the next phases of this research.

Recalling the rhetoric-language-music system of Chapter 1 and its illustration by the figures of voice—the Sibyl, Philomela, Orpheus and Echo—that are the subject of the subsequent chapters, in these concluding pages I want to return to the work of Deleuze and Guattari, whose contemplations on late-twentieth-century thought reflect on aspects of contemporary culture that were in formation during the early modern period. I also want to consider a few last words from sixteenth-century authors: an excerpt from François Rabelais’s prose epic on the adventures of Gargantua and Pantagruel, and a sonnet by Joachim Du Bellay. These texts synthesize the multivalent significations of voice that I have attempted to elaborate in this project. The vocal archetypes discussed in the preceding chapters may be said to have a narrative genealogy: that is, they appear under different guises in texts from antiquity to the Renaissance. They also have a kind of affective genealogy, each producing certain kinds of responses in the reader/auditor/viewer, which can be traced in large part to the use of voice in performance. Such responses may be thought of as points on a rhizome, to borrow Deleuze and Guattari’s term, connected and intersected by multiple lines. The lines that connect them include music, language, rhetoric, gender, body, sexuality, madness, divinity, and prophecy, in shifting and non-hierarchical relation to voice and to each other. I will briefly summarize how some of these lines cross in the material already presented, then suggest how these

rhizomatic intersections are illustrated through two examples taken from the writings of Du Bellay and Rabelais excerpted below.

The lines of music, language, and rhetoric are intertwined, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1. The rhetorical principles that shaped poetics and musical composition in the sixteenth century also translated into vocal performance practice. Persuasive, emotive and affecting techniques, such as variation, elocution, and disposition were typically the province of language or thought. But voicing that language or thought—speaking or singing, especially through the practice of *disposizione di voce*—also situates these techniques physically in the body of the speaker or singer. Moreover, the presence of musical elements (timbre, pitch, rhythm) in human voices makes possible their “continuous variation” in a rhizomatic system, placing music in “the service of a virtual cosmic continuum of which even holes, silences, ruptures, and breaks are a part.”¹ I would add to Deleuze and Guattari’s argument that voice itself, apart from music, also contributes to this cosmic continuum because of its musical traits. Deleuze and Guattari note that the “generalized chromaticism” that arises from variation “bears on the voice, speech, language, and music simultaneously,”² but simultaneously does not mean equally. Speech, language, and music are intertwined with voice precisely because the voice is the nexus at which speech, language, and music intersect. Thus, I would argue, the voice is the most variable of these elements; in other words, as chromaticism and variation bear on speech, language, and music,

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 95.

² *Ibid.*, 97.

they must have the greatest impact on the voice that contains within it all these elements. The variability of voice, moreover, accounts for non-speech utterances (wordless vocalizations) as well as the “holes, silences, ruptures, and breaks” that communicate the affect of the one who vocalizes and trigger an auditor’s emotional response. These responses—points on the rhizome—are in theory as limitless as the human capacity to feel, but there are a few that have appeared as recurring themes in these chapters: wonder, marvel or awe (*meraviglia*), for example at the Sibyl’s prophetic utterance as discussed here in Chapter 2, or Issabella’s miraculous martyrdom (Chapter 4); pity, as for Philomela, Lavinia, Ophelia, and the bereft Orpheus, which I have explored in Chapters 3 and 4; and pleasure or delight, as from the performances of Isabella Andreini and Vittoria Archilei (Chapter 2), the pastoral romp of *La Mirtilla* (Chapter 4), and even the poetic projects of Pietro Bembo, Joachim Du Bellay, and Pierre de Ronsard (Chapter 1).

