

## **Sound Effects: The Oral/Aural Dimensions of Literature in English *Introduction***

**Neil Rhodes and Chris Jones**

*Sound Effects* traces the history of the relationship between oral conditions and aural effect in English literature from its beginnings in the Anglo-Saxon period through to the twenty-first century. Few collections nowadays, other than textbook histories, would attempt a survey of their field from the early middle ages to the present day, and it is not our intention here to offer a continuous narrative. But despite the many centuries covered by this collection, the reader will find that certain themes recur in different contexts and that the individual essays speak to each other, often over long distances of time. It ends where it might have begun, with Homer, though in modern English form. The effect of this pattern is to create an “envelope” structure in which the ancient oral forms of Greek and Anglo-Saxon verse reappear as contexts for understanding how these forms survive and how sound works in the poetry of the modern world. The scope of the volume is also determined by its subject, since we are concerned with tradition as well as with the oral and aural. In particular, we are concerned with how literary production and reception respond to the different waves of media evolution from oral to written, manuscript to print (and the theater), and the later development of machine technology. We are not specifically concerned with the computer and the Internet, though they are an unstated presence behind the project as a whole. A subsidiary theme is the way in which sound, understood in both oral and aural terms, provides the agency through which high and low, elite and popular cultures are brought into conjunction throughout English literature.

This collection derives from a conference held at the University of St. Andrews in 2006, one of an occasional series on the media in history as a context for literary interpretation.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the conference was to extend our discussion of the literary media from printed text and script back to the most basic medium of all: speech. But we also wanted to explore points of

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<sup>1</sup> Publications from earlier conferences have been Rhodes and Sawday 2000 and Jones and Murphy 2002. In the case of *Sound Effects* we would like to take this opportunity of thanking Beth Wright for acting as conference secretary and John Wesley for his work as program coordinator; thanks also go to Fiona Benson and Beth Wright for the striking artwork. We are most grateful to John Miles Foley both for delivering one of the plenary papers and for the invitation to prepare this special issue of *Oral Tradition*, and also to David Crystal for generously offering to record passages of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Original Pronunciation for the collection. Thanks are due finally to Michael Bull, Wes Folkerth, and Bruce Smith for their extremely helpful appraisals of the proposal for this collection, and to Kristine Johanson for her indispensable help in editing the papers.

contact between the established field of oral tradition and the emerging field of sound studies. The origins of the latter might be traced as far back as Luigi Russolo's *The Art of Noises* (1913), but in academic terms the landmark publication is probably Murray Schafer's *The New Soundscape* (1968), which gave us a term that has become increasingly common in modern cultural history. More recently, there have been groundbreaking books by Bruce Smith (1999) on early modern England and John Picker (2003) on the Victorian period, as well as valuable multi-disciplinary collections such as Les Back and Michael Bull's *Auditory Culture Reader* (2003). Our hope is that the present collection will make its own contribution to this developing field by offering a broad historical contextualization of the oral/aural dimensions of English literature in an easily accessible online form that also allows us to provide sound and image files in an eCompanion.

Although our use of this last facility has been relatively modest, the electronic medium of the publication points in the direction that sound studies should obviously go. This has been the direction taken by John Miles Foley in his editorship of *Oral Tradition* and in his own work on the parallels between the conditions of primary orality and those produced by modern Internet technology.<sup>2</sup> It will seem increasingly odd to produce printed books about sound that are themselves soundless. The point we have reached was imagined half a century ago by Marshall McLuhan, who effectively invented modern media studies and gave us the concepts of "acoustic space" and, through his influence on Walter Ong, the "secondary orality" of the electronic media. It was McLuhan (1962) who announced that "the new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village" (31), and it is fitting that his work should now be enjoying a reevaluation: this is his century. McLuhan was a Canadian, as is Murray Schafer; when we add in the work of Harold Innis on the railways and Eric Havelock on oral tradition, both of whom were based at Toronto like McLuhan, it becomes apparent that the field covered by the present collection has a distinctively Canadian provenance. It so happens that two of our three early modern essays here are by Canadian scholars, the third considers McLuhan himself, and the opening essay in the collection comes from the present provost of Trinity College, Toronto.

