

AN EMBODIED STYLISTICS APPROACH TO ACTING INTERPRETERS' EXPLORATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S VERSE DRAMA A case-study analysis

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Abstract – This chapter explores the nature of poetry as a dramatic use of language, showing the relevance of Experientialist theories in Cognitive Linguistics to the empirical experience of acting Shakespeare's verse out. The assumption is that an overt and collectively-shared embodiment of meanings, accomplished through the use of creative writing and drama techniques, can enhance the interpreters' awareness of the formal and metaphorical characteristics of this poetic text. This also entails the interpreters' rediscovery of the 'embodied' nature of their own 'schemata' (or background experience) at the source of their emotional and conceptual responses to the poetic language of Shakespearean characters. Interpreters are therefore defined as *acting interpreters* when they act poetry out in a real space, appropriate it into their own schematic identities as they embody and authenticate its meanings, and then analyze its effects on themselves and on the other acting interpreters inter-acting with them. *Embodied Stylistics* is therefore meant not as the analysis of the text as such but, instead, as the analysis of the acting interpreters' responses to the poetic patterns of the text. This theoretical argument becomes actualized in the experience of 'poetic meaning embodiment' reported by the case-study subjects as 'acting interpreters' (some of them acclaimed British actors and stage directors) and an embodied-stylistic analysis will be carried out precisely on the ethnographic data collected during their creative-writing and poetic-drama workshops.

Keywords: Embodied Stylistics; acting interpreters; embodied schemata; Shakespeare's verse drama.

1. Research rationale: Embodied Stylistics and the Acting Interpreter of Shakespeare's verse

This chapter introduces a principled approach to the physical and emotional appropriation of Shakespeare's verse drama which is here regarded as emblematic of the process of its readers' experiential embodiment of the figurative, imaginative dimensions of poetic discourse. Such a discourse is, by its very nature, 'iconic' and 'representational' insofar as it does not make any reference to real contexts of everyday communication. It will be argued that

poetic language needs to be appropriated into the identity of the readers who, in interpreting it, authenticate it by means of their own subjective background experience, or ‘schemata’ (Anderson, Pearson 1984). In this sense, poetry is here regarded as the outcome of an ongoing process of interaction between the interpreter’s schemata and the formal organization of the poetic text. Schemata, therefore, are not to be considered simply as ‘mental’, cognitive structures, but also as *physical, bodily* ones, as the body is the primary means by which human beings experience the world and, consequently, it is an essential vehicle to conceptualization. According to this Experientialist approach (Johnson 1987; Lakoff, Johnson 1999), the human conceptual system has evolved from bodily experience, so that meaning is deeply rooted in human bodies. This justifies the definition of *experiential/embodied schemata* (Guido 1999, 2013), as well as the argument that such bodily aspects of schemata are usually left atrophied in conventionalized pragmatic interactions.

In the present chapter, this theory of the ‘embodied schemata’ will be applied to an experiential exploration of the nature of the representational discourse of poetic drama which is *physical* and *dramatic*. It is *physical* because, differently from the everyday uses of language, poetry elicits in its interpreters subjective and novel bodily/emotional sensations through its particular structural arrangement of language. Poetic structure diverges from any normal pattern of language at the semantic, phonological, prosodic, and syntactic levels: such formal peculiarities of poetic language are here assumed to have the power of ‘reviving’ the interpreters’ individual experiential schemata by directly appealing to them and, thus, inducing interpreters to enact – physically and vocally – the effects poetry has upon them.

Further, it is here argued that poetry itself is also inherently *dramatic* because it ‘internalizes voices’ within its very structural arrangement of language. In interpreting it, readers come to *appropriate, embody* and *enact* the discursual potentialities of such ‘poetic voices’ differently, according to their own ‘individual voices’. ‘Individual voices’ involve interpreters’ own physical, emotional and intellectual personalities – namely, their own schemata in their cognitive/bodily entirety. This occurs because poetry – and in particular poetic drama – has always the implication of a direct speech-act: a poem is a ‘poetic utterance’, a locution whose figurative language interpreters feel ‘authorized’ to appropriate by imaginatively displacing their own individual, experiential schematic system of symbolization into textual semantics. The series of ethnographic case studies regarding the first-person experience of two famous British actors (Dame Judi Dench and Sir Derek Jacobi) and a celebrated stage director (Sir Peter Hall), and the drama workshops with university students as case-study subjects, shall demonstrate how the interpreters’ dramatic appropriation of the ‘poetic voice’ within an actual ‘stage of enactment’ enables them to create ‘embodied, spatial

metaphors' that are equivalent to the verbal, 'written' ones, since also the interpreters' physical and vocal renderings of the 'poetic utterance' are expressions of their own interpretations and lend themselves to further re-interpretations.

The central claim of this study is therefore that, to achieve a total experience of poetic drama, interpreters need to engage their own schemata in their 'body/thought entirety'. This necessarily entails the recognition of the physical and vocal dimension of poetry as a fundamental prerequisite for a more thorough personal appreciation of poetic language. The basic assumption of this claim, thus, is that to be *conceptually* receptive to poetic language in general – and to poetic drama in particular – the interpreters need to be *physically* prepared to be receptive to it. For this purpose, they have to free themselves from their customary passive and silent position by giving poetry new, multidimensional semiotic contexts in space and 'inhabiting' them physically as well as vocally, through an interplay of form, body and mind. In this way, they would become *Acting Interpreters*. In other words, poetry interpreters do not have to limit themselves to the mentalistic practice of the 'sounding' of the 'voices' they achieve from the text just within their 'inward ear', but they have to 'embody' such voices, 'inhabit' them within a 'physical space of representation'. Then, eventually, they may let such 'embodied voices' inter-act with the other interpreters' embodiments, thus experiencing a different, 'diverging' kind of emotional, bodily, and intellectual communication which has the potential of reviving the acting interpreters' own conventionalized schemata.

By the *embodiment of poetic discourse*, thus, it is meant the continuous interplay of different effects poetic language produces on its interpreters as they physically and emotionally explore and interpret it in a real – and not just a mental – space. Acting interpreters, thus, are expected to generate 'in action' a physical expression coherent to the effects poetic form continually produces on their own experiential, embodied schemata.

In fact, it is far from taken for granted that poetic or verse drama is designed for projection as actual performance. There is in fact a general tendency to dissociate the stylistic analysis carried out by scholars on the poetic language and the actual staging of poetry, or verse drama by actors and directors. Scholars often assume that there is no context and meaning outside the text itself; practitioners, on the contrary, perform poetic language on a stage that gives it an actual context. The view that this chapter intends to advance is that such a context is neither internal to the language of the poetic text, nor external and projected onto the actual stage, insofar as, especially in poetic drama, context is achieved by the interpreters as they allow their experiential embodied schemata to interact with the poetic structure of the text.

It follows that exploring poetic drama involves two processes: acting it out and analyzing its effects, thus reconciling the divergent approaches by scholars and performers. This implies that the acting interpreters create their dramatic discourse and its effects which are followed by their own reflection upon them. *Embodied Stylistics* is therefore meant as the Experientialist analysis of the acting interpreters' own schematic responses to the formal patterns of the text, not as the analysis of the text as such. The chapter will thus provide a practical demonstration of how drama techniques, consistent with this Embodied-Stylistics approach, induce empirical acting interpreters into an understanding of dramatic poetry, and into an apprehension of this aesthetic effect, also in the experience of the above-mentioned acclaimed actors and director, whose interpretations of poetic language is described as the experience of 'meaning embodiment'.

2. Theoretical grounds

The Acting Interpreter process of poetic-meaning embodiment crucially raises the theoretical issue concerning the relationship between the figurative, 'imaginative' language of a poetic text and its realization as the discursal 'voices' of the dramatic characters in verse drama (Shakespeare's verse drama, in the case in point), thus promoting an exploration of the semantic/pragmatic connections between words, sounds, and meanings. This chapter, therefore, seeks to locate a cognitive-pragmatic issue of verse drama interpretation within established theories of Cognitive Linguistics (cf. Lakoff, Johnson 1999) Discourse Analysis (cf. Cook 1994; Easthope 1983; Guido 1999, 2013), Applied Stylistics (Widdowson 1992), Literary Critique (Derrida 1978), and Drama Methods (Chekhov 1953; Johnstone 1981). The aim is to create principled conditions whereby acting interpreters can appreciate poetic language in verse drama in their own way on the basis of certain relevant theoretical assumptions. Hence, by starting from the assumption that *text* is the syntactic-semantic-prosodic organization of the poetic language, and *discourse* is its pragmatic actualization realized by a multiplicity of empirical interpreters (cf. Guido 1999, 2013), it is here maintained that a discursal voice is subjectively achieved by individual interpreters while making their own experiential embodied schemata interact with the text *by reading poetic language of verse drama aloud* since the beginning. This would allow a full exploration of the linguistic patterns of the text as well as of the Acting Interpreter's own whole-person emotional involvement in the interpretation of the character's verse, insofar as the natural, 'physical' voice is the most direct expression of the interpreter's own personality. It follows that discursal voices achieved from the same text are multiple as multiple are the acting interpreters who come to 'vocally' interact with it.

Furthermore, this study intends to demonstrate that reading and interpreting verse drama is a process that engages different feelings and often conflicting sensations in the reader. It will be argued that the peculiar mood generated by such emotional, inner 'strife' could be described as the reader's split sensibility proceeding through an alternating, bewildering sense of estrangement-intimacy-estrangement. The implication is that readers as interpreters:

1. in *Phase 1*, initially attempt to familiarize themselves with the poetic language of verse drama by making their own schemata prevail over the text. In so doing, they employ a *top-down* (from mind to text), deconstructive approach (Rumelhart 1977) as a means to overcome the sense of unfamiliarity that poetic form invokes in them on their first approach to it. Hence, the interpreters' top-down cognitive processes make the new information achieved from the poetic text interact with their own schemata which 'normalize' the poetic-verse structures that, by their very nature, 'diverge' from everyday linguistic structures;
2. in *Phase 2*, then, interpreters eventually feel the need to focus on the 'deviating form' of the language of verse drama – which makes them feel 'estranged' from the original metaphorical and rhythmical language of poetry – thus activating *bottom-up* (from text to mind) reading strategies aimed at the achievement of meaning from the text (Rumelhart 1977);
3. in *Phase 3*, finally, interpreters come to embody poetic language by adopting *interactive* (top-down/bottom-up) interpretative strategies (Rumelhart 1977) which imaginatively amplify their own embodied experiential schemata. The assumption at this stage is that to achieve a total, all-involving, personal experience of the language of poetic verse drama, interpreters have to free themselves from their customary silent position, by giving poetry a context in space and 'inhabiting' it, 'authenticating' it by means of their own 'embodied, experiential schemata'. In this way, they become *acting interpreters* who take dramatic action on the poetic language of the text by accomplishing an 'imaginative leap' within it.

