
Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé
Voice, Conversation and Music
Helen Abbott
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BETWEEN BAUDELAIRE AND MALLARMÉ

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Voice, Conversation and Music

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2009 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Abbott, Helen
Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: voice, conversation and music.
1. Baudelaire, Charles, 1821–1867 – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Mallarmé, Stéphane, 1842–1898 – Criticism and interpretation. 3. French poetry – 19th century – History and criticism. 4. Oral interpretation of poetry. 5. Music – France – 19th century – Philosophy and aesthetics. 6. Music and literature – France – History – 19th century.
I. Title
841.8'09–dc22

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Abbott, Helen.
Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: voice, conversation and music / Helen Abbott.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 978-0-7546-6745-2 (alk. paper)
1. Baudelaire, Charles, 1821–1867 – Criticism and interpretation. 2. Mallarmé, Stéphane, 1842–1898 – Criticism and interpretation. 3. French poetry – 19th century – History and criticism. I. Title.
PQ2191.Z5A526 2009
841'.8–dc22

2009007672

ISBN 9780754667452 (hbk)
ISBN 9781315569093 (ebk)

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Abbreviations

The editions of Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's work referred to throughout are the Pléiade editions (see bibliography for full details), and will be signalled by the following abbreviations:

B.*OC*	Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*
B.*Corr*	Baudelaire, *Correspondance*
M.*OC*	Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*

Certain publishers have also been abbreviated as follows:

CUP	Cambridge University Press
OUP	Oxford University Press
PUF	Presses Universitaires de France

Note on the text

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Acknowledgements

With thanks to Anne Green and Craig Moyes at King's College London, and to those who humoured me with challenging conversations, book loans and advice, especially David Evans, Patrick Ffrench, Roger Pearson and Dee Reynolds, and finally to those who provided invaluable support, proofing and technical assistance, especially Anne Abbott, Steve Abbott, Veronica Holland, Felix McGonigal, Matthew O'Sullivan, Katie Playfair and Carol Tully. I am grateful to the AHRC for funding this research.

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Prologue

The opening of a one-act play by Jean Cocteau, which was premièred at the Comédie-Française in 1930 and set to music as an opera for solo soprano by Francis Poulenc in the late 1950s, satirises the notoriously unreliable Parisian telephone exchange of the day. The audience hears only one side of a telephone conversation between a female protagonist and her lover. Amongst the passionately fierce outbursts directed at her lover – for she knows that her lover is to marry another woman the following day – the woman finds herself also having to fend off other parties who have been connected erroneously by the operator into her own telephone conversation:

> Allô, allô, allô..... Mais non, Madame, nous sommes plusieurs sur la ligne, raccrochez..... Vous êtes avec une abonnée..... Mais, Madame, raccrochez vous-même..... Allô, Mademoiselle, allô..... Laissez-nous..... Mais non, ce n'est pas le docteur Schmidt..... Zéro huit, pas zéro sept..... allô! c'est ridicule..... On me demande; je ne sais pas. *(Elle raccroche, la main sur le récepteur. On sonne.)*..... Allô!..... Mais, Madame, que voulez-vous que j'y fasse? ..... Vous êtes très désagréable..... Comment, ma faute?..... pas du tout..... pas du tout..... Allô!..... allô, Mademoiselle..... On me sonne et je ne peux pas parler. Il y a du monde sur la ligne. Dites à cette dame de se retirer. *(Elle raccroche. On sonne)*. Allô, c'est toi?..... c'est toi?..... Oui..... J'entends très mal..... tu es très loin, très loin..... Allô..... c'est affreux..... il y a plusieurs personnes sur la ligne..... Redemande. Allô! *Re-de-mande*..... Je dis redemande-moi..... Mais Madame, retirez-vous. Je vous répète que je ne suis pas le docteur Schmidt..... Allô!..... *(Elle raccroche. On sonne.)* Ah! enfin..... c'est toi..... oui..... très bien...[1]

> [Hello, hello, hello..... But no, Madame, there are several of us on the line, hang up..... You're talking to a lady already connected..... But, Madame, you hang up yourself..... Hello, Mademoiselle, hello..... Leave us..... But no, this is not Doctor Schmidt..... Zero eight, not zero seven..... hello! it's ridiculous..... Someone is asking for me; I don't know. (*She hangs up, her hand on the receiver. It rings.)*..... Hello!..... But, Madame, what do you want me to do?..... You are most impolite..... How is it my fault?..... not at

[1] Jean Cocteau, *La Voix humaine* (Paris: Librairie Stock, Delamain & Boutelleau, 1930), pp.25–27. All translations throughout are my own. I have favoured a literal translation over more poetic renditions in order to assist the reader less familiar with the French language.