The classical figures of voice (the Sibyl, Philomela, Orpheus, and Echo) and their Renaissance counterparts illustrate and embody a rhizomatic network of vocalization and emotional response. Echo and the Sibyl have limited access to language. Echo can only imitate, but still finds ways to manipulate meaning by choosing how much to repeat: how many of the last few syllables uttered, and where to cut them off. The Sibyl speaks freely except during moments of possession by Apollo and the prophetic *furor*, when she can only utter the words that the god delivers to her (here the lines of language and madness intersect at the point of marvel for the Sibyl’s listeners). Philomela makes a convincing orator only until she is

robbed of her ability to speak. Orpheus, meanwhile, has such mastery of persuasive language that he is able to achieve the impossible, convincing Pluto and Proserpina to send Eurydice home with him: here the rhetoric and music lines intersect, touching on marvel and pity. Philomela, the Sibyl, and to a lesser extent Orpheus all share aspects of madness in their behavior, while the Sibyl and Orpheus also have access to divine inspiration and the gift of prophetic speech (lines: madness, prophecy). But the tithe on both of them is a bodily loss: Orpheus, torn limb from limb, is only able to prophesy once his head is disconnected from his body; Ovid's Sibyl, similarly, receives and channels Apollo's voice as her body withers and fades like grains of dust (line: body; points: marvel, pity). These vocal frameworks intersect, interact, and overlap, as in, for example, the opening sonnet of Joachim Du Bellay's *Les antiquités de Rome* (1558), a meditation on the ruins of the Roman empire written while Du Bellay was in service at the papal court:

Divins esprits, dont la poudreuse cendre
 Gît sous le faix de tant de murs couverts,
 Non votre los, qui vif par vos beaux vers
 Ne se verra sous la terre descendre,
 Si des humains la voix se peut étendre
 Depuis ici jusqu'au fond des enfers,
 Soient a mon cri les abîmes ouverts
 Tant que d'abas vous me puissiez entendre.
 Trois fois cernant sous le voile des cieux
 De vos tombeaux le tour dévotieux,
 A haute voix trois fois je vous appelle:
 J'invoque ici votre antique fureur,
 En cependant que d'une sainte horreur
 Je vais chantant votre gloire plus belle.³

³ Sonnet 1, "Les antiquités de Rome," in Joachim Du Bellay, *Les Regrets. Les antiquités de Rome*, ed. S. de Sacy (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 27. "Divine spirits, whose dusty ashes lie beneath the burden of so many covered walls, though not your praise, which enlivened by your beautiful verses will never be

The sonnet opens with an address to the “divine spirits” of antiquity, the great poets of Rome whose bodies are now dust under the city’s ruins but whose reputation lives on in their verses. Their poetry is living (*vif*) because it exists in a textual record, and the statement that their verse will never be buried seems to point to the classical trope of poetry as a lasting monument.⁴ Du Bellay invokes the monumental quality of poetry, but frames it in terms of the power and potency of the human voice. Text, the means by which Du Bellay both receives a past poetic tradition and records his work for future readers, enables communication from the past to the present. Voice, by contrast, is ephemeral, heard (in the absence of audio recording technology) only in the present; yet Du Bellay imagines that his poetic voice stretches across centuries and planes of existence into the abyss of the underworld, where it will reawaken the divine inspiration of the ancients. Du Bellay figures his poetic self as a new Orpheus, descending into hell to retrieve the lost beloved object: the glory of antiquity is his Eurydice, and the resurrection of ancient splendor is the ultimate humanist project. He also shares with the ancient poets a Sibylline status; each of them, as *vates* or poet-prophet, is subject to the frenzy of divine inspiration (*fureur*). The ancients, like Ovid’s Sibyl, are turned to dust while their verses, equated with prophetic utterances, outlast their bodies. In summoning up the spirits of his predecessors, Du Bellay is filled with a sacred awe (*sainte horreur*) at their divinity: *horreur* in this context is

seen to descend under the ground: If a human voice can stretch from here as far as to the depths of hell, let the abyss be open to my cry so that you can hear me from below. Three times tracing a devoted circle around your tombs under the veil of the heavens, three times I call you in full voice: here I invoke your ancient frenzy, while with sacred awe I sing your most beautiful glory.” (My translation.)