Therefore, an *acting interpreter* embodies the meanings s/he achieves from a poetic text in such a way as to derive from the poem his/her own subjective dramatic discourse capable of enhancing his/her imaginative apprehension of poetry at all levels of experience. The aim is to demonstrate how the interpreters' 'embodiment' of the voices they achieve in the text of Shakespeare's verse drama will gradually enable them to reconcile the two opposing sensations of 'intimacy' and 'estrangement' within their own selves. In this way, they can physically as well as emotionally communicate and share their own interpretative discourse with the other acting interpreters who 'inter-act' with them.

In sum, the poetic discourse that the acting interpreters derive from their own dramatic embodiment of the textual form should not be seen as something final and ‘re-textualized’. Similarly, by *dramatic discourse in poetry* it is here meant the continuous interplay of the different effects that the figurative language and the rhythm of a poetic text has on the acting interpreters as they physically and emotionally explore and interpret it in a real – and not just a mental – space, as soon as acting interpreters recognize an actual spatial, visual dimension in the metaphorical language of verse drama. Aristotle states that *lexis* (diction, elocution, and style) – a fundamental component of poetic metaphor – makes *logos* (discourse) materialize, and this is also what Ricoeur (1978, p. 141) means when he says:

(T)he vividness of such good metaphors consists in their ability to ‘set before the eyes’ the sense that they display. What is suggested here is a kind of pictorial dimension, which can be called the *picturing function* of metaphorical meaning. (Original emphasis)

Although Ricoeur’s implication is of a passive reader who just ‘receives’ the images that language ‘sets before his eyes’, and of a metaphorical language already containing a meaning within its form, nevertheless his view of the pictorial dimension of the metaphor implies the active presence of a receiver who activates his/her imagination to visualize counterfactual ‘possible worlds’ (Guido 2005; Hintikka 1989; Stalnaker 2001). Also Todorov (1980) refers to metaphors as ‘discourse made visible’, and Genette (1976) defines them as an ‘inner space of language’. It is within this space that the acting interpreter can establish an *iconic coherence*, by finding similarities in things which in real life are totally dissimilar.

In *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard (1969) asserts that, in spite of the conventional view of a wholly ‘verbal’ figure of speech, metaphor involves also an ‘optic’ component which, he maintains, is at the basis of Kant’s theory of schema – as providing images for concepts – and productive imagination. Henle (1958, p. 148) defines this optic, ‘pictorial’ component as the iconic aspect of metaphor: in his view, metaphor is not presented as an ‘icon’, but “what is presented is a formula for the construction of icons”. This is in line with Peter Brook’s (1990) definition of ‘the empty space’ – namely, a space in which the actor’s imagination, by interacting with the language of poetic drama, creates its own icons, its own metaphorical representations as the effect that poetic language produces on him/her. Such effects are not just experienced mentally, but also physically, bodily. Applied to the present context of Shakespeare’s verse drama, this implies that the pictorial dimension of the metaphor is not only experienced by the interpreters in terms of a detached mental visualization; on the contrary, it is assumed to prompt in them an all-involving multidimensional, spatial experience of language, as metaphors are

essentially 'representations' of physical, 'bodily' interactions with the environment (cf. Lakoff, Johnson 1999). This view is further developed by Lakoff (1987) who, by formulating his 'Spatialization of Form Hypothesis', comes to identify a metaphorical representation of grammar within a vocal and physical interaction with the environment. The notion of the physical bases of language metaphors and grammar is also advocated by Armstrong *et al.* (1995, p. 181), who point out that vocal and physical gestures "have, by their very nature, not only the potential to *represent* things or events, but they also have both the elements and the order – the structure of syntax – built into them". (emphasis added). Thus, the interpreters' use of imagination does not simply create a mental image of what they find in the poetic language; it rather creates a 'virtual space' in which they can make language 'appear' and 'act' deictically in actual time and space. Readers, in Sartre's (1948) words, always try to transcendently possess the absent object, or the absent body, and to give it form and voice in space. To achieve this physical embodiment, they unconsciously resort to their own memory, to their own experiential schemata.

Indeed, a number of researchers maintain that language comes from the metaphorical representations of the body interacting with the environment in space (Armstrong *et al.* 1995; McNeill 1992; Studdert-Kennedy 1987). Armstrong *et al.* (1995, p. 19), for example, state:

We believe not that brain, voice and hearing constitute language but that the whole organism, and especially the visual and motor systems, are involved in language.

And then they add (Armstrong *et al.* 1995, p. 34):

language is not dualistically separated from its physical realization; rather, it is deeply rooted ontogenetically and phylogenetically in its bodily basis.

Thus, they reach this conclusion (Armstrong *et al.* 1995, p. 154):

Language in the form of visible as well as vocal gesture provides the mechanism for the emergence of mind and self. (Original emphasis)

Yet, this position advocating the mind-body-language unity is almost an isolated one. This is especially due to the fact that today the experience of language has dissociated the body from the mind, as the essence of 'self' is generally thought to reside solely in the mind. As a result, experience has become covert, and the emotional communication of one's own 'self' with the 'selves' of others through the body has been denied. It is here argued, instead, that poetic language, to be fully authenticated by the acting interpreter, has to be taken back to its bodily roots, as it has to belong to the interpreter's whole body which defines itself through the bodies of others. It is through his/her body and his/her voice that the acting interpreter can disclose his/her own 'self'

within the emotional effects that poetry has on him/her. A metaphor, in this sense, represents the effect of a ‘pragmatic combination’ between the interpreter’s schemata and poetic form. Interpreters usually ‘talk about’ the effect a poem has had on their own ‘selves’, rather than ‘revealing’ and communicating it to others by creating physical and vocal expressions of the emotions that they experience within the ‘metaphorical space’ of the poetic language. On this subject, Linklater (1992, p. 6) says by referring precisely to the poetic language in Shakespeare:

It was a language that was still a part of an oral culture [...] (l)anguage lived in the body. Thought was experienced in the body. Emotions inhabited the organs of the body. Filled with thought and feeling, the sound waves of the voice flowed out through the body and were received sensorially by other bodies which directly experienced the thought-feeling content of the sound waves.

What has been argued so far does not suggest simply that the interpreter just accepts that poetry has a phonological design; in fact, understanding the prosodic features of poetry is an important part of the incorporation of the text in the self, thus allowing the text to activate an interpretation and thereby enhancing the acting interpreters’ experience of the poem. This does not mean that interpreters have to deal with the final product (the performance) of their previous, silent pondering over poems, but, rather, that they generate, ‘in action’, a physical expression coherent to the effects poetry continually produces on them. The acting interpreters, indeed, give expression to alternative ‘possible worlds’ (Hintikka 1989; Stalnaker 2001) – namely, virtual realities through their own bodies by interpreting the metaphorical language of poetry.

In fact, by excluding the body, the interpreter would remove his/her deepest and most instinctual life-force energies and impulses: poetic rhythm influences the breath rhythm, that is emotion felt within the body, thus appealing to the physical side of the interpreter’s schemata and activating memory. Vowels, too, can convey personal emotions in the interpreter as s/he vocalizes them, and consonants can convey moods in connection with their evocative sounds and with the physical efforts the interpreter performs in articulating them. Personal moods and emotions are thus related to the particular ‘iconic context’ of poetry realized by the acting interpreters while interacting ‘in space’ with its textual form.

In a situation of collective dramatic interpretation, the acting interpreters’ schemata, including their body memory, react to the language of poetry and interact with the way that the other acting interpreters are receiving and re-interpreting discourse. Then, they re-compose their own individual interpretations of the poetic effects around the text; in this way, they achieve their collective interpretation within which different discourses co-exist and merge. While physically interacting with poetic language, the body not only

feels (thus experiencing metaphors from a first-person involvement), but also reflects (thus objectifying the first-person experience of metaphors as a detached and external third-person analysis of that experience). In the following sections, this process will be methodologically illustrated through a systematic analysis of some protocols produced by 'empirical' acting interpreters, showing how dramatic discourse in poetry does actually take place.

In sections 3 and 4, the methodological procedures applied to the implementation of, respectively, the first two phases will be described, whereas the procedure and the embodied analysis on the third-phase data will be the subject of section 5.

3. Top-down phase

At the grounds of this initial phase of the acting interpreters' top-down processes of familiarization with Shakespeare's verse drama, there is a number of convergent areas of enquiry – from the Post-Structuralist and Deconstructionist approaches to literary analysis (Culler 2007; Derrida 1978) to Cognitive-Stylistics analytical procedures (Guido 1999, 2013; Widdowson 1992) and Drama Methods of verbal and physical-theatre improvisation (Chechov 1953; Johnstone 1981).

Indeed, the Post-Structuralist and Deconstructionist approaches (Culler 2007) are to be seen in the perspective of the Post-Modernist Critique that does not believe in the attainment of the absolute truth and, by the same token, it refuses every definition because this would entail 'classifying' something – thus, limiting its meaning potential. This is a reaction against the previous Modernist Critique considered as responsible for a misunderstanding of absolute expectations as regards to the notions of duration, non-ephemerality, fidelity and authenticity, whereas precisely the instability of reality may also offer positive opportunities, thus allowing a greater freedom of creative and critical expression. In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin (1969) criticizes the fetishistic 'status-symbol' value attributed to the work of art (which may also apply to Shakespeare's 'authentic' works that are not 'corrupted' by the unauthorized versions of his age, or by the adaptations performed from the past to the present times), whereas he defends the opposite value of 'reproduction' (a movie rather than a staged play; the photograph of a painting rather than the original painting). Derrida (1988) asserts that Deconstruction does not imply undermining a text from the outside, but lingering inside it in order to implement strategies of subversion which would produce alternative readings that may be radically different from the established ones provided by traditional criticism. In *Allegories of Reading*, De Man (1979) argues that paraphrasing the original text can turn that which is unknown into something

familiar, thus undermining consolidated reading schemes, even by means of ironic demystification. Also Brenkman (1984) advocates the practice of creating parallel texts based on the narrative reorganization (*mythos*) of plot, characters and meaning which is however not aimed at the achievement of a definitive critical reading. Hillis Miller (1975) regards Deconstruction as a ‘metaphysical’ process, making reference to the seventeenth-century stylistic conventions of paradox, hyperbole, and false syllogism that ultimately come to nothing – but the ‘nothing’, in the Renaissance period, was the very place of poetic imagination.

The deconstructive practice of playing with the language, plots, and characters of Shakespeare’s plays in poetic verse was meant, in the present study, to activate the acting interpreters’ top-down cognitive processes of familiarization with poetic language which, at its first impact, may produce a sense of distance and detachment in readers. The readers’ activation of their own experiential schemata to come to terms with the poetic-verse structure that diverges from everyday use of language, as well as with fictitious contexts and characters, was meant at this stage, to allow readers to inhabit such contexts, and appropriate the characters and their language style making them their own.

