

Silence, Breath, Sigh: Emotional Preludes of Voice

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Señora, sospiros son
muestras del triste cuidado;
aliento que el corazon
lastimado de passion
procura de muy cansado;
humo del fuego de amor,
que pierde y gasta la vida
sin çesar;
descanso del gran dolor,
que siente ell alma perdida

de pesar.

Son vn sonido que suena
del gran convate que esta,
entre la vida y pena
y ell amor que la condena
que se siente asta ca;
son amigos que se estan
consolando al dolorido
de su pena;
y salen quando se dan
de la casa que an ynchido

(*Cancionero de Juan Fernández de Íxar*)

Silence

The word “silencio” makes its way seamlessly into Romance languages from Latin *silentium*. As what is there before voice, in the welter and waste and darkness that holds the hovering breath of God until s/he says “let there be light,” silence is from the beginning linked to the divine, to the cosmic emptiness and deserts of sound that serve as prelude to the Word.

When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God’s breath hovering over the waters, God said: “Let there be light.”¹

This silence is what holds the breath of God until voice lets it out into the world, thus linking divine spirit to language. The word in Hebrew translated here as breath is, precisely, *ruah*, which can mean wind but also spirit, as here, the spirit, wind, breath of God. As such, silence will remain cloistered in religious language, showing up only rarely in medieval Iberoromance literatures. Gonzalo de Berceo uses it in his hagiographies of both Santo Domingo de Silos and San Millán de la Cogolla, and in *Del sacrificio de la misa* silence contextualizes prayer, “el preste ordenado ... ora en su silencio, como yaz ordenado” (st. 205), underscoring the relation between silence and the divine. The divine nature of *silentium* is most salient in its perception, for as Francisco Prado Vilar has analyzed, silence is perhaps best perceived through the eyes, considered as image and not as sound, as his analysis of the illumination program in the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Beatus suggests (28). The quiet of the world, of people and animals and things will be rendered in Spanish in *callar*, the hushing or omission of voice. Since this lexical distinction does not exist in English, we will have to use our imagination to hear these registers.

The *Poem of Mio Cid* begins with silence.² It is not only that the first folio is missing, though the *lacuna* is its own sort of marker of an aural void. As silence, it points to the initial events that

¹ I am referring to Robert Alter’s translation and notes, *The Hebrew Bible*, 11. See Francisco Prado-Vilar for the analysis of silence in the Beatus manuscripts.

² De los sos ojos tan fuertementre llorando,/ tornava la cabeça e estávalos catando./ Vio puertas abiertas e uços sin cañados,/ alcándaras vazías, sin pieles e sin mantos,/ e sin falcones e sin adtores mudados./ Sospiró mio Cid, ca mucho avié grandes cuidados,/ fabló mio Cid bien e tan mesurado:/ --¡Grado a ti, Señor, Padre que estás en alto! ¡Esto me

lead to the protagonist's exile, known to the audience, but which are here unspoken, unheard. The first verses linger in such silence-as-sound, as we follow the Cid's gaze to the open doors of his dwellings as he goes into exile, and we witness the tears –tears *without* sound-- that fall from his eyes.

De los sos ojos tan fuertementre llorando,
tornava la cabeça e estávalos catando.
Vio puertas abiertas e uso sin cañados,
alcándaras vazías, sin pielles y sin mantos,
e sin falcones e sin adtores mudados. (v. 1-5)

If anything, what lurks beneath this forced silence are the rumors that have provoked the King's ire,³ rumors that are mentioned only as an echo in the Cid's bitter welcome of his exile, as he claims

¡Grado a ti Señor, Padre que estás en alto!
¡Esto me an vuelto mios enemigos malos!" (v. 8-9)

Esto, this pronoun, somehow holds in it both the wounding words of his enemies and the king's decision to exile him in a situational demonstrative, introducing an exclamation that contrasts in volume with the initial silence, reverberating through the palaces, emptied of life.⁴

Before this exclamation to God, however, the first sound we actually hear in the poem comes as the Cid sighs as a result of his many worries: "Sospiró mio Cid, ca mucho avié grandes cuidados" (v. 6). This gesture has been read as an emotional characterization of the hero, merely a prelude to his speech, qualified as "mesurado," a virtue related above all to *prudencia* which will serve to praise the protagonist throughout the poem. I will come back to this reverberation of the sigh as an aural form of conditioning, a form of tempering or attunement, preparing us to hear this containment, this "measuredness" in the Cid's speech as tone and timbre, as well as an index of virtue and emotion.

In medieval literatures, silence is experienced as a reduced volume of speech: it is in secrets, whisperings, rumors, an active form involving oneself or others: *Me callé, se callaron. Callar*

an vuelto mios enemigos malos!—(1-9) [From his eyes so sorely weeping,/ he turned his head and looked at them./ He saw open gates and doors without locks,/ empty hangers, without furs or mantles/ and without falcons or molted goshawks./ Mio Cid sighed, for he had many grave worries,/ my Cid spoke well, and so measuredly:/ --Thanks to you Lord, Father who are on high!/ This my evil enemies have brought upon me!]. I will cite the *Cantar de mio Cid* from Alberto Montaner's edition (Barcelona: Crítica, 1993) and use Matthew Bailey's translation from his digital edition of the texts, at times modified for clarity.

