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E. BERRY

VISUAL RHYME. See EYE RHYME.

VOICE. To define *voice* in written poetry immediately poses a problem, for there is no literal voice in the poem: voice is an oral *metaphor employed in the description and analysis of the written word. It is not just any metaphor, however, but one that foregrounds fundamental distinctions underpinning Western culture: orality and literacy, speaking and writing. Regardless of how much one insists that writing is not speaking and that voice is not literally present in the poem, literary critics have persistently relied on metaphors of voice to analyze writing; it is difficult to imagine how one would go about discussing poetry in particular if we were forbidden to use the terms *voice*, *speaker*, and other vocal terms like **monologue* or **song*, to give a few examples. Teachers, students, and scholars regularly say that poetry "speaks" and readers "listen." The hist. of lit. crit. is saturated with more or less self-conscious uses of oral and aural terms for poetry. Though there are theories of narrative "voice"—see the work of Bakhtin and Genette, e.g.—poetry is regularly imagined to be the privileged site of vocal *presence; those who seek to demystify that presence work to dislodge or trouble oral metaphors that cleave far closer to poetry than to fiction, nonfiction, or perhaps even drama.

Studies of orality offer one approach to explaining why voice is so closely affiliated with poetry. These studies tend to agree that poetry is a crucial vehicle for the transmission of information in oral cultures. The repetitive sound structures that define poetry—*rhythm, *rhyme, *refrain, *alliteration, *assonance, *parallelism, *anaphora—are a central technology of cultural memory and historical transmission. In the absence of written documentation, sound patterns form a lang. system that enables recollection and recitation. Though oral cultures are certainly not extinct and though oral practices coexist alongside written practices in literate cultures, there is an abundance of work on the historical transition from orality to literacy in Western culture. Havelock, e.g., offers a theory of the "literate revolution" in Greece in the 7th to 4th cs. BCE that accounts for the saturation of vocal and aural

figures in Gr. lit. During that time, oral strategies—singing, *recitation, memorization—were not simply supplanted by a literate culture's documentary practices; instead, the two modes entered into "competition and collision." The jostling of literacy by the traces of orality never ended: "the Muse never became the discarded mistress of Greece. She learned to write and read while she continued to sing." Metaphors of orality continue to inhabit, unsettle, and complicate the textual realm to the present day. The earlier, crucial functions of poetry, however, have been replaced by more peripheral, optional practices. Rather than a warehouse for a culture's knowledge, poetry now serves, e.g., as an entertaining pastime, a form of individualized or collective aesthetic expression, or a tool in commercial marketing.

The profound if conflicted affiliation between orality and literacy is the subject of numerous investigations of textual communication that take voice as the central operative term. In his work on orality and literacy, Ong posits writing as an extension of speaking and, thus, uses the term *voice* to refer to both. As temporal rather than spatial practices, both writing and speech permit access to interiority—they exteriorize thoughts and feelings in human expression—and, therefore, enable communication. As Ong has it, spatial practices objectify, but temporal practices enable intersubjective exchange. While writing has spatial, objective qualities (see BOOK, POETIC; VISUAL POETRY), it is first and foremost temporal and communicative. For Ong, as for many other theorists, poetry's operations are the ideal example of literary communication. In the *lyric poem, the author masks his or her expression by speaking through an objectified figure of voice. In this way, the "poem . . . advertises the distance and remoteness which, paradoxically, are part of every human attempt to communicate, and it does this in so far as it is under one aspect 'objective,' . . . which is to say, non-vocal." But under another aspect, it is not objective, since it is trying to communicate; in this sense, the poem has a voice. That voice is not simply individual but compound, however, since the speaker anticipates the listener and vice versa. They meet in the poem.

A number of landmark romantic and postromantic studies place voice, and particularly what has come to be known as *lyric voice*—a figure that closely associates the poem's "speaker" with the author's perspective—at their centers, without commenting explicitly on their use of oral and aural metaphors to define written practices. William Wordsworth's Preface to the 2d ed. of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) defined "the poet" as "a man speaking to men" in "a selection of the language really spoken by men." Here the spoken word is clearly the inspiration for Wordsworth's thoughts about writing poetry; he seems to mean that the *poet should try to write after the manner of everyday conversation. Distinguishing between *poetry* and *eloquence* in "What Is Poetry?" (1833), John Stuart Mill famously asserted that "eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener." Here again, Mill uses oral terms to

describe written practices without remarking on a difference of which he was surely aware. Mill's metaphors for poetry primarily come from the stage rather than from, as with Wordsworth, the street or other locations of everyday life. Mill likens poetry to soliloquy, the actor's monologue to himself onstage that puts the audience in the position of unperceived listeners. Mill also summons the oral art of song. Both theater and song are vocal and embodied, a persistent poetic ideal. The elision between speaking and writing is typical in treatises on poetry of the romantic period, which set the terms for the ways many critics write about poetry to the present day.

