Limits of Lyric Poetry in the Twentieth Century

From James Joyce to Sarah Kane

Laura-Maria Johanna Blomvall

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University of York
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Abstract

Examining the limits of lyric poetry in the twentieth century opens up questions central to the form of the lyric poem and at the heart of contemporary lyric theory. Drawing on some aspects central to the debate about lyric poetry's expansiveness today, including Jahan Ramazani's argument that 'poetry makes visible the structuring presuppositions behind the genres it assimilates', I will argue through three case studies that far from dissolving lyric, experiments with its formal limits depend on a prior idea about lyric poetry and its implications.

In the first chapter, I argue that James Joyce's epiphanies build on a late nineteenth-century tradition of the prose poem to test the dependence of lyric on moments of heightened feeling and insight. Rather than simply acting as an incipient form to examine narrative and its limits, by testing the limits between prose and poetry the epiphanies have equally significant implications for articulating and interrogating prior assumptions about the limits of lyric poetry.

In the second chapter, I investigate the dependence of definitions of lyric poetry on notions of brevity by analysing H.D.'s long wartime poem *Trilogy*. I read *Trilogy* in relation to the Second World War and H.D.'s psychoanalysis to analyse the complex reasons behind her movement from the brief, Imagist poem to the poetic sequence, and how this move is symptomatic of a wider problem with the dependence of definitions of lyric poetry on brevity.

Finally, I argue that Sarah Kane's posthumously published work *4.48 Psychosis* tests the limits between poetry and theatre through a reliance on and a problematisation of the lyric voice. Reading the text within established traditions of lyric poetry, like aubade and nocturne poems, and in a wider context of fin-de-siècle writing, I show Kane's text negotiates the limits between dramatic dialogue and an isolated lyric voice.

List of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. Some of the observations on Steve Ellis's *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* in Chapter 2 have previously appeared in the form of a review. See Laura Blomvall, 'The 1939 State', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 41.1 (2017): 156-160. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

Limits of Lyric Poetry in the Twentieth Century

Not once have I ever had the time to ask myself, "Are my songs literature?" – Bob Dylan, Nobel banquet speech[1]

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
    Like strings of broken lyres – Thomas Hardy, 'The Darkling Thrush'[2]

When Bob Dylan received the 2016 Nobel Prize for literature, the Swedish Academy's decision provoked a clear articulation of some of the cultural concerns surrounding the limits of lyric poetry. Nominally, the Swedish Academy awarded the prize to Dylan for 'having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition',[3] with apparent ease situating 'poetic expression' in a tradition of song writing in their statement. In response to the nomination, Andrew Motion, among other writers, celebrated how Dylan 'has bent, coaxed, teased and persuaded words into lyric and narrative shapes that are at once extraordinary and inevitable',[4] suggesting a happy coexistence of both poetic and narrative forms in his songs. Elsewhere, Motion emphasised the poetry of Dylan's songs, arguing that his best songs 'contain the qualities we look for in poetry that matters. Concentration of language, formal expertise of one kind or another, and a clever balancing of articulacy and mystery'.[5] As is often noted, the word 'lyric' itself derives from the word *lyrikos*, 'relating to the lyre', evoking the origins of lyric poetry in Greek *melos* sung to the accompaniment of that instrument.[6] If lyric poetry was born out of song, for some it seems fittingly to return to that condition – somewhat akin to the birdsong in Hardy's poem 'The Darkling Thrush', which rejuvenates and lifts the bleak winter landscape. Compared to 'strings of broken lyres', the speaker in Hardy's poem associates the winter landscape with a broken instrument employed as an emblem of lyric poetry, which the 'full-hearted evensong' of a thrush redeems with its non-human singing. According to Motion and others, awarding the prize to Dylan has revitalised and expanded the limits of lyric poetry,

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[1] Dylan, Bob, *Banquet Speech* (Stockholm: Nobel Prize, 2016)
<http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2016/dylan-speech.html> [accessed 17 October 2018].
[2] Thomas Hardy, *The Variorum Edition of the Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy* ed. by James Gibson (London, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p.150.
[3] Andrew Motion, Jarvis Cocker et al., '"Dylan towers over everyone" – Salman Rushdie, Kate Tempest and more pay tribute to Bob Dylan', *The Guardian*, 13 October 2016.
[4] Motion, 'Dylan towers over everyone', *The Guardian*, 13 October 2016.
[5] Motion, Carol Ann Duffy et al., 'Beyond Bob Dylan: authors, poets and musicians pick their favourite songwriter', *The Guardian*, 5 November 2016.
[6] See Felix Budelmann, 'Introducing Greek Lyric' in *Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric* ed. by Budelmann, pp.1-18, pp.2-5.

broken down artificial and archaic barriers between genres and enabled the recognition of singers like Dylan and Leonard Cohen as master lyricists. However, Dylan's own response to the award was at first silence, followed by grateful bafflement. While accepting the award, Dylan places its presentation in the interrogative, as an answer to a vexed question he feels uncomfortable to consider himself: 'Not once have I ever had the time to ask myself, "Are my songs literature?"'. As David Orr notes in *The New Yorker*, the question generating controversy around the award was not due to Dylan's merit; the question, instead, was about *poetry*. What is the difference between poetry and song lyrics? More importantly, what is the significance of this difference: how do we *read* – or indeed listen to – 'Tangled Up In Blue' differently if we think of it first as a poem, and only secondly as a song? If some celebrate the expansion of the limits of lyric poetry, for others this expansion raises difficult questions around the definition of poetry and the establishment of generic boundaries: what counts as a lyric poem and what counts as something else.

This public debate about the limits of lyric poetry was anticipated, to some extent, by discussions about lyric poetry in academia. In an article summarising the critical trends of the 2006 MLA convention on lyric, Terada already observed how papers at the convention took the connections between lyric and other types of discourse for granted, assuming the radical dissolution of 'lyric' as a category into other practices and discourses. Terada observes how the 'emphasis on lyric's permeability – a disinclination to posit an inside or outside of lyric – is entirely proper and inevitable and more or less consistent with the trends Hošek and Parker presented in 1985',[1] referring to an influential collection of essays, *Lyric Poetry beyond New Criticism,* which aimed to introduce other interpretive tools than close reading to the genre that was the 'chosen ground'[2] of New Criticism. This dissolution of 'lyric' as a category parallels Virginia Jackson's and Yopie Prins's influential historical scepticism of the term 'lyric'. Jackson, for example, argued in *Dickinson's Misery* that a process of 'lyricisation' in the nineteenth century abstracted distinct works like 'riddles, papyrae, epigrams, songs, sonnets, blasons, *Lieder*, elegies, dialogues, conceits, ballads, hymns and odes' into one category, 'lyric' – a single model through which readers now encounter and interpret these various literary forms.[3] Jackson's project in *Dickinson's Misery* was to show how a developing idea of lyric poetry obscured the original contexts in which Dickinson's poems were circulated and read, while advancing a new theory of lyric reading, positing that 'the century and a half that spans the circulation of Dickinson's

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[1] Rei Terada, 'After the Critique of Lyric', *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 195-200, p.195.

[2] Chaviva Hošek and Patricia Parker, *Lyric Poetry Beyond New Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985), p.7.

[3] Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery: a theory of lyric reading* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005), p.7 However, as Michael McKeon observes in his study of the origins of the English novel, an abstracting process is not necessarily artificial: it is 'a conceptualisation whose experiential referent has a prehistory that is rich enough both to permit, and to require, the abstraction and the dominance of the general category itself'. McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1987, 2002), p.163.

work as poetry chronicles rather exactly the emergence of the lyric genre as a modern mode of literary interpretation'.[4] On the one hand, lyric poetry dissolves into other discourses and genres, when the limits between a poem and a song, for example, seem insignificant. On the other hand, perhaps 'lyric poetry' never existed as a category in the first place, and critics need to return to investigating Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* as sonnets and some of Emily Dickinson's poems as extracts from letters, for example.

The limits of lyric poetry, then, have so far appeared both elusive and questionable: dubious sites of cross-over that founder and dissolve under investigation. This thesis, examining twentieth-century examples of lyric poetry at various generic limits, will challenge this conclusion. James Joyce's early works, H.D.'s wartime writing and Sarah Kane's late plays, as I will show, play with different generic limits – the distinction between poetry and prose, between a short poem and a long poem, and between poetry and drama – and the intergeneric nature of the works both depend on and articulate a notion of 'inside' and 'outside of lyric'. By raising the question about their generic identity, the works I investigate reveal how the activity of creatively testing the limits of lyric poetry relies on a prior notion of what lies inside and outside lyric poetry as a category; and, moreover, that these limits have significant interpretive and evaluative implications. In her 1915 preface to *Some Imagist Poets*, Amy Lowell noted how free verse involved a careful balancing act between prose and poetry; free verse, she wrote, is,

> writing whose cadence is more marked, more definite, and closer knit than that of prose, but which is not so violently nor so obviously accented as the so-called "regular verse."[5]

Free verse has 'cadence', which is 'more marked, more definite, and closer knit than that of prose.' At the same time it is looser and not 'so obviously accented' as poetry written in more traditional metrical structures. Instead of dissolving into prose, the formal experiment of free verse thus involves a new but very precise articulation of the distinction between free verse and the rhythm of prose on one hand, and free verse and the rhythm of poetry on the other. Instead of blurring the generic boundaries between poetry and prose, Lowell uses free verse to articulate more carefully the differences between all three literary genres. Her influential preface is one example of how formal experiment in twentieth-century poetic works can both reimagine and rely on the notion of lyric poetry, instead of dissolving and deconstructing it, while producing challenging and original lyric writing.

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[4] Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery*, p.6.

[5] Amy Lowell, 'Preface', *Some Imagist Poets: an anthology* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), p.vii.

Reading lyric

This study is an investigation of twentieth-century works that expand, challenge, play upon and engage with the generic limits of lyric poetry. As such, it is informed by, but also aims to impact two fields intimately linked to these concerns: genre studies and lyric theory. The underlying assumption of my thesis will be that texts that are either generically indeterminate, or significantly diverge from our expectations of what lyric poetry is, will help to define more precisely the generic presuppositions of a lyric poem; that is, the interpretive assumptions and procedures the reader brings to the text when that text is recognised as a lyric poem. As Sharon Cameron has argued in relation to Dickinson's poems, which are so central to Jackson's historical argument, '[i]t is precisely the distance some of Dickinson's poems go toward the far end of coherence, precisely the outlandishness of their extremity, that allows us to see, magnified, the fine workings of more conventional lyrics'.[6] Stretching the limits of lyric poetry through 'outlandishness' allows us to recognise, according to Cameron, 'the fine workings of more conventional lyrics'. At the same time, I would argue, it is their adherence to some aspects of the internal working of a lyric poem that reveals what poems can retain in 'their extremity'. And it is this adherence, which allows us to discuss them as lyric poems. Following Alastair Fowler, the question of genre here, as elsewhere, is not primarily taxonomical; the question is instead about the interpretive expectations we use to engage with the text.[7] Indeed, readers' disagreements over genres of experimental literary works can reveal the issues of contention and confusion that surround lyric poetry, and help us identify the wider implications of writing lyric poetry at its limits. Features typically listed in definitions of lyric poetry – like brevity, concentrated use of the acoustic materials of language, and an association with a first-person speaker and expression of feeling – are not simply pragmatic means for generic categorisation. As Stephen Monte observes, genre theory 'deals with principles of reconstruction and interpretation and (to some extent) evaluation of meaning. It does not deal much with classification'.[14] Or, as Jonathan Culler phrased it in *Structural Poetics*, 'a literary taxonomy should be grounded on a theory of reading'.[8] In Culler's formulation, this theory of reading involves an implicit expectation of a reader's competence that makes the text intelligible. '[L]iterary intelligibility' as a model for understanding genre acts as 'a set of literary norms to which texts may be related and by virtue of which they become meaningful and coherent'.[9]

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[6] Sharon Cameron, *Lyric Time: Dickinson and the limits of genre* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1981), p.23.

[7] Alistair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: an introduction to the theory of genres and modes* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982). [14] Steven Monte, *Invisible Fences: prose poetry as a genre in French and American literature* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p.24.

[8] Jonathan Culler, *Structural Poetics: structuralism, linguistics and the study of literature* 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1975, 2002), p.139.

[9] Culler, *Structural Poetics*, p.169.

Lyric poetry, as a genre is not primarily, if at all, about taxonomy or classification: it is a learnt, culturally acquired model for making sense of a text through reading.

Reminiscent of Culler's more theoretical formulation of literary competence, the narrator of Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), Charles Kinbote – who is, as critics have noted, an exceptionally incompetent commentator on the long poem at the centre of the novel – imagines the history of reading as an accumulation of interpretive skills:

> We are absurdly accustomed to the miracle of a few written signs being able to contain immortal imagery, involutions of thought, new worlds with live people, speaking, weeping, laughing. We take it for granted so simply that in a sense, by the very act of brutish routine acceptance, we undo the work of the ages, the history of the gradual elaboration of poetical description and construction, from the treeman to Browning, from the caveman to Keats. What if we awake one day, all of us, and find ourselves utterly unable to read? I wish you to gasp not only at what you read but at the miracle of its being readable (so I used to tell my students).[10]

Kinbote imagines a historical process 'of the gradual elaboration of poetical description and construction' and the passage culminates with a vision of a future where all this literary competence, both in composition and reading, would be lost: 'What if we awake one day, all of us, and find ourselves utterly unable to read?' The suddenness of this new reality gestures to the tragic fall the inability to read poetry would represent, but also the imperceptibility of its disappearance through everyday habits – it is only noticed retrospectively, after waking up one morning like any other. Literary competence is 'the work of the ages', an accumulation of literary skills, which Kinbote paradoxically fails to manifest in his own reading, which involves systematically misreading and overwriting John Shade's poem in his 'scholarly' commentary.

In a novel that combines different genres – poetry and prose commentary – the question of reading and misreading becomes a more urgent task than performing a taxonomy of the different genres in *Pale Fire*. However, this is not to say that the limits of prose and poetry in *Pale Fire* do not provoke any anxious reflection. The novelistic techniques of the passage from Kinbote's commentary – emphasising the import of its historical narrative, 'the work of the ages', with syntactical laddering ('from the treeman…to Keats') – can divert from the object of Kinbote's commentary, Shade's long poem in heroic couplets (or, more precisely, iambic hexameter lines in rhyming couplets). As Brian Boyd, who argues for reading the 'poem' 'Pale Fire' for its own sake (in a carefully edited text that attempts to reimagine the material format of John Shade's manuscript), writes: 'Although many have no doubt that Shade's "Pale Fire" is major poetry, many have no doubt that it is not'.[18] Interpreting *Pale Fire* appears to involve a value judgement on the part of critics about the primacy and literary significance of Shade's

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[10] Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 1962, 1973, 2011, 2016), pp.226-27.

[18] Bryan Boyd, *Nabokov's 'Pale Fire': the magic of artistic discovery* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), p.27.

poem in relation to Kinbote's prose commentary. Indeed, Nabokov himself argues against 'any generic difference between poetry and artistic prose' that would warrant distinct formal analyses:

> I have never been able to see any generic difference between poetry and artistic prose. As a matter of fact, I would be inclined to define a good poem of any length as a concentrate of good prose, with or without the addition of recurrent rhythm or rhyme.[11]

In Nabokov's view, the distinctions between poetry and (artistic) prose dissolve entirely. However, it is significant that Kinbote's object of study is a poem: to Kinbote, it is poetry where the stakes of literacy appear to be at their most urgent, the loss of this interpretive competence by 'brutish routine acceptance' involving a nightmarish regression to the prehistoric man, who had not learnt to read or to write. Moreover, the passage arguably brings attention to how the semiotics of post-war poetry – commenting, interpreting and relating to verse – are imbued by a sense of loss governing the genre more generally. As Jackson explains in the beginning of her 2008 article, 'Who reads poetry?',

> it's worth asking why the anxiety betrayed by the question ['Who reads poetry?'] has been around for so long, and especially why it has spiked in recent years. The question expresses a worry that nobody reads much poetry, or that few people do, or that the right people don't at the right times or in the right ways.[20]

Kinbote's commentary foregrounds the idea that lyric poetry is damaged by people who don't read 'at the right times or in the right ways', anticipating Jackson's observation that anxiety over lyric poetry in fact represents an anxiety over how it is read, if it is read at all. A lyric poem is thus not a stable, unchanging category: rather it encapsulates a history and a culture of reading, gesturing to a continual tension between qualities associated with the lyric poem and the changing context for recognising these qualities. Kinbote's domineering and partisan readings demonstrate this tension between a lyric poem and its reinterpretation in the act of reading. By positing genre as a model not of classification, but of digestion, interpretation and reconstruction – as forms of encounter, in other words – this thesis gestures to another set of theoretical concerns: a theory of lyric reading.

While discussion of lyric theory has increased in the last fifteen years, a growing scepticism governs most engagements with both the terms 'lyric' and 'theory'. Jackson and Prins, most notably, advance a radical scepticism towards the lyric poem as a stable, fixed category.

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[11] Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage Originals, 1973, 1990), p.44.
[20] Jackson, 'Who Reads Poetry?', *PMLA,* 123.1(2008):181-187, p.181.

However, the introduction to their critical anthology of lyric theory begins with a sentence stating that we nevertheless 'take it for granted that we know what a lyric is'.[12] A theory of lyric poetry will thus need not only to observe exceptions and historical discontinuities that seem to undermine any firm definition of lyric poetry, but also to account for the pervasiveness of readers' expectations that they know what lyric poetry looks like – why, indeed, we do often 'take it for granted'. Indeed, Bob Dylan's laureateship is symptomatic of both the continuing project to expand the limits of lyric poetry, and the troubling questions this poses about the distinct meaningfulness of its current models. These disconcerting and concerning questions are are at the centre of this thesis: the limits between prose and poetry (Ch.1), the meaning and significance of lyric brevity (Ch.2), and the limits between poetry and drama (Ch.3). By looking at the various boundaries drawn between lyric poetry and other genres and by examining the 'intergeneric' nature of lyric poetry, I employ to some extent the same initial assumptions as Jahan Ramazani in his 2013 study *Poetry and Its Others*.[13] In the introduction to his study, Ramazani observes that 'by virtue of its exacting attention to form and language, poetry makes visible the structuring presuppositions behind the genres it assimilates'.[14] When Rae Armantrout and Frank Bidart, for example, use popular songs in their poetry, 'they decontextualize these discourses as trope and raise to view the assumptions behind them'.[24] In my thesis, I examine this process in reverse: how a prose writer like James Joyce and a playwright like Sarah Kane, for example, assimilate structural principles of lyric poetry within a prose work or piece of theatre, thus foregrounding readers' intuitions about what makes the structural organisation of poetry distinct from other genres – the structural principles upon which the reading of lyric poetry is predicated. Ramazani concentrates on examining the dialogue between poetry and non-literary as well as literary genres: novel, law, theory, news, prayer and song. However, as a genre of literature, lyric poetry depends on its distinctions from other literary genres, like prose, long poems and theatre. Lyric poetry at the limits of its own genre, where the poet engages with two distinct genres simultaneously, incorporates structural principles of other genres to poetry, or vice versa. Examining this 'dialogue', or perhaps more accurately in this context, constructive tension and ambiguity of generic categorisation, will assist in ideintifying more distinctly some of the core assumptions held about lyric poetry, particularly its structural organisation. The aim, to some extent, is to approach what Paul Franz argues in a review of Culler's *Theory of the Lyric*: that 'what kind of category [lyric] is might matter less than restoring our sense that questions about its nature are intelligible'.[15]

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[12] Jackson and Yopie Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader: a critical anthology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2014), p.1.

[13] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), p.5.

[14] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, p.8.

[24] Ramazani, *Poetry and Its Others*, p.8.

[15] Paul Franz, 'Burden of Proof: review of Jonathan Culler's Theory of Lyric', *PN Review* 42.3 (2016): 16-19, p.19.

Restoring our sense that questions about lyric are both significant and intelligible seems particularly urgent today in a context where critics discussing lyric poetry increasingly adopt the tone and form of an apology. The formulation of a theory of lyric is often dependent on the poem or poems used as examples for that theory, and the formal assumptions that govern the analysis of these poems. As a consequence, the poems used as models to formulate or challenge existing theories of lyric are indicative of shifting concerns around the paradigms for lyric reading. If Cleanth Brooks alludes both to Donne's 'The Canonization' and Keats's 'Ode to a Grecian Urn' in the title of *The Well-Wrought Urn*, and Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Paul de Man use Baudelaire's poetry to analyse either alienation of the modern urban subject or failure of the trope of anthropomorphism in lyric, today, Ben Lerner, for one, begins his 2016 pamphlet *Hatred of Poetry* with the 1967 version of Marianne Moore's 'Poetry':

> I, too, dislike it.
>   Reading it, however, with a perfect
>   contempt for it, one discovers in
>   it, after all, a place for the genuine.[16]

The four 'it' pronouns in the four lines of the poem, the last one awkwardly separated from its preceding preposition with a line break 'in / it', communicate a distaste to poetry by refusing to say it, instead referring back to the title of the poem. Lerner addresses his book on *Hatred of Poetry* to 'the haters' of lyric poetry, of which he himself also is one[17] (deliberately mirroring Moore's syntax), situating lyric poetry within the affective context of dislike, hatred, contempt and apology. His own theory of lyric, however, depends on a definition of poetry that makes claims for transcendence only to show the poem's formal insufficiency to realise that claim[18] – a definition that in itself is too generalised to cover many actual poems. These transcendental claims seem too narrowly associated with the lyric discourse and claims made by Ralph Waldo Emerson and a particular Romantic conception of lyric poetry that does not seem applicable to poems that do not make any claims for transcendence, or do not depend on that claim for their effectiveness. Lerner does nevertheless capture some of the affective language pervasive in current lyric studies, construed not only in terms of hatred, but also in terms of embarrassment and shame (Gillian White) or apology and defence (David-Antoine Williams).[19] White, for example, studies 'a sense of shame involved in twentieth-century "lyric reading", producing and describing…lyric shame'.[20] In Charles Altieri's essay 'What is Living and What is Dead in

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[16] Ben Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry* (New York: FSG Originals, 2016), p.3.
[17] Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry*, pp.85-86.
[18] Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry,* p.21.
[19] David-Antoine Williams, *Defending Poetry: Art and ethics in Joseph Brodsky, Seamus Heaney, and Geoffrey Hill* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).
[20] Gillian White, *Lyric Shame: the 'lyric' subject of contemporary American poetry* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), p.2.

American Postmodernism', the last stanza of John Ashbery's 1979 poem 'As We Know' also serves as an example of poets themselves overturning the category of lyric by embracing that embarrassment Lerner and White detect in Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop, respectively.

According to Altieri, 'this poem is remarkable primarily for what it refuses to do': to embrace its own 'lyric climax', which 'takes place as a moment of embarrassment'.[21] While my case studies 'refuse' to embrace some formal features associated with the lyric poem, 'embarrassment' only covers a limited spectrum of affective states covered in this range of texts. These affective structures include exhaustion of lyricism (Ch.1), form as a site of endurance and resistance (Ch.2) and the depression and tiredness of the lyric speaker (Ch.4). Thus my case studies demonstrate twentieth-century lyric to have a wide affective range, and while I do not claim to provide a comprehensive overview of the twentieth-century Anglophone lyric, my argument will hopefully demonstrate even within its limited scope lyric's continuing capacity for expansiveness and experimentation.

Lyric in and out of history

Scepticism over lyric poetry frequently goes hand in hand with a methodological scepticism about close reading. Parker articulated this intimacy between theory and form in her introduction to *Lyric Poetry Beyond New Criticism:*

> Why did so much of recent theory – structuralist and poststructuralist, feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic – tend to concentrate…primarily on narrative or on poetry with a marked narrative element? What might these newer approaches, whose own 'return to narrative' was in part a reaction against New Criticism, teach us about lyric poetry in particular? And, what in turn, might this 'return to lyric' reveal about the biases or limitations of certain kinds of critical practice and theory?[32]

In Parker's overview, certain literary genres are affiliated with specific schools of criticism; lyric poetry and narratives are intimately connected with the critical practices used to read these genres. The aim of the collection of essays was to adopt, first, new approaches to lyric poetry to yield new insight into the genre, and, second, to investigate 'the biases or limitations of certain kinds of critical practice and theory' the return to lyric reveals. As Parker observes, lyric theory had until fairly recently been overshadowed by narrative studies, but the growth of the field since the publication of Parker's and Hošek's collection of essays itself prompted discussion of a lyric turn in literary criticism. This lyric turn has generated a methodological attempt to move beyond New Criticism to employ theories that usually take narratives as their objects of study.

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[21] Charles Altieri, 'What is Living and What is Dead in American Postmodernism: Establishing the contemporaneity of some American poetry', *Critical Inquiry* 22.4 (1996): 764-789, p.777. [32] Parker, *Lyric Poetry Beyond New Criticism*, p.13.

As Bruce R. Smith noted in his introduction to *PMLA's* 2005 special edition on Poetry, '[a]lthough many psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theories are grounded in poetic discourse, critics who invoke these paradigms have seemed reluctant to take poems as objects of analysis. Has the time come to revisit the relevance of poetry and the pleasures of the poetic text in this changed interpretive universe?'[22] Jackson and Prins's *The Lyric Theory Reader* appeared in 2013 and Jonathan Culler's *Theory of the Lyric* in 2016. These two publications have arguably consolidated a growing interest already manifest in *PMLA's* special 2005 Poetry edition, and its section on 'New Lyric Studies' in its January 2008 issue, which brought together articles from Jackson, Prins and Culler. Lyric studies have experienced a revival, but one that has come with an urgency to reimagine the types of reading possible when discussing specific poems and lyric poetry more generally. Today, the new types of reading demand not only a movement *beyond* New Criticism by surpassing its methodological and ideological limitations, which has been happening for some time. It also demands a reinvention of formalist criticism after the critiques of poststructuralism, postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, new historicism and other late twentieth-century theories. Current work in lyric criticism thus rarely engages with the limits of lyric poetry as much as it does with the limits and limitations of the types of reading intimately associated with the genre. And, as Mark Jeffreys has noted, critical assumptions that lyric poetry is inseparable from ideologically reactionary theory 'raise questions about what narrative of literary history, what canon or set of texts, and what reasoning undergird' these claims.[23]

However, while the research output of 'new lyric studies' has indubitably increased, and its terms become increasingly institutionalised, its major proponents have deep-seated disagreements as to the scope or even the suitability of the term 'lyric' to describe specific poems. This division is perhaps at its most explicit between the historicising work of Jackson and Prins and the work of Culler, which professes an unapologetic transhistorical ambition in its argument: as Franz observes, his *Theory of the Lyric* can be 'understood less as advancing an historical thesis, than as proposing a conceptual model.'[24] Culler justifies this transhistorical approach in several ways, but most importantly in this context by claiming that 'poets themselves, reading and responding to predecessors, have created a lyric tradition that persists across historical periods and radical changes in circumstances of productions and transmission'.[25] In addition, Culler claims that the history of literary forms 'is reversible… poets can revive old forms, exploiting possibilities that have lain dormant for a while.'[37] In other words, Culler justifies his transhistorical argument by making a historical claim of continuity in

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[22] Bruce R. Smith., 'Introduction: Some presuppositions', *PMLA*, 120.1(2005):9-15, p.9.
[23] Mark Jeffreys, 'Ideologies of Lyric: a problem of genre in contemporary Anglophone poetics', *PMLA* 110.2 (1995): 196-205, p.198.
[24] Franz, 'Burden of Proof', p.18.
[25] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Harvard: Harvard UP, 2016), pp.3-4.
[37] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, p.4.

literary tradition and by arguing that poets have the ability to enter in creative dialogue with other poets' work across centuries. His first and most developed criticism of Jackson is also historical. According to Culler, Jackson 'conflates' the romantic expressive lyric, as developed in M.H. Abrams *The Mirror and the Lamp*, with the New Critical practice of identifying a dramatic speaker in a poem in her theory of lyricisation and idealised lyric reading – an act Culler says 'seems historically irresponsible'.[26] The underlying irony of Culler's argument is that his definition of a transhistorical approach depends on a historical model of continuity, and that his objection to Jackson's historical approach is an objection based on historical irresponsibility. The question about whether lyric poetry is anachronistic or whether it even exists outside of historically specific reading practices has thus divided critics and led to some confusion and conflict over how to frame this discussion over lyric in the first place. Indicative of this confusion – a confusion Culler does not make explicit – is his claim about poets reviving old forms as evidence of lyric poetry's continuity. It is unclear whether poets 'exploiting possibilities that have lain dormant for a while' involves poets exploiting formal possibilities that are constant over time, or whether this act of revival is in itself a historically specific intervention that cannot be understood outside of its context. Meanwhile the members of the Historical Poetics Network, of which Jackson and Prins are founding members, believe that no approach to lyric 'is sufficient without a self-conscious and rigorous critique of the historical implications of our present assumptions.'[27]

In this thesis, I will broadly treat lyric as a cultural product – with poets responding to their contemporary historical, cultural and social changes – and on this basis argue that their works need to be historicised without reducing their examination of the limits of lyric poetry and its wider implications to that history. The twentieth century saw significant and convulsive social and cultural changes, and although in this thesis I am primarily preoccupied with formal questions, some contexts like the Second World War and the development of psychoanalysis as a discipline play a role in some of my analyses. These contexts are particularly pertinent in the second chapter on H.D.'s wartime *Trilogy*, where I argue more strongly for the significance of the historical and intellectual contexts in her development formally from the brief lyric poems of Imagism to the long poems of her later career. Indeed, there is arguably a more intimate connection between twentieth-century modernity and the form of the lyric poem: in *The Architext,* Gérard Genette, for example, demonstrates that 'the relationship between theories of the lyric and theories of genre is intimate in modernity'.[28] Beginning with Stephen's aesthetic theory from *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, Genette shows how an artist figure of early

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[26] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, pp.84-85.
[27] Historical Poetics, *About* (Historical Poetics Network) < https://www.historicalpoetics.com/> [accessed 17 October 2018].
[28] Jackson and Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader*, p.11.

modernism projects his theory of the three literary genres of lyric, epic and dramatic to classical and medieval philosophy ('applied Aquinas'),[29] a critical manoeuvre representative of both lyric theory and genre theory in the twentieth century, which links an intellectual tradition to a more modern development. As Genette argues, 'we do not easily forgo projecting onto the founding text of classical poetics [Aristotle's *Poetics*] a fundamental tenet of "modern" poetics (which actually, as we will often see, really means *romantic* poetics)'.[30] According to Jackson and Prins, Genette's insight thus 'means that a shift in the conception of genre gave birth to the modern theory of the lyric',[31] and that the conceptual interest in genre has gone hand in hand with a new conceptual interest in the form of the lyric poem. Genre, lyric theory and modernity are, from this perspective, intimately and inextricably connected.

The aim in this thesis is not to provide an unequivocal history of the development of the lyric poem in the twentieth-century – indeed, the apparent eclecticism of my case studies is productive for resisting generalised narratives about lyric poetry in the period. Nevertheless, I will show that if lyric poetry is a modern invention, then its invention is inseparable from writers' examination and testing of its limits. Using the concept of limits is practical and specific enough to facilitate nuanced and detailed readings on a number of developments in the form of the lyric poem, without reducing them to one theory or model of reading. Indeed, there are significant continuities between the twentieth-century case studies of the limits of lyric poetry I analyse and much earlier precedents these works apparently make a break away from. As Hannah Sullivan observes, what is new in modernist formal experiment, particularly the development of free verse, 'is not a negative freedom from form, an absence of form, but the positive form to select critically from the prosody handbook, manipulating old forms for new ends.'[32] As 'all period-centered areas of literary scholarship have broadened in scope',[33] the expansive trend of new modernist studies identified by Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz makes it more difficult to temporally limit the modernist period, or make generalisations about the period's plural, varied, even, frequently conflicting endeavours. However, if what the term 'modernism' designates is currently governed by a degree of indeterminacy, this reflects the indeterminacy at the heart of the twentieth-century texts I use as case studies in this thesis, which exploit the lyric poem's capacity for openness to new possibilities and definitions. Each author, with varied degrees of self-consciousness and determination, view themselves as renewing the genres of literature they engage in by stretching

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[29] James Joyce, *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2000), p.176.
[30] Gérard Genette, 'The Architext', trans. by Jane E. Lewin, in *The Lyric Theory Reader* ed. by Jackson and Prins, pp.1730, p.17.
[31] Jackson and Prins, *The Lyric Theory Reader*, p.12.
[32] Hannah Sullivan, 'Emerging Poetic Forms', *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Late Victorian into Modern* ed. by Laura Marcus (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), pp.103-118, p.118.
[33] Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'The New Modernist Studies', *PMLA* 123.3 (2008): 737-748, p.737.

them to their limits, participating in different ways with the generic and formal experimentation associated with modernism. The lyric poem, as a consequence, appears both as formally indeterminate – open to new possibilities – and dependent on similarity and continuity for its experiments to work. My research examines four aspects of these limits of lyric poetry. First, in the case of Joyce's epiphanies, the limits between prose and poetry; second, in the case of H.D. war-time *Trilogy,* how the long poem tests the dependency of lyric poetry on notions of brevity; and, finally, in the case of Sarah Kane's last work, the limits between poetry and drama. Instead of following Jackson and Prins, who argue that 'from the larger historical perspective of the process of lyricisation, it is not hard to see how and why avant-garde reactions against the lyric have entailed increased confusion over what *lyric* means', it is at its own generic limits, I argue, that the questions about lyric poetry become most urgent and distinct.

Chapter Outlines

Each chapter investigates a case study of twentieth-century literary work that is generically indeterminate and tests the limits of lyric poetry by productively exploiting this indeterminacy. In the first chapter, I examine in detail James Joyce's epiphanies in the context of his early poetry and prose writing as examples of writing that challenge the limits between poetry and prose both in their form and their compositional history. In the wider context of the development of the prose poem and a tradition of poetic prose, Joyce's epiphanies provide an example of one author's engagement with these formal tensions. As Joyce integrates his epiphanies into *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners*, he uses his fictional young poet Stephen Dedalus's character to offer a commentary or model of poetic composition at the same time as he expands the investigation of the difference between prose and poetry to the difference between prose poetry and lyrical prose. This use of 'lyricism' in prose in turn raises further questions about the dynamic between heightened and deflated states of affect in a text, as well as elevated and everyday use of language. In the first chapter, I set out the main concerns of the thesis as a whole: if the term 'prose poetry' evokes an inner formal tension in the name of the genre, this tension foregrounds the paradigms governing the interpretation of lyric poems as a whole. Using Stephen Monte's observation about prose poetry as a starting point, I examine how an emphasis on affect in poetry over an emphasis on form – in other words, an emphasis on the response a text elicits from the reader superseding an emphasis on the formal features of the text[34] – operates in Joyce's creative examination of the entanglements of lyrical language and heightened feeling in prose.

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[34] Steven Monte, *Invisible Fences: Prose poetry as a genre in French and American literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p.17.

In the second chapter, I investigate H.D's poetic sequence *Trilogy* (1944-1946) in the context of H.D.'s writing about her psychoanalysis with Freud and her experience of living in London during the Second World War. The architectural ambiguity of *Trilogy* presents a crisis of formal definition under conditions of extremity. With separate numbered poems, *Trilogy* appears to be a sequence of poems, but on closer inspection, poems frequently run on semantically and syntactically to create the impression that the poetic sequence frequently dissolves into one, continuous long poem. Her use of the form of the long poem or poetic sequence, I will argue, raises wider questions about lyric length, and how this challenges an assumption of brevity present in most definitions of lyric poetry. Some of the previous criticism about the length of the lyric poetry has concentrated on notions of 'measurement' – according to Helen Vendler, for example, an ideal poem is fourteen lines long.[35] However, the affective relationship to continuity present in *Trilogy* and its images of immeasurability and containment imply that what is at stake is not so much a precise number of lines, but concern what brevity and length imply for the formal processing or containment of both personal and historical crises. The somewhat banal observation that lyric poems ought to be brief raises further questions about structural concerns with condensation of meaning, closure and integrity of a single poem that the notion of brevity implies, and which H.D.'s *Trilogy* places under psychological, philosophical and aesthetic stress. Ambiguously situated between the form of the long poem and the poetic sequence, testing the limits of Imagism without leaving that model entirely behind, *Trilogy* invites, to some extent, reading practices similar to other mid-century long poems and poetic sequences like Ezra Pound's *Cantos,* T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and David Jones's *The Anathemata*. However, H.D.'s explicit engagement with Imagism in the lyrical materials of *Trilogy* means that she is not simply examining the limits of the brief lyric poem, but specifically the limits of the modernist lyric poem variously defined by Pound and other Imagists.

In the final chapter, I examine Sarah Kane's posthumously performed and published work *4.4 Psychosis* as an example of a text that tests the boundaries between poetry and theatre, again in the context of a personal psychological crisis. As reviewers, critics and Kane's professional colleagues have performed, framed and analysed her final work as a play, its generic indeterminacy as a work that substantially relies on structural features of lyric poetry has been continually overlooked. The aim of the final chapter is thus two-fold. First, I want to argue that to analyse many sections of *4.48 Psychosis* as scenes of a play misrepresents its formal organisation by imagery, verse paragraphs and sounds patterns, while reading *4.48 Psychosis* within traditions of lyric poetry adds accuracy and nuance to our understanding of how the form(s) contained in *4.48 Psychosis* operate. Secondly, as *4.48 Psychosis* inhabits an ambiguous

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[35] Helen Vendler, 'Matter on Various Length Scales: Poetry', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 145.4 (2001): 389-401, pp.390-391.

space between poetry and theatre, its critical reception grants insight into the assumptions held of lyric poetry and its limits; specifically, how the construction of a first-person speaking voice distinguishes lyric poetry from drama and its strong association with multiple characters and dialogue. The lyric traditions of nocturne and aubade poetry, relevant to the night-time lyrical first-person sections of the text, negotiate this boundary between soliloquy and dialogue between characters. I will conclude the chapter by positioning Kane's text in the wider context of *fin-de-siècle* writing, and how the affective states in the text, like depression and tiredness, are connected to a concept of counting down – whether in the form of counting down minutes until the dawn or counting down minutes until the change of the century.

The aim of redescribing the genre of *4.48 Psychosis* – using lyric, as opposed to dramatic models to analyse how sections of the text formally operate – is to show that lyric is a category that is in fact both meaningful and useful. This conclusion goes against the grain of a strand of lyric theory sceptical of the category they claim to analyse. Speaking of John Ashbery's line 'The lake a lilac cube', Terada, for example, questions 'lyric' as a category:

> It seems to me now beside the point to narrate exactly how the particular instance acquires its power and quality, unless the instance provides an unheard of model of aesthetic power, and closer to the truth to explain it reductively by the sheer fact of its nomination as a lyric.[36]

Terada depreciates the concept of lyric effectiveness by claiming that the power of a successful line of poetry should either be explained by a model of aesthetic power that explains also the success of other art forms, or 'reductively by the sheer fact of its nomination as a lyric' – in other words, through its framing as a lyric poem. Reading *4.48 Psychosis* shows the reverse, however: a text *not* nominated as lyric acquires its power and quality using lyric means. The power of the text does not simply derive from its generic nomination, but from its literary features – literary features that I will argue are characteristic of lyric poetry, and have been recognised as such by individuals, despite the cultural and institutional framing of the text as a play. These acts of recognition and the interpretive depth that this recognition facilitates makes an implicit case for the category of lyric being meaningful in twentieth-century works. While the three case studies in this thesis are not comprehensive, or even representative, they are nevertheless each exemplary in articulating a particular limit for lyric poetry – and these limits, from James Joyce to Sarah Kane, help us to articulate what is both expected and exceptional about the experience of reading lyric poetry.

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[36] Terada, 'After the Critique of Lyric', p.197.

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Between Poetry and Prose: James Joyce's early works

Prose is considered to be the opposite of verse; if verse is eliminated, we can ask what the opposite of the 'poem' is, and from there, proceed backwards toward a definition of the 'poetic' [1] *—Tzvetan Todorov, 'Poetry without Verse'*

The distinction between prose and poetry feels at once essential for any definition of poetry as a genre, and a fairly recent, modern development in Western literature. As Joseph Brodsky observed, 'the tradition of dividing literature into poetry and prose dates from the beginnings of prose, since it was only in prose that such a distinction could be made'.[2] A note in William Wordsworth's *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* shows how dependent definitions of lyric poetry in the late eighteenth century were on its special other, 'prose'. Wordsworth is reluctant to use the opposition between poetry and prose – he says he does so 'against' his own judgement – and continues to claim that 'this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose' has introduced 'much confusion':

> I here use the word 'Poetry' (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a strict antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable.[3]

On the surface, Wordsworth's argument centres on the claim that distinguishing poetry and poetry has 'introduced [much confusion] into criticism' and that the two genres are not antithetical – in fact, prose often contains rhythmic passages, which can be metrically scanned. However, Wordsworth's reliance on the opposition between prose and poetry reveals the extent to which definitions of poetry appear to depend on this opposition as an initial

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[1] Tzevetan Todorov, 'Poetry Without Verse', in *The Prose Poem in France* ed. by Mary Ann Caws and Hermine Riffaterre (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), pp.60-78, p.60.

[2] Joseph Brodsky, 'A Poet and Prose', *Less than One: selected essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986), pp.176-94, p.176.

[3] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* ed. by Michael Mason (London, New York: Longman, 1992), p.69.

assumption familiar to his readers. Furthermore, this opposition helps Wordsworth refine and expand further comparisons. For example, Wordsworth introduces an alternative 'philosophical' distinction between poetry and empirical science, and redefines the distinction between prose and poetry as a distinction between prose and 'metrical composition' – and even this distinction is further qualified, since 'lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose'. Analysing the difference between poetry and prose thus shows the dependence of definitions of poetry on opposition to its generic others, particularly prose, but also how these distinctions betray the similarities between these different forms of writing. Negotiating the limits between poetry and prose provides an opportunity to distinguish what is unique to the definition of a lyric poem, at the same time as it helps to give these distinctions and definitions more precision.

If modern lyric theory depends on a history of critical distinctions between prose and poetry, different sub-genres of poetry negotiate this limit between prose and poetry with even further refinement. Dryden, in his *An Essay of Dramatick Poesy*, argues that blank verse, being 'but measur'd prose', is the kind of verse closest to prose and therefore suitable for certain types of plays.[4] Amy Lowell, as we saw in the introduction, also used the notion of 'measured' lines to distinguish free verse from both prose and metrical poetry. Timothy Steele also notes that '[i]f certain sorts of free verse achieve their effects by moving verse in the direction of prose, the modern prose poem accomplishes something comparable by moving prose in the direction of verse'.[5] However, the prose poem represents a more radical type of generic redefinition through poetic practice: the prose poem represents a poetic form with prose-like lineation – as opposed to mere absence of metrical structure, as in the case of free verse. The prose poem in fact represents a kind of inner contradiction: Tzevetan Todorov noted how 'the oxymoronic prose poem corresponds perfectly to the contradictions it evokes'.[6] Margueritte Murphy expands this notion of contradiction to theorise the prose poem in terms of a dialogic conflict:

> While every text may to some extent alter its own genre, the prose poem draws in and alters other genres or modes of discourse as part of its own peculiar self-definition…. The prose poem, then, is of special interest as a genre in which the traditional and the new are brought continually and inevitably into conflict, a conflict in which presumably every literary text participates, but which is here intensified and foregrounded.[7]

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[4] John Dryden, *The works of John Dryden. Vol. 17, Prose 1668-1691. An essay of dramatick poesie and shorter works*, ed. by Samuel Holt Monk, A.E. Wallace Maurer and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), p.70.