One of Shakespeare’s plays which was explored in the course of this first ‘top-down’ and deconstructive phase was *King Lear*. The aim was to investigate: (a) the extent to which the same verse drama can produce diverse reading modes in relation to different genres, contexts, and physical, emotional states, and (b) the relationship between dramatic language and body language in order to examine how the interpretation of a poetic text is influenced by the author’s intended meanings, the readers’ personal and socio-cultural motivations influencing their respective interpretations, and also by the external factors characterizing the contexts of production and of reception. Furthermore, the early years of the seventeenth century represented the context of production of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. This was a period of deep political, social and existential crisis in the English history: with Queen Elizabeth I’s death, the glorious Elizabethan Age was coming to an end, together with the utopian image of divine order which was metaphorically represented by the *Great Chain of Being*, ensuring the Elizabethan political and moral balance.¹

¹ Such an image of the universal hierarchy metaphorically represented by *The Great Chain of Being* – that, by descending from God, encompassed all the planets and the earth with every animate and inanimate being, organized according to categories of correspondences (God → Sun → King/Queen → Lion → Rose → Gold) – was undermined to destruction, to the ‘nothing’. The Universe, deconstructed by the new skepticism and by the new scientific and astronomic discoveries, did not reflect any longer the Divine Mind, thus the world seemed reduced to folly – an upside-down world. Indeed, the seventeenth-century metaphor of ‘Anatomy’ (cf. Robert Burton’s 1624 essay *The Anatomy of Melancholy*; and John Donne’s 1611 poem *An Anatomy of the World*) entailed a deconstruction, a search for alternative meanings (cf. the 17th-century Metaphysical Poetry) and replaced the 16th-century metaphors of ‘Mirror’, ‘Glass’, and

Shakespeare's *King Lear*, in fact, emblematically represents an upside-down world where children betray their fathers in both its plot (King Lear, after his abdication, is chased from home by his two wicked daughters Goneril and Reagan and reduced to madness) and subplot (the Earl of Gloucester, loyal to the King, is blinded and hunted by his illegitimate son Edmund). The divine order is thus no longer reflected in the organization of the human society where the virtuous and respectful children now become losers (Cordelia in the plot, and Edgar in the subplot), and the King does not embody wisdom any longer, which is instead represented by the character of the Fool.

In this top-down, deconstructive phase of stylistic analysis, *King Lear* was employed to help acting interpreters reflect on the 'imaginative function of language' (Halliday, Hasan 1976) used to create 'parallel worlds' within which integrations, substitutions and modifications can be carried out. Two workshops were implemented during this phase: one focused on creative writing, where case-study subjects – namely, students as acting interpreters² – were asked to associate parts of the literary text to other non-literary registers and to convert one literary genre into another. The aim of this workshop was to deconstruct the literary 'rules', as well as the historical and social context that produced the literary text and thus to acquire an awareness of Shakespeare's use of language by experimenting characters and actions of this play within different physical and emotional contexts. The other workshop of this phase was focused on physical theatre *études*, based on drama techniques of verbal and physical improvisation on the characters of *King Lear*, by exploring behaviours, thoughts, states of mind, reactions to the various situations, thus giving vent to the acting interpreters' physical and verbal creativity, free associations and physical spontaneity by deconstructing the text and creating parallel ones.

3.1. Creative-writing workshop

Among the tasks performed in the course of the creative-writing workshop there were those ones devoted to the exploration of the themes in *King Lear* (generational relationships, solitude, power, folly, wisdom) according to different literary forms. One of them was the poetic form of the *Acrostic*. This task consisted in writing the 'theme-word' vertically so as to create a poetic text in which the first letter of each line spells a word out. What follows is a series of acrostics produced by the acting interpreters participating in this phase:

'Speculum' (cf. the 1559 collection of English poems *The Mirror for Magistrates*), which entail the concepts of "model", a "code" reflecting God's truth which cannot be doubted. In the 17th-century, instead, precisely this impossibility to reach the 'ultimate truth' did allow interpretations which were different from the ones produced according to pre-established critical interpretations.

² I wish to thank the Italian high-school and university students of English Language and Literature who participated in the research reported in this chapter as case-study subjects.

Parade	Flows	Frenzied
Of	Of	Ears
War	Light	Are
Endless	Leaving	Rattling
Roar	You	
Joyless	Mysteriously	Weary
Eyes	I	Eyes
Are	Seem	And
Lurking	Truly	Knees
Over	Racked	Narrate
Us	Under	Endless
Spying	Suspicious	Sorrowful
You	Thoughts	Sighs
Wit	Muttered	Divine
Is	Utterances	Egoism
Sparkling	Record	Streams
Daylight	Dreary	In
Over	Empty	Rivery
Me	Rooms	Energy
My	Panting	Living
Arms	And	On
Dangle	Sweet	You
Near	Sighs	And
Enormous	In	Linked
Somber	One	To
Spaces	Name	You
Cunning	<i>Chain of words</i>	
Odious	Down	Nobody
Rascals	Enormous	Seems
Raise	Cave	Serene
Unbounded	Enemy	Since
Power	Incessant	You
To	Trad	Exist
Increase		
Over		
Nothing		

The *Reversed Paraphrasis* is then another task based on the reversal of meaning of verses and single words, keeping the original rhythm and structure, often with a parodistic outcome involving a change of context – as in the following examples:

LEAR (*reversed paraphrasis*)

Meantime we shall conceal
our brighter purposes.
Take the map away from here.
Don't know that we have unified
The three parts of our kingdom:
an'tis our fast intent
To keep the pleasure of rule,
despite my age;
Withdrawing it
from younger strengths, so we,
Well busy, rush towards life.

LEAR (*original verses, I. 1*)

Meantime we shall express
our darker purpose.
Give me the map there.
Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom:
and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business
from our age;
Conferring them
on younger strengths, while we
Unburthen'd crawl toward death.

Also writing *Lipograms* is a kind of creative exploration of the language of the original verse, consisting in rewriting it by avoiding a particular vowel or consonant while keeping the original sense and rhythm in order to express the same concepts in different ways – as in the following line:

LEAR (*Lipogram in 'T'*)

You should be in a grave,
why do you keep your uncovered body
under skies' horrible violence?
Is man only such a helpless being as he is?

LEAR (*original verses, III. 4*)

Why, thou wert better in thy grave
than to answer with thy uncovered body
this extremity of the skies.
Is man no more than this?

Re-writing Actualization is another task based on the reformulation of parts of *King Lear* into different styles in order to compare the original verses with modern conventional registers – such as the following one reproducing the contemporary tabloid style:

KING LEAR DRIVEN MAD BY HIS TWO CRUEL DAUGHTERS!

Despite his formidable reputation for total control of his kingdom and of himself, King Lear has gone mad. Rumors have begun to drift out during the last months: his daughters, it is said, have been ill-treating him after his abdication. Not everything was clear until last night when the old King was seen roaming about the heath alone, shouting under a terrible storm. Only his Fool was with him.

Creative Hybridization, instead, is focused on parts of *King Lear* reshaped according to the styles of other ancient and modern playwrights. What follows is the part in which King Lear wrongly curses and disinherits his faithful daughter Cordelia and then banishes the Earl of Kent because he has tried to defend her (*I. 1*). This scene was re-written in the style of Sophocles' tragedies, with Kent's verses hybridized with those of the Chorus in *Oedipus the King* (in italics in the text) that, in Sophocles, does not simply provide a comment on the events, but warns and suffers from the tragic hero's actions.

LEAR

Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:
 For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
 The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
 By all the operation of the orbs
 From whom we do exist, and cease to be;
 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
 Propinquity and property of blood,
 And as a stranger to my heart and me
 Hold thee, from this, for ever.

CHORUS

*That curse would frighten any man
 Great King of Britain, and it terrifies me.* Reverse thy doom;
 And, in thy best consideration, check
 This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least.

LEAR

Out of my sight!

CHORUS

See better, Lear; and let me still remain
 The true blank of thine eye.

LEAR

Now, by Apollo,--

CHORUS

King, thou swear'st thy gods in vain
My hands are shaking, my heart is cold
 When majesty stoops to folly.

Other activities of creative writing based on *King Lear* according to the stylistic conventions of different poetic forms encompassed:

(a) *The Medieval Ballad* (in the style of *Barbara Allan*):

In Britain once there was a King
 He was well known as Lear
 He was an old and unbending man
 He had more than one daughter.

When Lear his kingdom wished to assign
 He asked his daughters one thing
 "My darlings how much do you love me?"
 Two of them were promptly lying:

"O Dad we love you lots and lots"
 But the third one just whispered
 "I love you truly as I'm bound to do
 But I'll say nothing today."

King Lear furious like a storm

Gave all to the eldest daughters
And poor the younger one wrongly left
"My father is in harpies' hands".

When Lear knew all about the truth
He hated his wicked girls
Who chased him away from their home
Lear tramped over stormy moors.

(b) The *Renaissance Sonnet*, in which the first three quatrains with alternate rhymes illustrate the character's conflicting emotional states, whereas in the final rhyming couplet conclusions are drawn.

EDMUND THE VILLAIN

Two passions I've got in my heart (a)
Like ghosts they chase me in the world (b)
Power's tearing my soul like a dart (a)
Hate I clearly can see in a sword. (b)

Power can colour my life (c)
I can see gloomy winter in bloom (d)
But then Hate throws my Self in a strife (c)
And sweet spring even turns into doom. (d)

They both are at strife on my ground (e)
I hide their warfare to society (f)
But I hear in me their deafening sound (e)
Though I think that it's simply my malady. (f)

I don't know how to stop this obsession (g)
Though it turns into a gripping possession. (g)

(c) The *Haiku* (i.e., the Japanese poem that is composed by few words which apparently show no logical connection in order to prompt in readers new mental associations). In rewriting verses from *King Lear* into haiku poems, the last word/words of each verse was retained. The unexpected effect was an emphasis on the original meaning – as evident in the following instance:

LEAR (*haiku*)
Darker purpose,
Divided intent,

From our age
On younger strengths
Crawl toward death.

LEAR (*original verses, I.1*)

Meantime we shall express our *darker purpose*.
Give me the map there. Know that we have *divided*
In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast *intent*
To shake all cares and business *from our age*;
Conferring them on *younger strengths*,
while we unburthen'd *crawl toward death*.

(d) The *Limerick* (a kind of nursery rhyme like those ones composed by Edward Lear) focuses on the absurd side of situations, considering it as

essential for reaching the core of truth. By reducing the situations in *King Lear* into limericks, it is possible to pinpoint certain behaviours, thus showing their nonsense.

LEAR

There was an Old King of Britain
Who gave the Kingdom to his daughters
As he said “if you love me most
Your whole share won’t be lost”
That foolish Old King of Britain.

GONERIL and REGAN

There were two Daughters of a King
Who could lie about everything
So they got all the power
When they swore they loved their father
Those skillful, false Daughters of a King.

CORDELIA

There was a Princess in her youth
Who could only tell the truth
So she said nothing, rather
Than saying lies to her father
Who disinherited that truthful Princess
in her youth.

EDMUND

There was a Guy of Illegitimate Birth
Who couldn’t stand his shame on this earth
So he said: “If I survive
Nature, make me thrive!”
That ambitious Guy of Illegitimate Birth.

3.2. *Physical-theatre workshop*

The objective of this second workshop of the top-down, deconstructive phase of this study is to build in the acting interpreters’ minds a ‘physical memory’ to be internalized and brought with themselves during the last phase of the interaction with the other acting interpreters staging *King Lear*.