> all..... not at all..... Hello!..... hello, Mademoiselle..... Someone is calling me and I cannot speak. There is someone else on the line. Tell this lady to get off. *(She hangs up. It rings.)* Hello, is that you?..... is that you?..... Yes..... It's very hard to hear..... you're very far away, very far away..... Hello..... it's dreadful..... there are several people on the line..... Redial. Hello! *Re-di-al*..... I said redial asking for me..... But Madame, get off the line. I repeat that I am not Doctor Schmidt..... Hello!..... *(She hangs up. It rings.)* Ah! finally..... it's you..... yes..... very well...]

The crossed wires involved in this conversation, and the one-sided textual and dramatic representation of it, offer an angle from which to approach the kind of problems that arise when conversing with others.

When using our voices to converse with others, we might find ourselves being misunderstood, interrupted, overheard or cut off in mid-flow.[2] These potentially negative features of a conversation are, however, such an inherent feature of the way in which we use our voices with regard to others that we are often hardly aware of the problems that they might cause. Even in the face of these risks, we still converse with others, and in fact our awareness of these negative aspects is what feeds our ability to be able to communicate, and they contribute to our naturally sophisticated system of conversational exchange.

My initial encounter with the Cocteau text in the form of a concert performance of Poulenc's operatic setting served as the impetus behind the current study, prompting me to explore questions of conversation, communication and exchange in relation to the human and textual voices used in poetry. For the poet who 'converses' with his reader, the problems he encounters are the same as those encountered by the female protagonist of *La Voix humaine*: he constantly runs the risk of being misunderstood, interrupted, overheard or cut off in mid-flow. Yet this does not put him off writing poetry. The 'conversation' that constitutes poetry is a sophisticated means of communication. Poetry embraces these risks in order to move beyond any superficial form of communication which fails to take into account the complexities of the way in which the human voice is able to interact with others.

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[2] Derrida comments on a particular telephone conversation in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, suggesting that the telephone conversation is an interior conversation which both constitutes and ruptures any conversation: 'Intériorité téléphonique, donc: car avant tout dispositif portant ce nom dans la modernité, la *tekhnè* téléphonique est à l'œuvre au-dedans de la voix, multipliant l'écriture des voix sans instruments, dirait Mallarmé, téléphonie mentale qui, inscrivant le lointain, la distance, la différance et l'espacement dans la *phonè*, *à la fois* institue, interdit *et* brouille le soi-disant monologue' ['Telephonic interiority, then: because before any device carrying this name in modern times, the telephonic *tekhnè* is at work within the voice, multiplying the writing of voices without instruments, as Mallarmé would say, mental telephony which, inscribing the distant, the distance, the deferral and the spacing in the *phonè*, *at the same time* institutes, forbids *and* blurs the so-called monologue']. Jacques Derrida, *Ulysse gramophone* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), p.82.

Introduction

'Voice' is a notoriously slippery concept. The trajectory that can be followed from Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) to Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898) in their use of poetic language and forms has been well-documented, marking a shift from seemingly straightforward representational language, to more elusive, indirect, suggestive language. However, little emphasis has thus far been placed on how this affects reading practices, and how each poet employs and exploits both his own voice and the voices of others in order to establish a particular aesthetic response. The stark differences in the way poems by Baudelaire and Mallarmé sound to the ear or feel on the lips are an indication not simply of each poet's own distinctive 'voice', but also of how the developing aesthetic of each poet reflects a particular attentiveness to the effects created by the voice of the text itself. In this study, I shall suggest that the second half of the nineteenth century in France saw a renewed focus on the notion of 'voice' as an important aesthetic principle for poetry, and that this is especially evident in the works of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. My analysis acknowledges that the notion of 'voice' undergoes certain re-evaluations during the course of the nineteenth century, and that, as recent critical analysis has established, 'voice' remains an elusive term because it seeks to incorporate a complex range of physical, textual and symbolic ideas.[1] It is not simply a case of 'voice' defining the selfhood or identity of each poet,