⁴ For example, Horace’s Ode 3.30: “I have created a monument more lasting than bronze” (*Exegi monumentum aere perennius*).

used in the classical sense, “awe-inspiring,” as in Vergil’s epithet for the Sibyl (*horribilis*). That awe is expressed in a range of vocal expression: in the far-reaching cry that opens the abyss; in the calling-aloud of the spirits, accompanied by the physical movement of circling the tombs, joining voice and body in action; and in the singing of praise, which is also the singing or chanting of poetic verse. In sum, voice—the resonating, vibrating, embodied human voice—is the key to unlocking poetic potency. Although Du Bellay’s “voice” in this sonnet is a metaphorical, literary voice, his evocation of poetic inspiration emphasizes the idea of vocal power and suggests that voice is substantive enough to reach, to move, not unlike the text that has the permanent qualities of a lasting monument.

Perhaps few writers of the sixteenth century captured the materiality of voice—as a natural phenomenon and a narrative and stylistic tool—as compellingly as François Rabelais in his series of novels about the adventures of the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel.⁵ A sense of vocal immediacy suffuses Rabelais’s work; his prose is full of written-out sounds and babble, apparent nonsense words that carry a sonic meaning if not a lexical one. (Examples in the fourth book include Panurge’s drowning lament in Chapter 19 and the droll portmanteau words of Chapter 15.) In one memorable episode of the *Quart Livre* (1548), Pantagruel’s travels bring him into contact with frozen words and voices hovering in air, a conceit that combines a sense of textual permanence and the materiality of language with a connection to a mythical

⁵ The five books were published between 1532 and 1564. For a detailed timeline of Rabelais’s life and works, including publication dates of various editions of *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua*, see the Chronology in François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. M. A. Screech (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), vii-xiii.

past and the figures of voice described in the preceding chapters. Rabelais is conscious of his status as a mythmaker—not just in his appropriations of classical archetypes, but in the creation of original characters with their own mythos—which he demonstrates in his dedicatory letter for the 1552 edition of the *Quart Livre*.⁶ Writing to Cardinal Odet de Châtillon, Rabelais describes the content of his book as “pantagrueic mythologies” (*mythologies Pantagrueiques*), explicitly identifying his literary project as one of mythmaking.⁷ The Fourth Book opens with Pantagruel and his crew setting out on a sea voyage—shades of the *Odyssey* and *Argonautika*—in order to visit the oracle Dive Bouteille (“Holy Bottle”), as proposed by Panurge in Book 3, Chapter 47. Dive Bouteille is also referred to as Dive Bacbuc, “a Hebrew word taken to represent the sound of liquids being outpoured.” This double nomenclature is a prime example of how Rabelais’s idiom is both humanistically oriented and sonically motivated or onomatopoeitic.⁸ “Bacbuc” evokes the gurgling sound of liquid escaping a container, while “Bouteille” suggests an empty vessel waiting to be filled. Such an image is, of course, reminiscent of classical depictions of the oracle of Apollo; the Sibyl is a female body waiting to be filled with divine inspiration, and the issuance of the oracle is the pouring-out of the god’s voice through her.

Their voyage takes Pantagruel and his companions through a number of

⁶ For more on the editions of the *Quart Livre*, see *ibid.*, 615-40. This was the first of Rabelais’s books to be published with a formal dedication to a patron.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 639. All citations in English are from Screech’s translation. Citations in French are from *Le Quart Livre des Faicts et Dicts Heroiques du Bon Pantagruel* (Paris: Michel Fezandat, 1552).

⁸ The first use of the name Bacbuc is in the 1548 edition of the *Quart Livre* (*Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 664.)

picaresque adventures on imagined islands, beginning with the Isle of Medamothi (Greek for “Nowhere”), where Panurge buys a painting depicting the tale of Philomela, “transposing” her tapestry into another visual medium.⁹ Philomela’s vocally thematic story, concretized in a material, visual form, anticipates a similar concretization of the frozen words from vocalizations into material objects. Later in their travels on the high seas, the companions hear voices in the air (Chapter 55). Pantagruel imagines that the sounds must emanate from the disembodied head of Orpheus and his lyre, its strings plucked by the wind in the absence of hands.

