

**LYRIC POETRY AND THE
POSITIONING OF THE LYRIC
SPEAKER**

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Abstract

Lyric poetry is frequently viewed by critics as distinct from narrative poetry and prose. This distinction rests largely on the positioning of the lyric speaker vis-à-vis the poet author. Part of any definition of the lyric is the understanding that the lyric speaker is identical to the poet and therefore the poem is the unmediated direct expression of the poet's thoughts and experiences. These assumptions which are endemic to literary and sometimes linguistic criticism have led to restricted critical studies and a preponderance of inappropriate biographical criticism. This thesis examines how the speakers in certain types of lyric poetry are positioned, and identifies where conceptions of lyric speakers may be causing the problem of the biographical fallacy.

The central questions that structure this thesis are:

- Why is the lyric speaker so often considered by critics to be identical to the poet and therefore an unmediated direct expression of the poet's thoughts and experiences?
- Can lyric poetry instead make use of the same complexity of perspectives, voices and mediation that narrative prose does?
- What linguistic and narratological features in poetry deemed 'personal' to the poet might be creating the illusion of personalness, causing us to reduce this potential complexity to unmediated and monologic autobiography?

I argue that the assumption that lyric poetry represents the monologic and unmediated voice of the poet is endemic in criticism and without a more precise examination of what lyric speakers do, poetic criticism will continue to fall back on biographical criticism despite the many theoretical attempts to leave it behind. By demonstrating that there is narrativity present in lyric poetry, I argue that narratological concepts can and should be applied to lyric poetry, and therefore I join a growing discussion about how theoretical approaches to poetry can be improved by using the tools that are used to analyse narrative. Overall, my thesis is an application of narrative theory to three distinct types of lyric poetry that best demonstrate the multiperspectivism of the lyric, but are at the same time central examples of the genre: lyric poetry which uses a turn or volta to encode multiple viewpoints, poetry which appears extremely personal and connected to its poet, and poetry based on experiences of real conflict.

By using narrative theory (and where necessary drawing on literary linguistic models, such as text world theory, relevance theory and transitivity) , I analyse the point(s) of view expressed in poems considered quintessentially lyric and the positions and levels of mediation that the lyric speaker can adopt, thus demonstrating not only that lyric poetry can make use of the same complexity of perspectives, voices and mediation that narrative prose does, but that the poetic speaker operates in much

the same way as that of a prose narrator. I argue that this should cause us to rethink how the speaker in lyric poetry is approached. In addition, I argue that by examining poetry in this way, we can move on from making assumptions about the biographical links between poetry and poets, and instead identify the linguistic features which cause us to assume that such a link is present.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The problem

While there has been a great deal of research into the positioning of the narrator in narrative prose, few linguists have attempted to apply the same rigour to the discussion of the lyric speaker in poetry. The levels of fictionality, narrativity, multiple voices and the representation of consciousness are well discussed in narrative prose, but there have been few attempts to apply similar approaches to poetry. Introducing their important attempt to correct this, *Theory into Poetry*, Zettelmen and Rubik point out that linguistic criticism of prose can currently 'rely upon a sizeable corpus of internationally recognised and widely applied theoretical frames of reference' (2005:8), attempts to write about poetry still rely on 'axioms derived basically from post-Romantic conceptions of genre and reception' (2005:8). Similarly, Hühn claims that the analysis of lyric poetry 'is notoriously lacking in theoretical foundations' (2005:2).

Bakhtin claimed that lyric poetry is 'monologic', meaning that it displays only one point of view: the poet's (1981). This monologic voice is often the core of the concept of the 'poetic persona', and is also bound up with the assumption that this voice is the poet's, or reflects the poet's life in an intimate way. Bakhtin believed that poetry was the 'pure and direct expression of [the poet's] own intention' (1981:285), but does not offer much evidence for this, and neither do many of the critics who claim that poetry cannot or does not display the polyphony of voices that Bakhtin asserts for the novel. Even when the critic clearly separates the poet from their creation, the word 'personal' is frequently used to describe lyric poems and their speakers. Lyric poetry is more likely to be seen as autobiographical, and usually assumed to be non-narrative, which can lead critics to focus on poets, rather than poems. This, in turn, can create the assumption that lyric poetry is a simple, unplanned expression of the poet's feeling, written without distance and without any reflexivity, rather than a skilled art form.

This leads to the central questions that structure this thesis:

- a. Why is the lyric speaker so often considered by critics to be identical to the poet and therefore an unmediated direct expression of the poet's thoughts and experiences?
- b. Can lyric poetry instead make use of the same complexity of perspectives, voices and mediation that narrative prose does?
- c. What linguistic and narratological features in poetry deemed 'personal' to the poet might be causing us to reduce this potential complexity to unmediated and monologic autobiography?

Although there are many excellent stylistic analyses of poetry, (many of which are referenced in this thesis) stylisticians have commented on the lack of consideration of the creative (rather than autobiographical) process behind poetry, and this means that the most up to date research into narratological and linguistic thinking are frequently not applied, as they are assumed only to be useful in discussing prose fiction. Hühn argues that 'narrative theory is a sophisticated framework with which we may be able to refine, extend, and elucidate the methodology of the analysis of lyric poetry' which has been sorely lacking (2005:3). McHale points out that 'contemporary narrative theory is almost silent about poetry' (2009:11) and this avoidance of the most precise analytical tools we have available stunts poetic criticism into little more than 'an impressionistic and evaluative procedure of analysis, and a terminological pluralism that defies constructive academic debate' (Zettelmen and Rubik, 2005:8). Lyric poetry is defined as non-narrative, and therefore is not examined for narrativity. Similarly, lyric poetry is monologic, therefore it is read and criticised on the basis that it presents a uniform, single consciousness, and so evidence that its speakers can do anything else is not sought out.

I believe that lyric speakers can make use of the same polyphony and levels of mediation that Bakhtin believes can be observed from prose narrators, and it can also show the same richness of consciousnesses as can be found in any other genre of text. That is not to say that poetry and prose fiction always use narrative and consciousness in the same way. My contention is that they should not be *assumed* to be different based on the text's categorisation as poetry or prose. There is nothing in the format of the lyric that necessitates a monologic voice or a more direct access to the reporter's consciousness. Whether or not individual lyric poems take this approach is a different matter.

This is a circular problem: lack of rigour in the discussion of lyric speakers leads to poetic criticism which relies on these limiting ideas, and therefore causes lack of rigour in the resulting analysis. In these introductory chapters, I will demonstrate where the understanding of the lyric speaker has gone wrong, and in my analytical chapters I will demonstrate how correcting this problem can lead to more useful and precise analysis both of the poems' speakers and also a better understanding of how these poems work.

1.2 Defining the lyric speaker

The evidence for this lack of rigour can be seen in its most basic form in the way that the speakers are discussed in definitions offered for the term 'lyric.'

Cuddon describes a lyric poem as one which 'expresses the feelings and thoughts of a single speaker (not necessarily the poet himself) in a personal and subjective fashion' (1998:481). Unfortunately, 'personal' is not defined, so it is difficult to know exactly what it means. If it is not 'necessarily' personal to the person who wrote it, it still means that a significant number of lyric poems, Cuddon believes, are personal because they reflect the poet personally, and this connection is therefore implied to

be significant to the genre in some way. In addition, Cuddon describes lyric poetry as being written in a personal 'fashion', but gives no indication as to what stylistic features this might refer to (1998:481).

Abrams claims that lyric poetry presents 'a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling' and that this speaker 'need not be the poet' (which of course leads us to the conclusion that it *could* be) (1981:146). Similarly, Scholes' and Kellogg's definition describes the lyric speaker as a 'single actor' who is either 'the poet or his surrogate' (1966:4). It seems likely that the expression of thought or feeling is what is meant by 'personal', but it is also likely that 'personal' restricts this to the thought or feeling of the speaker, and this speaker is often assumed to be the poet.

Miller's definition of lyric poetry is similar, again using the word 'personal', but also specifies that a lyric poem 'projects the image of an individual and highly self-reflexive subjective consciousness (1994:10)'. 'Self-reflexive', like 'personal', suggests that the speaker will focus on itself, which would exclude some well-known examples of the genre, especially if it can be accepted that many love lyrics focus on an addressee or subject instead. The focus on the 'personal', 'self-reflexive' 'single speaker' has led to lyric poetry being read without consideration for the possibility of polyphony, multiple perspectives or voices, or the focus on experiencers other than the reporter.

Fowler believes that the poetic techniques used by lyric poets lend the form to 'expansive, often exclamatory, expressions of intense personal joy, sorry or contemplative insight' (1973:133-4), although he does not insist that lyric poetry must display these to be classed as such. Like Cuddon, there is no clarification for his use of the descriptor 'personal', but unlike Cuddon (and like Abrams), he does not specify whether or not he means personal to the poet, or a fictitious 'speaker'.

In addition, Fowler's view that lyric poems are written in 'an emotional rather than intellectual mode' (1973:134) also fits in with Cuddon and Abrams and further hints at what is expected of lyric speakers. The assumption that these speakers will be 'emotional' rather than 'intellectual' is so restrictive that it can exclude poetry that would otherwise be recognised by most critics as lyrical. For example, Lewis declares that 'irony and complexity of meaning are wholly foreign to the lyric' (1961:2) and therefore 'he sets aside the religious poetry of Donne and Hopkins while including lyrics of Rochester, Sedley, and Gray' (Jeffreys, 1995:201). Jeffreys also points out that Lewis believes that the 'proclivity for psychological complexity and self-obsession' in Romantic poetry excludes such poems as being lyric, despite the fact that these poems have 'traditionally been identified as lyrics and that are definitively canonical poems' (1995:201).

The frequent but undefined and imprecise use of the word 'personal' in these definitions of the lyric speaker informs the third of my main research questions. This vague but pervasive quality of 'personalness' is key to understanding why the lyric speaker is flattened into an unmediated and direct expression of the poet's thoughts

and experiences. If this quality is not one of biography but one rooted in the text itself, then examining lyric poems which are deemed the most personal to their poets will enable me to both define what a personal poem is (and therefore demonstrate that not all lyric speakers can be described as personal), and what linguistic and narratological features cause so many to mistake its speaker for the poet themselves.

Wolf, in *Theory into Poetry* (2005), goes through a list of features proposed by various critics in order to define lyric poetry (rather than just the speaker), and produces the most comprehensive examination of the various definitions of the genre that I have found. The framework that his analysis produces is therefore the basis of how I justify the lyricism of a poem in order to justify studying its speaker for this thesis. It is important to note, however, that some of his chosen features are based on a questionable view that 'lyric' is a 'synonym for poetry' (2005:27) which makes the entire genre of narrative poetry aberrant (which Wolf does, when he describes ballads as 'exceptional' lyric poems, rather than narrative poems). His survey of definitions of the lyric focuses on several possible features which are considered important, but invariably finds dissent and exceptions that rule out every one as necessary to the genre. Wolf concludes that 'apart from textuality and fictionality, there is not a single criterion to be found that fits all texts which could be – and are in fact – called "poems" and that consequently all of these criteria are precarious' (2005:31). However, as has been said, Wolf believes that 'no distinction between "the lyric", "poetry" and "poems" seems to be appropriate any longer' (2005:23). With this in mind, it is not surprising that Wolf considers all these features to be excessively narrow – it is clearly impossible to define a specific genre of poetry if every poem can be included within it. For example, when discussing the proposed monolocality of lyric poetry and the importance of a 'lyric-I', Wolf criticises this view by offering the example of narrative poetry (2005:28), a completely separate genre.

The monologic voice of the lyric speaker is described by Wolf as an 'unmediated consciousness', and it was also a recurring feature of his survey of German language definitions of the term. For example, Green includes 'a monologic 'I' figure' as the first of a list of 'assumptions' he makes about lyric poetry (1992:125). Definitions of the lyric, Wolf asserts, often present the Lyric-I as the 'alleged origo' of the poem, and thus the reader has direct access to this consciousness, unlike the characters within novels, who are mediated to us through the narrator (Wolf, 2005:27). This is reflected in Scholes' and Kellogg's description of the lyric speaker as the 'direct presentation' of a 'single actor' (1966:4). Although Wolf describes this unmediated consciousness as 'the core of lyricalness', it is easy, he believes, to find lyric poetry that does not use 'an overt speaker who appears in the first person' as its reporter (2005:28). Some critics have attempted to 'repair' these poems by creating an 'inferred' persona, but as Wolf says, this then ceases to make it a useful distinction between even poetry and prose, where the same discussion about overt and covert narration can be found (2005:28). However, although he thinks poetry can lack an *unmediated* consciousness, Wolf does not believe that poetry can use a *mediated* consciousness, in the way that characters in prose fiction are mediated by a narrator,

and he does not consider whether or not these unmediated consciousnesses can themselves mediate, as narrators do.

As with the definitions of all literary terms, we cannot expect a clear delineation of the lyric in all cases. Even the clearest and most commonly agreed characteristic of the lyric (that it is short) will not always be easy to apply. What length is a poem before it can no longer be called short, for example? However, unlike the distinction between the short story and the novella, or the novella and the novel, the definition of the lyric seems to suggest that the distinction between poetry that is short and poetry that is not short means a shift from non-narrative to narrative, and from personal, subjective and monologic into the full range of literary possibilities. No critic makes the same claim when distinguishing the short story from the novella.

Despite asserting that the terms 'lyric' and 'poem' are interchangeable, Wolf makes a considerable improvement to many of the features discussed above by suggesting that they should be features of a framework, rather than of a definition. Hühn describes this approach as examining poetry for 'a cluster of features which constitute family resemblances' (2004:142) rather than a list of fixed criteria that must be met. This would mean that a lack of one or more features considered lyrical does not automatically mean that the poem is not lyric, but the more features the poem lacks, the more likely it is that the poem will not be read or recognized as lyric. The aspects of this framework which refer to the speaker are listed below (*italics my own*):

- the lyric permits an oral performance *without play-acting*
- the lyric provides a means of evoking (elements of) a fictional world through minimal units; liminally, it allows poets to construct worlds in which there are no external developments nor (series of) actions but which consist only of *a single state of mind...*
- the lyric allows a maximum of 'poetic freedom' from the conventions and constraints of everyday language in *communicating experience, emotions, reflections and other mental states and activities* and enables poets to make a maximum use of all components of oral and written language, including imagery, self-referentiality and the acoustic dimension of language
- The lyric enables authors to treat their subjects from *the monoperspectival point of view of one consciousness and allows them in particular to simulate an immediate access to the innermost recesses of a human mind* without having to justify either the access to, or the content of that mind, as would, for instance, usually be the case in the stream-of-consciousness novel
- the lyric *enables poets to use this consciousness not as a means of shedding light on elements of external reality but of revealing itself, its thoughts and in particular its emotions* (2005:36)

The flexible nature of this framework makes this the most useful definition of lyric poetry that I have found. In addition, by asserting that all poems share 'fictionality' as a feature (2005:31), Wolf is, like I am, severing the connection between poetry and autobiography. However, this framework, although useful in many ways, summarises many other problems with current discussions of the lyric speaker. This

thesis will demonstrate the weaknesses in Wolf's assumption of monologicity in the presenting consciousness, and the corresponding lack of narrativity.

However, many other aspects of Wolf's framework are useful in assessing the potential lyricism of a particular poem, such as his expectation that lyric poetry frequently demonstrates 'opaque and difficult' use of language which can 'slow down the process of reception', and also the freedom from 'conventions and constraints of everyday language' which allows poets to 'make a maximum use of all components of oral and written language, including imagery, self-referentiality and the acoustic dimension of language', which comes close to some of Fowler's descriptions of poetic technique. This is, I believe, an excellent description of what is meant when texts are described as particularly 'lyrical' and 'poetic', whether or not those texts are poems at all, and is therefore a useful way to examine how far an example of lyric poetry can be considered exemplary for the genre.

1.3 Referring to the lyric speaker

Another manifestation of the lack of theoretical rigour applied to poetry, and possibly one of the confounding issues, is the use of terminology to refer to the reporting voice. In this thesis, I use the term 'speaker', but this does not represent a consensus amongst critics as the use of the term 'narrator' does.