[1] Michel Chion, for example, criticises French theoretical writing on voice for failing to explore 'voice' in a systematic way, and opens his study *La Voix au cinéma* (Paris: Éditions de l'Étoile, 1982) by describing the voice as 'elusive'. Dominique Ducard, meanwhile, highlights that 'voice' is, by its very nature, a complex theoretical problematic: 'Le statut ontologique de la voix, à la croisée du corps et de la pensée, du sens intime qu'elle révèle et de la signification conventionelle qu'elle délivre dans la parole, du subjectif et de l'interpersonnel, en fait un objet théorique dont la problématique est nécessairement complexe' ['The ontological status of the voice, at the crossroads between body and thought, of the sense of intimacy that it reveals and of the conventional signification that it provides in the spoken word, of the subjective and of the interpersonal, makes it an object of theoretical study whose problematic is necessarily complex']. Dominique Ducard, *La Voix et le miroir: Une étude sémiologique de l'imaginaire et de la formation de la parole* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002), p.10. Danielle Cohen-Levinas talks of voice as a paradox, outlining how 'la voix résiste aux méthodologies musicales, à l'objectivation des codes et à la réduction sémiotique. Nous savons qu'il s'agit d'un matériau complexe, fascinant, fondamentalement ambivalent' ['the voice is resistant to musical methodologies, to the objectification of codes and to semiotic reduction. We know that we are dealing with a material which is complex, fascinating, and profoundly ambivalent']. Danielle Cohen-Levinas, *La Voix au-delà du chant: une fenêtre aux ombres* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p.19.

rather it is the effects of using 'voice' in poetry – and the way that this can spark interactions, resonances and exchanges – that will be foregrounded in this study.

The initial underlying question behind this research is: what is the difference, if any, between reading poetry out loud and reading it internally? Since this is a very broad question which relates, essentially, to the 'performance practice' of poetry (to borrow a term from musicology), my field of analysis will be narrowed to four main areas of focus – Rhetoric, Body, Exchange and Music – in order to:

1. evaluate the importance of prescriptive rules or principles – most notably rhetoric, prosody and music – in the context of poetic production during the nineteenth century in France, and the extent to which these principles contribute to a definition of 'voice' as something which is both active and memorable;
2. consider the role of the human body or physical attributes of voice in the context of textual poetic practices; an analysis of the relationship between physical and textual manifestations of voice and the extent to which this is a dynamic process which privileges an ideal of resonance will further refine initial definitions of 'voice' as active and memorable in the context of Baudelaire and Mallarmé in particular;
3. explore the extent to which 'voice' must be considered as a process, and more specifically as a process of exchange, and to suggest that Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's models of conversational exchange begin to favour increasingly strange, foreign and abstract voices even in the face of potential risks and threats, such as infiltration by other, more seemingly powerful, voices;
4. assess whether trying to define voice as an active, memorable, dynamic, resonant, abstract process of exchange in the context of Baudelaire and Mallarmé is ultimately underpinned by a desire to create music rather than poetry, and to suggest that the forms and strategies of the song setting represent at once the ideal and yet the most problematic scenario for using 'voice' effectively.

Through detailed analyses of both the poetic and critical writings by Baudelaire and Mallarmé, I seek to add to existing critical work on the notion of 'voice' by addressing what 'voice' can mean in relation to reading and writing practices in poetry. The overriding concern, then, is the ways in which 'voice' in poetry is defined and influenced by aesthetic concerns. This study does not follow a strictly chronological path starting with Baudelaire and moving on to Mallarmé (although my opening chapter sets the scene in relation to earlier poetic and theoretical practices, and most notably the overriding spectre of Hugo); instead I have chosen to read both Baudelaire and Mallarmé closely together, looking at what happens in the 'between' spaces of their work. That Verlaine, a poet who also demonstrates a particular preoccupation with the nature and status of 'voice' in his poetic writings, has not been included as a key figure in this study is due the fact that this research relies on exploring the relationship between poetic and critical writings.

Verlaine's lack of critical writings in comparison to the wealth of texts composed by Baudelaire and Mallarmé situates him in a different mould, although his poetic influence cannot be ignored.