Old English scholarship has come a long way since the first enthusiastic attempts to apply oral-formulaic theory to the surviving corpus of poetry, in the wake of the fieldwork carried out by Milman Parry and Albert Lord.<sup>3</sup> It is now unusual to find expressed the once commonly held view that Old English poetry was originally composed orally, and subsequently dictated to, or otherwise transcribed by, "monkish scribes," in whose hands pristine oral performance became textualized and corrupt. Versions of this oralist view of Old English poetry still persist in the popular imagination, to the extent, that is, that the popular imagination embraces Old English poetry at all. In this respect, that the 2007 Robert Zemeckis film *Beowulf* depicts an oral-formulaic poet at work in the hall Heorot, declaiming genuine verses from the poem in convincingly accurate pronunciation, was both surprising (in that the filmmakers had considered

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<sup>2</sup> See further Foley 2008 and the Pathways Project (<http://pathwaysproject.org>).

<sup>3</sup> This phase of attention devoted to Old English poetry as oral began in earnest with Magoun 1953. For a summary and history of this approach, see Foley 1988. The online annotated bibliography devoted to oral-formulaic theory and maintained at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition makes a full subsequent bibliography here superfluous: <http://www.oraltradition.org/bibliography/>.

and investigated questions surrounding the poem's mode of production at all) and unsurprising (in that the film had adopted a superseded, but nevertheless attractive, model of that mode of production). Curiously, then, in the movie theaters of the English-speaking diaspora, the Zemeckis film may have created something approaching the idealized circumstances that scholars once imagined for the aural reception of Old English verse delivered as secular and heroic entertainment in the halls of the Anglo-Saxons, perhaps for the first time in the long history of the poem.

In professional scholarship on the subject, one now more commonly reads of Old English poetry as being marked by a "residual orality," or of a scribal culture inflected by formulaic compositional practices that reflect, derive from, or imitate those of an oral poetics, either actual and contemporary, or already vanishing and idealized. Foley puts Old English poems into the third of his four categories of oral poetry, "voices from the past," a typology that admits we will never know "the exact scenario of their commission to textual form," but acknowledges nonetheless that these poems "bear a telltale compositional stamp" of a culture informed by orality (2002:47).

In investigating the nature of this more nuanced relationship between a highly literary scribal culture in dialogue with the idea, or ideal, of an oral culture that is otherwise traceless in Old English poetry, few scholars have made more of an impact on the field over the last decade than Andy Orchard. In the present essay, Orchard explores close verbal parallels that occur across a number of texts, written in both Anglo-Saxon and Latin. As the existence of an apparently formulaic vocabulary in Anglo-Latin poetry (at times closely sharing phrasing or idiom with that of Anglo-Saxon) clearly cannot be attributable to an oral process of composition by illiterates, Orchard instead examines this allusive criss-crossing of textual pathways as subject to the same kind of investigation as any intertextual reference might be. Thus he is able to begin mapping out a network of influence and borrowing between specific Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Latin poems, rather than assuming such relationships are due to drawing on a common reservoir of oral-traditional idiom. This in turn permits a reconsideration of the oral/aural dimension of extant Old English literature. For, as Orchard demonstrates, extended memorization and recitation of verse formed a significant part of an education in Latin letters: that is to say, methods of acquiring literacy were highly dependent on orality. Thus a writer such as Aldhelm would have held in mind an enormous stock of rote-learned set phrases in verse, which could then have been redeployed in written composition, giving an impression of formulaic composition, and indeed depending on having been uttered from memory, but not being "oral-formulaic" in the way in which traditional scholars of oral-formulaic theory would understand the term. That this body of textualized poetry, marked by memorization and recitation, and highly aural in character, if not straightforwardly oral, is likely to have replaced an earlier Anglo-Saxon culture of oral composition is something Orchard's investigation admits, provocatively concluding that "it is a paradox that while we can never hear again the ancient poetry of the inherited native Anglo-Saxon oral tradition, it is precisely the imported literate Christian and Latinate culture that eventually displaced it that . . . allows us a glimpse of what was."