1.3.1 Narrator

In prose fiction, the reporting consciousness is almost universally called the 'narrator'. The same consistency is not found when discussing poetry. In fact, many critics do not align the reporting consciousness of the lyric with the narrators of prose fiction. As I have discussed, Wolf believes that the lyric speaker is monologic and unmediated because we have direct access to them, unlike the characters in prose fiction, who come mediated to us through a narrator (2005:27). If we instead compare the poetic speaker to the prose narrator, they are both unmediated to a similar degree. It is true that prose fiction is more associated with a third person narrator whereas lyric poetry is associated with the first person, but as Adamson points out, two of the four works 'most commonly cited as the novel's ancestors' (John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*) were written in the first person, so whether or not prose narrators use predominantly authorial or homo-diegetic narrators may be largely a matter of historical style (1994:61). In addition, third-person lyric poetry as Wolf points out, is not at all uncommon or hard to find (2005:28).

This means that whether or not a lyric-I comes to us unmediated is no more significant than whether or not prose narrators come to us unmediated. What is more significant is whether the lyric speaker mediates in the same way that a prose narrator does, and this thesis will demonstrate that it does.

Critics will use 'narrator' to refer to the reporter if the poetry is deemed 'narrative' (for example, in Anne Ferry's book 'Milton's Epic Voice: The Narrator in *Paradise Lost*' (1983)) but rarely is the term used when discussing lyric poetry, or in fact in most modern poetry at all. (However, Jeffries (2008) Hühn (2005) and Hühn and Keifer

(2005) are notable exceptions to this, and use either 'narrator' or 'speaker/narrator' when discussing lyric poetry.)

The most likely reason is that narrators narrate – if a poem is not felt to tell a story (as lyric poetry is frequently not) then the term 'narrator' does not seem an appropriate choice of word. However, this presents a few problems.

Firstly, with only a few exceptions, prose is not separated into narrative and non-narrative texts in the way that poetry is, although prose fiction is recognised to often have non-narrative elements. For example, Harshav writes about the structure of what he considers to be non-narrative prose in parts of *War and Peace*, but still uses the term 'narrator' throughout (1988). The term 'narrator' is so well-rooted in prose fiction, it is hard to imagine using an alternative, even if there is not perceived to be any narration.

'Narrative Poetry', unlike narrative fiction, is an agreed genre, which does not (or at least should not) include all poetry with a narrative. Although a lack of narrative is frequently claimed for the lyric (as will be discussed in my next chapter), a great deal of poetry deemed 'lyric' still has a thread of narrative (for example, as Peter Hühn demonstrated in 'Plotting the Lyric: Forms of Narration in Poetry' using William Wordsworth's *I wandered lonely as a cloud* (2005) and in 'Transgeneric Narratology: Application to Lyric Poetry' (2004) with W.B. Yeats' *The Second Coming*) so just because a poem is not deemed part of the narrative genre it does not follow that it contains no narration; the reporter might still, therefore, be narrating for at least part of the text. In fact, I suspect that one of the reasons that lyric poetry is not considered narrative is precisely because the term 'narrator' is avoided.

1.3.2 Speaker

The term 'speaker' or 'voice' is often used as an equivalent term to 'narrator', and both terms are used throughout *Theory into Poetry*. 'Voice' is a common term in narratological studies of prose, where it is used to refer to the voice of the narrative discourse (Genette, 1980 [1972]:186). 'Voice' as a term can be used alongside with 'narrator' therefore. However, when 'voice' and 'speaker' are used together (instead of 'voice' and 'narrator') the impression is created that the poem is meant to be heard rather than read. Considering the oral beginnings of poetry and the association of lyric with song and performance outside of poetry, this seems appropriate. Wolf lists the possibility of oral performance as his first criterion in his framework to define the lyric (2005:36), and the possibility of the poem being sung was Lewis' only criterion for it being a lyric. Poetry does generally use more sonic devices than prose, such as rhyme, rhythm, assonance and consonance and so on, which is a strong case for treating it as more aural than the majority of prose (though this does not seem to result in the substitution of 'narrator' for 'speaker' or 'voice' in prose texts which utilise these devices). However, the 'look' on the page of poetry such as concrete poetry, acrostics or the work of writers such as e.e. cummings should cause us to question this assumption. The 'difficulty' in understanding the lyric is another feature which is at odds with this orality, as re-reading a poem is

often recommended as a way to fully access its meaning (Eagleton, 2007 and Hirsche, 2000). Wolf includes the possibility of an oral performance as a feature of lyric poetry (though not a necessary one), but he also mentions Muller-Zetzelman's view that the orality of lyric poetry is no longer significant. If a poem is written with features that are only available to readers (as opposed to auditors) then it may be potentially misleading to consistently use the terms 'voice' or 'speaker'. Wolf points out that this is now an age where 'most poems are read rather than recited' (2005:24). Poetry is no longer a purely oral medium. In fact, poetry is often an attempt to represent consciousness directly, and to this end language is often twisted to forms that would never be used 'out loud', making it misleading to use any term that implies a spoken voice or oral performance.

However, Richards points out that voice is not necessarily used literally, but is 'an oral metaphor employed in the description and analysis of the written word' (2012:1525). Discussing poetry in terms of voice and speaker is persistent, Richards argues, despite 'how much one insists that writing is not speaking and that voice is not literally present in the poem' as 'literary critics have persistently relied on metaphors of voice to analyse writing' in both prose and poetry. We may not assume that narrators in prose fiction are speaking out loud, but they are still frequently described as having a voice by critics such as Genette and Bakhtin (2012:1525).

Therefore, like narrativity (as I will demonstrate) 'voice' is at least metaphorically present in both poetry and prose. However, there is a far stronger historical connection between orality and poetry, to the extent that 'poetry is a crucial vehicle for the transmission of information in oral cultures' (Richards, 2012:1525). The sonic devices such as rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and repetition may be utilised in prose, but their use is currently far more associated with poetry. Therefore, as long as the use of the term is recognised as metaphoric (at least in some occasions) the term 'speaker' is a suitable term to use as the counterpart to 'narrator', and it is the term which I will be using throughout the thesis.

1.3.3 Persona

Another term used is 'persona'. On the surface, this does seem to make a clear separation between poet and the speaker within the poem. Bristow uses the term in this way, but also suggests that this persona was created with the purpose of communicating the otherwise shocking or unacceptable beliefs and feelings of the poets discussed (1987:6). Deppman, when writing about an Emily Dickinson poem, uses the term 'persona' throughout his article to refer to the speaker of the poem, but then in one paragraph uses 'persona/poet' and 'poet-persona' without explanation (2000:5). 'Persona' is also often used to connect poems together by assuming that all poems written by a poet have the same persona. Schricker, whose book *A New Species of Man: The Poetic Persona of W.B. Yeats* (1982) discusses Yeats' 'persona' rather than his 'personas', as if he only has one. The word 'persona' means 'mask', and this perhaps explains why it can be used to suggest that the speaker of the poem is merely a mouthpiece for the poet's views. This makes it risky to

consider it as a possible equivalent for 'narrator', as it carries with it the suggestion that that the poet is just pretending to be someone else.

Wolf uses the term 'poetic persona' to refer to the 'single voice' of the lyric (2005:50), which again makes its use problematic for me, as I will be demonstrating the overlapping voices found within many lyric poems.

Some critics do use 'persona' to refer to the speaker, however, without assuming a connection between that consciousness and the poet. However, this can suggest that the consciousness is the main focus of the poem, and this is not always the case. Izenberg claims that 'persona' refers to a certain kind of speaker, (specifically, the speaker 'of any poem that is imagined to be spoken in a distinctive voice or narrated from a determinate vantage' (2012:1024)), rather than being a general term applicable to all poetic reporters. The 'voice', 'narrator' or 'persona' of the poem may be more frequently the focus of the text than is the case with prose fiction, but of course it is not always so. Just as narrators in prose have varying degrees of prominence in the text, the poetic speaker can be the focus of the poem, or can be nothing more than a reporter, giving us little insight into itself. Because of its association with the single voice of a personal consciousness, a 'persona' should be considered to be a *type* of poetic speaker, therefore, rather than a term that can encompass all poetic reporters. Using 'persona' to refer to all poetic speakers reinforces the misconception that lyric poetry is always 'personal' to someone (whether real or imagined), and ignores the possibility of lyric poetry in which the speaker is insignificant.

For example, Thomas Hardy's *The Ruined Maid* is primarily a dialogue between two people, but there is a speaker mediating this by adding reporting clauses at the end of each stanza. However, this is all that we get directly from them (although this speaker is plausibly one of the two interlocutors). Calling this speaker a 'persona' seems a stretch, as it emphasises an area of the poem that is just not that interesting or important as apart from 'said she' at the end of each of the six stanzas, the poem consists of a dialogue between the two characters.

Simon Armitage's *Poem* (in Appendix 8.1.1) is a sonnet written in the third person, describing a character distinct from the speaker, without any indication of a diegetic connection between the two. There is no modal language here that might build the character of the reporting consciousness, and no deictic markers that point towards it. It could be suggested that a persona is created just by the action of the consciousness choosing which actions to recount, as these focuses build a character. However, in the final rhyming couplet, the poem points to a nameless group of people, the 'they' who will be remembering the man, which separates the speaker distally from those who will remember him. It is not entirely clear, therefore, whether the list of things that he will be remembered for comes from the speaker or from 'them'. Separating out the speaker's perspective from that of those who will be remembering the man is all but impossible, just as separating out the narrator from the character in Free Indirect Discourse can often pose difficulties. Because it is used

so often to mean the poets' 'mask' or to indicate the personality of the speaker, using the word 'persona' in this case would focus our reading inappropriately on the act of mediation between us and the characters and events of the poem, rather than those characters themselves. 'Speaker', on the other hand may reference a voice, but it does not imply that the consciousness behind that voice will be significant or a focus of the poem. All personas may be speakers, but not all speakers are fully developed enough to suggest a persona.

As I will be arguing, the use of the term 'persona' is not only misleading in many cases, but is also a symptom of the restricted way in which the lyric is viewed. If lyric poetry is always thought of as 'personal' then it is not surprising that a fully drawn and foregrounded 'persona' is expected. For this reason, I will be using 'speaker' as although a poem's speaker may always have a voice, it may not always be developed enough to constitute that of a 'persona'.

1.4 Conclusion

This thesis will argue that these ideas about lyric speakers (where a poem is considered to be always one voice, or where critics use poems to create a 'persona' even when this is not appropriate) limit our understanding of what poetry is and what it can do. Despite some progress in using clear, linguistic approaches to understanding poetry, the concept of the poetic persona, which implies a direct, non-fictional connection to the poet, and which utilises a single, unmediated voice is still limiting and distorting our interpretations. Tied up with this is the assumption that the lyric is non-narrative, and therefore this persona cannot be narrating or mediating, ideas which I will challenge in my next chapter, and in chapter 4, I will demonstrate the multiple voices encoded within lyric poems. These assumptions of monoperspectivity, I will demonstrate, cause the lyric speaker to be often considered identical to the poet and therefore an unmediated direct expression of the poet's thoughts and experiences. Not only has this limited understanding of poetry, it has reduced a great deal of criticism to biography, which is misguided at best and insulting to the poet at worst, as will be demonstrated in chapters 3 and 5.

It is my intention to prove that the lyric can display narrativity without becoming fully narrative (and therefore becoming part of the genre of narrative poetry), and as such, its speaker can perform the same role as the narrator of prose fiction, mediating between the reader and the other characters, including, when utilising a homodiegetic and autodiegetic speaker, that of past and future projections of the speaker itself. This therefore answer my key research question which is whether or not lyric poetry can make use of the same complexity of perspectives, voices and mediation that narrative prose does. Without answering this question, lyric poetry will continue to be reduced to monolocality and monoperspectivism, leading to the collapsing of the poet and their speakers, and trapping analysis in biographical criticism, which in turn leads analysis to ignore the linguistic features of poetry.

In addition to identifying the problems inherent in these conceptions of lyric speakers, I will examine some key examples of lyric poems which will demonstrate

how putting aside these misconceptions can produce criticism that better explains how lyric poetry produces its effects, and in chapter 5 I will also demonstrate what linguistic features may have caused some of these misunderstandings. Key to this, is examining lyric poetry which is considered highly 'personal' to the poet, which will enable me to demonstrate that this 'personalness' is often due to stylistic features that narratologists have identified in their studies of subjectivity. By examining these, I will be able to identify which features of lyric poetry deemed 'personal' to the poet might be causing us to reduce this potential complexity to unmediated and monologic autobiography. However, many lyric poems do reference real events which could be described as biographical to the poet, and to examine the difference between these and poems which merely *appear* to recount the poet's personal experience, poetry written about wars and conflicts experienced or observed by the poet will be discussed in chapter 6. By examining how encyclopaedic knowledge is referenced in these poems, I make a distinction between poetry which offers only potential connections to private events and poetry which makes use of explicit or strongly implied links to *public* events. In addition, these conflict poems demonstrate a lack of the markers of personal poetry which I identified in chapter 5, despite the public connections to the poets' personal lives, which further proves the need to examine the positioning of the speaker away from any assumptions about the poet.

Although I have chosen to use the term 'speaker' in this thesis, I will be arguing that there is very little inherent difference between poetic speakers and prose narrators. Many definitions of lyric poetry state that it is non-narrative (rather than examining the different role that narrativity plays in lyric poetry, as opposed to in narrative poetry or prose, as Hühn and Keifer argue that we should (2005)), but defining the lyric as such is problematic and misleading. To properly examine where these misconceptions come from, it is necessary to look more closely at narrativity and to demonstrate the narrativity and layers of mediation which frequently exist, but are ignored, in lyric poetry.

2. Narratology as a theory of mediation and point of view

Whereas poetic criticism often collapses the lyric speaker into a single voice, representative of the poet, narratology has a long history of examining the various levels of narration present in narrative prose, and a far greater complexity in the positioning of voice is commonly acknowledged and discussed in narrative prose by narratologists. These narrative levels specifically separate out the narrator from the author, and also help to describe the relations between the various narrating instances within the text. This chapter sets out my argument that as narratology has already examined the various positions that narrators can utilise, it is the ideal framework with which to examine one of my central research questions, which is whether the lyric speaker can occupy a similar variety of positions.

Key to answering my research questions is the application of narratological theory to lyric poetry. As Hühn and Sommer (2012:np) argue, 'what a narratological approach to poetry is able to provide are a specific method of analyzing the sequential structure as well as a more precise instrument for differentiating the levels and modes of mediation in lyric poems'. Identifying the variety of positions that the lyric speaker can take therefore requires an examination of these narratological concepts to demonstrate their applicability to lyric poetry. As Hühn and Sommer point out, examination of these mediatory levels and modes are 'usually lacking' in analysis of poetry (2012:np), something my thesis intends to take some steps towards correcting.

2.1 Mediation

The lyric speaker is often described as unmediated, like characters in drama, who speak directly to the audience, but unlike fictional characters who are mediated through a narrator (Wolf 2005:27). In this section, I will argue that this comparison ignores the similarities between the lyric speaker and the prose narrator, as both are equally unmediated, and equally able to mediate between the reader and the texts that they narrate. This idea that the lyric speaking is communicating directly to the reader is behind the Bahktinian idea that poetry cannot have any inherent dialogue, but by using narratology to examine the mediation performed by the lyric speaker, I can demonstrate that lyric speakers and prose narrators can perform the same mediation between their readers and the events and experiences in their texts.

Mediation is frequently considered key to exploring narration. Stanzel defined narrative as a story which is mediated by the discourse of the narrator (1955:6), unlike drama, where the story unfolds directly in front of an audience. The narration is therefore seen as the medium through which the story is transmitted and the narrator of prose fiction is often said to 'mediate' the text. However, the lyric

speaker is frequently assumed to have no mediatory role. Whereas narratologists assume that narrative will have a narrator who mediates between events and characters, theoretical approaches to lyric poetry assume that lyric speakers are not unmediated, but are unable to perform a mediatory role.