One of these tasks is the *Conscious vs. Unconscious Minds*, based on verbal improvisation on the theme of ‘hypocrisy’ which is prevalent in *King Lear*. The task focuses on the dissociation between the conscious and the unconscious mind of the characters – in fact, what they say through their original verses does not coincide with what they think of or feel. In the course of this activity, the acting interpreters were in pairs, shoulder to shoulder, and focused on the characters’ inner motivations: one of them read a character’s verses and the other improvised upon what that character may unconsciously feel while uttering such verses – by adopting a kind of ‘interior monologue’ in verbal improvisation typical of the Think-aloud technique (Ericsson, Simon 1984; Nisbett, Wilson 1977) reproduced in the following protocol extract:

Protocol 1: *Think-aloud report*

LEAR (Conscious)

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose. Give me the map there. [...]

LEAR (Unconscious)

“I’m alone in this false world of lies that surrounds me. I fear death, it’s dark, it’s dark, there’s nothing after it. But I’m the King, I’ve the power of life and death on my subjects and on my daughters! I’m their god! They must love me!”

LEAR (Conscious)

Which of you shall we say doth love us most, that we our largest bounty may extend where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril, our eldest born, speak first.

GONERIL (Unconscious)

"I want all the power! My father is old and foolish, but he still wants to be the King! I will obtain all the kingdom! I want it all immediately!"

GONERIL (Conscious)

Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter [...]

Another task regards the exploration of the characters' *Archetypes* and of the *Psychological Gesture* (Chekhov 1953) that each of them embodies. The archetypal characters at the basis of this tragedy are: the King, the Servant, the Innocent, the Trickster, and the Fool.³ Each of them is characterized by a Psychological Gesture that represents their essence that actors (as acting interpreters) have to search into themselves, physically embody it, internalize it and then, again, reactivate it as a physical memory on stage. Tragic Archetypes are: The *Innocent*, who stands up straight, with wide eyes because everything provokes wonder in him/her. The *Trickster*, who has a small, rigid circle in one eye which s/he focuses on, thus assuming cunning airs. The *Fool*, who lets all his weight lie heavy on his knees as he may be said to embody Nietzsche's (2009) 'Spirit of Gravity' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, making human beings aware of their own absurdity. The *King* occupies all the space with his body, by keeping his head always up high and his back arched, and he moves with confidence as he is aware all the time that there is always a *Servant* ready to anticipate all his desires. One of the improvisation tasks – aimed at making the two archetypal characters of the King and the Servant interact – consisted in the King who owes all the space and the Servants who have to be very careful not to invade it, otherwise the King will clap his hands and the Servants will die. So the Servants have to move cautiously and bend over in order to take up as little space as possible. When, instead, *Two Kings Meet*, they start, in pairs, a power play by means of a psychological gesture: they both bend together, always looking into each other's eyes and trying not to bend down more than the other one.

Once embodied the Psychological Gestures of each archetypal character of the Tragedy, then the acting interpreters participating in this phase started exploring some of the scenes of *King Lear*, by initially turning them into *Tableaux*. This activity consisted in a stylization of a scene of the play by reducing it into three basic movements that could summarize the physical and emotional energy of the characters involved in the represented scene. This also requires the acting interpreters' total involvement in this task because this is the

³ I wish to thank the stage director Freda O'Byrne for her illuminating suggestions in the field of Physical-Theatre training.

moment in which their energy is progressively focused on the three intermediate objectives, with the respective gestures becoming fixed in their physical memory, leading to the conscious achievement of the final objective of the scene which, subsequently, will be developed in its entirety on stage.

In order to explore the *Sense of Tragedy* permeating the verse drama of *King Lear*, the physical task of the *Scream* was carried out – namely, the acting interpreters' simultaneous projection upon their heads of their negative physical and psychic energy through a collective scream. They first perform a series of vigorous physical exercises at the end of which they eject out of themselves through a scream all their negativity, projecting it above their heads. After that, acting interpreters activate a 'state of maximum tension' at being constantly aware that such a malevolent energy sooner or later will collapse on their heads destroying them – as it happens with the negative energy above the head of the tragic hero, haunting him (personified in the Ancient-Greek plays as the revengeful Furies, or as the Witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*). Hence, the 'sense of Tragedy' may be physically and emotionally defined as a 'vertical line' that connects characters with vengeful gods. Tragic characters move, fight, and die being aware all the time of this negative presence above their heads. This is different from *Melodrama*, where the hero has not developed a 'vertical' awareness of such an evil energy lurking above him, but he rather experiences a 'diagonal' awareness as he leans over the audience to communicate his personal tragedy, thus depriving it of the contact with mysticism and the divinity. In *Slapstick*, instead, the hero is a caricature: he fights and dies in horrible ways and then he gets back up and returns to live.

It is during the rehearsals that the verse drama starts acquiring a spatial dimension by establishing a semiotic cooperation with the verbal and gestural aspects of the performance, thus giving a spatial context to the illocutionary, perlocutionary, and deictic levels of the verse-drama body/thought interpretation. This means that the acting interpreters position themselves within the poetic text, filtering it through their own experiential schemata in order to communicate their interpretation to the audience. This would entail what Stanislavski (1981) defines as 'suspension of disbelief' that the acting interpreters activate with reference to the roles that they embody in order to explore their own physical and emotional reactions to the characters' poetic language. In the case in point, each subject of the case study, as an acting interpreter, identified him/herself with all the characters in *King Lear*. First of all, acting interpreters imagine that, in the same space occupied by their own body, there is the character's imaginary body 'to wear' and give it life through speech and movement. Such an imaginary body is assumed to influence the acting interpreters' personalities, modifying their physical aspect, voice and speech style, thus emphasizing the inherent qualities of the character.

Then, acting interpreters embodying characters have to interact with each

other in the context and through the poetic language of the verse drama. To this purpose, a series of physical-theatre *études* were suggested. One of them is *The Shoe*, meant to help acting interpreters establish relationships of stress/relief between the interacting characters they embody by means of the rhythm of their respective cues. Hence, in pairs, one acting interpreter says his character's cue when he receives the shoe from the other acting interpreter who has concluded her character's cue. The possession of the shoe, in fact, means having the control of the situation insofar as the other acting interpreter cannot go on with his part if the other acting interpreter does not throw him the shoe and so allows him to speak. This happens in scenes where the state of tension is high, otherwise the shoe is thrown from one to the other acting interpreter at a regular rhythm.

Another physical-theatre *étude* is the *Push-and-Pull* one, aimed at developing a physical memory for tense dialogues in relationships between victims and aggressor (e.g., Cordelia and Lear in the first scene, or Lear and his two wicked daughters). Subjects are in pairs, the acting interpreter who plays the 'aggressive' role says his cues by pushing another acting interpreter towards the other subject playing the 'victim' role, who will reply by trying to dodge him/her with difficulty as she has to pull another subject sitting on the floor. The acting interpreters' pushing-and-pulling physical effort produces on them vocal effects suitable for their respective uneasy roles.

The physical-theatre tasks exploring the cues of specific characters include the one focused on the *Insults to Edmund*, Gloucester's illegitimate son, who explodes with anger and hate, stressing the clusters of consonants in his monologue (*I. 2*) surrounded by a crowd of people (i.e., the other acting interpreters) turning around him and shouting their despise at him, calling him "bastard". The 'crowd' is meant to remain in his memory during the staged scene of his monologue.

The other physical-theatre task based on the exploration of the characters in *King Lear* is the one called *Making a mockery of Lear*. While Goneril and Regan declare their love to Lear (*I. 1*), they use a slow, hypnotic tone of voice turning around their pleased old father. Behind his back, unseen, they make a mockery of him. These psychological gestures need to be embodied by the acting interpreters because, on stage, Lear's daughters communicate on two levels – the level of falsity towards Lear and the level of revelation of their real intentions to the audience.

Paper balls is another physical-theatre task focused on the same scene (*I. 1*), when Cordelia tries to shake his father up and make him see the truth about his daughters. Her cues go with her throwing paper balls against Lear. On stage, the King is expected to 'remember' how his daughter's words hit him.

Lear in the storm (III. 2) is a piece of poetry which lends itself to a physical-theatre task focused on the acting interpreters' subtle interplay of self-

absorption into other dimensions of being. The method of data collection and analysis adopted at this stage (and in the Phases that will follow) is the technique of the Retrospective Report (Ericsson, Simon 1984). Acting interpreters' retrospective reports of their improvisation tasks were tape-recorded and then transcribed into protocols from which an embodied-stylistic analysis was performed on the subjects' dramatic interpretation of the textual structure. These are Lear's verses under analysis:

LEAR

Blow winds, and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow.
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks.
 You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
 Vaunt couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
 Singe my white head. And thou, all shaking thunder,
 Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world,
 Crack Nature's moulds, all germains spill at once,
 That makes ingrateful man.

In the reported activity, the text under analysis is a decontextualized extract from *King Lear* that subjects/acting-interpreters did not yet know – hence, the interaction with its poetic language and with the other acting interpreters' dramatic interpretation of this text was indeed crucial in determining the achievement of a collective dramatic discourse of poetry on a 'bare stage' of imaginative enactment. The protocols that follow report different interpretations of 'Lear's speech in the storm' by two groups of subjects/acting-interpreters. The objective is to focus on two different 'inner experiences' of the same poetic language – both consistent with the text (Widdowson 1993) – which could appear almost irrelevant from a perspective that is external to the group-dynamics as it may simply focus on the outer rendering of the physical scene, rather than on the psychological and emotional personification of the acting interpreters of some elements of the poetic context – as evident in the following retrospective report by a subject/external observer of the two different workshops that were only outwardly similar to each other:

Protocol 2: *Retrospective report*

External observer: "In both workshops, Lear was shouting his desperate lines while a storm of human bodies (personifying wind, rain, lightening, the branches of the trees) raged around him, Kent and the Fool, assailing and hitting them. The physical effort that Lear had to do to shun, parry and defend himself from the 'storm' made his voice more vigorous and emphatic. In both cases, that storm was the physical expression of his tormented state of mind. Actually, in both cases, there was a close relationship between the physical and the emotional involvement of the whole group."

As evident from this protocol, the external observer focuses on the

performances as such, not on the experiential interpretations by the two groups of subjects taking part in the two workshops. What this external observer misses, in fact, is the different emphasis on the physical/emotional exploration of this text by the two groups of subjects/acting-interpreters. Yet, this external observer's third-person retrospective report can indeed fit both interpretations emerging from the two workshops, as the following protocols by two internal observers demonstrate.

