starkly with the outdated fin de siècle theme and form of his hero's poem. But William Empson's "Villanelle" ("It is the pain, it is the pain endures") of 1928 was highly mod.; and when W. H. Auden adopted the form, his villanelles, like Empson's, were *pentameter: almost all earlier Eng. villanelles are *tetrameter or *trimeter. Dylan Thomas's first villanelle was a 1942 *parody of Empson titled "Request to Leda," but it was Thomas's 1951 "Do not go gentle into that good night" that ensured the villanelle's survival and status in Eng. poetry. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, major poets occasionally wrote villanelles.

Elizabeth Bishop's 1976 villanelle "One Art," along with the emergence of *New Formalism, introduced what might be called the postmodern villanelle. In the last quarter of the 20th c., poet after poet adopted the villanelle, often making use of a new license to use *near rhyme and near refrain and overtly obeying or challenging to the supposedly strict, traditional rules of the form. Poets also began to invent similar forms, most unique but some not: the prose villanelle, the *terzanelle* (a hybrid with terza rima), and, most notably, a ludicrously repetitive form invented by Billy Collins. The *paradelle*, which Collins claimed was a langue d'oc form of the 11th c., is a "parody villanelle" whose origin story is only slightly falser than the one commonly told of the "real" villanelle.

■ J. Passerat, *Recueil des oeuvres poétiques* (1606); D. Gaullyer, *Abregé de la grammaire françoise* (1722); P. Richelet, *Dictionnaire des rimes,* ed. P. C. Berthelin (1751); T. de Banville, *Petit traité de poésie française* (1872); E. Gosse, "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse," *Cornhill Magazine* 36 (1877); J. Boulmier, *Villanelles* (1878); C. Scott, *French Verse-Art* (1980); D. G. Cardamone*, The Canzone Villanesa alla Napolitana and Related Forms, 1537–1570* (1981); R. F. McFarland, *The Villanelle* (1987); J. Kane, "The Myth of the Fixed-Form Villanelle," *MLQ* 64 (2003); *The Paradelle,* ed. T. W. Welford (2006); A. L. French, "Edmund Gosse and the Stubborn Villanelle Blunder," *VP* 48 (2010).

<div align="right">J. Kane; A. L. French</div>

**VIRELAI** (also called *chanson baladée* and *vireli*). Originally a variant of the common dance song with refrain, of which the *rondeau is the most prominent type, this med. Fr. lyric form developed in the 13th c. and at first may have been performed by one or more leading voices and a *chorus. It begins with a *refrain, followed by a stanza of four lines of which the first two have a musical line (repeated) different from that of the refrain. The last two lines of the stanza return to the music of the refrain. The opening refrain, words and music, is then sung again. The *virelai* usually continues with two more stanzas presented in this same way. A virelai with only one stanza would be a *bergerette*. In Italy, the 13th-c. *lauda and, in Spain, the *cantiga, follow the same form. The syllables *vireli* and *virelai* were probably nonsense refrains that later came to designate the type.

The large number of variations and optional elements both in the *lai and in the virelai (as practiced by Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, Christine de Pisan, and Eustache Deschamps) produced much uncertainty among recent prosodists about how both forms should be defined, so that one must approach any mod. definition with great caution. Most recent commentators follow Théodore de Banville (*Petit traité de poésie française*, 1872), who, relying on the authority of the 17th-c. prosodist le Père Mourgues (*Traité de la poésie française*, 1685), tried to settle matters by defining the lai as a poem in which each stanza is a combination of three-line groups, two longer lines followed by a shorter one, with the longer lines sharing one rhyme sound and the shorter lines another (*aabaabaab ccdccdccd*, etc.). Then, calling on a false etymology of *virelai*—from *virer* (to turn) and *lai*—he defined the virelai as a lai in which the rhyme sounds are "turned" from stanza to stanza; i.e., the rhyme of the shorter lines becomes the rhyme of the longer lines in the following stanza (*aabaabaab, bbcbbcbbc*, etc.). Calling the virelai thus defined the *virelai ancien*, Banville goes on to describe the *virelai nouveau*, which bears no relation to the virelai ancien and is, if anything, more like the *villanelle. The virelai nouveau opens with a refrain, whose two lines then recur separately and alternately as the refrains of the stanzas following, reappearing together again only at the end of the final stanza, but with their order reversed. The stanzas of the virelai nouveau may be of any length and employ any rhyme scheme, but the poem is limited to two rhyme sounds only. Here again, Banville merely follows le Père Mourgues, whose "Le Rimeur rebuté" is used as an illustration. John Payne's "Spring Sadness" (virelai ancien) and Austin Dobson's "July" (virelai nouveau) are the only evidence that these two forms have excited any interest.