[5] Timothy Steele, 'Verse and Prose' in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics* 4th ed. ed. by Roland Greene (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012), p.1511.

[6] Todorov, 'Poetry Without Verse', p.67.

[7] Margueritte S. Murphy, *A Tradition of Subversion: the prose poem in English from Wilde to Ashbery* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 3. For another, more politically oriented theorisation of the prose poem, see Jonathan Monroe, *A Poverty of Objects: the prose poem and the politics of genre* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1987); for an overview of French prose poetry, see Suzanne Bernard, *Le Poème en prose de Baudelaire jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Nizet,

The foregrounded generic conflict Murphy identifies provides an opportunity to define the lyric poem with more precision; the prose poem presents a negotiation of the limits between prose and poetry that has further and even more extensive implications for the definition of lyric poetry in general than the case of blank verse or free verse.

Another theory of prose poetry – one that will underpin sections of this chapter – is one that takes into account historical changes in the prose poem that emphasise how the form is rooted in changes to the definition of lyric poetry. According to Steven Monte, the apparent inherent generic tension between prose and poetry is only superseded after an emphasis on affect supersedes an emphasis on form: 'When the essence of poetry is no longer believed to reside in its external features but rather in the intensity of the response it elicits in the reader, the possibility exists for something like the prose poem.'[8] Prose poetry depends on a transformed paradigm for lyric poetry: it relies on the continuity of a lyric tradition, at the same time as it only becomes possible with a shift in emphasis from 'external features' such as metre and rhyme to an emphasis on the affective response it 'elicits in the reader'. This emphasis on affect was anticipated by Wordsworth in his *Preface*, where he argues, with confidence, that 'there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition'.[9] Although Wordsworth critically frames the affect in this passage as subject matter of poetry, as a vehicle for 'pathetic situations and sentiments,' and not as a response of the reader to the text, the intensity of the response of the reader is arguably implicit. This refusal to formally separate poetry and prose by reconceiving lyric poetry is not only a feature of prose poems, of course, but also present in the works of poets who express acute discomfort over characterising their works as poetry. By 1800, as Monte observes, Wordsworth already asserted that 'there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of Prose and metrical composition'.[10] Much later, Nabokov similarly refuses 'to see any generic distinction between poetry and artistic prose'.[11] And Marianne Moore, in her interview with Douglas Hall for *The Paris Review* in 1961, claimed to 'dislike' the term poetry, and did not consider the term to apply to her works, which she characterised instead as 'my observations, experiments in rhythm, or exercises in composition'.[12] In a letter to Yvor Winters in 1922, Moore further explains how

'[f]or the litterateur, prose is a step beyond poetry I feel, and then there is another poetry

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[8] Steven Monte, *Invisible Fences: prose poetry as a genre in French and American literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), p.17.

[9] Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, p.81.

[10] Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, pp.68-9.

[11] Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage Originals, 1973, 1990), p.44.

[12] Marianne Moore, 'The Art of Poetry No.4', interview with Douglas Hall, *The Paris Review,* 26 (1961).

beyond that',[13] suggesting that poetry and prose, instead of being opposed to each other, exist on a spectrum, and that Moore's own poetry aspires to a condition of prose that somehow either supersedes or transcends the poetic. However, instead of the distinctions between prose and poetry becoming meaningless, these disavowals provide new carefully articulated definitions of the lyric, at the same time as these poets distance themselves from previous associations, and experiment with poetry's generic limits: disavowing poetry is a means of defining the genre more carefully and reimagining what is possible within the form. Poetry is thus both stretched further and reinvented by anti-lyricism that seeks to question any fundamental difference between prose and poetry.

Prose poetry became popular in twentieth-century Anglophone poetry after the influence of French symbolist poetry, particularly after the 1869 posthumous publication of Charles Baudelaire's *Le Spleen de Paris,* or *Petits Poèmes en Prose. The* first major English translation of French prose poetry appeared in 1890, translated by Stuart Merrill in *Pastels in Prose.* In 1905, Arthur Symons translated a part of *Le Spleen de Paris* in *Some Prose Poems from Charles Baudelaire*, and mentioned them in the 1919 additions to his seminal 1899 work *Symbolist Movement in Literature*, which also referenced prose poems from other French symbolist poets like Stéphane Mallarmé, Villiers De Lisle-Adam and Joris-Karl Huysmans. Indeed, by 1917 T.S. Eliot could write that it was now noticeable that 'poetry which looks like prose, and prose which sounds like poetry, are assured of a certain degree of odium and success'[14] – Eliot himself experimented briefly with the form, most notably in 'Hysteria', written in 1915, two years before his essay 'Borderline of Prose,' which on the whole disparages the form, despite some reserved praise for the prose poems of Richard Aldington. In this chapter, I will use James Joyce's epiphanies as my primary case study as examples of writing that test the limits between poetry and prose both in their form and in their compositional history, providing a unique and nuanced insight into the redefinitions of lyric poetry in the twentieth century through formal experiment. Joyce was familiar with French symbolist writing, having owned a copy of Paul Verlaine's *Les Poètes Maudits* by 1902, and used Arthur Rimbaud as an exemplar figure, according to recollections of various friends and evidence from his letters.[15] He also owned 'yellow-backed French editions of Verlaine and Maeterlink',[16] according to his brother Stanislaus, and famously references

[13] Marianne Moore, *The Selected Letters,* ed. by Bonnie Costello, Celeste Goodridge and Cristanne Miller (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p.192.

[14] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: the critical edition: apprentice years, 1905-1918* ed. by Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard (Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP, 2014), p.537.

[15] Scarlett Baron, 'Joyce and the Rhythms of Alphabet' in *New Quotatoes: Joycean Exogenesis in the Digital Age* ed. by Ronan Crowley and Dirk van Hulle (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2016), pp.18-44, pp.22-25.

[16] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's early years* (Cambridge, M.A.: Da Capo Press, 2003), p.112.

[17] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1944), p.25.

Rimbaud 'on the values of letters' in *Stephen Hero*;[17] it appears that poem XXXV of *Chamber Music*, 'All day I hear the noise of waters,' is a version of Verlaine's 1866 'Chanson d'automne' via Arthur Symons's translation. Joyce composed the epiphanies in the years between 1901 and 1904. He used these epiphanies later in *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, written between 1914 and 1915, and other published prose works, including *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. The year 1915 also saw the publication of T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and Virginia Woolf's first novel *Voyage Out*. The year thus marks a period where writers identified as central to modernism began their professional careers – the experimental, testing, early phase of modernism, before experimentation became one of the movement's definitional features. Joyce's epiphanies provide an early example of writing in English engaging with the generic limits of poetry, and the tensions between prose and poetry in particular, which negotiate formal transitions from Victorian poetry to modernist fiction. The epiphanies elaborate these formal questions further when Joyce works the epiphanies into *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners*. These reworkings both provide a commentary or model of poetic composition through the character of Stephen, and expand the investigation of the difference between prose and poetry to the difference between prose poetry and lyrical prose – when this 'emphasis on affect supersedes an emphasis of form' even more radically.

As Monte observes, the origins of the prose poem can be detected in late eighteenth-century trends for 'nature poetry, the fragment, dream literature, night poetry'.[17] In fact, Joyce's title 'epiphanies' links to a tradition of prose poetry that used terms from other art forms and practices in their titles: Arthur Rimbaud's *Les Illuminations* was based on the English term meaning coloured plates, Merrill called his translation of French prose poetry *Pastels in Prose* and Ernest Dowson wrote *Decorations in Prose* in conjunction with *Decorations in Verse* in 1899. Joyce's epiphanies use a religious term for revelation, which also highlights the emphasis on affect central to the development of prose poetry, as Joyce strove to present the epiphanies formally as poems, or as viable alternatives for lyric poetry. Stanislaus Joyce, recollecting his brother's composition of the epiphanies, notes their formal brevity and small scale. Even if we cannot trust Stanislaus's memories to represent his brother's intentions with full accuracy, his mentioning of the maximum number of lines in an epiphany does provide contextual support to the interpretation that one formal aim of the epiphanies was to provide an alternative to the traditional lyric poem:

> Another experimental form which his literary urge took while we were living at this address consisted in the noting of what he called 'epiphanies' – manifestations or revelations. Jim always had a contempt for secrecy, and these notes were in the beginning ironical observations of slips, and little errors and gestures – mere straws in the wind – by which people betrayed the very things they were most careful to conceal. Epiphanies were always brief sketches, hardly ever

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[17] Monte, *Invisible Fences*, p.18.

more than some dozen lines in length, but always very accurately observed, the matter being so slight.[18]

The epiphanies are 'brief sketches,' 'hardly ever more than some dozen lines in length,' setting a fairly precise limit to the number of lines an epiphany can contain. This identification of a measurable limit particularly stands out as a contrast to the apparently limitless alteration and accretion of material allowed in Joyce's mature novels like *Ulysses*, published in 1922, and *Finnegans Wake*, published in 1939 – the formal condensation of the epiphanies parallel the typical condensed nature of lyric poetry. W.B. Yeats's memory of Joyce's explanation of the epiphanies in their first meeting supports the idea that the brevity of the epiphany should be conceived as an experimental type of lyric: '[Joyce] had thrown over metrical form, he said, that he might get a form so fluent that it would respond to the motions of the spirit.'[19] Yeats's recollection suggests that Joyce's project with the epiphanies was similar to the ambition behind the prose poetry of Baudelaire, who famously wrote in the Preface to *Les Petites Poëmes en Prose* about the dream of 'a poetic prose':

> Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rhythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience?

> Which of us has never imagined, in his more ambitious moments, the miracle of a poetic prose, musical though rhythmless and rhymeless, flexible yet strong enough to identify with the lyrical impulses of the soul, the ebbs and flows of revery, the pangs of conscience?[20]

Both Joyce, according to Yeats, and Baudelaire were interested in conceptualising lyric in general and the prose poem in particular as a vehicle for the affective and the inner life. Baudelaire imagines the prose poem as a sub-genre that adapts to the 'mouvements lyriques de l'âme,' while Joyce allows the form of the epiphany significant flexibility to the end of it becoming responsive 'to the motions of the spirit.' It seems clear that the epiphany is not a brief narrative or dramatic episode, but specifically conceived as an alternative to a metrically organised poem. When Joyce 'throw[s] over metrical form' for a new, 'fluent' form of poetry, he apparently considers the epiphanies both as types of poetry and as a radical break from tradition, arising from the formal problems modern lyric poetry poses.

I will also argue in this chapter that this relationship between the affective and lyric interiority, or 'mouvements lyriques de l'âme', as Baudelaire calls it, generates questions about

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[18] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, pp.124-5.

[19] Richard Ellmann, 'Joyce and Yeats', *The Kenyon Review* 12.4 (1950): pp.618-638, p.624.

[20] Charles Baudelaire, *Vol.2 The Poems in Prose and La Fanfarlo* trans. by Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press, 1989), pp.24-25.

intentionality behind the form of the poem – specifically, how the acoustic shaping of the poem appears to make each word choice in a poem acutely deliberate, so that the reader perceives the sound and meaning of each word as uniquely motivated.[21] Stanislaus Joyce, in his discussion of his brother's epiphanies, uses the formal specifications about the brevity of the epiphanies to examine indirectly intentionality in these texts. The use of metaphor to indicate triviality ('mere straws in the wind') foregrounds how the poetic medium in fact uses the ephemeral and the accidental deliberately as a vehicle for gesturing to some hidden, actively concealed depth. The content of the epiphany, in a different critical framework, parallels Simon Jarvis's notion of the lyric as situated in a 'middle ground between fantasy and intention': 'because prosodic thinking operates right at the threshold of intentionality', Jarvis writes, 'the difficulty of deciding whether its effects are nugatory or real is in fact constitutive of the field of prosodic thinking'.[22] Operating 'at the threshold of intentionality', Joyce's epiphanies examine the limits of lyric poetry both in their form and in their content, in its recording of slips, errors and gestures 'by which people betrayed the very things they were most careful to conceal'.[23] For Mutlu Konuk Blasing, in fact, the relationship between affect and intentionality in the lyric poem is an intimate one, which is inherent in the process of learning a language: '[l]anguage is emotionally charged *because* it has to be acquired. Infants are socialized into language by learning to hear and communicate emotion and thus intentionalize acoustic and muscular phenomena.'[24] The sound patterning that characterises lyric language is thus both emotionally charged and is read and heard as uniquely intentional and motivated. Whether we fully embrace Blasing's psychoanalytic thread in her theory of poetic language, in section 1 of this chapter I will show that when Joyce comes to incorporate his epiphanies in his longer prose works, these epiphanies also negotiate affect in language, the learning of language and intentionality – at the same time as they formally examine the limits between poetry and prose.

Finally, sections 2 and 3 of this chapter will examine Joyce's experiments with the limits between prose and poetry in the context of the inheritance of Victorian models for lyric poetry that engage with certain exhaustion of lyricism and aesthetics of redundancy. The poems Stephen composes in *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and the lyricism in the short story 'Araby' in *Dubliners* both use the narrative context of the poems and the lyricism to subvert the revelatory, and to exhaust meaning from poetic intensity. Gilles Deleuze, in an essay on exhaustion in Samuel Becket, makes a useful conceptual distinction between 'tiredness' and

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[21] When I use the word 'intention' or 'intentionality', I do not refer to the intention of the author, but the intentionality a reader projects onto the poem after reading it – an effect of its formal organisation.
[22] Simon Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases' in *The Lyric Theory Reader: a critical anthology*, ed. by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2014), pp.434-448, p.445.
[23] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p.125.
[24] Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Lyric Poetry: the pain and the pleasure of words* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), p.13.

'exhaustion': '[t]he tired has only exhausted realization, while the exhausted exhausts all the possible. The tired can no longer realise, while the exhausted can no longer possibilitate'.[25] While the tired retains the possibility of action, without being able to realise that possibility, exhaustion does not even enable the possibility of action. Not only is action impossible, but also the will to action. Although, in practice tiredness can still 'actualise': automatic and flagging movement retains movement forward without the effectiveness and power that comes with fresh energy. Conceptual distinctions not so neat in literary examples, and the scope of exhaustion depends on what it is compared to or set against; whether spiritual rejuvenation ('Exhausted and life-giving')[26] or exhausted wells that produce voices singing ('voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells').[27] Paradoxically, Joyce's early literary experiments and attempts at formal renewal exist in relation to the inflation and exhaustion of a certain type of lyricism, establishing continuities between modernism and nineteenth-century poetry and poetic theory. In his early works, I want to suggest, Joyce employs prior lyric models in order to negotiate intentionality, the relationship between the deliberate and the arbitrary in the lyric poem; and this negotiation takes place in experiments with the generic limits of lyric poetry – particularly in experiments with the limits of poetry and prose.

1 The form of the Epiphanies

The forty survived short sketches Joyce composed between 1900 and 1903 and named 'epiphanies' vary in tone, register and the forms they contain: some epiphanies consist of short prose dialogues in dramatic scenes, others of brief dream narratives, others look more like what readers expect from a condensed prose poem. Twenty-two of these are preserved in Joyce's own hand in a holograph manuscript in Buffalo I.A, with numbers behind the separate leaves indicating their numerical order. 17 survive in Stanislaus Joyce's hand in his 'Selections of Prose from Various Authors' in Cornell 17. One separate leaf exists in James Joyce's hand in Cornell 15. Hans Walter Gabler notes the evolution of the form of the epiphany through these manuscripts:

> It has been noted that the prose pieces recorded by Stanislaus are all of the narrative kind. This has been attributed to personal preference. But under the chronological perspective provided by a closer analysis of his 'Selections', it becomes possible to discern a genuine progression within James Joyce's self-created genre from the scene of dramatic immediacy to the prose miniature mediated in the narrative mode.[28]

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[25] Gilles Deleuze and Anthony Uhlmann (trans.), 'The Exhausted', *SubStance*, 24.3.78 (1995): 3-28, p.3.

[26] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems & Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p.91.

[27] Eliot, *CPP*, p.73.

[28] Joyce, *A portrait of the artist as a young man: a facsimile of epiphanies, notes, manuscripts, & typescripts*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Garland Publishing, 1978), p.xxvii.

Scarlett Baron further articulates how '[t]he near-perfect balance between the number of dramatic and prose epiphanies does not reflect the actual unevenness of the collection, wherein the emphasis…shifts from drama to lyric and from scene to narrative.'[29] However, while superficially a chronological ordering of the epiphanies does indicate a clear formal shift, this does not account for the formal ambiguities that are contained within the epiphanies from the beginning. Joyce is playing with the limits of form and genre both in the early brief play-type dialogues and the later continuous prose pieces that most overtly resemble the form of the prose poem. The first of the manuscript epiphanies in Joyce's hand examines the limit between prose and poetry by incorporating both a piece of prose dialogue and a short poem into the sketch, thus foregrounding the generic transformations between poetry and prose in one, selfcontained text. The epiphany begins with a prose dialogue, where Jim listens to his mother and Mr Vance discuss a punishment for an unspecified misconduct or offence. From this relatively ordinary everyday conversation on child discipline, Jim extracts a lyric poem condensing the conversation's accidental rhymes into a poetic form, where Mr Vance and Mrs Joyce's lexical choices appear formally overdetermined:

> [Bray: in the parlour of the home
> in Martello Terrace]
>
> Mr Vance—(*comes with a stick*)…O, you know,
> he'll have to apologise, Mrs. Joyce.
> Mrs Joyce—O yes…Do you hear that, Jim?
> Mr Vance—Or else—if he doesn't—the eagles'll come and pull out his eyes.
> Mrs Joyce—O, but I'm sure he will apologise.
>   Joyce—(*under the table, to himself*)
>
>   —Pull out his eyes,
>   Apologise,
>   Apologise,
>   Pull out his eyes,
>
>   Apologise,
>   Pull out his eyes,
>   Pull out his eyes,
>   Apologise.[30]

Jim shapes the rhyme words 'eyes' and 'apologise' from a prose conversation into a short lyric poem, where these end-rhymes appear part of a deliberate design. What started as an accidental sound echo in a conversation between two adults becomes an integral part of the two stanzas the child composes orally, both rhyme words repeated four times in an A-B-B-A B-A-A-B

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[29] Scarlett Baron, *'Strandentwining Cable': Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), p.37.
[30] James Joyce, *Poems and Shorter Writings* ed. by Ellmann, Al Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p.161.

pattern for added emphasis. J.H. Prynne writes about the significance of sound patterns appearing to be motivated in a lyric poem:

> If the form of words can itself designate and specify some part of their sense, then the sign is not arbitrary: it is said to be *motivated*, implying that the nature of the idea or meaning expressed has affected the form of the word in such a way that the form can be 'read back' to reveal at least some part of the idea or the meaning which motivated it.[31]

The sound patterns of a lyric poem are part of the poem's meaning, and appear to be deliberate and motivated, not accidental as in everyday prose dialogue. The movement from a loose conversation to a condensed poetic form in the first epiphany thus foregrounds how the generic presuppositions of prose differ from those of the lyric poem: the accidental, the elliptic, the conversational in the form of a prose dialogue turns into a formally chiasmic and overdetermined first-person soliloquy in the eight rhyming four-syllable lines of the poem.

Indeed, the form of the poem 'can be "read back" to reveal at least some part of the idea or the meaning which motivated it'. This is evident, for example, in the psychoanalytic readings of the first epiphany after Joyce had incorporated into the beginning of *The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. These readings have 'read back' the form of the poem to concentrate on the discipline/punishment or trauma/creativity dialectics evident in the situation. For Christine van Boheemen, the passage is 'the impossible record of the moment of trauma that establishes Stephen's at once tenuous and over-cathected linguistic subjectivity',[32] for example. Van Boheemen observes the formal operation of the first-person speaker of a lyric poem as a 'linguistic subjectivity', and reads the resulting lyric poem as an 'impossible record of the moment of trauma' – the word 'record' implying that the diaristic impulse of noting down daily events is more significant than the formal transformation of overheard prose dialogue into lyric poetry and the creativity implicit in this act of composition. Meanwhile, Hélène Cixous points out how Stephen 'has picked up the word 'apologise' and subverted into a little poetry, which is his way of playing with the law…he accepts the law in order to transgress it. And he transgresses by being attentive to what is *inside* the words'.[33] Cixous has changed the emphasis from the linguistic subjectivity born from trauma into an analysis of how prose words are 'subverted into a little poetry' by concentrating on the sound and 'what is *inside* the words', applying a reading more nuanced to the significance of the generic shifts in the passage, while

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[31] J.H. Prynne, *Stars, Tigers and the Shape of Words* (The William Matthews Lectures, Birkbeck College London, 1992), p.2.

[32] Christine Van Boheemen*, Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the trauma of history: reading, narrative, and postcolonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 62 In van Boheemen's earlier essay, 'Joyce's Sublime Body: trauma, textuality, and subjectivity' 'the impossible record' was initially merely 'a record', and 'over-cathected' was the less psychoanalytically inflected 'overemphatic'. In Vincent J. Cheng, Kimberly J. Devlin and Margot Norris (eds), *Joycean Cultures, Culturing Joyces* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), pp.23-43, p.35.

[33] Hélène Cixous, *Volleys of Humanity: Essays 1972-2009* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011), p.90.

also translating this into the psychoanalytic model that considers this act of poetic composition as a transgression of 'the law', a term abstracted from the narrative context of child discipline. What van Boheemen and Cixous's readings miss is how the offence-punishment causal link is elided in the poem, concentrating on the accidental echoes of sound in the dialogue instead of the analysis of the logic behind the threatened punishment. Although in the context of *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, the poem is indeed the first instance of artistic creation in the development of Stephen's character, its prior use in the manuscript epiphanies excludes any narrative context. Outside this context, what the poem foregrounds is the generic transformation of an accidental piece of dialogue into verse form, while any speculation about the trauma Stephen experiences remains hypothetical.[34] What is undoubted, however, is that the presence of this poetic form – however simple – does generate attempts of reading back the forms of the word as intensely motivated and as providing unique insight into the psychology of the boy who spontaneously composes and recites the poem. In this sense, these readings by van Boheemen and Cixous provide instances of critical reading of the epiphanies as if they were lyric poems, producing readings that closely correspond to the lyric project behind the prose poem at the turn of the twentieth century, when poets particularly emphasise its ability to reflect the emotions of a modern subjectivity.

However, while Joyce's first epiphany reveals the different generic presuppositions between prose and poetry, it also represents an experimental form in itself, incorporating features across genres to create a test case for a prose poem that is limited in number of lines (in this case 15 lines, one more than in a sonnet) but does not have the metrical uniformity of a traditional verse poem. Critics have read the epiphanies as unique case studies of genre before: for Michael Sayeau, for example, the epiphanies 'are not simply *petits poèmes en prose* in which surface events make manifest psychological depths, but rather performative theorizations of modern narrative form and its limits'.[35] According to Sayeau, the epiphanies and their compositional history reveal Joyce's evolving relationship with the narrative form: the epiphanies are 'atomic forms of fiction',[36] kernels for his later prose works, which also imply a wider theory of 'modern narrative form and its limits'.[37] However, the epiphanies are equally if not more significant as performative theorisations of modern lyric and its limits, to use Sayeau's phrasing; and his brief allusion to Baudelaire's prose poems betray his own awareness of the epiphanies' complex formal and generic genealogy. Moreover, while Sayeau notes the importance of the epiphanies' formal entailments, his concentration on narrative overlooks the formal and generic

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[34] At least in the absence of marked symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. See, for example, Cixous's attempt to consider different reasons why Stephen might be hiding under the table; the reality is, as Cixous herself admits, that '[w]e don't know anything about it'. Cixous, *Volleys of Humanity*, p.90.

[35] Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: the everyday and the evolution of modernist narrative* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), p.192.

[36] Sayeau, *Against the Event*, p.207.

[37] Sayeau, *Against the Event*, p.192.

variety of the epiphanies: not only does the first epiphany perform a transformation from prose to poetry, the epiphanies overall include a generic range from play dialogues of banal everyday conversations to elliptic sketches of dreams. Indeed, the use of brackets to indicate setting and gestures, followed by a dialogue with assigned characters in the first epiphany – as well as the obvious elimination of any narration before Jim recites the lyric extracted from the dialogue under the table – presents the conversation as a dramatic scene from which Jim's lyric poem originates. As William Martin notes, 'the literary form of this epiphany reveals that Joyce perceived the presence of dramatic forms in everyday conversations'.[38] Reading the epiphanies as integral parts of Joyce's development as an author of fiction also overlooks the less popular narrative of Joyce's developing engagement with modern poetry. Further, framing his career as a progression from the epiphanies through *Dubliners* and *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* to his mature novels not only removes from this narrative his collections of poetry, *Chamber Music* and *Pomes Penyeach,* but also the poems Joyce incorporated in his fiction. Despite the fact that for literary modernism Joyce's poetry did not have the same influence as his prose works, these works are important for his development as an author. As J.C.C. Mays comments, '*Chamber Music* is not a false start, but in a profound sense the starting-point of everything he subsequently wrote'.[39] Joyce was writing *Chamber Music* and *Dubliners* at the same time, and the only other work Sylvia Beach would print besides *Ulysses* in 1922 was *Pomes Penyeach*, which came out as a Shakespeare and Company edition five years later in 1927.

Chapter 25 of *Stephen Hero*, which discusses a projected 'book of epiphanies', records a 'fragment of colloquy' as an overheard conversation recorded in a brief, condensed form. The 'brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis' are reminiscent of the setting of many of the short stories of *Dubliners*, revealing a shared context that motivates both the epiphanies in *Stephen Hero* and Joyce's prose works. However, the scene reveals further formal negotiation of the limits between poetry and prose:

> A young lady was standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis. A young gentleman was leaning on the rusty railings of the area. Stephen as he passed on his quest heard the following fragment of colloquy out of which he received an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely.
>
> The Young Lady - (drawling discreetly) ... O, yes... I .... at the ...cha...pel... The Young Gentleman - (inaudibly) ... I ... (again inaudibly) ... I The Young Lady - (softly) .O... but you're ... ve....ry... wick...ed...
>
> This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity

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[38] William Martin, *Joyce and the Science of Rhythm* (New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.79.

[39] J.C.C Mays 'Introduction', *Poems and Exiles* (London, New York: Penguin, 1992), p.xx.

[41] Joyce, *Stephen Hero,* p.188.

of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments.[41]

Stephen is *passing by* an interaction involving a different narrative of a relationship and different set of characters; on a 'quest' that determines the direction of his own purpose-driven narrative. The 'epiphany' or 'sudden spiritual manifestation' occurs at the intersection of a caught fragment of dialogue and the *mythos* driving Stephen who records the encounter. The epiphany is not merely a 'manifestation' of some spiritual significance or psychological depth accidentally on the surface of speech. Rather, the epiphany acts as a generic crux that redefines how to conceive narrative as opposed to the 'most delicate and evanescent of moments'. As Liesl Olson notes:

> Stephen's theory of epiphany is at odds with Joyce's presentation of everyday life in *Ulysses*, a work that shows how life cannot be organized artfully into epiphanic events; rather, experience is flooded with moments that are difficult to privilege, harder to "read into".[40]

Instead of overhearing the voice of the first-person lyrical speaker, the reader views the poet eavesdropping on a broken sexually charged dialogue, where conditions of privacy and secrecy are at their most normative. As the epiphany originates in a moment of deliberate listening by the poet passing by the scene, the model of lyric poetry as an overheard soliloquy shifts from the accidentally overheard to the deliberately listened to, from the knowingly shared to the unconsciously betrayed. The epiphany originates in a lyric moment of an imminent present interrupting a narrative; however, the different implications of overhearing at play in the scene suggest a more complicated relationship the epiphanies have both with the normative assumptions behind lyric poetry and those behind a developing narrative.

The generic ambivalence of the epiphanies shown by, but not reduced to, their resemblance to prose poetry also has implications for interpreting the editorial practice of the printed edition of the epiphanies. The decision depends on whether the editor wants to transcribe the manuscript on the page as accurately as possible, reproducing the line breaks in the manuscript, even when these are arbitrarily dictated by the space on the page and not by the form, or whether the editor follows the formal practice of Joyce, who writes the prose to the end of the page (this is also true of the epiphanies noted down by Stanislaus). The line breaks of the prose are clearly arbitrary: the lines frequently end on articles, and do not seem to be meaningful; in Stanislaus's transcription, some words at the end of the line are cramped to fit the page, and even hyphenated over the line break. Stanislaus's draft of epiphany 24 in Cornell 15, 'Her arm

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[40] Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), p.41.

is laid for a moment' (there are three transcriptions of the epiphany by Stanislaus in total) hyphenates the word 'bid-ding' over two lines twice. The edition of *Poems and Shorter Writings* by Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson, however, is inconsistent in its editorial practice: in the short pieces of prose dialogue, the line breaks are reproduced faithfully, but the lyrical prose passages are not, allowing the space of the page to dictate the line breaks of the printed version (see Appendix 1 for images that contrast the editorial practice in the two different types of epiphany). This becomes even more complicated with the few prose passages in Stanislaus's hand that include a line of dialogue, without being in the play format of Joyce's earlier epiphanies: in epiphany 5, the dialogue line break in the manuscript is reproduced ('I thought it was Mary Ellen….. I thought you / were Mary Ellen, Jim –') whereas in epiphany 26 it is not ('I saw your brother the other day….. / He is very like you' in the manuscript becomes 'I saw your brother the other day….. He is / very like you' in the printed edition). The epiphanies I quote in this chapter follow the manuscript lineation; however, in a printed edition, if we follow the formal intention behind Joyce's epiphanies, the line breaks ought to be dictated by the space of the page; otherwise lines ending on articles are attributed with a semantic emphasis not borne out by the content of the passage as a whole. Ellmann, Litz and WhittierFergusson's edition seems to suggest that the epiphanies contain two distinct types governed by separate formal practice over line breaks, which is not borne out by the lineation of Joyce or his brother themselves. However, this editorial inconsistency is arguably a symptom of the generic ambiguity of the epiphany, its ability to contain multitude forms, and negotiate the limits between prose and the brevity of the lyric poem. In fact, Stanislaus transcribes after epiphany 6 ('A small field of weeds and thistles') Mallarmé's prose poem 'Autumn Lament', suggesting his instinct for recognising his brother's epiphanies as continuous with this contradictory form made successful by the French symbolist movement (see final image in Appendix.1).

The epiphanies' formal negotiation of poetry and prose continues to be central in Joyce's fiction also, when the first epiphany containing the 'Pull out his eyes' lyric is transposed into the beginning of *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*. In the novel, Joyce transposes the play dialogue into a narrative in free indirect discourse; he shortens the dialogue into two lines containing the rhyme words. As a consequence, we have a clearer narrative context for the dialogue, introducing and placing the characters as well as the reason why Stephen needs to apologise. In *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, wider narrative superstructures subsume the poem, and critics read the poem as proleptic of Stephen's future 'as he finds a refuge from authority in art and makes a poem out of his predicament'.[41] Rather than recording the speech

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[41] Richard M. Kain and Robert Scholes (eds), *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the raw materials for a Portrait as an Artist as a Young Man* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1965), p.11.

of different characters, the narrator absorbs the poem into the viewpoint of growing Stephen and his psychological and artistic development. The epiphany, in its condensed form, elides causal connections between events to 'weaken' the plot (to use Stephen Kern's term)[42] ; part of its prose poem quality is how it is abstracted from a more developed and detailed narrative context.

> The Vances lived in number seven. They had a different father and mother. They were Eileen's father and mother. When they were grown up he was going to marry Eileen. He hid under the table. His mother said:
>
> —O, Stephen will apologize.
>
> Dante said:
>
> —O, if not, the eagles will come and pull out his eyes.—
>
> Pull out his eyes,
> Apologize,
> Apologize,
> Pull out his eyes.
> Apologize,
> Pull out his eyes,
> Pull out his eyes,
> Apologize.[43]

Joyce also heavily condenses the dialogue in *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*: 'O, but I'm sure Stephen will apologise' has changed into 'O, Stephen will apologise', for example. However the form of the poem stays the same, showing how while the content of the prose can be translated into a different form and condensed to a different length, the form of a lyric poem stays identical. As Percy Bysshe Shelley had claimed in 1821, translating a poem is comparable to casting 'a violet through a crucible', and the unchanged form of the poem in Joyce's different works suggests that formal fixity is indeed more necessary in poetry than in other genres it is set against and an ingrained part of poetic practice even in formally experimental early twentiethcentury works. These have further implications for the transitions and cross-overs between Joyce's prose and Joyce's poetry; as Wim Van Mierlo has observed:

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[42] Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel: a critical introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011). Kern identifies a scene of poetic composition in *Portrait* as a metatextual moment of departure for Joyce: '"all those elements which he deemed common and insignificant fell out of the scene There remained no trace of the tram itself nor of the trammen nor of the horses; nor did he and she appear vividly. The verses told only of the night and balmy breeze and the maiden lustre of the moon." Although verse calls for concision, one can read Joyce's explanation as a larger comment on the direction his writing was taking, as is evident from his carefully constructed but weakly plotted *Ulysses*'. (Kern, *The Modernist Novel*, p.68).

[43] James Joyce, *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), pp.5-6.

> The Epiphanies most clearly form a transition between the lyric ideals of *Chamber Music* and the symbolical effectiveness of the prose in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, neither of which is devoid of lyricism. The emotional charge that lies at the basis of the epiphanies and the artist's need to capture the moment effectively in language remains the essential ingredient of Joyce's oeuvre, and comes to the fore again most explicitly in Pomes Penyeach.[44]

The next section will examine in more detail the relationship between Joyce's poetry and prose, and the generic distinctions and continuities between prose and poetry the epiphanies both perform and encapsulate.

2 Chamber Music and Joyce's prose works

That the poem 'Pull out his eyes / Apologise' finds its lexical material from an everyday conversation highlights the structural difference between poetry and prose, as the lyric poem transforms the previously accidental sound echo into a formally determined rhyme. Joyce uses the lyric poem to repurpose the coincidental falling upon available words into a motivated formal choice. This apparent intentionality of poetic form contrasts in *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* with another scene of poetic composition where the resulting poem does not work, and does not work precisely because the sound patterns sound absurd and appear contingent on the imaginative associations of the poet playing with different possibilities of rhyme and marked sound patterns:

> His [Stephen's] own consciousness of language was ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves which set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms:
>
> The ivy whines upon the wall
> And whines and twines upon the wall
> The ivy whines upon the wall
> The yellow ivy on the wall
> Ivy, ivy up the wall.
>
> Did anyone ever hear such drivel? Lord Almighty! Who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall? Yellow ivy: that was all right. Yellow ivory also. And what about ivory ivy?[47]

Indeed, the repeated rhyme word, 'wall', creates both a formal and creative wall at the end of each line, impeding further development and trapping the poem into a form built on meaningless repetition. The words 'band and disband' employ the metaphor of an organised military group to figure lyric semantics as a union of parts co-ordinated for joint action. As the words 'band and disband', the union and dissolution of the semantic confederate alternate.

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[44] Wim Van Mierlo, "'I have met you too late": James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, and the Making of *Chamber Music*' in *Writing Modern Ireland* ed. by Catherine E. Paul (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015), 43-66, 63.

[47] Joyce, *Portrait*, p.150.

Instead of the overdetermination of a repeated chiasmic rhyme, Stephen's later fragment of a lyric results in 'wayward rhythms', rhythms not unified in a single structure but moving irregularly and capriciously away from the necessary interdependence of the poem's different parts. Stephen himself recognises the acoustic echo of the rhyme 'whines and twines' in the word 'ivy' as absurd: 'Who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall?' From this perspective, the poem fails Prynne's suggestion that the form of the poem 'can be "read back" to reveal at least some part of the idea or the meaning which motivated it'. Stephen proceeds to test different images and sounds, and his tests open the poem up to examination, change and the exploration of different possibilities: 'Yellow ivy: that was alright. Yellow ivory also. And what about ivory ivy?' The movement from one image to another through sound association to test whether these alternatives are 'alright' removes the determined necessity of the lyric poem: Stephen's lyric fragment is a work in progress and remains provisional. From another perspective, this provisional and experimental nature of the poem is indicative of developments in modern lyric poetry more widely: the attempt to create a conversation around the lyric genre, and to root it into an ethos of experimentation and boundary-crossing. In some ways, Stephen's poem arguably anticipates Charles Bernstein's discussion of 'chance-generated poetry' in his essay 'Jackson at Home', and Bernstein's suggestion that in order to break 'the circuit of intentionality in poetry' poetry should be both read and written'[n]ot as a projection of "self" centering the language experience but a discovery of its possibilities in an exteriorized, decentred experience of reading'.[45]

Without the narrative context depicting Stephen's artistic development and dissatisfaction with his own work, some poems in *Chamber Music* appears to deliberately integrate layers of provisionality in their form through choice of rhyme words. While *Chamber Music* overall is still viewed as minor juvenilia and rarely examined in relation to Joyce's prose works, there have been some significant recent attempts to recuperate the work: Van Mierlo, for example, has argued that '*Chamber Music*, though it might not be to the liking of all readers, has its own integrity and aesthetic aims, and its genesis as well as the context against which it appeared could do much to help us reach a better understanding of the intrinsic and historical meaning of Joyce's earliest writing'.[46] However, placing *Chamber Music* next to *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* provides some important insight into the parallels between the 'drivel' Stephen composes and the disinterest at best that *Chamber Music* seems to provoke in its readers, including Joyce himself, who writes to Stanislaus in February 1907 that 'I don't like the book, but wish it were published and be damned to it. It is not a book of love-verses at all, I

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[45] Charles Bernstein, 'Jackson at Home', *Content's Dream: essays, 1975-1984*, (Evanston, Illinois.: Northwestern UP, 2001), 252-58, 254.

[46] Van Mierlo, 'The Making of *Chamber Music*', pp.43-4.

perceive. But some of them are pretty enough to be put to music'.[47] In a less dramatic way than Stephen's poem 'The ivy whines upon the wall', poems in *Chamber Music* occasionally use bizarre word choices to execute the rhyme scheme; as a consequence of this oddness, these rhyme words can appear underdetermined in the poem's formal scheme. In poem XII – written in April 1904, three months before Joyce started his first story for *Dubliners* – the exclamation 'Mine, o mine!' on line 10 repeats 'mine' for emphasis in addition to using an exclamatory syllable 'o', incorporating an excess of superficial indications of strong emotion that stretches the limits of plausible sentimentality. The same line, crammed with poetic fillers, also somewhat clumsily begins a new sentence in the middle of the line in order to rhyme 'Mine, o mine!' with the word 'divine' on line 8:

> XII
>
> What counsel has the hooded moon
>   Put in thy heart, my shyly sweet,
> Of love in ancient plenilune,
>   Glory and stars beneath his feet –
> A sage that is but kith and kin With
> the comedian capuchin?
>
> Believe me rather that am wise
> In disregard of the divine.
> A glory kindles in those eyes,
>   Trembles to starlight. Mine, o mine!
> No more be tears in moon or mist
> For thee, sweet sentimentalist.[48]

Other rhymes also appear only necessary in order to satisfy the requirements of the rhyme scheme: rhyming 'moon' with 'plenilune' uses two near-synonyms to reinforce the night setting with a more obscure word, perhaps specifying the moon is full. '[T]he hooded moon' offers the addressee of the poem counsel, and 'ancient plenilune' figuratively describes love as an ancient full moon. However, as the moon scene has already been established, the use of the word 'plenilune' seems unnecessary for constructing the poem's milieu. The rhyme is not entirely original: A.C. Swinburne also rhymes 'moon' with 'plenilune' in his poem 'A Vision of Spring in Winter'. In Swinburne's poem, however, the rhyme words 'plenilune / noon / moon' play with oppositions as well as synonyms. The rhyme appears to both clarify and complicate the poem, rather than unnecessarily repeat features of the setting:

> III
> Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
> Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,

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[47] James Joyce, *Letters vol.2* ed. by Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1957, 1966), p.182.
[48] Joyce, *P&SW*, p.24.

> Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
> But where the silver-sandalled shadows are,
> Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
> Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:...[49]

The poem plays with multiple oppositions: the word 'But' on line 28 marks a turn from features that are absent from the milieu with those that are present. An 'ungrown moon' is present instead of 'plenilune' and 'full-breasted noon', which represent the absence of full light. Moreover, because of the two lines separating the 'moon' rhyme word on line 30 from the rhyming 'plenilune / noon' on lines 26 and 27, the word 'moon' performs in the progression of the poem both a surprise and a satisfactory fulfilment of expectation, so that the repetition of the moon imagery does not merely repeat in order to execute the rhyme scheme, but complicates and develops the milieu of the passage. In Swinburne's poem, the word 'moon' appears a functional clarification as well as a specification of the setting, rather than redundant repetition.

However, aesthetics of redundancy were already part of nineteenth-century lyric practice, as Isobel Armstrong notes, 'the Victorian poets were the first group of writers to feel that what they were doing was simply unnecessary and redundant'.[50] Although for Armstrong this redundancy follows from the epistemic constraints of Kant's aesthetics – where reality can only be accessed through individual consciousness, thus mediating external reality through cognitive conditions for perception – this philosophical context also manifests in poetic practice, creating significant precedents for Joyce's experimentations with poems of sentimentality and reiteration. Joyce's earliest poetry in collections titled *Moods* and *Shine and Dark* do not survive, apart from poem II 'The Twilight Turns from Amethys', in *Chamber Music* and the 'Villanelle of the Temptress', incorporated into *The Portrait of an Artsit as a Young Man*, both dated to circa 1900. The bulk of the poems in *Chamber Music* were written between 1901 and 1904, at the same time as Joyce was writing down his epiphanies. The Victorian precedents of *Chamber Music* have been noted before. Matthew Campbell, for example, observes the intimate connections *Chamber Music* holds with Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, published between 1808 and 1834, the poetry of James Clarence Mangan, Tennyson, and Yeats's *The Wind Among the Reeds*.[51] The critical view of *Chamber Music* has overall followed Harry Levin's early assessment that 'Joyce at best is a merely competent poet, moving within an extremely limited range…. His real contribution is to bring the fuller resources of poetry to fiction.'[52] As Marc Conner

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[49] A.C. Swinburne, *Selected Poems of Swinburne* ed. by Edward Shanks (London: Macmillan, 1950), p.240.
[50] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.4.
[51] Matthew Campbell, 'The Unconsortable Joyce: *Chamber Music*' in *The Poetry of James Joyce Reconsidered* ed. by Marc C. Conner (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2012), pp.51-77.
[52] Harry Levin, *James Joyce: a critical introduction* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1941)*,* p.27.
[56] Marc C. Conner, 'The Poetry of James Joyce Reconsidered' in Conner (ed.), pp.3-4.

observes, 'while [Joyce's] prose is so radical and experimental – virtually defining the modern age as, in Hugh Kenner's phrase, "the age of Joyce" – his poetry has long been held to reflect an antiquated, even regressive style incompatible with modernist conceptions of art and the artist.'[56] However, there have been intermittent but significant attempts to re-evaluate Joyce's poetry; most recently in the collection of essays, *The Poetry of James Joyce Reconsidered*, which Conner edited in 2012, but also in essays by Robert Scholes, Fr. Robert Boyle, in books by Conner Selwyn Jackson and Myra Russell,[53] and various editions and commentaries of Joyce's poetry.[54] J.C.C. Mays observes the importance of *Chamber Music* both as a precedent and as a parallel to experiments in Joyce's early fiction: '*Chamber Music* is fascinating in that it is neither good nor bad, nor these two things mixed: it possesses a capacity to turn contradictory responses to back onto themselves and remain simultaneously a demonstration of the mastery of a style and a critique of the same.'[55] Both Ezra Pound and Arthur Symons commended *Chamber Music*; in 1914, seven years after the publication of *Chamber Music,* Pound included the last poem of the collection, XXXIV 'I hear an army', in *Des Imagistes: An Anthology*, the February 1914 issue of *Glebe*, a year after the same poem had been included in a collection called *The Wild Harp: A Selection from Irish Poetry*, edited by Katharine Tynan, showing how at best the poetry of *Chamber Music* exists in an ambiguous relationship to poetry of the Irish revival on one hand, and international modernism on the other.