³ On *ire* as both an emotional and legal concept as *ira regia*, see Óscar Martín for Cid tradition, and Alex Korte for a take on how this appears in the *Libro de Alexandre*.

⁴ While these verses have been studied in terms of the economic contrasts they offer, between a present ruin and a past of abundance and success, (Hook, Grieve), I want to highlight here how the different references to emptiness, which Montaner aptly summarizes as an "escenario de ausencias," (complementary note to verse 3), is also the staging of the absence of sound. The "de los sus oios tan fuertementre llorando" is a physical phrase that embodies and thus underlines the emotion, but it also qualifies this as a silent form of crying (Pascual), creating an atmosphere of desolation that is most evident in its lack of resonance. I want to thank Jack Brown, who as one of my research assistants in my Medieval Iberian Sound project, documented many of these references and provided insightful commentary. The discussion with the great group of graduate students in my seminar "Voice to Noise" in spring of 2023 greatly informed my thinking about the issues I reflect upon here.

means to be quiet, an active, positive verb in Spanish that did not exist in English, where medieval *quiet* connotes movement or disorder that is calmed or appeased. Referred to sound, *quiet* appears in English many centuries later, in the mid-twentieth century, as a transitive verb linked to electronics.⁵ The spectrum of quietness, quietude, stillness, and tranquility is rendered in the Spanish *quieto*, used with the verb *estar* as a temporary mode of being still. In *callar* there is not only a voice and a lowering of volume, but also a strategy that retains the power to signify; there is volition, agency, and there is also authority behind it. The verb *callar*, incidentally, is of uncertain origin in Spanish and appears for the first time in the epic on the historical Cid's imagined life.⁶

Breath

Adjacent to the tone and timbre of *callar*, medieval literatures include in their engagements with sound a wide supply of moans, clamors, cries, laments, and groans that suggest different registers beyond voice and silence. *Gemidos, llantos, sollozos, clamores, alaridos, lamentos*, are represented in Spanish literature via a wide variety of strategies, from alliteration to anaphora, pauses in narration, changes in tone, and the different rhythms of narration. Among these, the sigh is the most quiet and recognizable, finding a lexicalized grounding at the end of the medieval period in interjections such as *¡Ah!*, or *¡Ay!*.

A sigh, *suspirium* in Latin, was a *respiratio rara* according to Galen (*On respiration*), in the same register as a groan or a hiss. From the Latin *spirare*, to blow or to breathe, with a prefix that connotes **depth**, coming from under or below, *suspirar* and *sospirar* appear quite early in medieval Spanish literatures, already in the thirteenth century, to be followed later by *aspirar*, and *respirar*; and centuries after, by *inspirar*, and *conspirar*.⁷

Sighs are most recognizable in literature as related to love and its repertoire of gestures. As Kristiina Savin notes, the pervasiveness of sighing in songs of love was guaranteed by none other than Petrarch, who referred to his *Canzoniere* as the “sound of sighs” (*il sono di... sospiri*), using the terms *sospiro* and *sospirare* some 132 times within this work (157). Sighs are part of the symptom spectrum of lovesickness, the *amor hereos* that strikes lovers triggering “sighs, tears, extraordinary eye movements, loneliness,” and solitary walks in nature that render visible the characters’ emotional, psychological, and physical state (Savin, 158).

Love sighs point to the role of breath as the site of articulation of different human conditions. As one of the expressions of breath, central to theories of emotion and psychology and the origin of the life force, sighs figure in the complex theory of respiration that brings together physiology, psychology, and theology. A. A. Long summarizes a series of principles on the topic of breath in early Greek thought that were incorporated into ideas of sighing in medieval literature and thought: the cooling function of breath (a position defended by Aristotle and Galen, for instance); the destination of inhaled breath as the brain; a causal connection between brain, breath, and sentience or consciousness (*phronesis*); and health as related to regular breathing and blood flow (44-45).⁸ While Hippocrates placed consciousness in the brain and not the heart, and Plato explained *psyche* as the life of the mind, independent from any biological process, creating different interpretations of the connections between *spiritus* and consciousness, there are general principles that sustain the theory of breath into the medieval period (Long, 45). Some of these elements will be reinterpreted

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. *quiet*.

⁶ The *Diccionario de la Real Academia* hypothesizes an origin in Latin *callāre*, ‘to silence’ or ‘lower’, and this from Greek *χαλᾶν chalān* ‘lower.’ (online)

⁷ Corominas, *DCELC*, *espirar*.