Sound as compositional element, and as a factor in the production and performance of poetry (or not), has been such a dominant topic for inquiry for literary scholars of Old English

that it is perhaps not surprising that sound as subject matter or theme treated within the literature in its own right has been largely neglected. This curious blind spot is addressed, for the first time in detail, by Alice Jorgensen in our second essay. Thus the collection turns from the ways in which the dimension of sound might affect and effect the textual world, to the ways in which the textual world in turn represents that dimension of sound. Jorgensen looks in particular at how noises are voiced within Old English battle poetry. Drawing on Elaine Scarry's theorization of pain (*The Body in Pain*, 1985) to examine the relationship in several Old English texts between language, violence, and noise, she provocatively develops the idea that language subjected to violence degenerates into noise, before turning to focus more closely on the poem *Exodus*. Jorgensen argues that it is in large part the depiction of noise that makes us experience *Exodus* as a violent poem, a conclusion that nevertheless does not avoid the irony that inarticulate noise is represented through articulate song.

Old English literature is often experienced in rather grim isolation from later literary tradition, but some of the most interesting issues surrounding the oral and aural character of early medieval poetry are played out again, in different contexts, in the early modern period. By the sixteenth century the English language itself had developed into its recognizably "modern" form, but up until the 1570s it was regarded as inadequate for literary purposes, and for anything more serious than poetry Latin was essential. Intellectual and scholarly works were written in Latin and much official business was conducted in that language: the purpose of going to school was to learn Latin. But while a large part of Latin language-learning was still conducted orally, as it had been in earlier centuries, humanist writers and educators saw medieval *sermo* as responsible for the debasement of the ancient tongues. In his *De Recta Pronuntiatione* (1528), Erasmus attempted to recover what he understood to be the original purity of spoken Latin and Greek from the corruption he claimed they had suffered through long centuries of vernacular abuse, and in the 1540s Sir John Cheke and his circle at Cambridge were also much concerned with the matter of correct pronunciation. At the same time, though sixteenth-century England was still very much an oral world for the educated as well as for the unlearned, the work of the humanists on the restoration of classical texts and their redirection of rhetoric toward writing meant that new approaches to speech and pronunciation have also to be seen in terms of a gradual shift towards a more literate culture.

This new and vexed relationship between speech and writing provides the context for John Wesley's essay on the Elizabethan schoolmaster, Richard Mulcaster. As the teacher of Spenser, Kyd, Lodge, and Lancelot Andrewes, whose innovations in poetry, drama, prose fiction, and bible translation did so much to stimulate confidence in English as a literary language, Mulcaster might be regarded as one of the prime movers of the Elizabethan renaissance. He was, of course, responsible for teaching these future authors Latin, but he also published a book called *The Elementarie* (1582) on "the right writing of our English tongue," which takes as its starting point the project for work on an English phonetic alphabet initiated by the Cambridge circle and developed by John Hart (1569) in his work on the transcription of the voice. As Wesley shows, Mulcaster's aim was to challenge those attempts to give absolute precedence to sound by constructing an allegory in which "Sound" is portrayed as a tyrant who is eventually forced to defer to Reason and Custom. But Wesley goes on to argue that this happy compromise is threatened as Mulcaster increasingly finds sound to be the subversive element in his plans for

right writing. Although he placed special emphasis on voice training in his own pedagogy, he is ultimately forced to concede that it is this element of sound performed in speech that is always going to trouble the orthographer.

In his discussion of the competition for precedence and authority between sound and writing in the sixteenth century, Wesley gives us a theoretical context for addressing the oral/aural dimensions of early modern literature. In the case of Shakespeare, however, we need to take into account an entirely new medium, not available to medieval writers, or indeed to anyone in England before the late 1560s: the theater. The purpose-built, commercial theaters of Elizabethan London were the wooden arenas in which plays were heard: they were quite literally the sounding boards for scripts. And while there was undoubtedly a growing literary market for printed play-texts, the plays themselves would have been initially experienced



Three passages from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* courtesy of David Crystal.

as speech. An enormous amount of intellectual labor has been expended on the reconstruction of “authentic” Elizabethan play-texts, but how do we recover their sounds? Experimental “original pronunciation” productions of Shakespeare attempting to do just that have been staged at the reconstructed Globe theater in London, guided by the expertise of David Crystal.<sup>4</sup> To date, Shakespeare’s Globe has mounted performances of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Troilus and Cressida* in OP, and Crystal has described the first of them in his book *Pronouncing Shakespeare* (2005). The court was a melting pot of regional accents, and accent was less an indicator of class than of age. Pronunciation was changing rapidly, and this was reflected in the speech of the younger generation. Under Crystal’s tutelage, Juliet and the nurse pronounced the same word in different ways (2005:111, 41, 74). But actors also found that in OP Juliet’s wordplay

seemed to be less intellectual and more to do with pleasure, while Jimmy Garnon, who played Mercutio, said of the Queen Mab speech that “in RP this always feels like poetry. In OP it suddenly felt real” (146-47). Without endorsing the distinction between poetry and reality, it is tempting to see in that remark a hint that OP might also stand for “original presence” in defiance of Derrida and much modern theory.