Writing to Nora in a letter in 1909, Joyce claims that when he 'wrote [*Chamber Music*], I was a strange lonely boy, walking about by myself at night and thinking that some day a girl would love me'.[56] The motif of the night-time city walker is a common one to the French and British prose poem of the turn of the twentieth-century, establishing another commonality between Joyce's poetry, French symbolism and Anglophone modernism. Baudelaire, when attempting to create a generic context for his *Petits Poëmes en Prose*, mentions Aloysius Bertrand's *Gaspard de la Nuit* and the image of the night-time walker in metropolitan Paris as central to his work. He was also aware of Jules Janin's *Le gâteau des rois*, which loosely relies on the structure of a night-time walker in Paris on the night of the Epiphany. Janin's work, like Joyce's, is also very conscious about its experimentations with the limits of narrative form.[57] In English-language prose poetry, Oscar Wilde poems in prose, written in 1894, similarly work with night-time

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[53] Robert Scholes, 'James Joyce, Irish Poet', *James Joyce Quarterly* 2.4(1965):255-270, Conner Selwyn Jackson, *The Poems of James Joyce and the Use of Poems in his Novels* (Frankfurt, Berne, Los Angeles: Perer Lang, 1978), Fr. Robert Boyle, 'The Woman Hidden in James Joyce's *Chamber Music*' in *Women in Joyce* ed. by Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless (Brighton: the Harvester Press, 1982), 3-32, Myra Russell *James Joyce's* Chamber Music*: The Lost Song Settings* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993).

[54] J.C.C. Mays edition and commentary on *Poems and Exiles* and the Ellmann, Litz and Whittier-Ferguson edition of *Poems and Shorter Writings*.

[55] Mays (ed.), *Poems and Exiles*, xvii.

[56] Joyce, *Letters vol.2,* pp.236-7.

[57] For a longer discussion of Baudelaire and Janin, see Monte, *Invisible Fences*, p.75.

settings: the first prose poem, 'The Artist', begins with the line: 'One evening there came into his soul the desire to fashion an image of *The Pleasure that abideth for a Moment*'.[58] The next prose poem, 'The Doer of Good', is a series of encounters in an orientalised, decadent city, which begins with the line, 'It was night-time and He was alone'.[59] Although poetry set in night-time is not a late nineteenth-century invention, its centrality to both French symbolist collections of poetry and Joyce's *Chamber Music*, especially when combined with the theme of walking, provides further support that Joyce's poetry can be read in this tradition. In fact, night-time walking was also central to T.S. Eliot's modernist poem, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* (first begun in 1910, published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in 1915), providing a thematic continuity between French symbolism, *Chamber Music* and modernism, in addition to some of the formal continuities I have argued for so far. Eliot's poem begins with the request to go 'through certain half-deserted streets',[60] establishing immediately night-time and walking as the poem's setting. Later, the speaker describes the streets 'that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent'.[61] The simile of 'intent' transforms what first appears to be a haphazard list of public stopping points in the city, 'one-night cheap hotels' and 'saw-dust restaurants',[62] into an argumentative structure that entraps with its 'insidious intent'. The movement from urban walking to textual constructs, from the haphazard list to inference of intent, parallels similar shifts occurring in Joyce's prose representing the poet and his acts of epiphanic and lyric composition: in retrospect, Joyce constructs his epiphanies and poems as products of Stephen's night-time wanderings. However, Eliot's use of rhyme to negotiate the tension between the overheard and the motivated sound pattern is another important formal parallel with Joyce's first epiphany. The repeated couplet, 'In the room women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo'[63] appears to lift the accidentally heard word, Michelangelo, out of a trivial conversation, as it happens to rhyme with 'go', the subject of the poem introduced in the famous apostrophe, 'Let us go then, you and I',[64] turning the overheard sound into parts of a deliberate rhyme scheme. This is similar to the way in which Jim in the first manuscript epiphany lifts the word 'eyes' and 'apologise' from an overheard conversation to construct a rhyming lyric poem; in the epiphany, Joyce makes this transformation from accidental, overheard and prosaic to the deliberate lyric structure more explicit. In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,* where the failure to perform the subject's intentions is an important theme structurally, the transformation of accidental conversations into apparently intended rhymes

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[58] Oscar Wilde, *The Works of Oscar Wilde* ed. by G.F. Maine (London, Glasgow: Collins, 1948), p.843.

[59] Wilde, *The Works*, p.843.

[60] Eliot, *CPP*, p.13.

[61] Eliot, *CPP*, p.13.

[62] Eliot, *CPP,* p.13.

[63] Eliot, *CPP,* p.13.

[64] Eliot, *CPP,* p.13.

shows how Eliot's early lyric examines formally the same tensions between the accidental and the motivated as Joyce's early works.

The critical recovery of *Chamber Music* has partly depended on extracting it from the context of modernism; as Van Mierlo explains, for example, his 'main purpose is to take it out of the context of High Modernism, which it preceded by a good number of years, and insert it more properly in the time the poetry came into being—the period roughly between 1901 and 1907— and the places that had an impact on its production: Dublin and London.'[65] Later he states the case more strongly, writing that *Chamber Music* 'is decidedly not a Modernist work, but that does not mean that it is not "modern" according to the standards and practices of its time.'[66] Indeed, while many of the poems of *Chamber Music* and *Pomes Penyeach* are explicitly nocturnal pieces, they do not involve the urban wandering Joyce describes in the letter to Nora, when evoking the context of its composition. The one poem involving walking in *Chamber Music* is of a young couple walking in a scene of summer wind and bats flying on trees 'out by Donnycarney', suggesting a more sentimental and rural environment than the tortured lonely walkers of metropolitan centres in Baudelaire's poetry, for example. However, Stephen's poetic composition in *Stephen Hero*, which references 'Blake and Rimbaud on the values of letters',[67] describes a scene of urban walking and poetic composition that pieces 'together meaningless words and phrases', suggesting that evacuation of sense from lyric poetry is in fact generated by the modern experience of walking in the city:

> It was not only in Skeat that he found words for his treasure-house, he found them also at haphazard in the shops, on advertisements, in the mouths of the plodding public. He kept repeating them to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables…. He would obey the command and wander up and down the streets alone, the fervour of his hope sustained by ejaculations until he felt sure that it was useless to wander any more: and then he would return home with a deliberate, unflagging step piecing together meaningless words and phrases with deliberate unflagging seriousness.[68]

Words are a source of 'treasure' – a source of stored and accumulated wealth – but the rather worn term of a 'treasure-house' in relation to literature that paradoxically indicates value has in fact lost some of its figural currency through repeated use. The tension between the meaning of the word and the emptying of connotation through figural recycling prepares for Stephen's own act of 'repeating [words] to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning and became wonderful vocables'. What is implicit in this passage of urban walking and poetic composition is that the themes and ideas of modernism in the form of the wandering in Dublin and the

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[65] Van Mierlo, 'The Making of *Chamber Music*', p.44.
[66] Van Mierlo, 'The Making of *Chamber Music*', p.61.
[67] Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, p.25.
[68] Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, pp.23-24.

reference to Rimbaud, are not necessarily at odds with vacuous poetry structurally built on repetition of sound patterns and musicality.

When read side-by-side with his prose works, the lyrical project behind *Chamber Music* is clearly not disconnected from early modernism, even if it does not directly or successfully contribute to the movement. Moreover, the epiphanies show how the development of a modern lyric expression depends on an experiment with generic limits, particularly the limits between poetry and prose. Despite the variety of the epiphanies, epiphany 33, for example, is characteristic in form and subject matter of the French and English-language prose poem at the turn of the twentieth century:

> They pass in twos and threes amid the life of the boulevard, walking like people who have leisure in a place lit up for them. They are in the pastry cook's, chattering, crushing little fabrics of pastry, or seated silently at tables by the café door, or descending from carriages with a busy stir of garments soft as the voice of the adulterer. They pass in an air of perfumes: under the perfumes their bodies have a warm humid smell …..No man has loved them and they have not loved themselves: they have given nothing for all that has been given them.[69]

The walking 'people who have leisure' on the boulevard, with the cafés and the suggestion of sexuality and sin closely resembles the thematic concerns of Baudelaire's poetry as well as the subject matter in some of Wilde's prose poems. The urban setting, quotidian life and surreal dreams in Joyce's epiphanies anticipate their development in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Further, the ambiguous status of the epiphany as a text somewhere between prose and poetry anticipates Joyce's experiments not only with the limits of narrative form but also the limits of lyric language in his later prose works. Epiphany 33, in fact, seems to end in two clauses separated by a colon like the ending couplet of a sonnet, marked out by ellipsis and punctuation rather than rhyme or line breaks. '….No man has loved them and they have not loved themselves: they have given nothing for all that has been given them' presents two separate clauses built on a repetitive negative syntax and repeated verbs. It also presents a general abstract statement that presents a moving away from the previous, specifically observed scene, thus resembling some of the summative couplets of Shakespeare's sonnets. The three preceding sentences, built on the repeated syntactic structure of 'They pass… They are… They pass…', only broken after the ellipsis with '….No man has loved', could also be viewed as a structural mirroring of the three sonnet stanzas, substituting the repetitions of sound in rhyme schemes with repetitions of syntactic structure. The epiphany thus subtly mirrors the form of a sonnet through syntactic means, showing how Joyce's epiphanies can indeed seem to represent experiments with an alternative to lyric poem in order to communicate conditions of modern subjectivity and modern life.

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[69] Joyce, *Pe&SW*, p.193.

3 Lyricism in Dubliners

For late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century prose poetry lyrical prose was an important precedent: even though prose poem as a form originated from France, 'the artistic prose of aesthetic criticism [in the 1890s] offered a prominent indigenous prototype',[70] as Margaret S. Murphy notes. Walter Pater, for instance, argued that imaginative prose 'will exert, in due measure, all the varied charms of poetry, down to the rhythm which, as in Cicero, or Michelet, or Newman, at their best, gives its musical value to every syllable'.[71] Moreover, Pater calls this musical prose 'the special and opportune art of the modern world', emphasising and elaborating the intimate relationship between poetic prose and modernity. Indeed, the novelists of high modernism in many ways puts this relationship into practice, as Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein and Joyce's novels attest, provoking T.S. Eliot to observe already by 1917 how 'poetry which looks like prose, and prose which sounds like poetry, are assured of a certain degree of odium and success'.[72] Angela Leighton, who also writes eloquently on Pater's prose, argues that Woolf chooses and uses words like a poet: 'It is not just that she writes poetically, with a feel for verbal colour and affect, but that she finds in words, certain words in particular, a structuring device which is part of the story.'[73] Lyrical prose does not reside simply in the 'feel' of individual words, but in the way those words structure the narrative. This is of course true also of what Sayeau calls 'the concise, almost lyrical narratives of *Dubliners*': not only is the final paragraph of *The Dead*, for example, highly patterned with sound echoes, repetition and musical phrasing, but the relationship between modernity and forms of writing that blur the distinctions between prose and poetry integral to the collection as a whole. Moreover, the relationship between the prose poem experiments of the epiphanies, Joyce's poetry and his early prose works is a close one: Joyce wrote a bulk of *The Dubliners* between 1904 and 1905, while most of the poems from *Chamber Music* were written between 1903 and 1904. The writing of *Pomes Penyeach* coincided with the writing of his major prose works, up until the early stage of *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce works some of the epiphanies into *Dubliners* and indeed later prose works, showing a parallel development and continual crossings between the different forms and genres Joyce works with, which the critical narratives detailing his development as a prose author tend to overlook. And if Joyce was revolutionary in the evolution of the modern novel, his experiments with the limits between poetry and prose are instructive for an understanding of the term 'lyric' in relation to modernity also.

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[70] Murphy, *Tradition of Subversion,* p.11.

[71] Walter Pater, 'Style' in *Appreciations* (1889; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1911), 12. Qtd in Murphy, *Traditions of Subversion*, p.10.

[72] Eliot, *The Complete Prose 1905-1918*, p.537.

[73] Angela Leighton, *On Form: poetry, aestheticism, and the legacy of a word* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), p.125.

The form of the epiphanies and the discourse surrounding them inform the structure and milieu of 'Araby' in *Dubliners*, for example, showing how Joyce's work in other genres that test the limits between poetry and prose inform his fiction. 'Araby' begins with a description of an urban-cul-de-sac similar to the setting in the passage from *Stephen Hero,* where Stephen provides one of his definitions of an epiphany. The passage in *Stephen Hero* takes place in front of 'one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis.'[74] In 'Araby' the same brown brick houses characterise the cul-de-sac of North Richmond Street, but instead of a character recording an epiphany, the houses themselves are imbued with a self-reflexivity that is at once prosaic in its evocation of suburban morality and bears some resemblance to definitions of subjectivity in lyric poetry. In 'Araby', '[t]he other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at each other with brown imperturbable faces'.[75] The houses have no other direction for their 'gaze' than the other houses opposite them, thus establishing an interreflexive dynamic between the houses and, by extension, the families who live in them. The milieu establishes a metaphoric link between consciousness of decency, suburban gaze and blindness; this blindness not merely suggested by the physical darkness of the street, but implicit in the 'blind end' as a street design that ends forward movement. René Wellek employs the image of a cul-de-sac to describe the dead end of lyric theory when it is defined by a principle of subjective immediacy. German lyric theory in 1967 had reached an 'impasse'; its different instantiations lead into an insoluble psychological cul-de-sac: the supposed intensity, inwardness, immediacy of an experience which can never be demonstrated as certain and can never be shown to be relevant to the quality of art.[76]

The 'psychological cul-de-sac' describes both the impasse of lyric theory, and the principle of subjectivity and self-expression these theories according to Wellek rely on. The image of the cul-de-sac describes the expressive subjectivity of the lyric poem, as well as the inability to empirically demonstrate that experience without resorting to biographical evidence. What is significant in the context of 'Araby' is that the 'blind end' of Richmond Street acts as the environment for the development of the young boy's subjectivity and self-awareness; and this self-reflexivity manifests in moments of lyricism which the surrounding narrative elements frustrate. In 'Araby', North Richmond Street provides a milieu for a nascent consciousness defined by the lack of traffic and forward movement which compels inter-reflection between the 'brown imperturbable faces' of the street, its layout acting as a literalised setting for the 'psychological cul-de-sac' the story proceeds to narrate with its first-person boy narrator coming into adolescent self-consciousness. The lyric self-reflexivity Stephen negotiates in his

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[74] Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, p.188.
[75] Joyce, *Dubliners* (London: Penguin, 1992), p.21.
[76] René Wellek, 'Genre Theory, the Lyric, and *Erlebnis*' in *The Lyric Theory Reader*, pp.40-52, p.51.

description of the form of the epiphany is produced by as well as transposed onto the milieu of 'Araby' construed by narrative devices. As a consequence, locating the source of the self-reflexivity and its ultimate value becomes more difficult, when the narrative frames moments of inwardness as a source of paralysis and undercut insight, rather than self-development achieved through moments of revelation.

As we saw earlier, Joyce claimed that when he 'wrote [*Chamber Music*], I was a strange lonely boy, walking about by myself at night and thinking that some day a girl would love me'.[77] The situation Joyce identifies behind his collection of poetry is similar to that of the young boy in 'Araby', who walks alone at night in Dublin longing for his friend Mangan's sister. In the short story 'A Little Cloud', the aspiring poet Little Chandler seems to describe a collection similar in its allusive intertext to *Chamber Music:* 'The English critics, perhaps, would recognise him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems; besides that, he would put in allusions.'[78] Most of the poems in *Chamber Music* are set in night-time, and the image of seeing the loved one from a window, central to the beginning of 'Araby', is implicit in two poems, where the positioning is reversed, and the speaker sees the loved one in the window, employing a traditional trope of troubadour poetry. The speaker in poem V requests the loved one to '[l]ean out of the window'[79] and the speaker of poem XXVI observes more ambiguously how 'Thou leanest to the shell of night, / Dear lady'.[80] Seeing Mangan's sister on the doorstep, calling his brother in for tea, shows the relative independence and freedom to move she enjoys in the short story, while it is the narrator who presses his face against the window to be able to see her.[81] The short story construes the erotic appeal of Mangan's sister through the narrator's half-caught glimpses by the window blinds, and the interplay of shadow and light through which he views her. This longing is the most overt cause for the narrator's self-consciousness and self-reflexivity. The narrator expresses his attraction employing a lyricised idiom which inflates linguistic investment at the same time as that idiom exhausts its own meaning:

> Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom.[82]

The passage mobilises several models of lyric simultaneously: the model of overpouring feeling and involuntary rhapsodic repetition; the defamiliarisation of everyday language ('strange prayers and praises'); affective intensification ('tears', 'flood from my heart'); and the notion of

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[77] Joyce, *Letters vol.2*, pp.236-7.
[78] Joyce, *Dubliners*, pp.68-9.
[79] Joyce, *P&SW*, p.17.
[80] Joyce, *P&SW*, p.38.
[81] *Dubliners*, p.22.
[82] *Dubliners*, p.23.

lyric temporality defined by the immediacy of a single moment in the present tense ('at moments', 'I thought little of the future'). The intensification of sound patterns in the consonance of 'sprang', 'strange prayers and praise', the assonance of /eɪ / in 'name', 'strange' and 'prayer' and of /ʌɪ/ in 'my', 'I myself', 'eyes' and 'why' employs intensified sound patterns characteristic of lyric poetry in a passage of prose. However, this passage of intense lyricism within 'Araby' also represents that lyrical investment as exhausted of meaning in the context of the short story's narrative.[83] Instead of achieving a moment of lyric insight, the narrator's lack of comprehension foregrounds the banality of affective investment in words that he himself 'did not understand' and cannot justify or explain ('I could not tell why'). To put this more radically, instead of lyricisation leading to a moment of heightened understanding or meaning, in this passage understanding is foreclosed and meaning evacuated. The lack of comprehension indicates less the transcendence of meaning – gesturing towards that which language is unable to express – when set in the context of a narrative that ends in frustration of the promise of a fulfilled romantic gesture.

The short story also develops a complex interplay of lyric and narrative time; as Baechler observes, '[w]hile *Dubliners* stories adhere to expected narrative sequence, in which time passes and change occurs, the intrusion of a variety of lyrical languages – metaphor, suggestive and extended description, silence, ellipsis – subverts narrative tags such as "when," "then," "On Saturday," "At nine o'clock," or "Eight years before"'.[84] However, the implications of this tension between lyric and narrative temporalities extends beyond lyrical languages simply subverting narrative tags: it also involves complicated dynamics between anticipation and frustration when prosaic routines undercut moments of lyrical effusion. When the young boy waits for the day of the bazaar, for example, and he perceives 'the tedious intervening days' as a frustrating obstacle delaying the fulfilment of his romantic promise: 'I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work in school.'[85] The anticipation appears to decelerate time and frustrate efforts of work, as the narrator 'chafed against the work in school'. As the moment of the bazaar comes closer, and is then about to pass, the slow weekdays turn into nervous acceleration of time as fear of the opportunity passing by becomes tangible:

> I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room…. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was *prolonged beyond an hour* and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any

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[83] For an article on lyricism in 'Araby', which examines this as a form of heteroglossia by investigating the DearKnows 1987 production of *Dubliners* at the Home for Contemporary Theatre in New York , see Lea Baechler, 'Voices of Unexpected Lyricism in Two "Dubliners" Stories', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 28.2 (1991): 361-376.

[84] Baechler, 'Voices of Unexpected Lyricism', p.361.

[85] Joyce, *Dubliners*, p.24.

longer, but *it was after eight o'clock*…. I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists…. At *nine o'clock* I heard my uncle's latchkey….[Emphases mine][86]

The story delays the anticipated moment of purchasing a desired exotic product for the object of attraction and marks it by precise notations of time as a symptom of the narrator's anxious observation of the clock. He continues to check the time at the bazaar, which is the first thing the narrator notes when he arrives (passing from the platform to the road the narrator sees 'by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten').[87] The anticipated narrative climax of purchasing the gift Mangan's sister requests corresponds to the equally anticipated lyrical climax, where this prosaic moment of shopping would translate to a lyrical declaration of love. The other characters' temporal routines, however, override this romantic climax and frustrate the narrator's internal build-up of time by interfering with his own time-constrained and goal-driven itinerary: Mrs Mercer's inability to wait because of her habit of never staying outside past eight o'clock; and the uncle's belated arrival having forgotten about the bazaar and having visited habitually the pub. If the epiphany at the end is one of *anagnorisis*, it is one of a negative recognition,[88] rather than a fair return of the narrator's affective investment. This negative undercutting frustrates any impulse to read the ending as a moment of super-conscious awareness and insight. 'Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself'[89] reworks the darkness and inter-reflexive gaze of the houses on North Richmond Street in the first paragraph of the story; the dead end setting translates into a psychological dead end of cynical self-recognition, after the other characters' quotidian habits and routines circumvent the story's narrative and lyrical climax.

Similar frustration arising from the tension between aspiration to poetry and the pressures of the everyday take place in 'A Little Cloud', where the aspiring poet Little Chandler's new child's crying interrupts a moment of reading Byron's poem and poetic composition:

> He felt the rhythm of the verse about him in the room. How melancholy it was! Could he, too, write like that, express the melancholy of his soul in verse? There were so many things he wanted to describe: his sensation of a few hours before on Grattan Bridge, for example. If he could get back again into that mood….

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[86] *Dubliners*, p.25.

[87] Joyce, *Dubliners*, p.26.

[88] Dominic Head has commented on the 'negative reading' of 'Araby's' 'revelation': 'Interestingly in "Araby" the religious motif of revelation confirms the negative reading. The supposed moment of insight occurs in a darkened hall dominated by 'a silence like that which pervades a church after a service': if the 'service' is over, then we can conclude that the moment of genuine epiclesis has been missed.' Head, *The Modernist Short Story: a study in theory and practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p.35.

[89] *Dubliners*, p.28.

> The child awoke and began to cry. He turned from the page and tried to hush it: but it would not be hushed. He began to rock it to and fro in his arms but its wailing cry grew keener. He rocked it faster while his eyes began to read the second stanza:
>
>> Within this narrow cell reclines her clay,
>> That clay where once....
>
> It was useless. He couldn't read. He couldn't do anything. The wailing of the child pierced the drum of his ear. It was useless, useless! He was a prisoner for life.[90]

The crying of the child directly intervenes and interferes with the lines from Byron's poem, where it is violently cut with an ellipsis and Little Chandler violently concluding that '[i]t was useless'. Little Chandler evokes how he felt 'the rhythm of the verse about him in the room', suggesting that the poetic stanza can in fact be transposed to a room described in prose, and the lyricism of poetry mirrored and evoked through free indirect discourse, until the narrative interferes with these moments when poetry and prose seem to temporarily fuse. Where 'Araby' used lyricism to structure the short story around the young boy's growing self-consciousness, 'A Little Cloud' employs poetry directly as a thematic and structural contrast to the everyday demands of remembering to bring a parcel of coffee home from Bewley's and looking after a vulnerable young dependent. Joyce made a direct, if negative, comparison between 'A Little Cloud' and his poetry; in a letter to Stanislaus, Joyce wrote that 'a page of *A Little Cloud* gives me more pleasure than all my verses.'[91] In fact, the connections between *Dubliners* and Joyce's poetry are at times even more intimate. The poem 'She Weeps Over Rahoon', written in Trieste in 1913 and published in *Pomes Penyeach*, originates in the same biographical event as 'The Dead' (Nora's grief for her dead lover Michael Bodkin), and echoes the short story's final paragraph in form and wording. The word 'falling' acts as a refrain in both, structuring acoustically both the stanzas of the poem and the prose paragraph. 'Rain on Rahoon falls softly, softly falling'[92] echoes the description of snow 'falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, on the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves.'[93] There are thus direct as well as indirect crossovers between Joyce's poetry and his prose works. By further examining poetry and lyricism within the context of *Dubliners*, Joyce brings into focus the limits of the modern lyric poem in several ways. First, by taking poems and forms of poetic writing outside the limits of poetry into prose, Joyce shows how lyricism can be used for narrative means, which also help to highlight the different effects and goals of the two genres. Second, Joyce uses these limits of lyric poetry to reframe lyric self-reflexivity and self-consciousness as a dark cul-de-sac, and to frustrate

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[90] *Dubliners*, pp.79-80.
[91] Joyce, *Letters Vol.2*, p.182.
[92] Joyce, *P&SW*, p.54.
[93] *Dubliners*, p.225.

moments of epiphanic transcendence with the prosaic pressure of families, everyday routines and the opening times of metropolitan markets and suburban coffee shops.

Thus, while the use of lyricism and poetry in 'Araby' and 'A Little Cloud' highlights the impotence of that poetic impulse in a narrative setting, it also helps us to critically distinguish the expectations, goals and effects between poetry and prose, which develops some of the ambiguities and conflicts already contained in Joyce's epiphanies. The use of the accidental sound patterns from an everyday conversation into a deliberate rhyme scheme turns into a more complex containment of lyricism within everyday family life and the developing aspirations of men in early puberty and adulthood. To a large extent, this use of poetry and lyricism in his fiction is also Joyce's response to the limits of lyric poetry in the early twentieth-century: extending Victorian models of poetry engages Joyce in experiments with the aesthetics of redundancy as well as modern banality. When in Chapter 5 of *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* Stephen composes a villanelle, we read the resulting poem in context of the narrative, where the inflations of the poem's lyrical idiom appear somewhat overstretched. Stephen's villanelle uses liturgical repetition of affect-charged words, which seem as vacuous as the 'strange prayers and praises' of the boy in 'Araby':

> *Are you not weary of ardent ways,*
> *Lure of the fallen seraphim?*
> *Tell no more of enchanted days.*

> The verses passed from his mind to his lips and, murmuring them over, he felt the rhythmic movement of a villanelle pass through them. The roselike glow sent forth its rays of rhyme; ways, days, blaze, praise, raise.[94]

The bodily experience and production of the verse – the murmuring lips, feeling 'the rhythmic movement of the villanelle' – does not result in a spontaneous flow of expressive syntax, but in a selective list of rhyme words that can be used formally to map the poem, filling in the rest of the line in order to make sense of the predetermined rhyme words. Of course, this is not uncommon practice in the composition of poetry; and the villanelle form, defined by strict rhyme scheme and pattern of refrains, is in many ways apt for communicating a feeling repeated from ten years ago, and thus dependent on the recycling of old sentiment as opposed to inventing a new form to fit present feelings. The homophone 'rays' and 'raise' hides the other homophone Stephen does not list, 'raze'. Even if this silent rhyme is not in the poem or the narrative itself, it is the kind of pun Joyce tended to relish in retrospect. For example, referencing *Chamber Music* in the 'Sirens' chapter of *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom reflects, 'Chamber music. Could make a kind of pun on that. It is a kind of music I often thought when she.

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[94] *Portrait*, p.183.

Acoustics that is. Tinkling',[95] suggesting the retrospective latrine joke on chamber pots now embraced by some critics of Joyce's poetry. In the act of constructing a poem from the tight form of the villanelle, the rays of light and raising up of hands performing sacred worship erase from the material sound of the word meanings that suggest the tearing down of structures and demolishing of buildings. This is not to say, however, that Joyce's work is implicitly deconstructive – that defeating traces remain in the text, and these traces 'consume' the integrity of the work's meaning as it proposes to actualise itself. Rather, *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* creatively exploits opposite meanings of words and contextualises the lyric project in order to examine conditions of generic instantiation: the limits of normative models proposed for lyric, such as structural integrity and the inevitability of a poem's interrelated parts. Using poems and moments of heightened lyricism within prose, Joyce investigates both the conditions for poetic impulse, and the availability of irony and linguistic play in the modern lyric poem.

In *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, the imagery of a sacred rite and liturgy in Stephen's villanelle reworks the narrative context of Stephen's somewhat banal jealousy for a priest over Emma. As this man of religion becomes the cause for Stephen's romantic frustration and lyric inspiration, the rituals of religion are incorporated into the villanelle in a way that highlights the similarities and differences between the poet and the priest, a poem and a religious ritual:

> To him she would unveil her soul's shy nakedness, to one who was but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite rather than to him, a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life.[96]

The passage describes the priest's office as 'the discharging of a formal rite' without acknowledging how the rigid formality of the villanelle recycling the same rhyme words is comparable to the habitual reperformance of a religious ritual. If there is significant distinction between the poet and the priest, this difference would lie in the Eucharist's function as a collective remembering of Christ's sacrifice. The 'habits' of religious ritual are spiritually formative in reinforcing belief and redirecting the believer's attention and thoughts to God: the rituals perform a reaffirmation of faith and the believer's spiritual dependence on God's grace. The repetition in Stephen's villanelle, on the other hand, does not reinforce as much as it empties spiritual meaning; the habitual acts as a ground for emptiness of content, rather than as a formative aid in redirecting the soul. The refrain of the poem reflects on its own tired formalism by inquiring after the addressee's weariness, 'Are you not weary of ardent ways? / Tell no more of enchanted days'. This tiredness appears in the poem apparently against

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[95] *Ulysses: the 1922 text* ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), p.271.
[96] *Portrait*, p.186.

Stephen's intentions, as he himself is clearly enthusiastic over his own poetic inspiration and reaches in his villanelle for the condition of 'a hymn of thanksgiving'. This implicit sincerity complicates the meaninglessness of the poem by showing that despite its apparent vacuity and tired style, the poem bears weight for Stephen and energises his imagination and creativity. However, his refrain questions whether the addressee is not in fact 'weary' of the 'ardent ways' the poem is supposed to register and map, and arrests any further involvement with 'enchanted days': 'Tell no more of enchanted days'. The effect of cutting short the vacuity of 'ardent ways' and 'enchanted days' is not to situate them in some transcendental plane beyond human expression, but to index the dead end of a certain type of lyricism not meaningfully directed towards any erotic or spiritual efficacy. If the form of the villanelle is meaningful, this meaning lies in its repurposing of the most repetitive lyric form to express nostalgia for an old lost attraction: it recovers tiredness on the level of form and content by recycling old feeling in its expression of weariness and the mundanity of an old romantic rejection.

Comparing Stephen to an 'eternal priest of imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life' metaphorically extends the act of poetic composition to an epiphanic 'spiritual revelation' that is metaphysically transformative. This metaphoric interchangeability provides further evidence of the intimate connection between epiphany and a negotiation of the limits of lyric poetry in Joyce's early works. Taken at facevalue, however, Stephen's references to transubstantiation can be misleading for critical analysis of how the comparison functions in the passage, and the implications of the scope of this comparison for developing a critical concept of epiphany. Ashton Nichols, for example, has interpreted Stephen's statement as Joyce's own aesthetic manifesto, elevating the passage to the status of a nascent epiphanic 'poetics'. Nichols intuits the intimate formal connection between the epiphanies and poetry by claiming the epiphanic form originates in nineteenth-century poetry, especially Wordsworth's 'spots of time'. He observes the connection between a lyrical concentration on a single moment and the form of the epiphany:

> [In] *Portrait of the Artist*, Joyce defines the artist's role as that of a "priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everlasting life." The daily bread – the commonplace – becomes revelatory and epiphanic at the point where it takes on the radiance of something beyond itself. This process occurs in the mind, where the raw data of consciousness are transformed into illuminated manifestations of meaning.[97]

However, beyond the questionable identification of Stephen's aesthetic theory with that of

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[97] Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Modern Literary Movement* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p.10.

Joyce, Nichols also extracts the 'priest of the eternal imagination' quote from the context of *Portrait as an Artist as a Young Man,* where Stephen's statement is motivated by sexual jealousy and results in a villanelle that does not contain what a reader could characterise as 'illuminated manifestations of meaning' of transformative power. The narrative context therefore effectively contradicts at the same time as it complicates Stephen's statements on the aesthetic significance of the epiphany. A productive analysis of the epiphanic form comes from an appreciation of the discrepancies between content and context: the economical opacity of Joyce's epiphanies in the manuscripts as distinct from the generically situated epiphanies in Joyce's longer prose works, where the narrative context ironises the attributions of significance the condensed form of the epiphany elicits in concert with Stephen's own often misleading statements. This also further suggests that Joyce's continued fascination with the limits between prose and poetry focus particularly on lyric's ability to indicate insight and affective investment, and the ability of prose to infuse this with irony and cynicism by placing poems and moments of lyricism in context of banal quotidian pressures. Instead of creating an epiphanic poetics, Joyce plays with the limits between prose and poetry to experiment both with the limits of traditional narrative form, and, what has so far been overlooked in generic analyses of his works, with the limits of lyric poetry in the early phase of modernism.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The aim of this chapter has been two-fold. First, to show that in order to gain a full understanding of Joyce's development as an author, we need to read his prose and poetry sideby-side, rather than limit the narrative to his published fiction. Not only are there some significant and complicated overlaps between his poems and the prose works he was writing concurrently; many of his works formally depend on testing the limits between the two genres. At moments *Dubliners* echoes both directly and indirectly Joyce's poetry from *Chamber Music.* Further, both the prosaic and the lyrical are important formal components at play in *Dubliners,* which incorporates poetry and lyricism into its narratives in order to both exploit and critically undercut its most overt effects. Joyce's prose works employ lyricism to highlight the tension between lyric and narrative temporalities, when everyday routines and schedules undercut moments of instantaneous insight and immediate feeling; moreover, this tension is a significant part of the structural organisation of short stories like 'Araby' and 'A Little Cloud'. Second, if 'the prose poem has the distinction of being the literary genre with an oxymoron for a name',[98] as Michael Riffatarre phrased it, Joyce shows that a creative examination of the possibilities of poetry in prose is more nuanced and complex than a simple dependence on an internal contradiction. Joyce's epiphanies and his poems in prose works like *Portrait of an Artist as a*

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[98] Michael Riffaterre, 'On the Prose Poem's Formal Features' in *The Prose Poem in France*, 117-132, p.117.

Young Man show the distinction between the apparently accidental sound patterns of prose and the motivated sound patterns of a poem's rhyme scheme. If intention was the contested critical category *par excellence* definitive both of the New Criticism of Wimsatt and Beardsley and the post-structuralism of Barthes – to say nothing of the Freudian questioning of conscious agency – this critical foreclosure is complicated in the use of the lyric and lyricism in Joyce's early works. Intention, as we have seen, is not here merely an effect of poetic sound patterning, but a condition for experiencing the lyric form: without the appearance of motivation behind the poem's lexical choices, the poem turns into something provisional, recycled, even failed. Joyce's shifts from one genre to another delineate a movement from the haphazard to the deliberate, from the everyday to heightened moment. Indeed, in some ways the possibility for a kind of modern poem is born out of this recognition that moments of intense affect, transcendence and self-knowledge are undercut by the pressures of the everyday: parents, children, work, money, schedules and routines.

Moreover, meaning can be derived from the banal, and, formally, the accidental conversation can be heightened into an alternative of a lyric poem. This is of course not an original insight into Joyce's aesthetics: as Richard Ellmann already observed, 'Joyce's discovery, so humanistic that he would have been embarrassed to disclose it out of context, was that the ordinary is the extraordinary'.[99] However, Joyce also finds the banal in the apparently extraordinary, and this tension applies to his poetry as well as his fiction and the epiphanies, which are a crux for understanding how Joyce's development as a prose artist was intimately connected to his examination of the limits of lyric poetry. Murphy argues that the prose poem in early twentieth century British modernism was a marginal form; she writes that '[i]n the period of high modernism, when that other French form, *vers libre*, was heartily embraced, the prose poem remained marginal, experimental, a minor genre for most major poets and critics.'[104] However, even if the prose poem was marginal, that does not mean that some of the formal concerns it eschews were not central for modernism, and indeed the development of the lyric poem in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In fact the epiphanies, which I have argued has many intimate connections with the tradition of the symbolist prose poetry, act as a formal vehicle between Joyce's published poetry and prose works, and perform the limitations of modern lyric poem in miniature form, which underpins the use of lyricism in his prose works. Finally, using everyday objects and experiences in the heightened form of a highly patterned lyric poem, in poems like 'The Swing' by Don Paterson – 'object poetry' and other trends that are now effectively taken for granted, are anticipated by Joyce's aesthetics, even though he is not often considered a key player in the development of lyric poetry in the twentieth century. Joyce's

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[99] For further discussion of the ordinary and the everyday in Joyce's fiction, see Margot Norris, *The Value of James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016), pp.8-40 and Sayeau, *Against the Event,* pp.189-248. [104] Murphy, *A Tradition of Subversion*, p.2.

creative exploitation of the limits between poetry and prose both depended on prior assumptions about lyric poetry as a genre, and helped to define and elaborate those assumptions more accurately. Joyce also opened up new possibilities for lyric writing that are central to the lyric poem today with his poetic transformation of the everyday, and the transformation of everyday language into high literature.

2

Between Short Poems and Long Poems: H.D.'s Second World War writing

I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, "a long poem," is simply a flat contradiction in terms. -E.A. Poe, 'The Poetic Principle'

How short does a poem need to be, to be called lyric? –T.S. Eliot, 'The Three Voices of Poetry'

The existence of the long poem and the dependency of definitions of lyric poetry on notions of brevity have been problematic for both critics and poets. In his essay, *The Poetic Principle*, written in 1848 and published posthumously in 1850, Edgar Allan Poe set out to analyse, examine and theorise 'poems of little length'. However, investigating short poems is not merely a starting point for further analysis, an arbitrary restriction in material to focus the content of his essay. Instead, concentrating on 'poems of little length' was an axiomatic statement underlying Poe's idea of lyric poetry and its limits: 'I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, "a long poem," is simply a flat contradiction in terms'.[1] However, this principle of brevity underpinning the form of a lyric poem faces practical problems of how to identify and measure an admissible length to the lyric poem. In *Three Voices of Poetry,* a paper T.S. Eliot delivered in 1954 at the annual meeting of the Book League in London, a century after the publication of Poe's essay and fifty years after James Joyce finished his manuscript epiphanies, Eliot asked 'How short does a poem need to be, to be called a "lyric?"'[2] Eliot quotes *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition of lyric as 'the name for short poems…directly expressing the poet's own thought and sentiments',[3] a definition of lyric poetry which prompts him to question, with a sense of frustration, the normative relationship between brevity and the lyric poem. If *Three Voices of Poetry* concentrates on analysing poetry into categories that cannot be reduced to one appearing to express directly 'the poet's own thoughts and sentiments', Eliot begins his essay by subordinating these other elements to the first part of *OED*'s definition, which identifies a lyric poem by its brevity. Eliot's question about lyric length highlights how

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[1] E.A. Poe, *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe III* ed. by John H. Ingram (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1875), pp.197-219, p.197.

[2] T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), pp.89-102, p.97.

[3] Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, p.97.

brevity is both elusive – it suggests a measurable end point that is not fixed – and a somewhat banal observation. If for Poe the notion of a long poem is oxymoronic, for Eliot the notion of a short poem in relation to the definition of 'lyric' is problematic, perhaps even vacuous of meaning. However, for both Poe and Eliot, ideas about length and brevity underpin definitions of lyric poetry. If Joyce's epiphanies provide an example of a negotiation, articulation and exploitation of the formal limits between poetry and prose, the long poem and poetic sequence deal with the limits of length in lyric poetry, and the possibilities embedded in its measurable form. Further, brevity comes to imply certain structural concerns with condensation of meaning, closure and integrity of a single poem, which H.D.'s *Trilogy* – a long poem written during the Second World War – places under stress.

The long poem – as Poe himself recognised – has a long history. The epic poem represents a long narrative poem written in verse dating back to the beginnings of Western poetry in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. The sonnet sequence, as it developed from the sonnet sequence of Petrarch's *Canzoniore* to Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* in English, presented sequences of poetry united by the romantic situation that inspires the poetic speaker's lyric courtship. An anthology, like the Greek Anthology that inspired H.D.,[3] is a collection of poems by different authors tied together under an editorial principle. In fact, any contemporary poetry collection is expected to be readable in sequence, or with any individual poem extracted from the collection as a whole to be read as a stand-alone piece. Many poets write both long poems and short lyrics. In a letter to Harriet Monroe, dated October 28th 1922, Wallace Stevens expressed his desire to write more long poems:

> I wish that I could put everything else aside and amuse myself on a large scale for a while. One never gets anywhere in writing or thinking or observing unless one can do long stretches at a time. Often I have to let go, in the most insignificant poem, which scarcely serves to remind me of it, the most skyey of skyey sheets. And often when I have a real fury for indulgence I must stint myself.[4]

Steven writes of a tension between the pull of writing short poems and long poems, associating the desire to write long poems with 'a large scale', 'long stretches of time' devoted to reflecting on a composition and 'indulgence', suggesting some of the resources a long poem demands but also the rewards it represents in terms of ambition and substance. The contemporary American poet Eleni Sikelanios writes of the scale involved in her long poem *The California Poem* (2004): 'it did indeed feel huge — too huge to handle. The more I did, the bigger the field appeared, and I

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[3] For a detailed analysis of H.D.'s engagement with the Greek Anthology, see Eileen Greogry, *H.D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), pp.161-173.

[4] Wallace Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens* ed. by Holly Stevens (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p.231; qtd. in Helen Vendler, *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems* (Harvard: Harvard UP, 1969), p.1.

knew there was no way I could "cover" (or manipulate) everything in it. So I had to settle on scratching at this one little spot as diligently (or at least for as long) as I could'.[5] Sikelanios's very different project of writing a long poem involves covering a big 'field' 'by scratching at this little spot', evoking a paradox where length and scale is achieved through concentration and limitation.

