CHAPTER 1. Toward a Philosophy of Literary Voice

Person as Voice: Thinking about a Metaphor

This is a book about a concept with its own profile and history. Our focus is human selfhood and subjectivity, as understood through the guise of voice. Voice is mask, grid, metaphor, a phenomenon of delay and remove. Difference, deferral is inevitable, even within one person's makeup, for full self-presence is strictly impossible. We know that, if we *think* of the sound and sense of our own voices, even as we speak our individual given names, we hear ourselves ever so slightly as another. (A further step away, worthy of study, but not here, is when a jazz clarinet or sax becomes the lyrical stand-in for the singing human voice, guise of a guise.) In newspaper language, the metaphor of voice is absolutely equated, conflated with the person. Philosophically this is an error, but it testifies to a need which the present study may analyze but never uproot. For voice is in fact a metaphor of enormous prestige in political and literary culture, an idealism that moves across nearly all geopolitical borders. Studying the person through and by means of the guise, we hope to penetrate ordinary usage and thus to tease apart the tenor (person) and the vehicle (voice) of the metaphor, to see what logical products may be created. Guise means something about person, and about why person needs guise. To begin by looking at guise and not directly at person will, we trust, release unusual energies. Voice as person is a special kind of metaphor—synecdoche, part for whole. But this need not mean a reduction in logical terms. It may indeed mean an expansion of the understanding of person, by means of movement into detours and inner foldings, mappings of outer battlements and inward sounding

corridors of selfhood. We may also move into volatile border states of
noise just before literature comes into being and just after, on the other
side, it has phased out into nonsense.

The verbs *defect, substitute, deviate*: in setting up the inquiry thus,
thinking about the metaphor of person as voice, we are repeating
Jonah's errancy, refusing to answer the call. Jonah is not only our fig-
ure for resistance to vocation, reluctant prophecy, the teacher who
needs instruction; he is also a role model for scholarly method and, to
expand this to its proper dimensions, for an ethics of scholarship.
Resisting the arrogance of an apocalyptic scholarship that would elim-
inate Jonah's fear and self-suspicion, Henri Meschonnic ends his book
on Jonah as an "errant signifier" saying "Jonah, that's me. That's to
say, you."[1] Peter Dews ends his book about post-structuralism's logics
of disintegration by denouncing an "inability to provide anything
other than a repudiation of the philosophy of the subject," and by
affirming what any philosophy of voice must needs affirm, "that cri-
tique is not a question of the arbitrary and coercive espousal of pre-
misses and precepts, but rather a commitment to that coherence of
thought which alone ensures its emancipatory power."[2] In the present
post-post-structuralist moment, the order of the day is the finding of a
logic of integration which would deliver a human subject not held cap-
tive by the limitations of a discredited philosophy of consciousness.

Perhaps this is why so many excellent studies have recently con-
verged on the issue of voice: not only the Franco-American and central
European appropriation of the dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin, but in
addition many French and French-influenced and homegrown Anglo-
American descriptions of what Eric Griffiths calls "printed voice." In
this integrationist moment, we are beyond the stage of David Carroll's
1980s book, *The Subject in Question*, beyond the necessary thoroughgo-
ing skepticisms of Jacques Derrida's sixties antiphonocentrism, and
ready to be "For the Subject," as Geoffrey Hartman says in his dedica-
tion to *Saving the Text* (1981).[3] But what subject, and according to what
logics? How preserve a critical and political dimension within the
metacritique, while still admiring Jonah's strange disgust at a prophe-
cy that has no instant result in agency, his unwillingness, as
Meschonnic says (81), to play God's game? Only a cogent theory of the
relation of the subject to the social will support a philosophy of voice
as a metaphor of person. Beyond even this, as a difficulty quite suffi-
cient by itself for study, is the question of the sacred, raised by Jonah
when he runs away and refuses Yahweh (act of commission and
escape) and raised by Jonah when he holds his tongue (silent act of
omission and escape). Meschonnic (81): "Job recognizes that God is
right. Jonah is quiet. The book ends on Jonah's silence, his non-

response to God's question." Could our book dare to do better than Jonah, to complete Jonah? *To answer?* Never. Yahweh hasn't talked to us—directly. (To be exact, Yahweh never talked to the anonymous author of the Book of Jonah, either.) Still, we come up against the edges of sacred voice at several points, because no comprehensive study should omit theology or, in our day, the scholarship of Henri Meschonnic on the Jewish side and of Jesuits Walter J. Ong and Michel de Certeau.

Three Elements of a Comprehensive Philosophy of Literary Voice

A History/Theory of the Relation of Voice to Person

Such a history/theory would also be an account of the relation of person to the voice that is in the text, on the page. Our own account says that voice is the undecidable as between person and text. Literary voice simultaneously affirms writing and puts it into question. This is our way of rephrasing the truly constructive point, first to our knowledge made by Meschonnic, that those marks of orality we call "voice" may be found equally in speaking and in writing. If that is the case, then the speaking-writing opposition which has so dominated thinking in this field, and which has put speaking over writing, can be surpassed by thought. The issue for the present book is the correct definition of the speaking that is in writing.

A naturalized and entirely conventional usage is to call the voice the "self," by an unproblematized synecdoche of the ephemeral part, sounds on the breath, for the person or the group of persons. Our way, by contrast, is to keep pressing the to-us-unanswerable question, Who is speaking? To ask the question in historical and phenomenological contexts will reduce the possible number of replies from infinity to something usually countable, usually nearby.