Rhetoric

The rhetorical aspect of this study will explore the governing principles which underlie poetic production during the nineteenth century in France, and in particular those principles which addressed how a poem was to be read. I draw from a number of key rhetorical and prosodic theories and principles which specifically preoccupied poets of the era, including Hugo, Gautier, Banville, and Baudelaire and Mallarmé in particular. I shall refer to a range of classical, nineteenth-century and contemporary theoretical concepts and treatises on poetry in order to establish the status of rhetoric, prosody and music during this period. This leads me to address a number of questions including: should strict rhetorical or metrical rules be adhered to in order to assist the reader who will 'voice' a poem upon reading? Are any diversions from poetic rules a direct result of a particular emphasis on the role of the human voice in poetic language? Should poetic composition be governed solely by the extent to which it sounds pleasing to the ear? I explore to what extent 'voice' in the context of traditional rhetorical practice is an action, insofar as it might prompt effects within a particular temporal framework that will be lasting, repeatable and, ultimately, memorable (in rhetorical terms, as I shall elaborate, this is the relationship between 'actio' and 'memoria'). The purpose of this opening section on rhetorical practices is to establish both the framework within which the poets were working, and a theoretical framework for exploring the aesthetic outcomes of the concept of 'voice' within the context of a fresh approach to Baudelaire and Mallarmé which considers their work in dialogue.

Body

If I take as my framework the notion that 'voice' is both active and memorable, how then does this affect how poets compose and readers read? I seek to answer this question in Chapter 2 by considering three core elements:

a. what performance scenarios or vocal enactments are at the disposal of the poet and his reader?
b. what do we know about the ways in which Baudelaire or Mallarmé read their own poetry?
c. what are the implications of the differing dynamic properties of the human voice in the context of verse and prose poetry?

By exploring the ways in which each poet exploits both quieter whispering voices (which are supposedly close to the internal silence of thought) and louder shouting or crying voices (which are supposedly too loud to be considered as part of internal thought) in their written texts, I seek to understand how the dynamic range of voices portrayed therein leads the reader to react physically to these voices, even when the reader does not read out loud.

Alongside my analysis of Baudelaire's and Mallarmé's own writings, I also take into consideration more recent work in a domain outside of literary studies – the field of neuroscience – which seeks to explain why the distinction between reading or speaking out loud and reading or speaking internally is so difficult to pin down. I propose that this difficulty is not only a necessary feature of the human voice, but one that begins to explain the aesthetic agenda which underlies the work of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. The human voice is bestowed with particular dynamic properties that link the physical elements of voice with more abstract connotations which derive from the poetic text itself. I shall argue, then, that 'voice' is to be understood not simply as a purely corporeal feature, nor as a purely textual or abstract notion, but as a concept that encapsulates a dynamic interaction between both corporeal and abstract properties. If we understand 'voice' as something dynamic, which has as its purpose an aesthetic outcome, then we can better contend with the manifold attributes of voice that arise within the works of both poets under consideration here.

One of the most prominent aesthetic outcomes of poetic language for Baudelaire and Mallarmé is its potentially resonant effects. I turn, in Chapter 3, to study the implications of creating a 'vocal resonance' through poetic language. The concept of 'resonance' derives from the way that both poets talk about 'voice' as a vibration not just of the vocal chords, but also of words and language. Both poets contend with the various resonances that are established between different senses, sounds, meanings and sensations created by words, but there is a marked shift in Mallarmé's work which begins, seemingly, to place a greater emphasis on the sensation of language. The aesthetic implications of this are significant. Of course, for Baudelaire and Mallarmé, who are both indebted to Poe's *Philosophy of Composition*, the notion of 'aesthetics' implies a supposedly 'scientific' approach towards the concept of Beauty.[2] The origins of the word 'aesthetics' from the Greek 'aisthêtikos' also imply that this 'science' is predominantly a science of sensation. Baudelaire's defining use of the word 'esthétique' in his collected art criticism of the 'Curiosités esthétiques' embodies both these meanings: what strategies should be used in order to create beauty in art, and how do they affect us? I shall suggest that the 'science' of creating beautiful sensations uncovers some significant new developments at the hands of Baudelaire and Mallarmé.

In particular, after Baudelaire's 'correspondances', Mallarmé shifts the focus towards the 'sensation' of poetic language as a particular defining feature of

[2] Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Philosophy of Composition', *Essays and Reviews* (New York: The Library of America, 1984).

aesthetic experience. In order to create a 'sensation' through poetic language, a certain set of conditions is required. Mallarmé is careful to prepare the way for a particular process of vibration which suspends meaning in order to concentrate on the wider range of effects or responses that can emanate from particular patternings of language. It was Margaret Miner who first coined the term 'resonant gaps', and this seems to be precisely what is at stake for Mallarmé as he seeks to enable language to resonate within the interstices between possible meanings or interpretations.[3] The implication of this, as I shall propose, is that a particularly demanding kind of 'resonance' begins to emerge from poetic language, one which suggests that the human voice will only be profoundly active and memorable if the whole body is involved in a particular process of vibration.