⁸ While *phronesis* is usually translated as practical or contextual wisdom, judgement, or prudence, it is here understood as consciousness in the widest sense.

within a Christian framework, among them the Aristotelian idea that the human *psyche* requires a part of something divine, not transmitted in the *pneuma*, the life-giving spirit:

This non-material, separable and ethereal entity is a clear gesture in the direction of Platonic dualism. Aristotle's 'divine portion' is not literally pneumatic because it is immaterial, but its metaphysical status may be compared to the Judaeo-Christian idea of the Holy Spirit (*hagion pneuma*) (Long, 48).

In Christianity, the discussion of breath will involve multiple linguistic cultures: Hebrew *ruach*, Greek *pneuma*, and Latin *spiritus* contribute overlapping notions of human and divine breath, central to creation and theology (Saunders et al, 7-9). As medieval medical theory incorporated classical thought via Arabic interpretations and innovations, breath became central both to the idea of the life spirits and to the physiology and psychology of emotion (Saunders et al, 20).

Beginning in the twelfth century, the Latin West developed the question of the *pneuma/spiritus* in translations of Greek and Arabic medical treatises in light of the debate on the dual material/spiritual nature of humanity, as well as on the distinction between its animal and divine elements. Saunders summarizes this engagement as follows:

The framework of the bodily spirits was crucial to medieval understanding of the emotions and psychology. Thirteenth-century natural philosophy drew on Avicenna, in particular his *De Anima* (translated into Latin in the twelfth century), to elaborate the processes of thought enabled by the animal spirits, seen as occurring in the ventricles of the brain. Breath was intimately connected with the emotions, which were believed to occur through the movements of the vital spirits and natural heat, produced in the heart and travelling through the arteries. In joy or anger, the vital spirits and accompanying heat rushed out of from the heart, marked on the body by physical responses such as blushing. In grief, distress, or fear, the vital spirits and heat withdrew into the heart, reflected in pallor or swooning. Withdrawal of the spirits equated to withdrawal of breath: at its most extreme, this could cause unconsciousness or even death. Sighs and tears were believed to carry the overburdening spirits out of the heart, purging and cooling it, though sighs might prove dangerous in excess causing the heart to dry out and wither (Saunders, 91-92).

Bodily reactions such as blushing or swooning were readily picked up in literary works to play essential narrative roles, as in the hot sighs of love in *Le Roman de la Rose*, in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, and in *The Parliament of Fowls*.⁹ In Cavalcanti's poetry, sighs—along with fears, and other emotions resulting from love—are personified in *spiriti* and *spiritelli* that serve as messengers between lovers. In Spanish literature, the repeatedly copied *cancionero* poem by Lope de Estúñiga ("*Llorad, mis llantos, llorad,*") builds on an anaphoric chain in which sighs are preceded by tears and moans, and followed by thoughts (*lloros, gemidos, pensamientos*), a sort of summary of the love elements associated with sighing and the gestural repertoire of lovesickness, part and parcel of *cancionero* love poetry, conveying the strong association between love and sighs by the fifteenth century, one that finds itself in popular music to this day.

⁹ Paul Michael Johnson's recent work on blushing, if focused on the early modern period, points to the work that bodily symptoms of the emotional and psychic life play in literary works.

Before *cancioneros*, the fourteenth-century Archpriest of Hita's *Libro de buen amor* played with this gestural repertoire to decode women's openness to the Archpriest's advances, as is the case with Doña Endrina.¹⁰ When the Archpriest asks Trotaconventos for assurances of Doña Endrina's love for him, saying that anyone who loves cannot hide it, for it is revealed in gestures, or sighs, or blushing, or speaking, she responds that not only does Endrina change color and habits, or demand that Trotaconventos speak to her about him in private, but that:

Cada que vuestro nombre yo le estó deziendo, otea me e sospira e está comediendo; aviva más el ojo e está toda bulliendo: paresçe que con vusco non se estaria dormiendo. (st. 811)

Later on, the poem will draw upon this repertoire again to recreate the encounter between Doña Garoza and our protagonist:

Oteó me de unos ojos que paresçían candela: yo sospiré por ellos, diz mi corazón: '¡Hé la!,' Fui me para la dueña, fabló me e fablé la, enamoró me la monja e yo enamoré la. (st. 1502)

Here, the poem does not only list a series of symptoms of love, but also engages sound to simulate the play of breath and breathlessness of the love process through a series of aspired consonants that traces the path of *spiritus* through the heat that love has ignited. First, the gaze of Garoza transmits heat (*candela*), making the protagonist sigh and thus giving breath and voice to his heart, finding the object of desire in "Hé la." This expression, as much an indication of place as an interjection, sounds very much like a sigh. The hemistichs create a steady rhythm that supports the exchange, and in the last two verses the characters take turns to speak to each other (*fabló me e fablé la*), to finally, fall in love, continuing to hold on to the ambiguity between a carnal and a divine love.