Who is speaking? is preeminently a question of our own period of literary speculation, the period of communications technology and advanced methods of voice simulation, voice reproduction. Our inability to be certain in this matter tends to define us in our modern and postmodern era. Dennis Potter, author of *The Singing Detective*, a six-part television series for the BBC, says: "One of the reasons I choose to write 'drama' rather than prose fiction is precisely to avoid the question which has so damaged, or intellectually denuded, the contemporary novel: '*Who is saying this?*'" Potter believes that "the masking of the Self is an essential part of the trade. Even, or especially, when

'using' the circumstances, pleasures and dilemmas of one's own life."[4]
So far from stating that he wants a definitive answer to the question of
Who, far from wanting certitude, he is looking for ways to increase
and diversify the baffles and masks. Potter rejects a fussy, popular-psy-
chology questioning of the Who behind the story, because he resists
anyone's reducing a play to an expressive event, a personal hangup.
This critique of expressivity is perhaps the crucial motive for scholar-
ly questioning of literary voice in our period and for authorial dis-
missal of voice as a metaphor of person.

　　To write such a critique does not only mean a withdrawal from
the concept of 'art as expression', but it necessarily implies a discus-
sion of certain important philosophical issues, as the very concept of
'expression', as Gilles Deleuze convinces us, is formed as a hub of most
significant philosophical notions such as 'being' (*être*), 'knowledge'
(*connaître*), and 'production' (*produire*).[5] Signalling here only a necessi-
ty of a much more detailed analysis of expression, suffice it to say that
a critique of expressive self involves two very important areas. First, it
must allow space for the events which are not directly or causally
linked with an individual, which have not been, so to speak, mastered
by the subject, and which yet enter the individual without being inte-
grated or submitted to any order imposed upon them by the subject.
What it practically means is that the correlation both between the sub-
ject and the world and between the "corporal" and "spiritual" orders
within the subject itself has been shaken and weakened. Thus, there
are events in one sphere which now do not quite "correspond."
(Deleuze [304] writes that it is precisely expression which establishes a
link between the spiritual and corporal series in humankind to any
value or symbol in the other, the "flat" events which we have no bet-
ter terms for than *chance* or *incident*.) In other words, a critique of
expressivity must signify the end of the romantic, individualistic tra-
dition of "correspondences" which sees the poet as the central unit
capturing and then expressing the system of relations. In fine, where-
as romanticism made an individual responsible for inscribing each
occurrence into the general pattern of correspondence between the
physical and historical on the one hand and the spiritual and tran-
scendental on the other, now the subject does not regulate the mecha-
nisms of general relatedness but is a part of it. One does not "express"
phenomena but takes down notes and minutes of chance operations.

　　Thus, John Cage is right when he claims that his intention in
preparing some of his musical pieces was to put "the stories, the inci-
dental sounds from the environment . . . together in an unplanned
way . . . to suggest that all things are related, and that this complexity
is more evident when it is not oversimplified by an idea of relationship

in one person's mind."[6] Second, a critique of expressive self puts a question mark next to such important notions as 'similitude' and 'analogy'. The expressive self operates on the principle that, (a) its acts are recognizable as carrying marks of their maker, and (b) that each act allows us to recapture the totality of the self. In terms of traditional metaphors, one has to recall Deleuze's point about two crucial metaphors of expressivity, one of the "mirror" (*"qui reflète ou réfléchit une image"*), and the other of a "germ" (*qui exprime l'arbre tout entier*) [Deleuze, 69, 163]. Thus, the self which does not define itself along the lines of expressivity cannot or at least cannot always "recognize" itself in its own product; neither can it claim that anyone, including the self itself, can get access to the "totality" of self through the "stylistic" analysis of the self's products. Consequently, there creeps in a noticeable rift between *ratio essendi, ratio cognoscendi*, and *ratio agendi* which, in turn, implies that a subject is no longer describable in terms of Leibnitzean monad.

One has only to mention dadaist and surrealist practices of collage making or *écriture automatique* to see how the aleatory appears as an integral part of the subject's product, the part which cannot be recognized as "resembling," "depicting" or "explaining" the subject. John Cage's operation on the book of *I Ching* is another good example of such procedures.[7]

Ours is a critique of expressivity, authorship, bardship, because it is a critique of presence. Jacques Derrida's famous attack on phonocentrism is our starting point. Elimination of the old philosophical subject and implied critique of intention and agency were the main legacies of Derrida's work in the sixties, primarily *Speech and Phenomena* and *Of Grammatology*. However, Derrida's absolute dismissal of the sound stratum of writing, and of the speech that is in writing, printed voice, seems now an overplayed hand. The tactful reassertion of voice as sound, voice as person, in Geoffrey Hartman's Derrida-influenced book *Saving the Text* (1981) gave support for our own sense that there was something to be rescued from the general devastation of antiphonocentrism—at the very least, an error to be defended. On the other hand we are conscious that Hartman has himself been criticized for giving back, in that book's analyses of Tennyson, what he took away from the philosophy of consciousness in his general statements.

The fundamental premises of the philosophy of the subject are self-constitution, self-boundedness, and self-property. The critique of this Cartesian-Kantian-Hegelian (and Capitalist) self-isolated subject has been thoroughgoing in the Marxist, deconstructive, and poststructuralist semiotic traditions. But there are other possible and workable

notions of the subject, and we develop and exemplify these. In the process, we write a critique of the expressive self and of self-presence, entering into an existing body of inquiry that seeks new forms of subjectivity and, we hope, extending its terms. (Whereas early in his career Michel Foucault argued for scholarly elimination of author study so as to widen research to historical discourses, later on he used this very term, *new forms of subjectivity*.)