Challenging this, Hühn and Sommer (2012:np) argue lyric poetry may not 'typically' make use of the full range of mediatory modes and levels utilised by narrative texts, but this does not mean that this range is not available to the form. Hühn and Sommer claim that both forms of text can 'instantiate the two fundamental constituents of the narrative process, temporal sequentiality and mediation, equally well' (2012:np). They also argue that far from lyric poetry being unmediated, narrative and lyrical texts are *both* able to 'seemingly efface' the mediatory level, and 'create the impression of performative immediacy of speaking' (2012:np).

In order to justify my use of narratological frameworks designed to analyse narrators with the speakers of lyrical poems, it is therefore important, to prove that these levels of mediation do exist in even quintessentially lyrical poems.

2.1.1 Mediation in a typically lyric poem

In this section I will demonstrate the mediatory role of the lyric speaker in a typically lyric poem. To Bakhtin, the novel uses a polyphony of voices whereas in poetry 'all fully signifying authorial interpretations are sooner or later gathered together in a single speech center and a single consciousness; all accents are gathered together in a single voice' (Bakhtin, 1984:204). If Bakhtin is right, my use of the communicative model proposed by narratologists to examine any poetry would be inappropriate, as he argues that poetry does not use multiple voices that require any mediation. It would be easy to dismiss this seemingly naïve view by offering narrative poetry, such as *Paradise Lost*, in which the complexities of the voices are surely equal to any novel, but to fully refute Bakhtin, it is necessary to examine lyric poetry.

As discussed before, Wolf proposes a framework for defining the lyric poem. This means poems in which the 'complete realization of the range of the lyric traits within which historical variability could then be conceptualized...' (2005:40) must exist. Such a poem would possess 'a maximum of these lyric traits and would ideally be identifiable by all recipients as a typical poem without hesitation' (2005:40). One of these features is 'the existence of a seemingly unmediated consciousness or agency, perhaps even of a 'persona' as the fictional origin of the text' (2005:27) (though Wolf is here discussing opinions in literary criticism, and not his own.) Poems like this one are often seen, in the words of Wolf, as 'unmediated', in contrast to narrative characters, who are mediated 'through a narrator' (2005:27). As an example of such a poem, Wolf offers Christina Rossetti's *Song* (appendix 8.2.1), which he believes 'shows all the aforementioned characteristics', including the existence of an unmediated consciousness and a monologic speaker (2005:40). This should be, therefore, the perfect example to challenge Bakhtin's view that poetry is 'a pure and direct expression of [the poet's] own intention' (1981:285) without any mediation performed by the speaker.

The poem is written from the perspective of a living person telling their 'dearest' not to mourn for them after death.

The assumption of monologicity and a lack of mediation also frequently leads to treating the speaker in poems like *Song* as identical to the poets who wrote them, as the 'single speech center' and 'single consciousness' does not allow space for the poet and speaker to be separated. Jamison writes about the assumption made by Victorian critics that female poets' writing was assumed to be 'almost literal self-expression – tears, sighs, or songs that sprung, above all, naturally to the page.' (2006:259) (which suggests that criticism of Christina Rossetti's poetry often suffers from many of the same assumptions as that of Sylvia Plath and other confessional poets, which will be discussed in chapter five.) Christina Rossetti's poetry (like much of lyric poetry) is seen to be direct self-expression. Jamison believes that this stance was particularly obvious when considering Victorian criticism of other women's poetry, which 'privileged the expressive and emotive in poetry and defined women's poetry in particular almost exclusively in these terms.' Women's poetry, Jamison believes, was thought to be little more than an "'expansion outwards", "expression", a "carrying out" of self from enclosure within a barrier' (2006:259). Quite apart from the patronising notion that Christina Rossetti (once a potential poet laureate) was not creating carefully organised poems, but simply writing down how she felt, this assumes that her poetry is autobiographical. This assumption is part of where the notion of the 'unmediated consciousness' of lyric poetry comes from - the poem is unmediated because the poet has not created a narrator through which to communicate their ideas, therefore the communication between poet and reader is unmediated. As Hühn says, the features of the lyric may 'make it seem as if mediacy is replaced by the performative immediacy of speech' but this does not mean that mediation does not occur (2005:3). This is why, despite a similar lack of mediation between the narrator and the reader, the unmediated nature of lyric poetry is rarely compared to the similarly unmediated nature of prose narration: prose fiction is less frequently viewed as being a direct reflection of the author's psyche. Narratologists have long recognised that narrators are not identical with the authors who create them.

According to Jamison and Maxwell, Christina Rossetti (like the confessional poets who came after her) resisted this notion that her poetry was an artless form of self-expression and expressed concern that her poems would be 'regarded as the outpourings of a wounded spirit' (2006:255-6). According to Lootens, these fears were well grounded, as reviews of Christina Rossetti's poetry either claim that her poetry seems to 'gush up out of her heart', or that the poet created the poems by 'singing sweetly' or 'piping' like 'a bird on a spray in the sunshine, or the quaint singing with which a child amuses itself' (1996:166). Even further, 'metrical and formal innovation, when noted, is understood as "apparently lawless as a bird's song, yet, like the bird's song, obeying a law too subtle to be seen"' (Jamison 206:256). This approach not only makes pointless (and according to the poet, incorrect) links between literature and biography, but also offensively dismisses the skilful and careful composition of poetry as nothing more creative than natural phenomena

such as a spider's web or a snowflake. In other words, like the later confessional poets (discussed in chapter 5) Rossetti was seen as writing down her own feelings, rather than the fictional feelings of an invented consciousness.

The first part of *Song* is written using imperative verbs: '*Sing* no sad songs for me', '*plant* thou no roses', '*Be* the green grass' which focuses the attention on the lyric 'you' (the intended recipient of the poem, whom I will presume to be fictionalized). This means that although we focus on the speaker's instructions, we are also led to imagine the character of the speaker's 'dearest' through the implications of her words. In the second stanza, the focus is on what existence will be like for the speaker once they are dead. The speaker will not 'see the shadows', 'feel the rain' and 'hear the nightingale'. This, through the negation, characterises them as someone who probably does these things currently.

Through a study of deixis, Green argues that the lyric often positions the events of the poem and its communication (the 'content time' and 'coding time' respectively) as simultaneous (1992:126). This creates an 'illusion whereby the reader experiences the text-world from the perspective of the author's poetic persona as if the scene were unfolding in real time for both participants (Gavins, 2007a:134). This is only partly true for *Song*, as although the speaker does seem to be communicating to an addressee 'in real time', the majority of what is being communicated is about the future, when the speaker is dead. The speaker is therefore mediating between the reader and the possible future that is created by the poem. The speaker may be unmediated, but her role is mediatory. One way in which this could be defined more clearly is through an exploration of the text-worlds created by the poem.

Text-world theory was devised by Werth (1995, 1999) and later refined by Gavins (2005, 2007a) as a way of describing the mental representations generated by those participating in discourse, including the reading and writing of texts such as poetry, drawing not just on the linguistic content of those texts, but the context in which they are communicated and received. Text-world theory can be used to demonstrate how participants in discourse make use of world-building elements, such as deictic expressions, to create mental representations called text-worlds. In turn, these text-worlds can contain elements that prompt further world-switches, such as modal expressions or direct speech, potentially leading to layers of embedded sub-worlds. It is not only useful in demonstrating the narrative layers within poetry currently considered to be flatly unmediated, but it is also particularly useful to my argument for a reassessment of lyric poetry and the role that its speakers play because it is not associated with poetry in particular. Text-world theory has been used to analyse a wide range of literary and non-literary texts including advertising (Hidalgo Downing, 2003 and Gavins, 2007a), drama (Cruikshank and Lahey, 2010), film (Lugea, 2013) and conversation (Gavins, 2007a). In short, text-world theory is designed to account not for specifically literary or poetic effects, but for all discourse, making it an ideal tool with which to examine the features of poetry without limiting ourselves based on misleading definitions or expectations.

A text-world analysis of the first stanza demonstrates the mediatory role that the speaker plays in creating various modal sub-worlds which are where the majority of the poem's focus lies:

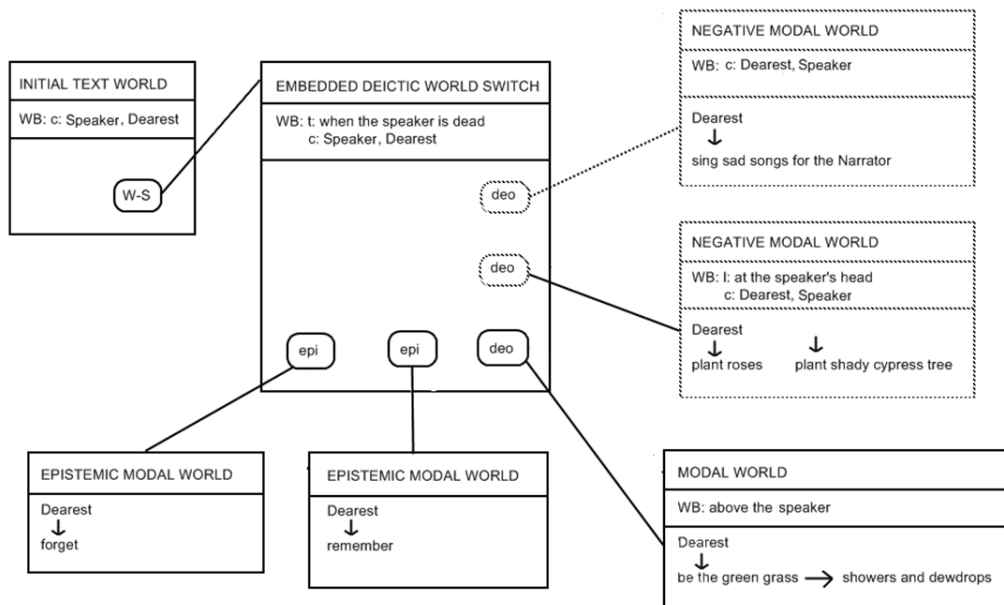


Figure 2.1

As demonstrated in figure 2.1, the first stanza of the poem begins with a world-switch: the speaker points to a future time (when she is dead) and the rest of the stanza is based in this world. We have no world builders with which to situate the initial text-world in either a time or a location. This text-world contains four further world-switches, but like the initial text-world, there is no function advancing information within it – the activity all takes place in the text-worlds embedded within this text-world.

The first of these text-worlds is a negative deontic modal world. The speaker gives clear instructions (using the imperative mood) to the addressee that he is not to sing sad songs for her when she is dead. (I am aware neither of these participants are assigned gender, so my use of 'she' for the Lyric-I and 'he' for the Lyric-you is entirely arbitrary, and only for the purpose of better differentiation.) The second is also a negative deontic modal world in which the addressee is instructed not to plant roses or cypress trees above the grave. This produces the clearest and most fully realised text-world so far – there are location, time and character world builders, and there is also clear activity, unlike the text-world it is embedded in, which lacks locative world builders, and the initial text-world, which lacks locative and temporal world-builders. Similarly, when the addressee is instructed to 'be the green grass' above the speaker, this creates a modal world in which he is located above her and is (somehow, I presume metaphorically) being the green grass that covers her grave.

These three text-worlds focus themselves on the action of the speaker's 'dearest'; any interpretations of the speaker's character or motivations must be inferred indirectly from what she communicates to her 'dearest', and it would be difficult to

infer much more than her lack of desire to be mourned, and her indifference to being remembered. We can also infer more than indifference through the insistence that no *sad* songs are sung – does this perhaps mean that happy songs would be acceptable? In which case, the speaker does not seem indifferent only to being mourned, but also to death itself.

The ‘dearest’ can be characterised through similar inferences. The first second level modal world-switch is negative (‘Sing *no* sad songs for me’), which means the reader will have to create a world in which the narratee sings sad songs and plants shady Cypress trees over the speaker’s grave. As Gavins asserts in her comprehensive guide to text-worlds, even when a negation of an action occurs, ‘the text’s readers nevertheless create a mental representation of an enactor performing precisely these actions’ (2007a:102). It is impossible to conceive of a negative without first mentally constructing its positive, and as a result of this construction, ‘The contents of this text-world are foregrounded in the reader’s mind, since they must first be brought into focus in the discourse in order then to be negated’ (2007a:102). Gavins also points out that these positive versions of negative text-worlds can influence readings of the text. In this case, the fact that the speaker’s ‘Dearest’ is being asked *not* to sing sad songs or plant shady cypress trees implies that the speaker thinks that the ‘dearest’ would be likely to do so. This, in turn, results in a characterisation of the ‘dearest’ as someone who would likely grieve for the speaker (who clearly does not wish him to be sad), and we therefore create a close relationship between them.

The non-negated deontic world works in a similar way: by instructing the ‘dearest’ to complete function advancing tasks, (such as ‘be the green grass above me’) the reader is therefore likely to characterise him as it is not associated with poetry in particular as someone who is not likely to do such things without prompting. The character of the ‘dearest’ as created by these two text-worlds is therefore someone who would not only mourn the speaker in a grand fashion, but who is not likely to ‘be the green grass’ above her. This is a presumably metaphorical instruction, which as it does not have a clear target, could be interpreted in many different ways, but all of them suggest a desire for an undramatic approach to grief.

The poem does, therefore, create the consciousness of the addressee, and as the only access we have to this character is through text-worlds built by the speaker, it can hardly be said to be unmediated.

The second stanza of the poem focuses on what death will be like for the speaker, and does not mention the ‘dearest’ at all, as can be seen in figure 2.2:

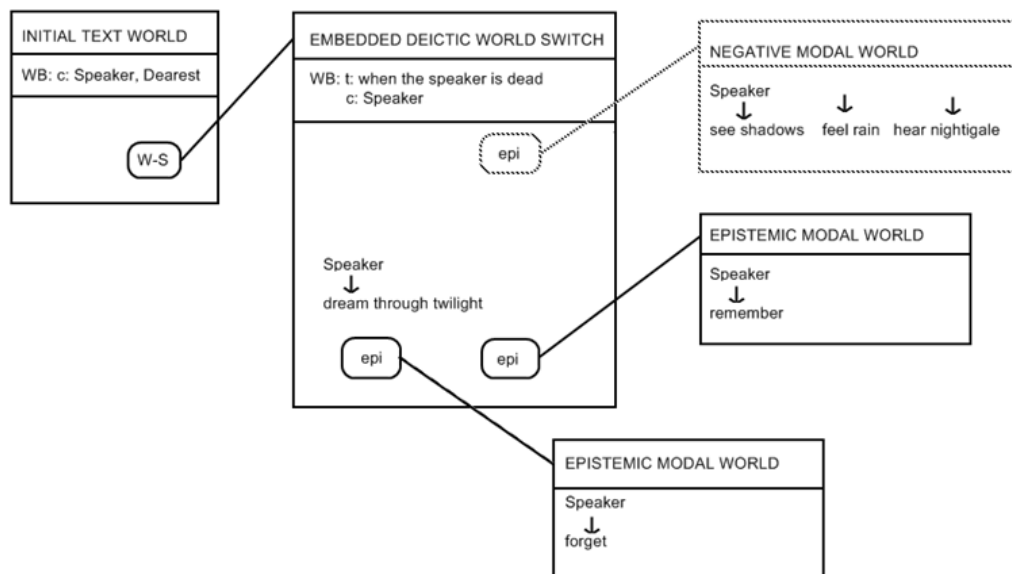


Figure 2.2

Like the first stanza, the second begins with a negative epistemic modal world in which the speaker expresses certainty that when she is dead she 'will not see the shadows', 'feel the rain' or 'hear the nightingale.' Just as the consciousness of her 'dearest' was mediated through her address, here we have the consciousness of the speaker's future dead self, mediated through her present consciousness. Just as the negative imperatives of the first stanza implied someone who would otherwise commit those acts, these negations imply actions that the speaker is currently taking or is able to take. The speaker can be therefore characterised as someone who is likely to see shadows, feel rain and hear nightingales.