Hearing voices without seeing any speaking bodies, Pantagruel calls his companions to attention. Hands cupped behind ears, they listen, “ears lapping up the air like fine oysters-in-their-shells so as to hear any scattered word or sound,” an image that emphasizes both the active quality of hearing (ears consuming sound from the air) and the material quality of the sounds (“scattered” as if formed from solid matter).¹⁰ The voices, moreover, belong to “men, women, children, and horses,” thus including multiple categories of age and gender, and both human and non-human

⁹ “Panurge bought a large picture transposing in paint the theme long ago worked by Philomela with her needle to show and reveal to her sister Procne how her brother-in-law Tereus had raped her as a virgin and cut out her tongue so that she could never reveal such a crime. I swear to you by the handle of this fellow’s phallus that it was a daring and wonderful painting. Do not imagine, I beg you, that it portrayed a man covering a young woman. That would be too stupid and gross. The painting was very different and easier to understand. You can see it in Thélème on the left-hand side as you go into the tall gallery.” *Ibid.*, 669. (“Panurge achapta vn grand tableau paint & tra[n]ssumpt de l’ouurage iadis fait a l’aiguille par Philomela exposante & representante a sa soeur Progné, comment son beaufreere Tereus l’auoit dupucellee: & sa langue coupee, affin que tel crime ne decelast. le vous iure par le manche de ce fallot, que c’estoit vne paincture gualante & mirifique. Ne pensez, ie vous prie, que ce feust le p[or]traict d’vn ho[m]me couplé sus vne fille. Cela est trop sot, & trop lourd. La paincture estoit bien aultre, & plus intelligible. Vous la pourrez veoir en Theleme a main gausche entrans en la haulte gualerie.” *Le Quart Livre*, 5r.)

¹⁰ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 826. “A son commandeme[n]t nous feusmes attentifz, & a pleines aureilles humions l’air comme belles huytres en escalle,” *Le Quart Livre*, 115v.

beings. Panurge is terrified, but Pantagruel, in the vein of the philosopher-king, seeks to understand the phenomenon and turns to ancient wisdom (Plutarch, Aristotle, Plato) for illumination. Pantagruel paraphrases the Aristotelian claim “that the Words of Homer are fluttering, flying, moving things and consequently animate,”¹¹ and Plato’s description of words that are spoken in a land so cold that they freeze in the air and are never heard; perhaps, suggests Pantagruel, they have stumbled into “the very place where such Words unfreeze.”¹² (The latter claim sets the scene for Chapter 56, in which the frozen words become audible—voiced—as they thaw.) “And what a surprise,” Pantagruel continues, “if it were the head and the lyre of Orpheus:

for, after the Thracian women had ripped Orpheus to pieces, they hurled his head and his lyre into the river Hebrus, which swept them down into the Black Sea as far as the isle of Lesbos, ever floating together upon the waters. And from the head there continually poured forth a mournful song seemingly lamenting the death of Orpheus, whilst, with that song, strokes from the winding winds made the chords accord. Let us keep a lookout in case we see them [the head and lyre of Orpheus] hereabouts.¹³

Pantagruel wonders whether the bodiless singing head might be the source of the voices. This is a peculiar statement, given the number of voices or words that seem to be audible all at once. Does Orpheus speak in more than one voice, or does his lyre

¹¹ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 827. (“Me souvient aussi que Aristoteles mantie[n]t les parolles de Homere estre voltigeantes, volantes, mouentes, & par consequent animees,” *Le Quart Livre*, 116v.) See also Plutarch, *On the Oracles at Delphi*, 398A, 404F-405A (Plutarch, *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, 15 vols., vol. 5 (Harvard University Press, 1962; repr., 1962), 278-79, 316-19).

¹² Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 828. “Ores seroit a philosopher & recherche si forte fortune icy seroit l’endroit, on quel telles parolles degele[n]t.” *Le Quart Livre*, 117r.