Ours is an intersubjective account that makes much of the role of alterity, the equal-to-self role of others in the constitution of subjectivity. Utterance is on the borderline between at least two consciousnesses where all dialogic discourse takes place. This, Mikhail Bakhtin's lesson about dialogue, answerability, unfinalizability is in process of being tested in many kinds of examples of voice and bids fair to being the most complete theory of human communication to have emerged in the twentieth century.

The power and comprehensiveness of Bakhtin's dialogism may well mark the end of an entire era in Western thought about voice as person, person as voice. Walter J. Ong is right to argue that the era has its origins in the century of Ramus and what Ong calls the "decay of dialogue" with Guttenberg and the new forms of writing, reading, listening. These new forms, emergent in the late middle ages, tend to obliterate older collective modes of thought and earlier technologies of speaking, writing, reading. They permit, indeed encourage, that "ideology of the aesthetic" (Terry Eagleton's term) emergent in early modern Europe, particularly in Descartes, wherein separate selves separately experience the world and art. The seventeenth century is a crucial turning point, and we (like Jonathan Goldberg in his book on voice) see a remarkable new sophistication about the borrowing and citational echo effects in the poets of the seventeenth century, including the devotional poets. Writers in the era of the Restoration, such as Hobbes and Locke, begin to theorize self as property in a new way in the notion of possessive individualism. To have a notion of social contract means ceding some selfhood, some voice in the sense of representation and power, in order to found a state force which will keep brutishness at bay. One literary version of the new nationhood ideology is the bardic, many of whose origins or reinvigorations lie in the mid-eighteenth century. In the bardic is propounded a poetics of self and nation at a moment when the nation is being expanded (England) or attacked (Poland), and when the poet can speak expansively, expressively, with an I that is claimed to be a We. (That is why the bardic is in our own era unfashionable—the self expanded to represent the nation seems monstrous, a ridiculous claim.)[8]

This seventeenth and eighteenth-century moment also evokes the greatest explosion in the West of what Bakhtin called "inner

speech." George Steiner documented the rise of this type of consciousness in the coming of the novel, the proliferation of letter writing, the development of genres like memoirs, travel narratives, picturesque journeys. All these drive voice down into the interior self.[9] The culmination rather than the reversal of this trend is of course romanticism, when European history arrives at what early science, colonialism, proto-Capitalist acquisitiveness, and Cartesian self-study were all, it now seems, conducing toward—possession of an inner generative self, genius, an infinitely rich personality. Romantic philosophy and poetry explore the jostling of the humanism of the one against the humanism of the many, in the recent terms of historicist Roy Harvey Pearce, with the richness of singular self gaining preference. And as M. H. Abrams, Walter Jackson Bate, and others have shown, romantic criticism put the generative self at the center of systems of literary commentary. Within the public sphere of the two revolutions, industrial and political, there emerged promethean individuals, and also apertures for democratic individuals and indeed for the coming into power of a new middle class and the coming into consciousness of a new working class that identified itself as a group after 1789. Remaining with England only, we can record the coming of vote as voice in 1832; schooling as voice in the new education acts from the middle of the century to the end; extension of the vote to women during World War I. Heroic modernism in literature and painting develops lines already started in romanticism, chastening, diversifying, extending notions of self—only in Gertrude Stein and a few isolated figures, still unincorporated, anticipating the postmodern by spreading hints of self all over the flat surface of language.

Consider now the public sphere of eastern and central Europe in the 1990s, where many groups claim voice in the political sense: voice as vote, voice as nation, voice as ethnic group, voice as language. These imaginary communities, in Benedict Anderson's phrase, are finding an assertion of self and group after many years of submitting to the voice of authority. Just now, inner speech is in recession and political speech is a desperate life or death issue; but it is likely that, at any punctual moment shown in these paragraphs' quick survey, the same may well have seemed true for contemporaries with an interest in literature and in social justice.

A Theory of Communicative Context

Voice as person, person as voice, we have seen, is logically at the core of this topic, and yet this remains partial. Any cogent method must describe and exemplify a large network of interrelationships of

enunciation. Every voice, including prayer, needs an ear, imagines an addressee. The audience is, as Walter J. Ong has insisted, always a fiction, and particularly with the temporal and spatial distances required by printed voice. So voice is projecting an audience, to an audience— also the audience is plainly influencing content and tone. Thus in some sense uttering is also answering and listening is also helping to sculpt matter and tone of discourse. Bakhtin's work of the twenties on answerability is one source of such speculation. Another crucial achievement here is Jürgen Habermas's extended labor toward a sociology of communication—on the influence of a public sphere on communicative action. For Habermas, speaker and hearer, as partners, both simultaneously occupy the level of intersubjectivity and the level of objects (or state of affairs). This valuable inclusiveness is not to be found in accounts of communication which would foreground the metaphysics of power or desire, accounts which omit the relation to the other which is constitutive of subjectivity. An exception would be Jacques Lacan's reading of therapeutic communication, where without its being politicized we do find a theory of how interactive speaking forms and deforms selfhood from the earliest childhood moments.