The nightingale in question, however, is not simply singing, but is singing 'as if in pain'. The use of a simile (rather than the more metaphorical 'green grass' in the first stanza) focuses our attention on the speaker's attitude rather than the nightingale. The nightingale is not singing in pain, it merely sounds as if it is, and the person to whom it sounds this way is the speaker. The speaker's choice of words does not just impact on our understanding of the events, but on our impression of the speaker, and as a result her present (alive) state does not seem entirely happy. This is compounded by the speaker's indifference to whether or not she remembers life at all (the two epistemic modal worlds of forgetting and remembering are given equal weight), and her use of the function advancing phrase 'dreaming through the twilight'. Such a poetically beautiful description of death cannot help but imply that the opposite is true for her life – just as in the initial text-world her twilight both rises and sets, she is also not dreaming, and perhaps she wishes to be.

The poem gives us access to three distinct consciousnesses, therefore – the speaker's, the future dead self of the speaker, and the speaker's dearest. The second and third of these clearly cannot be labelled as unmediated, as we can only access them through the implications of the speaker, but even the characterisation of the speaker often comes mediated through text-worlds. Our impression that the speaker

does not have a happy life we infer not only through her instructions to her 'dearest' and her choice of imagery, but through the characterisation of her dead self as peacefully dreaming, without hearing the bittersweet song of the nightingale. The speaker's words serve a dual purpose, therefore: they are both building the modal world in which she is dead, but also telling us more about the initial text-world, in which she is alive. This poem cannot be described as monologic, therefore, as the speaker's words serve more than one purpose and result in access to more than one consciousness. Even the consciousness of the speaker comes to us somewhat mediated, as her character is mediated through our understanding of the possible future where we infer details about her based on what we are told about her future self. Despite being a clear and uncontroversial example of lyric poetry, this poem does not display a monologic or unmediated voice. If this quintessential example of the lyric form does not display the monologic consciousness that Bakhtin expects to find within poetry, it seems unlikely that it can be universalised as the one important distinguishing feature of lyric poetry.

To defend Wolf, it is possible that my definition of an 'unmediated consciousness' does not match his. He argues that the speaker is usually presented as the 'alleged origo' of the poem, which is true in this case, and thus the reader has direct access to this consciousness, unlike the characters within novels, who are mediated to us through the narrator (Wolf, 2005:27). However, this is suggesting that it is appropriate to compare the speaker in a lyric with a character in a novel rather than the narrator of that novel. Looking at *Song* it can be clearly seen that there are characters who are mediated through the speaker, just as characters in novels are mediated through narrators. Hühn, in the same book in which this chapter is published, uses 'narrator' (2005) to refer to the lyric speaker, and this points to a far more useful comparison, as both lyric speakers *and* narrators are usually presented as 'alleged origos' of their texts, and both lyric poetry and narrative prose can make use of characters who are mediated to us through them. This supposed defining characteristic of lyric poetry is therefore applicable to nearly all lyric and narrative texts, both prose and poetry.

The distinction between fictional characters and prose narrators is not always clear, however. Characters can also be narrators, as in *Wuthering Heights* for example, and first person narrators are usually diegetic characters in the stories that they tell, as in *Moby Dick*. Such narrators are usually called 'character narrators' (Fludernik, 2012:27). Not only can characters narrate, but narrators can be fictional characters in their own right, and action could occur at the 'level of discourse/mediation' where the narrator addresses any narratees, and what is deemed the 'level of action' could also make use of another level of embedded narration. *Song*, therefore, is no more an example of unmediated consciousness than *Moby Dick*. Just like other first-person texts, the main character of *Song* mediates between the reader and the other characters and is responsible for building the worlds and the characters in the poem. In the case of *Song*, and many other lyric poems, the characters which are mediated to us by the speaker are the speaker and the addressee themselves. Therefore I have not proved the *lack* of an unmediated consciousness in *Song*, but I have

demonstrated that the consciousness performs the same mediatory role as would be expected from any narrator. In which case, an unmediated consciousness to which we have direct access and which is presented as the 'alleged origo' of the text could describe not only the lyric speaker but also prose narrators.

So while Wolf believes that this 'unmediated consciousness' is 'arguably relevant for the majority of poems' (2005:39), it is not a notable characteristic. Instead what is notable is whether or not this unmediated consciousness has any mediatory role, and due to the assumption that lyric poetry is 'monoperspectival' and primarily focused on the character of this consciousness this possibility is rarely considered. However, if lyric speakers are compared to narrators through the use of narratological frameworks, their mediatory role can be more effectively examined.

The application of narratological theory to lyric poetry is therefore a useful way of examining the positioning of its speakers, as without it critics tend to focus on the direct communication between the speaker and the reader. Without examining the full range of communicative levels, embedded mediation is ignored, and the speaker's role is examined as monologic. However, by using the framework of narratology, we can more properly examine the frequently ignored mediatory role performed by these speakers.

2.2 Levels of narration

As I have demonstrated, lyric speakers have a mediatory role that proves that the narratological framework used to examine the role of the narrator is applicable to lyric poetry. In both lyric poetry and narrative prose, mediatory voices navigate between the reader and the content of the text, which can be spread across several levels, as demonstrated in my analysis of *Song*. Crucial to my research questions is the separation of the author from their narrator, as this separation has not traditionally been examined in lyric poetry, as lyric poetry is frequently assumed to provide direct access to poets' thoughts. However, the separation of the author from their narrator is only one of the commonly discussed levels of narration in narratological theory; this separation accounts for the distance between the poet and the speaker that they create, but as discussed earlier, this speaker must also be separated from the other levels of the text which they mediate. Without examining these levels in lyric poetry, the mediatory role of the lyric speaker will be missed, and therefore the various positions that this speaker can take will remain undiscussed.

In this section, I will argue that not only does the lyric speaker perform a mediatory role, but that the more detailed levels of communication and mediation commonly used in narratology are also applicable.

Figure 2.3 explains these narrative levels adapted from Jahn (2005), itself an adaptation of Genette (1980).

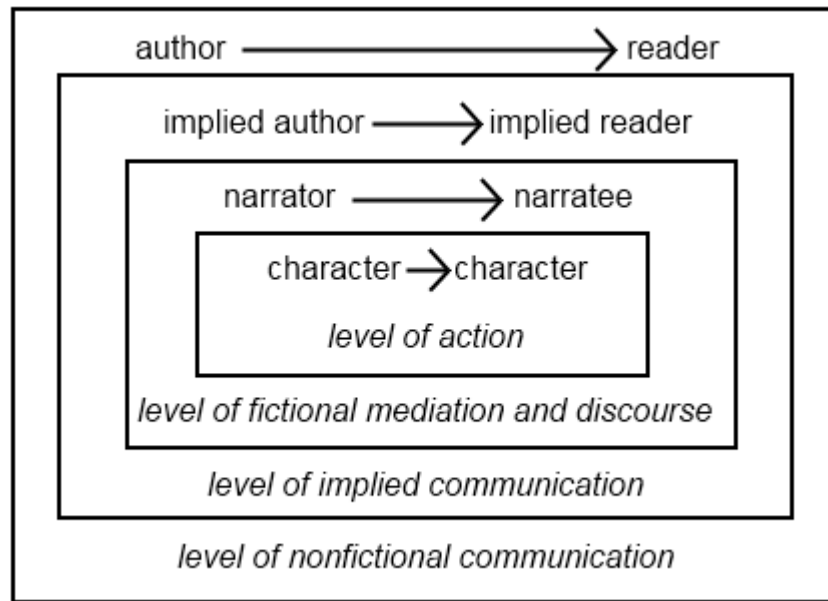


Figure 2.3

The level of nonfictional communication, in which an author is writing the text and it is read by various readers is also called the ‘discourse world’ in text-world theory. Within this, is the level implied by the text, which is created by reading the text and imagining who may be reading and writing it. The author and reader(s) implied by the text may be far removed from the reality of those actually reading and writing it. Within this level is the level of fictional mediation and discourse in which the narrator addresses their narratee(s). The story, which this narrator narrates, occurs in the level of action, in which all the fictional characters experiencing the events of the story interact.

The terminology of this presents us with a few problems, as without a foregrounded narrative, or any expectation that a lyric poem will use a narrator (rather than a voice, a speaker, a persona or an addresser), the terms ‘narrator’ and ‘narratee’ are controversial. Similarly, the ‘level of action’ is inappropriate in many lyric poems, where the action is internal, psychological or non-specific. To this end, I have adapted this model to one with a less jarring and more applicable use of terminology that still demonstrates the deictic levels nested within the poem (figure 2.4). Jahn, like many other narratologists, does not find the concept of the implied author useful, and so omits it from his diagram entirely. As my focus is separating the speaker from the poet, rather than the poet from any implied poet, I have also omitted this level in my model.

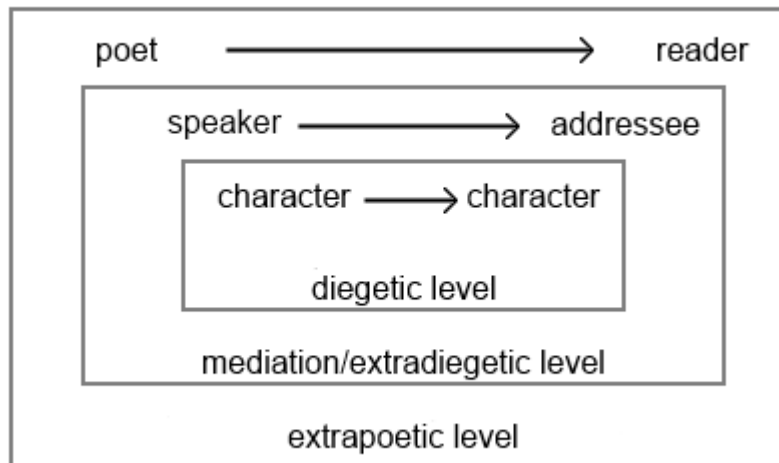


Figure 2.4

Figure 2.4 clearly separates the extrapoetic/non-fictional level, in which the poet writes the poem and the reader reads it, from the world of the poem itself. It also allows for poetic speakers to narrate other characters (possibly past or future versions of themselves or the addressee) and therefore helps us to recognise that the poem is not necessarily monologic or unmediated, even if the focus is on the level of mediation in which the speaker exists. This is not to say that in every poem or every piece of prose fiction there will be more than one character, or that every poem will have a clear addressee, but just that this is the level at which characters in the text's discourse will occur.

2.2.1 Narrative levels in first-person narration

It is possible that narratological models have not been applied to the speakers in lyric poetry because the narrator of prose fiction so frequently uses the third person to describe the participants in the narrative, and therefore has a more obviously mediatory role. Lyric poetry, on the other hand, is far more associated with the first-person, which makes it easier to miss the mediation and collapse the speaker with the experiencer that they discuss. First-person narrators are a part of the story that they tell, which makes distinguishing between the mediatory level and the level of action more difficult. This may account for some of the difficulty in separating out the lyric speaker from their diegetic self who is experiencing the events or emotions that the speaker tells us about.

However, narratologists have adapted their theories to account for first-person narration, and Adamson argues that whether or not we perceive narrators as using predominantly the third as opposed to the first-person may be largely a matter of historical style (1994:61). Hansen claims that first-person epistolary novels were the norm before the shift to third-person omniscient narration in the nineteenth century (2008:317). Similarly, third-person lyric poetry is not uncommon or hard to find (Wolf, 2005:28), and therefore it would be a mistake to discount narratological

models for the analysis of the lyric speaker because of these perceived differences in the genres.

In fact, labelling narrators as 'first' and 'third' person may be misleading, as the terms do not strictly apply to grammatical person, and are not necessarily related to the first and third person pronouns. A third-person narrator may even directly refer to themselves using the first-person, as the narrator of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* does. To correct this Genette uses the term 'homodiegetic' to describe the first-person narrator, who is 'present as a character in the story he tells' and 'heterodiegetic' to describe those narrators who does not take part in the story (1980, pp. 244-245). Therefore the distinction is whether or not the narrator is in or outside the world of the story that they are telling. A distinction can also be made between intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrators, which correspond with whether or not the narrators take part in the story that they are telling (Rimmon-Kenan, 2007:95). The speaker in Simon Armitage's *Poem* is therefore heterodiegetic and extradiegetic, as there is no indication that they participate at all in the world that they report on, and all the diegetic participants are reported distally, using the third person. In contrast, Christina Rossetti's speaker in *Song* is discussing their own death, and their future self is one of the characters at the diegetic level, making them a homodiegetic and intradiegetic speaker.

2.2.1 Subjectivity

Although the use of first-person speakers in lyric poetry might lead critics to assume that this speaker is personal to the poet or significant to the poem, narratologists have argued that a homodiegetic or first-person speaker does not entail a personal perspective, or even that the text will focus on that particular persona. Genette distinguishes between internal focalisation, where the narrator is restricted to accessing the mind of one character, and external focalisation, where the narrator does not offer access to any of the characters' consciousnesses and merely relates events (1972:188–89). External focalisation is 'objective' whereas internal focalisation is 'subjective' on behalf of the focalising character.

Edmiston points out that although first-person narration is often associated with internal focalisation, external focalisation is still possible when a first-person narrator chooses 'to withhold his own earlier thoughts and thus adopt an external focalization' and when narrators make use of 'foreshadowing and other types of prolepsis' (1989:731). First-person narration is not necessarily internal, therefore, and the same linguistic features which indicate a subjective or objective viewpoint can be used whether a text uses a first or third person speaker or narrator.

Brinton lists seven broad linguistic features which are found in free indirect speech and thought presentation which combine to create representations of the speech, thought and perspectives of fictional characters (1990), which Adamson calls 'empathetic narrative' (1994). These include co-temporality between the narrative past and the characters' present, a lack of antecedents in the use of pronouns, demonstratives, definite articles, the use of 'nonembeddable, independent clauses of

direct quotation' often with 'expressive or emotive content', expression of 'the character's emotions, attitudes, judgments, evaluations, and beliefs, his "epistemic and judgmental meaning" (Fillmore 1974:16)', 'verbs of consciousness or of communication' in parentheticals and no indication of the communicative function (1990:366). Similarly, Fludernik includes such features as the use of pet or familiar names (2003:137), the use of specific address to indicate relationships (2003:138), the use of the reported consciousness's idiolect (2003:138), a lack of a use of names (as 'we frequently do not think of people by their names' (2003:139), 'vague or imprecise references or locutions' (2003:140), referring to objects by definite noun phrases (2003:140), the use of 'this and that' and 'these/those' to indicate 'emotional closeness or distance' (2003:140), 'highly evaluative designations' (2003:140) and 'designations that are very much from the reporter's perspective' (2003:140).

Brinton and Adamson's descriptions focus on heterodiegetic narrators, who are describing events that they were not a part of. However, this empathic narration could also be used by a homodiegetic narrator, who is part of the narrative events they are reporting on. Within the category of homodiegetic narrators, Genette distinguishes between narrators who are identical with the protagonist, and those who are present but are outside witnesses to the events, or are peripheral to them (Farner, 2014:206). (Moby Dick, for example, uses a narrator whose past self is present for the action of the novel, but Ahab is the character who is central to the narrative, making the narrator of Moby Dick homodiegetic, but not autodiegetic.) Autodiegetic narrators may or may not make use of these subjectivity features. As Edmiston explains, a first-person narrator may 'withhold' the thoughts and feelings of their past, experiencing self, or may offer information that their experiencing self cannot have known, thus clearly separating their narrating and experiencing selves.

In prose narrative, subjective first-person narration may involve reporting of past events in such a way to minimise the distance between when the events occurred and the time in which they were reported, in order to indicate that the past has a continuing effect on the present. Cohn calls this 'consonant' narration (1984). In contrast, she calls narration which makes use of the distance between a narrator and their narrated past-self to give the reader more information than the narrated self can know 'dissonant first-person narration'. She offers Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (1890) as an example of consonant first-person narration, as 'Not once in this entire novel does its narrator draw attention to his present, narrating self by adding information, opinions, or judgements that were not his during his past experience' and also describes the novel as 'wholly self-centered, indeed self-obsessed' (Cohn, 1984:158). This could also describe Holden Caulfield, the narrator of J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*.

