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OFF THE PAGE: do multimedia, performance and
installation methods in the 21ST Century represent a
development of poetic form or a departure from poetry
proper?

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Abstract

This paper discusses 21st Century methods of presenting poetry off the printed page, such as slam, musically structured performance, film and video poetry, multimedia, digital, site-specific, and installation work. Looking at the context within which these have developed, and investigating the roots within traditional poetry from which they have grown, it seeks to determine how far such presentations can be considered to be new poetic forms. It also considers how far the techniques within them can be described as analogous to, or extensions of, traditional techniques. It considers the paucity of critical discussion around these developments in poetry, and argues that, although the method of delivery of the pieces may be novel and unfamiliar, where off-page work uses language in such a way that it conforms to the same definition of poetry that would be applied to work presented on the page, its various manifestations represent new forms in poetry, and should be subject to, and part of, the same critical conversations as those more traditional works.

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