Describing the reader's state of apprehension and actual practices will be part of any comprehensive account of literary voice. There will be many states and many practices, perhaps as many as readers, and yet the printed voice is there as a guide or grid to reading, a specific form of words. If there is plural reception, there would also appear to be plural enunciation, as in the kinds of questions Michel de Certeau asks as a reader of the devotional works of St. Teresa of Avila, "Who are you? Who else lives in you? To whom do you talk?" Mystical writing sponsors a plural enunciation to a single divine interlocutor, which is then overheard or overread by others.[10]

As a diagram to think with, to judge comprehensiveness, let us imagine a schema of critical theories that bear on communicative context. The schema is a more explicit version of M. H. Abrams' well-known triangle, here a clock with positions filled in for multicultural discussion of critical theories by Wai-lim Yip.[11] The compass points are North=World (things, events); East=Author (as individual); South=Work (the relative autonomy of the artwork); and West=Reader (norms of the reading public, cognitive practices of reading as a skill). At forty-five degrees from each of these cardinal points on the circle are four categories of literary theory, namely:

1. Between world and author: theories of perception of objects, author-centered theories of poetics.
2. Between author and work: theories of perception into art, form matching perception, mediumistic theories.

3. Between work and reader: theories of communication, function and effect, social and linguistic contract, communicative strategies, reception theory, hermeneutics.
4. Between reader and world: theories of historical relevance, mode of production theories, historical discrepancies in perception.

In the middle of the circle, subject to lines of force running from all points on the circumference, are a number of topics such as national resources, technological level, psychological features, societal norms, cultural factors, aesthetic theories, linguistic modes. That a valid literature and literary theory may be constructed from any of the eight positions on the outside of the circle is clear; names and schools of writers can be ranged on and between the cardinal compass points. Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism and Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action do not fit at any one compass point like other writers' ideas in the twentieth century. Bakhtin in particular moves between all points, existing in the middle of the circle with equal ability to move in all directions. Bakhtin's dialogism, with voices that are strongly marked by class and sociolect, retains issues in ideology. Western scholars, not only Slavists, looking to complete formal stylistics with a more communitarian-based stylistics, begin to find Bakhtin more adequate than, say, Roman Jakobson. What primarily distinguishes Bakhtin is his commitment to elaboration of the premise of the speaking subject as an answerable subject.

A Stylistics Based on Speech Orientation

In order to theorize the whole issue, a responsible philosophy of voice should bring back for analysis the following elements of printed voice, all of which have often been relegated to the sphere of the merely instrumental: the sound stratum of the text; questions of idiolect, dialect, sociolect; ordinary conversational language; and the visual configuration of the text, including the graphological and typological form, and also the processual patterns of the hands in sign language.

Sound made equal and made nonequal in meter, rhyme, and rhythm at all levels from syllable all the way up to whole text—those formal, phonic linguistic issues are not faced by Derrida, are indeed dismissed by him. But those who would revise and extend grammatology pay close attention to these devices—as in Garrett Stewart's focus on the double meanings literary works get from word junctures, in a recent book with a thesis in its title, insisting that *Reading Voices* (1990). Henri Meschonnic, in *Critique du rythme* (1982) treats rhythm as a privileged category, the place in the text where the free choice of the

self is on display and in rapport with the social, eluding the false opposition of signifier and signified. Another rich field of exploration is the role of sound as sound, sound as repetition, in religious glossolalia, studied by Michel de Certeau as a phenomenon of vocal utopia.[12] Intonation, for example in Jamaican or African-American writing that moves into and out of dialect, provides crucial interpretive information that is given over primarily by sound, though of course a writer's choices are also lexical, syntactical. When we study code switching in represented talk we put voice back into its cultural matrix. Printed voice must also include the fullest possible reference to visual configurations which give the reader an inducement to read a text as a unity, to recognize emphases, and to know when it is over. American sign language, which is not a spelling out of alphabet with fingers, is a privileged case for theory of voice, because it unquestionably is a language with a grammar and a syntax and has no phonic component whatever. Sign language is voice without sound, the purest instance of voice as person we can imagine, engaged daily by hundreds of thousands, and with its own literary technologies, sign systems, devices, emphases.

Whether as spoken evanescent sound or visual voice, the issue here comes down to a location in the human body, in physiology, in pulsions and compulsions that preexist, or accompany, language. This too has been relegated and needs to be repossessed, as it is most thoughtfully in David Appelbaum's philosophy of phatic and physical and preliterary voice. Our own way of conceiving this will be to bracket our study by developing two modes of the minimal. Maximal voice, which we treat in our middle chapters, has highly overdetermined meanings—meaning grafted onto meaning—and is thus literary voice as such. Minimal voice in our first sense (as noise) is exclamation, birdsong, babble, phatic utterance, phonic material that seems on the way to being articulate speech. Minimal voice in our second sense (as nonsense), in the final chapter, is the deliberate minimal of the avant-garde where language is used to mime breakdown of language, so to force the reader to look at each word, syllable, stanza, sentence, paragraph, or other structural or semantic feature as itself in all its strangeness and materiality. The first minimal is that of the not yet of the speaking subject, and the second minimal is the no longer. Innovation in critical inquiry as in literary creation sometimes occurs, when one inspects those places where stable constructions of person and genre break down. But to study only those places is not to be comprehensive. Language and voice as person need the body both for production and for reception, but to treat these as limited to or trapped within the body would betray the primary Bakhtinian axiom, which we take as our own: *we are dialogue on the boundaries between consciousnesses.*

There is now a larger fellowship of many scholars writing on related topics, and our affiliated inquiry is a work of synthesis, development, exemplification, refocusing, specification. Our book treats materials from ancient Greece and biblical culture, from early modern literature and philosophy, from the heyday of the bardic as a type of national voice in Enlightenment and romanticism, and from modernist and postmodernist literary culture. As to method, we have set out to complete a phenomenology with a historical stylistics and a sociology of voice. Theoretical and comparatist, we develop exemplary readings across many geopolitical and generic boundaries. Our book tries to live up to its title by arguing theoretical, theological, historical, and current pedagogical pertinences for the figure of errant, dissatisfied Jonah.