One way that this subjective consonance can be achieved is through use of the progressive aspect, which creates the impression that events of the past are 'in progress at the present moment' (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005:Chapter 7) and which is often used to signal 'expressive emotional involvement,' (Fludernik, 2003:200). Similarly, the present perfect tense combines the past and the present

and therefore 'indicates that what happened in the past has 'some kind of relevance' to the present (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005:Ch. 6). Green argues that this technique is common in lyric poetry, which often positions the events of the poem and its communication (the 'content time' and 'coding time' respectively) as simultaneous (1992:126). Adamson discusses Samuel Taylor Coleridge's and Ezra Pound's use of the present perfect to make it clear that 'the speaker is not only reporting a past event but also a current existential condition and its continuing affective power' (1998:667-8). These features will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, where I will use point of view analysis to examine confessional poetry with strong subjective features.

Labelling lyric speakers as monologic and monoperspectival, and identical with their poets collapses these levels of communication and assumes that the speaker will be autodiegetic and identical to their experiencing self. Lyric poetry may be predominantly associated with first-person narrative, but that should not mean that its speakers are always homodiegetic, that homodiegetic lyric speakers are autodiegetic, or that these autodiegetic speakers subjectively represent the thoughts and feelings of their experiencing selves.

However, when an autodiegetic narrator does make use of linguistic features of subjectivity, the result is a narrator who focalises closely on the thoughts and feelings of their past self. This lack of objectivity obscures the gap between the narrator and the past self that they are narrating, and creates the illusion of immediacy. Such poetry, which subjectively presents the personal perspective of the speaker and creates the impression that the communicative levels of mediation and narration have been collapsed, is therefore more likely to be assumed to be an autobiographical poem without a distinction between the poet and the speaker. Lyric poetry such as this is extremely common, and extreme examples of this will be examined further in chapter five, but does not account for the entirety or even the majority of the genre. In chapters four and six I will examine alternative positions that lyric speakers can take, and demonstrate how the assumption that these speakers are monoperspectival representations of their poets can limit our understanding of poems which do not exclusively show these markers of subjectivity.

2.3 Narratorial reliability and the implied author

2.3.1 The implied author

The New Criticism made some of the first attempts to separate out the author from their writing. Beardsley and Wimsatt were critical of the many attempts to make 'judgements about a poem or novel based on one's knowledge of the writer's life' (1946:3) and instead argued that literary criticism should be based on the text alone.

With the concept of the implied author, Booth intended to both adhere to the New Criticism's insistence on the separation of the author from their work whilst avoiding the need to focus entirely on the text (1969:112). A purely text-based criticism, Booth argued made it impossible to examine the audience of a text and the 'ideas and beliefs' that may shape it (1969:112-3).

The concept of the implied author has been the subject of a great deal of debate. For example, Hempfer declared the term to have 'no theoretical use', Zipfel deemed it 'vague' and 'imprecise', and Nünning and Nünning claim that 'structuralist and cognitive narratologists' argue for the abandonment of the term entirely (2001:89-90). In many cases, it becomes difficult to separate out the implied author from the narrator, at least when the narrator is a reliable one. For example, Phelan attempts to distinguish George Eliot's narrator in *Middlemarch* from the implied George Eliot by 'regarding the narrator as a wise, ironic, and gender-neutral person that the implied Eliot adopts' (1996:112) but does not explain why he does not regard this implied author as 'wise, ironic, and gender-neutral' themselves. As Phelan points out, 'no one questions whether this narrator shares Eliot's norms' (1996:112), in which case, it is not clear on what basis he makes the distinction.

Although Booth was the first to make use of the term 'implied author' in 1961, the concept itself has its roots as far back as 1927, when Tynjanov referred to the abstract 'literary personality' of a text as separate from the person who wrote it. Similarly, Booth used the term to refer to the author evoked by the text, rather than the writer themselves (1961). This acknowledges that reading a text causes the reader to call a writer to mind without assuming that this provides any automatic insight into the real writer, and therefore demonstrates a useful distinction that is rarely made in poetic criticism. This 'implied author' can be viewed as a proxy figure for the author themselves, and a 'created version of the real man' (1961:73). Importantly, this also allows for the same writer to write texts that cause the reader to infer different authors, rather than always attempting to link back the different texts to the same historical person. As I will demonstrate in chapter five, the fixation on getting back to the 'real' poet by using their body of work as evidence with which to analyse them both limits our understanding of these poems and also distracts critical attention away from the poems themselves.

2.3.2 Unreliable narrators

Booth was also the first to propose the concept of the 'unreliable narrator', which, as Nünning and Nünning say, 'has been considered to be among the basic and indispensable categories of textual analysis' (2001:89). This unreliability could be due to the character's young age or diminished capacity for understanding, their limited knowledge, their intense personal involvement and subjectivity, or their questionable morality (Rimmon-Kenan, 1989:100-101). Booth defined a narrator as reliable when they speak 'in accordance with the norms of the work' and as unreliable when they do not (1961: 158-9). Similarly, Chapman defined unreliable narration as when 'the narrator's account is at odds with the implied reader's surmises about the story's real intentions' which leads the reader to 'hold the narrator suspect' (1978: 233). The distinction between a reliable and an unreliable narrator is therefore based on the distance between the values and judgement of the implied author and those of their narrator. Such a distance makes it almost impossible to view the narrator as identical to that of the author or implied author, thus suggesting that the lyric speakers who are treated as the voices of the poets

who created them are likely to be reliable. (Phelan (1996) also associates reliability with the lyric speaker, which will be explored in more depth in the next section.)

However, Nünning (2005:91 and 2008:30-45), like Jahn (2005), believes that the concept of the implied author is contestable, both methodologically and theoretically (2005) and therefore is not a sound basis for defining unreliability. In addition, Altes argues that the concept of reliability itself lacks methodological rigour, as 'establishing unreliability would rest on the problematic assumptions that there is a reliable view on the world and on selves, pre-supposing a shared sense of psychological, moral and linguistic normality as the default setting of narration' (2015:70). On the contrary, Nünning argues, 'no generally accepted standards of normality exist which can serve as the basis for impartial judgment' (1999: 64). Despite this, Nünning and Nünning believe that 'unreliability is an effect that most readers intuitively recognize' (2001:91) even if narratologists have yet to pin point how they manage this. As Altes points out, despite his criticism of using the implied author to determine reliability, 'Nünning does not offer a method, let alone a better method, to describe or detect unreliable narration' (2015: 73) and inferring the distance between the narrator and the (implied) author is still key in narratology when assessing reliability.

Some narratologists associate reliability not just with the narrator being the plausible voice of the implied author, but with their position outside the diegetic level of the story. Phelan argues that 'any time we have a character-narrator', (as distinct from an authorial narrator) 'whether that character is protagonist, witness, or reporter at several removes from the action, the question of reliability is inevitable' (1996:112-3). He therefore associates authorial narrators (who have no direct involvement in the diegetic level of the story) as fundamentally reliable, but any narrator who has an involvement in the story as potentially unreliable. This is not because clear distance can be found between their voice and that of the implied author, but because their perspective on the action is necessarily limited. For this reason, many critics think of all first-person narrators as potentially unreliable.

This may suggest that lyric speakers, as they so commonly use the first-person, may be more frequently unreliable than narrative narrators. However, as I have pointed out, lyric speakers are more closely associated with reliability, as the poet's and the speaker's position is often considered identical. This is not the case with narrative prose, as first-person narrators are rarely considered to be identical with their authors, unless the story they are telling is clearly autobiographical. For example, Booth offers *The Great Gatsby* as a novel with a reliable first-person narrator (1983), but what makes Nick Carraway a reliable narrator is not that we believe the events he narrates have been experienced by F. Scott Fitzgerald, but that he is presented as a trustworthy observer of events, and that we assume that his perspective on the events he narrates are likely to be similar to those of the author's. He stays 'aloof' and carefully reflects on events after considerable time has passed (Murphy, 2012:76). Murphy argues that his reliability stems from five key factors: 'Nick's undisclosed, secure speaking location; his use of non-rhetorical standard English; his

observer-narrator status; his ethical maturity, which has been secured before the novel commences by his experience of wartime action; and his retrospective reevaluation of Jay Gatsby as the Aristotelian anagnorisis of a marked order narrative (Aristotle, 1996; cf. Phelan and Martin, 1999).’ (2012: 76). The frequent use of first-person narration by lyric speakers, and their corresponding position in the diegetic level that they report on, does not necessarily mean that these speakers lack reliability, therefore. However, reliability is also not enough to fully explain why lyric speakers are so closely associated with their poets. To more fully explore why the use of the first-person in lyric poetry and prose narration differs in this regard, a close examination of narrative and eventfulness is required, which I shall explore in my next chapter.

Examining reliability may not be sufficient, but it is still crucial in assessing whether or not a speaker is likely to be considered the monologic voice of the poet, as unreliability marks a clear difference between the position of the speaker and the implied poet.

2.3.3 Reliable and unreliable poetic speakers

Although the concept of narratorial reliability is the subject of much continuing discussion in narratology, it ‘is hardly ever used in the discussion and analysis of poems’ aside from ‘the sub-genre of the dramatic monologue, where the untrustworthiness of the speaker is obvious, and, in fact, a constructive feature’ (Huhn, 2015:173). The lyric speaker, on the other hand, is closely associated with its poet. Although lyric speakers’ voices are considered reliable (insofar as they lack distance from their implied poets) the concept of reliability is rarely used to discuss this.

Phelan believes that the concept of reliability can be used to distinguish between narrative and lyric poetry, because a reliable poetic speaker takes the reader’s focus away from any narrative that they might be mediating. However, when writing about reliable and unreliable narrators, he does not make a similar claim that a reliable narrator reduces the narrativity in prose fiction. In this section, I will examine Phelan’s argument and conclude that although he is wrong that that reliability reduces the level of narrativity, an unreliable lyrical speaker does reduce the level of lyricism. As reliability reduces the apparent distance between speakers/narrators and their writers, an unreliable poetic speaker cannot be mistaken for the poet that created them, and therefore cannot be described as ‘personal’ or monologic.

Phelan applies his ideas about reliability in an attempt to distinguish between the lyrical and the narrative by examining two of Robert Frost’s poems, *Nothing Gold Can Stay* and *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (1996), concluding that both are lyric because of the lack of unreliability in the speakers.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (appendix 8.2.2), right from the title, sets out a narrative scene, orientating us with a specific time and place, and is narrated by a clear fictional persona, who indicates their subjective perspective in the first line

through the mental verb 'think', which focuses us on the speaker's internal thought processes rather than simply the ownership of the woods. The speaker is in a specific place, marked by the proximal deictic 'these', referring to the woods, in line one and 'here' in line three. In the next stanza, the setting is expanded by describing the speaker's position as 'Between the woods and frozen lake', 'without a farmhouse near' and the time is described in a way that is meaningful to the speaker as 'The darkest evening of the year'. There is a clear sense of conflict in the narrative, with the speaker torn between enjoying the 'lovely' woods, and the long journey ahead of them. This is emphasised by the anthropomorphised horse, onto whom the speaker projects their knowledge that stopping at this point is not a logical course of action, despite their desires, and the evaluative language which describes the woods from the speaker's perspective in ways that make it clear that they are appealing ('lovely, dark and deep', the 'easy' wind and 'downy' flake.) The fact that the poem ends with 'promises to keep' and 'miles' that the speaker must travel implies resolution to the conflict. The speaker can be described as autodiegetic, therefore, as they are the both the protagonist in the narrative and also the mediator between the narrative events and the reader.

Phelan agrees that the poem has elements of narrativity, and also lists its tellable components such as: 'a character, an unstable situation' and 'a resolution of the instability' (1996:33). Despite this, he defines it as a lyric poem 'because of the way characterization and judgment work' (1996:33). Phelan argues that 'the mimetic component of the speaker's character is highly restricted - his main trait is his desire for surcease' and that this 'allows readers to project themselves into the poem, to experience vicariously the speaker's desire and choice' instead of treating the character as part of a narrative.

However, it is difficult to see how many more traits this character could be inferred as having in a text of 109 words without reducing the specificity of the other narrative elements. I also reject the idea that more detailed characterisation prevents readers from 'projecting' themselves into the character's situation. As is the case with *Animal Farm*, detailed narratives and characters can be used as allegory for historical or personal situations, so readers are quite able to both 'project themselves' in the position of characters in fictional situation and to treat them 'as part of a narrative'. In addition, I have not found anyone arguing that restricting the character of a narrator reduces the narrativity present in prose.

Phelan is categorising *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* as a lyric poem rather than a narrative one because of perceived differences between genres of poetry, rather than because of any lack of narrativity in the poem (as he clearly acknowledges that the poem does display a great deal of narrativity). Not only that, but rather than comparing lyric to narrative poetry, he is comparing the dramatic monologue to the dramatic lyric. He quotes Rader's description of the dramatic lyric in which 'The figure in the poem is imagined from within, so that we participate in his mental activity as if his eyes and experience had become the poet's and our own' (1976:142 cited in Phelan, 1996:34). This is arguably the case with *Stopping by*

Woods on a Snowy Evening, where Phelan argues we do not examine or assess the speaker's character, but imagine that we are them. Therefore, Phelan concludes, the poem fits the description of a dramatic lyric, and therefore is a lyric poem and not a narrative one.

However, the word 'narrative' is not used once in Rader's *The Dramatic Monologue and Related Lyric Forms*, from whence the quotation was taken, and Rader is not concerned with assessing the levels of narrative in the poems he discussed at all. It is true that 'Neither his desire nor his decision are held up for evaluation by Frost' and that the 'character [is] presented not for us to judge but to project ourselves into' (Phelan 1996:34) but the requirement to judge and evaluate, rather than identify and project into the poem's speaker is part of Rader's definition of the dramatic monologue, not narrative poetry. *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* is still a narrative text, whether or not it meets Rader's requirements for the dramatic lyric rather than the dramatic monologue.

In fact, a key factor in drama (including dramatic lyrics) is that it tells a story, something impossible without some degree of narrative. *A Handbook to Literature* defines drama as 'a story told in action by actors who impersonate the characters of the story' (Holman, 1986:154), and *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetics*, when defining dramatic poetry, discusses to what degree a dramatic poem can emphasise plot, but assumes, therefore, that plot and narrative are present (Worthern, 1976:377). Dramatic poetry may be a distinct genre from narrative poetry, but both make use of narrativity. As Jahn points out, when arguing for a narratological approach to drama, drama has both story and plot, which makes some degree of narrativity inevitable (2001:674).

Phelan assuming the opposition of lyric and narrative without considering that the two can co-exist in the same poem is part of the problem caused by a lack of stylistic examination of poetry. Lyric and narrative are assumed to be opposite ends of the same axis, and therefore the presence of lyrical features entails a reduced narrativity. It would be ridiculous to point out elements of lyricism in a novel and therefore conclude that it cannot tell a story. The narrative features of *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, therefore, are barely acknowledged before Phelan dismisses them, and the speaker's narratorial role is not considered.

Phelan also considers another of Robert Frost's poems, *Nothing Gold Can Stay* (appendix 8.2.3) and considers how our response to the text of this poem would alter 'if a character in a traditional narrative were to make an argument for the evanescence of beauty' that this poem does:

Our response to that utterance would follow the same logic as our response to any other speech by that character: the response would be mediated powerfully by our previously established sense of the character. If this character has frequently been exposed as lacking in understanding, then we would either suspect that the author did not stand behind the argument contained in this new utterance or, depending on other cues in context, that the author wants to suggest some alteration in the character's

understanding. In either case, the poem would be important for its contribution to the characterization of the speaker and to the sequence of judgements we are making about her (Phelan, 1996:32).

Here, Phelan is assuming that poetic speakers are best compared to fictional characters, and does not consider that they can fulfil the same role as that of a narrator, with a similar range of involvement in what they tell us. In essence, Phelan is arguing that an unreliable poetic speaker is the equivalent to a fictional character, whereas a reliable poetic speaker can be thought of as the poet themselves. Even if that speaker is clearly part of a specific narrative setting, Phelan believes that without a fictionalised persona, it will be 'is as if his eyes and experience had become the poet's' and the poem will not be narrative (1976:142 cited in Phelan, 1996:34). However, this ignores the more appropriate comparison, which is between poetic speakers and prose narrators. Narrators can also be 'exposed as lacking in understanding' and our response to their utterances can also be 'mediated powerfully by our previously established sense' of their character. They can also be reliable and trustworthy, and we can assume that the author does stand behind their statements.