In his essay "The Three Voices of Poetry" (1954), T. S. Eliot extends Mill's argument by articulating distinctions among three kinds of poetic voice that lie along a dramatic spectrum. These are ideas or ideals, never found in their pure form; all poems tend in their expression one way or another, but all poems are combinatory. The "first voice is the voice of the poet talking to himself—or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience. The third is the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse." For Eliot, the third voice is the most difficult to accomplish because it requires the most complete self-concealment and imaginative *empathy on the part of the writer; Shakespeare's plays are the most memorable achievement in this mode. Eliot himself wrote verse dramas and discussed in this essay the difficulty of creating autonomous characters. Eliot's second voice is more commonly known as dramatic *monologue, though he insists that the dramatic *persona is merely a mask for the poet; in this way, he collapses dramatic monologue back into lyric. Eliot's interest in the dramatic and the impersonal is indicative of a larger transition "from lyrically expressive to dramatically objective norms for reading" consolidated by the *New Criticism, according to Tucker. The New Critics insisted on assuming "always that the speaker is someone other than the poet himself," even or esp. when reading lyric poetry. As Tucker observes, this attempt to move away from subjectivity actually reinforces it, precisely through the insistence on the orality of poetry: the emphasis on voice continues to invoke an isolated, "overheard" lyric subjectivity, now the speaker's rather than the poet's.

Tucker diagnoses this persistent tendency to think of poetry as oral and, therefore, rooted in the interior of a speaking subject who seeks to communicate with another as an "anxiety of textuality." It betrays the fear that the reader will be lost in a sea of unmotivated verbiage if he or she cannot organize reading experiences around a familiar model of individualized psychology: "What is poetry? Textuality a speaker owns." The insights of deconstruction, however, have made it increasingly impossible to overlook the *textuality of poetry, so that reading poems as if one were hearing them seems increasingly fantastical and inadequate. On the other hand, "the abysmal disfigurements of a deconstruction that would convert poetry's most beautiful illusion—the speaking presence—into a uniform textuality" is equally shortsighted.

The unsettling insights of deconstruction are articulated most compellingly in the work of Jacques Derrida, whose formulations inaugurated a new strain of lit. crit. that seeks to disrupt and show the limits of the oral/aural understanding of poetic textuality. In *Of Grammatology* (1967, trans. into Eng. 1976), Derrida decries the tyranny of voice that underpins and justifies an ethnocentrism rooted in what he calls "logocentrism." Logocentrism "is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning." He reads the Western philosophical trad., from Aristotle to Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Ferdinand de Saussure, as profoundly privileging the spoken word, which, in turn, privileges self-presence. The mind communing with itself speaks a kind of interior, universal lang. that vocal expression most closely approximates. For Derrida, this is the founding principle of metaphysics, which dichotomizes body and soul or spirit, presence and absence, speaking and writing. Writing in this system is derivative and discredited, a copy of a copy, "mediation of mediation"; it signifies "a fall into the exteriority of meaning." Its signs are arbitrary and bear no enchanted proximity to the inner workings of the mind. In the beginning was the spoken word, and it brought a worldview into being that Derrida seeks to overturn. His proposed grammatology, as opposed to *linguistics, which operates according to the vocal privilege, would be a way to begin to interrogate and dismantle the tyranny of voice.

Focusing a deconstructive lens on poetry (and esp. Charles Baudelaire's poetry) in "Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric" (1984), Paul de Man condemns the tendency to read voice into lyric as "delusional." That delusion emerges from a "terror" of modernity and a retreat into escapist nostalgia: terror calls lyric voice into being. Lyric reading practices that hear voices where there are only words anthropomorphize at their own peril (though de Man never specifies what precisely the danger is).

Critics after Derrida and de Man, for the most part, begin from two mutually incompatible premises: either they continue to assert that hearing voices in poetry is not delusional but rather an integral component of that literary experience, or they seek ways to grant the written or textual qualities of poetry a power independent of, or at least not subordinated within, an oral/aural framework. An example of the former approach is William Waters's sophisticated treatment of vocal and sensual metaphor in his study of *apostrophe, *Poetry's Touch* (2003). Acknowledging that writing cannot literally speak or touch, Waters nonetheless goes on to explore a persistent tendency of poetry to try to speak and gesture beyond the limits of the word, to communicate physically in a disembodied medium. Susan Stewart, in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002), also acknowledges the fictive and sometimes clichéd deployment of vocal metaphors in the study and practice of poetry; nevertheless, she offers a valuable exploration of why we love certain voices and how poetry serves as a vehicle for the beloved voice. That voice is not singular, even though it emerges from an

individual; it is imprinted by other voices, possessed by the hist. of those voices that have been heard by the speaker. Our voices carry and are composed of the voices of others. Poetry is the medium for these possessed voices.