Across this gridwork, we develop our four leading ideas for the following reasons:

Speaking subject: Because we can no longer say subject as such, subject with a locked-inside consciousness that is bounded, self-possessed. Because we want to analyze propositions of subject which liberate and empower and propositions of subject which enslave.

Minimal Articulation: Because we want to test versions and elisions and syncopations of subject, vulnerable or perverse or excited or momentary states of experience, fragments of subjectivity where sound has not come all the way over to concept, where the vox confusa of animals or the body has not reached vox articulata but still has human meanings.

Regional Intentionality: Because we can no longer say "within the bubble of consciousness of the biographical individual," and yet, until we reach the furthest limit of avant-garde decentering and of electronic networking, we still refer to intention and agency, making assumptions about the social and other placement of person, of voice, knowing we can never finally specify a single place.

Indeterminate voice: Because we want to indicate an avant-garde literary language that is not reducible to person, but forces the reader into a furious hunt for continuity, individuality, centeredness, bounding outline, social tones of voice, most of which attributes have been eliminated in postmodern writing. Because the writing that eliminates or defaces relies on residual hopes for such attributes, in an era when they have been decertified as values.

These four expositions are designed as ways of putting right and filling the gaps in the survey of voice philosophy which follows in the two remaining sections of the present chapter.

The Speaking Subject:
Our Most Comprehensive Premise as Derived
from Emile Benveniste and Julia Kristeva

Where would I go, if I could go, who would I be, if I could be, what would I say, if I had a voice, who says this, saying it's me? Answer simply, someone answer simply. It's the same old stranger as ever, for whom alone accusative I exist, in the pit of my inexistence, of his, of ours, there's a simple answer. It's not with thinking he'll find me, but what is he to do, living and bewildered, yes, living, say what he may. Forget me, know me not, yes, that would be the wisest, none better able than he. Why this sudden affability after such a desertion, it's easy to understand, that's what he says, but he doesn't understand. I'm not in his head, nowhere in his old body, and yet I'm there, for him I'm there, with him, hence all the confusion. That should have been enough for him, to have found me absent, but it's not, he wants me there, with a form and a world, like him in spite of him, me who am everything, like him who is nothing. And when he feels me void of existence it's of his he would have me void, and vice versa, mad, mad, he's mad. The truth is he's looking for me to kill me, to have me dead like him, dead like the living.[13]

Who says this, saying it's me? Literary voice is not empirical speech or even, usually, reducible to such familiar anchor points as logical thinking or audible sounding. Hence all the confusion. Samuel Beckett has written about literary voice from within, speaking as, and imitating and personifying literary voice. All writers do this but not, perhaps, with such a theoretically fierce explicitness about the anxious murderous collegiality of the speaking self and the self that is spoken, that detachable shadow.

As to "the self," then, which is it, really, the speaking self or the self that is only (though possibly magnificently) spoken? This question is *unanswerable*. That is the point of this book. It is wiser, therefore, to dismiss the term *self* as emblem for our task, since it stands ambiguously for the speaking and the spoken, and those two are necessarily to be discriminated.

Between the speaking and the spoken, the slash between active and passive voice, is this book's inquiry. The very processual quality of the betweenness is captured in a third term, one we among others have learned from Emile Benveniste and Julia Kristeva, *the speaking subject.* The speaking subject, one of the main tropes and instruments of our inquiry, is not the biographical author, not the old philosophical subject, not in the first instance possessed of gender, race, or class, and not the center of true intentionality. Of course, one fairly soon gets past the first instance, that theoretical fiction, and gender, race, class, and intentionality become separable propositions of subject. Indeed *agent* might be a term preferable to *subject,* in order to rule out connotations of subjectivity we inherit from the more watery forms of romanticism, but *speaking subject* is the term we get from Julia Kristeva's French; we employ it with reservations. Bakhtin's Russian has *govaryashchii ya,* the speaking I, but doubtless that has limitations of its own, and anyway Kristeva's term has a theoretical history and a quite specific set of connotations.

For an entirely adequate preliminary definition of the term, our readers may reread the passage from Beckett. The speaking subject is an in-process, dialogic relationship between whoever speaks and whoever is spoken, theorized in full consciousness that there will be baffles, multiplications of imaginary selves and voices, diacritical distances, slippages of meaning, problems with pronouns. These troubles arise because each of the fraternal internal antagonists, the speaking and the spoken, wishes to interfere with, silence, and finally to kill off the other, even as both must know that the continuous mutual interference is what creates the effect of literature.

How is literature possible? What voice speaks in the works of literature? These questions generate and finally frustrate our study. Like others, we find useful a definition of literature as an activity that ceaselessly puts itself into question. However, this position can perhaps be maintained without accepting the total subversion of the subject. For that is what is at issue: whether the effacement or dispersal of the human subject, that sometimes takes the guise of voice, is necessary or even possible.