Protocol 3: Retrospective report: interpretation 1

Internal observer – Lear 1: “At the beginning I didn't realize that the storm outside had any connection with the storm of feelings inside me. While I was acting, I was mainly concentrated in avoiding my friends playing the rain, the wind, etc. I was speaking to them. Then I began to realize that the energy of the outside ‘storm’ was also within my voice and in my body. My movements were violent, and my mouth had to make a strong, violent effort to articulate those words: there are lots of consonants all together, in groups, and it was difficult to speak them under such conditions. I felt that I was also one among the elements of the storm. Actually, my body was as one with the words that I was speaking. I don't know how, but, at a certain point, I forgot about what was happening to me, and about my own movements too, and I started imagining that I was abandoned by everybody, that nobody loved me, and I felt desperate.”

Protocol 3 is a retrospective report by a subject/acting-interpreter embodying the first-person perspective of the Addresser (Lear). His interpretation is about a storm which is unconsciously embodied, disembodied, and then consciously re-embodied again by Lear. It proceeds according to the following stages:

- 1) in embodying Lear, the acting interpreter is initially unaware that the ‘storm’ is inside his character;
- 2) Lear's ‘diegetic description’ of the storm is, actually, an unconscious projection of his inner, ‘emotional storm’ out of himself into a second-person Addressee (i.e., the ‘physical storm’ personified by the other acting interpreters in the group);
- 3) the ‘physical storm’ is, therefore, experienced, at this stage:
 - (a) from the embodied second/third-person perspective by the student/acting-interpreter playing Lear;
 - (b) from the embodied first-person perspective of those acting interpreters who personify wind, rain, lightening, etc.
- 4) Lear becomes physically engaged with both:
 - (a) the ‘physicality’ of the sound of the clustering consonants present in that poetic language;
 - (b) the ‘physical storm’ as personified by the acting interpreters.
- 5) Lear becomes the storm. By developing either ‘physical action’, or a sensitivity to the sounds prompted by the poetic language, the acting

interpreter who embodies the Addresser/Lear comes to a conscious first-person re-incorporation of the second-person Addressee/storm. In this way, he recognizes it as an inner, personal storm of his mind (he authenticates it by using his own personal schemata). The initial unconscious experience, therefore, becomes now a conscious one, so that the language stops being simply ‘diegetic’, descriptive, and becomes ‘mimetic’ and ‘imagistic’ in its expression of an inner emotional state.

Protocol 4: *Retrospective report: interpretation 2*

Internal observer – Lear 2: “I felt the storm within myself, and I felt the need to give vent to my despair and to communicate it to the Fool and Kent who were with me. The storm, personified by the other students, illustrated my words and helped the Fool and Kent visualize how I felt.”

If the first interpretation represented an inner, ‘ideational’ (Halliday 1994) and personal storm, this second interpretation represents a direct ‘interpersonal’ (*ibidem*) communication of emotions, which are also exemplified on a parallel physical level by the acting interpreters embodying the elements of the storm. Hence, Lear’s speech is explicitly ‘diegetic’, ‘indexical’ and ‘deictic’. The interpretative process develops as follows:

1. Lear mimetically *is* the storm, since the beginning. He has already absorbed it, and consciously experiences it within himself;
2. Lear’s Addressee is no longer the storm (as in ‘interpretation 1’), meant as an unconscious objectification of his inner self in an attempt to rationalize it. Rather, the storm is represented by Kent and the Fool, who are with Lear and to whom Lear addresses the expression of his stormy state of mind;
3. Kent and the Fool, in their turn, receive and absorb Lear’s emotional expression and reflect it back to him. In this way, the group of acting interpreters as a whole ‘inter-absorbs’ and personifies Lear’s ‘inner storm’, thus becoming a collective embodied experience – from an inner first/second-person perspective – as well as from an external third-person perspective.

The embodiment process analyzed so far implies that, in order to give presence on a ‘bare stage’ to any representational aspect of being (a person, an animal, or an object), the acting interpreter needs to activate a ‘schematic, imaginative readiness’ enabling the acting interpreter’s physical/emotional background knowledge to be stretched and then transmuted into creative possibilities. The acting interpreter could potentially experiment all these possibilities by disseminating his/her self into a multiplicity of physical digressions. In the light of the protocols reported and analyzed above, it is evident that all these physical conditions do not exist objectively, outside the acting interpreters’ schemata, but, rather, different acting interpreters invoke them out of the poetic language

by differently engaging their embodied schemata so as to give different physical and emotional expressions to them.

At this point, acting interpreters moved to the second bottom-up phase of poetic-drama exploration.

4. Bottom-up phase

This second phase of embodied stylistic analysis explores the notion that interpreting a poetic text is an active process which involves the empirical interpreter in a continuous communicative interaction with the textual structure (Guido 2013). The implication is that, after having explored and improvised on the plot, characters and language of Shakespeare's plays in order to familiarize with them, then acting interpreters need to return to the structure of the poetic text which still produces in them a sense of estrangement due to the fact that it is not an 'everyday language'. As the retrospective reports by the celebrated actress Dame Judi Dench and stage director Sir Peter Hall will demonstrate, poetic language is not so immediately accessible as any ordinary 'referential' text but, being a 'representational' text, it is an inherently complex language as it is designed to elicit variable effects on different interpreters. The poetic text, as it were, challenges its interpreters to return to it, to reconsider its language, and to re-filter it through their own schemata over and over again so as to achieve their own personal meanings from it. The focus at this stage, therefore, is on the acting interpreters' process of embodiment of the prosodic structure of Shakespeare's verses, by appropriating the poetic rhythm into their own personal experience. Indeed, poetic rhythm affects the rhythm of breathing, thus activating the acting interpreter's emotional memory. Vowel sounds trigger personal emotions, consonant sounds prompt states of mind through the physical efforts that the interpreters make in order to articulate them. Poetry, like music, is composed by verbal and sound structures which represent an illocutionary force capable of producing variable perlocutionary effects on the acting interpreters who embody them by interacting with the rhythm and the sound of the text that represents in fact a kind of musical score. Acting interpreters, therefore, start analyzing graphemes to phonemes in order to try to achieve a meaning from them (Samuels, Kamil 1984). Even reading each word of the poetic text aloud can trigger in acting interpreters a reflection on the sense of each of them and on their connotations evoked by their sound and meaning – even a reflection on link-words such as 'and', 'but', 'however', etc. can have an influence on the readers' interpretation, Link-words, indeed, change the direction of thought, or they can contribute to its development in one direction rather than another. The sense and energy of

each word can in fact bring to the sense and energy of the next one, thus disclosing the characters' thought movements.

This, however, may sound as if there is a built-in motivation to recurrence 'in the text itself', but it is not so, because the interpretation of poetic language is determined neither exclusively by the text, nor by the writer. It is in fact the interpreter who, by accepting the writer's challenge, returns to the poetic text and achieves his/her own multiple discursal interpretations by continually interacting with the structure of its language. This is evident in the retrospective reports (Ericsson, Simon 1984) elicited in the course of this bottom-up phase from actress Dame Judi Dench and from stage director Sir Peter Hall (as case-study subjects), as well as in the 'retrospective' and 'think-aloud' reports collected from the students/acting-interpreters representing the subjects of this study in the course of poetic-drama workshops. In these reports, moreover, the acting interpreter's process of 'staging Shakespeare's verses' with the other acting interpreters inter-acting with him/her is crucial, as this represents the kin-aesthetic collective process in which the acting interpreter's 'self' comes to be absorbed by the other acting interpreters' 'selves', insofar as, in Heidegger's (1962) view, the 'self' is the condition of the group's identity. Also Nietzsche (1956), in his *Birth of the Tragedy*, claims that the actor confuses his/her 'self' with the other actors' rhythms and bodies, but eventually s/he reconciles the sense of alienation (being outside his/her 'self') and the sense of intimacy (being within his/her 'self').

In her retrospective report, Dame Judi Dench⁴ – representing an acting interpreter of this case study – illustrates her own processes of building 'poetic characters' – namely, characters that, for their very formation, are dependent on linguistic forms (van Peer 1989, p. 9) which, in the case under analysis, is a poetic form. The retrospective report reproduced below focuses precisely on her process of character building through Shakespeare's language in verse. Dame Judi's method, that she defines as 'instinctive', is actually based on her deep knowledge of the poetic structure and verse rhythm:

⁴ I wish to thank Dame Judi Dench for having kindly accepted to be a subject of this study. Judi Dench is a celebrated Oscar-winning British actress, an outstanding authority in the staging of poetic drama – in recognition of which she was made Dame of Order of the British Empire. She has performed Shakespeare for a long time with the Royal Shakespeare Company, at the National Theatre, and at the Old Vic Theatre – thus she perfectly represents the quintessence of the 'acting interpreter' of Shakespeare's verse drama. This verbal report was collected in Dame Judi's dressing room at the Royal National Theatre in London.

Protocol 5: *Retrospective report*

DAME JUDI DENCH: "Mine is an entirely instinctive approach, entirely. I just completely, completely rely on instinct. I mean, there is a strange kind of instinct, in a way there is a dichotomy about that because there is a way and a pattern of *speaking* Shakespeare (as taught by Peter Hall, Trevor Nunn, John Barton, George Rylance) which you have to assimilate and you have to know about that. Then, in a way, after you assimilate it, you know how you should approach it. It's like typing, you know where the letters are, learn where the letters are, and then, although you can't forget it, you do forget that in order to write the letter. In other words, you have to learn the speaking of the verse – that you have to learn – and then you have to obey it, you have to obey your line endings but, nevertheless, all that you have learnt, that is, verse speaking, must be assimilated *into* the emotion of that character and the immediacy of that character. Then, once you've assimilated that, you have to learn the speaking of the verse and then you can do it. You can be naturalistic, though, and obey completely punctuation. You can be completely naturalistic – it's difficult, but you can be – and yet you will never ever run out of breath if you do that by obeying the line endings, for instance, you know. You'll also find out some meanings that are rather obscure, but if you actually go back to the First Folio, which we often work from, then you see that it makes wonderful sense – but you can hear it, can't you? [...] Indeed, you need to have a strong director who says 'please observe the line-ending there, the half-line, please take the other half-line on to make a whole line'. You just need to have a very strong director, and Peter Hall is the standard director because he watches, he watches it all, so there's a great discipline put on it, and that's very good and very exciting for us actors."

Judi Dench's reference to the renowned British stage director Sir Peter Hall made the choice fall on him as the next subject of the 'bottom-up phase' of this study.⁵ The focus in his retrospective report was to enquire into the process by which acting interpreters have to be taken back to Shakespeare's script – that is, to his poetic text – and thus, in this case, the interesting question regards the extent to which the script limits the range of possible interpretations – limits, for instance, the vocal performance. In short, if acting interpreters say a poem in a certain way, they should be able to refer back to the script because that is the way they are acting on that particular written signal – in Widdowson's (1992) words, the poetic text 'on page' determines its interpretation 'on stage'. This seems to be in line with the 'bottom-up' perspective by Cox and Dyson (1963)

⁵ I also wish to express my gratitude to the late Sir Peter Hall who generously agreed to be an 'acting interpreter' of this study, following Dame Judi Dench's suggestion that he would represent an excellent subject for this research. Sir Peter Hall was the founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company, he directed the London National Theatre for about twenty years. He was the director of many groundbreaking stage productions and, as a consequence, he was knighted for his service to the British theatre. The present retrospective-report protocol was collected at the Old Vic Theatre in London.

who maintained that the authority of the text and of its author have the function of establishing an order in the interpretative process. Therefore, although it is true that Shakespeare's verse drama should be personalized through the individual experience of the acting interpreters – however, at this second phase of bottom-up analysis, there has to be a recognition that personalization is nevertheless relatable to a specific script. Sir Peter Hall, in particular, as a stage director, has always focused on the rhythm of Shakespeare's verse, thus running the risk of exercising his control over the actor's interpretations. Yet, under his direction, actors – as acting interpreters – started embodying characters by finding their motivations in the emotional effects triggered in their experiential schemata by Shakespeare's verse rhythm. The rhythm of the iambic pentameter in Shakespeare's 'blank verse' was thus embodied by Sir Peter's actors/acting interpreters as they read such a verse aloud interacting, at the same time, with its textual structure, the context of the play, and with the other actors/acting interpreters.