Phelan's argument here offers further supporting evidence as to why referring to the speaker of a poem as a 'persona' can be misleading. Associated, as the lyric is, with presenting a state of mind or a thought with 'universal significance', it is often assumed that this means that the speaker will have significance to the poem. In this case, as with many others (such as Simon Armitage's *Poem*) 'the speaker's character is not a functional part of the poem') and because of this, Phelan argues, echoing Booth's definition of a reliable narrator as one who speaks 'in accordance with the norms of the work' (1961: 158), that it 'fades back into the image of the implied author' and therefore as the speaker is reliable, 'the distinction between speaker and author does not exist here' (1996:32).

Similarly, Vogt argues that 'we sympathize with the speaker's revealed attitudes, partly because they are the only ones represented and partly because the speaker's narration implicitly claims to be reliable' (1979:548). Phelan is right that this means that the lack of characterisation of this 'speaker' means that 'our attention is directed away from any mimetic representation of that speaker and toward the poem's thematic point about beauty' but he also hints at one of my key complaints about poetic criticism, which is that the poet's and the poem's speaker's perspective are assumed to be the same, and therefore that learning about one will tell you something about the other. Similarly, Langbaum believes that the lack of a character distinct from the narrator means that the dramatic lyric describes the real experience of the poet, as the lack of this separation indicates a lack of separation from the poet and the poem (1957).

Misleading though these conclusions are, if Nünning is right, and unreliability is something that most readers can recognise, it is likely to be the similarly recognised lack of such unreliability in many poetic speakers which causes these critics to so closely align the speakers' perspectives with the poets'. Without the clear gap

between what the speaker tells us and what we believe that the poet knows or believes, it becomes easier to project the poet onto their poem and ignore the distinction between the poetic and the extra-poetic levels. This is a factor in causing lyric poems to be considered monologic and unmediated, because distance between the poet and their speaker cannot easily be found.

Hühn makes the distinction between the narrator/speaker and 'the abstract author/composing subject' in a text, who is 'responsible for the system of values, norms, and meaning implied by the formal, stylistic, rhetorical, and tropic structure of the text' (2005:9). The speaker/narrator, on the other hand is 'excluded' from this level, and so it occurs 'behind their backs' (2005:9). When what occurs behind the speaker's back in this way is significant or a major feature of the poem, the character of the speaker is foregrounded, and is examined without their knowledge. Poetry such as this, which utilises strongly and clearly characterised speakers, is often not characterised as lyric at all. Wolf believes that when the words of a poem are spoken by a very clearly defined fictional character, this means that reading the poem requires 'play acting' which tips the poem towards the genre of dramatic monologue, which Langbaum claims requires us to judge the speaker (1957:75). However, not all poems with clearly defined fictional characters as speakers are dramatic monologues: when such a character's monologue is internal, or without a clear setting or listener, Langbaum defines it as a soliloquy (1957:146). Langbaum distinguishes between dramatic monologues and soliloquys by claiming that the latter requires 'self-absorption and internal debate' whereas the speaker of the former 'directs his attention outwards' (1957:146).

The presence of unreliable or clearly characterised speakers, where the reader is encouraged to examine or assess their perspective rather than simply adopt it, therefore reduces the lyricism of a poem. Such speakers cannot be mistaken for their poets (or implied poets) and therefore would not fit the definitions of the lyrical speaker which I detailed in my introduction. Many of these poems may be more properly considered dramatic monologues, soliloquys or perhaps narrative poems, depending on their other features. The dramatic monologues of Robert Browning, where the speakers are frequently morally reprehensible or unlikeable are clear examples of this, whereas more subtle and lyrical examples can be found in many of Carol Ann Duffy's poems, such as *Education For Leisure*.

The many ideas from narratology about reliability are useful in examining both poetic speakers and also in unpacking the problems of poetic criticism where the poet's and speaker's perspectives appear similar and therefore lead to the collapsing of narrative levels.

2.4 Methodology

We have seen therefore that narratology offers far more elaborate and useful tools for the analysis of communicative levels, textual organisation and the representation of perspectives than current approaches to poetic criticism. For this reason my thesis joins the call for a reconsideration of existing approaches to poetic speakers

and for bringing theory into poetic criticism. What my thesis will attempt to do is precisely this: adopt the elaborate models that narratology and stylistics make available to us in order to show that the lyric speaker is not the direct mouthpiece of the author and that the way the lyric speaker organises a lyric poem is more complex than just as direct expression of biographical material.

In order to examine the variety of positions that lyric speakers can take, it will be necessary to adopt a text-driven approach, with poetry chosen for the variety of positions that the speakers take. To demonstrate that lyric poetry manifests the same variety and complexity of perspectives, voices and mediation that narrative prose does, this thesis will examine a variety of predominantly twentieth century lyric poems, each chosen to demonstrate the various positions that the lyric speaker can take beyond that of a monologic representation of the poet's voice and experience. Within each type of poetry, I have selected the individual poems based on the available critical responses to them, and as my research questions specifically tackle the perceived close relationship between the poet and the speaker, I have chosen poems emblematic of biographical criticism. Chapters three and four will examine narrativity and structure in lyric poetry respectively, to demonstrate that the lyric speaker can function as a narrator, and can take multiple perspectives within one poem. This lays the groundwork for looking at two types of lyric poem in chapters five and six: confessional poetry, which is emblematic of biographical criticism due to the subjective viewpoint of the speaker; and poetry about real world conflicts, which are personal to the poet (primarily from the First World War) which demonstrate clear distance between the speaker and the poet, despite the biographical connection. Together, these poems demonstrate that not only can the lyric speaker take a range of positions comparable to that of a prose narrator, but that these positions are not related to the degree of biographical connection implied by the poem. From within each type of lyric poem, I have chosen the individual poems predominantly because of the amount of literary criticism that is focused on them, a great deal of which still relies heavily on the poet's biography.

Because my approach is text-driven, I have chosen to use different linguistic frames for each chapter, which I believe is necessitated by the different features that I will be highlighting with each type of poem. This eclectic approach to stylistics has been justified by Jeffries (1999, 2000 and with McIntyre, 2010) as she believes that 'it stands to reason that more than one theory might be used to illuminate any set of data' and therefore it is 'theoretically defensible' (1999:385) to choose different theoretical approaches depending on the features of the text and which aspects of the text the analysis will be focusing on. Jeffries argues that 'no system in the world is watertight in the sense that there can be no change, no overlapping categories' (2000:9) and therefore any theory that could be applied to all of the texts I have chosen would either be too restrictive to demonstrate the wide variety of linguistic features I am attempting to demonstrate, or it would be 'as complex as the data' and therefore 'too cumbersome' to be effective (2000:9). I have therefore chosen different frameworks for each of my four analytical chapters.

The thesis will be structured as follows:

Chapter 3: Narrativity in lyric poetry:

This chapter investigates the presence of narrativity in the lyric and therefore seeks to demonstrate that the lyric speaker does narrate. One of the main points that emerged from the previous chapter is the communicative model that narratologists have proposed which makes it clear that any narrative is assumed to have a narrator, i.e. someone who mediates between the events and characters in the narrative. This kind of communicative model is lacking in theoretical approaches to the lyric. And the main reason why this is the case is most probably the fact that it is assumed that the lyric lacks a narrative. This is a claim used in definitions of the lyric and in attempts to separate lyric from narrative. In this chapter, therefore, I will attempt to show that elements of narrativity are present even in the most canonical lyric texts and more pronounced in narrative poetry. This means that narrative poetry at least is not an aberrant genre and that its speaker should be treated in the same way as the prose narrator. The presence of narrativity even in lyric poems central to the genre alerts us to the fact that even the lyric speaker narrates in some form and therefore mediates between the reader and the narrated world, albeit that this narrated world is only very sketchily presented and the focus is not on it per se, but on the emotional experience of the lyric-I most typically. By examining narrativity in the lyric, I hope to show that the same communicative hierarchy as proposed for narrative should be applied to the study of lyric texts, with the lyric speaker adopting the same mediatory position as the prose narrator.

Chapter 4: The Lyric Turn:

This chapter demonstrates that the lyric speaker can occupy a variety of positions and adopt sometimes conflicting perspectives within the same text. Many lyric poems utilise a turn or volta which can be used to encode multiple, conflicting perspectives on the same topic within the same text, and this chapter examines lyric poems in which this structural feature is particularly prominent. The multiple positions that the speaker takes due to the turn marks the text multi-perspectival and the speaker's role mediatory rather than leaving their voice and perspective unified and unmediated. This challenges the idea that the speaker of a lyric poem is the equivalent to a fictional character but without the mediation, and demonstrates that instead their role can occupy multiple positions and use multiple narratorial styles within the same text. Unlike unreliable narrators, whose unreliability causes readers to question their credibility and doubt their judgement, these turns operate much like narrative plot twists, with the speaker structuring the multiple perspectives to enhance the tellability of the poem. In this chapter, I will be using narrative concepts of perspective and Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse in order to highlight the polyphony of conflicting perspectives within the same text.

Chapter 5: Confessional poetry:

This chapter studies the positioning of the lyric speaker in relation to his/her experiencing self. By drawing on the distinction between an experiencing self and a narrating self in fiction and on theories of consciousness representation I argue that

even poetry with a very strong association with the biography of the author, such as confessional poetry, is ultimately a fictional representation of personalness. Confessional poetry, mainly associated with a group of American poets writing in the 1950s and 1960s, focuses entirely on the perspective of the speaker and their emotional trauma, creating the impression of a close, personal link between the poet and the poem, which in turn leads to a preponderance of biographical criticism. However, I argue that this does not warrant the assumption that the experience depicted is personal to the poet. With this set of poems I will be demonstrating that there are linguistic indices that make the poem appear personal and that these signal the voice of the experiencing self, rather than the narrating self, a distinction that narratology posits in first-person narratives. To demonstrate this, I will use a point of view analysis and the narrative indices of subjectivity to demonstrate the ways in which the perspective of these poems focuses tightly on that of the speaker as experiencing self rather than as narrating self which can be linked to the poet, creating an intensely personal text. In addition, due to the strong association of metaphor with emotion and therefore with subjectivity, I shall be analysing the metaphors in confessional poetry which demonstrate that the poems foreground personal experience and the psyche of the experiencing self of the speaker rather than any narrative events which may have caused their suffering and which may be prompting critics to seek biographical connections.

Chapter 6: Conflict poetry

This chapter demonstrates that even in poetry about real historical events in which the author has participated, the lyric speaker still acts like a mediating narrator who projects others' consciousnesses into the text without necessarily having direct knowledge of them. Conflict poetry is a genre of lyric poetry based on real historical events of significance, nearly always events in which the poet is historically documented to have taken part. Despite this verifiable connection between the poets' experiences and the experiences depicted in their writing, these poems often avoid the extremes of subjectivity demonstrated by the confessional poems I discussed in the previous chapter, and instead demonstrate that the lyric speaker can utilise non-personal perspectives and consciousnesses, including the collective experience of those that suffered and positioning the reader as complicit in the combatants' suffering. To examine how the speaker in conflict poetry represents victims and agents of violence, I will be using systemic functional linguistics to demonstrate how the roles of participants and processes are distributed in conflict poetry, thus developing the argument that the lyric speaker, much as a prose narrator, can mediate for the reader the perspectives of others who are characters in the text.

These four analytical chapters demonstrate that the poetic speaker operates in much the same way as that of a prose narrator utilising a similar range of perspectives, and I argue that this should cause us to rethink how lyric poetry is approached and defined. In addition, I argue that by examining poetry in this way, we can move on from making assumptions about the biographical links between poetry and poets,

and instead identify the linguistic features which cause us to assume that such a link is present.

2.5 Conclusion

The assumed lack of mediation in lyric poetry goes some way to explaining why the lyric speaker is often considered identical to the poet (in answer to research question (a)), and the example of Christina Rossetti shows how this can lead to the limiting and often demeaning assumption that the poem is merely a direct expression of the poet's thoughts and experiences. The damage caused by this assumption will be examined further in chapter five, where I demonstrate that the skill of the confessional poets has been similarly ignored in favour of viewing their poetry as a way of gaining insight into their psychological trauma.

It is true that lyric poetry makes more use of homodiegetic speakers, who discuss their own past and future experiences, and this can obscure the distance between the speaker and the poet. This makes narratology the appropriate framework with which to challenge these assumptions, as it has been demonstrated that the same levels of narrativity exist in prose texts whether or not the narrator is hetero or homodiegetic. Similarly, the use of reliable poetic speakers may also lead lyric poetry to be assumed to be 'personal' to the poet. With a less reliable speaker, there is a clear distinction between what the poet and the speaker knows, causing the speaker to be more easily separated from the poet that created them. On the other hand, reliable lyric speakers appear to have the same level of knowledge and awareness as the poet, and therefore the distinction between them is less clear. As can be the case with authorial narrators, the position that reliable poetic speakers take can easily be confused with the poet's position, and this is compounded if the author or speaker is also obtrusive and clearly gives subjective opinions on the events that they describe. Chapter five will examine these features further to demonstrate what other features may cause lyric poetry to be assumed to be 'personal' to the poet, whereas chapter six will examine features of lyric poetry which reduce this quality of personalness, despite a clear biographical connection to the poets who wrote them, in this way establishing a clear distinction between biographical events and poetic representation.

3. Narrativity in lyric poetry

My previous chapter proposed narratology as the best framework for examining the lyric speaker. Narratology offers a communicative model that assumes a narrator who mediates between events and characters in a narrative. This communicative model is not used in theoretical approaches to the lyric as it is based on narrative, and lyric is assumed and to lack any narrative. This lack of narrativity is frequently considered key to separating lyric poetry from other genres in a way that this chapter will contest. The assumption that lyric poetry is non-narrative is so pervasive that it even extends to other genres of poetry, and narrative poetry is seen as an aberrant form of lyric poetry, instead of a separate genre. Challenging this assumption, this chapter will prove that narrativity is present even in the most canonical lyric texts and therefore demonstrates that the lyric speaker narrates and therefore mediates between the reader and the narrated world. What separates narrative from lyric poetry is not the presence or absence of narrativity, I argue, but the backgrounded or implied nature of the narrative in lyric poetry, and the focus on thoughts or emotional experiences instead. Despite the lack of foregrounded or complete narrativity, the same communicative hierarchy as proposed for narrative can and should be applied to the study of lyric texts, and the lyric speaker should therefore be assumed to take the same mediatory position as the prose narrator.

3.1 Distinguishing between narrative and lyric poetry

In order to examine the narrativity present in lyric poetry, it is first essential to examine how it is usually separated from narrative poetry, where the narrativity is clearly present. Lyric poetry is frequently assumed to lack any narrativity, and therefore its speakers are assumed to be unable to narrate.

It is notable that 'Narrative Poetry' is a specific genre, as it hints at the assumption that most poetry is *not* narrative. Cuddon's *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* even states that lyric poetry is so labelled 'to distinguish it from narrative or dramatic verse of *any* kind' (1998:481) (*italics my own*), suggesting that not only is lyric poetry non-narrative by definition, but that a lack of narrativity is the norm for poetry. This definition of lyric poetry as anything that is not part of the genre of narrative poetry is broad, (and probably the most practical), and similar to Abrams, in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, who also uses a lack of narrativity as the key identifier of the lyric, defining it as 'any fairly short, non-narrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling' (1981:146). The lyric speaker, therefore, is clearly not thought of as having a mediatory position between the reader and a narrative.

Wolf does not describe lyric poetry as non-narrative, but he does claim that narrative forms of poetry, such as the ballad, are 'exceptional' examples of lyric (2005:28). Therefore, although a lack of narrativity was not one of his listed features of lyric

poetry, the assumption that the lyric is prototypically non-narrative is still an essential feature of his definition of the genre.