■ E. Gosse, "A Plea for Certain Exotic Forms of Verse," *Cornhill Magazine* 36 (1877); G. White, *Ballades and Rondeaus* (1887); Kastner; H. L. Cohen, *Lyric Forms from France* (1922); Le Gentil; P. Le Gentil, *Le Virelai et le villancico* (1954); M. Françon, "On the Nature of the Virelai," *Symposium* 9 (1955); G. Reaney, "The Development of the Rondeau, Virelai, and Ballade," *Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer* (1962); F. Gennrich, *Das altfranzösische Rondeau und V. im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert* (1963); F. Gennrich and G. Reaney, "Virelai," *MGG* 13.1802–11; N. Wilkins, "Virelai," *New Grove*; Morier; R. Mullally, "Vireli, Virelai," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 101 (2000); J.-F. Kosta-Théfaine, "Les Virelais de Christine de Pizan," *Moyen Français* 48 (2001).

<div align="right">U. T. Holmes; C. Scott</div>

**VISUAL ARTS AND POETRY.** *See* carmina figurata; concrete poetry; ekphrasis; painting and poetry; ut pictura poesis; visual poetry.

**VISUAL POETRY**

  I. Forms
 II. Functions
III. Development

## IV. Free Verse
## V. Mixed and Electronic Media

Visual poetry is poetry composed for the eye as well as, or more than, for the ear. All written and printed poetry is visual poetry in a broad sense, in that, when we read the poem, the visual form affects how we read it and so contributes to our experience of its sound, movement, and meaning. The overwhelming majority of lyric poems are meant to fit on a codex page, hence, to meet the reader's eye as a simultaneously apprehensible whole. As Mooij points out, "written poetry allows for devices of foregrounding not available to oral poetry." Among these devices are lineation, line length, line grouping, indentation, intra- and interlinear white space, punctuation, capitalization, and size and style of type. In traditional verse, however, the written text serves mainly a notational role, and its visual aspects are subordinate to the oral form they represent. In visual poetry in the strict sense, the visual form of the text becomes an object for apprehension in its own right. In some visual poetry, text is combined with nontextual graphic elements.

**I. Forms.** In general, the visual form of a poem may be figurative or nonfigurative; if figurative, it may be mimetic or abstract. In cl. and Ren. pattern poetry, we find figurative visual form that is mimetic, the printed text taking the shape of objects (see TECHNO-PAEGNION); the best-known examples are two poems by George Herbert, "The Altar" and "Easter Wings." There are also 20th-c. examples of mimetic visual form, among them the *calligrammes of Guillaume Apollinaire and some *concrete poetry. Poems in the shape of geometric figures such as circles and lozenges, another kind of pattern poetry, realize the possibility of figurative visual form that is abstract: in the Ren., 15 such forms are enumerated by George Puttenham. Less rigidly geometric forms are not uncommon in conventional poetry (Ranta).

The visual form of most poems is nonfigurative: such poems are isometrical or heterometrical, hence, consist of regular or irregular blocks of long and/or short lines. Open arrangements of lines in the page space are usually also nonfigurative. Such nonfigurative visual form may contribute significantly to the effect of the poem. In the case of short poems, the shape of the whole poem is apprehended immediately as open or dense, balanced or imbalanced, even or uneven, simple or intricate. In stanzaic poems, the regular partitioning of the text may convey a sense of order and control and generate an expectation of regular closure. Further, the individual stanzas themselves are apprehensible visual units. Stanzas in symmetrical shapes may suggest stability or stillness, while asymmetrical shapes may suggest instability or movement in a direction. Stanzas of complex shape may convey a sense of elaborate artifice. Stanzas where lines of different lengths, or with different rhymes, are indented by different amounts, as in John Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*, may appear esp. highly ordered. For the reader steeped in poetry, the visual forms of stanzas may also recall antecedent poems written in stanzas of similar shape. The basic shape of the *sapphic stanza, e.g., is recognizable even in extreme variations.