Even earlier, in the thirteenth century, the *Libro de Apolonio* had addressed the role of sighs of love. In this work, however, the sigh is much more developed in its roles, informed by the complex mediation sighs explicitly serve in other forms of writing, articulating the emotional, the psychological, and the physiological. First, the scenes of love between Luciana and Apolonio seem to tread familiar ground. As Luciana takes music lessons from Apolonio, she falls in love with him. Here, falling in love is synonymous with understanding, and study is a form of lovesickness:

Fue en este comedio ell estudio siguiendo,
en el rey Apolonio fue luego entendiendo;
tanto fue en ella el amor ençendiendo,
fasta que cayó en el lecho muy desflaquida. (st. 197)

Luciana's father, king Architrastes, confirms that the cause of her sickness is study ("dell estudio que lieua estando enflaquida, / que es de la flaqueza en enfermedat cayda" (st. 208ab). While Architrastes mistakes the symptoms of lovesickness for those of long study, Luciana, lying in bed suffering of *amor hereos*, attempts to draw out Apolonio's feelings for her, asking Apolonio to help her judge between three suitors:

¹⁰ See part 3 of Luis López González book on melancholia for an analysis of lovesickness or *amor hereos* in the *Cantigas* and the *Libro de buen amor* that accounts for the representation of physiological, spiritual, and psychic dimensions of love.

Cató ha Apolonyo & dixo con gran sospiro: ‘Dígasme, Apolonyo, el mýo buen rey de Tiro, en este casamiento de ti mucho me miro, si te plaze ho si non, yo tu voluntat requiro’. (st. 218)

Her sigh is here one more symptom of her lovesickness, but it will be Apolonio’s blushing, as he realizes he is the one Luciana wishes to marry, which will confirm that the corporeal signs of their emotional state add up to a love story.

Sighs, as I anticipated, also appear in this romance as part of a very different emotional repertoire. Later in the story, Luciana has a difficult birth while at sea and is thought to be dead. Fearing the curse of carrying a dead body on board, Luciana’s body is placed in a casket and left at sea to drift away. She is found on a beach by a student who upon closer inspection of the body, wisely diagnoses the situation and arranges to revive Luciana. The trope of the seemingly dead beautiful lady, common to fairy tales and romance, found in the story of Apolonio one of its most loved medieval iterations. The Spanish text describes the physical process of reanimation in detail. As the student prepares to embalm the body, he finds signs of life,¹¹ telling his teacher that he still finds in her the life spirit, “yo entendo en ella espirament de vida” (st. 303a). Placing her by the fire to heat up her body—thought the student takes the precaution of covering Luciana’s face to protect it--, he then mixes an ointment and rubs it all over Luciana’s body. The combination of heat and medicine results in the life spirit, which had been trapped in the cold body, to be able to breathe a little bit: “respiró un poquiello el espíritu catiuo” (308d). The warm medicine enters the body and finds the heart, liquefying the blood that had congealed around it, and thus allowing the soul, which had been drowning in this, to breathe: “Entróle la melezina dentro en la corada,/ seuyóle sangre que estaua cuagada; / respiró el almiella que estaua afogada” (st. 310abc). After this breathlessness, described as a form of drowning, the first external sign of this physiological process—a sign of life-- is a sigh: “sospiró huna vez la enferma lazdrada” (st. 310d). Alfonso de Palencia’s *Universal vocabulario* (1490) highlights this physiological dimension of sighing when he defines *suspirare* as:

Atraer el aliento desde lo alto, o hondo. dende viene *susperium*. que es suspiro que muestra dificultad. la zual dizen los griegos que es dipsmam. que es ansia. o ahogamiento. o respiraçion penosa.” (fo. 484r)

Palencia’s definition here frames a longstanding association of sighing with difficult breathing, reworking the definition in the *Etimologías romanceadas de San Isidoro*, which note that “*suspirum*, que es por suspiro, tomó este nombre porque es graveza de resollamiento, la qual llaman los Griegos disnoa, esto es, ‘ahogamiento’” (251).

The episode of Luciana’s reanimation in the *Libro de Apolonio* uses several terms referred to breath, *espirament*, *respiró*, *sospiró*. To these, we can add the idea of drowning (*afogada*), one repeatedly used to describe the feeling of breathlessness. As is well known, Luciana’s first sign of recovery will come in sound as a thin, weak voice, *like a cat’s*, asking for Apolonio (st. 314). “Engagement with the play of breath and the precise physiology of the vital spirits that govern the emotions,” argues Saunders, “allows romance writers to dramatise the physicality of intense experience and the embodied quality of emotion,” as well as explore the limits between life and death (99). In the *Libro de Apolonio*, the use of the sigh in such physiological detail forces us to

¹¹ The student “entendió hun poquiello de la odiçenpcón,” [hears a bit of the *odiçenpcón*] (st. 300d) a term that remains obscure, pointing to either a “pulse” or something related to giving birth.

read back the sigh not only in its emotional force, but as one tied to health, a context that gives depth to the work of breath in this text beyond the tropes of love.