¹³ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 828. “No[us] serio[n]s bien esbahiz si cestoient les teste & lyre de Orpheus. Car apres que les fe[m]mes Threisses eurent Orpheus mis en pieces, elles iecterent sa teste & sa lyre dedans le fleuve Hebrus. Icelles par ce fleuve descendirent en la mer Pontiq jusques en l’isle de Lesbos, tous iours ensemble sus mer naigeantes. Et de la teste continuelleme[n]t sortoyt vn chant lugubre, comme lamentant la mort de Orpheus: la lyre a l’impulsion des vents mouuens les chordes accordoit harmo[n]nieusement avecques le chant. Regardons si les voirons cy autour.” *Le Quart Livre*, 117r.

sound voices instead of chords? Such a phenomenon would not be out of keeping for a figure of such fluid identity and multivalent significance as Orpheus.

The ship's pilot solves the mystery of the frozen sounds' origin, telling Pantagruel that the frozen sea was the site of a battle in the previous winter, where "the Words and cries of men and the women, the pounding of maces, the clank of the armour of men and horses, the whinnying of steeds and all the remaining din of battle froze in the air. And now that the rigour of winter has passed and fine, calm, temperate weather returned, they melt, and can be heard."¹⁴ All sounds are equally susceptible to freezing; they all have a shared substance, whether generated by organism or by machine. Pantagruel throws words onto the deck of the ship by the handful, to feel them and see them up close, and to help them thaw so that they can be heard sooner. The words are multicolored, and melt like snow; some of them, in a "barbarous tongue" (*languaige Barbare*), are incomprehensible; and some of them turn out to be noises rather than words, such as the cannon shot that sounds to the adventurers like a chestnut popping in the fire. The fantasy and ingenious whimsy of this episode is tempered by references to the destructive violence of the recent battle that created the frozen soundscape. By thawing the words and noises, Pantagruel and his companions learn about the conflict that took place, about the people, animals, and weaponry that were involved. This active restoration of knowledge—the recuperation of information that remained inaccessible for a long time—is also an

¹⁴ *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 829. "Lors gelere[n]t en l'air les parolles & crys des hommes & fe[m]mes, les chalis des masses, les hurtys des harnoys, des bardes, les hannissmens des cheuaultx, & tout aultre effroy de co[m]bat. A ceste heure la rigueur de l'hyuer passee, aduenante la serenité & temperie du bon temps, elles fondent & sont ouyes." *Le Quart Livre*, 117v.

allegory of Renaissance humanism, as suggested by references to the wisdom and learning of the ancients in this chapter and throughout Rabelais's work. Grasping the frozen words and bringing them onto the deck of the ship to thaw is an act of making lost knowledge accessible again, not unlike discovering and translating a Greek manuscript.¹⁵ Rabelais's conception of the retrieval of classical learning—tactile and immediate—is a materialist alternative to Du Bellay's vision of a far-reaching poetic expression, though both cases capture some important elements of early modern understandings of voice. In the Rabelaisian mythos, voice is material; words and sounds have substance, texture, color. Voice is affecting; Pantagruel and his crew are by turns startled, attracted, puzzled, and amused by the thawing words. Finally, Rabelais describes the ways in which sounds generate their own emotional effects, being terrifying or elegant according to their combinations of vowels and consonants: an aspect of language explored at length by Pietro Bembo in Book 2 of the *Prose della volgar lingua* in his arguments about word selection based on *gravità* and *piacevolezza*.