Recovering the sounds of Shakespeare is what Patricia Parker sets out to do in her essay on “Shakespeare’s Sound Government.” Taking up some of the issues raised by Wesley in a theoretical and pedagogical context, which include the point that the ungovernability of sound in Elizabethan English is reflected in the instability of spelling, she argues that the Shakespearean textual tradition has led to the suppression of the aural dimension of the plays. Her essay draws especially upon work for her edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which aims to restore some of the meanings lost to us through the standardizing print tradition of the Shakespearean text. Making sense of Bottom’s somewhat confused report of his dream, “The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen . . .” (4.1.204-05), Parker pursues a strategy of “hearing with the eye, seeing with the ear” to retrieve some of Shakespeare’s lost puns; this is not just a matter

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<sup>4</sup> Recordings of the Globe productions were not available, and we are grateful to David Crystal for offering us his own versions of three passages from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for this special issue of *Oral Tradition*. The passages here are 2.1.249, 3.2.102, and 5.1.413 ff.

of recovering sound effects in purely sensory terms, but of recovering aurally generated meanings. The subject of orally based Latin language-learning reappears here in a quite different context, as Parker uncovers wordplay between Latin and English, but she also goes on to emphasize the importance of the polyglot communities of early modern London and the contribution of other modern languages to the “translingual soundings” of Shakespearean drama. Ultimately, this international dimension to the verbal experience of the plays shows how sound opens up much wider issues: “far from being mere verbal ‘quibbles,’” she argues, “such polyglot or homophonic soundings frequently forged larger cultural associations in the period.” Recovering Shakespeare’s sound effects, therefore, is a vital task for the cultural historian, as well as for the editor.

In the last of the three Elizabethan essays, Neil Rhodes turns to the other new medium of the sixteenth century, print itself, and considers its relationship to orality in the light of the ideas of the founding father of modern media studies, Marshall McLuhan. While later printed editions of Shakespeare may have obliterated the aural dimensions of the plays experienced in the theater, some writers in the early modern period itself responded to print as a quasi-oral medium. The most striking example of a writer who was able to use print to simulate oral conditions was Thomas Nashe, and Rhodes begins by suggesting that it was this aspect of his literary production that led the young McLuhan to choose him as the topic for his Cambridge Ph.D. thesis. McLuhan’s initial interest in Nashe situated him within the domain of high culture, since his thesis was principally concerned with the arts of the classical trivium, and in that context orality appeared in formal dress as oration. But in his own translation from Cambridge into the commercial print world, Nashe exploited the potential of speech models drawn from popular culture, those of fairground and marketplace, which enabled him to experiment with different kinds of oral performance and create what was almost a hybrid oral-print medium. It was this experience, Rhodes argues, that prompted McLuhan’s later work on the media and popular culture. The other aspect of Nashe that was important to McLuhan was his hostility to Ramus. Whereas Nashe had managed to absorb oral tradition into the print medium, Ramus’s reform of the trivium and his consequent influence on textbook production had the effect of severing print from the old oral world. It was McLuhan who proposed Ramus to his student Walter Ong as a subject for his own Ph.D., thereby initiating some of the most important work on the relationship between orality and literacy in the later twentieth century.

The ideas of McLuhan and Ong, or the Orality-Literacy School as it is sometimes called, have often been represented as sentimentalizing oral cultures while at the same time stigmatizing the supposedly alienating effects of print. In this formula, print produces linearity and closure, the communal vitality and spontaneity of the oral world are replaced by the solitary occupation of silent reading, and hearing yields to sight as the principal cognitive mechanism. Part of the purpose of Rhodes’ essay is to show that their ideas were not quite so monochrome as that and to argue, in the case of McLuhan, that it was Nashe’s experimental use of print to simulate the conditions of oral culture that prompted him to think about some of the cultural consequences of modern media. As far as the evolutionary model itself is concerned—the model in which print supplants oral culture in early modern England—recent historical research, by Adam Fox (2000) for example, has convincingly demonstrated that the two media cross-fertilized and actually helped to reinforce each other during the period. But once these qualifications have been made, it

is nonetheless the case that, by the mid-eighteenth century, writers (and presumably some readers) had themselves become aware of the distancing effects of print. Their response, as James Mulholland describes in his essay on Ossian, was to create a new cult of the oral within the pages of the printed book. This was not the same as Nashe's experiment, which manipulates print to fuse elite and popular rhetorical models; in the case of Ossian what was at stake was the claim for a national culture (that of Scotland) rooted in oral tradition and epitomized in the Romantic figure of the bard.