Grief

At the limits of life and death, sighs also figure in hagiography. In the *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, when the protagonist is denied entrance to the temple, her epiphany triggers a profound sigh, which both serves a corporeal sign of the exit of some form of breath or *spiritus*, and serves as a prelude to voice. As her first words after this change of heart, María asks God to give her death, “Del cuerpo le salió un suspiro tan fuerte, / dixo: Dios, dame la muerte” (st. 472-473). The sigh is here a physiological gesture that symbolizes the devotional transformation Maria has undergone. I understand her request to die metaphorically, as one of allowing her to leave behind her sinner life to enter a life of virtue, as a sort of conversion of the spirit conveyed in an exchange of breath.

The religious connotations of the movement of *spiritus*, breath, through the body, made of sighs a symptom of devotion. Savin writes that sighs were important for Christian theology, playing a role in penance, and weaving the metaphors of secular and divine love, becoming a sign of the desire of God (Savin, 164). Lover and Christ were brought together through the idea of the breathing heart (Saunders, 92), weaving metaphors of secular and divine love, while *suspiria* became a metaphor or metonym for prayers (Savin, 165). If divine and human love overlap through the idea of longing, these sighs often underline a different emotion at their origin: grief. As Saunders writes, “in grief, distress, or fear, the vital spirits and heat” move into the heart, as does the breath, producing pallor, swooning, or at its most extreme, death (91-92). Sebastián de Covarrubias, at the beginning of the 17th century, gathers all of these connotations in his definition of sighing:

Sospirar. Sacar el espíritu de lo profundo del pecho, con significación del dolor y ansia que padecemos. 2. Algunas veces es indicio de desear alguna cosa con grande ahínco, *latine* SUSPIRO, AS. *spiritum ab himo pectore traho*; 3. y de allí se dijo suspiro, *latine suspirum*, los suspiros es pasión muy común a los enamorados; y así dan al suspiro diferentes significaciones y epítetos; yo no quiero embarazarme en esta materia. (Covarrubias, *Tesoro*, s. v. SUSPIRAR). As one of the added variants of *espiritual*, Covarrubias adds that to sigh, 12. *suspirar*; is to arrancar del pecho el espíritu y aliento con dolor y fatiga, porque, congojándose, el corazón se enciende y tiene necesidad de alentar y traer a sí el aire con más fuerza, con que forma el 13. suspiro.

Covarrubias enumerates pain, anxiety, great desire and passion as the meaning that sighs may index, and complements this emotional explanation with a physiological one tied to the theory of breath, it was Boncompagno da Signa in the 13th c. who had added one more function at play in the production of sighs, one that brings together the physical, the emotional and the psychological within the domain of the imagination:

Sighs emerge ‘from suspension of breath’ (*ex spiritu suspensione*) because the soul ‘forgets’ breathing when strong emotions are aroused by memories of past events or imaginations of the future. During this process the heart is contracted, and the respiration stops until the dilatation of the heart finally produces a deep breath. (in Savin, 158)

The role of memory and imagination, whether referring to the past or the future is, according to da Signa, at the origin itself of emotion, playing a fundamental role in how sighs will be able to signify in literary works.

Grammar

Affectus is a term found in medieval grammatical discourse, as well as in rhetoric, mostly in relation to the part of speech called interjection. In linguistics, interjections have historically been one of the most difficult parts of speech to describe. In Greek grammatical thought, interjections were simply a sound analogous to those made by animals, extraneous, outside of reason or articulate language, called thus *alogoi*, considered a part of speech only with adverbs (Morcillo Expósito, 84). It will be among the Latin grammarians that interjections will become independent from adverbs, as a class of words with no specific meaning whose role is to transmit emotion. (Morcillo Expósito, 84) Donatus' definition, in particular, became standard in medieval grammars and their commentaries:

Interiectio est pars orationis interiecta aliis partibus orationis ad exprimendos animi adfectus aut metuentis, ut ei; aut optantis, ut o; aut dolentis, ut heu; aut laetantis, ut euax' (The interjection is the part of speech inserted into other parts of speech to express the disposition of the soul either fearful, as *ei*; or desiring, as *o*; or sorrowful, as heu; or joyful, as *euax*. (in Amsler, 27)

Isidore of Seville reaffirms this definition of the interjection in his *Etymologies* (book I, ix, 7, xiv), qualifying these utterances as specific to individual languages and not easily translatable. As Amsler writes, Isidore repeats the “association of *affectus* primarily with non-cognitive interjections and emotional, sudden, or disordered speech unique to individual languages, using the example of *vah* for joy, *heu* for sorrow, *hem* for anger, and *ei* for fear” (28). If grammarians had emphasized the explosiveness or intensity of *affectus* which resulted in these expressions, rhetoricians emphasized their transitoriness.¹² Later medieval grammatical theory highlighted two things: that the form of expression and not only the type of word is what constitutes *affectus*, revealing a speaker's emotional state; and that *affectus* is related to the will (Amsler, 29-30).