**II. Functions.** The viability of visual poetry as a literary mode depends directly on the functions that can be served by visual form. These fall into two classes: (a) those that reinforce the sense of the poem's unity and autonomy and (b) those that point up its *intertextuality. In group (a), we can enumerate six integrative functions: (1) to lend prominence to phonological, syntactic, or rhetorical structures in the text (this would include scoring for performance and the use of white space to express emotion, invite contemplation, or signal closure); (2) to indicate juxtapositions of images and ideas; (3) to signal shifts in topic, tone, or perspective; (4) to render iconically the subject of the poem or an object referred to in it (incl. the use of white space as an icon of space, whiteness, distance, void, or duration); (5) to present the reader with an abstract shape of energy; and (6) to help foreground the text as an aesthetic object. In group (b), we can identify six dispersive functions: (1) to signal a general or particular relation to poetic trad.; (2) to allude to various other genres of printed texts; (3) to engage and sustain reader attention by creating interest and texture; (4) to cross-cut other textual structures, producing counterpoint between two or more structures occupying the same words; (5) to heighten the reader's awareness of the reading process; and (6) to draw attention to particular features of the text and, more generally, to defamiliarize aspects of lang., writing, and *textuality. The visual form of a given poem may realize several different functions, even ones from the two opposed classes, at once.

**III. Development.** Historically, "all poetry is originally oral, and the earliest inscriptions of it were clearly ways of preserving material after the tradition of recitation had changed or been lost" (Hollander). Subsequently, "the development has been from . . . visual organization of phonological data . . . to a visual organization that carries meaning without reference to the phonological" (Cummings and Simmons). "[O]nce the inscribed text was firmly established as a standard . . . end-product of literary art and typical object of literary appreciation, it was only natural that the literary artist would exploit the rich aesthetic possibilities offered by the inscribed medium" (Shusterman). From ca. 300 BCE, visual effects have been exploited in various modes of visual poetry and in mixed-media works.

Perhaps the best known of the modes of visual poetry is what is anachronistically called pattern poetry, a mode used by Western poets from the 4th c. BCE to the present. Less familiar than poems in figurative or geometric shapes are *versus intexti*, also called *carmina cancellata*, a subgenre of pattern poetry. Such poems were composed on a grid, 35 squares by 35, each square containing a letter, with type size and, later, color and outlining used to distinguish visual images from the background of the rest of the text. First composed in the 4th c., they reached their fullest devel. in the work

of Hrabanus Maurus (9th c.). Another ancient visual genre, the *acrostic, subverts the convention of reading from left to right and from top to bottom. Inscriptions, originally cut in stone with no regard for the appearance of the text, acquired beautiful lettering in Roman monumental art, which was reproduced and imitated in the Ren. In the 16th and 17th cs., esp. in northern Italy, they flourished briefly as a literary genre in printed books (Sparrow). The form, used mainly for religious and political eulogy, was really lineated prose—prose composed and printed in centered lines of uneven lengths, with the line divisions supporting the sense. A mixed-media genre, the *emblem, flourished during the Ren. Typically, it comprised a short motto, a picture, and an explanatory, moralizing poem.

The 20th c. saw a diverse abundance of highly visual works. These were heralded, just before the turn of the century by Stéphane Mallarmé's late work *Un coup de dés,* a visual composition with text in various type sizes arranged in the space of two-page spreads. It was followed, early in the century, by Apollinaire's calligrammes, in which lettering (often handwriting) of different sizes typically sketches the shape of an object, e.g., a cigar with smoke. The typographical experiments of *futurism and *Dada, the typewriter compositions of the Am. poet e. e. cummings, and concrete poetry all use visual form in ways that counteract the transparency of the written medium.

**IV. Free Verse.** Visual form plays a more important role in the prosody of *free verse than in that of metrical verse. One distinguishing feature of much modernist free verse—the eschewal of line-initial capitals—is a purely visual feature. On the one hand, besides serving to label the verse as nonmetrical, the use of lower-case letters at the beginnings of lines (unless they are also beginnings of sentences) may have the effect of reducing the visual prominence of the line as a unit. On the other hand, where lineation and line grouping are not determined by meter and rhyme, lines and line groups may be constitutively visual units. Even where lines are phonological, syntactical, and/or semantic units as well, their visual aspect may be important to their effect.