Exchange

Perceiving 'voice' as a process of vibration raises questions about the stability of 'voice' as a concept. What emerges from the writings of both poets is that this instability is a necessary feature of their aesthetic agenda. Such a shifting concept of 'voice' enables them to exploit the potentially negative aspects of using 'voice' in poetry, including those that derive from misunderstandings or conflicting opinions. I develop this in my fourth chapter by exploring the ways in which Baudelaire and Mallarmé deal with the process of 'voice' as it becomes an exchange of different voices, particularly in the context of conversation. My analysis of particular textual traits which designate voice (or, in the case of Mallarmé, deliberately try to avoid designating a specific voice) leads me to explore the extent to which the process of exchanging voices is central to our understanding of the aesthetic effects of using 'voice' in poetry. On a basic level, a process of exchange implies a reciprocal giving and taking; in the context of exchanging voices, this suggests that in order to be able to take on different voices, each poet (and, indeed his reader) must be prepared to give up his own individual voice. In fact, I shall suggest that the very concept of an 'individual voice' is an inherently unstable feature of language which both poets exploit to the full in their poetic texts. In order to establish that yearned-for resonant sensation, it seems that the poets must avoid those voices which are overtly subjective. My analysis will demonstrate that as a result, it becomes increasingly difficult for anyone to accept responsibility for a particular voice. The poets begin, then, to favour voices which are strange, abstract or difficult to identify.

In the case of both Baudelaire and Mallarmé, adopting the quality of strangeness demonstrates an acceptance of the fact that there is always ample scope for misunderstandings within the context of conversational exchanges. As I explore in my fifth chapter, misunderstandings do not, however, necessarily result

[3] Margaret Miner, *Resonant Gaps between Baudelaire and Wagner* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

in a failure to elicit a resonant response. In Baudelaire's prose poem 'L'Étranger', for example, a mysterious stranger seems persistently to misunderstand his interlocutor's intentions:[4]

> 'Qu'aimes-tu le mieux, homme énigmatique, dis? ton père, ta mère, ta sœur ou ton frère?
> – Je n'ai ni père, ni mère, ni sœur, ni frère.
> – Tes amis?
> – Vous vous servez là d'une parole dont le sens m'est resté jusqu'à ce jour inconnu.'
>
> ['Tell me, enigmatic man, who do you like best? Your father, your mother, your sister or your brother?'
> 'I have no father, no mother, no sister and no brother.'
> 'Your friends?'
> 'You are using a word whose meaning, up until today, has remained unknown to me.']

The initial interlocutor uses words that the 'extraordinaire étranger' ['extraordinary foreigner'] seems not to understand; the 'étranger' himself concludes the conversation with an enigmatic and perplexing response, emphasised by the use of ellipsis: 'J'aime les nuages…' ['I like the clouds…'].[5] In Mallarmé's aesthetic, meanwhile, the advantage of misunderstanding is that it prevents the conversational interlocutor (and also the reader) from approaching the poetic conversation with too many preconceptions or clichéd interpretations. The quality of strangeness instead leads the reader to re-read, to re-voice, and to re-act in a different way each time the poetic text is brought to voice.

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[4] Charles Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes,* ed. by Claude Pichois, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1975–1976), I, p.277. All subsequent references will be designated by the abbreviation B.*OC*.

[5] Steve Murphy explores this impossible conversation in his analysis 'Six réponses de *L'Étranger* ou l'art de tuer la conversation', highlighting that 'Les tirets qui ponctuent la plupart des débuts de ligne de *L'Étranger* marquent avec insistance un échange de voix' ['The dashes which punctuate most of the beginnings of lines in *L'Étranger* insistently signal an exchange of voices']. Steve Murphy, *Logiques du dernier Baudelaire: Lectures du Spleen de Paris* (Paris: Champion, 2003), pp.161–177.