The newly discovered Gaelic epic was, of course, an invention. But as Mulholland shows, this involved not just the invention of tradition, but also the invention of "voice." What Ossian's creator, James Macpherson, was attempting to do was to re-create a sense of the living voice of the bard from the typography of the printed page. The key term for Mulholland here is "intimacy." This is not so much the intimacy of private space, of book and reader, as the imagined communal intimacy of oral performance, the human interaction of the bard and his audience, re-created in the silent world of print. This illusion is reinforced by the illustrations that accompanied the published versions of Ossian, which are designed to supplement Macpherson's typographical construction of "voice" by enhancing the reader's sense of participation and human presence. The Ossian phenomenon is part of the wider cult of the primitive in the Romantic era, but it also marks the point where readers begin to reimagine themselves as audiences.

What it also does is alert us to the social dimension of media evolution and to the way in which performance may act as a mechanism for social bonding. The theater partially fulfills this role in literate cultures, but in the eighteenth century, alongside and in contrast with the development of the silent reader, a vibrant song culture existed that was genuinely participatory and not merely constructed as such through the devices of print. To illustrate this phenomenon, Dianne Dugaw focuses on the journals of James Boswell, another Scot, and describes how Boswell sang his way through Britain and Europe in an extraordinary variety of different social situations. For Boswell, song worked through shared experience to bridge social difference in all sorts of encounters: with an aristocrat at a gentleman's drinking club; with peasants in Corsica; and in a breakfast conversation with a lady. In some situations the theater might act as a point of reference, as in this last encounter where Boswell's diary records his flirtatious allusion to the song from *The Beggar's Opera*, "Youth's the Season Made for Joys," which Dugaw herself sings in an accompaniment to her essay. But while song culture might be mediated by the theater, this essay also underlines the point that song had the effect of bringing elite and popular culture into conjunction, which is a process we see at work in different contexts elsewhere in this collection.

One instance of this mixing of high and low was the growing interest of the intellectual elite in the ballad, a central feature of both the cult of orality that produced Ossian and the song culture celebrated by Boswell. Indeed, we could see the ballad as central to English oral tradition more generally, while bearing in mind that a significant part of the ballad corpus is of course Scottish and that there is also a distinctive Gaelic ballad tradition (which Macpherson exploited). Upperclass appreciation of the ballad can be traced at least as far back as Sidney's well-known affection for "Sir Patrick Spens," but it first achieves a respectable place in the English literary canon with the publication of Thomas Percy's *Reliques* in 1765 and reaches its apotheosis in

Wordsworth and Coleridge's revolutionary *Lyrical Ballads* at the end of the century. But as well as providing a meeting point for elite and popular literary taste, ballads also have a curiously bifocal relationship to history: on the one hand, they may be timeless narrative songs about love, loss, betrayal, and murder, evolving over centuries of performance but essentially undatable; on the other, they may be based on very specific events, datable by the trials that followed from them and the subsequent reports of these. The two kinds are usually put into the separate categories of folk ballad and street or broadside ballad, but in either case ballads foreground the role of memory in relation both to composition and to historical fact.

Thomas Pettitt's essay on "The Suffolk Tragedy," a ballad first printed in 1828, begins by arguing that the role of memory in the composition and transmission of ballads is inadequately recognized by the term "oral tradition." Instead, he proposes a fusion of the two in the term "memoral" that would, he suggests, be the real alternative to written transmission. He then goes on to argue that the relationship between folk and broadside ballad may have been misunderstood. In terms of media the difference between them should be obvious. The broadside was a printed sheet recording recent sensational events and sold on the street, while the folk ballad was preserved in memory, transmitted by voice, at some stage written down, and eventually, perhaps, printed. But Pettitt points out, first, that some of the ballads sold as broadsides were in fact acquired from "memoral" tradition and commercially repackaged. He then conducts an experiment to show, much more surprisingly, that the reverse process can also be seen at work: that ballads that start out as broadsides can over time acquire the characteristics of the folk ballad through entry into memoral tradition. Taking "The Suffolk Tragedy" as his example, a ballad in the murdered sweetheart category, he shows how repeated memoral performance had the effect of "decomposing" the ballad to its basic narrative structures and emotional core. It is a vivid illustration of how Fox's argument about the cross-fertilization of oral and print media in the early modern era can be extended to even later periods.