The rhythm of the iambic pentameter in Shakespeare resembles the natural rhythm of everyday speech – five feet sequentially constituted by one non-stressed syllable followed by a stressed one – which gives the iambic pentameter a naturalistic effect. And indeed, Shakespeare's verse reproduces the characters' thought movements – e.g., when the verse rhythm becomes irregular it means that the characters' thoughts, feelings and actions are changing, or are suddenly reacting to something unexpectedly happening in the course of the dramatic action. Hence the acting interpreter adapts the rhythm of his/her voice, together with his/her thoughts and feelings, to the rhythm of the irregular iambic pentameter, thus freeing his/her imagination.

What follows is Sir Peter Hall's retrospective report on how Shakespeare's verse has to be interpreted on stage:

Protocol 6: Retrospective report

SIR PETER HALL: "I start from the text and the language. I think it's very dangerous for actors to begin with themselves, because they end up having *to say* Shakespeare. So, I spend a very great deal of time analyzing the text. First of all structurally, for rhythm, antithesis, alliteration, assonance, rhyme. I go through it with them, trying to make every line scan as a regular iambic pentameter, and if it doesn't, then you find an emotional reason for the irregularity. So you *use* the irregularity, you don't ignore it. And actually many Shakespearean lines can be made to scan. A verse very often gives you an emphasis which takes you to what Shakespeare meant, and makes the actors very aware of the line structure, because I think Shakespeare is about lines, not about words, and if you've got to speak speech tripping all the time, and follow it through, then you need to preserve the line, which is why he bothers to have two half-lines with two different characters, which means, of course, you take the cue, the second actor takes the cue, but the two actors have to act together, make one line in rhythm, tempo, emphasis and volume, although their motives can be entirely different, can be quite contradictory. [...] You

have to keep in rhythm, you have to keep in time, or when you are out of time there is an emotional reason – a pressure – changing. So I spend two weeks or so on that line before I begin anything else. I expect the actors not to breathe in the middle of the lines, only at the end of the lines; I expect them to keep their lungs full with tiny breaths at the end of the line, so they're like bag-pipers, they always have air in their lungs that they can use, make the whole line work. And even when there is a caesura in the line, it doesn't mean pause of breath, it means, when there is a heavy caesura in the line, that you have to slow up on the first half of the line, so you can maintain the break and then the rhythm thereafter. So the caesura is often a signal of a change of pace. In that sense, I mean, Shakespeare tells you when to go fast, or when to go slow. Many, many Shakespearean lines, probably sixty per cent, are monosyllabic, and when you are dealing in monosyllables it means you have to spread the line and make it slower, in order to make the iambs work, and that, of course, is again an emotional signal: the actor has to find out why he wants to play it slow. So, although Shakespeare tells you when to go fast, when to go slow, when to pause, when to emphasize in contrast to another, when to rhyme, when to be irregular in your metre, the reasons why you do these things are still the actor's prerogative. And the end result is that Shakespeare's verse must be preserved. It's like learning a dance, or like learning a sword-fight: you learn the steps or you learn the strokes of the sword, and then finally you have to make it your own, and act it, and *be* it. But the end result is something that you learn before you find out how to get there."

From Peter Hall's words it clearly emerges the notion that there is something about the poetic form that engages the whole body of the acting interpreter who can give life to the rhythmical and semiotic organization of that language by 'appropriating' it and 'embodying' it through a total interaction with the rhythm and the sound of the text. Widdowson (1982) for instance, in his paper *Othello in Person*, represents the ground upon which rhythm comes to be embodied in verse drama in the following workshop with a group of students/acting interpreters that are the subjects of this study. He explicitly focuses on the use of rhythm to shift perspectives by exploring Othello's dislocated mode of self-representation in his poetic speech which is promptly appropriated by Iago with the intention of manipulating him. Widdowson's study in fact inspired the embodied stylistic analysis reported in this section on bottom-up interpretative processes insofar as in Shakespeare's *Othello*, the rhythm of the verse makes perspectives shift from the character of Othello to that of Iago. In his analysis, Widdowson shows how Othello's unstable image of himself is reflected in the way he displaces the first-person experience of his own self into third-person references to other abstract selves and Iago accesses Othello's mind and manipulates it by making this peculiar 'mental disposition' his own. Iago in fact absorbs Othello's third-person overt representation of his first-person most hidden fears (his wife's infidelity) and reflects them back to him. This is evident, for instance, in the following lines (*III. 3*):

IAGO

But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves.

Hence, by appropriating Othello's discursal style and 'mind style', Iago 'becomes' Othello. In other words, Iago renders Othello's unconscious 'vocal', thus making it conscious. In the context of the present study, Widdowson's analysis of Othello is especially illuminating insofar as in the passage 'from page to stage' this fusion of selves and perspectives becomes also a vocal, rhythmical, 'physical' fusion of the two dramatic voices. Thus, Widdowson's discourse analysis made of *Othello* is relevant precisely for the drama *method* drawn from it, regarding the process of dramatic embodiment of the 'shifting perspectives' in poetic drama taking place when acting-interpreters worked together on Shakespeare's blank verse. The protocols of the transcriptions of the subjects' dramatic exploration of the poetic dialogue in *Othello* shows exactly how they initially managed to 'shift-and-share' perspectives only by means of the rhythmical discourse that they achieved from the metrical pattern of the poetic text. And indeed, rhythm is one of the primary discursal elements which can actualize psychological dynamics in the physical space of poetic dramatization. Berry (1991), in her description of vocal techniques for actors, emphasizes the way in which even the rhythm achieved from the 'split lines' in the poetic-drama text leads to a sort of 'fusion' of the characters who "are almost breathing together" (*ibidem*: 68). The following protocols provide evidence of the way in which acting interpreters' mutual achievement of a rhythmical discourse from the metrical pattern of the text by means of drama methods could lead them to realize:

- a. the rhythmical fusion of Iago's and Othello's thoughts into a unique one. This means that every change of 'voice' at each cue might correspond to a change in the direction of thought;
- b. the play of 'status' through which Iago deceitfully manipulates the rhythmical discourse in order to manipulate Othello's thought;
- c. rhythm, breath, emotion, and thought in the two characters' split lines that are dialogically interrelated.

To elicit in acting interpreters a subjective experience of *thought-fusion*, they were initially asked to read the cues of dialogue reproduced below (*III. 3*) that could be interpreted as a contending of two antithetic thoughts and feelings (each marked by every cue ending with a full-stop) to be found uniquely in Othello's conscience (stressed vowel sounds are highlighted in bold):

[1] IAGO

I see this hath a little dashed your spirits.

[2] OTHELLO

Not a jot, not a jot.

[3] IAGO

In faith, I fear it has.

[...]

[4] IAGO My lord, I see you're moved.
[5] OTHELLO No, not much moved.

The following scripts are two instances of the Think-aloud protocols (Ericsson, Simon 1984) on the conclusions that acting interpreters reached after having vocally worked in pairs on the rhythmical dynamics of the shared lines. Tape-recordings were collected while they were discussing their dramatic representation of the *Othello* lines. Tape-scripts were also produced and edited by the acting interpreters themselves with the purpose of enhancing the cognition of their own dramatic interpretations – which is at the basis of their embodied stylistics analysis:

Protocol 7: *Think-aloud report*

A: "I'm not sure Othello realizes this, 'his spirits are not dashed', the rhythm is very regular."

B: "Yes, there is a contrast between emotion and rhythm. His thought is not clear now, it is creeping slowly in his mind."

Protocol 8: *Think-aloud report*

C: "Line [2] starts with an anapest – *Not a jot, not a jot*. There are two anapests. It speeds the rhythm. Othello wants to remove quickly the thought upsetting him. This thought, on the contrary, returns in the second part of the line in Iago's regular rhythm. Iago's rhythm is always very regular".

D: "And also in line [3] the regular metre of Iago's cues shows that a new thought has already developed in Othello's mind."

C: "But we still don't know this thought."

D: "No, but we know the emotional effect that this new thought has on Othello when Iago says: *I see this hath a little dashed your spirits; I see you're moved*. You are Iago, but you are me, too. I know I'm moved, but I don't want to admit it, I keep my distance to defend myself from suffering."

C: "Yes, Othello says *No*, in the second part of the line. He alters the rhythm to stop his thoughts. But he has to admit that he is moved, though *not much moved*."

The next stage of the workshop focuses on *thought-manipulation*, to be explored alongside the previously analyzed notion of thought-fusion. Acting-interpreters were therefore asked to explore rhythm, punctuation and line-length (run-on and end-stopped lines), and to find a 'physical embodiment' of the intersecting movements of thought that they would achieve in the poetic dialogue between Othello and Iago. The following think-aloud protocol reproduces a recording made while two acting-interpreters were interacting to create a physical representation of the 'thoughts in action'. Also a third-person observer was present (again, stressed vowel sounds are highlighted in bold):

Protocol 9: *Think-aloud report*

A: Iago: "I hope you will consider what is **spoke**
Comes from my love.

The metre is regular. But it sounds long."

B: "It's a run-on-line."

A: "Then there is the full-stop. A long sentence and then, suddenly a full-stop. And then I start again the new sentence with *But*."

B: But does it 'come from your love?' Let's play it as if you wanted to reassure me of your love."

C: (*external observer*): "Iago looks straight into Othello's eyes, he holds his hands, and he says all his speech in this position."

A: *Iago*:

*"I hope you will consider what is spoke
Come from my love. But I do see you're moved.
I am to pray you, not to strain my speech
To grosser issues, nor to larger reach
Than to suspicion."*

B: *Othello*: "I will not."

A: *Iago*: "Should you do so, my lord,
My speech should fall into such vile success
Which my thoughts aimed not at.

No, it doesn't work. How do you feel?"

B: "You look into my eyes and I have no time to think. Rhythm is hypnotic. Why do you reassure me and then talk about suspicion? Give me more time to think, and don't look into my eyes."

A: "I'll stress the pauses at the full-stops." (*She does it*).

C: (*external observer*): "Iago turns round and round Othello while he says his words. When the long sentence ends, he stops and looks into Othello's eyes and says briefly *I do see you are moved*."