Augustine will go in a different direction, affirming that interjections are not a part of speech at all, but pure affect, a movement of the mind that erupts in speech (*Interiectio non pars orationis est, sed affectio erumpentis animi in vocem*). Later grammarians will claim that this movement is signifying of mental experience, and therefore, it is indeed a part of grammar (Amsler, 31). Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, grammarians will debate whether interjections are part or not of grammar, and will introduce other elements to describe them, but they will all place affect at the heart of interjective speech.

Attunement

The use of *affectus* in the study of irregular, elliptical, or truncated speech is effective in interpreting interjections, but it also allows for the interpretation of the linguistic plays with breath and breathlessness in medieval literatures that convey the disposition of the mind/soul of a

¹² “Priscian,” writes Amsler, “associates *affectus* and the interjection with emotional disposition or behaviour which deviates from proper accentuation in speech or imitates inarticulate (that is, non-linguistic) sounds, such as giggles or expressions of disgust,” which brings up interesting questions about the animal/divine distinction that are relevant to notions of voice. (29)

character and indeed elicit these emotions in the audience. But beyond the grammatical, the sigh and its representation have a particular relation to language within the literary work, as a narrative element, as a driver of plot, as characterizing detail. Most particularly, sighs might signal emotion that cannot be put into words, while in some instances sighs substitute speech, and other times they might even be a sign of what cannot be said, a marker of suppressed speech.

In medieval Spanish literatures, the most common sigh is the one that precedes speech. In this position, the sigh prepares both speaker and audience for the words that follow.¹³ Leaders often preface their words with sighs. Peculiarly, the words they pronounce are not strategic plans or assessments, they are often declarative statements of fact or rhetorical questions that underline the plight that has come to the people, the city, the land that lies before them. That is, these statements are expressions of emotion, and the sigh that precedes them is, literally, the pretext, as in the *Libro de los exemplos por a.b.c.*:

El emperador mando que callassen e con suspiro dixo: - ¡O Johan, maldito e desagradesçido de los bienes que te fize! E disteme mal por bien en quanto en ti fue. Perdiste esta tierra e a mi e a los mios tiraste la libertad e nos posiste en captiverio (212).

This sort of sigh, one arising from distress, fear, or grief, related to cold rather than heat, and connoting a pensive, reflective mood more attuned to mind than to the heart, is the one that marks the hero at the beginning of the *Poem of the Cid*. The reflective state that the sigh originates in is marked, as we have said, by silence.

Voice

A sigh is almost voice.¹⁴ The tears and sighs of the Cid, as he turns his face to see the empty palaces he leaves behind, are a way of externalizing his worries.¹⁵ His emotions, however, are due to grief, and thus his sighs are cold sighs, which, as we had seen, “reflect the absence of warmth... when the spirits have withdrawn from the rest of the body” (Saunders 93).¹⁶ Grief, then, these cares, exiting as sighs, are also a signal of the emptiness of the Cid’s body, and thus this inner architecture of the body is also void, resonant of the empty palaces the protagonist looks at as he departs to exile, an “escenario de ausencias,” as Montaner calls it, that finds its soundtrack in the Cid’s exiting breath (647).

The *Poem of the Cid* is, by dint of its genre, by period, meant to emphasize listening not only passively in its mode of diffusion but thematically and affectively, as it cues memory and interpretation for a sonically engaged audience. In a performance that used this manuscript, for instance, an initial lacuna or absence would have been unremarkable in terms of plot because the

¹³ This is the case as well in medieval English literatures, as Barry Windeatt notes, also indicating that in the contrast with joy, this might be the reason why singing is perceived as the opposite of sighing. (445-6.)

¹⁴ Crying is, of course, in the same category, and it shows up a couple of times in the poem, here complementing the Cid’s grief, though it is explicitly silent, or later, as in verse 856, “moros e moras compeçaron de llorar,” where it seems that tears are accompanied by sound. See also Connie Scarborough on weeping in the *Poem of the Cid* (MLA communication, 2024).

¹⁵ “... though sighs might prove dangerous in excess, causing the heart to dry out and wither,” cautions medieval medical literature (Saunders, 92). Colin Smith has found a parallel to this expression of grief in in the French *La chevalerie d’Ogier*: “Vers Castel Fort avoit son chief tornepe, /Du cuer sospire, plaint l’a et regreté” (vv. 8877-8878, in Montaner, 646-647), which includes the sigh.

¹⁶ Saunders, 93. she is here interpreting references in Chaucer’s *The Parliament of Fowls*, but her conclusions are fitting with the Cid’s emotional state of being..

audience, of course, would have known of the Cid's exile, of his success in the battlefield, of his loyalty to his men. The numerous ballads, along with works in Latin and Romance produced on the life of the hero in the couple of centuries between the Cid's life and the copying of this manuscript, made of every version a variation on a known tune.