Music

It is perhaps not surprising that music becomes such an important feature of both poets' attitudes towards the notion of 'voice'.[6] Music has the advantageous property of being able to communicate and create a resonance even though its voices may be incomprehensible, foreign, strange or abstract. My final chapter broaches the issue of music in relation to the process of using 'voice' in poetry, and reconsiders initial hypotheses put forward in my opening chapter on poetic principles, where I acknowledge the profound influence of musical criteria on poetic composition during the nineteenth century. The slippage between the status of verbal and non-verbal uses of voice becomes an important conundrum for each poet's output. It is for this reason, I suggest, that neither the model of vocal music nor the model of instrumental music is specifically privileged by either poet. Poetry instead becomes idealised as a 'chant-instrument', different from vocal music, different from instrumental music, different from music altogether, and yet still beholden to it. Music, after all, has voices which interact and converse in strange and mysterious ways – and this is inherent to the aesthetic ideal for poetic composition that Baudelaire and Mallarmé seem to yearn for. I focus in particular on the ways in which each poet exploits the precarious balance between music and poetry by acknowledging the ways in which both arts continue to borrow from one another. This persistent borrowing of poetry by music and music by poetry – particularly, though not exclusively, through repetitive traits such as refrains – further elucidates the process of exchanging voices that I explore in earlier chapters, since it suggests that the process of exchange is not simply one of conversation or dialogue between particular voices, but also one which results in the loss of certain voices as others (such as those of music) take precedence.

I supplement my analysis of the interaction between poetic and musical voices by considering a particular form which seemingly unites them both, that is to say, the song setting. Whilst I do not attempt to do a full analysis of all the Baudelaire or Mallarmé poems set to music (since this would go far beyond the intended scope of the present study), I shall focus briefly on a small number of examples which demonstrate the ways in which the exchange between poetry and music is always complicated by disruptions, irregular patternings and disappearances. The process of give-and-take between poetry and music enacts the process of exchanging voices in a particularly profound way (since poetry hankers after music's abstraction and emotive force, and music hankers after poetry's meanings). Exchanging both poetic

[6] Clive Scott's 'État présent' focusing on French verse analysis notes that recent critical attention has begun to explore the important relationship between voice and music in poetic composition. See *French Studies*, 60:3 (2006), 369–376. My own approach seeks not to privilege 'voice' over 'music', or 'orality' over 'musicality' (or indeed vice versa), but to understand how 'voice' cannot be dissociated from 'music' in the poetry and poetics of Baudelaire and Mallarmé, drawing, where relevant, from contemporary song settings of their poems.

and musical voices inevitably results in moments where the exchange falters, is disrupted, or distorted; and I shall conclude by suggesting that it is precisely these moments that Baudelaire and Mallarmé are at pains to exploit in order to elicit a particular aesthetic response. So my initial question – what is the difference, if any, between reading poetry out loud and reading it internally? – takes on an entirely different colour in the context of the song setting. The differences in interpretation and reading that arise from different settings of a poem will remind us that the relationship between music and poetry is a productive one because the aesthetic response that is able to emerge actively engages with lingering vestiges of different voices which gradually lose themselves in a process of exchange.

Voice, Conversation and Music

By taking an overarching approach which acknowledges important relationships between voice, conversation and music, this study aims to offer a more comprehensive analysis than that which has been carried out thus far by other scholars in the field. Research into Baudelairean voices has frequently privileged particular issues such as duality or gender. Barbara Johnson, for example, has focused on the duality of Baudelaire's voice and 'la structure dialogique de la plupart des *Fleurs du Mal*' ['the dialogic structure of the majority of *Les Fleurs du Mal*']; my own approach acknowledges the importance of dialogue in Baudelaire's writings, but rather than placing emphasis on the duality of the 'je' and 'tu' personae inscribed therein, I take an aesthetic standpoint which privileges a more abstract process of exchange.[7] Rosemary Lloyd has addressed the issue of gendered voices in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, suggesting that 'Baudelaire's poems seduce us into setting aside the gender-specific mask of the hypocrite reader, and living instead through that plethora of personae that mill about in his destabilizing and therefore liberating world'; I accept this interchangeability of gendered voices as an inherent feature of an aesthetic approach to 'voice', particularly during an era of poetry where any direct relationship between 'voice' and subject becomes increasingly destabilised.[8] Such destabilisation is further exacerbated by issues of temporality and death, and Elissa Marder's work on the relationship between conversational speech and consciousness of time, offers an important springboard for my project.[9] Concerning Mallarméan voices, critical research has already touched on issues such as dynamics and the relationship between voice and text. Roger Pearson, for example, has addressed Mallarmé's predilection for quieter

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[7] Barbara Johnson, *Défigurations du langage poétique: la seconde révolution baudelairienne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), p.60.