B: "You are mocking me! I do not feel reassured at all. You see? Your pauses make me reflect. You are insinuating a suspicion in me!"

Through this protocol it is possible to notice the way in which the acting-interpreter A uses pauses after every full-stop to manipulate feelings and insinuate suspicion in the acting interpreter B. End-stopped-lines, then, do not just mark grammatical pauses, but rather emotional interruptions which invoke a multiplicity of implicatures to be subjectively inferred. Run-on-lines, on the other hand, speed the rhythm and provide an emotional anti-climax.

In this example, thus, the creative prompt of Widdowson's (1982) study on *Othello* has been turned into principled practice. From the selected protocols it is possible to notice how Othello's characteristic dislocated style of self-representation (as also appropriated by Iago) found an analogue in the rhythmical discourse achieved by acting interpreters while dramatizing the lines 'shared' between the two characters. In this way, acting interpreters could realize the extent to which Iago manages to become the physical embodiment of Othello's thought/breath-rhythm, manipulating it, and then making his unconscious mind 'vocal', thus raising it to Othello's consciousness. Such a 'displaced specularity' is also stylistically rendered by the use of second-/third-person pronouns 'you-s/he' which actually imply the first-person 'I'. This is evident in Othello who, eventually, seems to recognize his own self displaced

and embodied in the second-person Iago, when he cries out, with his characteristic dislocated style:

OTHELLO

By heaven, he echoes me,
As if there were some monster in his thought
Too hideous to be shown.

In turning Shakespeare's *Othello* into his opera *Otello*, Giuseppe Verdi attempted to transpose into music the original 'shared lines' between Othello and Iago, re-elaborated into the Italian version by his librettist Arrigo Boito. The difference between Tragedy and Melodrama outlined in section 3.2 is evident here, insofar as in Shakespeare's original play, Othello's destructive thoughts and emotions leading to tragedy were just insinuated or implied, as if they were a devastating supernatural force impending on his head, ready to fall and destroy him. On the contrary, the Verdi/Boito libretto rewording of *Othello* simply paraphrases the characters' intentions and emotions which they directly communicate to the audience, as in this example:

OTELLO

Che ascondi nel tuo core? (*What are you concealing in your heart?*)

JAGO

(*mimicking Otello, while addressing the audience*) Che ascondo in cor, signore?
(*What am I concealing in my heart, sir?*)

OTELLO

'Che ascondo in cor, signore?' / Pel cielo, tu sei l'eco dei detti miei, nel chiostro / dell'anima ricetti qualche terribil mostro. (*'What am I concealing in my heart, sir?' / By heaven, you are the echo of my words, in the cloister / of your soul you lodge some horrible monster.*)

This section has explored the second, 'bottom-up' phase of the acting interpreter's process of verse-drama embodiment. Next section shall enquire into the last 'interactive' phase of this study.

5. Interactive phase

In this last 'interactive phase' of the analysis of the acting interpreters' embodiment of Shakespeare's verse drama, both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' cognitive processes come to interact in the mind of the acting interpreter as s/he finds himself/herself engaged not only with the text, but also with its various interpretations by the other acting interpreters inter-acting with him/her and, finally, with the deepest sides of his/her own self. In the following section, therefore, an embodied-stylistic approach will be adopted to inquire into how the acting interpreter achieves involvement with verse drama, as well as with

the other acting interpreters in the process of physical enactment of the play. The objective is to speculate on the ways in which the acting interpreter schematically connects reality and virtuality in the process of interaction with the textual form. This mental/physical journey is accomplished through the interpreter's own experience of the formal organization of the poetic language, as well as through the way the other interpreters communicate to him/her their own experience of it. The assumption is that poetry interpretation represents the process of realization of the interpreter's 'self' within the representational contexts that the poetic form evokes in his/her own schemata. The acting interpreter's virtual dislocation into the iconic context of poetry, in fact, enables him/her to explore conscious and unconscious potentialities of self expression in imaginative and collectively-experienced situations which can be unfamiliar to his/her own schemata, thus broadening his/her physical and emotional experience.

At this stage, the acting interpreter can even feel free to diverge from the metrical pattern of the verses that s/he embodies in order to find his/her own authentic 'experiential voice' within the virtual context of the play that s/he shares with the other acting interpreters interacting with him/her. The empirical acting interpreter of this third and last phase of this study is Sir Derek Jacobi, the eminent British actor famous for his superb Shakespearean interpretations.⁶ The following retrospective protocol reported in this section shows the process by which Derek Jacobi, as acting interpreter, goes beyond the second bottom-up phase, mainly focused on the rhythmical dimension of Shakespeare's verse drama, to advocate an appropriation and authentication of a textual 'poetic voice' by turning it into an experiential 'dramatic voice' within a physical space of enactment. Indeed, his retrospective report shows evidence of how possessing and being possessed by the poetic language in such a way as to appropriate the text and assimilate it into his own being, allows him to start an interactive deconstruction of both the organization of the language in the text, and the organization of his own schemata. What follows is Sir Derek's report of his experiential embodiment of Shakespeare's verse drama:

⁶ Derek Jacobi has twice been awarded the Laurence Olivier Award and a BAFTA Award. He was knighted for his service to the British theatre and he holds also the Danish Knight 1st Class of the Order of Dannebrog for his interpretation of *Hamlet*. I wish to express my warmest thanks to Sir Derek for his active and constant collaboration with this research over the years, generously granting his availability to become a 'case-study subject' on several occasions during the rehearsals of various performances where he played principal and title roles. The present retrospective-report protocol was collected at the Barbican Theatre in London, where the Royal Shakespeare Company is based.

Protocol 10: *Retrospective report*

SIR DEREK JACOBI: "This is probably totally against what some like Sir Peter Hall would argue, whose views on this subject are very strict: tempo, the way of saying the lines, of working through the lines, all that is very strict. In that sense, it makes the text very clear, but I do not think it makes the text very interesting to listen to. I think that an actor should be given freedom to make the same kind of vocal and linguistic patterns with the text as he makes with a modern text, and the punctuation should not be treated with reverence; after all it is not the Bible he is acting. Therefore, be as creatively free as you are with a contemporary text. Certainly the line, the rhyme, the rhythm, the iambic pentameter in Shakespeare condition to a certain extent, but that is not the only thing because the plays are to be continually re-researched, re-developed, re-discovered, and you cannot take the same approach every time. So that by perhaps leaving the iambic pentameter apart for a while, you might discover something that maybe even Shakespeare himself was not aware of. I think that the actor must try to be as creative as possible, rather than just merely accepting pre-established interpretative patterns. [...] Even the audience who have seen or heard the play before have a degree of suspicion of it, because it is not going to be in the language that they fully understand, that they speak, but, what comes from the actor's mouth must come out from the actor's head, from the actor's body as the language he speaks. If it sits uneasily on the actor, if the actor seems to be speaking in a strange way that is unfamiliar to him, the actor then creates another layer of this dissociation with the audience. Therefore the actor has got to be absolutely at home with it as if it were his own language, also as if it were his 'spoken thought' and not a recitation. I think sometimes with having too strict ideas of the metre, and the rhythm, and the iambic pentameter, poetic language comes out as 'recited', it does not come out as 'spoken thought', so that recitation immediately places it in a bracket where it distances itself from the audience, because it is not a language immediately felt as real, so that the audience cannot experience it in a real way, because it does not sound real, it sounds 'special' – and it is special, but there must be a way of retaining that special quality, retaining that 'bloom' of poetry in the words, but at the same time, making the sound as if you are 'speaking thought', and you are not speaking a text. We don't think in iambic pentameter, Shakespeare wrote in iambic pentameter, and we can speak them, we can say them, but, today, we do not think in them, we do not feel in an iambic pentameter, and you've got to reconcile those two things. That is why, for me, personally, the iambic pentameter has to lose out. I'd rather go for the thought and the feeling and perhaps drop a few beats and a few rhythms. [...] I think that Hamlet is, of all the great classical parts, the prime personality part – i.e., there are as many Hamlets as there are actors who want to play him. I played Hamlet out of my own personality, out of my own centre, if you like. It is a big personality part, and what you are, how you look, how you sound, your particular charisma on the stage, or your particular personality, all invest Hamlet with his character. In this sense Hamlet is a blank and you can bring to him yourself, and every aspect of yourself, you don't have to, in a sense, re-chart and imagine and try to be something that you are not, because you can actually be yourself [...] Also Hamlet's relationship with his mother Gertrude is one of those central relationships in the play, and I have had three Gertrudes

and each one has been totally different, and each one has treated me in a different way, as an actor and as Hamlet – as a son, and again, depending on the actors playing it, and their ideas of what they want to do, or of what they want to feel, and your interpretation of how that has to change, you have to adjust your interpretation. After all, Hamlet isn't a one-man show, Hamlet depends for his existence very much on what everybody else is doing around him, very much so, because, in a sense, he is also a facet of all their personalities.”

Starting from Derek Jacobi's embodiment experience of the character of Hamlet in relation to the other actors interacting with him (the various actresses playing Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, to him), the 'closet scene' in *Hamlet* (III. 4, lines 8-136) was selected for the physical-theatre workshop of this third 'interactive' phase, with the purpose of guiding students/acting interpreters to the awareness that they can experience a simultaneous total embodiment of the first-, second- and third-person perspectives while appropriating voices in verse drama with other acting interpreters in a dramatic context. Evidence shall be provided of the extent to which acting interpreters embodying the characters of Prince Hamlet and the Queen his mother Gertrude achieved such shifting-perspective awareness by means of protocols reporting the 'embodied stylistic analysis' that they, on the one hand, consciously performed on the interaction between their own dramatic interpretations-in-progress and, on the other, operated retrospectively on their embodiments.

The choice of the extract from *Hamlet* was motivated by the fact that since the acting interpreters knew the whole context of the play, they could exploit the characters' general motivations that they achieved and embodied in the text. Creating conditions for acting interpreters to embody specific 'characters' within a 'contextualized poetic drama' entails four main objectives:

- 1) enabling the acting interpreters to shift their own identities into the characters' virtual ones, exploring all their facets and perspectives;
- 2) widening the scope of their identification by acknowledging other dimensions of the self;
- 3) enhancing their powers of dislocation into the characters' different states of mind and sensitivities;
- 4) enhancing their powers of emotional communication by negotiating the meanings that they infer from the poetic text with the other acting interpreters' subjective meanings and interpretations.

The acting interpreters that represented the subjects of this workshop physically and emotionally explored the 'closet scene' (with the violent exchange between Hamlet and Gertrude, his mother, ending with the apparition of the Ghost of the King, Hamlet's father) by focusing on the male and female characters' possible shifting perspectives. In such physical-theatre-workshop situation, acting interpreters spontaneously came to identify their first-person 'I' with the

second/third persons 'you' and 's/he', by empathically absorbing not only the different female/male perspectives, but also the different linguistic – and vocal – styles inherent in each character (as they came to interpret him/her), as well as each character's different 'bodily movements', and even image projections of his/her most hidden fantasies. In this sense, such a dramatic representation of poetic language was both interpersonal and ideational (Halliday 1994): for example, Hamlet's physical embodiment of his uncle, his father and even his mother are all parts of his own subjective, ideational mode of representing 'his own reality'. The female subject interpreting Gertrude, on the other hand, reacted to such a male representation in her own unexpected experiential terms. At the same time, however, such an ideational side is interpersonally rendered in the context of dramatic communication with the other characters – and even objects – as embodied by the other acting interpreters in the context of the physical-theatre workshop.