Narrative scholars also dismiss a priori the possibility that narrativity can be present in the lyric. Claims that lyric poetry is not narrative are common, but studies of poetry that demonstrate this are difficult to find. Common definitions of narrative are that it narrates (Rimmon-Kenan, 1994), represents (Prince, 1982) or recounts (Prince, 1987) one or more events, involving 'characters, and what the characters say and do' (Abrams 2005:181). Prince, Labov and Rimmon-Kenan believe that narrative must have two or more events, or one situation and one event, that do not 'presuppose or entail each other' (Prince, 1987:58). Rimmon-Kenan's list of possible forms of narratives include 'Newspaper reports, history books, novels, films, comic strips, pantomime, dance, gossip, psychoanalytic sessions' (which gives us a far broader range of possible narratives than Prince's or Stanzel's does, both of whom insist on a level of mediation between the events and the audience which they do not believe is present during dramatic performance.) Rimmon-Kenan separates out these narrative forms from fictional narratives by defining them as 'the narration of a succession of fictional events' and also states that this suggests that narration is '(1) a communication process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee and (2) the verbal nature of the medium used to transmit the message.' (1983:2). This definition, Rimmon-Kenan believes, discounts lyrical poetry from being narrative fiction, but she does not make it clear whether she believes points (1), (2) or both cannot be fulfilled by the Lyric. It is impossible to believe that she does not believe lyric poetry (or any poetry) to be 'verbal' or that it cannot be 'a communication process' which is 'transmitted from addresser to addressee'. I assume, therefore, that it is the lack of a 'succession of fictional events' which she believes preclude the possibility of lyrical poetry being a fictional narrative. However, she does not offer or discuss any examples of lyric poetry demonstrating this lack, and the possibility of lyric poetry that *does* contain 'succession of fictional events' is not discussed. Scholes and Kellogg assert that the inclusion of just one event in a poem prevents it from being a lyric poem, as this means it 'moves towards narrative, without demonstrating that lyric poems lack events (1966:4). This is begging the question: the lyric is defined as non-narrative, therefore lyric poetry is not examined for narrativity because it is assumed that it will not be found. Clearly, not only do critical approaches to lyric poetry make little use of narratology, narratology scholars routinely ignore the lyric.

Demonstrating the narrativity present in lyric poetry is crucial to answering my research questions, as it is required to fully examine the range of positions that any mediating reporter can take. As I will argue, excluding all poetry displaying any evidence of narrativity from the genre of lyric poetry would exclude some of the most famous examples of the genre, and therefore exploring to what degree lyric poetry can be narrative is a useful first step in demonstrating the mediation and narration performed by its speakers.

Acknowledging some of these problems, Fludernik, when examining the narrativity present in a corpus of English Mediaeval and Early Modern Lyric, improves these definitions somewhat by describing lyric poetry as using a 'personal speaker that does not primarily tell a story... nor uses the verse form for the pragmatic and didactic purpose of communication' (2005:99) and unlike Wolf, specifies that she will use the term to refer to 'short poems which are neither ballads nor belong to the (mostly) longer epic, chivalric or hagiographic verse narratives' (2005:100), rather than discussing poetry as a whole. This second definition brings us back to Cuddon, and to using lyric as an umbrella term for everything that is not part of the narrative poetry genre, as long as it is 'short'.

Fludernik's proviso that the lyric can be narrative as long as it does not 'primarily' tell a story offers more promise than simply discounting the possibility of narrativity. By not 'primarily', she means narrativity in the lyric must be what she calls 'weak narrative', 'residual narrative' or 'implied narrative', as opposed to her example of Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (which fits clearly in the genre of narrative poetry, and is definitely not short). The lyric, Fludernik believes, can display narrativity as long as it is not 'foregrounded' and 'has not been fully expanded to include even a mini-plot or an extensive portrayal of experientiality' (2005:100). These residual narratives could be considered 'sketched' versions of full narratives, and the lack of expansion is probably due to 'the brevity of the lyric text' (2005:100). The frequent descriptions of the lyric as 'short' might therefore be more important to its perceived narrativity than would at first appear. This lack of foregrounded narrative depends on Fludernik's own definition of narrative (2005), which is distinct from most others in that it does not require a sequence of events, but instead focuses on 'experientiality'.

Like Fludernik and Cuddon, I will be defining the lyric as any poem which is not considered a narrative poem, such as a ballad or epic, though I will also consider how far these individual poems will be perceived as typical examples of the genre as far as style and content is concerned by considering the other definitions above, including Wolf's full framework.

3.1.2 The conflation of lyric and narrative poetry

Although lyric poetry is frequently defined as non-narrative, there is still a tendency amongst critics of poetry to treat narrative poetry as an aberrant form of lyric, rather than a separate genre. This results in not only lyric poetry being treated as non-narrative, but all of poetry, even when a clear narrative is foregrounded. Lyric and narrative poetry is therefore frequently conflated, with any narrativity used by the poetic speaker either ignored or treated as exceptional.

Wolf goes through a list of features proposed by various critics in order to define lyric poetry, but some of his chosen features are based on this questionable view that 'lyric' is a 'synonym for poetry' (2005:27). His survey of definitions of the lyric focuses on several possible features which are considered important, but invariably finds dissent and exceptions that rule out every one as necessary to the genre. Wolf

concludes that 'apart from textuality and fictionality, there is not a single criterion to be found that fits all texts which could be – and are in fact – called "poems" and that consequently all of these criteria are precarious' (2005:31). However, as Wolf believes that 'no distinction between "the lyric", "poetry" and "poems" seems to be appropriate any longer' (2005:23), it is not surprising that he considers all these features to be excessively narrow – it is clearly impossible to define a specific genre of poetry if every poem can be included within it. For example, when discussing the proposed monologicity of lyric poetry and the importance of a 'lyric-I', Wolf criticises this view by offering the example of narrative poetry (2005:28), a completely separate genre. In contrast, my challenge of the lyric speaker's assumed monologicity will be demonstrated using the speakers from lyric poetry.

The association of poetry with lyricism and prose with narrative is so ingrained that often attempts to distinguish between poetry and prose become confused with the distinction between lyric and narrative. For example, Rubik (2007:202) and Cuddon (1975:191) both believe that when faced with a poem, the reader uses different strategies to decode it than if they are given prose. This is not, they argue, necessarily because of differences between poetry and prose, but because 'we look for different things in the two genres, and we naturally find what we look for... because we focus on and validate what in other texts we may pass over' (Rubik, 2007:202). However, what Rubik concludes that readers find in prose and poetry seems more appropriate to the distinction between lyric and narrative. When examining Peter Carey's *Life and Death in the South Side Pavillion* and Stephen Crane's short story, *The Open Boat*, she argues that they show many features characteristic of poetry: 'brevity, heightened artificiality, an over-structuring of language and a tendency to deviate from common usage; epistemological subjectivity and a concentration on psychic rather than outside events' (2005:174) a list which would apply more accurately to lyric poetry rather than poetry in general.

Although Rubik demonstrates the crossover in techniques used in both poetry and prose through her discussion of poetic prose and prosaic poetry, she believes that because of the different reading strategies applied to prose and poetry, 'the reading experience is different' (2007:206) despite similar literary techniques. When reading poetry, she believes we are more likely to view poetry as allegory with 'universal significance' (2007:202) and prose as a representation of reality. Rubik also summarises Fludernik's view that poetry is linked to allegory 'since [Fludernik] sees a fundamental contrast between the metaphorical presentation of abstracts such as love and honour in poetry, in which the speaker's experience is entirely allegorical, and the quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience in narrative' (2007:203) (though Fludernik later revises this, as I will discuss). On the other hand, in prose 'readers will primarily focus attention on the diegetic eventfulness of the external action or on "experientiality", on the consciousness of the individual fictional characters and their historically singular fates, and they will tend to ignore the interpretative possibilities of over-structuring and naturalise deviation (2007:202).

What triggers these different reading strategies are the paratextual features, Rubik believes. A text that looks like prose will be viewed as primarily narrative, and a text that looks like poetry will instead be approached for its 'interpretative challenges' (2007:201) and allegorical meaning. In other words, purposefully placed line breaks activate this poetic schema, whereas a lack of them activates a narrative schema. As an example, Rubik claims that Seamus Heaney's *The Early Purges* (appendix 8.3.1) activates a poetic schema purely because of its layout but then 'deflates reader expectation by its low-key style and resistance to allegorical meaning' (2007:206).

However, assuming that a text merely has to look like a poem in order to trigger this non-narrative schema ignores the existence of narrative poetry. Narrative poetry has a tradition going back at least as far as the lyric. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is not just one of the earliest narrative poems, but one of the earliest poems of any type, and even one of the earliest surviving examples of literature in general, the existing version dating back to 1200BCE and which almost certainly existed in some form more than a millennium prior to this (Lipking, 2012:1049). The idea that poetry is not associated with narrative is therefore false. McHale points out that 'The range of narrative poetry is enormous; it includes the entire epic tradition, primary and secondary, oral and written, as well as medieval and early-modern verse romances, folk ballads and their literary adaptations, narrative verse autobiographies such as Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, and novels-in-verse from *Eugene Onegin* through Les Murray's *Freddy Neptune* and Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*' (2009:12). It is not poetry that is associated with a lack of narrative, it is *lyric* poetry. Whereas poetry and prose are distinguished from each other primarily by layout (by the modern reader, at least), we cannot rely on narrative and lyric poetry to look different with such a fleeting glance. Unless the title or other paratextual information alerts the reader in advance, whether a poem is narrative or lyric can only be determined by reading it.

Perloff points out that this is a common blind-spot in literary criticism. 'Lyric' and 'poem' are used interchangeably so frequently that 'the equation of poetry with the lyric is almost axiomatic in contemporary criticism' to such an extent that 'the possibility of writing poems that tell stories is not considered (1982:415). McHale also criticises the fact that 'lyric has become the default mode for poetry; but that does not mean that all poems are lyrics' (2009:13). For example, Jeffreys claims that Olson's position is that 'what is true of lyric is true of poetry' (Jeffreys, 1996:202) and Wolf rejects Cuddon's claim that lyric poetry should be distinguished from 'narrative or dramatic verse of any kind' (Cuddon, 1999:481), and instead claims that "'lyric" has become an umbrella term for most versified literature (except for the epic and verse drama) and has thus become a synonym of "poetry"' and therefore 'no distinction between "the lyric", "poetry" and "poems" seems to be appropriate any longer' (2007:27). He therefore positions lyric poetry (not just poetry) as one of the 'three main forms of functional literature as a whole' alongside 'drama and narrative fiction', which is exactly the position that Perloff and McHale bemoan. If we forget that narrative poetry is a form of poetry, then we also forget that other forms of poetry can use narrative, leading to assumptions like Rubik's, that narrative in poetry is somehow transgressive and unexpected.

The Early Purges, therefore, only ‘deflates reader expectation’ if the reader expects it to be a *lyric* poem, not just because the reader recognises it as a poem. Rubik claims that the poem’s lack of poetic imagery and resistance to allegory ‘mocks the lyric’ (2007:206), but what makes *The Early Purges* a lyric, rather than a narrative poem? Whether or not the poem is a narrative poem or not, it *is* narrative. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to look more closely at what is meant by narrative, discuss the various definitions of it, and examine why so many critics believe that the lyric precludes these features.

3.4. The role of narrativity in separating the genres of narrative and lyric poetry

In order to ensure that my argument about the lyric speaker is fully justified, it is important to clearly set out how I am separating lyric from narrative poetic speakers. In this section, I will explain Fludernik’s argument for distinguishing between narrative and lyric poetry by the type of narrativity present, rather than the earlier discussed distinctions which dismissed the possibility of narrativity in lyric poetry entirely.

As I have demonstrated, if lyric poetry is separated from other forms of poetry, it is often on the basis of a perceived lack of narrative, but this lack of narrative has not been successfully demonstrated (and in the case of Hühn, demonstrated to be in at least some cases, false). The distinction between lyric and narrative poetry cannot, therefore, be that only one of them displays narrativity. This makes most conventional definitions of narrative poetry useless, as most simply require a narrative poem to be one that ‘tells a story’ (both Cuddon, 1999:456 and Lord, 1974:542). Without demonstrating that other forms of poetry do *not* tell a story, ‘narrative poetry’ could be synonymous with ‘poetry’, which is in turn used synonymously with ‘lyric’ resulting in even more redundant and over-extended definitions.

However, even though the narrativity of *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* is clear, the poem is a lyric, whereas Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *The Lady of Shallott* and Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* (both written at a similar time) do not just display narrativity, but are narrative poems.

Fludernik defines lyric poetry as poetry ‘that does not primarily tell a story’ (2007:103) leaving open the possibility for lyric poetry to tell stories, and also for us to distinguish between narrative and non-narrative poetry not by the presence or absence of narrative, but by whether or not the poem is *primarily* narrative. This is similar to the distinction made by Friedman, who claims that narrative ‘foregrounds a sequence of events that move dynamically in space and time’ whereas lyric ‘foregrounds a simultaneity, a cluster of feelings or ideas that projects a gestalt in stasis (1989:164) (which is in stark opposition to Hühn, who argues that lyric does display sequences of events, but that these events tend to be ‘of a mental kind’ (2005:148)). Like Fludernik, Friedman therefore believes that lyric poetry *can* display narrative, but it is not narrative poetry as long as it ‘focuses on state of mind’ rather

than story. Of course, this also allows for a considerable amount of grey area between clearer examples of either genre, and also allows us to examine the narrative present in lyric poetry using narratological tools, just as we can examine the lyrical elements of narrative poetry.

When examining English Mediaeval and Early Modern lyrical poems in her chapter in *Theory into Poetry* (2007), Fludernik excludes poems which she believes have a 'foregrounded plotline' such as ballads (2007:104). Narrative, she argues, can be residual or implied as well as fully developed and foregrounded. By examining the degree to which narrative (including residual narrative) can be found in the lyrical poems she examines, she intends to help answer 'the question of where the borderline between lyric and narrative poetry might be drawn' (2007:104). Considering whether or not a poem is primarily narrative and or whether the narrative is residual or foregrounded is a usefully nuanced way of examining both the boundary between the lyric and narrative poetry, and also what makes a poem that displays narrativity something other than a narrative poem. Narrativity therefore arises primarily from eventfulness, whereas lyricism makes use of 'emotions, reflections and other mental states and activities' (Wolf, 2007:26), and both poetry and prose can make use of these.

3.2 Narrativity in lyric poetry

In this section, I will argue that narrativity is present in lyric poetry, and although the poem may not be focused on it, it is still worthy of study and an essential consideration when examining the variety of positions that its speakers can take. As I have demonstrated, lyric poetry is frequently assumed to lack narrativity by narratologists, rather than demonstrated to do so, and this results in critics neglecting the speaker's complex and mediatory role. Hühn questions this blind spot in narratology, pointing out that narratological examinations of poetry have been limited to narrative poetry or the epic in all but a few occasions (2005:148). As I have already mentioned, Hühn demonstrated the narrativity present in one of the most famous lyrical poems, Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (appendix 8.3.2) Hühn believes that 'lyric poems generally share the fundamental constituents of story and discourse as well as the narrative act with narrative fiction in that they likewise feature a sequence of incidents (usually of a mental kind), mediate and shape it from a specific perspective and present it from a particular point of time vis-a-vis the sequence of incidents' (2005:148).

In order to demonstrate the narrative possibilities of lyric poetry, it must therefore be possible to demonstrate that it can show a succession of at least two events (or a situation and an event, at least) which 'do not entail or presuppose each other'. And further, it must be demonstrated that these events and situations are 'fictional'. This will demonstrate that not only can the lyric speaker mediate, but that they can communicate narrative events.

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud clearly recounts several events and situations which do not presuppose or entail each other. In the first stanza, the narrator 'wandered', and

then 'saw' the daffodils. Using the sequential event definition of the lyric, the actions of the daffodils ('fluttering and dancing', 'tossing their heads') and the waves (which 'danced') can also be included in the narrative aspects of the poem, as can the final stanza, in which the daffodils 'oft... flash upon the inward eye' of the narrator. According to the definitions of Prince and Rimmon-Kenan, the poem certainly displays a level of narrativity, despite not being part of the genre of narrative poetry. Prince would have to agree that the poem demonstrates 'the representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence' (1980:49).