[8] Rosemary Lloyd, 'Hypocrite Brother, Hypocrite Sister: Exchanging Genders in *Les Fleurs du Mal*', *French Studies*, 53:2 (1999), 167–175 (p.174).

[9] Elissa Marder, *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p.18.

dynamic volumes in his circumstantial poetry, such as reading 'sotto voce'; I elaborate on this concept in relation to the wider corpus of Mallarmé's writings.[10] Bertrand Marchal has analysed the way in which Mallarmé converts writing into voice in 'Hérodiade', and metaphorises the notion of 'voice' by comparing it to that most evocative of symbolist images, the setting sun; I seek to break down the distinction between 'voice' and writing and aim to avoid metaphorical readings of 'voice' in my analysis since my approach addresses 'voice' as a dynamic process rather than a symbolic image.[11] The most encompassing approach to the notion of 'voice' in relation to nineteenth-century poetry to date is Clive Scott's work which focuses on the context of reading and translating poetry. Scott's work provides invaluable refinement of the issues surrounding this slippery concept; I shall draw from Scott's analyses in order to develop these in more detail within the context of Baudelaire and Mallarmé in particular.[12]

Fundamentally, 'voice' is an area of study which is burdened with numerous critical preconceptions, which derive principally from fields outside of poetry and from developments in twentieth-century literary criticism in particular. Of particular relevance to this study is the work of Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette and Jacques Rancière but it is important to acknowledge the extent to which scholars in fields as diverse as philosophy of language, linguistics, poststructuralism, phenomenology and deconstructionism have all broached the concept of 'voice', frequently in widely conflicting ways. Since classical antiquity, 'voice' has typically been dubbed the 'source' of language, as its originary – and therefore ideal – state which is to be privileged over writing. In France such perceptions persisted throughout the centuries, with a notable exponent of this idea being Rousseau who believed the voice to be an organ of the soul.[13] According to this theory, the originary state of voice is not speech but thought, which is considered to be a pre-utterance prior to either speech or writing. Such considerations about the origins of voice, and specifically about the relationship between thought and speech, have undergone important critical reinterpretations throughout the twentieth century. The voice

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[10] See Roger Pearson, *Mallarmé and Circumstance: The Translation of Silence* (Oxford: OUP, 2004).

[11] See Bertrand Marchal, *La Religion de Mallarmé: poésie, mythologie et religion* (Paris: José Corti, 1988); 'une forme de lecture, immanente au poème … convertit l'écriture en voix' ['a form of reading, immanent to the poem … converts writing into voice'], p.55 and 'Cette phrase … mime le mouvement solaire de la voix, mouvement d'élévation puis de symétrique retombée' ['This phrase … mimics the solar movement of the voice, a movement of elevation and then of falling back down again'], p.67.

[12] See Clive Scott, *Channel Crossings: French and English Poetry in Dialogue 1550–2000* (Oxford: Legenda, 2002) and *The Poetics of French Verse: Studies in Reading* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

[13] See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1974), p.119. See also Lydia Goehr, *The Quest for Voice: On Music, Politics, and the Limits of Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p.104.

of thought is considered to be what constitutes a subject, and language itself. But the placing of language at the root of being would, according to poststructuralist thought, therefore imply that speaking or writing subjects are dislocated from their originary source.[14] However, definitions of what this 'originary source' might be are conflicting: for Barthes, the 'grain de la voix' ['the grain of the voice'] is the individual or unique (emotive) quality underlying each person's voice; for Kristeva individual phonemes are what constitute the workings of voice; for Derrida, who critiques long-held beliefs in 'logocentrism', meaning or truth behind voice is to be found in writing, not speaking; for Agamben the originary source is an incoherent cry or scream that has not yet been actualised into meaning.[15] Although the voice has an identifiable materiality within the human body, it is also bears aesthetic properties through language, as my own analysis will explore, since this has important ramifications for working with poetry.