The protocol analyzed below includes 'think-aloud' and 'retrospective' reports. They were slightly edited with the addition of punctuation, omission of some non-relevant parts (signalled by dots), and the indication of the stressed syllables in bold – obviously without altering the subjects' words.

Protocol 11:

Think-aloud report

A. (Hamlet): "Now, mother, what's the matter? – I am extremely tense, I want my mother to understand me, but I'm too aggressive. I cannot control my tension."

C. *Third-person observer*: "Hamlet comes running to his mother's closet, stumbles and pushes everything on his way (*the other acting interpreters placing him obstacles with their bodies*). He gets to Gertrude, his mother, grabs her shoulders and shouts desperately *Now, mother, what's the matter?* This seems really a question he rather wants her to ask him. But she looks frightened."

B. (Gertrude): "I feel offended, threatened. *Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended*. It's safer if I say that the king, Hamlet's uncle, not me, is offended. I transfer my feelings to my new husband."

A. (Hamlet): "She is escaping from her responsibilities. But I want her to share my view: *Mother, you have my father much offended*. We must make it more effective. We are 'playing antithesis'."

B. (Gertrude): "We are also 'playing status'. I feel threatened. We must make the language 'aggressive'. The rhythm of the iambic pentameter, perhaps, is not the right one"

B. Gertrude: *Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.*

A. Hamlet: *Mother, you have my father much offended.*

B. (Gertrude): "Let's stress it differently with a *Push-and-Pull* activity. You push me and I oppose resistance. Perhaps this would help us stress our meaning."

(*They do it by changing the stresses in the syllables of the iambic pentameter while Hamlet pushes Gertrude who opposes resistance*)

B. Gertrude: *Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.*

A. Hamlet: *Mother, you have my father much offended.*

A. (Hamlet): “Yes. it works. We stress ‘Hamlet’ as opposed to ‘Mother’, the informal ‘thou’ as opposed to the formal ‘you’: Hamlet is more formal in his language, you see? He says ‘Mother’, ‘You’. He keeps his distance from her. Another antithesis is ‘thy’ and ‘my’.”

B. (Gertrude): “This ‘shared line’: you interrupt me: I want to reassert my voice and you want to deny it”

B. Gertrude: *Have you forgot me?*

A. Hamlet: *No, by the rood, not so.
You are the Queen, your husband’s brother’s wife,
And, would it were not so, you are my mother.*

A. (Hamlet): “I want to give you another identity. The identity I see in you. *Come, come, and sit you down, You shall not budge – sit down! are you hurt?*”

B. (Gertrude): “No, it’s ok. Be careful. Let’s do it in another way. Just tell me calmly to sit down, do not use violence, and I’ll do it. I think it’s more effective.”

A. (Hamlet): “It’s in contrast with the words.”

B. (Gertrude): “The tension is already in the words.”

A. Hamlet: *You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.*

B. Gertrude: *What will thou do? Thou wilt not murder me? Help, ho!*

B. (Gertrude): “How shall we work on this? I feel like laughing. ‘Murder’ is exaggerated, isn’t it? Is Gertrude teasing Hamlet?”

A. (Hamlet): “I don’t think so. You should be scared.”

B. (Gertrude): “Do something to scare me!”

A. (Hamlet): “Look at me. I’m your mirror. I’ll show you *the inmost part of you.*”

Retrospective reports

D. External observer: “In the scene of the mirror, Hamlet put his face in front of his mother’s face, looking into her eyes. She started mirroring herself in it. She seemed pleased with her image. Each of her movements was reproduced by Hamlet. Then, slowly his face changed into a horrible expression when they said together *you may see the inmost part of you*, and she screamed frightened.”

B. Internal observer (Gertrude): “I was absorbed into Hamlet’s ‘mirror’, and he was reflecting back my image, distorted, as he was seeing it. I spoke his lines together with him, he was murdering my own identity to replace it with his view of me. I screamed *Thou wilt not murder me?* – I remembered reading about the Elizabethan metaphor of the ‘mirror’ replaced by the late-Renaissance metaphor of ‘anatomy’, dissection. He wanted to dissect my soul.”

A. Internal observer (Hamlet): “*Peace, sit down, / And let me wring your heart; for so I shall / If it be made of penetrable stuff.* While I said so with a cool voice, I stepped behind my mother’s shoulders. I think by this movement I wanted to take her perspective, I mean, I wanted to ‘become’ her perspective by imposing

my perspective on her. She fell on the floor saying *What have I done, that you dar'st wag thy tongue / In noise so rude against me?* I did not imagine that she was going to respond to me in that way. I started telling my lines: *Such an act / That blurs the grace and blush of modesty ...* and I realized that she was repeating the same lines: she was taking my view. My tone was firm and cool, she was desperate on the floor. I was really her conscience."

E. External observer: "The scene of the 'two pictures' of the two brothers (the murdered king and the new one) was really powerful when Hamlet said: *Look here upon this picture, and on this, / The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.* I saw Hamlet becoming the image of his father and then of his uncle. He actually became them, he behaved like them and used their tones of voice. The king his father and the king his uncle were speaking in their own voices filtered by Hamlet's voice. He was like a medium possessed by two ghosts."

B. Internal observer (Gertrude): "When Hamlet told me *You cannot call it love; for at your age / The heyday in the blood is tame* I felt he really wanted to modify me. He is very mean. I'm not old."

A. Internal observer (Hamlet): "*You cannot call it love* – 'You' is not addressed to my mother, but to myself: 'you' is 'I', and I am my mother. First, I became my father, then my uncle, now I'm her. Then, suddenly my voice became that of my uncle again, only that, this time – thanks to Gertrude's physical response to my interpretation – my uncle's voice evoked my inmost fear in front of my eyes: the image of my mother in love with my uncle."

B. Internal observer (Gertrude): "At Hamlet's words *In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love / over the nasty sty* I realized that there wasn't Hamlet's voice in those lines. That voice was the voice of his uncle: the beautiful, inviting voice of my new husband, and I imagined being with him, I was in love with his voice, till I whispered *O speak to me no more.* Then I realized Hamlet's hysterical voice shouting *A murderer and a villain, / A slave that is not twentieth part of the tithe / Of your precedent lord,* but I was smiling at myself happily, completely detached from Hamlet, until I saw him collapsing on the floor like an old cloth as he said *A king of shreds and patches!* And his father's Ghost appeared to him."

The objective of this 'interactive' workshop was to verify the way in which acting interpreters make their interpretative processes overt within a group of other acting interpreters who physically interact with them and with the formal structure of the poetic text. It can be clearly noticed, therefore, that each of them allowed his/her own 'self' to be empathically and imaginatively absorbed into the other acting interpreters' 'displaced selves'. In this way, each acting interpreter became a third-person detached observer of his/her own and of the others' dramatic interpretation of the poem without losing his/her first/second person involvement – which is here considered to be the very essence of the process of verse-drama embodiment.

6. Conclusions

This chapter has explored the embodied stylistic process of verse-drama interpretation in both theoretical and practical terms. By starting from an objection against the traditional body/thought dichotic way of considering schemata, it has been argued that the nature of schemata is intrinsically based on a body/thought unity, and that the only way for an interpreter of verse drama to subjectively access all the imaginative potentialities of its poetic language is by means of his/her own body, since the body is at the source of the individual's physical, emotional and intellectual experience. In this way, an empirical interpreter of the poetic language of verse drama, such as the poetic language in Shakespeare's plays, becomes an 'acting interpreter' who shares his/her own interpretation of poetic language with other acting interpreters in an actual space of enactment.

On the basis of these cognitive-experientialist premises, a number of case studies were carried out with two renowned stage actors and a director as research subjects, delving into their own experience of poetry embodiment on stage as 'acting interpreters'. Then, a series of drama workshops with empirical subjects/acting interpreters were also implemented, by grounding the enquiry initially, in the course of the first 'top-down' phase of this study, on the way in which they access and familiarize with the form of poetic language by means of their individual body/thought schemata, thus emphasizing the multiplicity of subjective responses that such an authentication can allow. This occurs as the acting interpreters perform their 'imaginative leap' into the virtual contexts achieved from the poetic language – which are often unfamiliar to their own schemata. This necessarily entails the assumption that acting interpreters – in their drama explorations by means of physical-theatre activities of improvisation on the original text to create parallel ones, as well as in their activities of creative re-writing of the text – activate a systematic cognition of their own subjective/affective pragmatic embodiment of Shakespeare's verse drama.

Then, the sense of unfamiliarity eventually triggered in the minds of the acting interpreters by the form of poetic language – which deviates from everyday language uses – prompt them to move to the second, 'bottom-up' phase of their verse-drama embodiment by focusing on the way the metrical structure of Shakespeare's verse contributes to the characters' expression of their personalities, motivations, and emotions. Finally, in the third, 'interactive' phase of the analysis, acting interpreters perform another 'imaginative leap', this time into the other acting interpreters' physical and emotional interpretations of the poetic language, thus interacting and identifying themselves with other perspectives in order to create a collectively-shared dramatic discourse of poetry in acting Shakespeare's plays out. Such processes

are centred on the setting of an imaginative relationship between the acting interpreters' body and the poetic language as they embody it in an actual space of enactment.

This principled approach is particularly suitable for the acting interpreters' *embodied stylistic analysis* of Shakespeare's verse drama, insofar as such a genre has the implication of a 'free direct utterance', whose figurative language and rhythm interpreters feel authorized to appropriate, thus enhancing their awareness of the gradual integration of the new knowledge conveyed by the poetic text into their own body/thought schemata in the process of collective dramatic interpretation. Finally, this study has also demonstrated how textual control is paradoxically significant in allowing multiplicity and variability in discourse interpretation. Therefore, it is important that acting interpreters never disregard the formal organization of the poetic text as the multiplicity of their own responses must always be placed in relation to that. Acting interpreters' use of self-monitored protocols has indeed enabled them to become aware of their own interpretative processes, and of the structure of Shakespeare's verse drama, so that they could subsequently retextualize their experience of poetry-enactment and perform an embodied stylistic analysis on their dramatic interpretation of the textual organization.

The outcome of such a procedure is that the formal aspects of the analysis can be repossessed by the acting interpreters under a wholly personal, individual dimension, insofar as they are not considered as inherent properties of the text (as the Structuralist approaches seem to imply), but rather they are the result of an ongoing imaginative negotiation of meaning. This chapter has tried to show precisely how such meaning-negotiation process actually involves both the poetic language of Shakespeare's original verse drama and the acting interpreters' individual physical, emotional and intellectual personalities in their creation and stylistic appreciation of new, original, and entirely subjective verse drama embodiments.

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