However, while the impulse to write long poems may seem to be continuous throughout the history of Western poetry, the development of the long poem and lyrical sequence in the twentieth-century presents problems specific to contending modernist formal concerns. Margaret Dickie, for instance, has noted how 'for the American Modernists the long poem provided unusual hazards to extended composition because it had no principle of generation, no limits to reach or transgress, no narrative to tell, no hero to tell it'.[6] In other words, the radical nature of modernism serves both to highlight the limits of lyric poetry by transgressing them and to generate an impasse for expansion by eliminating narrative structural principles. Indeed, for Charles Altieri, the modern long poem is distinguished by a 'desire to achieve epic breadth by relying on structural principles inherent in lyric rather than narrative modes'.[7] According to this reading of the development of long poems, Victorian long poems, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1856), Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* (1862), Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868), Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882) or Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859-1885) depended, with different degrees of structural experimentation, on narrative forms, precipitating events and legends from epic cycles. Meanwhile, the modernist long poem depended on lyric principles like a lyric speaker, poetic form, imagery or rhythm for its continuity, or, indeed, its fragmentation. This does not mean that the modernist long poem was not anticipated by works like Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or even Gerard Manley Hopkins's *The Wreck of Deutschland* (composed in 1875 and 1876, published in 1918), which are arguably structurally more dependent in stanza forms and metrical patterns for their continuity than propelling narrative. However, if modernism, as an umbrella term for a number of early twentieth-century aesthetic movements, frequently deployed varied types of formal radicalism and experimentation, the twentieth-century lyric poem represented a more intense and formally radical conflict between the condensed, selfsufficient lyric fragment and the ambitions of the long poem.

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[5] Sikelianos, Eleni and Jesse Morse, *The California Poem: Epic, elegy, ode, paean* (Philadelphia: Jacket2, 2007) <http://jacketmagazine.com/33/sikelianos-ivby-morse.shtml> [accessed 5 June 2018].

[6] Margaret Dickie, *On the Modernist Long Poem* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1986), p.15.

[7] Charles Altieri, 'Motives in Metaphor: John Ashbery and the Modernist Long Poem', *Genre* 11.4 (1978): 653-87, p.653.

This conflict is perhaps encapsulated in Ezra Pound's shift from Imagism and Vorticism to the writing of his *Cantos* – projects that overlapped but articulated two apparently contradicting aesthetic commitments. Pound's declaration in 'A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste', first published in *Poetry* in 1913, that '[i]t is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works', seems to contradict the opening statement in the Three Cantos, published in the same magazine four years later, that 'the modern world / needs such a rag-bag to stuff all its thought in', in reference to Browning's undoubtedly voluminous long poem *Sordello*.[8] In 1915, Pound described his new project in a letter as 'a chryselephantine poem of immeasurable length which will occupy me for the next four decades unless it becomes a bore'.[9] Although Pound soon dropped this original first canto from the growing *Cantos* manuscript, it indicates the scale and the poetic precedents in his mind at this early shift away from condensed poetic units. Pound's move from the aesthetics of imagism to the continually re-interpreted project of the *Cantos* most obviously involves a shift in his relationship to the form of the long poem and poetics of scale more generally, and a move from an emphasis on 'one Image' to an expansive 'rag-bag', which now seemed more appropriate to 'the modern world'. Although Imagism was a relatively brieflived aesthetic movement, beginning in earnest in 1912 and being all but over by 1918, it was one of the most influential movements in modernist poetics. This is partly because Imagism was also a *critical* movement, part of conversations about the nature of poetry that resulted in a number of critical essays and manifestos by Pound, and an *editorial* movement that sought to anthologise its work as it was being written, as well as an aesthetic movement. It encapsulated ideas that were to become central to the modernist poem; it also reflected the nature of modernist poetic movements as collaborative and often combative projects consisting of the works of poets that were at times intimate with one another, at other times engaged in editorial conflict.[10] Indeed, one of these conflicts involved Pound's inclusion of the final poem from Joyce's *Chamber Music,* 'I Hear an Army', in the first Imagist anthology, *Des Imagistes*, published in March 1914. In an article for *Little Review* four months later, Charles Asheligh, remembering a conversation with Richard Aldington (H.D.'s fellow Imagist and husband from 1913), commented that the publishers had 'dealt a blow to sectarian Imagism by including these nonImagist poems' by James Joyce and four others in the anthology.[12] Pound's movement away from Imagism does not only signal the ordinary progress and maturation in a poet's career; it is also necessarily a critical and poetic intervention to the idea of the modernist

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[8] Ezra Pound, 'Three Cantos' in *Poetry: A magazine in verse,* 10.3 (1917): 113-121, p.113.
[9] A. David Moody, *Ezra Pound: Poet. A Portrait of the Man and his Work. I: The Young Genius 1885-1920* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), p.306.
[10] For some accounts of the development of Imagism, see Glenn Hughes, *Imagism & the Imagists: a study in modern poetry* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1931, 1972); Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), pp.173-191; Peter Jones, 'Introduction', *Imagist Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1972), pp.13-46; Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), pp.63-79, pp.103-104; and Ethan Lewis, 'Imagism' in *Ezra Pound in Context* ed. by Ira B. Nadel (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), pp.274-284. [12] Jones, *Imagist Poetry*, p.19.

poem, and the possibility of a long poem in the twentieth century. Indeed, as Ethan Lewis for one has argued, Pound's version of Imagism incorporated the possibility of the long poem within it:

> [P]recisely because Pound transcended imagism, it plots horizon points for marking Pound's development. A poet wed to imagism necessarily concentrates on 'small things', risking confinement to 'a poetic of stasis'. Yet by presenting at one moment multiple matters arranged in interactive 'complexes'; by creating illusions of 'freedom from time and space limits'; this small static aesthetic set the course for the modernist long poem.[11]

The kernel of the long poem, according to Lewis, lay in Pound's early emphasis on complexity; in fact, Pound's changing aesthetic statements of intent mask internal conflicts over, and continual shifts in, interest, ambition and beliefs about the form of the lyric poem. The development of Pound's *Cantos* over fifty years does not represent one ideal of poetry, but a continual process of reinterpreting and rereading the poetic project of *Cantos* as a whole, as Ronald Bush has shown in *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos*.[12] Pound's apparent self-contradiction in the desirable length of the lyric poem – not altogether unlike Poe's belief in the contradiction embedded in the form of the long poem itself – thus also represents a process of reading and re-interpreting the limits of lyric poetry and what can be included within the lyric project.

The aesthetics and personal lives of Ezra Pound and H.D. were famously entangled during a crucial time in both poets' poetic development. After their early engagement had fallen through and the poets both found themselves in London, it was Pound who promoted H.D.'s work, signing her poem 'H.D. Imagiste', thus giving H.D. her professional name. He sent her poems to Harriet Monroe, the founder and editor of *Poetry* magazine, in October 1912, anticipating his Imagist manifesto in his description of H.D.'s poetry: 'am sending you some *modern* stuff by an American, I say modern, for it is in the laconic speech of the Imagistes.... Objective—no slither; direct—no excessive use of adjectives, no metaphors that won't permit examination. It's straight talk, straight as the Greek!'[13] In *End to Torment*, based on a diary H.D. kept in 1958, the year Pound was released from St Elizabeth's in Washington, D.C., H.D. recollects this moment of editorial support, intervention and poetic branding:

> 'But Dryad,' (in the Museum tea room), 'this is poetry.' He slashed with a pencil. 'Cut this out, shorten this line. "Hermes of the Ways" is a good title. I'll send this to Harriet Monroe of *Poetry*. Have you a copy? Yes? Then we can send this, or I'll type it when I get back. Will this do?' And he scrawled 'H.D. Imagiste' at the bottom of the page.[16]

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[11] Lewis, 'Imagism', p.274.

[12] Ronald Bush, *The Genesis of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977, 2014).

[13] D.D. Paige (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941* (London: Faber and Faber, 1950, 1971), p.11.

[16] H.D., *End to Torment: a memoir of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1979), p.18.

H.D.'s recollection of the scene almost half a century later shows both the fondness Pound had for her (still addressing her with the nickname 'Dryad' he had called her when they were courting in America), his energy in supporting her, and the sense of violence and violation with which Pound could affect new poets, whose work he edited. The passage from *End to Torment* and Pound's letter to Monroe also show the extent to which Pound's branding of Imagism as a movement depended on a close reading and analysis of H.D.'s poetry. Moreover, Pound's acts of 'slash[ing] with a pencil', telling H.D. to '[c]ut this out, shorten this line' shows how Pound's influence as an editor in the period of early and high modernism depended on cutting, shortening and making the poem more brief. The aesthetics of expansion evident in his *Cantos* and H.D.'s later work is a move away from Imagism most obviously and most significantly as a move away from this practice of cutting lines and words, and embracing a practice of adding and layering verbal material; in other words, a move from the brief lyric poem to a long poem or lyrical sequence.

H.D.'s career follows on the surface a similar pattern of moving from Imagism to long poems evident in the works of Pound. Her most famous Imagist poems, 'Hermes of the Ways', 'Epigram', 'Oread', 'Pear Tree' and 'Orchard' were published in small magazines like *Poetry* and *BLAST* between 1913 and 1915 and her first two collections of poems, *Sea Garden* (1916) and *The God* (1917). In her interwar collections, *Hymen* (1921), *Heliodora and Other Poems* (1924) and *Red Roses for Bronze* (1931), H.D. began to struggle with the constraints of Imagism and to show an increasing interest in mythology and masked autobiography, while still using the brief lyric poem as the predominant model for composing a collection of poetry. But it was her wartime collections, *The Walls Do Not Fall* (1944)*, Tribute to the Angels* (1945) and *The Flowering of the Rod* (1946), later published together as *Trilogy*, which marked her departure from the short lyric poem to the long poem. After the war, the form of the long poem and poetic sequence would remain central to her poetry, *By Avon River* (1949), *Helen in Egypt* (1961), *Hermetic Definition* and *Vale Ave* (the last two written between 1956 and her death in 1961, published posthumously). The similarities between H.D.'s and other poets' embracing of more expansive poetic forms during the war did not escape her. After she had finished the first two parts of *Trilogy*, it became clearer to H.D. in her correspondence with Norman Pearson that she would need to write a third part, and Pearson commented on *Trilogy's* formal similarity to other wartime long poems:

> What I should suggest is waiting until your final part of the trilogy is ready, then perhaps reprinting WALLS with these two extra parts added to it. Or is that too much like the *Quartets*

of Eliot or Ezra's *Cantos*, as far as scope goes. I don't think so. I feel that's the way poetry goes now, inevitably and rightly.[14]

According to Pearson, the expansive 'scope' of new poetry is 'the way poetry goes now, inevitably and rightly', gesturing to the long poem both as a fit response to wartime conditions and as a natural progression in the work of modernist poets like Eliot and Pound. In fact, other long poems written during or soon after the Second World War include W.H. Auden's *New Year Letter* (1940), Stevens's *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* (1942), William Carlos Williams's *Paterson* (1946-1958) and David Jones's *The Anathemata* (1952). Later, however, both H.D. and Pearson would associate *Helen in Egypt* more strongly with the *Cantos*, calling them 'her cantos': 'But I completed my own *cantos* as Norman called them, again in the Greek setting; mine is *Helen and Achilles* [*Helen in Egypt*]'.[15] H.D. received a copy of *The Pisan Cantos* in 1948 from New Directions, which both moved and influenced her,[16] and she saw the significance of the characters of Helen and Achilles in her poetic imagination comparable to the significance of Odysseus to Pound's, while Pearson compared *Helen in Egypt* with *Cantos* because of their formal scale and ambition.

Many contemporary critics have observed these similarities between H.D. and other modernist poets' work particularly from the 1930s onward. Susan Stanford Friedman has argued that H.D.'s long poems, beginning with *The Walls Do Not Fall*, are part of the 'modernist mainstream' of writers, who use mythical structures and quest plots to write expansive works:

> H.D.'s development from imagist to epic art places her squarely in the centre of this modernist mainstream. Her work shares with all these writers [Pound, Eliot, Williams, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, W.B. Yeats and Hart Crane] the fundamental spirit of quest given shape by myth and mythic consciousness, by religious vision or experience, and by a new synthesis of fragmented traditions.[20]

While *Trilogy,* like the *Cantos*, is a long post-Imagist poem, and thus also a significant examination of the limits of lyric poetry in the twentieth century, *Trilogy*, unlike the *Cantos*, or even *Helen in Egypt* (1961), does not rely on a mythic figure like Helen or Odysseus for its continuity. Indeed, *Trilogy* does not centrally rely on the historical, narrative and mythic structures of epic poems, and the use of the word 'epic' to describe *Trilogy* can be highly misleading. Instead of a mythological figure providing the key to the formal continuity of the poem, H.D. wrote a long poem using short lyric units – most obviously the stanzaic unit of the

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[14] Donna Krolik Hollenberg (ed.), *Between History and Poetry: the letters of H.D. and Norman Holmes Pearson* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), p.42.

[15] H.D., *End to Torment*, p.32, for further instances when H.D. calls *Helen in Egypt* her 'cantos', see also p.41 and p.49; and Hollenberg (ed.), *Between History and Poetry*, p.121.

[16] Barbara Guest, *Herself Defined: the poet H. D. and her world* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), p.290, 293.

[20] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p.5.

couplet – thus employing lyric structures as a primary means of continuity in her new, expansive poetics. While H.D. viewed *Helen in Egypt* as comparable to Pound's *Cantos, Trilogy* is a more unique and independent arrival at the form of the long poem during the Second World War. She described her formal development using both metaphors of growth and of reaction. In 1956, she compared her formal progression to the growth of a tree, as a 'little sapling', which 'has grown down into the depths and upwards in many directions'.[17] The sapling metaphor suggests organic growth, a natural development that reflects both the growth of the poet's powers, and the expanding form of her poems. At other times, however, H.D. suggested a more radical difference between her early Imagism and her first long poem, *Trilogy*. In her 'Notes on Recent Writing', a manuscript written in 1949, H.D. observes how *Trilogy* 'is not the "crystalline" poetry that my early critics would insist on. It is no pillar of salt nor yet of hewn rock-crystals. It is the pillar of fire by night, the pillar of cloud by day'.[18] H.D. often described her early poetry as 'crystalline' or 'crystallised', 'verse so chiselled as to be lapidary'[19] – always in quotation marks, ventriloquizing her early reviewers – suggesting a poetics of cut, polished stone and geometrically regular crystals. These 'crystalline' poetics sharply contrast with the 'pillar of fire by night, the pillar of cloud by day' she used to describe *Trilogy*, which evoke long, vertical structures that support buildings, formed from the dust and fires of the London Blitz. H.D.'s *Trilogy* is in three parts, each consisting of 43 poems, published separately in 1944, 1945 and 1946 and together as *Trilogy* in 1973, twelve years after H.D.'s death. The only two poems from the 129 poems of the collection not written in unrhymed couplets[20] are the first poem, written in triplets, and poem 41 in *The Walls Do Not Fall,* which uses quatrain stanzas with couplet refrains. The formal continuity of *Trilogy* thus largely derives from H.D.'s consistent employment of the unrhymed couplet – her use of the most minimal stanzaic unit in a group of poems that simultaneously thematises questions of continuity, rupture and limitation. While *Trilogy* invites reading practices similar to other long poems and poetic sequences from previous centuries, I will argue that H.D.'s explicit and formal engagement with Imagism in *Trilogy* means that she is not simply examining the limits of the brief lyric poem, but specifically the limits of the modernist lyric poem contained in Pound's and other Imagists' poetic agendas.

The first section of this chapter begins by exploring questions of formal continuity central to the long poem and the lyrical sequence. I will particularly examine the discursive, syntactic and

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[17] 'Poet Hilda Doolittle, on Yale Visit, Assails Imagist Label Used to Describe Her Work', *New Haven Register* (16 September 1956, p.10, qtd in Friedman, Susan Stanford, *Psyche Reborn: the emergence of H.D.* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981), p.4.

[18] H.D., 'Notes on Recent Writing' (1949), manuscript in the Beinecke Library. Quoted in Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p.8.

[19] H.D., *End to Torment*, p.3.

[20] The only stanzaic irregularities are two italicised and indented stanzas in poem 28 and 33 in *The Flowering of the Rod* to indicate quotations from Kaspar's prophecies and poem 39 in *The Walls Do Not Fall*, which does not end with a complete couplet.

typographical continuities in the first four poems of *The Walls Do Not Fall* and poems XIII and XIV from *Tribute to the Angels*, showing how these poems, or poetic units, are frequently openended, expand images and layer contexts to test the restraint and brevity of H.D.'s early Imagist poems. Through formal analysis of *Trilogy*, I will argue that H.D. develops her long poem or poetic sequence both from and against Imagism, and that her explicit discussion of scale, containment and limitations present a particular perspective on the theoretical problems long poems and poetic sequences present. Further, the architectural ambiguity of *Trilogy* – ambivalently positioned between the form of the long poem and poetic sequence, both building on and rejecting the model of lyric poetry presented by Imagism – presents a crisis of formal definition under conditions of extremity. In the second and third sections of the chapter, I investigate the more evident historical and intellectual contexts of extremity that compelled, facilitated and informed her transition to long poems and poetic sequences: psychoanalysis and the Second World War. I will analyse in detail H.D.'s *Writing on the Wall* (later published in her book *Tribute to Freud*), a memoir of her therapy with Freud in 1933 and 1934, composed at the same time as she was writing *Trilogy*. H.D. contributed *Writing on the Wall* to *Life and Letters Today* throughout 1945 – her partner Bryher's magazine, where poems from *Trilogy* also first appeared throughout 1945 – after finishing the last part of *Trilogy*, *The Flowering of the Rod*, in the last months of 1944 and preparing it for book publication in 1945. Her description of the composition of *Writing on the Wall* is frequently revealing of the formal ambitions and models she employs in *Trilogy* – indeed, more so than comparisons to other 'epic' poems of the 'modernist mainstream' – and attests to H.D.'s unique intellectual route to long poems and poetic sequences. I will argue that her prose memoir and poetry frequently act as each other's doubles: *Writing on the Wall* comments on, shadows and haunts the expanding poetics of her *Trilogy*. As a consequence, H.D.'s expansion of the limits of lyric poetry in general, and the limits of Imagist poetics in particular, overlaps with a serious engagement with the expanded possibilities of psychoanalysis and her experience of history during the bombing of London in the Second World War.

In the third section of the chapter, I will argue that the historical context of the Second World War compelled H.D.'s experimentation with expansive poetic forms, which her psychoanalysis had first opened up as possibilities. H.D.'s formal experimentation with long poems and poetic sequences was a response to psychological and historical crises, and represented a complicated entanglement of psychoanalytical frames of interpretation and expressions of both internal and external violence. These personal and national crises provide a further insight into the pressures exerted on lyric form by twentieth-century historical and intellectual contexts. H.D.'s problems with the constraints of the brevity of her early Imagist poetry are therefore inseparable from her changing relationship to modernity in the form of poetics, history and psychology. To argue that this relationship between lyric form and twentieth-century cultural contexts in

H.D.'s poetry extends to wider implications for the development of modernism, I will end by positioning H.D.'s resistance to and desire for poetic closure in the context of 1940s late modernism. Samuel Hynes calls 1939 'a period of endings, but of no beginnings',[21] a historical observation that has wider formal implications for wartime poetry's attempts at effecting closure. An analysis of the endings of W.H. Auden's 'September, 1939' and Eliot's *Little Gidding* next to the final poem of *The Walls Do Not Fall* in part corroborates Tyrus Miller's project of redefining narratives of modernism by 'focus[ing] on modernism from the perspective of its end'[26] in his seminal study on late modernism. However, instead of examining the overlaps of mass culture or states of the nation narratives that compelled the questioning of the conditions that facilitated the high-modernist avant-garde poem, I will finish the chapter by looking at the end of modernism in relation to the poetic endings in wartime writing, especially when these poems position themselves within self-conscious historical and aesthetic narratives. For the thesis as a whole, my argument about the relationship between the different ends of modernism during the war articulates how the convulsions of the Second World War shape the narrative of modernism and modernist lyric poetry in the twentieth century. If Joyce's epiphanies and early writing mark the beginning of the century and Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis,* finished in 1999, marks its end, then H.D.'s wartime writing encapsulates a self-conscious reaction against modernism in general and Imagism in particular in the 1940s, marking a turning point or shift in the intimate connection between twentieth century poetry and modernism. Positioning H.D.'s work in the wider context of 1940s late modernist poetry is thus crucial in opening up these wider questions about the relationship between history, poetry and form during the Second World War, and a key moment in my collection of critical snapshots in twentieth-century poetics.

The problem of defining the length of the lyric poem has generated varied ideal lengths by different critics. Aristotle's ideal length for a poem can be calculated as 6,000 to 7,000 lines, identical to the length of a play that can be viewed at one sitting.[22] According to Poe, the lyric poem can last the length of a work that can sustain a mood of 'elevating excitement'.[28] Helen Vendler has argued that the ideal length of the poem consists of fourteen lines, or the length of a sonnet: 'the normative poem in English tends to run between twelve and sixteen lines. Such a length has proved sufficient to express, with some complexity of utterance, a set of human responses to some provocation'.[23] Indeed, one of the essential lyric qualities underpinning

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[21] Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and politics in England in the 1930s* (London: Pimlico, 1976), p.340.

[26] Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, fiction, and the arts between the world wars* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p.5.

[22] Aristotle, *Poetics,* trans by. Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin, 1996), p.39

[28] E.A. Poe, *The Works III,* p.197.

[23] Helen Vendler, 'Matter on Various Length Scales: Poetry', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 145.4 (2001): 389-401, pp.390-391.

Joyce's epiphanies was, as his brother commented, a prescribed brevity of about twelve lines.[24] The modern long poem and poetic sequence directly challenge these limits: the limit of the final line of the poem; the limit of the brief lyric poem; and, by extension, the limits of lyric poetry itself. If the long poem can no longer be experienced as a normative lyric poem because it cannot be described as brief, the long poem acts as a genre limit case, foregrounding features of poetry not dependent structurally on being brief. The lyric sequence and the long poem are recognised sub-genres of poetry, with a long tradition of examples ranging from epic poetry to sonnet sequences. However, in the modern period there is also a wider theoretical problem at stake in conceptualising lyric form, as the long poem and the poetic sequence perform a limit case testing the dependence of lyric on notions of a measurable limit point. As this chapter will show, H.D.'s *Trilogy* engages formally with Imagism, psychoanalysis and total war – in other words, some of the most significant cultural and intellectual legacies of the early twentieth century, making it an ideal case study of a poem that examines not only the limits of lyric poetry, but also the limits of modernism. While many critics have reclaimed H.D. as a positive and palatable figure for modern poetry due to her bisexuality, feminism, anti-fascism and active support of continental war refugees,[25] the significance of her formal experimentation, particularly her unique and personal development of the long poem or poetic sequence, remains underexplored. In this chapter, I seek to go some way to bridging this gap by examining how H.D.'s arrival at expansive forms developed both from and against modernism, psychoanalysis and the Second World War, while also paving the way to the formally experimental long poems and poetic sequences of contemporary women poets like Anne Carson, Louise Glück and Alice Oswald.

1 Forms of expansion

H.D.'s *Trilogy* examines the limits of the brief 'crystalline' Imagist poem in its expansive aesthetics, which undermine, test and interrogate the dependency of definitions of lyric poetry on theories of brevity in general, and the contained, poetically autonomous image in particular. She examines these limits formally: *Trilogy* is not simply a collection of poems, but a continuous lyrical thread of poetic units; one poem begins with an ellipsis after the previous poem has finished with one, rhetorically and typographically beginning the next poem where the previous poem ended, blurring the transitions between separate poems. H.D. also addresses the idea of limits and limitation explicitly in the images and word choices of the poems. Poem IV from *The Walls Do Not Fall*, for instance, a poem of twenty-three couplets meditating on the shell-fish,

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[24] See pp.26-27 of this thesis.
[25] For early book-length feminist readings, see, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *H.D.: The Career of That Struggle* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1986) and Friedman, *Psyche Reborn* and *Penelope's Web: Gender, Modernity, H. D.'s Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) and Donna Krolik Hollenberg, *H.D.: The poetics of childbirth and creativity* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1991).

builds on the tension between the physical limits of the shell-fish and the 'invasion of the limitless / ocean-weight':

> I sense my own limit,
> my shell-jaws snap shut
>
> at invasion of the limitless, ocean-
> weight; infinite water
>
> can not crack me, egg in egg-shell;
> closed in, complete, immortal
>
> full-circle, I know the pull
> of the tide, the lull
>
> as well as the moon;[26]

The poem's speaker uses images of perfect containment, autonomy and perseverance in the single line 'closed in, complete, immortal'. These figures of containment emerge, however, from sensing the ocean, expansive rather than contained, which exerts pressure on the shell in images of invasion and weight: the speaker 'sense[s]' her 'own limit' only 'at invasion of the limitless'. When the poem asserts that 'infinite water / / can not crack me', this image recalls the physical fragility of an 'egg-shell' in its limitless environment. The poem shifts into the first-person with the line 'I sense my own limit', and expands to an examination of the fragility and porousness of these sensed limits. Questions about the limits of lyric poetry are not just suggested by the form – a heuristic readily available for the study of any long poem or poetic sequence. Rather, boundaries defining different notions of scale are at stake in H.D.'s *Trilogy* as a whole, while these discourses of scale facilitate a particular perspective on the theoretical problem long poems and lyric sequences present, when lyric poetry is understood to be dependent on brevity. The image of a limit is central to poem IV – the limits of a shell-fish, the limits of a self – at the same time as the poem explores what lies beyond these limits, the expanding ocean, the pull of the tide, the moon, infinity.

Using the image of a shell-fish to explore a more abstract idea of containment and limitation produces a creative meditation on form and self, highly lyrical in its laddering of metaphors, comparing the shell-fish variously to 'bone, stone, marble' – materials of a 'master mason' – a hermit in a temple or shrine, 'egg in egg-shell', as well as the self, 'self-out-of-self, // selfless, / that pearl-of-great-price.'[33] The final comparison is also a reference to the parable of the pearl

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[26] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.9.
[33] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.9.

in Matthew 13:45-46, which plays on 'pearls' in the plural and the singular 'one pearl of great price', a comparison to the 'kingdom of heaven'.[27] The speaker's laddering of metaphors embeds eschatological narratives that become important later in the poem, as we will see, and plays with the difference between plural and singular units in its biblical references that is crucial to H.D.'s experimentation with a thread of connected poetic units as opposed to a single brief lyric poem. Further, expanding on the dynamic between the limit of the self and its limitless surrounding element by using the image of a sea-shell, the poem reworks a self-contained image – among other things – into a developing argument about the self. In poem XIV of *Tribute to the Angels*, the speaker uses a similar image of self-containment, articulating a desire to 'dematerialize', using poetic means of acoustic encasement to effect this disappearance:

> I do not want
> to talk about it,
> I want to minimize thought,
>
> concentrate on it
> till I shrink,
>
> dematerialize and am
> drawn into it.[28]

The speaker repeats the word 'I' three times in these lines, and eight times in the poem as a whole, mostly with verbs expressing ability or desire. What is more, the sound of the word 'I' is encased in the '-ize' suffix of the words 'minimize' and 'dematerialize', so that the poetic associations between words suggest formally the same attempt at reducing in size and disappearing the poem describes. However, if self-containment can resemble the poetic project of Imagism, in poem XIV from *Tribute to the Angels* this attempt to 'concentrate on it' until the subject disappears follows the demand for invention by an unnamed 'he'. The previous poem ended with the couplet 'he said, / "invent it"', while poem XIV begins with the line 'I can not invent it / I said it was agate, // I said....', so that poem XIV becomes an elaborated refusal to name, instead of evoking through layered, multiplying description. The sequence continues this reported dialogue over the end of the poem, building the speaker's act of resistance in poem XIV in response to the demands reported in poem XIII, a refusal that works in parallel with figures and poetic means of acoustic echo and encasing. Allegories of Imagism in images of selfcontainment thus operate hand-in-hand with discursive continuity from one poem to

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[27] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (eds.), Matt. 13:45-46 in *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), p.21.
[28] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.77.

another, the reported dialogue carrying over from the end of one poem to the beginning of the next.

If these poems manifest a 'desire to achieve epic breadth by relying on structural principles inherent in lyric rather than narrative modes',[29] in Altieri's formulation, they also incorporate structural principles from other discourses like rhetorical argument and employ these to lyric ends. Poem IV from *The Walls Do Not Fall* gestures to a framework of a wider argument in the poetic sequence, using the phrase 'for instance' in the first line, 'There is a spell, for instance, / in every sea-shell'. The poem begins with the rhyme 'spell', marking the caesura of the first line, and 'shell' at the end of the second line, signalling the discourse of the poem as acoustic and lyrical. However, the phrase 'for instance', which displaces the word 'spell' from the end of the first line, asserts an argumentative relationship between two poems, as if poem IV was giving an example of the argument in the previous poem. Similarly, poem III from *The Walls Do Not Fall* uses the word 'however' in the first line, qualifying the sentence in relation to the end of the previous poem: 'Let us, however, recover the Spectre, / the rod of power'[30] marks an argumentative turn from the question ending the previous poem, 'how can you scratch out / indelible ink of the palimpsest / of past misadventure?'[31] The lyric sequence reworks argumentative structure by signposting analytical relations without committing to logical development of an analytical argument; the employment of non-lyric structural principles of continuity in fact fosters the ambiguities of the poem's analytical connections. If brevity implies compactness of meaning – each word being deliberate and interrelated in a multiplication of meaningful relations – using connective phrases to link other poems to each other both multiplies and dilates meaningful semantic relations beyond the single poems' formal ends, marked by numbers that separate otherwise continuous lyrical threads and poetic units. Instead of suggesting the interpretation relies on the semantic relations contained by the form of a single poem, the interpretation of poems II to IV in *The Walls Do Not Fall* becomes dependent on the content of the poems that precedes them.

In some ways, this interpretive continuity is already present in sonnet sequences and Victorian poetic sequences like Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or Rossetti's *The House of Life*. Critical debates concerning Shakespeare's sonnets have often involved, first, argument over the ordering of individual poems around a central narrative about a love triangle between two separate lovers; and, second, attempts to construct this narrative around fixed, biographically determined characters from Shakespeare's life. This use of narrative structures like plot and characters to interpret the continuity of the lyrical sequence shows how the reading of lyrical sequences can

[29] Altieri, 'Motives in Metaphor', p.653.
[30] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.7.
[31] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.6.

be motivated by assumptions from other genres. In this sense, the long poem or the lyrical sequence is not merely a problematisation of brevity as a formally defining element, but a boundary case between poetry and what lies beyond poetry, including historical and biographical contexts. However, while the poems of *Trilogy* assert an argumentative connection between a sequence of poems that is actually a manifest part of the verbal tissue of the poems, rather than a structural assumption made by a reader, any attempt to explain what the argumentative connections exactly are would sound like a stretched interpretation at best. In *The Walls Do Not Fall*, poem III does not directly answer the question posed at the end of poem II, for example: 'your stylus is dipped in corrosive sublimate, / how can you scratch out / / indelible ink of the palimpsest of past misadventure?'[32]; a question followed in the next poem with, 'Let us, however, recover the Spectre, / the rod of power'.[33] The responding poem reworks the rod-like figure of the 'stylus' and turns it into the Caduceus (the staff of Hermes), the subject matter of the following poem, but the continuity comes from associations of imagery – images of the pen, a sword, rods and different types of staff are connected throughout *Trilogy* – rather than analytical argument. The poems signal analytical continuities undermined by the actual content, where the primary connective tissue consists of poetic imagery and other types of linguistic patterning. Lyrical and non-lyrical structural principles operate hand in hand, using argumentative connections for lyric ends, as the sequence employs syntactic and argumentative connections to link poems together, multiplying obscurities in the poems, which resist the analytical work the poem at first appears to encourage – the effect is, indeed, of an ongoing 'palimpsest of past misadventure'.

Connections between poems in the sequence are also encouraged by other syntactic and typographical techniques that resist formal closure at the end of a poem, for instance, by ending the poem with an ellipsis reproduced at the beginning of the following poem, or ending the poem with a question mark in a mood of uncertainty – a question the next poem may or may not answer. Both of the first two poems of *The Walls Do Not Fall* end with a question, resisting affirmative syntactic closure, instead opening the poem to a possible answer the following poem might provide. The very first poem of *The Walls Do Not Fall* ends with a difficulty to understand why the walls do not fall and bodies break in face of incendiary assault:

> the bone-frame was made for
> no such shock knit within
> terror, yet the skeleton stood up
> to it:

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[32] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.6.
[33] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.7.

the flesh? it was melted away,
the heart burnt out, dead ember,
tendons, muscles shattered, outer husk dismembered,

yet the frame held:
we passed the flame: we wonder
what saved us? what for?[34]

The beginning of the next poem – 'Evil was active in the land, / Good was impoverished and sad'[35] – if it takes up the task of answering this central question of the reason and meaning of survival, does not provide any direct or hopeful new poetic beginning. The tension between the continuities and discontinuities in the transition from poem I to II parallels similar tensions within the first poem itself. The end-rhymes 'for / terror' (eye-rhyme) and 'ember / dismembered' (with 'ember' embedded in the last two syllables of 'dismembered'), form subtle acoustic and visual couplets embedded in the triplet form of the first poem, which disintegrates in the final triplet where the repeated word 'frame' rhymes with the word 'flame' situated in the middle of the line, and not at its end. The instability of the acoustic organisation of the poem parallels the poem's evocation of unexpected continuities in the face of burning, collapsing and disintegrating architectural structures that were built to be stable. The poem mobilises different notions of frame – human, architectural and poetic – when it equates the human body to a bombed building, imbuing the poem's discussion of stability and continuity with wider formal implications for *Trilogy*. Placing notions of continuity under pressure, the speaker of the poem also interrogates the temporal positioning of lyric speech. The questions in the final line of the poem – 'what saved us? what for?' – places the poem in a moment questioning both the past – what saved us? – and the future, looking for a purpose that would explain the survival of the collective 'we' speaking in the poem. The poem is halted in a time that is not strictly in the present – registering the immediacy of present surroundings – but halted between the past and the future, in the aftermath of a 'shock knit within terror' and the difficulty of reimagining future goals in light of an assault that has transformed the familiar urban landscape. While Albert Gelpi argues that 'H.D.'s initial reaction to the explosion of war is to withdraw into the psyche as protective shell',[36] the relationship between the war and the formal continuities and discontinuities in the first poem, also evident in H.D.'s use of the image of the shell in poem IV of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, is in fact more complicated than Gelpi allows. When the first poem of *The Walls Do Not Fall* uses a question to end it, the resistance to affirmative closure corresponds to the thematic treatment of endurance in a suspended state of uncertainty over future experienced in warfare. The 'withdrawal' into the shell in the context of the fourth poem

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[34] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.4.
[35] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.5.
[36] Gelpi, Albert, 'Re-membering the Mother: A Reading of H.D.'s Trilogy' in *H.D.: Woman and Poet*. ed. Michael King (Orono: National Poetry Foundation, 1986), pp.173-90, p.176.

in *The Walls Do Not Fall* is in fact more of an opening up to elaborate the pressure exerted on the shell by its surrounding, formless environment, the limitless ocean.

The limits of the first poems in *The Walls Do Not Fall* expand not simply through poetic imagery and argumentative structures closer to rhetoric; the poems also expand in response to the pressure exerted by their surrounding environment and historical context. The state of uncertainty in armed conflict feeds back into the discourse of continuity in the opening poem of the collection: how a brief moment throws its shadow over a long period of time stretching to the past, while simultaneously continuing to have a formative influence on individual and collective futures. The context of civilian survival during armed conflict colours also the poems' reflections on the act of writing in general, and the act of composing lyric poetry contained by satisfactory poetic closure in particular. The question at the end of the second poem of *The Walls Do Not Fall* leaves the poem open-ended, but extends from the context of the marks war leaves in individuals to interrogate the marks on the page in a written document:

> your stylus is dipped in corrosive sublimate,
> how can you scratch out
>
> indelible ink of the palimpsest
> of past misadventure?[37]

The 'indelible ink' of the palimpsest reverses the recyclable writing material as a document that cannot be erased – if reused, the palimpsest will merely repeat what lay beneath the new layer of text.[38] Here, H.D. is partly justifying her poetics of layering, answering the critics who preferred her early Imagism by providing a vivid image of the speaker's inability to 'scratch out' words in the way Pound violently cut lines out of H.D.'s early poems. This model also closely resembles Freud's comparison of memory to a 'mystic writing pad', which 'provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary paper pad'.[39] Freud explains the operation of memory by analogy to technologies of writing, both of which are central to the theme and poetics of *Trilogy*. At the same time, H.D., writing *The Walls Do Not Fall* in 1942, faces the realities of war, and the history 'of past misadventure[s]' from the classical world to the present that compel the length of the lyrical sequence. If, for Smaro Kamboureli, the long poem deals with 'its legacies

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[37] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.6.

[38] H.D. defines the term palimpsest in her prose work of the same name, published in 1926, as 'a parchment from which one writing has been erased to make room for another'. H.D., *Palimpsest* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois Press and London and Amsterdam: Feffer & Simons, Inc, 1968; orig. pub. 1926), title page.

[39] Sigmund Freud, 'A Note upon the "Mystic Writing Pad"' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.XIX translated and edited by James Stratchey and Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), pp.227-232, p.230.

of epic, lyric and narrative forms' and the 'inherited conditions' of its multiple generic origins,[40] the historiography embedded in H.D.'s *Trilogy* concentrates on generating open-endedness by interrogating the inability to escape the patterns determined by history and passive suffering in a suspended state of extended conflict. The length of the lyric sequence and its continual expansion thus parallels the reiterative pattern of global conflict and violence, which both stretches the duration of the poetic material and layers it with a long history of war and its textual imprints. Describing ink as 'corrosive sublimate' mixes a metaphor of chemical wearing away with the act of chemical purification, construing the act of leaving marks simultaneously as creative and destructive.

However, while Pound's *Cantos* in many ways explicitly incorporate history into the poems, H.D.'s *Trilogy* seems more compelled by it. This is, partly, a practical observation: H.D. struggled with writer's block and the constraints of Imagism throughout the 1930s, but the war released a new period of creativity, as well as a final move away from the model of lyric poetry proposed by Imagism. While Friedman observes how H.D.'s 'later work bears a strong resemblance to imagist technique in the continued clarity and simplicity of her poetic line and the precise shape of her images',[41] H.D. herself discusses the similarities and differences between her Imagist poetry and poem XXIII of *The Walls Do Not Fall* in a letter to Norman Pearson:

> And here we have in XXIII, a 'gem', in Japanese or early H.D. manner – but exact. I do not want to pick out gems or be a 'clear-cut crystal'. That catch-phrase is easy for journalists. A seed is not a crystal – and if my mustard-seed has grown too high and spread too many branches, that is a pity for the critic, that is a pity for H.D. fans (few and far between though they are – but you wrote to me, for instance, of some boy in the west.)[42]

While poem XXIII, a short ten-line poem describing a river running between banks of iris and ending on the prayer sounds of the grasshopper and the mantis, does in fact resemble H.D.'s early poems, her comments on it suggest she sees it as moving away from Imagist craft, describing it as a 'seed' instead of a 'crystal'. The image evokes Christ's parable of the mustard seed from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, which depends for its message on the contrast between the smallest of seeds and the eventual scale of the tree, 'the greatest among herbs'.[43] The height and spread of the branches that grow from that seed refers in part to the expansion of the sequence as a whole, suggesting that the single poems or lyric units cannot be

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[40] Kamboureli, *On the Edge of Genre: the contemporary Canadian long poem* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p.204.

[41] Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p.8.

[42] Hollenberg (ed.), *Between History and Poetry*, p.31.

[43] Carroll and Prickett (eds.), Matt. 13:32 in *The Bible*, p.19 .

[51] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.11.

read independently, but form part of an organically growing lyric material. At the same time, it suggests that even the longest of poems begins from a small seed, a brief, self-contained lyrical unit familiar from H.D.'s Imagist craft. The word 'gem' appears in fact in poem VI from *The Walls Do Not Fall*, where the speaker places on grass blades 'separate ravellings / of encrusted gem-stuff',[51] gesturing to the expansion of the single gems of her early poetry to the more amorphous 'gem-stuff' and its 'separate ravellings' in *Trilogy*. If her reference to 'gem-stuff' alludes quietly to Pound's 'rag-bag to stuff' – Pound had shown early drafts of cantos to H.D. in 1914, when he lived across the hall from her and Richard Aldington at Holland Place in Kensington,[44] almost three years before the first ones were published in *Poetry* – then H.D.'s 'gem-stuff' more obviously positions itself as building on the legacy of Imagism, examining the limits of the brief lyric poem in relation to her early modernist writing, instead of presenting a complete break away from it. Thus while, in some sense, *Trilogy* invites reading practices similar to other long poems and poetic sequences from previous centuries, H.D.'s explicit and formal engagement with Imagism in the lyrical materials of *Trilogy* means that she is not simply examining the limits of the brief lyric poem, but specifically the limits of the modernist lyric poem as it was promoted by Pound and other Imagists.

Moreover, while H.D. is reimagining the possibilities of a modernist lyric expansion, reading *Trilogy's* strategies of continuity has further implications for the interpretation of the theories of language and meaning *Trilogy* presents. Susan Gubar attempts to project a semantic significance to H.D's historical layering of meaning and references by interpreting each word in *The Walls Do Not Fall* 'as a puzzle ready to be solved':

> By means of lexical reconstruction, [H.D.] begins to see the possibility of purging language of its destructive associations and arbitrariness. Viewing each word as a puzzle ready to be solved and thereby freed not only of modernity but also of contingency, H.D. begins to hope that she can discover secret, coded messages.[45]

However, as I have tried to show by analysing the wider discursive strategies operating in H.D.'s *Trilogy* to generate principles of continuity in the lyrical sequence, the independent units of the poems resist being read as self-contained and soluble riddles in the way proposed by Gubar. 'This is no rune or riddle, / it is happening everywhere'[54] explicitly states the poem

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[44] In *End to Torment,* H.D. writes that, '[s]oon after seeing some of these original or early *Canto* variations, in the Pounds' Holland Place apartment in Kensington, opposite our own flat, we moved.' H.D., *End to Torment*, p.26 It is possible that H.D. misremembers these dates: according to Pound's biographer, Pound did not start speaking about the *Cantos* until the summer of 1915. However, if H.D. remembers correctly seeing these early drafts before her and Aldington's move from Holland Place to Hampstead Heath in January 1915, this would adjust the dating of Pound's ur-cantos at least five months earlier. Moody, *Ezra Pound*, p.306.