To assume a relation between voice and person in literature would be wrong. That assumption of a fundamental humanism is the very thing to be validated. Specifically, could we show the traces of the voice in the author's selection of point of view and in the very play with tense, syntactic weave, punctuation, and prosodies of writing? If we keep the idea of voice, we will have to show with it how and why literary devices can be used to mime spontaneous thinking and ordinary language. (For example, Beckett performs this mime even as he creates theory at the highest level.) An adequate account will have to

show how voice itself is a literary concept which designates a falling away from literature toward speech, ordinary language, and everyday life. What we above termed "interference" is just this when viewed from the vantage of the literary discipline. The calling away meets an equal and opposite calling back.

Just here is the convergence of our leading terms, *voice* and *speaking subject*. It bears repeating that Henri Meschonnic has admirably framed the meaning of literary voice by stating that voice may appear both in writing and in speaking. Voice is the indeterminate between writing and speaking. It is a metaphor of and for both writing and speaking. Its status is inherently ambiguous, a hybrid strain. It is the projection of a virtual subject toward a virtual other. The subject and the other may be entirely imagined, but even if the subject or the other results from reportage, the printed voice will be a fiction of communication. Our return to a specialist term, the *speaking subject*, is prompted by a wish to rethink the subject within literary work. There are so many arguments advanced for abandoning the author, collapsing the author into the reader or into the author's society or the words on the page, that authorship may be a contaminated category for now. Yet the printed voice is not usually far from the reach or range of some attributable intentionality, some regional intentionality. Social registers of intonation can and must be read if we are interpreting texts. The speaking subject allows that the voice may not be the author's, but does not allow, except in the extremes of textual voice, that the voice becomes entirely, exhaustively detoned, dissolved into society or world or some other abstraction that can accept the intentionality we used to give to an agent.

The concept of the 'speaking subject' emerged from linguistic theory of a rather restricted sort. At the beginning was Roman Jakobson, whose work in pronouns as shifters was the main linguistic account of subjectivity in language before the 1960s. But Jakobson did not develop his thinking in this field, and the major act of clarification is by Emile Benveniste in two essays of the late fifties, "The Nature of Pronouns" and "Subjectivity in Language." Benveniste saw that persons are constituted by these little words in the form class of grammar, and by parts of the verb in conjugation. Out of Benveniste came several further extensions: Louis Althusser used this in his own study of how subjectivity is "interpellated" in specific ideological contexts; Henry Meschonnic developed his theories of rhythm in poetry as the always-different expression of subjectivity in language; Julia Kristeva pursued the notion of the 'speaking subject,' notably in a crucial article of 1973 that politicizes the concept. Out of Kristeva develop more recent Anglo-American accounts of literature and film, notably Kaja

Silverman's two books and certain psychoanalytic, feminist, and political extensions.[14]

Michel de Certeau has well said that the "self" is "in reality plural, social in its very constitution. Its activities follow out dialogues that have begun well before one sets oneself to speak."[15] He is speaking of dialogues, not scripts; one sets oneself to speak, changing the discourse by entering it. This is, as Kristeva has written, a subject in process (*en procès*: on trial, but also ever in motion), but still a subject. Across her career, Kristeva seems skeptical about centered and bounded subjects, about personal identity; but after the early seventies and her mastery of psychoanalytic tools, she comes more to accept a subject position in beings who suffer and who may be influenced by the talking cure. In her 1970 article "The Ruin of a Poetics," Kristeva shows how Bakhtin in his 1929 book on Dostoevsky transcends the structural-linguistics backgrounds of Russian Formalism. Bakhtin does so by taking *slovo* not as word but as discourse, as speech addressed to someone else. "The word/discourse," says Kristeva, "is . . . distributed over the various instances of discourse that a multiple 'I' can occupy simultaneously." Kristeva's 1973 piece "The Speaking Subject" is the classic exposition of a semiotics that "can establish the heterogeneous logic of signifying practices . . . can lead to a historical typology of signifying practices by the mere fact of recognizing the specific status within them of the speaking subject."[16] What Toril Moi says of Kristeva may be affirmed of others whose work contributes to the exposition of the word as dialogical discourse, in the direct line from Bakhtin: "a difficult balancing act between a position which would deconstruct subjectivity and identity altogether, and one that would try to capture these entities in an essentialist or humanist mould."[17] For better or worse, we admit this of ourselves as well, with this qualification regarding our balancing act: the radical nihilism Moi refers to has never really occurred, except as a theoretical limit, a fear of thinkers who would challenge Nietzsche, Derrida, and the Italian proponent of "weak thought," Gianni Vattimo. Derrida, his German master, and his Italian affiliate would all insist that there is no possible deconstruction of the subject that would be total, only an endless labor of weakening, draining, and diluting the terms of Western thought, which are all that we have.

So our precursors in this body of theory adopt the dialogism of Bakhtin as opposed to that of Jakobson and the formalists and structuralists. In the debates over Moscow-Tartu structuralism in Russia in the sixties, nowhere on either side was there raised a notion corresponding to dialogue as shared differences or of the speaking subject that might have mediated these issues. The establishment Socialist

Realist critics and the innovative Tartu semioticians were both unable to make use of the paradigm shift begun by Bakhtin. This repeated the failure of historical and theoretical knowledge of formalism itself, which lacked all understanding of the speaking subject and the voice within the text, even as it very well mapped the separate devices that made up the printed voice. And the Russian inability to put to use Bakhtin's coherent, successful construction of an integral theory of all human culture in terms of communication is but a local lapse within a larger one. Much in the theory of language, worldwide, would have been different had Bakhtin been known.