These variations work as echoes, in the sense Pauline Le Ven underlines when she writes on the figure of Echo in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, noting that the repetition of sound (the echo) is not identical to the original sound, not only because it is the deferred repetition of sound in time, but also because it must account for the introduction of meaningful pauses, of silences, of interruption, of delay, which is what brings meaning into Echo's enunciations in Ovid's story: "Echo cannot initiate sound, but by pausing and subverting the sequence in which we hear, by introducing delay and cut, Echo embodies and foregrounds the power of listening creatively, at a remote and after a delay" (LeVen, 227). This creative listening is highlighted in the distinction between observing or witnessing sound, *spectare sonos* -a passive audience that merely observes--, and *expectare sonos*, an audience that expects or anticipates sound, sound that one already knows, that one waits for and thus, one is more attuned to, especially to any variation (LeVen, 227). This expectation is, on the one hand, made up of emotion stirred up in the audience, one that prepares that audience for the content that will follow; in some other way, this expectation is what gives shape to genre, a form of listening, an *affective* listening, especially salient in a medieval epic poem such as the *Cid*, where the input from popular ballads in romance, disseminated orally/aurally, is crafted with the interweaving of learned works in Latin. In manuscript culture, these versions are what we are used to referring as *mouvance* and *variance*, here referred to a performance or a reading out loud, the uniqueness of each of those in their variation a source of pleasure: "In erotic as in acoustic matters, part of the pleasure is in the anticipation and repetition of, ultimately, the same experience" (LeVen, 228). Bridging the written and the aural, one could speak of these ideas on echo and repetition as occurring in both formulas and topoi, from the Cid to Star Wars, in the use of quotation and sampling across genres, from Petrus Alfonsi to Don Juan Manuel to Cervantes. When an expectant audience hears a familiar phrase or tune or story, when voice or sound is a form of quotation,¹⁷ it is inevitably different, and in the combination of the expected repetition and the perception of that difference there is pleasure. This is the operation at work in the writerly lesson of Borges in Pierre Menard's rewriting of the *Quijote*, and that instrumentalized in musical sampling in any genre.

The echoes of the historical Cid and its many fictional, popular, learned elaborations are thematized within this poem as voice, which is the second path highlighted in terms of sound in the poem. Voice brings up a number of important questions for the study of medieval culture, from embodiment to the production of meaning, subjectivity to theology, poetics to music. Within the ample spectrum that the term voice captures, it is speech, *fablas*, as a particular instantiation of voice, and especially its thematization, what is instrumentalized in this poem.

Immediately after sighing, as we heard, the poet tells us the Cid spoke well, saying: "¡Grado a ti Señor, Padre que estás en alto! / Esto me an buelto mios enemigos malos!" (v. 8-9). While the first verse frames the Cid's situation in his trust in God and his own future, the second moves the audience affectively even closer to the protagonist by providing an enemy, the *enemigos malos*, according to the trope of the *locus ab adversariorum*.¹⁸

There are only two more instances of sighing in the poem. The first occurs as the hero embraces his young daughters, preparing to leave them behind as he obeys the order to leave the kingdom.

¹⁷ See Lawton.

¹⁸ See Montaner's complementary note to the verse in p. 650 of his edition for more nuance on the web of social, moral, and political implications of these verses.

At San Pedro de Cardeña, Doña Ximena kneels before him, weeping silently as she tries to kiss his hands. She addresses the Cid and asks for his advice on what to do now that they must see him part. The Cid picks up his daughters in his arms and brings them close to his heart, crying again in silence. This time, he sighs more pronouncedly, underscoring the depth of his grief:

Enclinó las manos la barba vellida,
a las sus fijas en braços las prendía
llególas al corazón, ca mucho las quería;
llora de los ojos, tan fuertemiente sospira (v. 274-277)

The last instance of a sigh is also one of grief, as the trial at the end of the poem confronts the infamous infantes de Carrión with the demands placed by the Cid in front of King Alfonso. The third and most important quarrel is introduced by the Cid in verse 3254, when he accuses the infantes of dishonor and lesser worth, detailing the events in Corpes as having torn open his heart, “¿A qué me descubriestes las telas del corazón?” (v. 3260), marking the quarrel as a profoundly emotional one. In the back and forth, among the many insulting lies and misleading statements the infantes proffer, Diego González declares not repenting for having left the Cid’s daughters and insisting that the girls will sigh in shame for the rest of their lives because they will be forever reproached:

Porque dexamos sus fijas aún no nos repentimos;
mientras que bivan pueden aver sospiros,
lo que les fiziemos serles ha retraído. (v. 3357-3359)

Two verses later, a flurry of calls for silence will gather the disruptive voices back to the authority of the king and the conclusion of the trial.