[45] Susan Gubar, 'The Echoing Spell of H.D.'s Trilogy', *Contemporary Literature*, 19.2 (1978): 196-218, p.206. [54] *Trilogy,* p.84.

should not be read as a puzzle understood as a self-contained verbal structure where meaning is determined by a tight interrelation of the poem's different parts, but as a continuous interweaving of lyrical materials that resists closure, gesturing to what 'is happening everywhere' beyond the 'rune or riddle' or 'coded messages' of poems working as puzzles. The elasticity of the lyrical sequence, its extension over a long period of lyrical material, influences and interferes with the interpretation of local moments of lyricism as keys to reading the lyrical sequence as a whole. Instead of the poems effecting satisfying closures where the different parts of a poem coordinate in one meaningful textual whole, the poem is suspended in a state of open-endedness; instead of self-contained moments of lyrical expression, the poems expand to reiterate and allude to material in other poems in the sequence, thus pointing to the limits of the brief lyric poem as posited by Imagist craft and criticism.

2 'Out of hand, gone too far, a "dangerous symptom"': Psychoanalysis and the poetic sequence

As H.D. employs new rhetorical, syntactic, typographical and lyric strategies of continuity to expand the limits of the brief lyric poem in *Trilogy*, she is also considering alternative intellectual and psychological contexts to read, interpret and process poetic form. H.D. was writing her memoir of her therapy with Freud, *Writing on the Wall* in 1942, in the same year she was writing the first part of *Trilogy, The Walls Do Not Fall*. She published parts of both the memoir and the poems first in *Life and Letters Today*, contributing the memoir to the magazine in 1945 after finishing the last part of *Trilogy, The Flowering of the Rod*, earlier the same year.[46] This chronological coincidence betrays a more significant coinciding of formal concerns: H.D.'s thoughts on poetic form in her memoir of her psychoanalysis with Freud anticipate the form of her long wartime poem, which the memoir followed. Indeed, if Joyce provided a commentary to a concept of lyricism when he incorporated his epiphanies into his early prose works, H.D.'s prose memoir shadows, haunts and informs the expansion of her practice of lyric in *Trilogy*. Her encounter with Freud thus precipitated a new direction in her poetics, and her memoir of this encounter provides an important insight to her understanding of the overlaps between writing, memory and history. There have been a number of studies on Freud and H.D., and many of them acknowledge that H.D.'s psychoanalysis with Freud influenced her poetry from *Trilogy* onwards. In her biography of H.D., Barbara Guest observed that the primary effect of her psychoanalysis was to achieve a new freedom in writing: 'She is free to be the kind of writer she wants to be. …She appears to have escaped…the yoke of Imagism.'[47] There have been at least three book-length studies on H.D.'s poetry and psychoanalysis, but their unpacking of

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[46] The last instalment appeared in January 1946. Guest, p.277.

[47] Guest, p.218.

Trilogy in relation to *Writing on the Wall* tends to be either limited or non-existent.[48] Claire Buck, in her reading of *Trilogy* and *Helen in Egypt* within a 1991 study, concentrates on the relationship between femininity and knowledge, using Luce Irigaray's comments about femininity in a phallogocentric economy of representation as a starting point.[49] *Trilogy* is not one of the major texts Dianne Chisholm examines in her 1992 *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics: psychoanalysis in translation*, although she teases some preliminary connections between *Trilogy* and Freud's concept of the dream-work and American Transcendentalism.[50] Susan Edmund's 1994 *Out of Line: history, psychoanalysis and montage in H.D.'s long poems* uses H.D.'s later psychoanalysis by Walter Schmideberg between 1935 and 1937 as a starting point for examining Kleinian models of female and lesbian aggression, mother-child dyads and oral sadism in *Trilogy*.[60] There has also been a more recent magisterial and illuminating collection of letters by H.D., Bryher and their circle covering the years of H.D.'s psychoanalysis with Freud in Vienna, edited by Friedman.[51]

However, my emphasis will be on how H.D.'s psychoanalytical engagements enabled, informed and explained her formal expansion of the lyric poem in *Trilogy*. If the Second World War compelled H.D. to write a long poem or lyrical sequence, it was facilitated by her engagement with Freud's analysis and method. Indeed, H.D.'s return to the memory of her hallucination during her writing of *Trilogy* suggests her involvement in the two projects were compelled by similar formal questions about formal expansion and writing in sequence. Close reading *Writing on the Wall* is thus not merely evidence of H.D.'s engagement with and interpretation of Freud; it also opens wider questions about how the examination of the limits of the modernist lyric poem could be intellectually envisioned and justified. From section 29 of *Tribute to Freud* onwards, H.D. recounts how she hallucinated writing on the wall in a hotel room in Greece, the event that gives *Writing on the Wall* its title. In a letter to Bryher dated March 19, 1933, H.D. writes that Freud interpreted the writing as 'a poem sequence that was not written',**[52]** as if the hallucination at the centre of her memoir of Freud was the originary form for the 'poem sequence' that was to follow her writer's block of 1930s – namely, *Trilogy*. Recounting the same hallucination again in *Writing on the Wall,* H.D. links the hallucinated writing to another poetic form, the 'verse couplets' of the Delphic oracle, 'which it was said could be read in two ways'.[53]

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[48] See also Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Stanford Friedman, '"Woman Is Perfect": H.D.'s Debate with Freud', *Feminist Studies* 7.3(1981): 417-430 and Norman Holland, '*Tribute to Freud* and the Freud Myth' in *H. D.: Modern Critical Views* ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1989), pp.11-26.

[49] Claire Buck, *H.D. and Freud: bisexuality and a feminine discourse* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), pp.131-164.

[50] Dianne Chisholm, *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics: psychoanalysis in translation* (Ithaca, London: Cornell UP, 1992), pp.42-67.

[60] Susan Edmunds, *Out of Line: history, psychoanalysis and montage in H.D.'s long poems* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994), pp.21-93.

[51] Susan Stanford Friedman (ed.), *Analyzing Freud: Letters of H.D., Bryher and their circle* (New York: New Directions, 2002).

[52] Friedman (ed.), *Analyzing Freud*, p.115.

[53] H.D., *Tribute to Freud* (New York: New Directions, 2012), pp.51-52. All further references to this edition. [64] *Trilogy*, p.5.

H.D. thus not only writes that Freud connects this event of psychoanalytical significance with her poetic craft, but interprets the hallucination as specific poetic forms, 'a poem sequence' and 'verse couplets' – forms that also constitute H.D.'s *Trilogy*, as a lyrical sequence primarily written in unrhymed couplets. Indeed, in the second poem of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the speaker declares that 'gods always face two-ways, / so let us search the old highways // for the truerune, the right spell',[64] gesturing to a Janus-like approach in the search for poetic forms of spiritual significance. But in *Writing on the Wall*, H.D. interprets the hermeneutic implications of writing in couplet form – that couplets 'could be read in two ways' – in a psychoanalytic context. H.D. reworks a reading 'in two ways' in the analytically splitting syntax of her prose, using the conjunction 'Or' to represent alternative interpretations: either the writing expresses her 'suppressed desire for the forbidden', or it represents an 'extension of the artist's mind, a *picture* or an illustrated poem, taken out of the actual dream or daydream content and projected from within' [emphasis original].[54] Indeed, the passage is full of 'or' conjunctions, as her writing can be 'a *picture* or an illustrated poem', derived from either an 'actual dream or daydream content'. Not only can couplets be read 'in two ways'; her writing in general generates alternative sources of inspiration and alternative forms of reading that combine the visual and the poetic in different ways. The couplet form, when transposed into a psychoanalytical setting, is no longer a means of developing a poetic sequence, but an object of interpretation that motivates its own hermeneutic practice through the analytical offering of two distinct alternatives. That the writing represents a poetic sequence has hermeneutic implications in the psychoanalytical setting, where textual form impels interpretation of the underlying motive behind the appearance of that form to reveal hidden aspects of the unconscious.

However, these distinct alternatives contradict the proliferation of descriptive terms and the approximations of the different readings that resist easy categorisation: instead of a neat analytical distinction, *Writing on the Wall* provides an expansive and untidy absorption of Freud's theories in an act of self-analysis and self-explanation. Interpreting the writing on the wall as 'an extension of the artist's mind' expands from an 'illustrated poem' to 'a high-powered idea, simply over-stressed, over-thought, you might say, an echo of an idea, a reflection of a reflection, a "freak" thought that had got out of hand, gone too far, a "dangerous symptom"'.[55] Instead of two distinct ways of reading that can be neatly separated, the writing disappears into a cognitive distance and exceeds interpretive boundaries as the excess of stress and thinking ('a high-powered idea, simply over-stressed, over-thought') transforms into a 'reflection of a reflection', a further removal from the original 'idea'. By the end of the paragraph, the list conflates the Platonic representation of poetry as twice removed from reality with a

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[54] H.D., *Tribute*, p.51.
[55] H.D., *Tribute*, p.51.

psychoanalytic diagnosis of an uncontainable pathology: 'a "freak" thought had gone out of hand, gone too far, a "dangerous symptom"'. The proliferating list building on anaphora equates syntactically going too far with getting out of hand, an act of exceeding the limits of acceptability with an unmanageable illness. As Chisholm observes, '[p]osed as a question of reading either this way or that, H.D.'s proposition actually points to a conjunction and proliferation of readings (two ways and more than two ways) at once symptomatic and poetic'.[56] The hallucinated 'poetic sequence' accrues notions of length that are not merely related to questioning the limits of a measurable poetic closure, but further suggest psychological stress or strain, even uncontrollable mental states that expand compulsively and can be read – in quotation marks – as a 'dangerous symptom'. Applying this analysis of going too far in her memoir to *Trilogy,* the long lyrical sequence she is writing at the same time, it is clear that a notion of expansion is motivated in H.D.'s case by psychological stress or strain related to war, as both of H.D.'s mental breakdowns were in large part delayed reactions to the two world wars. Moreover, the couplet form, as it appears in her hallucination, has interpretive implications of being read in two ways, at the same time as the neatness of this dialectic is undermined by the formal expansion of syntax that corresponds to the progress of her mental strain.

In the context of the project and artistic ambition behind *Writing on the Wall*, this formal frustration of H.D.'s analytical distinctions is apt for representing H.D.'s hallucinatory writing on the wall that swims in and out of focus, from one form to another. Despite the occasional emergence of two lines and interpretive stability, the writing does not permanently fix into a stable couplet or linear form: unlike the lineated couplets of *Trilogy,* the hallucinated writing on the wall resists both lineation and linearity, mapping instead the entangled outlines of ambiguous and hermetic memories. The poetic sequence H.D. hallucinates on the wall of the hotel room in Greece remains unwritten throughout the 1930s in part because formally it has not yet been lineated into its own sequence or arranged into a particular order. This psychological context thus explains, on one hand, the recursiveness of H.D.'s writing that returns to the memory it tries to both evoke and analyse, and, on the other hand, the extensiveness of her memoir – the difficulty of effecting reflective closure on the memory of a moment in time that has ended, but not yet been psychologically sealed off. The state of crisis that frames *Trilogy* highlights how contexts such as time and memory complicate the analysis of brevity and length in lyric poetry implied by these contexts. Instead of a moment recollected in a state of tranquillity, the state of crisis in *The Walls Do Not Fall* is continuous, not packaged into lyric units of isolated reflective moments that would facilitate any easy closure: hallucination, vision, dream and the endless process of their interpretation is central to both

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[56] Chisholm, *H.D.'s Freudian Poetics*, p.10.

Writing on the Wall and *Trilogy*. If *Trilogy* did not begin as an attempt to realise the poem sequence that was not written, H.D.'s return to this memory during her writing of *Trilogy* suggests her involvement in the two projects was compelled by similar formal questions about sequences and sequentiality. In *Writing on the Wall*, in a section discussing her first having the idea of writing a memoir of her psychoanalysis, H.D. claims she wishes to avoid the structure of a historical sequence, and its wider implications of representations of the experience of time:

> I do not want to become involved in the strictly historical sequence. I wish to recall the impressions, or rather I wish the impressions to recall me. Let the impressions come in their own way, make their own sequence.[57]

At the same time as H.D. yields accuracy of historical sequence and chronology to processes memories and impressions, she re-locates the agency of the process to the impressions themselves, construing the author of the *Writing on the Wall* as passive mediator of the processes of recollection that have their own separate ability to self-realise in writing, thus finding a new way of sequence. *Trilogy* is both a long poem and a poetic sequence, the architectural ambiguity a result of H.D.'s experimentation with balancing continuous lyrical threads after the insights into form she gained from her psychoanalysis with Freud and her own grappling with the limits of the brief lyric poem as it was promoted by Imagism. Expressing the need to allow impressions to recall the writer, instead of the writer actively recalling these impressions in a chronological order, is due to the influence of the methods of Freud's psychoanalysis like talking cure and free association, but also in part due to the real experience of passivity in face of historical events out of the subject's control. The expansion of the lyric poem into a lyrical sequence is thus, to a significant degree, a product of crisis – both mental crisis and historical crisis – and the couplet form unifying the sequence not only acts as a poetic form, but also expresses a psychological symptom of traumatic stress. The architectural ambiguity of *Trilogy*, its hovering between the form of the long poem and poetic sequence, its challenging of the limits of the lyric models of Imagism without leaving those models entirely behind, presents a crisis of defining form under conditions of extremity.

The separate agency H.D. attributes to her memories, central to the power of the poems in *Tribute to the Angels* in particular and including her hallucinations, corresponds to the material separateness her hallucination of the writing on the wall presents. The image of writing appearing on the wall foregrounds the materiality of the spaces between couplets, the white background, which makes the black lines visible. But the lines themselves, which appear on the durable form of the wall, remain uncertainly situated between the real and the hallucinatory, the phenomenal world and the unconscious suppression projected outside the mind. *Writing on the*

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[57] *Tribute*, p.14.

Wall manifests an awareness of the graphic dimension of writing that enables its own creative possibilities:

> Upon the elaborate build-up of past memories, across the intricate network made by the hairlines that divided one irregular bit of the picture-puzzle from another, there fell inevitably a shadow, a writing-on-the-wall, a curve like a reversed, unfinished *S* and a dot beneath it, a question mark, the shadow of a question – *is this it?*[58]

The extrapolation of the question '*is this it?*' from the visual sign on the wall parallels poetry's visual and graphic 'codes' that operate, as Johanna Drucker writes, as conditions and vehicles for a poem's meaning. For Drucker, avant-garde poetry that exploits the visual potentials of print and typography highlights this feature,[59] but the emphasis on the materiality of writing is also present in H.D.'s reading of the writing on the wall by referencing Egyptian hieroglyphs. H.D.'s voice in *Writing on the Wall* tries to formalise her memories into writing, but the writing on the wall that resembles hieroglyphs is also an image that needs to be described, not merely translated into another language. *Writing on the Wall* continually foregrounds aspects of language as visual signs that are un-translatable. Evoking the visual specificity of the sign – 'a curve like a reversed, unfinished *S* and a dot beneath it' – the passage also activates the mood of uncertainty already present in the beginning of the passage, where H.D. notes how she 'may or may not have mentioned [these incidents] to the Professor. But they were there'.[60] To build a coherent psychological picture, what is not said is as important as what is said in the formal psychoanalytical setting. However, even with the added information, the final closure is marked by a question mark and disappointment – an extrapolation of deflated meaning, '*is this it*' from a visual sign on the wall that parallels the endings of the first two and the penultimate poems of *The Walls Do Not Fall* with question marks: 'what saved us? what for?',[61] 'how can you scratch out / indelible ink of the palimpsest / of past misadventure?'[62] and 'is the union at last?'[63] Lack of closure and interrogation are as integral to *Writing on the Wall* as they are to the formal expansion of *Trilogy*, which in the context of the prose memoir accrue intense psychological significance. In this sense, the parallel life of *Writing on the Wall* can be said to double and undo, write and shadow *Trilogy:* the prose of *Writing on the Wall* shadows and comments on the poetry of *Trilogy,* in a similar way as Joyce's prose works comment, double and undo the kern of the lyrical contained in his epiphanies. The twinning of prose memoir and lyric in both foregrounds the lyric project and articulates distinctly its formal entailments.

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[58] H.D., *Tribute*, pp.29-30.

[59] Drucker, Johanna, 'Not Sound' in *Sound of Poetry / The Poetry of Sound* ed. Marjorie Perloff and Craig Dworkin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.238.

[60] H.D., *Tribute*, p.29.

[61] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.4.

[62] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.6.

[63] *Trilogy*, p.57.

The difficulties of closure and mood of uncertainty that compel the formal continuation of the poetic sequence in *Trilogy* thus correspond to H.D.'s thematic exploration of textual production and materiality of verbal signs in *Writing on the Wall*. The word 'wall' itself acts in *Writing on the Wall* both as a blank page for writing and as a durable surface to contain the transient projection of intense psychological experience. The image of a wall, present in a number of H.D.'s works, to examine the intersection of psychological states and aesthetic form has precursors in a number of modernist and pre-modernist texts, such as Charlotte Perkins Gillman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1892), Virginia Woolf's 'Mark on the Wall' (1917) and T.S. Eliot's review of I.A. Richards's *Science and Poetry* for *The Dial* in March 1927.[64] Woolf's 'Mark on the Wall' examines the processes of association and psychological processes of inference to determine what the mark on the wall is – whether it even is a mark, or whether it is a hole in the wall that only looks like a mark.[65] But the hallucination in *Writing on the Wall* uses the wall to investigate the relationship of the mind and text through a more intense type of psychological uncertainty more akin to the surrealism and uncertainty of the wartime short stories of William Sansom, where walls collapse, crumble and burn in flames: '[a] wall will fall in many ways. It may sway over to the one side or the other. It may crumble at the very beginning of its fall. It may remain intact and fall flat.'[66] The 'wall' of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, the first part of *Trilogy*, refers both to the material walls of urban London during the war, as well as the formal frame of the poem, so often expanded by similar moods of uncertainty Sansom dwells on in his short stories. In the above quote, where the fireman's thoughts are prolonged in the moment of uncertainty before knowing what will happen to the unstable wall, the wall becomes an interpretive surface as well as a material reality; a doubleness also present in the writing on the wall of H.D.'s memoir, which the psychoanalysis with Freud contextualises both historically and theoretically. The wall acts both as a source for textual production and as a surface for reading. But the wall can also metonymically represent the architectural space of the room or the house, which corresponds to Freud's own containment of his analytical work within the domestic space of the nuclear family. H.D. in the hotel room in Greece as well as in London feels like a 'foreigner',[67] showing how she inhabits that architectural space in a perpetual state of displacement. However, this domestic set-up of illness contained by walls and a creative act completed in an interpersonal framework are the conditions for understanding the meaning of the writing as a whole, as her memoir suggests:

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[64] Eliot's figure of a wall, which Marianne Moore as the editor thanked as being 'surely memorable', characteristically questions the function of poetry in human salvation: '[poetry] "is capable of saving us," he says; it is like saying that the wall-paper will save us when the walls have crumbled'. Eliot, Valerie and John Haffenden (eds), *Letters of T.S. Eliot Vol.3 1926-1927* (London: Faber and Faber), p.340.

[65] Woolf, Virginia, *A Haunted House: The complete shorter fiction* (London: Vintage, 2003), pp.77-83.

[66] William Sansom, 'The Wall' in *The Stories of William Sansom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963, 2011), pp.13-16, p.16.

[67] H.D., *Tribute*, p.26.

> But as I relaxed, I let go, from complete physical and mental exhaustion, [Bryher] saw what I did not see. It was the last section of the series, or the last concluding symbol – perhaps the determinative that is used in the actual hieroglyph, the picture that contains the whole series of pictures in itself or helps clarify or explain them.[68]

H.D.'s 'let[ting] go' of her mental and physical stress enables Bryher to see the writing on the wall to assist H.D. from the isolation of illness, and reach the interpretive closure that has strained, engaged but so far escaped her. Moreover, this intimate relationship is necessary for the completion of 'the series' of symbols, emphasising the assumptions of serial ordering and 'concluding' symbols, instead of question marks, which help to 'clarify and explain' the preceding symbols. But this concluding symbol is not seen by H.D., only Bryher, her partner and carer: H.D. in *Writing on the Wall* connects the materiality of writing to psychological states of crisis and uncertainty outside of the psychoanalytic and an interpersonal frame, thus inflecting the poetic sequence the writing on the wall represents with theoretical contexts that complicate any straightforward analysis of length in poetry merely by reference to different measurable units one can identify in lyric poetry.

As DuPlessis and Friedman have observed, in an essay in *Feminist Studies* in 1981 following the first posthumous publication of H.D.'s poem on Freud, 'The Master', 'H.D. locates Freud's wisdom in his translation of the dream – for her, the expression of the personal unconscious and the wellspring of religious and aesthetic vision'.[69] Dreams are central to 'The Master': the speaker ends its first section by using the word three times, both as a verb and as a noun, both as an act of dreaming and as an object of analysis: 'I caught the dream / and rose dreaming, / and we wrought philosophy on the dream content'.[70] If, in *Writing on the Wall*, H.D. writes of the Delphic oracle as fitting into 'a tradition of warnings or messages from another world or another state of being',[71] the Dream in poem XX in *The Walls Do Not Fall* anticipates this mediation between states of being, the Dream which 'acts as a go-between, interpreter'. The poem connects interpretation and supernatural mediation, at the same time as it attributes to 'the Dream' a revelatory function similar to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytical theory thus directly inflects the arguments in the poems in *Trilogy*. What is more, this same poem further interprets the dream through formal brevity in descriptive statements approaching those used to characterise lyric poetry. The Dream 'states economically / in a simple dream equation', paralleling the condensation of lyric form and the economy of its language with the type of saying or stating the Dream performs. A 'simple dream equation' suggests, like the couplet, two

[68] H.D., *Tribute*, p.56.
[69] DuPlessis and Friedman, 'Woman is Perfect', p.420.
[70] H.D., *Collected Poems 1912-1944,* ed. by Louis L. Martz (New York: New Directions, 1983), p.451.
[71] H.D., *Tribute,* p.50.

sides of an equation divided by the mathematical equals sign, a symbol requiring a perfect numerical balance. For Adam Phillips, this linguistic conciseness and formal containment highlight the functional similarities of psychoanalysis and poetry:

> The most obvious link is that they [poetry and psychoanalysis] are both linguistic arts. Freud suggests not exactly that we speak in poetry, because poetry has line-endings, but that we potentially speak with the type of incisiveness and ambiguity that we're most used to finding in poetry.[72]

In his introduction to H.D.'s *Tribute to Freud*, however, Phillips emphasises the reiterations, rather than the concision, of H.D.'s writing, noting how 'it is part of her [H.D.'s] poetic method in this book, as in her poetry – and psychoanalysis is a method only in the sense that poetry is – to reiterate words and phrases and sentences throughout the text, as indeed happens during psychoanalysis'.[73] If *Trilogy* incorporates psychoanalytical methods, such as word association and analytical examination of the poetic material to expand and extend the poetic sequence beyond the brevity of the Imagist lyric poem, this formal absorption also shows what is distinct about poetic structures as opposed to psychoanalysis. For Jahan Ramazani, 'by virtue of its exacting attention to form and language, poetry makes visible the structuring presuppositions of the genres it assimilates'.[74] But the reverse is also true: the assimilation of psychoanalytic methods of accumulating verbal material makes visible what is lost when lyric brevity yields to extra-poetic means of continuation like psychoanalysis. The unity of a 'well-wrought urn'[75] where each line of a poem has an autonomous integrity and stands in tight interrelation to the other lines of the poem to produce an effect of unity and closure at the poem's end, gives way to an expanding fragmentary open form that wrestles to sustain its momentary ends. Indeed, *Trilogy* and *Writing on the Wall* can be seen to act as each other's doubles, reflecting precisely this relationship between poetry and prose in response to psychological and historical crises. The crisis of form performed in H.D.'s lyric poetry is shadowed and written over in the different psychological, personal and historical crises analysed in the prose memoir written side-by-side with her wartime expansive poetry.

3 The war poem

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[72] Adam Phillips and Prospero, 'Poetry as Therapy', *The Economist,* 29 March 2012.

[73] H.D., *Tribute,* p.xi.

[74] Jahan Ramazani, *Poetry and its Others* (Chicago, London: Chicago University Press, 2014), p.8.

[75] H.D. reworked the image of the urn in her memoir of Freud, describing 'the exquisite Greek tear-jars' in Freud's office not only as representations of craftsmanship, but also images for the investigation of the unconscious: 'Fragmentary ideas, apparently unrelated, were often found to be part of a special layer or stratum of thought and memory, therefore to belong together; these were sometimes skilfully pieced together like the exquisite Greek-tear jars and glass bowls and vases that gleamed in the dusk from the shelves of the cabinet that faced me where I stretched, propped up on the couch in the room in Berggasse 19, Wien IX.' H.D., *Tribute*, p.14.

The psychoanalytic context of the couplet form and writing in sequence in *Writing in the Wall* highlights the new wider interpretive ramifications of the poetic forms H.D. employs in her wartime poetic output. However, the difference between the formal organisation of *Trilogy* and the literary forms associated with the psychoanalytic method – the verbal accretion of analytical material through word association and the construction of developmental narratives – highlight the distinct motives behind *Trilogy* that compel its expansion of scale. Pearson suggested the tripartite structure of *Trilogy* to H.D. as a way of adequately responding to the development of the Second World War:

> I've been reading the new mss [*Tribute to the Angels*] with terrific enthusiasm. and do think you've hit a very fine stride. The tone is right and the feeling is as sure as ever. I wonder if I'm correct however in feeling glad that they came after the WALLS and that they now had probably better wait until a third set can complete what is very much a war trilogy. These are 'relief' poems, not quite either victory or peace poems.[76]

The 'relief' poems of *Tribute to the Angels* were to be followed by the 'victory or peace poems' of *The Flowering of the Rod;* the Trinitarian architecture of *Trilogy* derives primarily not from H.D.'s spiritual beliefs, but from the affective states that map the developing arch of the war. Her conversations about war and war poetry with Pearson thus directly motivated the expansion of H.D.'s wartime poetry from the single collection of *The Walls Do Not Fall* to an entire trilogy. Indeed, the date and location, which begins the published version of *The Walls Do Not Fall* – 'To Bryher // for Karnak 1923 / from London 1942' – firmly places the part of the *Trilogy* to the period of aerial bombardment of the capital during the Second World War. If H.D. conceived of new formal possibilities for her writing during her psychoanalysis with Freud, the convulsive events following Britain's declaration of war against Germany finally compelled the length and expansion of her poetry. Moreover, this historical context opens wider questions about the relationship of long poems and poetic sequences to history. Pound famously defined an epic as 'a poem including history', [77] a term Hugh Kenner has applied to other poems of Pound's contemporaries 'offering to read all phenomena as indices to some process larger than the span of lyric attention'.[78] However, H.D.'s *Trilogy* does not merely include history; its formal architecture is dependent on an affective response to the experience of a particular historical crisis. Moreover, H.D. composes *Trilogy* from continuous lyric units, instead of relying on mythical or historical narratives to structure her work, examining the limits of the lyric poem from within, through a project of expanding poetic work. If H.D.'s psychological crisis suggested new possibilities for sequential forms, the historical crisis compelled her to employ

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[76] Hollenberg (ed.), *Between Poetry and History*, p.42.

[77] Ezra Pound, 'Date Line' in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* ed. by T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp.7487, p.86.

[78] Kenner, *The Pound Era*, p.363.

these new forms in her poetry: forms that engage with the limits of the modern lyric poem, a crisis of form that parallels the psychological and historical crises from which it emerged.

The Second World War is different from other wars that preceded it in its unique and violent conflation of the expansive and local, global warfare with militarised homes. In *The Heat of the Day*, Elizabeth Bowen used the image of the map to suggest the sheer number of countries and continents involved in the conflict and its unprecedented global scale: '[w]ar's being global meant it ran off the edges of maps, it was uncontainable'.[79] At the same time, the war had an unprecedented impact on civilians, bringing military aggression from battle fields to private homes, violently literalising the metaphor of the home front. This combination of expansion and containment presents a unique challenge to the lyric poem: 'We in our haste can only see the small components of the scene / We cannot tell what incidents will focus on the final screen', Donald Bain wrote, expressing the limitations for representation an individual poet faces during a global war. However, the title of the poem, 'War Poet', suggests against this negative sentiment the possibility of the role of someone who documents 'the small components of the scene', if 'only to ease our dusty throats'.[80] In the blurb H.D. asked Pearson to write for the back cover of *The Walls Do Not Fall*, Pearson observes the centrality of civilians in the war, and the poignant combination of psychological intensity and extremity of historical violence in H.D.'s writing: '[t]he memorable poetry of these times is not likely to be military in the old sense. This is a civilian's war, and this is civilian war poetry….The outer violence of the scene touches the deepest hidden unconscious terrors'.[81] Georgina Taylor has written lucidly of the two types of literary style poets adopted to document and process the Second World War, and how these styles influenced H.D.:

> H.D. felt that a new way of writing had to be found that both avoided experimentation for its own sake but, on the other hand, did not become a kind of 'documentary' writing that was developing popularity, as in, for example, some of the work of Storm Jameson and Kay Boyle. She felt that writing needed to be psychologically informed and aware, but connected to the external world, that it needed to be interesting as literature, but not to the exclusion of external socio-political reality.[82]

H.D. had to develop a type of literary experimentation motivated by the historical reality of her time of writing. The modern long poem and lyric sequence are thus, to a significant degree,

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[79] Donald Bain, 'War Poet', in Hugh Haughton (ed.), *Second World War Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p.26. See also Haughton's comparison of Bain's poem with Keith Douglas's 'Desert Flowers', p.xix-xx.

[80] Haughton (ed.), *Second World War Poems*, p.26.

[81] See image of the original back cover on The British Library Collections, *The Walls Do Not Fall Collection Item* (London: The British Library)<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-walls-do-not-fall-by-hd> [accessed 21 June 2018].

[82] Georgina Taylor, *H.D. and the Public Sphere of Modernist Women Writers 1913-1946* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), pp.144-45.

both aesthetically experimental and radical, and responsive to poetry's wider context, the historical extremities that drive and compel this experimentation. However, the ways in which H.D.'s wartime writing is 'psychologically informed' and 'connected to the external world' of military conflict is much more complicated in its entanglement of psychoanalysis, war and considerations of poetic form and the legacy of Imagism.

The complexity of war's impact on formal choices was not, of course, limited to the poetic output of H.D. Writing in London 3rd September 1939, the day Britain declared war against Germany, Stephen Spender wrote in his journals the rationale behind continuing to write during the war:

> I am going to keep a journal because I cannot accept the fact that I feel so shattered that I cannot write at all…. Words seems to break in my mind like sticks when I put them down on paper. I cannot see how to spell some of them. Sentences are covered with leaves, and I really cannot see the line of the branch that carries the green meanings…. I must put out my hands and grasp the handfuls of facts.[83]

The 'handfuls of facts' recovered from a state of writerly impotence do not merely balance documentary writing with psychologically informed literary experimentation. A state of agraphia – the loss of the ability to write – necessitates an act of documentation. However, as critics have noted, Spender's wartime literary output blatantly contradicts his confession of struggling to write, and the metaphor of a growing branch to describe the failure of sentences being meaningful is undermined by the overall eloquence and rhetorical coherence of the passage. But the two types of 'fact' the journal passage observes – 'the fact that I feel so shattered' and the 'handfuls of facts' of external events – articulate an intimate connection between literary documentation and psychological self-analysis that translates into wartime writing. Moreover, this unique confluence of concerns to both document expansively and express feelings of impotence are central to H.D.'s wartime poetic aesthetics, which expands beyond the limits of the brief lyric poem and continually frustrates formal closure. Experimenting with the limits of lyric poetry is thus, in a significant way, both a psychological and a literary strategy of processing the realities of modern, twentieth-century war – a generic complexity that parallels those found in David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937) and Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (1948). The long poem and poetic sequence, in the hands of H.D., is both a challenging of the brevity of the autonomous lyric poem of pre-war Imagism, and a response to the intellectual and historical challenges represented by the first half of the twentieth century in the form of psychoanalysis and total war.

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[83] Stephen Spender, *The Thirties and After: Poetry, Politics, People (1933–75)* (London, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1978), p.101.

H.D.'s use of spiritual-psychoanalytic frame in her poetry arguably complicates the mobilisation of a specific historical context in her work. However, in *Writing on the Wall*, the on-going war provides the vocabulary and the imagery to describe H.D.'s psychoanalysis with Freud, and these intellectual and spiritual contexts of psychoanalysis and metempsychosis are verbally and figuratively entangled with the representation of wartime experience in writing. Asserting control over the uncontrollable by explaining the war through an occult or psychoanalytical narrative, these frames help to process and assimilate the disempowerment and depression produced by trauma as well as the anxiety of its anticipation in the interwar period. H.D. uses the image of 'an explosive' to describe a moment when Freud says the word 'Time', again entangling psychoanalysis, war, time and language:

> '*Time*', he said…. The word was surcharged, an explosive that might, at any minute, go off. (Many of his words did, in a sense, explode, blasting down prisons, useless dykes and dams, bringing down landslides, it is true, but opening up mines of hidden treasure.)[84]

H.D. uses the figure of an explosion to characterise language invested with psychological significance, capable of violently removing barriers detaining hidden aspects of the unconscious H.D. evokes with building metaphorical force. Instead of using psychoanalysis to frame her experience of war, H.D. uses the war to frame her psychoanalysis with Freud by re-deploying the image of an explosive to describe Freud's words, triggered by this one instance of his use of the word 'Time': time is 'surcharged' with explosive meaning. In H.D.'s 'Notes on Recent Writing', quoted earlier in the chapter, H.D. observes how *Trilogy* 'is not the "crystalline" poetry that my early critics would insist on. It is no pillar of salt nor yet of hewn rock-crystals. It is the pillar of fire by night, the pillar of cloud by day'.[85] The distinction between her early writing and *Trilogy* lies in the difference between highly crystalline solids – salt and crystals – defined by structural order and periodic arrangement of molecules, compared to the vaporous and combusting chemical processes – the fire of the incendiary bombs during the night, and the dust rising from the ruins during the day. These notes also suggest H.D. is indeed grappling with the limits of the brief lyric poem, the 'crystalline' poetry of her early work. The image of a 'pillar' suggests H.D. thinks of her wartime poetry in 1949 as a structure that rises in the air; a cultural structure that builds and extends. The speaker in *Trilogy* in fact uses the phrase 'pillar of fire' in poem XXVI, where the pillar presents continuity between the 'pillar-of-fire / that went before' and 'the pillar-of fire that comes after' – a continuity that bridges the 'chasm, schism in consciousness'.[86] The use of the image within *Trilogy* is significant, considering H.D. uses the image to describe her wartime poetic output formally as a whole. In her notes, the pillar of fire

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[84] H.D., *Tribute*, p.75.

[85] H.D., 'Notes on Recent Writing' (1949), Beinecke Library ms. qtd. in Friedman, *Psyche Reborn*, p.8.

[86] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.49.

and cloud used to describe her poetry bears resemblance to descriptions of the physical effects of incendiary bombing on the urban landscape, while also alluding to God's guidance of Moses and the Israelites through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and fire in Exodus 13:21.[87] However, in *Trilogy* the pillar of fire bridges a split in the mind: the speaker of the poems internalises the external panorama of war, while increasing the complexity of the allusion to Moses's and the Israelites' escape from slavery. Further, bridging the 'chasm, schism in consciousness' can be viewed as a metaphor for continuity over breaks that characterises the sequence as a whole, as it rhetorically carries the argument from one poem to the next regardless of the breaks imposed by the formal ends of a single poem. The continuities maintained over internal chasms parallel the formal continuities over breaks in the long poem or poetic sequence as a whole. The lyrical sequence is thus necessary, on one hand, to do justice to the documentation of the psychological experience of war; on the other hand, the ambiguity between the psychological effects of war and the war interpreted as an effect of suppressed desire and aggression reveals itself gradually through the reiterations and echoes in the poetic sequence.

In this repetitiveness, *Trilogy* resembles both formally and in its psychological impulse sessions of psychoanalysis. 'I wanted to free myself of repetitive thoughts and experiences – my own and many of my contemporaries',[88] H.D. observed in *Writing on the Wall* on her reasons for consulting Freud, highlighting psychoanalysis as a medium for articulating the repetitive in order to achieve freedom from compulsive thoughts and behaviour. If repetition is one of the formal strategies used by poets like Eliot and H.D. to expand their long wartime poems, in H.D.'s case there are strong parallels with the process of psychoanalysis, and indeed a psychoanalytical interpretation of conflict and violence – an analysis that fascinated many writers, including Woolf, whose late work examines the overlaps of violence and fascism and Freudian theory.[89] Indeed, descriptions of the experience of war influence H.D.'s metaphors for literary production in *Trilogy*. The speaker in poem IX of *The Walls Do Not Fall* connects violent destruction of buildings with destruction of books, exploring the vulnerability of books in an image of a burning building: 'though our books are a floor / of smouldering ash under our feet' creates an image of books as part of the architectural structure, both aflame. The poem alludes later to the use of paper to make cartridge cases for air-defence guns, which leads to the pun on the final word of the poem, '*cartouche'*.[90] The word means both the paper case of a gun cartridge and the oblong figures in Egyptian hieroglyphics, enclosing royal or divine

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[87] Carroll and Prickett (eds.), Exod. 13:21 in *The Bible,* p.82.

[88] H.D., *Tribute*, p.13.

[89] Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Random House, 1996), pp.722-726.

[90] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.16.

names, an instance of dynamic containment the pun formally reproduces.[91] The pun is on the level of a single word the most extreme example of formal condensation of meaning associated with the brevity of the lyric poem. While the experience of war thus, on one hand, necessitates the use of a form that facilitates repetition and a tension between breaks and continuity, it also provides local moments of contained lyricism that are transitory and singular but depend for their effect for the wider context of war where they occur. *Trilogy* demonstrates thus, in fact, a combination of expansive structural continuity in the form of a poetic sequence and meaningful density associated with the brief lyric poem.

What is more, as we have seen, the war and its psychological ramifications both impel and complicate these formal concerns with continuity, closure and expansiveness. Later in *Trilogy*, the speaker uses a register of affective charge and interiority also associated with brief lyric poetry, but in a wider context of war, where these figures accrue public and historical meaning. The reserve of flammable power present in the image of the cartouche also takes place in the mind, described as 'a pure core of burning cerebration'. The image of a brain burning with mental work uses similar figures to those found in Emily Dickinson's poetry[92] such as '[a] quiet – Earthquake style'[93] or 'Loaded gun',[94] to evoke the volcanic reserve ready to erupt from the brief space of the lyric poem and lyric poetry's expressive register. In H.D.'s poem, the 'pure core of burning cerebration' translates to a reflection on the act of writing as a container of affect – of 'contradictory emotions' – that are both extensive and layered:

> Wistfulness, exaltation, a pure core
> of burning cerebration,
>
> jottings on a margin, indecipherable
> palimpsest scribbled over
>
> with too many contradictory emotions,…[95]

The speaker of the poem describes writing both as a palimpsest and as 'jottings on a margin', a commentary on the periphery of the main text. The metatextual moments both reflect on the layered expansiveness of the poetic work and, at the same time, incorporate allusions to war

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[91] OED, 'cartouche', n.,1a. and 4. Gubar argues this pun offers comfort and consolation; however, the line preceding it characterises it as a 'irony' as 'a bitter truth / wrapped up in a little joke', more characteristic of the ambivalence and lack of resolution in *Trilogy's* puns and in-folded meanings. Gubar, 'The Echoing Spell', p.206.
[92] For a summary of the notations H.D. made on her copy of Dickinson's poems, held in the Beinecke library, see Eileen Gregory, 'H.D.'s Volume of Dickinson's Poems; and, a Note on Candor and Iniquity', *H.D. Newsletter*, 3.1 (1988): 44-46.
[93] Dickinson, Emily, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: reading edition* ed. by R.W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), p.234.
[94] Dickinson, *The Poems*, p.341.
[95] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.42. [107]
H.D., *Trilogy*, p.4.

experience. The figure of the 'burning cerebration', using imagery of fire to describe the mind, follows imagery of fire describing the bombing of London, again using imagery to build correlations between internal processes of the mind and the external, historical unfolding of urban destruction:

> Pompeii has nothing to teach us, we
> know crack of volcanic fissure, slow
> flow of terrible lava,
>
> pressure on heart, lungs, the brain about
> to burst its brittle case
> (what the skull can endure!):…[107]

Although most critics place emphasis on the historical superimpositions and interconnectedness of *Trilogy*,[96] what is significant about this passage is how it declares Pompeii as experientially redundant – a past example is unnecessary when an urban population can experience a disaster of fire in the present – and how the evocation of the physical impact of an explosive replaces that of a volcanic eruption. If anything, as DuPlessis comments, *Trilogy* is an example of 'mythopoetic revision'.[97] The 'burning cerebration' in poem 31 is not merely a metaphor for describing the act of thinking, but a reworking of the image of 'the brain / about to burst its brittle case' in the impact from an incendiary explosive. The imagery of fire recycles references to literal fire in the historical context *Trilogy* both documents and expresses through an expanding sequence of poems. The limits of the lyric poem, as H.D. examines them in *Trilogy*, are both a formal interrogation of possibilities beyond brevity and a response necessitated by the unique representational and experiential challenges presented by war.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Many recent critics have linked the Second World War with late modernism, or even the end of modernism, in literature:[98] late modernism, in this context, is a powerful example of how shifts in literary style and ideology can coincide with historical events. Leo Mellor has written about a 'different history of British late modernism' and a 'different kind of war literature', which 'drew its potency from historical specificity, material debris, and traumatic fears'.[99] In a study of British literature of 1939 and the period preceding the war on the home front, Steve Ellis notes

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[96] For a lucid summary, see Rachel Blau DuPlessis, 'H.D. and revisionary myth-making', *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry* ed. by Alex Davis and Lee M. Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), pp.114-125.

[97] DuPlessis, 'H.D. and revisionary myth-making', p.120.

[98] For further accounts, see also Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: modernism and national culture in England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003) and Paul K. Saint-Amour, *Tense Future: Modernism, total war, encyclopedic form* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015).

[99] Leo Mellor, *Reading the Ruins: Modernism, bombsites and British culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), p.204.

the 'narrowing focus' of the war, quoting Samuel Hynes, who describes the 1930s as 'a time of endings, but of no beginnings',[100] which makes this chapter connecting the two other chapters on the beginning of the twentieth century and its end so crucial.[101] Ellis suggests the end of *The Criterion* and the deaths of Yeats, Joyce, Woolf, Madox Ford and Freud between 1939 and 1942 and the Second World War mark a useful period boundary, signalling the end of modernism.[102] However, as Marina MacKay notes, 'the correlation between late modernism in England and the world-changing circumstances with which it overlapped amounts to more than a historical coincidence'.[103] Moreover, Hynes's 'time of endings' has further implications for the formal endings in poetry, and the performance of formal continuity and closure in a literary work. Looking at examples from W.H. Auden and Eliot addressing the ending of a poem in relation to the Second World War and its outbreak, there is an affective investment in finding final harmony at the close of a poem. Auden's 'September 1, 1939' explicitly connects the outbreak of war with feelings of uncertainty and fear, which the end of the poem attempts to overcome:

> May I, composed like them
> Of Eros and of dust,
> Beleaguered by the same
> Negation and despair,
> Show an affirming flame.[104]

Like H.D., who showed how '[t]he outer violence of the scene touches the deepest hidden unconscious terrors', Auden brings war and the emotional state of the first-person speaker together in the word 'beleaguered'. However, the ending of the poem needs to also negotiate how to document the beginning of war with formal and affective closure. Acoustically, this closure is achieved with the rhyme 'same' and 'flame'; emotionally, despite the 'negation and despair' that reiterate the historically determined feelings of uncertainty, 'anger and fear'[105] from the beginning of the poem, the poem's ending absorbs these expressions of hopelessness into a hypothetical and qualified affirmation in 'May I… Show an affirming flame'. In the ending of *Little Gidding*, first published in September 1942, the same year H.D. was composing *The Walls Do Not Fall*, Eliot incorporates Julian of Norwich's future tense of 'all shall be well', which seems by the end of the sentence to slip into the present tense to figure an image of unity, 'When…the fire and rose are one':

> And all shall be well and

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[100] Steve Ellis, *British Writers and the Approach of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), p.9.