The critical work that questions rather than embraces the oral/aural framework for reading poetry often draws on media hist., thinking through the ways technologies that transmit the word, written or spoken, might change the ways that people think, speak, and write. Because there were powerful media revolutions in the Ren. and the 19th c., much of this work is grounded in those periods—for instance, Mazzio's argument that the Ren. voice does not always coincide with eloquence and Griffiths's exploration of the written, textual, and specifically "printed" properties of the Victorian poetic voice.

See ADDRESS, DRAMATIC POETRY, EXPRESSION, ORAL POETRY.

■ T. S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (1957); F. Berry, *Poetry and the Physical Voice* (1962); W. J. Ong, *The Barbarian Within* (1962); M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist (1981); W. R. Johnson, *The Idea of Lyric* (1982); G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. J. E. Lewin (1983); P. de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (1984); H. Tucker, "Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric," *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, ed. C. Hošek and P. Parker (1985); J. Goldberg, *Voice Terminal Echo: Postmodernism and English Renaissance Texts* (1986); E. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (1986); E. Griffiths, *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry* (1989); F. A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. M. Metteer (1990); P. Zumthor, *Oral Poetry*, trans. K. Murphy-Judy (1990); B. R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999); Y. Prins, "Voice Inverse," *VP* 42 (2004); C. Mazzio, *The Inarticulate Renaissance* (2008); J. A. Peraino, *Giving Voice to Love: Song and Self-Expression from the Troubadours to Guillaume de Machaut* (2011).

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VOLTA, *volte* (It., "turn"). A musical and prosodic term for a turn, particularly the transition point between the *octave and *sestet of the *sonnet, which, in its It. form, usually rhymes *abbaabba cdecde*: the *volta* is significant because both the particular rhymes unifying the two quatrains of the octave and also the *envelope scheme are abandoned simultaneously, regardless of whether this break is further reinforced syntactically by a full stop at the end of the octave (though usually it is), creating a decisive "turn in thought." By extension, the term is applied to the gap or break at line nine of any sonnet type, though in the Shakespearean form, e.g., the type of rhyming (*cross rhyme) is not abandoned at that point.

T.V.F. BROGAN

VORTICISM. Vorticism was an Eng. avant-garde movement in the visual arts, primarily sculpture and painting. It is also important to literary modernism because of the guiding roles of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. Vorticism's literary corpus is small (largely restricted to the short-lived journal *Blast*, 1914–15), but the documents and debates surrounding the movement's brief flourishing remain historically significant. Given the general absence of other *manifesto-based groups in Eng. literary modernism, vorticism's direct engagement with *cubism, *expressionism, and, above all, *futurism provides a valuable record of Eng. modernism's relationship to the aesthetic practices and key ideas of the international avant-garde. Like these avant-gardes, vorticism explicitly explores the relationship between modernity in lit. and in the other arts, thus contributing to Eng.-lang. modernist aesthetics more generally. Because of Pound's and Lewis's extensive connections, other major modernists who were not themselves vorticists (e.g., F. M. Ford, T. S. Eliot, Rebecca West, and T. E. Hulme) are linked to the movement either historically or in subsequent crit.

The vorticist aesthetic seeks a charged synthesis of dynamism and stasis. In the visual arts, this involved a critique of both cubism's alleged stasis and of the futurist worship of speed and motion. In lit., this meant an effort to move beyond the static character of the image that now, for Pound, defined the imagist movement with which he had previously been associated (see *IMAGISM*). Pound describes the vortex as "a radiant node or cluster . . . from which, and through which, and into which ideas are constantly rushing." Poetic vorticism's program combined epigrammatic intensity with dynamism and movement; thus, it concisely formulates a central problem of modernist poetics.

The movement's politics remain a subject of controversy. Long held to be close in spirit and style to It. futurism, vorticism's violent rhet. often reinforces this interpretation, as do the later sympathies of both Lewis and Pound for radical right-wing politics. Particularly with Lewis, however, vorticist aggression is often mixed with humor and elements of self-critique largely lacking in futurism, to say nothing of fascism. Similarly, while vorticism does self-consciously represent a style specific to the machine age and its wars, it cannot be said to offer a straightforward celebration.

See AVANT-GARDE POETICS, MODERNISM.

■ *BLAST* 1–2 (1914–15, rpt. 1982); E. Pound, *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1916); W. Lewis, *Wyndham Lewis on Art*, ed. W. Michel and C. J. Fox (1969); H. Kenner, *The Pound Era* (1971); W. C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (1972); F. Jameson, *Fables of Aggression* (1979); E. Pound and W. Lewis, *Pound/Lewis*, ed. T. Materer (1985)—letters; R. W. Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis* (1985); M. Perloff, *The Futurist Moment* (1987); P. Peppis, *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde* (2000).

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