The very instability of 'voice', which can appear and emerge in so many different guises in the context of poetry, is inherent to the developing symbolist aesthetic of the late nineteenth century in France. During the same period, writers in other fields, and in particular novelists, were beginning to explore the possibility of 'reproducing' the voice of 'le peuple'. Zola began to experiment with this idea in *L'Assommoir* in particular, and the Goncourt brothers endeavoured to convey particular qualities of the working-class voice in their work by using non-standard French. For these novelists, direct speech or dialogue became an important area of focus. Yet where novelists sought to reproduce as far as possible, poets instead sought to exploit a more dynamic interaction between different voices that goes beyond textual techniques of reproduction. Where 'voice' becomes interesting in poetry, I suggest, is at those moments where it is put into action

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[14] For further analysis of these perspectives see, for example, Christina Howells, *Derrida: Deconstruction from Phenomenology to Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), pp.45–75; or Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[15] See Roland Barthes, 'Le Grain de la voix' in *Œuvres complètes,* ed. by Éric Marty, 3 vols (Paris: Seuil, 1994), II; Julia Kristeva, *Polylogue* (Paris: Seuil, 1977) and *La Révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974); Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène: introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Paris: PUF, 1989), *Ulysse gramophone* (Paris: Galilée, 1987) and *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967); Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: the Place of Negativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991). For a summary of different critical arguments pertaining to the concept of 'voice', see also Paul Zumthor, *Performance, réception, lecture* (Longueuil: Éditions du Préambule, 1990). Clive Scott's analysis of voice or 'vocal presence' in fin-de-siècle French and English verse specifically privileges the Barthes–Kristeva model of the 'géno-texte' which he defines as 'a play of signifiers where meaning is always in the process of being made, unmade and re-made' and which is opposed to the expressive voice of the 'phéno-texte' where meanings are already articulated. See *Channel Crossings*, p.181. Whilst I shall refer later to Barthes' essay on 'Le Grain de la voix', my own approach draws from an aesthetic argument rather than a semiotic one.

(even subconsciously) under conditions that are strained, challenging, or even artificial. There are inevitable moments of crisis and confusion, there are inevitable moments of impotence and silence; but these are also counterbalanced by moments of confidence and clarity. It is easy to lament the fact that poetry is no longer read out loud, and that people (students or otherwise) simply no longer know how to read poetry. However, since reading poetry is complicated by the fact that so many different vocal decisions need to be made, I shall call into question the extent to which either Baudelaire or Mallarmé intended their poetry to be read out loud, and address whether the effects produced by reading out loud are necessarily to be privileged over an internal reading. As the contemporary poet Yves Bonnefoy has suggested, a distinction between reading out loud and reading internally is difficult to maintain.[16] The nuances that I shall explore in the varying dynamics of voice, as they are exploited by each poet, will allow me to break down distinctions between reading out loud and reading internally.

In my exploration of different possible performance scenarios for poetry, theories of 'performativity', particularly those which explore the dynamic properties of performance, will influence my analysis of how 'voice' can be both internal and external, and both written and spoken.[17] Each poet is aware of the wider scope of performance possibilities for his poetry, which might remain in the privacy of a fireside armchair, or may encroach upon more public domains of music and theatre. John E. Jackson suggests that Mallarmé's poetry has a more interior and oblique addressee than Baudelaire's:

> Baudelaire parle, il fait de son poème le théâtre d'une parole qui, le plus souvent, est orientée vers un destinataire clairement identifié. Ainsi l'oralité devient-elle, plus qu'un caractéristique relative, le registre naturel de sa poésie. À l'opposé du rêve mallarméen d'une écriture se réfléchissant seule dans l'espace nocturne et

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[16] 'Y aurait-il quelque différence, pour un auteur, entre lire son œuvre (avec ses yeux, sur la page) et prononcer à voix haute un texte déjà écrit? Cette distinction ne tient pas' ['is there a difference of some sort, for an author, between reading his work (with his eyes, on the page) and speaking a text already written out loud? This distinction does not stand up']. Yves Bonnefoy, *La Poésie à voix haute* (Condeixa-a-Nova: Ligne d'ombre, 2007), p.31.

[17] J.L. Austin's speech-act theory remains the dominant work in this area. See *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962). The critical concept of 'performance' was popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With specific reference to Baudelaire and Mallarmé, see Marie Maclean, *Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988) and Mary Lewis Shaw, *Performance in the Texts of Mallarmé: The Passage from Art to Ritual* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993). More recently, Joseph Acquisto has further nuanced the issue of performativity in relation to symbolist poetry and music, referring to recent work by Jonathan Culler, and suggesting that 'a performative approach to criticism infuses repetition with dynamism; it is an open-ended view of texts as unstable and perpetually tending to reinvention by acts of reading and writing'. Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.5.