[101] Some of the observations on Ellis's book here have previously appeared in the form of a review; see Blomvall, 'The 1939 State', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 41.1 (2017): 156-160.

[102] Ellis, *British Writers*, p.7.

[103] Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), p.1.

[104] W.H. Auden, *Another Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), p.115.

[105] Auden, *Another Time*, p.112.

> All manner of thing shall be well
> When the tongues of flame are in-folded
> Into the crowned knot of fire
> And the fire and the rose are one.[106]

Eliot's *Little Gidding*, like H.D.'s *The Walls Do Not Fall*, ends without a closed rhyme scheme, and yet rhetorically and through quiet assonance – the chiasmic repetition of diphthongs in 'crowned' and 'one' and 'folded' and 'rose', for example – achieves a feeling of final tonal unity and harmonious close. H.D., Auden and Eliot, addressing with different degrees of explicitness the war from which these poems emerge, work to close with a tonal affirmation – through imagery of light and unity, and modal syntax – that points beyond the poems' formal ends.

H.D.'s *Trilogy,* as a long poem or poetic sequence that tests the limits of her brief, economical and restrained early poems, can be viewed as a late modernist poem not only because it was written after 1939, but also because her wartime work so clearly works both with and against the legacy of her early poetry associated with the modernism of Imagism. However, in any long poem or poetic sequence the question of an ending and endings is formally emphasised, and even further heightened by the historical context of a still unresolved military conflict. In this sense, the late modernist poetry of the early 1940s in general, and H.D.'s *Trilogy* in particular, evidences a redefined relationship to what Giorgio Agamben calls 'the structural relevance to the economy of the poem of the event I have called "the end of the poem"'. [107] Agamben directly connect the 'structural relevance' of lyric closure directly with the assumption of the 'economy of the poem' – in other words, lyric brevity. What is more, Agamben articulates the relationship between brevity and closure by using an example of a proto-modernist failure to achieve satisfactory closure in Baudelaire's poetry, glossed by the high modernist prose author, Marcel Proust. That Agamben analyses the failure of this type of brief formally closed lyric poem in relation to a tonal change anticipating modernist poetry influenced by Baudelaire suggests that the brief lyric poem – where units of sense and sound come together satisfactorily at the poem's close – is particularly under pressure in works intimately associated with emergent modernism:

> Proust once observed, with reference to the last poems of *Les fleurs de mal*, that the poem seems to be suddenly ruined and to lose its breath ("it stops short," he writes, "almost falls flat…despite everything it seems that something has shortened, is out of breath"). Think of "Le cygnet," such a tight and heroic composition, which ends with the verse "Aux captifs, aux vaincues…à bien d'autres encore!" (Of those who are captive or defeated…and of many more others!) Concerning a different poem of Baudelaire's, Walter Benjamin noted that it "suddenly interrupts itself, giving one the impression – doubly surprising in a sonnet – of something

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[106] T.S. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p.198.
[107] Giorgio Agamben, 'The End of the Poem' in Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (eds), *The Lyric Theory reader: a critical anthology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp.430-434, p.433. [120] Agamben, 'The End of the Poem', p.432-33.

fragmentary." The disorder of the last verse is an index of the structural relevance to the economy of the poem of the event I have called "the end of the poem". As if the poem as a formal structure would not and could not end, as if the possibility of the end were radically withdrawn from it, since the end would imply a poetic impossibility: the exact coincidence of sound and sense. At the point in which the sound is about to be ruined in the abyss of sense, the poem looks for shelter in suspending its own end in a declaration, so to speak, of the state of poetic emergency.[120]

Agamben uses images of a poem interrupted, 'shortened', 'ruined', out of breath, stopped short and fallen flat: different ways of articulating how the brief lyric poems that most obviously anticipated modernism fails to come to a satisfactory poetic close, as if the poem had exhausted itself before the finishing line, the final punctuation. The quote from Walter Benjamin further observes the surprising conjunction of the closed form of the sonnet with a final feeling of fragmentariness. This fragmentariness is different from the open-ended Romantic fragment poems analysed by Marjorie Levinson,[108] where the poems were left unfinished, and classical fragments, where the fragmentary nature is a consequence of incomplete preservation of the material text. In readings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan', subtitled 'A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment', for example, a clear tension exists between critics who view the fragmentariness of the poem as limited to the biographical context provided in Coleridge's Preface and its narrative of interruption and forgotten dream, or the claim, as Andrew Allport puts it, that 'the incompleteness of the poem—even if it is rooted in the author's biography—is not primarily experienced by readers as biographical, but as poetic, as gesture, as form'.[109][110] Baudelaire's poetry, and other modernist poems, deliberately cultivated an aesthetic of fragmentariness; fragmentariness is always formally intended, rather than a biographical or historical accident. At the same time, this fragmentariness is also a conscious gesture to poetic fragments before modernism: H.D.'s fragment poems in *Heliodora and Other Poems* (1924)*,* for example, explicitly reference Sappho translations.[111] If the idea of lyric length specifically tests a commonplace of different definitions of lyric poetry – that lyric poems are brief – Agamben also points to how this somewhat banal observation about brevity implies further structural concerns with condensation of meaning, closure and integrity of a single poem.

The relationship between the long poem, the poetic sequence and the late modernism of 1940s emphasises a continuous open form with tonal attempts to achieve what Agamben in relation to Baudelaire calls the 'poetic impossibility' of 'the exact coincidence of sound and sense' – in some ways both building on and moving away from the brief fragment of modernism. The last

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[108] Marjorie Levinson, *The Romantic Fragment Poem: a critique of a form* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

[109] Andrew Allport, The Romantic Fragment Poem and the Performance of Form', *Studies in Romanticism* 51.3 (2012):

[110] -417, p.400.

[111] For an account of H.D.'s engagement with Sappho's fragments, see Greogry, *H.D. and Hellenism*, pp.148-161.

[124] H.D., *Trilogy*, p.59.

poem of *The Walls Do Not Fall* nearly performs this 'poetic impossibility' in the coincidence of sound and of the final couplet, '*possibly we will reach haven, / heaven*',[124] the near-pun 'haven, / heaven' connecting the final two lines over the line break. The sky – previously the source of anxiety and risk of violent death and dispossession, the 'zrr-hiss / lightning in a not-known, //unregistered dimension' from the beginning of the poem – stands for heaven, with only one letter added to 'haven', promising new peace and security to high altitudes. The approximation of the sound in the two words thus poetically attempts to reconfigure meaning, replacing the sound of airplanes with the sound of 'haven, / heaven.' As an example of a 1940s long poem or poetic sequence, the speaker of the last poem in *The Walls Do Not Fall* attempts to discover a realm of hope after the war by offering a psychic map of survival, at the same time as she employs models of lyric closure now in the realm of the possible, despite its long and openended form.

The mapping of possible future states comes at the end of a poem, where the difficulty of finding a way out of a destroyed building parallels the formal difficulty of having 'no rule / of procedure'. The image of a civilian experience of urban destruction is implicated within the form of the long poem, which depends on the continuity of form and meaning despite the breaks established by individual poems in the sequence. In the final poem, the difficulty of movement in a collapsing house develops into a discourse of voyage and discovery without a map, using metaphors of navigation to chart both the emergence from a destroyed house and the form of the poem:

> *dust and powder fill our lungs*
> *our bodies blunder*
>
> *through doors twisted on hinges….*
>
> *and the ether is heavier*
> *than the floor,*
> * and the floor sags like*
> *a ship floundering;*
>
> *we know no rule*
> *of procedure*
> * we are voyagers,*
> *discoverers of the not-*
> *known,*
>
> *the unrecorded;*
> *we have no map;*

possibly we will reach haven,
heaven.[112]

H.D.'s poem uses repetition of both words and sentence structures to establish continuity over line breaks, instead of using enjambement and incomplete syntax or rhyme schemes to create the impetus for crossing the stanza break. The dynamic between the line break and the verbal and syntactic patterning formally supports the experience of moving forward in a collapsing, disintegrating building. The poem also repeats the pattern of offering two lexical alternatives to create a verbal bridge over the line break: the list 'voyagers, discoverers' is on the same line, but 'the not-known, // the unrecorded' links two couplets together. H.D. incorporates interwoven threads of self-reflection and ambivalence about the formal elements of the writing that call into question while attempting to affirm a justification and value of writing under the pressure of extreme historical circumstance. But this interpretation of the coincidence of aesthetic and historical statements also operates in reverse: when the speaker claims that '*we know no rule / of procedure*', the confusion and disorientation of burning and collapsing architectural structures refers simultaneously to the lack of guidelines instructing how to proceed in a crisis and the *ad hoc* development of poems' couplets of irregular length. Nevertheless, verbally, syntactically and acoustically, the speaker of the poem choreographs the poem's continuity, corresponding to the survival and endurance the poem describes. If in the early modernist and high modernist text, according to Agamben, '[a]t the point in which the sound is about to be ruined in the abyss of sense, the poem looks for shelter in suspending its own end in a declaration, so to speak, of the state of poetic emergency',[113] in the wartime poetic sequence this process appears to be reversed. From a state of historical emergency, the first-person speaker looks for shelter in a formal continuity that closes in a coincidence of sound and sense that no longer looks coincidental, but deliberate, if not committed to with final certainty.

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[112] H.D., *Trilogy*, pp.58-59.
[113] Agamben, 'The End of the Poem', p.433.

3

Between Poetry and Theatre: Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*

[I]f our modern poetical drama has failed, it is mainly because, always dominated by the example of Shakespeare, it would restore an irrevocable past. – W.B. Yeats, 'A Note on At the Hawk's Well'[1]

The relationship between lyric poetry and theatre in the twentieth century is a particularly fraught one. On the one hand, the tension between the two forms is indicative of a wider problem with the definition of lyric poetry, and what consequently constitutes the element of the 'poetic' in theatre. On the other hand, twentieth-century poets have specifically wrestled with the relationship of verse drama to modernity. As W.B. Yeats observed in his Note printed after *At the Hawk's Well* in *Harper's Bazaar* in March 1917, the idea of 'modern poetical drama' was already fighting against failure and its attempt to revoke the past instead of finding its suitability to the present day.[2] During the brief post-war revival of verse drama, Ronald Duncan also described wrestling with the 'essential challenge' of adapting verse drama to the twentieth century in connection with his play *This Way to the Tomb* (1945) and T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935): 'We both saw that by writing plays about saints in a remote period we had evaded the essential challenge, which was to find a flexible verse form to express the age we lived in, on the stage'.[3] If the prose poem took poetry in a radical new direction, involving a new paradigm of poetry that concentrated on affect over metrical composition – indicative of the change not only in form, but in conceptions of lyric poetry – the revival of verse drama in midcentury Britain and Ireland seemed to work *against* modernity by reverting to a relationship between poetry and theatre that significantly predated the twentieth century. The most important period for the revival of verse drama in the twentieth century thus seemed backwardlooking, an example of a testing of the limits of two literary genres – poetry and theatre – that failed to successfully reinvent either. As A.T. Tolley has lucidly summarised, '[t]he problem was to find a form of drama and a concomitant form of verse suited to the presentation of a modern scene where the poetry was neither out of place nor a mere decoration, but was felt as intrinsic to the realisation of a poetic quality inherent in the vision of

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[1] Russell K. Alspach (ed.), *The Variorum Edition of the Poems of W.B. Yeats* (Basingstoke, London: Macmillan, 1966), p.417

[2] Alspach (ed.), *The Variorum Edition*, p.417.

[3] Ronald Duncan, *Collected Plays* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971), p.x. Qtd in Irene Morra, *Verse Drama in England, 1900-2015: Art, modernity, and the national stage* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2016), p.157.

the play'.[4] While many poet-dramatists did attempt to move beyond historical, biblical and mythological narratives and adapt verse drama to the modern day, like Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (1949), Christopher Fry's *Venus Observed* (1950) or Anne Ridler's *Shadow Factory* (1945) – the first two set in contemporary drawing rooms and the last in a post-war factory – these did not, in hindsight, seem to open new possibilities either for poetry or for theatre. As Peter Brook has observed, even Fry's plays in contemporary settings seem to revert to an earlier century: 'Fry finds his poetry in the England that still has echoes of the middle ages in its villages, the England of Canterbury, Ely and Oxford. The melancholy of *Venus Observed* is that of the Elgar cello concerto and *Brideshead Revisited*'.[5] Against the most successful and influential post-war British play, John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), the verse drama influenced by Eliot and Fry seems desperately out of sync, set in the English manor house, not the kitchen sink, written in verse, and not the gritty prose of the urban streets.

One of the reasons for the backward-looking nature of modern verse drama is that the blurred limits between poetry and theatre were at their most pressing at the origins of Western theatre, the emergence of Ancient Greek drama from choral song. As L.A. Swift has argued about the relationship between dramatic and non-dramatic choral song in fifth-century Athens, 'lyric allusions need not be an isolated decorative feature, but can be part of a systematic poetic structure running through the plays'.[6] Not only do the origins of Greek theatre lie in choral song; choral song and allusions to different lyric genres can be structurally and thematically integral to the dramatic work as a whole. From this perspective, blurring the limits between lyric poetry and theatre is not an example of twentieth-century formal experimentation, but a return to the roots of both lyric poetry and dramatic theatre in choral song. Indeed, Patrick Durgin, the publisher of *The Kenning Anthology of Poets Theater 1945-1985,* argues that the term 'poets theatre means a radical modernist continuation of classical theatre… I think it can be read as a loosely structured genre that arises out of the need some poets feel to explore the demands of setting, character, dialogue, scene, and other narrative and performative concerns of the theatre… From time to time it becomes central to the ongoing development of one's poetics '.[7] Speaking of a very distinct type of closet drama tradition in post-war American poetry, Durgin's comments illuminate the intuitive connections between classical drama and modernist experimentation with the limits of lyric poetry through an intense engagement with different generic features of drama. This experimentation with the limits between poetry and theatre involves specifying and interrogating assumptions underpinning both genres. On one

[4] A.T. Tolley, *The Poetry of the Forties* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985), p.186.
[5] Peter Brook, qtd in Hugh Whitemore, *Christopher Fry Remembered* (London: The Royal Society of Literature, 2005) <https://rsliterature.org/fellow/christopher-fry/> [accessed 15 August 2018]. Qtd in Morra, *Verse Drama*, p.167.
[6] L.A. Swift, *The Hidden Chorus: echoes of genre in tragic lyric* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), p.4.
[7] Donovan, Thom, *What is Poets Theater?* (Chicago: Poetry Foundation, 2010) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2010/04/what-is-poets-theater> [accessed 15 August 2018].

hand, poetry can incorporate formal elements like dialogue, character or setting, and specify these formal elements for the purpose of testing their limits within the parameters of lyric poetry. On the other hand, using formal elements of theatre can become 'central to the ongoing development of one's poetics', pushing the boundaries of what is possible within lyric poetry, and interrogating how crucial its underlying assumptions – like the use of a lyric speaker that excludes dramatic dialogue – are to the genre.

However, despite the arguments for the continuities between classical theatre and modern verse drama, some theorists and practitioners have attempted to redefine the meaning of 'poetry' and 'poetic' in the context of twentieth-century poetic theatre. Moreover, the problem of the relationship between verse drama and modernity is in fact part of a wider problem of formal definition, concerning how the language of poetry can either inhibit or enhance the 'dramatic' in a staged play, and – crucially – what the words 'poetry and 'poetic' connote in theatre. This challenge of definition is evident in the large number of terms for sub-genres that in different ways situate a play on the boundary between poetry and theatre, as Denis Donoghue noted in an early study of twentieth-century verse drama: '[p]oetic drama, verse drama, prose drama, dramatic verse, dramatic poetry – we have a generous supply of terms, yet we confuse our speech by blurring their outlines'.[8] But while Donoghue expertly disambiguates this 'generous supply of terms', he does not explain at length where this impulse to blur the outlines of poetry and theatre stems from, and why there has been such an intense interest in the possibilities of various formal overlaps between the two genres. One reason may have been suggested by the contemporary verse dramatist Peter Oswald, who maintains that 'there's a close affinity between poetry and drama': '[t]he kind of tension, intensity and economy required for a line of poetry to work, is very similar to the kind of suspense and simultaneousness required for a line of drama or a scene to hold an audience'.[9] Oswald points to the closeness between theatre and poetry in the 'tension, intensity and economy' shared by the two forms; 'a line of poetry' and 'a line of drama', from this perspective, approximate each other in their formal purpose to 'hold' an audience or reader through tension. Another explanation was suggested by Eliot, who, in a 1940 essay on Yeats, appreciated the interchangeable aesthetic purpose of poetic and dramatic in Yeats's theatrical works:

> What is necessary is a beauty which shall not be in the line or the isolable passage, but woven into the dramatic texture itself; so that you can hardly say whether the lines give grandeur to the drama, or whether it is the drama which turns the words into poetry.[10]

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[8] Denis Donoghue, *The Third Voice* (Princeton: Princeton UP 1959), p.3.

[9] Peter Oswald, *On Schiller and Contemporary Verse Drama* (Peter Oswald) <https://peteroswald.net/on-schiller-andcontemporary-verse-drama/> [accessed 15 August 2018].

[10] T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957, 1961), p.260.

Eliot emphasises 'beauty' as a common feature in the lyric and dramatic features of Yeats's plays, viewing the two genres as interwoven to a degree that makes the task of isolating which form generates this beauty difficult. Instead of the lyricism inhibiting the dramatic conflict, as was the case in many closet dramas by Romantic poets and staged verse plays in the 1940s – like in Shelley's 'lyrical play' *Promethues Unbound* (1820), which, he suggested would work better in the imagination of the reader[11] – the poetry of Yeats's plays, according to Eliot, enhances the dramatic and vice versa. Indeed, it becomes impossible distinguish whether the verse lines generate the dramatic scale of the play, or whether it is the central dramatic conflict the play represents 'which turns the words into poetry'.

These experiments with the limits between poetry and theatre in the twentieth century extend to a wide variety of performative arts, like ballet, opera and church plays, as well as works in other languages than English – indeed, global influences were crucial to most British engagements with verse drama and poetic theatre. In his 1922 preface to *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel,* Jean Cocteau famously distinguishes between 'la poésie de théâtre' and 'la poésie au théâtre', poetry in the theatre and poetry of the theatre:

> L'action de ma pièce est imagée tandis que le texte ne l'est pas. J'essaie donc de substituer une "poésie de théâtre" à la "poésie au théâtre ". La poésie au théâtre est une dentelle délicate impossible à voir de loin. La poésie de théâtre serait une grosse dentelle; une dentelle en cordages, un navire à la mer.... Les scènes s'emboîtent comme des mots d'un poème.

> The action of my play is made from images, while the writing is not. I am trying to replace 'poetry in the theatre' with 'poetry of the theatre'. Poetry in the theatre is like delicate lacework, impossible to see from a distance. Poetry of the theatre should be a coarse lace; lacework for rigging, a ship at sea… The scenes interlock like the words of a poem. [My translation].

Comparing classical verse drama to delicate lace and modern poetic drama to rough rope, the imagery of the passage shows the centrality of the 'image' to Cocteau's conception of poetic theatre, identifying the important lyricism of twentieth-century theatre in the visual images represented on the stage, instead of the language of metrical composition. This distinction is, in part, common to differentiations between verse drama – a play written in metrically regular verse – and *poetic* drama, plays frequently written in prose that depend on a different understanding of what it means to be poetic, and has allowed a number of critics to identify Henrik Ibsen's prose plays, which followed his verse plays *Brand* (1866) and *Peer Gynt* (1867) from 1869 onwards, as important precedents to twentieth-century poetic drama, despite his

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[11] There have been some recent arguments for the effectiveness of the verse plays of Romantic poets. Reeve Parker, for example, has argued that Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley experiment 'boldly with the aesthetics of dramatic performance, drawing on – and challenging – inherited traditions'. Parker, *Romantic Tragedies: the dark employments of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), p.1. These arguments unfortunately lie outside the scope of this chapter; what is significant for the purpose of my argument is the impact the *perceived* failure of nineteenth-century verse drama had on twentieth-century experiments with the limits of poetry and theatre.

eschewing of metrical verse.[12] Often at stake in the theory and practice of poetic theatre are definitions of poetry in general: for Cocteau, instead of metrically composed lines, poetry is defined by the image and the verb *s'emboîter*, fitting together or interlocking, which formally translates the operation of a lyric poem to the operation of a performance made from scenes. Consequently, if the terms 'poetry' and 'poetic' can be redefined in the space of twentiethcentury theatre, then these redefinitions have wider implications for lyric poetry, particularly for our assumptions about its limits. While most studies of verse drama and poetic drama have viewed it from the point of view of theatre studies, the use of poetry – however defined – on stage does not merely impact the development of theatre and dramaturgy. The writing of verse drama and poetic plays has equally significant implications for poetics – implications that are implicit in the constant drive of poets from Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley and Browning to Wilde, Yeats, Eliot and Auden to engage in dramatic form. Indeed, an assumption underlying this chapter will be that the development of poetic theatre complements poets' attempts at verse drama, specifically through a renewed interest in the form of the soliloquy as a medium of character and heightened emotion. Reviewing the poetry of Frank McGuinness, Alice Oswald is excited about the prospect of a playwright writing poetry, returning to the origin of Greek drama in choral lyric. However, expressing disappointment in McGuiness's ability to cross dramatic and lyric in his poetry, she speculates on the reasons for the difficulty of bridging the two genres in contemporary poetry: '[o]r is it the case that verse has been so long excluded from drama that we have forgotten how rhythm works within ordinary speech as the medium of the unconscious?'[13] Oswald's question hides an argument about the close relationship between poetry and theatre, alleging that rhythm operates in ordinary speech – and, by extension, dramatic dialogue – in a comparable way to lyric poetry, as 'the medium of the unconscious'. Again, at stake in the examination of the limits between poetry and theatre is an idea of lyric poetry: the possibility of reconfiguring the relationship between theatre and poetry, particularly the relationship between lyric speaker and dramatic dialogue, the first and third of Eliot's three voices of poetry.

*   *   *

The problem of the voice and the number of voices is central to the wider problem of genre in playwright Sarah Kane's final work *4.48 Psychosis*. When Kane committed suicide in February 1999, she left behind a revised manuscript of the text she had been working on before her

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[12] See, for example, Donoghue, *The Third* Voice, pp.8-10 and Arnold P. Hinchliffe, *Modern Verse Drama* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp.4-10. On Arthur Symons's appreciation of Ibsen in his essays on poetic drama, see Morra, *Verse Drama,* p.32, p.51.

[13] Alice Oswald, 'The Sea With No Ships', *The Times Literary Supplement,* 12 May 2000.

death, which she had titled *4.48 Psychosis*. *4.48 Psychosis* does not have any assigned characters specified at the beginning of the play or anywhere else in the text. The text Kane left behind consisted of twenty-four sections separated by lines of dashes. Seven of these sections were short dialogues (apparently between a doctor and a patient, but without specified characters), two lists of self-help instructions lifted from Edwin Schreidman's *The Suicidal Mind* (one of them in first person with line breaks), two sections of numbers, a parody of medical notes and one of only eight letters, 'RSVP ASAP'. Forming just over half of the play, however, the manuscript also contained twelve soliloquies, ten of which are best characterised as lyrical: the sections are written in the first person, with frequent use of imagery and sound patterns in a language of affective intensity characteristic of lyric poetry. I have provided a detailed formal breakdown of *4.48 Psychosis* in Appendix 2, although identifying which sections are in prose and which are in poetry is rarely clear-cut. For example, I have formally listed section 18 as a dialogue between a patient and a doctor, as it uses initial dashes to indicate a change in speaker, even though the first part of the dialogue consists of thirteen lines separated by line breaks that otherwise formally approximate the lyrical sections of the play. This formal ambiguity is indicative of a wider generic examination of the limits between theatre and poetry, dialogue and lyric speech: the uncertainty over the speaker(s) and of the limits between poetic speech and prose dialogue perform formally the speaker's mental breakdown and difficulty at establishing stable boundaries between the self and others. In her lyrical sections, Kane combines blocks of prose with lineated poetic stanzas freely, shifting between prose poetry and lineated free verse. The seventh section, for example, expresses interiority and affective states through metaphor and rhythm dependent on deliberate organisation of line breaks:

> I will drown in dysphoria
> in the cold black pond of my self
> the pit of my immaterial mind[14]

The acoustic resonance of the 'I' sound in 'I', 'my', 'my' and 'mind' formally establishes a poetic sound pattern in the three lines at the same time as it advances the text's treatment of interiority and mental breakdown in subject matter. The lyricism of the passage both depends on the firstperson speaker, the sound of the first 'I' word, at the same time as the ripple effect of the 'I' sound becomes a symptom of mental anxiety and unease. The lines thus highlight how the poetic cohesiveness of the text intimately links with its intense scrutiny of the lyric trope of an isolated first-person speaker. Moreover, Kane represents the failure of dialogue as a cure or exit from this lyric interiority and intense poetic self-analysis, which crystallises the text's negotiation of the limits between poetry and theatre.

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[14] Sarah Kane, *Complete Plays* (London: Methuen Drama, 2001), p.213.

Despite the formal ambiguity of most of the sections of *4.48 Psychosis*, Appendix 2 provides an initial insight into Kane's extensive reliance on elements familiar from lyric poetry in her final work. The highlighted sections in the first person give an idea of the extent to which *4.48 Psychosis* avoids dramatic interactions between characters. The sections highlighted as lyrical – that is, lineated like poetry, as well as spoken entirely in the first person – shows the extent to which on the page *4.48 Psychosis* approximates poetry. Indeed, early reviewers were conscious of this generic confusion when James Macdonald directed the first production of *4.48 Psychosis* for Royal Court Theatre in the summer of 2000. In *The Guardian*, Michael Billington called the performance 'a dramatised poem', 'a ruthlessly self-analytical theatrical poem', and compared it to Sylvia Plath's poem 'Edge',[15] situating Kane's text in a tradition of 'confessional' poetry instead of viewing it as a development in British theatre. Charles Spencer, writing for *The Telegraph,* markedly called *4.48 Psychosis* 'a piece' instead of a play, and emphasised its appearance on the page: '[o]n the page, the piece looks like a poem'.[16] Meanwhile, Nils Tabert, the translator of Kane's work into German, noted how 'there is very little psychology in her plays, they are never explicit, very little is explained. Things just happen and you have to make up your own mind what it means, like in poems'.[17] In an academic article, Alicia Tycer observes how, while the text 'builds on dramatic tension', it 'often seems more like lines of poetry than traditional dialogue'.[18] Tabert views the ambiguity of meaning in Kane's plays as a poetic element, while Tycer intuits that this generic ambiguity in Kane's final work is connected to its formal interrogation of the limits of dialogue and 'lines of poetry'. Christopher Innes asserts confidently that *4.48 Psychosis* 'is unmistakably in the form of a free verse dramatic poem'[19]: instead of analysing Kane's final work as an example of poetic drama, Innes and other critics are intent on describing it as a dramatic poem, suggesting that the form of *4.48 Psychosis* is more inherently lyric than dramatic.

However, the fluidity of these terms – the fact that Kane's final work is at times characterised as a poetic play, and other times a dramatic poem – indicates that an analysis of the implications of these formal overlaps is more important than performing a taxonomy of the sub-genres that exist between poetry and theatre. Indeed, the uneasiness of the generic categorisation of Kane's final work reveals how genre is a process of recognition in reading, a process of responding to the formal elements in the text. The disagreement over the form and genre of *4.48 Psychosis* thus reveals the active process of assigning, defining and reinterpreting

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[15] Michael Billington, 'How do you judge a 75-minute suicide note?', *The Guardian*, 30 June 2000.

[16] Charles Spencer, 'Sarah Kane's howl of pain is an act of artistic heroism', *The Telegraph*, 14 May 2001.

[17] Nils Tabert interview in Graham Saunders, *'Love me or kill me': Sarah Kane and the theatre of extremes* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp.134-142, p.137.

[18] Alicia Tycer, '"Victim. Perpetrator. Bystander." Melancholic Witnessing of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*', *Theatre Journal* 60.1:23-36 (2008), p.26.

[19] Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama: the twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p.534.

both the terms 'lyric' and 'dramatic', revealing some of the similarities and differences in individual readers' and viewers' intuitions about the shape and elements of the two genres. For example, reviewers, scholars and translators frequently call *4.48 Psychosis* a 'poem', despite its performance in the theatre, showing how readers and viewers can recognise lyric poetry in texts even when they are on the surface assigned another genre. However, although the work's lyricism was recognised early and critics still acknowledge the poetic qualities of the text, *4.48 Psychosis* is primarily considered as a play. Scholars with a background in theatre studies and Kane's professional colleagues from the theatre, including directors James Macdonald and Vicky Featherstone, and her agent Mel Kenyon, have vocally defended reading *4.48 Psychosis* as a piece of theatre. [20] Macdonald, for example, explained in an interview for *The Independent* how 'there were a lot of people saying that [*4.48 Psychosis*] shouldn't be done, that it wasn't a play. Once one got over the shock of her death, it seemed to me that it absolutely was, and that it was a very considered statement. It became a labour of love to defend it'.[21] Academic critics, on the other hand, have so far concentrated on analysing the text as a challenge to conventional theatrical form; Eckart VoigtsVirchow, for example, argues that 'Kane's experiments with the *theatrical* text hold the key to her final plays, *Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*' [emphasis mine].[21] It is true that Kane organised the different sections of the text around a loose narrative that leads to the speaker's suicide, and that this narrative can give the impression that the first-person speaker of the text forms dramatically, that is, in relation to an event that finally resolves the tension and conflict in the text. This event takes place in the final lyrical section of *4.48 Psychosis*, when the speaker performs her death: 'I shall hang myself / to the sound of my lover's breathing'[22] from the beginning of *4.48 Psychosis* changes, by the end of the text, to, 'I'll tell you how I died…It is done',[23] the changing tense indicating the speaker's changing relation to a forming event.

However, despite the presence of this event in the text, over half of the work consists of lyrical sections without explicit action or dialogue, and reading these passages exclusively through traditions of theatre would reduce the formal complexity of the passages and re-frame them in a way that is misleading. The awkwardness of this generic re-framing is evident in the critical practice of describing the voice in *4.48 Psychosis* as a disembodied voice or consciousness,[25]

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[20] The author of the first monograph on Kane's work, Graham Saunders, is a lecturer in theatre studies at the Univeristy of Reading. His co-editor for the first collection of essays on Kane, Laurens De Vos, is a specialist on theatre and literary theory, particularly the legacy of Antonin Artaud in British twentieth and twenty-first-century theatre. The introduction to Kane's *Complete Plays* was written by playwright David Greig. The list goes on. [21] Matt Trueman, 'James Macdonald on Caryl Churchill's *Escaped Alone*: "I'm drawn to plays I don't know how to do"', *The Independent*, 18 January 2016.

[21] Eckart Voigts-Virchow, '"We are anathema" – Sarah Kane's plays as postdramatic theatre versus the "dreary and repugnant tale of sense"' in *Sarah Kane in Context* ed. by Laurens De Vos and Saunders (Manchester, New York: Manchester UP, 2010), pp.195-208, p.204.

[22] Kane, *CP*, p.207.

[23] Kane, *CP*, p.241.

without reflecting on the appropriateness of the terminology within the necessarily embodied medium of the theatre. When Kane herself discussed a draft of [24]*4.48 Psychosis* with her agent a week before her death, she struggled to come to a decision about the number of voices in the text and their gender. The undefined nature of how to perform *4.48 Psychosis* shows that while Kane thought about questions of performance, there was considerable confusion about how to stage the text. A similar dissatisfaction with the physical embodiment of theatre is already present in Kane's previous play *Crave*, first performed in 1998 by the theatre company Paines Plough at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh. At first, Kane wanted the play to be performed in the dark, with the four voices not attached to visible human shapes of the actors. However, the idea was dropped when Featherstone, who directed the play, convinced Kane it would not work in performance, indicating the discrepancy building between Kane's formal vision of her work and the physical medium of the theatre. In fact, using the term voice and the image of voices in the dark – attempting to approximate a disembodiment through erasure of dramatic character and invisibility of human actors – brings Kane's late work generically closer to terms central to lyric theory and poetics. As Eliza Richards notes, in her entry on 'voice' in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 'literary critics have persistently relied on metaphors of voice to analyse writing', with poetry particularly 'regularly imagined as a privileged site of vocal presence'.[25] The relationship between voice and poetry in *4.48 Psychosis* may be implicit in the composer Philip Venables's decision to use the text as a libretto for an opera score, which takes the voice(s) of Kane's work to a new musical register. Reviewing the 2016 performance at Lyric Hammersmith for *The Guardian*, Tim Ashley observes how performing *4.48 Psychosis* as an opera is formally fitting for the text:

> Though [*4.48 Psychosis*] avoids the overt violence that made [Kane's] earlier work notorious, it remains an extreme text, dissolving character, narrative and theatrical artifice in its quest for absolute emotional expression. It is acutely dependent on rhythm, verbal repetition and cyclic thematic patterning, but also innately musical – a pre-existing libretto, waiting for a composer, you might say…[26]

Describing the formal extremity of the text, its 'emotional expression' and innate musicality, Ashley could have been describing a lyric poem as well as 'a pre-existing libretto'. Although, in

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[24] The practice of referring to Kane's speaker as a 'voice' or 'voices' in *4.48* Psychosis is so prevalent that it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list. The actor Daniel Evans, for example, called the lyrical sections 'the multivoice bits' in an interview with Saunders, *Love me or kill me*, p.174, and Ben Brantley, in a review of the first American performance of *4.48 Psychosis*, writes that '[o]n the page, it reads like a poem of negation from a single disembodied voice'. Brantley, 'Full of Sound and Fury, Signifying Relentless Pain', *The New York Times*, 28 October 2004.

[25] Eliza Richards, 'Voice', *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry & Poetics*, 4th edn, ed. by Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012), p.1525.

[26] Tim Ashley, 'Venables brings Sarah Kane's savage text to musical life', *The Guardian*, 25 May 2016.

Figure 3.1 Royal Opera's production of 4.48 Psychosis at the Lyric Hammersmith. Photograph: ROH/Stephen Cummiskey 2018

this chapter, I concentrate on the central difference between lyric speech and dramatic dialogue, in analysing the lyricism of Kane's text, it is impossible to separate its reimagination of the scope of a poetic voice from its musicality and extremity of feeling. Kane's development during her short career dissolves boundaries between genres, transforming from dramatic work to lyric poetry, perhaps even opera. As Marc Bridle has noted, '[o]ut of all Kane's dramatic works, [*4.48 Psychosis*] is the one that comes closest to opera because, of all her theatrical pieces, it is the one that least fits the description of a modern play'.[27] But if *4.48 Psychosis* is amenable to opera because of its distance from 'the description of a modern play', then this generic distance also opens it to other genres, including lyric poetry.

There are, of course, important precedents for Kane's radical experimentation with dramatic form. The challenge of writing a libretto has appealed to many poets: Auden, for example, collaborated with Chester Kallman to produce libretti for Benjamin Britten, Igor Stravinsky, Hans Werner Henze and Nicolas Nabokov. More recently, Tony Harrison has collaborated with the composer Harrison Birtwistle on the chamber opera *Yan Tan Tethera: a mechanical pastoral* (1986) and David Harsent has written libretti *Gawain* (1991), *The Corridor* (2009) and *The Minotaur* (2008) in collaboration with Birtwistle, and *Crime Fiction* (2009) and *In the Locked Room* (2012) for the composer Huw Watkins. Kane's elimination of assigned characters in *4.48 Psychosis* has also some important formal precursors in the theatre, such as Martin Crimp's *Attempts on her Life* – first performed at Royal Court theatre in 1997, a play Kane was

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[27] Marc Bridle, 'Philip Venables: *4.48 Psychosis*', *Opera Today*, 25 April 2018.

enthusiastic about[28] – the late plays of Samuel Beckett and Kane's own play *Crave*, which premiered in 1998. Indeed, Featherstone, who directed *Crave*, explained that it could not be performed as a piece of physical theatre, because the play would then turn into a performance poem:

> you might as well take a piece of poetry by Ted Hughes and perform it in the theatre. And I don't think *Crave* is a piece of poetry that should have a physical side to it – they are four voices in the darkness – and they only exist to speak because people will listen to their sorrow.[29]

The screenwriter and playwright Phyllis Nagy has also commented on Kane's 'abandonment of character' and drama in her final works: 'I think what does happen in the last two plays is a movement towards a literary, rather than a purely theatrical form. And by this time, she has clearly abandoned any sense of character…. When you abandon character, you abandon drama, so for me she has effectively abandoned drama'.[30] In a significant way, Kane was already exploring a type of literary text and poetry with *Crave*, and this formal movement away from a play depended on erasure of characters interacting with each other and a new emphasis on disembodied voice. However, *Crave*, despite its lyricism, still has set characters, even if these are only indicated by letters C, M, B and A; *Attempts on her Life*, while it does not have a set of characters, still describes Ann in the third person through dialogue. Meanwhile, over half of *4.48 Psychosis* is in first-person lyrical soliloquies, thus moving more radically from dramatic dialogue to a lyrical voice. Kane's examination of the limits between poetry and theatre in her final works were anticipated by Beckett's experiments with the limits of genre in his late plays.[31] Beckett was a friend of James Joyce: they met in Paris soon after Beckett arrived in the city in 1928, helping Joyce with *Finnegans Wake* and writing the critical essay, 'Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce', which was published in 1929 in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*. Enoch Brater has argued that in Beckett's late style 'the theatre event is reduced to a piece of monologue and the play is on the verge of becoming something else, something that looks suspiciously like a performance poem'.[32] Observing the connections between Beckett's poetry and prose, S.E. Gontarski observed how 'the border between Beckett's poetry and his prose is often amorphous or ambiguous, since his prose shares the rhythms of his verse and not all his poetry is stanzaic'.[34] The formal overlaps between the different genres Beckett engaged in derive from his creative examination of each genre's formal

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[28] For Crimp's influence on Kane, see Saunders, *Love me or kill me*, p.111.

[29] Saunders, *Love me or kill* me, pp.131-32.

[30] Saunders, *Love me or kill me*, p.73.

[31] For an introductory essay on the influence of Beckett on Kane, see, Saunders, 'The Beckettian world of Sarah Kane' in *Sarah Kane in Context*, pp.68-79.

[32] Enoch Brater, *Beyond Minimalism: Beckett's late style in the theatre* (New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), p.3. [34] S.E. Gontarski, *Beckett Matters: Essays on Beckett's late modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2016), p.76.

limits, reimagining assumptions underlying drama – its dependence on character and embodiment, for example – until his plays are 'on the verge of becoming something else.'

However, despite this 'amorphous or ambiguous' border between Beckett's poetry and prose, Beckett does not use the poetic line as a unit of composition in the theatre. If *4.48 Psychosis* tests the limits between poetry and theatre, this generic experimentation with the limits of dramatic character and dialogue echoes earlier experiments by Beckett in the 1960s and 1970s. However, Kane's play with the poetic line as a unit in parts of *4.48 Psychosis* pushes her work formally further to lyric territory than Beckett's plays in prose.

In this chapter, I will not argue that *4.48 Psychosis* is generically fixed, either as a play or as a poem, but that the confusion and debate over its genre is indicative of its formal distinctness and the extent of its experimentation, highlighting assumptions underlying poetry when it is approached with the expectations of theatre, and vice versa. The function of this chapter is, as a consequence, two-fold. First, I will show how reading *4.48 Psychosis* within traditions of lyric poetry adds accuracy and nuance to our understanding of how the text operates formally – traditions which have been neglected when Kane's final work is only positioned within a narrative about the development of British theatre. Second, since *4.48 Psychosis* inhabits a contested space between theatre and poetry, it provides an important perspective on the assumptions underlying both genres; specifically, by showing how the employment of a firstperson speaker distinguishes lyric poetry from drama and its strong association with multiple characters and dialogue. In the first section of the chapter, I will argue that *4.48 Psychosis* makes formal sense when read within the lyric traditions of nocturne and aubade poetry, which negotiate this boundary between soliloquy and dialogue. Night in *4.48 Psychosis* represents a time of being awake alone in the dark, when the external world only has the shapes that the conscious subject projects onto it, in contrast to the world of dialogue and resumed business and busy-ness in the morning.[33] Following Susan Stewart's arguments in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, I will argue that the night-time setting of *4.48 Psychosis* is not only central to the form and meaning of the text, but it also highlights conditions for lyric poetry and its limits as a whole. Like Greek dramatists, Kane does not use allusions to genres of lyric poetry simply as an ornament to a play, but as part of a systematic poetic structure. The formal radicalism of *4.48 Psychosis* both performs the breakdown of the subject in the text, and reinvents the possibilities of both dramatic and poetic form by testing their generic limits. Instead of celebrating the nighttime isolation of lyrical self-consciousness, *4.48 Psychosis* performs the

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[33] Aubade and nocturne poetry have different literary traditions: the first tends to be associated with a parting of lovers in the morning, the second with solitary contemplation in the evening or at midnight. John Donne's aubades 'Break of Day' and 'The Good-Morrow' and his 'A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day' provide early examples in English of the differences between the two sub-genres of poetry. However, *4.48 Psychosis* is set between the midnight and dawn, and draws on elements from both traditions, which is why I will discuss both traditions equally.

subject's isolation and her separation from others and the ordinary rhythms of the everyday. Thus, although *4.48 Psychosis* in some ways clearly relies on a notion of romantic lyric subjectivity,[34] it also clearly depicts the formal, pathological and philosophical limits of that subject's viability.

Another unique feature of *4.48 Psychosis* that sets it apart from Beckett's late plays, for example, is the posthumous nature of the text, which has several significant implications for reading and interpreting its form. First, as the staging and performance of the text were left in a radical state of uncertainty, without instructions for staging approved and controlled by the author. Secondly, the apparent connections between Kane's death and the themes of *4.48 Psychosis* have resulted in a biographical impulse in performing and interpreting the play, anchoring the formal complexity of the voice(s) in the text by reference to Kane's own life and mental illness – an impulse that also provides an insight into the text's form, particularly the text's unique proximity to poetry. As I will show in the second part of this chapter, anchoring a voice by reference to a subject outside the text is one impulse behind reading lyric poetry – an impulse that makes the unique coincidence of sound and sense in poetry appear intended and grounded in formal agency. In the second part of the chapter, I argue that Kane's employment of a first-person speaker in *4.48 Psychosis* both relies on and questions these assumptions: she employs a lyric 'I' in order to interrogate the humanist assumptions of a coherent and autonomous self. If, in H.D.'s *Trilogy*, the crisis of the Second World War compels a crisis of form and an expansion of the brief lyric poem, the crisis of interiority in Kane's final work compels an equally urgent creative scrutiny of the lyric speaker.