In this book we propose a historical-theoretical typology of sig-nifying practices, on the lines Kristeva has suggested, recognizing within these the specific status of the speaking subject. Donne-Descartes, the Bardic in Gray and Mickiewicz and Lindsay, and twen-tieth-century writers of the textual voice, such as Paul Celan, are the primary examples, and among these the subject positions of race and class are occasionally discussed, but given foreground focus only in the long section of Mickiewicz. We also wish to reckon in our own sit-uation as male speaking subjects from different parts of the world. In view of the immense changes of representation and nationhood in eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990, and in view of advances for various races and for women in the past twenty years, we have registered the ironies for scholarship of our leading term. At the moment of emer-gence of oppressed or underrepresented groups, including nations in Mickiewicz's sense of fatherland, in greater numbers and power than we have experienced in our lifetime, there is also a scholarly criticism of previous illusions and errors concerning selfhood and voice and representation in both senses of voting and showing forth. Just when the new groups have emerged, scholarly theory would deny them the kind of full faith in voice that previous, more oppressive, generations indulged. It does seem politically important to salvage something for democratic voice from the current hygiene of theory.

Dialogism, Speaking Subject, and the Critique of Existing Theory of Voice

"Where would I go . . . if I had a voice": Samuel Beckett's mono-logue dramatizes the conflict between the biographical person and the literary person, each trying to reduce the other to matter, a necessary interference—*not one without the other* in literary voice. So Beckett repeats a distinction that has existed in literary theory since classical Greek aesthetics, between *diegesis* and *mimesis*. For Plato in The

Republic, diegesis is simple narrative, presumably a biographical voice: mimesis is imitation of the speech of another. (Aristotle applies mimesis to both simple narrative speech and imitative speech, so only Plato sharply draws the distinction.) Plato's distinction has been reworked by T. S. Eliot in "The Three Voices of Poetry" (poet to self, audience; or in dramatic character), and by many others.

New Critics and traditional critics tend to understand voice as unique and personal, while post-structuralists understand it as separate from individual consciousness. With post-structuralists, voice is more related to grammatical categories (Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette), more soaked in citation of previous voices (Jacques Derrida, Jonathan Goldberg), more like a code among many codes (Roland Barthes: the "positional field of the subject," rather similar to our idea of a 'regional intentionality'.) Only among the post-structuralists, and not among the New Critics, except perhaps in their advocacy of a special term, *persona*, as the stand-in for a poem's biographical speaker, is there sufficient distancing from the human person to conceive a speaking subject. And only among a few of the post-structuralists is there sufficient distance, from a Cartesian self-bounded consciousness, to entertain a philosophy of dialogism. Actually then, a small number of theorists, across these many centuries and national traditions, hold the most capacious accounts of voice.

As a tool for thinking, the speaking subject gives subjectivity without subjectivism. As a tool for thinking, the dialogic imagination gives subjectivity a way to be social, determined by communicative context but also determining it. These double-barreled phrases are in fact oxymorons, allowing a centrifugal adjective to pull against a centripetal noun; as tools, they baffle oppositional thinking.

Existing theory of voice, as it superintends its subset literary voice, shows certain limitations when read through a grillwork that understands "voice as having a human, yet nonpersonal referent."[18] To set out these limitations may help to synthesize and reconfigure the field. For the present generation of scholarship, Jacques Derrida's is the constitutive philosophy of voice. His critique of two thousand years of privileging speaking over writing was sustained over several books and articles. Put writing on the level with speaking and see what happens, Derrida proposed; deconstruct the opposition, promote the science of writing with a disciplinary name, *grammatology*. Derrida went to the heart of the topic with a critique of centered selfhood, authorship, originality, and self-presence, all of which had spuriously been connected, he argued, with speaking alone as the traditional way to devalue writing. Derrida is protagonist and sparring partner in our own account of literary voice, as he is in recent studies by, for example,

Geoffrey Hartman, Garrett Stewart, Jonathan Goldberg, David Appelbaum, and Eric Griffiths, precisely because one must either accept his position or get to the other side of it with a refutation or partial correction. To us, his definition of a breaking moment of thought is productive, and yet we see the necessity of certain large, hard nubs of granite that cannot be swept away by the force of his thought. Resisting Derrida in particular points, we nonetheless would now define all theories of voice as before and after grammatology. Even though some of this work, such as post–J. L. Austin speech-act philosophy, is produced chronologically after Derrida's three major books of 1967, it is nonetheless part of the earlier thinking, locatable by its neglect of Derrida's logic.

Before Grammatology

The physiology of literary voice is the least of voice but not nothing. The human voice measures and masters a column of air from the lungs to the lips, taking its energy from the stream that comes from the lungs as we exhale. The mouth takes in both food and air and perfects the sounds which emerge from the larynx, that gate or valve which closes automatically during swallowing. So this human speech, which may be taken down and back to a breath that confounds itself with the very breath of life, may give some reality to the object of memory and desire but is itself hardly noticeable and usually dies on the lips which give it a form. Empirical speech, like all sound, "exists only when it is passing out of existence" (W. J. Ong's words), each previous noise annulled, forgotten. This undulation of the air, whose speech print is so personal that we have not been able to build machines to recognize it, is born in the body but effaces, forgets the body. Empirical speech and the speaking subject are not the same, but those who would train singers and actors, those who would claim referential communication with parrots, those who would treat the speech disorder spasmodic dysphonia with minute doses of deadly botulinum toxin, do not worry about the differences. "The Voice as an Expression of the Whole Person" is the first subhead of the first chapter in Michael McCallion's *Voice Book* (1988), a primer on the splendid voice-training method of F. M. Alexander.[19] None of these physiologies of voice have encountered Derrida; nor has he encountered them as body or as sound, unless we might include them as implied in his crushing demonstration that there is no purely phonetic writing.