When we approach the oral and aural dimensions of literature in social terms, we immediately encounter questions of register, and of elite and popular cultural contexts, but when we move our attention to the media in history we are more likely to find ourselves addressing issues of primitivism and modernity. Interestingly, Pettitt describes the operations of memoral tradition as a "ballad machine," suggesting that modern technology may imitate the processes of much older forms of transmission. When we reach the Victorian period, however, the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the communications revolution brought about by the railways creates what appears to be an irreversible modernity in the form of a new machine-dominated world. The effects of this shift are transmitted in literature perhaps most strikingly through the new soundscapes of the city.

Bruce Johnson approaches this subject by showing how the hugely expanded cities of Victorian Britain could no longer be read visually, but only experienced aurally. So despite the apparently relentless drive towards modernity in social and economic terms during the nineteenth century, cognitively the effects of the new machines are more ambiguous. The movement that Johnson describes is, for example, the opposite of that proposed by Walter Ong when he argued that print culture replaced an aural perception of the world with a visual one. And Johnson also sees many of the characteristics traditionally associated with oral culture, in particular the sense of shared life generated by sound, as being replicated in the new, mechanically created, sonic



community of the city. In other respects, however, nineteenth-century technological innovation points more directly toward modernity. The obvious examples in the field of sound would be the telephone and the recording machines developed toward the end of the century, which have the effect of detaching sound from its human origins. These innovations extend a process that begins with the disembodied, imaginary voices of print, as Mulholland shows in his discussion of Ossian. But the device that Johnson chooses as the point of convergence for many of the themes of his essay is, in fact, the typewriter. The typewriter represents a new stage in information and communications technology and, of course, in literary composition and production itself. It represents speed, but also noise. The silent hall of the medieval scriptorium, or the dusty Victorian office where clerks scratch at their ledgers, is transformed by the typewriter into the loud, mechanical clatter of the modern workplace. At the same time, the typewriter is inseparable from gender. As Johnson neatly sums up in his discussion of Grant Allen's novel *The Type-Writer Girl* (1897), "She is her technology, its sound is her sound." He points out that the "type-writer" is both the machine itself and the woman who types, and also that it becomes a trope for a newly voluble workplace where the ancient regulations for female silence no longer apply.

Derek Attridge's essay on Joyce also opens with a woman and the sound of a machine, in this case Molly Bloom and the train whistle from the Penelope section of *Ulysses*. But Attridge is concerned not so much with the cultural impact of technology, as in the way sound can be translated into language and represented on the printed page. Joyce was certainly alert to the effects of early twentieth-century sound technology, and this awareness may well have acted as a prompt for his "aural games," but Attridge reminds us that the soundscape of Dublin in 1904 was not that of 1922 and that mechanical urban noise is not the dominant aural feature of *Ulysses*. Molly's thoughts move from train whistle to song and then to the internal ruminations of her own body. What Attridge specifically focuses on is the role of nonlexical onomatopoeia in the linguistic representation of sound and, crucially, on the way it attempts to represent the reminiscence of sound as aural associations slide into one another in the consciousness of an individual. In so doing, he sets out a number of ways in which nonlexical onomatopoeia cannot simply be seen as a rhetorical device for the "unmediated imitation" of sound. Some of the theoretical issues that arise here return us to the competition between sound and writing in the sixteenth century discussed earlier by Wesley. What Attridge is ultimately describing, however, is a literary experiment that we might associate specifically with modernism, while nonlexical onomatopoeia itself might be regarded as the most perfect illustration of what Parker calls "hearing with the eye." While the representation of new machine noise in literature might be regarded as a feature of modernity, the non-mimetic features of the modernist novel work differently, not presenting noise as something extraneous but instead using sound effects to show how, in Attridge's words, "the text produces a world." The culmination of this process is *Finnegan's Wake*.