Susan Stewart's study of nocturne poetry and the night as 'bridging the relation between what is human and what is not human'[35] has some clear parallels with the posthuman project of mapping 'the edge of the human', as the philosopher David Roden has phrased it.[36] Although a full examination of posthuman theory lies outside the scope of this chapter, my argument about Kane's use of the lyric speaker in order to interrogate its coherence has some notable precedents in posthuman theory. Drew Milne, for example, in an essay on poets' use of birdsong to portray 'the limits of lyric humanism', begins with Theodor Adorno's observation that it is a modern assumption that 'immediacy and subjectivity are essential to lyric expression'.[39] Milne then suggests, 'against the grain of Adorno's conception of lyric, that the

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[34] In an interview with Nils Tabert Kane made a comment about her dramatic characters being misunderstood, and that they were instead Romantic figures in the tradition of Keats and Shelley, or Goethe and Schiller. Saunders, *Love me or kill me*, p.141.

[35] Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: UP of Chicago, 2002), p.375.

[36] Roden, David, *Posthuman Life: philosophy at the edge of the human* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2014), p.1. [39] Drew Milne, 'In Memory of the Pterodactyl: the limits of lyric humanism', *The Paper*, 2 (2001): 16-29, p.16

[40] Milne, 'In Memory of the Pterodactyl', p.16.

limits of lyric humanism remain closer to this ancient conception of lyric and the speculative experience of nature'[40]: there is an effective line of continuity from Homer's sirens to Keats's nightingales and mermaids singing in Eliot that reveals the limits of romanticism and its 'lyric humanism'. Cary Wolfe has mapped different possibilities for applying posthuman theory to lyric poetry by employing Niklas Luhmann's work on poetry and systems theory to read Wallace Stevens's late work. However, some of Wolfe's conclusions seem counterintuitive: he argues how 'paradoxically poetry that is least replete with prosodic features such as stanzaic regularity, rhyme, alliteration, and so on…[can be regarded] as most poetic in the specific sense developed by Luhmann'.[37] In other words, a good poem – like a poem by Stevens or Marianne Moore – needs to exemplify lyric poetry despite sparsity of its prosodic features. Otherwise, Wolfe argues, one would have 'to call a mediocre rhymed quatrain by Carl Sandberg better poetry' than a poem by Stevens or Moore.[42] However, a poem being more recognizably poetic does not necessary imply that it is better written – you can call a rhyming quatrain by Carl Sandberg more recognisably poetic (however mediocre) without claiming that it is a better poem than one by Wallace Stevens. Moreover, as I have shown in this thesis, some of the best poetry achieves its quality and interest precisely by examining the formal limits of lyric poetry and our assumptions about what lyric poetry entails.

I assume here therefore that we have to make sense of the recognisably poetic to define more accurately core assumptions and the implications of existing models of lyric poetry, and that a theory of lyric poetry should not reach conclusions that are counterintuitive – for example, that prosodic features are irrelevant for conceptualising lyric poetry. In this sense, *4.48 Psychosis* is exemplary, in that it is a work written by a playwright and published as a play, though early reviewers were inclined to characterise it as a poem, suggesting that the language of the text – despite the medium in which it was first presented – encouraged different generic recognition. In other words, *4.48 Psychosis* should reveal what formal and linguistic features encourage generic characterisation as lyric poetry despite critics framing the text as a play and Methuen Drama publishing it with the paratextual apparatus of published works of theatre (specifically, an opening page giving details of the first performance, which is standard practice when publishing contemporary plays in book form). At the same time, Kane's reliance on formal features of lyric poetry, like the use of a lyric first-person speaker, also shows the limitations of these features by performing the disintegration and death of that subject, which creates a number of difficulties if performed as monologues on the stage, as I will show. I will conclude the chapter by examining *4.48 Psychosis* as a text about different ends and boundaries, and argue that the theme of ending one's life and the end of the night derive, in part, from Kane's

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[37] Cary Wolfe, *What is posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p.268.

[42] Wolfe, *What is posthumanism*, p.268, p.277.

participation in late twentieth century *fin-de-siècle aesthetics*. If James Joyce composed his epiphanies at the turn of the twentieth-century, and H.D. examined the limits of the brief lyric poem during a global crisis as well as in context of examining her own psychological crisis in the middle of the century, then Kane's final work, written before her death in February 1999, responds to the end of this century of historical convulsions and radical aesthetic experimentation. In some ways, Kane's conclusions can be viewed as pessimistic. Difficulty and failure are part of *4.48 Psychosis*, both formally and in terms of content: if *4.48 Psychosis* is about the transition from the end of one century to another, or about the transition from life to death, it is also about the impossibility of new beginnings – the death at 4.48am in the year 1999, entailing that the speaker neither experiences another dawn nor the next millennium. However, this pessimism will also produce one of the most eloquent and radical examinations of the limits of lyric poetry and the boundary between a lyrical speaker and dramatic dialogue, interrogating the number and nature of speakers a poetic play or a dramatic poem may contain.

1 'Waking at four to soundless dark': 4.48 Psychosis and the aubade tradition

The second section of *4.48 Psychosis* consists of a soliloquy in the shape of an unpunctuated prose poem, approximating poetry in its use of first-person speaker, rich imagery and sound patterns. This opening lyrical section takes place during the night – the speaker alludes to nighttime several times in the passage – but night-time also operates as a metaphor for the mind, the 'darkened banqueting hall near the ceiling of the mind',[38] extrapolating from the nocturnal setting to the darkness and isolation of the first-person speaker. From the beginning, night-time darkness and the interiority of poetry are mutually implicated. Indeed, the metaphorical correlation between night-time and the dark space of the mind highlights the referential complexity of the title of *4.48 Psychosis*, where the specificity of the time of 4.48am is inextricably linked to the distorting mental states the text elaborates. According to the original Royal Court Theatre programme, the title refers to 'the hour, in the middle of the night when anguish hits the mentally unstable hardest'.[39] In the first lyrical section, the speaker employs the word night to allude to nightmares; as a metaphor for death and the afterlife; and to describe moments of insight, psychological clarity and revelation:

> I had a *night* in which everything was revealed to me.
> How can I speak again?

> the broken hermaphrodite who trusted hermself alone finds the room in reality teeming and begs never to wake from the *night*mare….

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[38] Kane, *CP*, p.205.

[39] Innes, *Modern British Drama*, p.535.

Remember the light and believe the light

An instant of clarity before eternal *night* [Emphasis mine][40]

The speaker in Kane's text refers to night as a time for light and psychological clarity, as well as the time for her death. Instead of sunrise, the early morning darkness is followed by '[a]n instant of clarity before eternal night', thus replacing the nocturnal setting of the text with death following a moment of psychological clarity and insight. The oxymoronic confusion of darkness and light and the perceptual isolation of the speaker not only elaborate the insomnia and mental breakdown of the speaker, but also align the text generically with the density of imagery and first-person speaker associated with poetry. According to J.H. Prynne, for example, this isolation of the speaker is a symptom of the elegiac turn in Victorian poetry, arguing that Wordsworth 'abandoned the ambition to present the reflecting mind as part of an experiential context and withdrew into a self-generating ambience of regret. With this went an amazing degree of control over incantatory techniques, designed to preserve the cocoon of dream-like involvement and to present a kind of constant threshold music—the apparent movement of a gravely thoughtful mind'.[41] In night-time, 'the reflecting mind' is most forcefully disconnected from an 'experiential context' to be in dialogue with, as the world is hidden in darkness. Indeed, Prynne's 'cocoon of dream-like involvement' identifies, in a different register, the connection between nocturnal sleep and isolation of the lyric speaker: Kane's speaker exists in a similar cocoon, divorced from a world to engage with by night-time.

Thus, while this night-time setting is crucial to elaborating the psychological crisis the text describes and performs, it is also crucial in negotiating the limits between poetry and theatre by positioning the text in a tradition of romantic poetry and lyric criticism. In Susan Stewart's study *Poetry and the Fate of the* Senses, the phenomenology of lyric poetry – a speaker who strives to make visible outlines outside him- or herself – makes poems set in the night-time special cases of lyric poetry that reveal the processes and objectives of lyric poetry as a whole. She begins her influential study by describing how 'the mind in the dark has no object to reflect on and no object to limit the endless racing of its reflections'.[42] Stewart construes poetry as a positive force against this darkness: 'poetry is a force against darkness…. The task of aesthetic production and reception in general is to make visible, tangible, and audible the figures of persons'.[43] Poetry works against darkness by illuminating the outlines of others; Stewart construes darkness as a context where the isolated mind cannot reflect on objects and figures

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[40] Kane, *CP*, pp.205-6.

[41] J.H. Prynne, 'The Elegiac World in Victorian Poetry', *The Listener*, 14 February 1963, 290-91, p.290. Qtd. in Simon Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases' *Thinking Verse* 1 (2011): 17-43, p.21.

[42] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.1.

[43] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.2.

outside itself, trapped instead in 'the endless racing of its reflections'. This 'endless racing' of the mind's 'reflections' bears similarities to the self-involvement of the reflecting mind described by Prynne, and to the lines from Alice Oswald's aubade 'Tithonus' from *Falling Awake* (2016), describing the voice of Tithonus during sunrise: 'as soon as the voice goes on arguing / in its sleep like a file going to / and corrosively fro / …so the thought goes on recycling / itself and the mouth opens and the body / begins to shrivel into something more / portable'.[44] Like *4.48 Psychosis*, 'Tithonus' is exactly timed, not to express thoughts at 4.48am, but to be read exactly for 46 minutes, the time it takes for the sun to rise: 'What you are about to hear is the sound of Tithonus meeting the dawn at midsummer. His voice starts at 4.17, when the sun is six degrees below the horizon, and stops 46 minutes later, at sunrise. The performance will begin in darkness'.[45] As in *4.48 Pscyhosis*, the note at the beginning of the poem blurs the formal boundaries between performance and the lyrical voice in the dark. A subliminal processing of these blurred boundaries is evident in Dan Chiasson's review of the collection, reflecting on the nature of poetry in response to *Falling Awake* by using the performance term of choreography: 'Poetry, with its fixation on passing time, its technologies for measuring it, and its keen awareness of impending silence, comes as close as any art can to imposing an immortal choreography on mortal experience'.[46] In *4.48 Psychosis,* there is also a formal implication in this identification of night-time with solitary speech, and light with the possibility of including others in the form of dialogue, crucial to the essential difference between poetry and theatre. During the night, the speaker is alone as everyone else is asleep, providing a formal context for lyric soliloquy. *4.48 Psychosis* shows the significance of the night-time setting for the movement in Kane's work from dramatic plays to lyrical poetry, as night-time is formally implicated in the movement from theatrical characters engaged in dialogue and critical events of a plot to the solitary, affective expression of a first-person speaker.

The aubade, or dawn song, is a type of a valediction poem set specifically in the morning to depict the parting of lovers. If, according to Susan Stewart, lyric poetry is specifically related to night time – as poetry emerges from darkness and solitude to glean the outlines of others – then the aubade exemplifies formally this negotiation between isolation in darkness and the emergence of new outlines during the sunrise. In Act 5 Scene 3 of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the two lovers wake up in the morning together only to part, but not before negotiating in verse dialogue how to interpret the sights and sounds of the outside world in the emerging light:

    ROMEO

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[44] Alice Oswald, *Falling Awake* (London: Cape Poetry, 2016), p.49.

[45] Oswald, *Falling Awake*, p.46.

[46] Dan Chiasson, 'Alice Oswald's natural terrors', *The New Yorker*, 12 September 2016.

…. Look, love, what envious streaks Do lace
the severing clouds in yonder east. Night's
candles are burnt out, and jocund day Stands
tiptoe on the misty mountain tops….

JULIET
Yon light is not daylight; I know it, I.
It is some meteor that the sun exhaled
To be to thee this night a torchbearer…[47]

While Romeo interprets the 'streaks' of light behind the clouds as sunrise, Juliet argues the 'light is not daylight', but a meteor in the sky. The morning setting in this scene acts both as the beginning of dialogue and as a negotiation of how to interpret the signs of the day accurately: dialogue formally facilitates an engagement with the external world, and an achievement of correct interpretation through conversation and disagreement. As the dawn makes the outlines of the lover visible, the aubade moves from night-time solitary speech to morning dialogue, from the mind with 'no object to reflect on and no object to limit the endless racing of its reflections' to two people conversing about the world external to them – a dialogue that is also present in the voices of the two nightingales and a watchman in Ezra Pound's second 'Alba'[48] poem, which opens his 'Homage à la Langue d'Oc', published in 1918. Stuart McDougal and Robert Stark argue this aubade anticipates Pound's experiments with line length and typography in the *Cantos*,[49] and that 'the clusters of sound and image' in the poem 'are typical of Pound's modernist poetics'.[50] Beckett also used the title 'Alba' for his 1931 aubade, although his grasp of the Provençal tradition was hazier than Pound's.[51] The aubade tradition has been thus significant both for modernist poetics and its adaptations of older lyric traditions as well as for articulating a dynamic between solitary lyric speech and dialogue between lovers. In many cases, the dawn also represents a discovery of lover's intimacy, liaisons and even obscenity, which adds a further romantic and social context to the formal negotiation between soliloquy and dialogue.

In the opening lyrical section in *4.48 Psychosis*, the speaker not only uses metaphors of darkness to describe the mind, but she also construes 4.48am as a time of isolated consciousness, separated from her 'sleeping lover' and an absence of conversation:

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[47] Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan (eds), *The New Oxford Shakespeare: modern critical edition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), p.1051.

[48] Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems and Translations* ed. by Richard Sieburth (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), p.84.

[49] Stuart McDougal, *Ezra Pound and the Troubadour Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972), p.126.

[50] Robert Stark, 'Pound among the Nightingales: from the Troubadours to a cantible Modernism, *Journal of Modern Literature* 32.2 (2009): 1-19, p.3.

[51] Seán Lawlor and John Pilling (eds.), *The Collected Poems of Samuel Beckett: A critical edition* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), pp.269-70.

> I am jealous of my sleeping lover and covet his induced unconsciousness
>
> When he wakes he will envy my sleepless night of thought and speech unslurred by medication[52]

The speaker observes her 'sleeping lover' in the dark, the speaker and the lover divided by sleep and sleeplessness, separated by cognitive state and medication; but most importantly, this division of the lovers emphasises the solitude of night-time and how night-time darkness restricts dialogue. The speaker transitions to soliloquy because everyone else, including the speaker's lover, are asleep: although the speaker can glean the outline of another, she cannot engage in dialogue and negotiate the meaning of external stimuli the way Shakespeare's lovers discuss what the source of light is and what it means for the end of their first night together. By emphasising the night-time setting in *4.48 Psychosis*, Kane not only describes insomnia and mental breakdown; she also meaningfully engages with traditions of poetry and tests the limits between poetry and theatre by examining the different conditions of dramatic dialogue and a lyric speaker. Analysing the fear of the dark illuminates further the isolation of the poetic speaker characteristic of nocturnal poetry. Stewart discusses the fear of darkness poetically as that which 'presses against us and yet has no boundary; without edge or end, it erases and mutes the limits of our being'.[53] However, the fear of the dark also consists of the feeling of isolation, as the rest of the world, including the closed ones in the same room, are unconscious while the sleepless speaker remains conscious. Freud observes this link between fear of darkness and isolation in his story of a child, who was comforted by hearing his aunt speak, his aunt's voice reassuring him the child was not awake alone:

> While I was in the next room, I heard a child who was afraid of the dark call out: 'Do speak to me, Auntie! I'm frightened!' 'Why, what good would that do? You can't see me'. To this the child replied: 'If someone speaks, it gets lighter'.[54]

What is frightening about dark is not simply the loss of visibility; it is also the fear of being awake alone and not being able to talk to someone else. Indeed, the child thinks that '[i]f someone talks, it gets lighter', describing dialogue as having the power to illuminate and lift the darkness. Poetry set in the isolated consciousness during the night-time does not then merely negotiate the limits of visibility, but also the first-person speaker and her relationship to other voices excluded from the poetic text. In the line '[w]hen he wakes he will envy my sleepless night of thought', the speaker incorporates into her speech what she imagines the lover will feel and say in the morning, instead of the text reporting it directly through dialogue in the morning

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[52] Kane, *CP*, p.208.

[53] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.1.

[54] Sigmund Freud, 'XXV Anxiety' in 'Part III: General Theory of the Neuroses' in James Stratchey (ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud Vol.XVI* (London: Hogarth Press, 1963), p.407.

after the lover awakes. The passage locates the realm of dialogue in the morning, thus further inscribing the time of the title, 4.48 in the morning, with a single isolated speaker familiar from traditions of reading romantic poetry.

Aubades formally negotiate both spatial and temporal thresholds, the limits between light and darkness and the limits between the bedroom and the outside world. The speaker of John Donne's 'The Good-Morrow' tries to make 'one little room an everywhere', aware of the intruding outside world outside the walls of the bedroom, walls that also stand for the formal organisation presented by Donne's stanzas. But the post-coital leisure of Donne's lovers also presents an enwrapped and mutually absorbed moment outside of time that tries to stall the resumption of both everyday business and busy-ness – the scheduled, repetitive routines of the external community. As Fiona Green has observed:

> The poetry's fostering these cross-purposes – the aubades' formal patterns getting in the way of the things they say – serves as a stay against time, prolonging the interlude between wordless oneness and the transparency of daylit sense, and, paradoxically, as a conduit between the private sphere of waking consciousness and the busied world that lies traditionally outside the scope of lyric.[55]

The moment in the morning between night and daytime presents 'the private sphere of waking consciousness' while also registering what lies outside of this consciousness, the people, obligations, schedules and non-poetic language of everyday business Donne's speaker tries to delay by making 'one little room an everywhere', cancelling the outside world in a poetic equivalent of hitting the snooze button in the morning. The speaker of the poetic passages in *4.48 Psychosis* constantly mediates day and night, light and dark by referencing spatial thresholds. Indeed, directors have interpreted the line repeated throughout *4.48 Psychosis,* 'Hatch opens / Stark light',[56] and the final line of the play, 'please open the curtains'[57] as instructions for theatrical space: James McDonald, for example, ended the first performance by opening the theatre building shutters to the light and noise of the London streets.[58] The literalisation of the aubade's spatial dynamic in the theatre setting – the darkness of the theatre contrasted with the business of everyday life and the daylight outside the theatre – first emerges from the mental isolation *4.48 Psychosis* expresses in contrast to everyday normality. As Michael Billington notes in his review of Macdonald's production, 'what [the play] taught me was the frustration of the potential suicide at the way the rest of the world marches to a different, rational rhythm'.[59] This

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[55] Green, Fiona, "'The Pitch of the Dawn": Reading lyric in Jorie Graham's aubades', *Genre* 45.1 (2012): 121-142, abstract.

[56] Kane, *CP*, p.225, p.230, p.239, p.240.

[57] Kane, *CP*, p.245.

[58] Saunders, *Love me or kill me,* pp.116-17; for James Macdonald's view of the ending, see p.125; for the actor Daniel Evans's comments, see p.175.

[59] Billington, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2000.

difference between the speaker's consciousness and the different rhythm and objectives of the world outside her objective is evident in a prose soliloquy, which fleshes out the speaker's situation in more detail:

> Burning in a hot tunnel of dismay, my humiliation complete as I shake *without reason* and stumble over words and have nothing to say about my 'illness' which anyway amounts only to knowing that there's no point in anything because I'm going to die. And I am deadlocked by that smooth psychiatric voice of *reason* which tells me there is an objective reality in which my body and mind are one. But I am not here and never have been. Dr This writes it down and Dr That attempts a sympathetic murmur. [Emphasis mine][60]

The doctors' 'smooth psychiatric voice of reason' and 'sympathetic murmur' contrasts with the speaker's 'shak[ing] without reason and stumbl[ing] over words', describing a state of affect evoked with intense metaphorical force: '[b]urning in a hot tunnel of dismay', 'my desperation clawing and all-consuming panic drenching me',[61] 'aching shame'.[62] In one sense, this shaking 'without reason' indicates how the symptoms the speaker manifests have no apparent cause. In another sense, the lack of apparent reason shows 'the way the rest of the world marches to a different, rational rhythm' – the different types of reason and unreason that separate the speaker from others. Even in a prose passage where the speaker describes engaging in dialogue with others during a daytime doctor's appointment, her mind remains in a separate realm of logic, unable to engage with the reasoning of the external world. Further, even in a prose passage, the speaker incorporates other characters into her soliloquy, thus detailing in prose the context for poetry and exclusion of dialogue in the lyrical, lineated sections of the text.

This contrast over first-person speaker and others that hinges on the word 'reason' is also one that is central to Green's reading of aubades, as her article 'takes as its ground that lyric poetry reminds us how to read *unreasonably'* [emphasis mine],[63] a term she borrows from the opening of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* to replace Mutlu Konuk Blasing's term 'non-rational'. Like Blasing, Green distinguishes her term from irrationality, 'any cultivated, induced, pathological, or "deviant" irrationality, or the irrationality of dreams'.[64] But unlike Blasing's use of the term non-rational, reading unreasonably entails side-tracking the processes of language acquisition, how we have learnt 'to tune out or turn down the sounds, durations, and rhythms of words, their surface likenesses and patterns of coincidence, so that the conventional or "arbitrary" workings of the linguistic code can come through'.[65] The reader of poetry reads

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[60] Kane, *CP*, p.209.

[61] Kane, *CP*, p.209.

[62] Kane, *CP*, p.209.

[63] Green, 'The Pitch of the Dawn', p.122.

[64] Mutlu Konuk Blasing, *Lyric Poetry: the pain and pleasure of words* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), p.2. Qtd. in Green, 'The Pitch of the Dawn', p.122.

[65] Green, 'The Pitch of the Dawn', p.121.

unreasonably to engage with the acoustic elements of language, the rhythm of words and their aural coincidences and patterning – in other words, aspects of language the child learns to ignore in order to concentrate on the signified meaning of words and sentences. Kane's use of the word 'reason' in *4.48 Psychosis* has similar formal implications: the sections of dialogue (apparently between a junior psychiatrist and a patient) involve extended attempts at argument and reasoning, while the first-person speaker in lyric passages concentrates on expressing 'irrational'[66] mental states and the feeling of 'drowning in a sea of logic'.[67] However, the speaker in *4.48 Psychosis* does not distinguish between the unreasonable and the pathological: when the speaker explains how her 'life is caught in a web of reason / spun by a doctor to augment the sane',[68] the word 'reason' is a web doctors weave in an attempt to cure what Blasing called 'deviant irrationality'. The reason/unreason dichotomy thus operates along the ill/healthy binary, making the distinction between unreasonable and irrational less clearly drawn. While poetic expression and unreasonable interpretation of the world and language are mutually implicated in Kane's text, Kane tests these formal differences of rational dialogue and irrational expression in the context of a psychological crisis. The limits of poetry and theatre are thus examined at their most urgent only after the failure of dialogue and rational conversation in *4.48 Psychosis*; a failure that formally marks the emergence of cut-off interiority and lyric expression.

Kane's explicit use of the language of mental illness in connection with the emergence of lyric language in her work might suggest that Green and Blasing have overstated the distinction between the non-rational, unreasonable and the irrational: clearly, all these terms are central for Kane's compulsion to shift from dialogue to first-person lyric speech. But equally insightful – and what the reviewers of *4.48 Psychosis* and critics of Kane's work have overlooked – is the significance of the night-time setting and traditions of nocturnal and dawn poetry for analysing the lyric sections of her final work, as the critical connections between Kane's work and Greene's analysis of aubades suggest. When Charles Spencer commented on the depression behind Kane's text, his observation could equally describe the experience of insomnia: '[a]nyone who has suffered from depression will recognise the way Kane's language pins down the way in which its victims become trapped in repetitive loops of useless thought and feeling, and the desperate desire for peace or mere oblivion'.[69] The speaker's desire for oblivion emerges both from depression and from a chronic inability to sleep; the 'loops of useless thought and feeling' also accurately describe 'the mind in the dark [that] has no object to reflect

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[66] Kane, *CP*, p.222.
[67] Kane, *CP*, p.223.
[68] Kane, *CP*, p.233.
[69] Spencer, *The Telegraph*, 14 May 2001.

on and no object to limit the endless racing of its reflections',[70] which Stewart articulates in connection with the emergence of lyric speech. In the beginning of *4.48 Psychosis*, the speaker describes her death at 4.48am as a response to desperation, the only way out of which is suicide: 'At 4.48 / when desperation visits / I shall hang myself / to the sound of my lover's breathing'.[76] But as this statement of future intent suggests, this suicide will be performed while she is separated from others by sleep, 'the sound of my lover's breathing' gesturing to the earlier lines about hers and her lover's different sleeping patterns. Yearning for sleep and suicidal ideation are closely connected in *4.48 Psychosis*: by the end of the text, the lines have changed from yearning and preparing for death to simply the yearning for sleep: 'At 4.48 // I shall sleep'.[71] In another lyric section, the speaker connects mental instability with night-time by transposing images of darkness and immateriality to describe the restlessness of the mind:

> I will drown in dysphoria
> in the cold black pond of myself
> in the pit of my immaterial mind
>
> How can I return to form now my
> formal thought has gone?[72]

The images of sinking, depth, blackness and immateriality create a sensory as well as affective texture in its performance of mental breakdown and depression. The stanza's images arise from dysphoria, or unease and restlessness and 'the cold black pond' could be a poetic image for night-time, or equally for a depressed mind. This incremental building of images that adopt nocturnal characteristics leads to a reflective moment on the form of the text, where the impossibility of form is a consequence of the loss of 'formal thought', thus positing that the text's experimentation with limits of form – indeed, even absence of form – is a necessary response to the mental crisis of the first-person speaker. The connection between mental breakdown and the form of the text is also suggested in a later passage of lists: 'derailed / deranged / deform / free form'.[73] The connection between the 'free form' of the text and the mind's derailing is one the speaker articulates repeatedly, continually reinforcing the connection between Kane's use of poetic form with the mental state of insomnia and night-time isolation that is central to the text. The list plays with patterns of sound characteristic of lyrical poetry in its repetition of prefixes, foregrounding the acoustic materials of language. This acoustic play gives the choice of words the appearance of arbitrariness, as the speaker could have chosen any other number of words with the 'de-' prefix – like 'decompensate' and 'deconstruct', both

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[70] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.1.

[76] Kane, *CP*, p.207.

[71] Kane, *CP*, p.233.

[72] Kane, *CP*, p.213.

[73] Kane, *CP*, p.223.

words used elsewhere in the text.[74] The list thus performs mental breakdown and the breakdown of form by emphasising the arbitrary selection of words connected by shared prefixes while also gesturing to an emergence of poetic form from an increasing dependence on sound patterning for the formal organisation of the text.

Kane's brother Simon Kane has acknowledged both the formal experimentation of the text and its performance of suicidal depression: 'Sarah did kill herself, and she was writing a play about what it feels like to be suicidally depressed. In practically every way you look at *4.48*, she's blurring boundaries. That kind of uncertainty is part of what it's about'.[75] While the subjectmatter – the ending of the text in suicide – seems overdetermined by the biographical context of *4.48 Psychosis*, the form of the text is open-ended, blurring boundaries and infused with uncertainty. During the night, the brain inflates connections between words in isolation from normal everyday social interaction that could anchor words in mutual need for transparent communication. At the same time, tiredness traps thought in circular loops that resist any meaningful or satisfying conclusion. Philip Larkin's 'Aubade' is an example of a modern dawn song that is not about the parting of lovers, but about an isolated speaker '[w]aking at four to soundless dark',[76] liken the speaker of Kane's text. The speaker in Larkin's poem engages in '[a]rid interrogation' about 'where and when I shall myself die',[77] manifesting the circularity of thought characteristic of a speaker passing time in isolation before daybreak. There are of course clear differences of form and situation between Larkin's poem and *4.48 Psychosis*. Larkin's speaker wakes up early to think about his fear of death, whereas the speaker of *4.48 Psychosis* has spent an entire 'sleepless night of thought'.[78] Moreover, Larkin's speaker articulates very lucidly why this arguing with the self is 'arid', while Kane's speaker performs 'the repetitive thought and feelings' with visceral intimacy. Nevertheless, Larkin's poem articulates Stewart's emphasis on darkness as something without 'edge or end',[79] while the dawn (and for Stewart, poetry), 'make[s] visible, tangible, and audible the figures of persons'[80] in its final stanza:

> Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
> It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
> Have always known, know that we can't escape,
> Yet can't accept. One side will have to go.

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[74] Kane, *CP*, p.238, p.222.
[75] Simon Kane in Andrew Dickson, '"The strange thing is we howled with laughter": Sarah Kane's enigmatic last play', *The Guardian*, 11 May 2016.
[76] Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* ed. by Anthony Thwaite (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p.208.
[77] Larkin, *CP*, p.208.
[78] Kane, *CP*, p.208.
[79] Stewart, *The Fate of the Senses*, p.1.
[80] Stewart, *The Fate of the Senses*, p.2.
[87] Larkin, *Collected Poems,* p.209.

> Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to
> ring In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
> Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
> The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
> Work has to be done.
> Postmen like doctors go from house to house.[87]

The end quatrain, with the rhyme words 'rouse' and 'house' closing in the rhyme 'sun / done', creates a formal enclosing that acoustically performs the speaker's containment in the room, already awake as the '[i]ntricate rented world' only 'begins to rouse'. From the realm of thought and self-argument, as the 'light strengthens', the poem returns to anchor its observations on everyday objects that take shape and everyday routines that resume: the wardrobe, telephones 'getting ready to ring', the sky clearing and postmen beginning to deliver mail. In 'Aubade', Larkin uses some of the same details to characterise dawn as Jorie Graham's 'Sea-Blue Aubade', where 'other kinds of shine rise off the edges of things – / as if the daylight were a doctor arriving'.[81] Graham describes 'the edges of things' taking shape in the sunlight, like Larkin's room that 'takes shape' as the 'light strengthens', reinforcing again the modern aubade's centrality in articulating the difference between darkness and the edges of objects in the world and between the self and the tangible outlines of others. Both Larkin and Graham use the image of the doctor to represent the resumption of business and scheduled appointments in the morning: in Larkin's poem, the postmen, who mark the beginning of everyday activities, 'go from house to house' 'like doctors'; in Graham's poem the light of dawn is compared to a 'doctor arriving'. In *4.48 Psychosis*, the medical professionals perform a similar function of presenting a contrast to the speaker's night-time thoughts, 'the smooth psychiatric voice of reason' trying to argue that the speaker's thoughts are not anchored in 'objective reality'.[82] The aubades associate doctors with scheduled, rational business in daylight, conducted in reasoning dialogue in contrast to the speaker's inconclusive self-reflection during the night. The only dialogues in *4.48 Psychosis*, after all, take place between a doctor and a patient, with the doctor's better or worse attempts in arguing against the 'repetitive loops of thought and feeling' of the lyric passages. The speaker, in this sense, resembles Baudelaire's '[u]n poëte pieux, ennemi du sommeil'[83] – 'the pious poet, enemy of sleep' [my translation] – in 'Tristesses de la lune', the poet's vocation evidenced precisely by his or her inability to sleep, lyric language originating from the poet's night-time walks.

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[81] Jorie Graham, *The Errancy* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997), p.42. Green reads the reference to 'a doctor arriving' as an allusion to Shakespeare's Sonnet 66. Green, 'The Pitch of the Dawn', p.126. However, the resemblance to Larkin's use of the image is more manifest.

[82] Kane, *Complete Plays*, p.209.

[83] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal: édition de 1861* ed. by Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1972, 1996), p.103.

2 The lyric speaker

Stewart uses nocturnes to highlight the humanism at the centre of lyric poetry, arguing that '[p]oetic making is an anthropomorphic project'.[84] However, elsewhere she proposes the threshold state of the night as a site for negotiating changes in identity, even changes in species: '[t]he night is often the secret site of initiation, purification, and other threshold activities bridging the relation between what is human and what is not human and providing a context for changed roles and states of being'.[85] Stewart relates this tension between recognising 'what is human and what is not human' in the dark to the Orphic project of the lyre, at the root of lyric poetry, to make visible the outlines of Eurydice emerging from Hades. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice also underlies Jorie Graham's 'End of Progress Aubade (Eurydice to Orpheus)', where Graham uses the aubade tradition and the Orpheus myth in conjunction to explore different limit states. Graham's speaker outlines 'the limits of' the lover sleeping next to her, who is asleep and therefore inaccessible:

> your face downturned – the roomdarks floating
> towards the lure of – the limits of – your barely
> breathing pallor – sleep –[86]

The speaker outlines the other, 'the limits of – / your barely breathing' and the 'pallor' of sleep, at the same time as the lover remains inaccessible, his face 'downturned', the dashes marking unfinished clauses as if imitating the evasion of the other from the poem. He is alive, but the details of 'barely breathing' and 'pallor' observe the proximity between sleep and death by commenting on the decelerated rhythm of breathing during sleep and the lack of blood flow to bring colour to his face. In this sense, Graham's aubade performs the Orphic project of trying to make visible the outlines of the lover in daylight, while also conjuring the strangeness of sleep and the absence of another's cognitive presence from the world. The dash after 'limits of –' manifests both the present and absent limits of the lover and the disappearing limits of the line break, the unfinished clause also marking the line-end with an absence. In *4.48 Psychosis*, the speaker of the lyric passages also outlines a 'sleeping lover' with his 'induced unconsciousness',[87] but, as critics, like Graham Saunders and Robert Lublin, have observed, the text also examines a wider theme of a lost or absent lover. [88] One of the soliloquies begins,

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[84] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.2 There is, in fact, a tradition of criticism that attempts to deconstruct the anthropocentrism of lyric poetry, notably Paul de Man's article 'Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric'. De Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), pp.239-262.

[85] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.375.

[86] Graham, *The Errancy*, p.57.

[87] Kane, *CP*, p.208.

[88] Saunders, *Love me or kill me*, p.113; Robert I. Lublin, '"I love you now": time and desire in the plays of Sarah Kane' in *Sarah Kane in Context*, pp.115-125, p.124.

'[s]ometimes I turn around and catch the smell of you',[89] only to end in an indictment against God 'for making me love a person who does not exist'.[90] The combination of a tactile, sensory absence is also present in a later lyrical passage beginning, 'I dread the loss of her I've never touched', and continuing with, '[a] song for my loved one, touching her absence / the flux of her heart, the splash of her smile'.[91] The other is more radically absent, on the threshold of the real and imagined, while the sensory details give the absent other a concreteness that both anchors and destabilises the speaker's feelings, as those feelings emerge from specific details that are not necessarily about a real person. Tracing the outlines of an absent other compels a poetic register that reveals both the anthropomorphism of poetry and its examination of the limits of the human, 'providing a context for changed roles and states of being'.[92]

If lyric language originates from this tracing of outlines to give presence to an absent other, this negotiation of liminal states of being is even more pronounced when the speaker herself is disconnected from the world and ordinary discourse. The most pronounced site of absence is, as a consequence, not the other, but the speaker herself: tracing the limits of the human as not merely the limits of the lover disappearing to Hades, but also the limits of the self approaching death. Before the final line of *4.48 Psychosis*, 'please open the curtains', the speaker instructs the reader or audience member to watch her vanish:

> watch me vanish
> watch me
>
>   vanish
>
> watch me
>
> watch me
>
>
>   watch

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[89] Kane, *CP*, p.214.
[90] Kane, *CP*, p.215.
[91] Kane, *CP*, p.218.
[92] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.375.

It is myself I have never met, whose face is pasted on the underside of my mind[93]

In some ways, a prior conception of a stable subject is a precondition to the speaker's use of the first-person pronoun in the final two pages of the text. Julie Waddington, in her essay on the posthumanist identities in Sarah Kane, notes how the 'myself I have never met' is 'shown to be constituted by the very "I" that speaks, as it is the voice of the mind that produces the split or creates its own other'.[94] Similarly, Karoline Gritzner argues that 'by aesthetising the failure of the subject Kane's work puts the subject back into the frame and, in a vestigial way, preserves subjectivity'.[95] However, as Ruben Borg argues in an article on posthumanism and Samuel Beckett, 'posthumanism is always co-implied with humanity' and that 'from the outset [posthumanism] was a constituent part of the human character, possibly a function of the eminently human faculty of self-transcendence'.[96] That is, while Kane's text relies on a prior conception of subjectivity, this does not mean that it does not examine and push beyond the limits of humanist assumptions. Moreover, while Waddington, Gritzner, Cristina DelgadoGarcía[97]and others have examined the erasure of the subject in Kane's work generically as the erasure of a *dramatic character* in her work, their conclusions would have to be reassessed if the implications of generic approximation of *4.48 Psychosis* to lyric poetry are taken fully into account. Although there are multiple theoretical and practical strands to posthumanism – including cybernetics, animal and disability studies – most pertinent to my argument here will be the core project of expanding theoretical concern beyond the human defined by rational capacity for self-determination; an expansion already present in other twentieth-century challenges to humanism by theories like psychoanalysis, which emphasises the role played by the unconscious in human behaviour. Specifically, the question will be how the limits of the human impact the self-reflexivity associated with lyric poetry, which critics have noted as the precondition for 'the failure of the subject' in Kane's work. If Stewart writes of poetry as tracing the contours of other humans through communication, what does posthumanism, not tracing the contours of other humans, but of humanity itself – 'the edge of the human',[98] as David Roden phrased it – complicate the reading of lyric voice in Kane's text?

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[93] Kane, *CP*, pp.244-45.
[94] Julie Waddington, 'Posthumanist identities in Sarah Kane', *Sarah Kane in Context*, pp.139-148, p.146.
[95] Karoline Gritzner, '(Post)modern Subjectivity and the New Expressionism: Howard Barker, Sarah Kane, and Forced Entertainment', *Contemporary Theatre Review* 18.3 (2008): 328-340, p.337.
[96] Ruben Borg, 'Putting the Impossible to Work: Beckettian afterlife and the posthuman future of humanity', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 35.4 (2012): 163-180, p.164.
[97] Cristina Delgado-García, 'Subversion, Refusal and Contingency: the transgression of liberal-humanist subjectivity and characterization in Sarah Kane's *Cleansed, Crave* and *4.48 Psychosis*', *Modern Drama*, 55.2 (2012): 230-250.
[98] Roden, *Posthuman Life*, p.1.

If, according to Stewart, '[p]oetic making is an anthropomorphic project',[99] then post-human lyric speech complicates this entrenched connection between a human subject and the lyric firstperson speaker. Kane achieves this by what I will call *lyric choreographing* of the bodies, and of one's own body, crucially, not through stage directions, but through setting of words on the page and verbal means of directing the relationship between the speaker and reader kinaesthetically. In the final two pages of *4.48 Psychosis*, it is not necessary to watch an actor or actors disappear on the stage, as the work itself performs this disappearance textually. On the one hand, 'watch me vanish' uses words to choreograph the speaker's disappearance and the reader's textual line of sight in relation to that event. On the other hand, as the distribution of words on the page becomes sparser in the ending of the text, the reader's eyes have to physically move across an increasing amount of white space to anchor to the reducing number of words where the 'I' of the text is still present. In this context, '[i]t is myself I have never met, whose face is pasted on the / underside of my mind'[100] engages in a more complex choreographing of the speaker's own body and interiority: the phrase 'the underside of my mind' hides the speaker's never encountered 'face' in a reverse *anagnorisis* that does not record a moment of selfrecognition, but denies its very possibility. The choreographing of the disappearance of the lyric first-person speaker thus outlines also the limits of the expressive, humanist subject, for whom language acts as the condition for self-knowledge, intimacy and intersubjective meaning.

If the lyric poem acts as what Herbert Tucker calls the 'intersubjective confirmation of the self'[101] – appropriately in the context of his influential discussion of the nature of dramatic monologue – the lyrical passages of *4.48 Psychosis* counteract that process by examining the subject's limits in language. Instances of choreographing a splitting of the self recur throughout the text:

> But I am not here and never have been[102]

> Here am I and there is
> my body[103]

> I don't know who I am[104]

[99] Stewart, *Fate of the Senses*, p.2.
[100] Kane, *CP*, p.245.
[101] Herbert Tucker, 'Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric' in *The Lyric Theory Reader: an anthology* ed. by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: John Hopkin University Press, 2014), pp.144-156, p.152.
[102] Kane, *CP*, p.209.
[103] Kane, *CP*, p.230.
[104] Kane, *CP*, p.225.

The adverbs 'here' and 'there' organise deictically different parts of the self where that self is absent from the outlined space – 'I am not here' – or watching from a distance her own body. The line break in 'Here am I / and there is my body' reinforces the poetics of dissociation, or the poetic means of articulating the detachment from one's own body. In other passages, the speaker employs poetic imagery to choreograph this dissociation. The line 'my thought walks away with a killing smile'[105] stages verbally the speaker's thought moving away, as if the speaker's thought were a separate person physically capable of walking. Using poetic imagery to separate the mental activity of thought from the subject does not merely split the self, but also articulates a fragmentation of human agency, as different parts of the self – body, thought, feeling – act independently of each other, without the subject's overall control. In another image, the speaker uses biblical language and poetic metaphor to evoke the vanishing of the soul, declaring that '[s]anity is found in the mountain of the Lord's house on the horizon of the soul that eternally recedes'.[106] Comparing the soul to an eternally receding horizon performs a disappearance of parts of the subject, imagining the soul as the boundary between earth and sky that moves away as you move closer to it, thus trapped in an inevitability of continual disappearance. The speaker in *4.48 Psychosis* uses images of limits and of the self's movement away from the subject to lyrically visualise and choreograph the edge of the human, the limit of the self and the parts of the self that extend beyond its control. The emergency of lyric language thus goes hand in hand with a dissolution of a coherent self, examining the limits of poetry and theatre by making the limits of the speaking human subject central to the text.