A more mediated pedagogy of voice comes to us through intelligent popular studies, which encourage insecure writers to begin

Writing with Power (1981).[20] Peter Elbow's book of this title has a long chapter where he admits that voice is a "mysterious standard" (283), but nonetheless he offers a definition: "Voice, in writing, implies words that capture the sound of an individual on the page. . . . Writing with no voice is dead, mechanical, faceless. It lacks any sound" (287). "Real" voice is "uttered by a person," so the "expression-filled" speaking of announcers, salesmen, and preachers is "an extreme example of voice-but-not-real voice" (292). Elbow seems partly aware that he is using terms as gestures. But since he is writing a practical handbook in order to develop maturity and mastery, he feels it helpful to give writers advice on linguistic individuation in the largest sense, on how to separate real voice from voice. Though Elbow's practical tone and his anecdotes may free up and inspire beginning writers, his voice-person-sound-reality equation has been surpassed. One cannot read this version of traditional pedagogy, through the grill of grammatology, without seeing the irony at the expense of Elbow's mysterious standard.

Also pre-Derridian are certain anthropologies and phenomenologies of voice. In 1963, early in his career, Jack Goody wrote with Ian Watt "The Consequences of Literacy," an influential article whose broad distinctions between nonliterate and literate societies Goody, writing alone, has traced through a series of books: nonliterate societies transmit cultural tradition through face-to-face communication and are thus homeostatic, keeping only those memories that are functional; literate societies transmit cultural traditions in fixed form, so "the past is . . . set apart from the present, [and] historical enquiry becomes possible."[21] Skepticism, syllogism, and logic are the result in the ancient Near East and Ionia. The Goody-Watt article is a thought piece that takes a cut into its material at the highest level of generality, loading its cultural preferences against the "simple" nonliterate cultures which are all taken to be simple in the same way. Maintaining the privilege of the analytical consciousness that comes with writing, which is not a grammatology, they take no interest in the speaking that is in writing or the writing that is in speaking. Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (1976) shows fascination for *centers* and *depths*, metaphors of voice open to question, but his ontological inquiry also shows welcome attention to the reader-receiver of musical and literary sounds—an "ethics of listening." Pursuing intersubjective openings, he explores inner speech, gestalts of figure and ground in the auditory field, silence as something more than a lack, temporalities in our reception, and other experiences. Ihde's study is more empirical than Derrida ever gets, because he describes physical sensation. Ihde is also more metaphysical: "The 'darkness' hidden in voiced

language is in fact not a weakness of word but its strength. It is the ultimate withdrawing Openness of the silent horizon as full ontological possibility. The relation of voice to inner speech and to the pregnant silence of the face gives way ultimately to the Open horizon of silence."[22] Whatever its excesses, such a way of talking is unquestionably more dialogic than Derrida, more open to voice experience at the ground level of sound, sensation, uncanniness, temporal extension.

Speech act philosophy has not, like the others above here, passed grammatology in silence. The two were on a collision course from the start. Both had their heyday in the sixties and seventies, through the debates of Derrida and John Searle in the pages of *Glyph*. The signal strength of speech act philosophy is that it recognizes and celebrates the effective behavior of an agent who wills, who is speaking to (or at, actually) other agents within a social context involving intention, rules, knowledges. The emphasis is on active verbs. In illocutionary acts the completed utterance finishes an intentional act; in perlocutionary acts, illocutionary utterances have some specific consequences. What is lacking is *interlocutionary* acts, the heteroglossia of specific social discourses which hierarchize ordinary languages and put them into conflict. What is lacking is any sense that the metaphorical side of speaking makes for logical dilemmas and literary opportunities. The speaking and willing person behind speech act philosophy is still the Cartesian subject with full self-presence. Since John Searle's thought is not reconstructed by Derridian attack on presence and phonocentrism, John Searle hopes to pull apart that attack, showing it as contrary to common sense. Alas, a direct-agency account of language has no mechanism to deal with irony as a form of thought, or with the irony of double-voicing and multiple personhood, or with the aporias of the question that organizes our own inquiry: Who is Speaking? We conclude that speech act philosophy would yield a starved and one-dimensional philosophy of literary voice.

The question of voice has been explored in terms of verb rather than in terms of person. Have we only the alternatives of active voice and passive voice, and might the question itself lead to new modes of agency and subjectivity? In passing, in "Differance" Derrida said he was after something like the Greek middle voice. In "To Write: An Intransitive Verb," Roland Barthes asked when and why writing as such became transitive, arguing that modernist writing has its end within itself, radically intransitive, and the middle voice explains, or at least analogizes, the simultaneities of modernist writing as such. By implication, since the issue is never publicly joined, this is a French avant-garde reply to speech act philosophy's hopes for a public language of agency. If agency/patiency, subjecthood/objecthood, activi-