Attunement

Two other moments of silence stand out in the *Poem of the Cid*. The first is when the infantes ask the king for his support in marrying the Cid’s daughters. The poem remarks that the king reflects on this for a long time, “una grant ora” (v. 1889), a formula that is used in the poem to signal that bad news has been communicated, intended to highlight the king’s wariness. This is mirrored in the Cid’s reaction just a few verses later (v. 1932):

Cuando lo oyó mio Cid el buen Campeador,
una grand ora pensó e comidió;
--¡Esto gradesco a Christus el mio señor! (v. 1931-1933)

The invocation of God after silent reflection is an echo of the initial image of the Cid, as he assessed his situation and expressed his trust in God and his own future. Here, the Cid will contrast how much he has gained through his personal effort in contrast with the infantes, members of the court by birth, explicitly stating he does not favor the marriage. Both of the Cid’s silences are filled with worry, the mind working out the emotions, memories and hope for the future mixed in. But while the initial situation was one of grief, involving the work of breath in regulating psychological and emotional life, the Cid is here much more confident, for he has the love of the king. Both moments also prepare the audience emotionally, attuning the listener to the mixed feelings of the

character, emotions that cover not only the immediate events that follow, but the expectation of an eventual good outcome.

As audience, the poem prepares us affectively, that is, emotionally and psychologically, through sound elements such as the sigh to hear speech registers in terms of volume and pitch and speed—the hero’s grief, the fragility of the girl’s plea, the contrasts in secret whisperings and verbal pacts, the crescendo in a battle of words, the silence imposed by the king. Attunement is thus not only a function of sound but one of *affectus*, participating in both the life of the mind and that of emotions, made up of the animal and the divine. Attunement taps into and helps shape a community of sound as much as an emotional one.¹⁹ The audience is expected to imaginatively hear these differences in tone precisely because voice, as David Lawton has argued, “is not a determinate order of signs like figures or tropes but a volatile series of suggestions or cues that move between theme and address, between text and reader,” or in our case, between performer and audience (2-16).

While I cannot elaborate here on the construction of voice within the plot, what I want to emphasize is the layering of this expectation extending out from the poem to us as audience, for we are also explicitly asked to imagine and hear this physically in the gestures, interjections, and voice of the narrator and performer reciting the poem, recreating the affective soundscape within us. Throughout, we hear explicit calls for listening that hover between the story and our experience, *Oid; odredes; escuchad*. These calls to the audience invite us to be part of the Cid’s armies, of the *burgeses et burgesas* watching from the windows, of the King’s court, melding expectation with experience, memory with presence, narration with living sound. Engaging with the function of deixis, a type of reference whose meaning is dependent upon the context of its enunciation, I call this deictic listening, a term I use to refer to this particular rhetorical function for sound, one that creates or demands a place for the listener in and of the poem.

Beyond the questions of orality and authorship, or the nuances of composition and performance, we know that the experience of this poem and of the literary works cited here would have been auditory, demanding from the audience not only attention, but a particular form of engagement. Aural engagement with these works required a sonic literacy, that is, a repository of sound that would allow the audience to make connections, to supplement and complement prompts and allusions, to interpret specific sounds in different contexts, to overlay tone and timbre, speed and rhythm, volume and pauses to words pronounced in order to shape their meaning. Being present in the performance of a work facilitated the blurring of past events with the present, allowing listeners to hear themselves as characters, to feel themselves part of a community produced by the soundscape of performance and reaction.

The final combats between the criminal infantes and the Cid—the duels that complement the words said at court—will take place in the lands of Carrión three weeks after the trial. The Cid has by then decided to return to Valencia, leaving his trusted men to combat under established rules and the protection of the King. The three challengers fighting for his honor are Martín Antolínez, Pero Vermúez, and Muño Gustioz. As the Cid bids them farewell, saying he hopes for good news, Martín, Pero, and Muño reply that the Cid might hear of them having died, but not of them having been defeated, alluding to a fate, a fame, and an affective response that will be disseminated in sound: “podedes oír de muertos, ca de vencidos no.—” (v. 3529). They, of course, win the combats:

¹⁹ I am referring to the “emotional communities” that Barbara Rosenwein analyzes in her important book on the early medieval period. In some way my argument can be understood as calling attention to how literary works of later periods instrumentalize sound, highlighting the role of the aural not only in the affirmation of such systems of feeling, but also in the reshaping or reconstitution of such communities.

Fernando declares himself beaten by Pero Vermúdez, Diego exits the field fleeing from Martín Antolínez and is thus declared defeated, and Assur González is wounded by Muño Gustioz to the point he cannot speak. Silenced, it is his father, Gonzalo Assúrez, who must call for the end of the combat. “Esto oímos nos,” (v. 3692) declare the judges, concluding the duels. Dishonored, as *infames* and *traidores*, humiliated and judged of lesser worth for the rest of their lives, the infantes are left behind by the poet. A joyful twenty-something verses turn instead to cries of happiness, exclamations of justice restored, weddings, and enough honor to go around. In this noise one can only imagine the infantes slumped, walking in silence, sighing all the way back to Carrión.

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