The image of the receding horizon uses images of the sky and atmosphere, limits between sky and earth as well as limits between night and day, to figure the limits of the self and the human. This use of the changes in the sky to figure the volatility and turbulence of a coherent self continues in the final lyrical passage of the play, where the speaker uses the image of a storm to figure the splitting of the mind:

> I've never understood what it is I'm
> not supposed to feel like a bird on the
> wing in a swollen sky my mind is torn
> by lightning as it flies from the
> thunder behind[107]

This time, instead of the thought or soul receding away from the speaker, the mind is in flight from the sound of thunder that follows lightning, employing the sensory delay between the travelling of sound and the travelling of light to figure the space for the mind's fugitive

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[105] Kane, *CP*, p.218.
[106] Kane, *CP*, p.229.
[107] Kane, *CP*, p.239.

movement. The image of a bird flying from thunder follows a statement about the difficulty of explaining or resolving antinormative feelings, an inability to understand 'what it is I'm not supposed to feel'. The poetic image, in this instance, arises from the lack of reconciliation between the subject's feelings and the expectations of the external world. However, the sky and weather imagery also continue the suggestions of aubade tradition, negotiating darkness and light in a different meteorological context. In fact, the darkness of the storm, which the lightning momentarily illuminates, precedes the final repetition of the lines 'Hatch opens / Stark light', which occurs four times in the text, re-connecting the atmospheric images of light and dark to the inner entrapment and visionary illumination:

> Hatch opens
> Stark light
> and Nothing
> Nothing
> see Nothing[108]

After the capitalised 'Nothing' takes on an absolute nihilistic quality, the final 'see Nothing' anchors the figurative use of light and dark back to the sensory limits the night-time setting necessarily involves: instead of there being 'Nothing', the speaker *sees* 'Nothing', indicating limits of subjective perception in the dark. Kane in fact draws both on aubade traditions and nocturnal meditative traditions. The '[s]tark light' that comes from the opened hatch does not illuminate the subject's perception to make outlines of things visible. It figures in the text less an actual source of light, operating instead as an image for a private moment of negative vision, the kind of contemplative insight nocturne poetry and night-time vigils are traditionally associated with.

Figure 3.2 Anamaria Marinca in 4.48 Psychosis at the Young Vic. Photograph by Tristram Kenton (2009).

Performing the lyrical sections of *4.48 Psychosis* in the theatre involves challenging decisions on how to communicate physically the text's generic and thematic stretching of the humanist assumptions of autonomy, integrity of the self and rational self-determination. The TR Warszawa production, performed in Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2008 and at

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[108] Kane, *CP*, p.239.

the Barbican Theatre in 2010, deliberately cast the actress Magdalena Cielecka, who physically resembled Kane, to perform the lyrical sections of the text, thus interpreting *4.48 Psychosis* biographically in an attempt to dramatically re-enact the last moments of Kane's life. Similarly, Christian Benedetti's 2009 production of *4.48 Psychosis* at the Young Vic cast Anamaria Marinca – the only actor in the production – who looks uncannily similar to Kane with her slim physique and blonde, cropped hair (see Figure 3.2). Lyn Gardner wrote in her review of the TR Warszawa production for *The Guardian* that 'Cielecka is clearly Kane on the last night of her life'.[109] As a consequence, the internal fragmentation the text performs becomes an unequivocal expression of mental illness that by-passes its radical textual form. The first Royal Court Theatre production Macdonald directed in 2000 took

Figure 3.3 Cast photo from James Macdonald 2000 production of 4.48 Psychosis at the Royal Court Theatre.

a different approach, not interpreting the lyrical. voice through biographical re-enactment. The posthuman elements of the aubades – where the self is disconnected both from others and dissociated from itself – was conveyed with a video of a window, where people were seen walking across. This video of a window was then screened on a mirror (see Figure 3.3). The three actors, Daniel Evans, Jo McInnes and Madeleine Potter, remained on the stage trapped inside, re-enacting the way the speaker of the text is trapped alone in night-time self-reflection when the rest of the world is asleep, or resuming the daily activities after the night that does not end for the speaker. As Daniel Evans commented, the style of acting required was dramatically unusual:

> The three of us were playing the same person, on the same journey every night. That's bizarre, because you're normally working with people who have their particular journey and you have your separate journey. And although we start and end up at the same place, you don't have eye contact with each other, and you don't touch anyone – it was so bizarre.[110]

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[109] Lyn Gardner, '4.48 Psychosis', *The Guardian*, 26 March 2010.

[110] Saunders, *Love me or kill me*, p.175.

The fact that all three actors 'were on the same journey every night' shows both the unity of the first-person speaker, and its self-division into parts that do not communicate in the way separate characters in a traditional play would communicate and interact. The choreographing of the three bodies on stage that represent the same subject gives physical form to the choreographing of interiority Kane's text already performs textually.

However, there are limits in that the necessary fact of embodiment – whether performed by one actor or multiple actors – imposes on the form of the text. Performed by multiple actors, the lyrical sections of the text give the impression of dialogue. Even when the actors are directed to speak the lines without reacting or acknowledging each other in any way – Macdonald directed the actors to avoid eye contact and touching – it is difficult to stage the lyrical passages with multiple actors without giving the impression of a conversation, when dramatic dialogue is formally absent from most sections of the text. Performed by a single actor who physically resembles Kane, Cielecka's performance gives the play the physical effect of coherence and autobiographical grounding, which the speaker of the lyrical sections of *4.48 Psychosis* violently resists. From another perspective, this intuition to perform the *4.48 Psychosis* biographically is in itself an assumption that confirms the text's essential lyricism. According to Blasing's theory of lyric poetry, it is lyric language and form that provokes an assumption of an 'existential and historical subject-agent' behind the lyric poem:

> The interface of genre and history rhetorically positions the lyric speaker and allows the inscription of the "I" in the poem to be read as *self*-inscription. Put differently, in the lyric an "I" that can only speak within the textual system of the linguistic and formal codes and "I" that can be heard and realized only outside the system—an existential and historical subject-agent— must *seem* to coincide. That rhetorical coincidence is, properly, a moral ground, a figural coincidence that would convince us that the speaking "I" stands by his words.[111]

In Blasing's theory, the historical subject behind and outside the poem and the 'I' within the poem 'must '*seem* to coincide'. Lyric poetry is thus, to a significant degree, defined by the assumptions the reader has about the speaker of the poem, the 'figural coincidence' between the 'I' speaking the poem and the figure outside of the poem this 'I' represents – an assumption explicitly present in biographical readings of lyric texts. This biographical impulse behind the critical and performative framing of the speaker in lyric poetry explains the frequent comparisons between *4.48 Psychosis* and the poetry of Sylvia Plath. If H.D. used her psychoanalysis to open formal possibilities in the expansion of her lyric project during the war, an equivalence between a poem and a suicide note – a piece of valedictory writing left behind to explain the act that the suicidally depressed is about to perform, usually in the form of a letter or letters addressed to loved ones – is one imposed on Plath and Kane by posthumous

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[111] Blasing, *Lyric Poetry*, p.31.

critics. After the first 2000 performance, Billington notoriously asked how to 'award aesthetic points to a 75-minute suicide note', explicitly framing the text as autobiographical life-writing, continuing to compare it to Plath's last poem before her suicide: 'Like Sylvia Plath's Edge, [*4.48 Psychosis*] is a rare example of the writer recording the act she is about to perform'.[112] More recently, Andrew Dickson has commented directly on the similar assumptions behind Cielecka's performance and the reading of Plath's late poetry:

> While *Blasted* and *Cleansed* and *Crave* have long been acknowledged for the radical theatrical masterpieces they are, *4.48 Psychosis* has been trapped in the shadows of what happened to its author. One 2009 revival even featured an actor who, with her boyish features and closecropped hair, looked unnervingly like Kane herself: it was theatre as raw autobiography, a Sylvia Plath-like howl into the abyss.[120]

Observing that Kane's final work 'has been trapped in the shadows of its author' intuits Blasing's connection between the 'I' of the lyric poem and the 'existential and historical subjectagent' behind the poem. As a consequence, this entrapment is not simply an observation of critical reception; it is also an observation about the form and genre of *4.48 Psychosis*. Describing the text as 'raw autobiography' and comparing it to 'a Sylvia Plath-like howl into the abyss' suggests that the closest point of comparison to Kane's play is the work of a poet whose work is read as biographically, as is Kane's final work, and whose late work is also characterised by a number of aubades and nocturnes, like 'Morning Song' (1961) and 'Ariel' (1962). This formal alignment of Plath and Kane's work shows how questions about the speaker of the lyrical sections of *4.48 Psychosis* are inseparable from the generic questions about its form, particularly the interpretive overlaps between life writing, like suicide notes, poetry and traditions of lyric expression. Billington's characterisation of *4.48 Psychosis* and Plath's poem 'Edge' as examples of 'the writer recording the act she is about to perform' is thus not simply an attempt to reduce literary texts to the biographies to their authors; it is also symptomatic of central assumptions behind lyric reading, the search for a figural coincidence between the 'I' of poetry and the author who wrote the poem and evidence of the significant poetic dimension to Kane's final work.

3 Insomnia and late twentieth-century *fin de siècle*

If James Joyce wrote his epiphanies in the beginning of the twentieth century, there is a wider question of how *4.48 Psychosis* – a text that names a time of day with such specificity – is of its time, mapping the end of the same century of radical formal experimentation with the limits of lyric poetry. Written in 1998 and 1999, and first performed in 2000, *4.48 Psychosis* bridges the

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[112] Billington, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2000.

[120] Dickson, *The Guardian*, 11 May 2016.

millennium, even as the speaker of *4.48 Psychosis* fails to bridge the long night of sleeplessness into daylight. This connection between *fin-de-siècle* writing and nocturnal writing is not accidental. Elaine Scarry, in her introduction to a collection of essays on *fin-de-siècle* poetry, notes how the end of the century tends to produce lyric evocations of a smaller scale of transition, the change of day:

> Perhaps poetry written in the final decade of the century should be seen under the rubric (borrowed from Wordsworth) of the 'evening voluntary', for much of it is devoted to finding the precise moment when one thing ends and another begins: to 'fynd in the bordure the ende of the evening, that is verrey night'.[113]

Scarry connects the *fin-de-siècle* lyric with the aubade and nocturne traditions, as both lyric traditions draw the contours of time's edges, 'in the bordure the ende of the evening' and the beginning of darkness. Although Kane does not address the end of the millennium explicitly, the edges of darkness are a central feature of the work, where the speaker is 'devoted to finding the precise moment when one thing ends and another begins'. This formal connection between nocturne poetry and *fin-de-siècle* is also evident in Derek Mahon's 1999 poem 'Night Thoughts', the first part of his long poem on decadence, which counts time at night at the same time as it reflects on social changes in Ireland: 'Night thoughts are best, the ones that visit us / where we lie smoking between three and four / before the first bird and the first tour bus'.[114] Mahon's 1999 poem is also looking back to late nineteenth-century *fin-de-siècle* writing; as Hugh Haughton observes, 'Decadence' 'always operates on at least two levels; as an autobiographical essay on decadence, looking back to the primal scene of modernity in the late nineteenth century, and a satirical critique of "the delights of modern life" in the "post-Cold War, global warming age"'.[115] What is more, in *4.48 Psychosis* that vague time 'between three and four' is later, closer to the morning and precise to the minute, the time 4.48am marking also a transition from life to death. When Allen Grossman talks of an asymmetry of consciousness at the *fin-de-siècle* – its inclusion of what is over, and its non-inclusion of what has not yet happened[116] – this applies more radically to the time of death as its own boundary, line of transition, 'from whose bourn / No traveller returns'[117] – or as the speaker of *4.48 Psychosis* says, in a more direct statement of despair, 'I sing without hope on the boundary'.[118] Scarry titles her chapter on *fin-de-siècle* lyric 'Counting at Dusk', and different types of counting are also central to *4.48 Psychosis,* which does not simply count minutes to daylight or end of the century,

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[113] Elaine Scarry, 'Counting at Dusk (Why Poetry Matters When the Century Ends)' in *Fins de Siècle: English poetry in 1590, 1690, 1790, 1890, 1990* ed. by Scarry (Baltimore, London: John Hopkins UP, 1995), pp.1-36, p.17.

[114] Derek Mahon, *New Collected Poems* (Oldcastle: Gallery Books, 2011), p.195.

[115] Hugh Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), p.267.

[116] Allen Grossman, *Summa Lyrica,* p.12. Qtd. in Scarry, 'Counting at Dusk', p.15.

[117] Taylor etc., *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, p.2041.

[118] Kane, *CP*, p.214.

but also minutes to the speaker's death. In a section of dialogue, the patient recounts a dream where the doctor gives her eight minutes to live: 'I dreamt I went to the doctor's and she gave me eight minutes to live. I'd been sitting in the fucking waiting room for half an hour. *(A long silence.)*'.[119] The speaker's joke derives from the weight of the time a terminally ill patient has left in comparison to the banality of waiting for a scheduled appointment. There is more at stake when you are running out of time than when you are running late, even though they are measured in the same unit of time. Thirty minutes and eight minutes are comparable in duration, but not in value, as the waiting room in the patient's joke contains both the routine of the scheduled list – waiting for one's appointment – and the count-down to the end of one's life.

The other repeated counting down involves two lists of numbers in *4.48 Psychosis*. The lists count back from one hundred by sevens, which doctors use to test for loss of concentration or memory – the second list does this accurately, while the first, quoted below, counts wrong, and is, literally, all over the page. The significance of the count-down is not merely numerical count down to the end of a century: it is a psychological effort to show one's ability to remember and concentrate, so that even counting down numbers seems like a subjective event, a revelation of lyric interiority in the form of memory. In the first section of numbers, the numbers are not precise counting down by sevens, suggesting confusion and inability to concentrate. Difficulty and failure are part of *4.48* Psychosis, both formally and in terms of content: 4.48am does not evoke the ending of one day, but the long time it takes for the next day to begin, for business to be resumed. Indeed, the only other precise time mentioned in the text, six o'clock, suggests this: 'At 4.48 / when sanity visits / for one hour and twelve minutes I am in my right mind',[120] suggesting that at 6am, when the rest of the world wakes up, her night-time clarity will be gone. In some ways, *4.48 Psychosis* is not about the transition from the end of one century to another, or from life to death, but about the impossibility of new beginnings – the death at 4.48am in the year 1999, which means both that the speaker never experiences another dawn or the next millennium. This impossibility of new beginnings may be partly characteristic of the different tone of late twentieth-century work. Helen Vendler speaks of the distinct tonality of twentiethcentury *fin de siècle* from that of the nineteenth century: the tone of the 1990s is 'confused rather than weary, screen-mobile rather than painting-static, jump-cut rather than continuous, interrogative rather than conclusive'.[121] Although Vendler's characterisation is

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[119] Kane,   , p.221.
[120] Kane, *CP*, p.229.
[121] Helen Vendler, 'Fin-de-Siècle Lyric: W.B. Yeats and Jorie Graham', in *Fins de Siècle*, pp.123-140, p.130. [130] Martin Davies, 'The Lateness of the World, or How to Leave the Twentieth Century' in Michael St. John (ed.), *Romancing Decay: ideas of decadence in European culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp.246-256, p.246. [131] Sylvia Plath, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p.272. [132] Kane, *CP*, p.238.

necessarily somewhat sweeping, it shows the difficulty of applying characteristics of late nineteenth-century mood to that of the late twentieth, indeed, the difference between Joyce's *début de siècle* and Kane's *fin de siècle*, at the same time as her analysis calls attention to the element of a unifying tone in end-of-the century works. As Martin Davies observes, the 1990s involved a very specific 'sense of the sheer surfeit of eventuality, of burdensome plenitude which preempts, hence inevitably involves the foreclosure of, existence in time to come'.[130] When Billington compares *4.48 Psychosis* to Plath's 'Edge', what is more important perhaps than their posthumous publication is their evocation of this sense of lateness. 'We have come so far, it is over'[131] in Plath's poem evokes Davies' diagnosis of the 'sheer surfeit of eventuality' of late twentieth century; Plath's line in its turn resonates with, perhaps anticipates, the speaker of *4.48 Psychosis*, who states that there is 'no way to reach out / beyond the reaching out I've already done'.[132] There is a 'burdensome plenitude' built up from the past, of coming too far, reaching out too many times, which the lyrical speaker finally foreclosing subjective future time, either by stating that there is 'no way to reach out', or by declaring that 'it is over'.

In 'Edge', an image of a rich garden and sensory but 'burdensome plenitude', of flowers folding in during the night, and scents oozing out continues to evoke this closeness to death and 'foreclosure of, existence in time to come':

> She has folded
>
> Them back into her body as petals
> Of a rose close when the garden
>
> Stiffens and odors bleed
> From the sweet, deep throats of the night flower.[122]

The speaker evokes the moment of death through the image of a night-time garden, where the petals of flowers close in the darkness. The garden and the dead body become interchangeable in the images of stiffening and bleeding from the throat, which compare the plenitude of floral scents to bleeding wounds and a corpse in *rigor mortis*. The last section of *4.48 Psychosis* involves similar surreal evocations of darkness, afterlife and the human body:

> Still black water
> As deep as forever
> As cold as the sky
> As still as my heart when your voice is gone
> I shall freeze in hell[123]

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122 Plath, *Collected Poems,* pp.272-3.

123 Kane, *CP*, p.239.

The building list of similes creates an atmosphere of darkness, depth and coldness before connecting this atmosphere to loneliness and the absence of dialogue, 'when your voice is gone'. If Freud remembers a child afraid of the dark saying 'when someone talks, it gets lighter', the speaker of *4.48 Psychosis* connects the black, the cold and the stillness characteristic of the night to the absence of another, familiar voice – the isolation of insomnia. Like Plath's poem, which changes from the third person evocation of garden-body to a first-person statement in the end of the poem, Kane's stanza builds from an anaphoric description to statement about the self after death in 'As still as my heart when your voice is gone / I shall freeze in hell'. Later in the same passage, the lyrical fragments return to the moment of 4.48am in an anticipation of 'clarity' and peace:

> at 4.48 the happy
> hour when
> clarity visits
>
> warm darkness which
> soaks my eyes[124]

4.48 Psychosis uses the atmosphere of Davies's 'psychopathology of lateness',[136] its 'foreclosure of existence in the time to come' in the context of the exhaustion of insomnia followed by the comfort of final sleep [125]– the darkness is no longer cold and still, but 'warm' as it 'soaks' the eyes' – the warmth and moisture performing a similar function to the 'sweet' throats of the night flower and the roses of the garden in Plath's poem, suggesting a richness, comfort and plenitude at the moment of death.

Marina Tsvetayeva's poem on insomnia describes exhaustion through the weakening of the body, but also, crucially as a dispossession: 'After a sleepless night, the body weakens. / It grows dear, not one's own, it's nobody's'.[126] The limits of the human the speaker of *4.48 Psychosis* outlines and tests throughout the text emerge from a similar context of early morning hours and insomnia, the solitude in darkness where there are no tangible outlines and others to enter into dialogue with. The embodiment demanded by theatrical performance becomes increasingly problematic in a context where the speaker's body is radically dispossessed: it cannot be owned by another – a doctor, or a lover – or even by the speaker herself – in Tsvetayeva's words, the body is 'not one's own'. Emmanuel Levinas, writing of insomnia, notes the same dispossession of self, but frames it in terms of anonymity:

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[124] Kane, *CP*, p.242.
[125] Davies, 'The Lateness of the World', p.246.
[126] Marina Tsvetayeva and David McDuff (trans.), *Selected Poems* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1987, 1991), p.51.
[138] Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents* trans. by A. Lingis (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kulwer Academic Publishers, 1978, 1988), p.66.

> Wakefulness is anonymous. It is not that there is *my* vigilance in the night; in insomnia it is the night itself that watches. It watches. In this anonymous nightwatch where I am completely exposed to being all the thoughts which occupy my insomnia are suspended on *nothing*. They have no support. I am, one might say, the object rather than the subject of anonymous thought.[138]

The alertness of night-time contemplation is not the alertness of the awake subject. Instead, the tired subject is the object of the night's watching: not hanging on the firm edges of external figures and objects, the self becomes instead exposed to the darkness, where the boundary between the night and the thoughts 'suspended on nothing' blurs; the thoughts 'which occupy my insomnia'. Kane articulates the suspension over nothing, or what Levinas later calls '*finding oneself over a void*'[127] during the night more firmly in terms of not void but of absence. At the end of *Crave*, the characters evoke a night-time urban scene:

> **M**   Absence sleeps between the buildings at night,
> **C**   Between the cars in the lay-by,
> **B**   Between the day and night.[140]

The characters compare the boundary between day and night to spaces between urban buildings and cars. In *4.48 Psychosis*, dreams seen during the night motivate a search for the absent other in the dawn: 'And I go out at six in the morning and start my search for you. If I've dreamt a message of a street or a pub or a station I go there. And I wait for you'.[128] This is one of the only two passages that specify a time different from 4.48am. Six o'clock in the morning marks the time when different urban locations – stations, pubs, streets – are beginning to be visible in the morning light, and people are beginning to wake up to go to work. However, for the speaker, the night-time dreams still leave their mark on the morning itineraries, as she maps her walk on locations she's dreamed of during her sleep. If insomnia provides the context for articulating the limits of the human subject and the count-down to death, the idea of absence – the unanswered soliloquy, or search for dialogue – negotiate the blurred boundary between day and night, the inability to function in a schedule beginning at six o'clock, as opposed to the logic of loneliness and dreams: 'At 4.48 / when sanity visits / for one hour and twelve minutes I am in my right mind'.[129]

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[127] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, p.71.

[140] Kane, *CP*, p.189.

[128] Kane, *CP*, p.214.

[129] Kane, *CP*, p.229.

Coda

On Limits and Limitation

"Well, tell me whether it is slang or poetry to call an ox a legplaiter.*"*
"Of course you can call it poetry if you like."
"Aha, Miss Rosy, you don't know Homer from slang. I shall invent a new game; I shall write bits of slang and poetry on slips, and give them to you to separate." – George Eliot, Middlemarch[1]

In Chapter XI of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), separating words is part of a game Fred Vincy invents with the purpose of teasing his sister Rosamond to show, according to Fred, her lack of judgement and education. It follows a conversation about class distinctions embedded in the English language and how to distinguish which phrases are 'common' and which are not. The word 'separate' in the passage thus gestures to a number of boundaries, whether formal or socially forming. On one hand, the context of the passage is prosaic, treating separations of class and education as well as rifts between siblings: On the other hand, this section of prose dialogue from Eliot's novel presents a serious argument about lyric poetry and how to separate it from other forms of speaking and writing. According to Rosamond, any word can be poetry if it is framed as such: '[o]f course you can call it poetry if you like' suggest that it only takes one person to call a word or phrase poetry for it to become such. This emphasis on the poetic being a quality created by the reader almost anticipates Stanley Fish's argument in his essay, 'How to Recognise a Poem When You See One', that '[i]t is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities.'[2] According to Fred, however, the 'poetic' is determined by its provenance – whether it originated in Homer or slang – and the presence of an established community of readers who have prescribed the parameters of each genre. At the heart of this debate about how to distinguish a poetic word from a non-poetic word lurks an anxiety that the boundaries between the poetic and the non-poetic are in fact blurred and unrecognisable. This debate about poetry is part of its time: *Middlemarch* is set in the period leading up to the 1832
Reform Act, thirty years after Wordsworth claimed to eschew any 'poetic diction' in favour of 'the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation' arranged in metrical composition – an emphasis on ordinary and vernacular language Wordsworth's contemporaries, Coleridge in

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[1] George Eliot, *Middlemarch* ed. by David Carroll (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2018), p.97.
[2] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The authority of interpretive communities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1980), p.326.

particular, relentlessly critiqued.[3] Wordsworth's 1800 Preface and his 1802 Appendix 'Poetic Diction' to *The Lyrical Ballads* plausibly facilitate the wide use of slang and regional dialects in contemporary poetry, even theoretically anticipating the use of clichés in poetry, examining the limits between mundane and revelatory verbal textures in a challenging way by employing nonpoetic words and phrases to poetic ends.

Eliot's innocuous scene of sibling teasing thus embeds an important argument about the limits between poetic and non-poetic words, the elusiveness of recognising the 'poetic' and the social stakes of establishing its generic boundaries. What this cursory snapshot to nineteenth-century debate about poetic diction in Eliot's novel also manifests is the continuity of concern and contest over the definition of lyric poetry and its limits – an argument that is both of its time and continues to be felt in discussions of the limits of lyric poetry today. Instead of approaching the question of generic definition by presenting a taxonomy of forms – separating a poetic word from a non-poetic word – this scene is an instance which examines the boundaries of lyric poetry and in doing so reveals some of the wider interpretive implications of form and genre. What is significant about the twentieth-century works covered in this thesis is the authors' shifting relationship to the perceived transformations of the possibilities of writing. The three chapters have provided critical insight to three different historical moments – the beginning of the twentieth century, the Second World War and the end of the twentieth century – that attest to the continuity of these concerns, particularly the impulse to experiment and test formal boundaries throughout the convulsive changes of the century, while gesturing to significant precedents before modernism. By focusing on three eclectically chosen authors from across the period, this discussion has sought to develop a nuanced in-depth analysis of the limits of lyric poetry in the twentieth century, which is not constrained by established narratives about the development of lyric poetry in the wake of modernism. Moreover, by choosing critically underrepresented works, I have sought to substantiate the paradox at the centre of my argument: that investigating the limits of lyric poetry opens up questions central to the form of the lyric poem and at the heart of contemporary lyric theory. Moreover, what is formally possible within lyric poetry depends on a prior idea of what lyric poetry is, and expanding its limits imply a definition of where those limits lie. Joyce's invention of the form of the epiphany in the tradition of the late nineteenth-century prose poem depended on a new paradigm of poetry focusing on feeling, rather than the metrical poetic line. H.D.'s expansion of Imagistic craft into a long poetic sequence involves a frequent meditation on the limits of the brief, selfcontained image, and its implications for poetry, as well as an expansion of lyric self-patterning across the broad span of three long inter-related sequences. Finally, Sarah

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[3] For an overview, see Raimonda Modiano, 'Wordworth's Theory of Poetry' in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth* ed. by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015), pp.482-499.

Kane's examination of the limits between theatre and lyric poetry depended on an idea of lyric voice, both defined and problematised in her final, posthumously performed work.

These limits of lyric poetry are symptomatic of a crisis in form identified by poets writing during and in the wake of modernism; and, if I have not reduced my argument into a narrative of the development of modernism, this is because modernism as a collection of both independent and connected movements resists this narrowed focus. What has been significant to my argument, however, is the relationship between modernism and formal experience of crisis: as Sean Pryor observes, '[t]he situation of poetry, for modernism, was one of acute crisis',[4] quoting Laura Riding and Robert Graves: '[m]odern civilization seems to demand that the poet should justify himself not only by writing poems, but furthermore by proving with each poem the contemporary legitimacy of poetry itself'.[5] The poetic limits I have analysed in this thesis address some of the most critical and central to current definitions of lyric poetry: its boundaries with prose and drama and the dominant assumption – to the point of seeming banal – that a lyric poem ought to be brief. Indeed, these performances of the limits of lyric poetry in the twentieth-century poetry still hold intellectual and affective potency. Kathleen Jamie has been part of the revival of the form of landscape essay beginning with *Findings* (2005), which, as her poetry, is characterised by a quality of attentiveness and paying attention in language, only now in the form of lyrical prose. Like James Joyce's epiphanies, the overlaps between the prose form of the essay and the form of the lyric poem depends on a shifted idea of lyric and lyricism, not here dependent on affect and revelatory insights, but on the quality of care and attention paid to the world through language. Don Paterson has contemplated both seriously and frivolously the problem of brevity and its implications for lyric poetry through aphorisms in *The Book of Shadows* (2004), *The Blind Eye* (2007) and *The Fall at Home: New and Collected Aphorisms* (2018): '[t]he aphorism is a *brief* waste of time. The poem is a *complete* waste of time. The novel is a *monumental* waste of time';[6] 'Like the poem, the aphorism must be prompted by a momentary *conviction*; the sanity of that conviction is neither here nor there'.[7] Instead of tackling the problem of lyric length through a poetic sequence, like H.D., Paterson reflects on the brevity of lyric poetry through a form even shorter than a poem. And if Sarah Kane approached poetry as an end to a career of writing plays, Alice Oswald reverses this process by engaging with the form of a play through poetry in *Sleepwalk in the Severn* (2009). The collection begins with a denial, '[t]his is not a play. This is a poem in several registers, set at night on the Severn Estuary', only to flirt with dramatic form by specifying characters, a setting,

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[4] Sean Pryor, *Poetry, Modernism, and an Imperfect World* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017), p.5.
[5] Laura Riding and Robert Graves, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* (London: William Heinemann, 1927), p.260, qtd in Pryor, *Poetry, Modernism and an Imperfect World*, p.5.
[6] Don Paterson, *The Book of Shadows* (London: Picador, 2004), p.191.
[7] Paterson, *The Book of Shadows*, p.188.

a prologue, a chorus and the organisation of lyric materials into five acts. This allusion to the formal organisation of the play within a poem builds on her ambitious absorption of human and non-human characters and voices in her long poem *Dart* (2005).[7]

The legacy of modernist and late modernist experiments with the limits of lyric poetry are particularly pertinent to Anne Carson's work, which often depends on generic crossovers and re-examinations of lyric poetry's formal limits, as Joshua Marie Wilkinson has observed: "[m]ost writers fit neatly into a genre or two: a few writers seem to exemplify the genres they work in; a small number really bend or blend genres in order to create new kinds of texts and performances; and still fewer seem to obliterate genre itself, from the inside out. I would place Anne Carson's work in that latter, freakish category…"[8] Some of these subversions of genre are evident from the subtitles of Carson's works: her award-winning *Autobiography of Red* (1998) was subtitled 'A Novel in Verse', her 2001 *The Beauty of the Husband* 'A Fictional Essay in 29 Tangos', her 2005 collection *Decreation* 'Poetry, Essays, Opera' and her 2006 translation of four plays by Euripides *Grief Lessons*. In fact, Carson suggests that there is a more fundamental affinity between lyric poetry and a wider concept of limits and liminality. Describing Aeschylus's use of metaphor as being 'just on the edge of sense and on the edge of the way language should operate',[9] to Carson, poetry in general and the Ancient Greek use of poetic metaphor in particular are 'on the edge' of the semantic possibilities and the ordinary functions of language. While elsewhere, Carson develops the notion of 'edge' in relation to desire – arguing, for instance, that 'Eros is an issue of boundaries'[10] – this 'issue of boundaries' is also central to the form of the lyric poem. This liminality of language's proper working defines the form more profoundly: lyric poetry in itself embodies a state of liminality, the limits between sound and sense, between line and sentence, between self and other, between printed words and the silence of the space in the margins. Paradoxically, lyric poetry at its limits captures some of the questions at the heart of lyric poetry and its generic definition.

Experiments with the limits of lyric poetry can thus underscore and unlock a fundamental aspect of lyric form in some its contemporary manifestations by foregrounding limits of sense and the limits of the operations of human language. In a poem 'The Nightingale' from John Burnside's 2011 collection *Black Cat Bone*, the speaker describes the singing of the nightingale, the shifting emblem of the lyric poet's *metier*; as Percy Bysshe Shelley writes, 'a poet is a

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[7] For a discussion of voice in Oswald, see my chapter 'Ted Hughes's influence on contemporary poetry: the case of Alice Oswald' in the forthcoming essay collection, *Ted Hughes: Nature and Culture* ed. by Terry Gifford, Neil Roberts and Mark Wormald (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[8] Joshua Marie Wilkinson, 'Introduction' in *Anne Carson: Ecstatic lyre* ed. by Wilkinson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), pp.1-9, p.1.

[9] Emma Brockes, 'Magical thinking', *The Guardian*, 30 December 2006.

[10] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet: an essay* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 1986, 2014), p.30.

nightingale who sits in darkness, and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds'.[11] With metaphors 'just on the edge of sense', the speaker of Burnside's poem approaches not the limits between poetry and another literary genre, but other types of edge embedded in the poem's imagery. Moreover, these limits appear in a poem describing a nightingale, the bird that frequently stands in for the essence of the poetic:

> to sing, not with the grace
> of flesh surpassed,
>
> but rain-deep, in the hollow of the stem,
> where darkness folds and blisters into foreign
>
> bodies, galls and
> knots of keratin,
>
> hunger and the thousand forms of lust
> that quicken out of matter, fire-
>
> and sap-stained, songs
> unwinding from the throat
>
> as breath spills out and comes, time and again,
> to nothing – neither echo nor lament –[12]

While the two-part poem is overtly about the end of a marriage, the description of the nightingale and its relationship to Burnside's poetics is of particular interest. There is something unartful about the nightingale's song, which comes out with breath that 'spills out', like unintentional flowing over the edge of a container, to transmit sound over the limit between the bird's body – 'unwinding from the throat' – and the external world. Syntactically, 'sap-stained' could refer either to the 'songs' in the same, alliterative line or the 'thousand forms of lust' in the previous couplet, uncertainly situated between the song of the nightingale and the allegory of disappointing end of desire embedded in the poem. If the reference to a fungus that stains wood is an unpleasant comparison to either desire or birdsong, it still has the power to signify – a process of lyric signification that seems to come to an end as the poem approaches nothingness. The description of the nightingale begins with the negative 'not with the grace / of flesh surpassed' and ends with 'unheard' song: 'a night bird sings // and sings unheard, / where once we made our bed'.[14] The speaker thus attempts to convey the birdsong by describing what it is not, and ends the poem by admitting an absence of listeners in an echo of the absence palpable in his own home.

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[11] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', *The Major Works* ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), pp.674-701, p.680.

[12] John Burnside, *Black Cat Bone* (London: Cape Poetry, 2011), pp.22-23.

[14] Burnside, *Black Cat Bone,* p.23.

In fact, the poem continually approaches nothingness, absence, loss and unheard acts of expression: 'comes, time and again, / to nothing – neither echo or lament' names but denies two forms by which the song of the nightingale, and, by extension, lyric poetry could communicate. As Angela Leighton has observed, the idea of form seems inevitably to be haunted by and conjoined with its more radical other, nothingness: '[i]f form is a word which has left two centuries and more of aestheticist and post-aestheticist writing, there is another word which has often seemed to shadow it, and that is the word "nothing"'.[13] In W.S. Merwin's nightingale poem, 'Night Singing' (1996), the speaker believes describing the song of a nightingale in a poem is 'slightly embarrassing' as 'there is nothing at all left for me to say'.[14] However, the poem gradually transforms into an unwilling recording of that song and ends in a conditional description of listening, 'if I knew I would hear / in the last dark that singing I know how I would listen'.[15] In contrast to Merwin's speaker's initial reluctance to find anything more to say about the song of the nightingale, in Burnside's poem the birdsong that 'comes, time and again, / to nothing' in the absence of listeners. At the same time, the length of the sentence and the density of imagery mean that Burnside's poem operates 'just on the edge of sense' and the limits of meaning. The negative 'not with the grace / of flesh surpassed', which begins the description of the nightingale's song is more complicated than a rewriting of any dynamic of transcendence and its failure in lyric poetry, which Ben Lerner ascribed to lyric poetry as whole.[16] The darkness in Burnside's poem 'folds and blisters into foreign // bodies', exploiting lyric poetry and its limits to inhabit a state of otherness and operate at the edge of sense. Beyond the limits of lyric poetry and other forms of writing thus lies a more fundamental preoccupation with limits and limitations. And, at the heart of this thesis, is the demonstration that not only are questions about lyric poetry informing and intelligible at its formal limits, but that these limits provide the critical space where those questions are at their most distinct and indispensable.

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[13] Angela Leighton, *On Form: poetry, aestheticism and the legacy of a word* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), p.263. See also 'Nothing, but: An Afterword', pp.263-266 in the same book.

[14] W.S. Merwin, *The Vixen* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p.32.

[15] Merwin, *The Vixen*, p.32.

[16] Ben Lerner, *The Hatred of Poetry* (New York: FSG Originals, 2016), pp.8-9.

Appendix 1
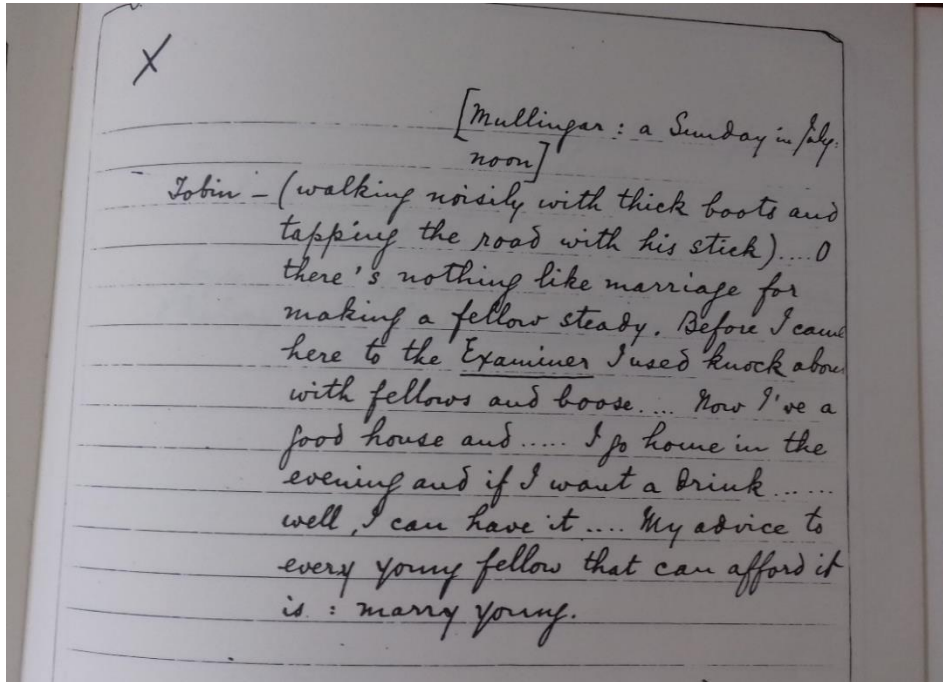
Lineation of James Joyce's 'Epiphanies'

Figure A1.1. Epiphany 9 in James Joyce's hand, Buffalo MS IA.

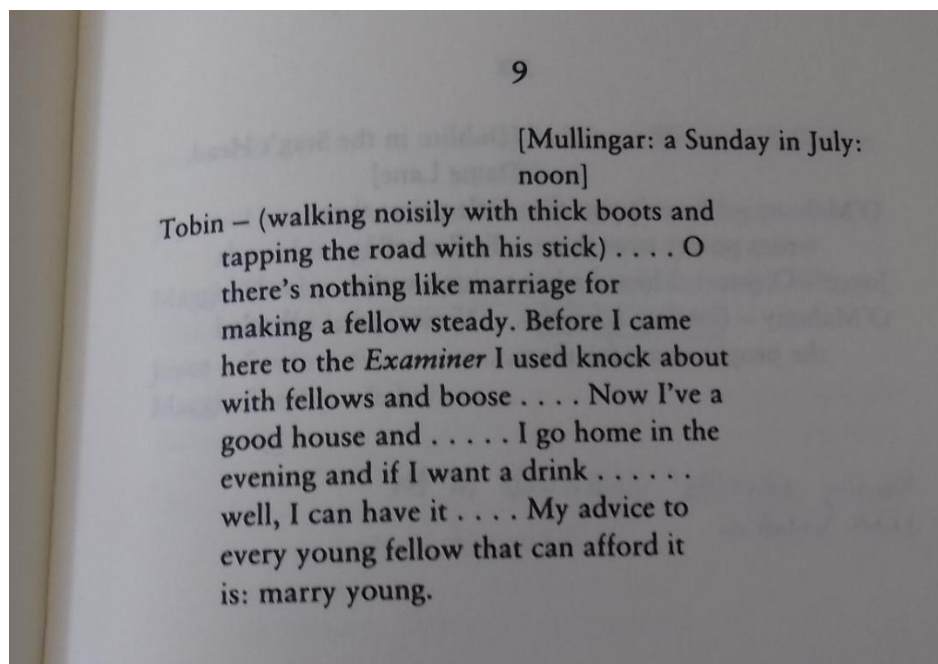*Figure A1.2. Epiphany 9 in Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson edition. They have maintained the original MS lineation.*

Figure A1.3. Epiphany 21 in James Joyce's hand, Buffalo MS 1A.

Figure A1.4. Epiphany 21 in Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson edition. Here they have not followed the original lineation.

58

-fused forms, half-men, half-goats. Dragging their great tails they move hither and thither, aggressively. Their faces are lightly bearded, pointed and grey as india-rubber. A secret personal sin directs them, holding them now, as in reaction, to constant malevolence. One is clasping about his body a torn flannel jacket; another complains monotonously as his beard catches in the stiff weeds. They move about me, enclosing me, that old sin sharpening their eyes to cruelty, swishing through the fields in slow circles, thrusting upwards their terrific faces. Help!

Jas. A. Joyce

Ever since Maria left me, for another star—which? Orion, Altair, or thou, green Venus?—I have always cherished solitude. How many long days I have passed alone with my cat! By 'alone' I mean without a being, and my cat is a mystical companion, a spirit. I may say, then, that I have passed long days alone with my cat, and alone with one of the last writers

Figure A1.5. Epiphany 6 in Stanislaus Joyce's hand in Cornell MS 17, followed by a translated Mallarmé prose poem

Appendix 2

Formal breakdown of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*

Sections in blue designate lyric sections written in the first person using line breaks. **Sections in grey** designate lyric sections written in the first person without deliberate line breaks. **Sections in white** designate prose dialogue. **Sections in green** consist of different lists or abbreviations without a grammatical speaker.

Section	Form	Indicated / assumed speaker	First line(s)
1	Prose dialogue	Doctor; patient does not reply	*(A very long silence.)* - But you have friends.
2	Soliloquy (combination of prose poetry and poetry with line breaks)	First person ('I')	a consolidated consciousness resides in a dark banqueting hall
3	List of symptoms of depression Followed by soliloquy combining poetry with line breaks and prose	First person ('I')	I am sad
4	Numbers	-	100
5	Soliloquy (prose)	First person ('I')	It wasn't for long, I wasn't there long. But drinking bitter black coffee
6	Prose dialogue	Doctor and patient	- Have you made any plans?
7	Soliloquy (poetry)	First person ('I')	Body and soul can never be married
8	Abbreviation	-	RSVP ASAP
9	Soliloquy (unanswered address in prose)	First person ('I')	Sometimes I turn around and catch the smell of you and I cannot go on
10	Prose dialogue	Doctor and patient	- Oh dear, what's happened to your arm?
11	Soliloquy (poetry)	First person ('I')	I dread the loss of her I've never touched
12	Prose dialogue	Doctor and patient	- No ifs or buts.
13	Soliloquy (poetry)	First person ('I')	abstraction to the point of
14	Medical report, parody (prose)	Report in third person	Symptoms: not eating, not sleeping, no sex drive
15	Soliloquy (poetry)	First person ('I')	Hatch opens
16	Prose dialogue	Doctor and patient	- I gassed the Jews, I killed the Kurds, I bombed the Arabs
17	Soliloquy (poetry)	First person ('We')	We are anathema
18	Prose dialogue after the initial address of thirteen lines employing line breaks	Doctor and patient	- At 4.48
19	Soliloquy (poetry followed by six lists of single-syllable violent verbs)	First person ('I')	Hatch opens
20	Numbers	-	100
21	Soliloquy (combination of prose poetry and poetry with line breaks)	First person ('I')	Sanity is found at the centre of convulsion, where madness is scorched from the bisected soul.
22	List of self-help goals	-	to achieve goals and ambitions
23	Prose dialogue	Doctor and patient	- You've seen the worst of me.
24	Soliloquy (poetry)	First person ('I')	Fattened up

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