In most cases, visual form in free verse assumes a subservient, pattern-marking role. E.g., lineation, in its visual aspect, may serve to juxtapose images, as in Ezra Pound's classic imagist poem "In a Station of the Metro." Lineation, layout, and other visual features may serve to score the text for oral performance. Charles Olson, in his 1950 essay *"Projective Verse," claimed that there should be a direct relationship between the amount of white space and the length of pause. Regardless of whether it signals pause, intra- or interlinear white space can work mimetically, expressively, and rhetorically. Many free-verse poets exploit these possibilities through arrangement of text in the page space, as does Denise Levertov in this passage from "The Five-Day Rain":

Sequence broken, tension
of sunlight broken.

So light a rain
fine shreds
pending above the rigid leaves.

Less commonly, the visual form takes on a privileged, pattern-making role. Where lines do not coincide with units of the text's linguistic structure, they may, esp. in the case of short lines, set up a counterpoint to it. Free-verse poets, notably W. C. Williams, sometimes arrange their lines in "sight-stanzas," perceptible as stanzas only by virtue of having equal numbers of lines and creating iterated visual patterns. Here, the visual order of the stanzas may compensate aesthetically for considerable density or sprawl in syntax or argument. In other free-verse poems, white space serves to defamiliarize split or isolated textual elements, as in these lines from the Canadian poet bpNichol's *The Martyrology*:

hand

the h &
what else

**V. Mixed and Electronic Media.** Besides exploiting the visual elements of written lang. for various effects, experimental poets occasionally incorporate pictorial elements in their texts. Some poets compose, or collaborate with visual artists in composing, works that combine visual art and text. Asian poetry has a long trad. of such work. William Blake's illuminated books are a major Western example. The artist's book, a mode developed by visual artists, has been used by some contemp. experimental poets to explore the visual properties of texts. Along the continuum from purely literary art to purely visual, there are many possibilities for visual poetry with a dual aesthetic appeal—even for poetry without words. Other lines of poetic experimentation also offer visual possibilities; thus, scores for *sound poetry have been treated as a type of visual poetry.

In recent decades, the wide availability of the computer has given poets a means of text production and presentation that opens new possibilities for visual poetry. For the visually oriented poet, its value lies not in its allowing automated generation of text (see ELECTRONIC POETRY), but in its facilitating creation of spatial form, integration of graphic elements with text, use of color, and, esp., control of the pace of appearance and disappearance of segments of text (see TYPOGRAPHY). This control allows poets to incorporate temporal rhythms into visual form.

*See* LETTRISME.

■ G. Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), rpt. in Smith; J. Sparrow, *Visible Words* (1969); R. Massin, *La Lettre et l'image*, 2d ed. (1973); *Speaking Pictures*, ed. M. Klonsky (1975)—anthol.; J.J.A. Mooij, "On the 'Foregrounding' of Graphic Elements in Poetry," *Comparative Poetics*, ed. D. W. Fokkema et al. (1976); J. Ranta, "Geometry, Vision, and Poetic Form," *CE* 39 (1978); *Visual Literature Criticism*, ed. R. Kostelanetz (1979); R. Kostelanetz, *The Old Poetries and the New* (1981); Morier, under "Blanchissement," "Vide"; R. Shusterman, "Aesthetic Blindness to Textual Visu-

ality," *JAAC* 41 (1982); M. Cummings and R. Simmons, "Graphology," *The Language of Literature* (1983); H. M. Sayre, *The Visual Text of W. C. Williams* (1983); S. Cushman, *W. C. Williams and the Meanings of Measure* (1985), chap. 2; C. Taylor, *A Poetics of Seeing* (1985); Hollander; W. Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914–1928* (1986); R. Cureton, "Visual Form in e. e. cummings' *No Thanks*," *Word & Image* 2 (1986); J. Adler and U. Ernst, *Text als Figur* (1987); *The Line in Postmodern Poetry*, ed. R. Frank and H. Sayre (1988); "Material Poetry of the Renaissance / The Renaissance of Material Poetry," ed. R. Greene, *Harvard Library Bulletin* NS 3.2 (1992); *Experimental—Visual—Concrete*, ed. K. D Jackson et al. (1996); *Visuelle Poesie*, ed. H. L. Arnold and H. Korte (1997); J. Drucker, *Figuring the Word* (1998); *New Media Poetics*, ed. A. Morris and T. Swiss (2006).

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 *over*heard. 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