Reminiscence of sound and the text's production of a non-mimetic, acoustic world are ideas also explored by Chris Jones in his essay on twentieth-century poets' patterning of a verse soundscape resonant with aural associations of Anglo-Saxon poetry. It may be tempting to style the invocation of Anglo-Saxon poetry in sound by Ezra Pound and other modernist poets as yet another form of post-romantic nostalgia, or fetishization of putative origins, albeit in this

instance given the novel twist of constituting a form of primitivism made manifest in and through phonetic sound. Jones, however, complicates such a straightforward, period-bound narrative by dwelling first on Anglo-Saxon poetry's sense of its own lateness and its relationship with an imagined, earlier acoustic world, as evidenced in *Beowulf*. In his understanding of the poem, this text not only produces an aural world, but also invents (with an ear cocked to the medieval associations of that word with "discovery") an oral means of production for that world, and, in doing so, provides an origin myth for itself. Through its multiple textualized stagings of oral/aural poetry, *Beowulf* cultivates, just as self-reflexively as in the case of the Ossian phenomenon described by Mulholland, a cult of the oral. The recovery and reimagining, then, of an Anglo-Saxon soundscape by the poets W. S. Graham and Edwin Morgan, both considered in the second half of this essay, are analogous to the *Beowulf*-poet's own recovery and reimagining of the performance of an "ur-Anglo-Saxon" poetry. The latter is not simply a uniform, end-point source text for the former writers to revisit and echo; it desires "pure" oral origins as fiercely as any work engrained in page and ink. Finally, Jones draws on and adapts Foley's understanding of the operation of traditional idiom and "extratextual" metonymic meaning, as developed in *Immanent Art* (1991), in order to argue that we need to recognize a form of aural allusion being deployed in Graham's and Morgan's work that does not direct itself to a specific "source" text, but that summons a whole body of work into the soundscape of the new, or "trigger," composition.

The final essay in the collection concerns a modern poem that has evolved over half a century, Christopher Logue's *War Music*. But it also takes us back to the beginnings of the Western literary tradition in Homer and draws together the two strands of oral tradition and aural effect that have run throughout the volume. The *Iliad* itself is oral, but in Logue's case, Greenwood reminds us, "we are dealing not with orality, but rather the tradition of poetry as collaboration between text and voice," and this is the focus of her close analysis of the sound qualities of *War Music*, where she looks in depth at Logue's rendition of one extended simile from Book 16. But Greenwood's close reading also has wider contexts. She invokes the principle of "life," both in the sense of human presence and as the livingness of sound, apprehensible in oral performance and sustained in the written poetry-for-voice created by Logue. While these are ideas that have been strongly contested by modern literary theory, they have also been extraordinarily tenacious in audience responses to literature in many ages, as the essays in this collection demonstrate, and they remain so today in our electronically mediated environment. Greenwood also sees Logue's achievement very much as the culmination of an English tradition of Homer translation, absorbing influences from Chaucer to Pound and echoing earlier attempts by English writers to translate the sounds of Homer into their own language.

In both respects, Greenwood's essay encourages us to retrace our steps through this collection. Her discussion of the "intimacy" of the relationship between oral poets and their audiences returns us to Mulholland's discussion of the eighteenth-century invention of "voice," while the subject of "war music" itself echoes the sounds of battle in Old English poetry described by Jorgensen. But to end with Homer is not merely to offer a retrospective window on oral tradition and aural effect. One of the aims of this collection is to show how the oral and aural dimensions of English literature can be contextualized by their relationship to media evolution, not in a progressively linear way but in more complex forms in which old media reinvent

themselves in new conditions and new media seem to reproduce the characteristics of much earlier modes of communication. In the case of Homer, the parallels between oral tradition and modern Internet technology are being explored in Foley's Pathways Project (2008, ongoing), which shows how both media-technologies consist of navigable networks of interlinked potentials, with "users" charting singular pathways through multiple possibilities. At the same time, electronic technology is restoring sound to us in a world of acoustic space, as McLuhan anticipated long ago: we write in print, but we speak on the web. Twenty-first-century media are transforming our understanding of the oral/aural dimensions of earlier literature as well as creating new conditions for new literature, and in doing so they will force us to rethink our conception of voice and "life," as well as our very idea of the human itself.

So let us begin: Hwæt, Hi, Hiya, Howay . . . .

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