The Rabelaisian episode of the frozen words is a parable on the material qualities of voice and sound. It also evokes the endless variation of voice and language, suggesting the ways in which voice can be transformed and is itself transformative in its capacity to move and affect the ones who listen. And in the creation of his "Pantagruelic mythologies," Rabelais conjures up other kinds of

¹⁵ Rabelais offers another view of humanist education in Chapter 8 of *Pantagruel*, in which the eponymous hero receives a letter from his father Gargantua with instructions for his scholarly pursuits (*Gargantua and Pantagruel*, 44-50).

transformations and metamorphoses, both in fashioning his own fables and in appropriating classical myth. A Sibyl lives on the next island over; Philomela hangs in the gallery; we are on the lookout for Orpheus's disembodied, singing head; echoes hover above the frozen sea even if Echo is not named. Among these figures of voice, Orpheus is the singer *par excellence*, creating melody and lyric together: a rhetorical sophistication to which the wordless warbler Philomela and the imitative Echo do not have access. (The Sibyl, with her hexameter chants, comes closest.) And even on this frozen sea, Orpheus cannot be imagined without his lyre. An instrument by which the poet accompanies his own singing, the lyre is symbolic of the musical elements that underpin vocal production, such as pitch, timbre, and rhythm. These essential musical qualities inherent in the human voice generate variation and transformation, and are in turn generated by transformative or liminal states, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest:

The properly musical content of music is plied by becomings-woman, becomings-child, becomings-animal; however, it tends, under all sorts of influences, having also to do with the instruments, to become progressively more molecular in a kind of cosmic lapping through which the inaudible makes itself heard and the imperceptible appears as such: no longer the songbird, but the sound molecule.¹⁶

Let us take the “instrument” in this case to be the voice itself. Following this line of reasoning, then, the influence of the body's vocal apparatus on the voice drives it toward a “progressively more molecular” state: that is, a system of discrete parts, moving, dynamic, understood on the level of detail, variation, and idiosyncrasy.

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 248. (“Le contenu proprement musical de la musique et parcouru de devenirs-femme, devenirs-enfant, devenirs-animal, mais, sous toutes sortes d’influences qui concernent aussi les instruments, tend de plus en plus à devenir moléculaire, dans une sorte de clapotement cosmique où l’inaudible se fait entendre, l’imperceptible apparaît comme tel: non plus l’oiseau chanteur, mais la molécule sonore.” *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2: Mille plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 304).

(Deleuze and Guattari, borrowing terms from chemistry, oppose the “molecular” component to the “molar” mass, which is a consolidation of many disparate elements into conceptual unity.) Considering sound and voice on a “molecular” level reveals its infinite and often overlooked variety, and renders perceptible what was hidden or unheard.

This molecular voice calls to mind Ronsard’s sonnet *Les petitz corps culbutans de travers*, which I discussed in my Introduction, with its imagery of tiny tumbling atomic bodies crashing together to build the material world. When that world is disassembled and the molecules and atoms subdivided into their essential parts, the last element to which they break down is not air, fire, water, or earth, but voice. For Ronsard, voice links the molecular-material world of the *petit tout* to the whole cosmos, the *grand Tout*. But Deleuze and Guattari’s phrase “no longer the songbird, but the sound molecule” suggests a dismissal of the molar in favor of the molecular, or else a claim that music/voice/sound can only be understood on either the molar scale or the molecular scale. I would argue instead, along with Ronsard, that the macrocosm and the microcosm are connected by a shared thread of vocal essentialism, and that attentiveness to the molecular gives us access to better understanding of the molar. In other words, voice is foundational on both the macro scale and the micro scale. Voice is an essential component (one could say, with Plato, that it is a necessary, originating component) in language, literature, and music; voice is essential to interpersonal communication and establishing individual identity; and at the microscopic end of the spectrum, even the smallest shifts and breaks and

changes in voice or vocal timbre are revelatory of the interior state of the speaking or singing subject. If we're looking for the process "through which the inaudible makes itself heard," we find it not only in the sound molecule, but also in the songbird: Philomela, whose song is precisely the inaudible (that is, her suffering) making itself heard.

With the above examples as well as the preceding chapters, I have set out to demonstrate two things: first, what the human voice itself can tell us about identity and subjectivity and how voice can generate affective and emotional responses; and second, how that knowledge about voice can help us read the textual products of an era when orality and literacy co-existed and both exerted strong influences on literary production. The present work is a first step in my developing an understanding—both theoretical and historical—of voice in its many guises, both material and metaphorical, across sources in poetry and poetics, music, drama, and performance practices and histories.

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