The speaker in *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* uses the past tense in all but the last stanza, which makes the link between the speaker here and the majority of prose fiction narrators clear, as the past tense is 'the unmarked tense form in the context of narrative' (Fludernik, 2003:195). In addition, the use of the progressive aspect in combination with non-finite verbs (for example, 'Fluttering and dancing in the breeze' and 'tossing their heads') is common in narrative to imply 'temporal overlapping, simultaneity' (Fludernik, 2003:195) and to 'lend an effect of 'density' to the plot, adding a level of figural perception to the mere recounting of plot action' (Fludernik, 2003:201).

The speaker using the past tense makes it easier to see the mediation between us and the description of the speaker's past self who sees the daffodils; this use of past tense to describe past events is the norm in prose fiction. However, many lyrical poems are not written in the past tense, and this may be part of why the events that they describe are not recognised as narrative.

The speaker in Christopher Marlowe's poem *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* (appendix 8.3.3) mostly uses the future tense. After the imperative of the opening line ('Come live with me, and be my love'), the speaker details what their life would be like together in the future. Although there are enough events and situations recounted in the poem for it to constitute a narrative, their hypothetical modal nature may prevent critics from viewing them as such.

The opening and closing imperative, 'Come live with me, and be my love' express the speaker's desire, and is not a description of an event that is real to either the speaker or the addressee. 'Come live with me', as an instruction in the imperative mood, is arguably not a description of an event at all, as it is not something that has happened in the fictional world of the poem. The later descriptions of what their lives would be like together are similarly modal, using epistemic modality to express what he believes the future holds for them if she were to accept his invitation.

However, the fact that the description of events is modal should not preclude them from being events. Herman and Vervaeck argue that 'things that have not really happened (for instance, dreams and plans) are often essential for narrative structure' and 'modal aspects' of the narrative may be part of the meaning of the story, even if they do not occur as 'real events' (2001:154-5).

be imagined to fully understand the text-world. This framing of the narrative, or *mise en abyme* (such as Stockwell's suggestion of 'I fell asleep and dreamt that...') is common in prose fiction, also, without suggestion that what is embedded cannot display narrativity.

The events are a future projection rather than the more common past tense used for the majority of narrative prose. Future tense narration is rare in prose, but when it does occur, it is still recognised as narration. Phelan and Rabinowitz, when discussing Michael Frayn's *A Very Private Life* assert that 'even future tense narrative conveys a sense of something already there to be recounted, if only in a place called the future... The future world of the novel is asserted as already occupying a place in time' (2005:534). Fludernik agrees that prose written in the future tense can still be narrative, and she also asserts that Pam Houston's story *How to Talk to a Hunter* and other future tense prose is narrative despite being a hypothetical projection of future events, just as *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* is (2012:90). Scholes, however, disagrees; he declares that 'narrative is past, always past' and that 'To speak of the future is to prophesy or predict or speculate- never to narrate' (1980:210) and Fleischman asserts that the past 'is the only way one can narrate' (1990:38) despite acknowledging that narrative use of future tense is 'rare' and therefore not non-existent (1990:53). However, this may be simply because of the lack of prose narratives written in the future tense. As Scholes and Fleischman do not discuss the few that exist (such as *A Very Private Life* and *How to Talk to a Hunter*) it is unclear whether they have seen examples and dismissed them as narrative, or whether they have not seen them so cannot conceive of their narrativity (though Fleischman acknowledges and discusses examples of the historical future tense (1990:54)). The future modality of the poem should not preclude its narrativity, therefore, though because of its rarity in prose, it may obscure it.

However, very few of the events that the speaker details have a clear, fixed sequence. Aside from the second stanza, in which 'Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks' clearly follows the two of them sitting 'upon the rocks', the events do not clearly affect or follow on from each other caused by a lack of internal causality. There is no indication that the list of items that the speaker intends to make for his love are offered in order of construction, and it is not clear when these gifts will be made, in relation to the sitting on the rocks, or the dancing of the shepherds' swains. This is partly because of a lack of connectives other than 'and', but also because there is no logical progression from one event to another.

This does not *preclude* these events from forming a narrative, however. Prince believes that a narrative is 'the representation of real or fictive events and situations in a time sequence' (1980:49), and to demonstrate this, he offers the simple, traditional poem, *Roses are Red*:

Roses are red

Roses are red
Violets are blue
Sugar is sweet

And so are you

As Prince says, 'Roses are not red *before* violets are blue,' and so this poem cannot be said to have a time sequence. However, the events in *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* do not lack the possibility of sequentiality, as is the case with *Roses are red*, but the sequentiality is simply unclear or perhaps unimportant. There *could* be a time sequence here.

Forster famously defines plot as a type of story which exhibits cause and effect, offering the following two examples:

Story: 'The king died and then the queen died.'

Plot: 'The king died and then the queen died of grief.' (Leech and Short, 2007:293)

Leech and Short point out that 'in spite of what Forster says, it is difficult not to construct a cause and effect relation between the two sentences of the 'story' example too' (2007:293). Even without being told what the reason for the queen's death is, 'readers will infer one, using the pragmatic maxim of relation (Grice, 1975) or the principle of relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1986)' meaning that it is still quite likely that the reader will deduce that the queen died of grief (2007:293). 'Roses are red', on the other hand, is not an event but a descriptive statement, meaning that 'roses are red' continuously, rather than roses becoming red, or roses being red for a specific length of time. 'We will sit upon the rocks', on the other hand, describes an action with a beginning and (presumably) an end, leaving the possibility that it can occur before or after the other actions detailed in the poem. Similarly, if the connective entailing sequentiality is removed, and the story becomes simply 'The King died and the Queen died from grief' it is still likely that a time sequence will be inferred. *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* may lack an entailed sequentiality, but that is not the same as a complete lack of sequentiality, as is the case with *Roses are Red*. It is easy, for example, to infer that the events occur in the order in which they are recounted. This lack of clear sequentiality throughout the poem makes the poem less narrative, but without the lack of possibility of a clear sequence of events, it cannot be completely without narrativity, and though these forms of narrative are weak and partial, they demonstrate that lyric poetry cannot be defined by the absence of *all* narrativity.

Similarly, the speaker in Yevgeny Yevtushenko's poem *Waiting* (appendix 8.3.4) uses future projection in order to describe events that he is looking forward to occurring.

Unlike the events of *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, there is a clear sense of chronology and causality in this poem. The speaker offers a clear logical progression from leaving the taxi, running upstairs, and opening the door without knocking. This speaker is, therefore, more clearly communicating narrative events than Christopher Marlowe's. Both speakers are homodiegetic and autodiegetic, and talk of events that they wish to happen. However, the events that the Shepherd describes are conditional on his love accepting his offer to life with him and becoming his love;

there is no such condition present on the arrival of Yevgeny Yevtushenko's speaker's love. The high level of detail that the speaker gives us both of the events they will experience together (how she will take the future self of the speaker in her arms, how she will drop her coat) and also those which the speaker will not see (the way in which she will exit the taxi, how she will run up the stairs, how wet she will be from the rain) give the sense that the speaker not only believes that these events will occur, but that they have enough information on how the events are likely to occur for us to trust the speaker's judgement. Although the events have not occurred in the present of the fictional world of the poem, the reader must imagine those events in order to make sense of the text, just as they would with a piece of past tense fiction.

If Scholes and Fleischman are right, and future tense cannot be narrative, it can certainly change our understanding of what the narrative is. If the future projection of events in *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* and *Waiting* are not narrative, they do inform our understanding of a current text-world in which events clearly occur. The speaker/ shepherd is inviting his love to live with him, and while we do not know many details of their relationship, one certainly exists in the text-world of the poem. Similarly, the speaker of *Waiting* is doing just that. The speaker's future projection of what will happen when their love arrives creates a text-world where the speaker is waiting for her, where the two are in love and one in which she is probably travelling in order for them to be together.

It is misleading, therefore, to define the lyric as a purely non-narrative form. The narrative may be weak, implied or backgrounded, but forms of narrativity can still be present in the lyric without compromising other aspects of the genre. If narrativity has a different function in lyric poetry to its role in narrative poetry and prose, as Fludernik claims it does, it is not simply that it is not there. As Hühn says, 'the lyric-specific characteristics of poems tend to make narrativity in them different from that in narrative texts' but that narrativity can still be present (Hühn, 2005:234).

Fludernik's use of the term 'narrative' is rather unorthodox, however, as she 'dispenses with plot' and even 'action' as necessary components, and instead requires a text to display 'experientiality' to be deemed narrative (2007:104). Experientiality, writes Fludernik, is 'the quasi-mimetic evocation of "real-life experience"' (1996:9). Using this definition she claims that narratives can exist without plot, but 'there cannot be any narratives without a human (anthropomorphic) experiencer of some sort' (1996:9). The most important aspect of a text's narrativity is 'the presence of a human protagonist and her experience of events as they impinge on her situation or activities' (1996:22).

It is not my intention to address the debate about what a narrative actually is, or whether Fludernik is right to align narrativity with the experience of the speaker rather than the story the speaker tells. I will therefore consider Fludernik's 'experientiality' as a related concept to narrativity, rather than abandoning the more easily recognised definitions that I offered earlier.

3.2.1 Quasi narrative in lyric poetry

I have already explained how Fludernik argues that the distinction between lyric and narrative poetry lies in the degree of narrativity displayed. In this section I will examine more closely Fludernik's claim that lyric poetry makes use of quasi narrativity rather than experiences which can be defined as fully narrative. Specifically, Fludernik claims that allegorical poetry cannot be narrative, a claim which I will demonstrate to be false. However, her recognition that narrativity does play a role in lyric poetry is crucial in my decision to adopt the communicative hierarchy used for narrative prose to better understand lyric speakers.

By using experientiality as the basis for demonstrating narrativity, Fludernik believes that she can demonstrate that 'Much that appears to be narrative in poetry does not actually qualify as such because it does not concern specific fictional personae but posits a hypothetical or allegorical scenario (1996:265). To demonstrate this, she uses Ben Jonson's poem *How He Saw Her* (appendix 8.3.5).

If we use the traditional definition of narrativity, 'a series of actions and events', Fludernik agrees that this poem 'scores high on the scale of narrativity' (1996:265). However, because she does not view the poem to be 'about a particular person calling on Cupid' but instead 'projects a hypothetical scene that serves as a metaphor for the speaker's frustrated love relationship' (1996:265) the poem lacks sufficient experientiality for her to deem it fully narrative. Although there are action and events, she does not view these events as sufficiently real. Fludernik views the experience of the protagonist as 'entirely allegorical', but concedes that it could be read as fictional. Therefore, according to Fludernik, if we view the poem as being about a literal encounter between the protagonist and Cupid, then the poem is narrative, but if we treat it as allegorical for a more mundane, but only lightly implied, scenario between the man and the woman, it is not. Fludernik's position here gives us yet another tricky axis of fictionality to contend with, as texts are not all allegorical to the same degree, and whether the allegorical reading is essential or optional can be difficult to determine. Fludernik views the poem as 'entirely allegorical' whereas I assumed that the allegory did not begin until the protagonist spoke to Cupid, and that the encounter between the man and the woman occurred as written.

Lodge does not view allegory as incompatible with narrative, and instead believes that it 'can be easily combined with an essentially metonymic type of narrative' (1977:206). For example, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is 'based on a system of similarities between the story of the animals and the history of the Russian Revolution, but the narrative is quite intelligible without the application of this code' (Lodge, 1977:206). Similarly, the narrative of *How He Saw Her* is quite intelligible if it is interpreted as a literal encounter with Cupid, it just becomes a fantastical or unlikely one. In other words, if *How He Saw Her* lacks the experientiality to be a narrative, then it challenges the definition of *Animal Farm* as narrative. I

To take an example from narrative poetry, Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* is frequently given an allegorical reading, often one which is allegorical for the poet's own life, which I'll discuss in a later chapter. The two sisters, Lizzie and Laura, are often read as representing the two sides of Christina Rossetti's character, or the poem as a whole considered as Christian allegory, with Lizzie representing Christ (Mermin, 1983:107). Although the poem is consistently treated as allegory by critics, what the poem is an allegory of is ambiguous, as these opposing interpretations show. The allegorical reading of the poem, just as with *Animal Farm* and *How He Saw Her*, is optional.

Fludernik's argument positions the allegorical and literal readings of *How He Saw Her*, *Animal Farm* and *Goblin Market* as mutually exclusive, whereas it is more likely that they are experienced concurrently. Werth viewed metaphor as 'double-layered' because 'the reader... is allowed, and perhaps encouraged, to glimpse two or more aspects of meaning simultaneously' (1977:9). For example, someone who reads *How He Saw Her* may view the poem as allegorical, but will probably still imagine a text-world in which where the protagonist literally talks to Cupid, and in this text-world, all three characters have experientiality and actionality. This text-world is then blended with the originating text-world to create the story of unrequited love which inspired the allegory. Similarly, an allegorical reading of *Animal Farm* and *Goblin Market* will still create text-worlds in which the Animal Farm, and Lizzie and Laura's encounter with the Goblins exist, and these are then used to create the more complex reading, where the characters and events stand for something else.

Lodge views this process as akin to the reading of literature itself. When interpreting a literary text, 'we make it into a total metaphor: the text is the vehicle, the world is the tenor' (1977:109). Just as Fludernik does not view the encounter with Cupid as 'real', Lodge argues that neither are we 'likely to interpret King Lear or Paradise Lost as literal reports of the real: at every point these works point to their own status as total metaphors. The human condition, Shakespeare is saying, 'is' *King Lear*; the human condition, Milton is saying, 'is' *Paradise Lost* (1977:107). Just because a text 'posits a hypothetical or allegorical scenario', does not mean that it 'does not concern specific fictional personae' (Fludernik, 1996:265), such as King Lear or Satan.

How He Saw Her, rather than being entirely allegorical, has more in common with the Middle English lyrics Fludernik later examines in 'Allegory, Metaphor, Scene and Expression', her chapter in *Theory into Poetry*. These poems, she argues, 'seem to start with a narrative' (2007:107) before they are 'transcended in the direction of allegorical interpretation' (2007:106). Rather than viewing these allegorical events and characters as lacking the experientiality to be narrative, Fludernik this time (ten years later) defines them as 'quasi-events' and 'quasi-characters' (2007:109) which combine to create narrative scenes in which the specific time and location are suggested, rather than fully realised (2007:110). For example, Fludernik examines one mediaeval poem in which 'the text seems to start with a narrative and then goes on to turn the expected love story into a religious meditation' (2007:109). The poem

begins telling the story of a man riding through the wood and seeing a beautiful maiden, but it becomes clear that this maiden represents Mary, and the meeting between them becomes an opportunity for religious meditation, rather than romance, with the more mimetic description being replaced for religious philosophy. It is not the allegory between the maiden and Mary which makes this poem less narrative than the opening would lead us to believe, but the fact that once 'The speaker as somebody riding through the woods at a specific time (narrative frame) has disappeared', the poem does not become a narrative about the rider and Mary, but instead the poem '[converts] itself into a clearly argumentative and conative shape' (2007:109).

This makes the poem less narrative than *How He Saw Her* in which the allegory itself retains its narrative frame, which is clearly and specifically temporally located ('on a day,/When her look outflourished May'), during the allegorical meeting between the unrequited lover and Cupid, and both of these poems less narrative than *The Early Purges* in which the narrative frame has both a specific time and location. The protagonist in *How He Saw Her* is a fully drawn character, with an emotional response to his situations. Cupid and the 'her' of *How He Saw Her* could be seen as quasi-characters in a scene, created by the poem as part of a quasi-narrative.

Where I disagree with Fludernik is in her assessment that the poem 'seems' to begin with a narrative before becoming a religious discussion of the soul. The narrative beginning of the poem is not a misleading trick: it still displays narrativity, it just does not develop into a fully realised narrative. If the opening of a text is perceived as narrative because of clearly displayed narrative features, the fact that the poem changes track away from this does not reduce this narrativity. The reader may revise their initial impression of the text-world that the poem created, but those initial impressions are still a part of the reading experience.

Fludernik uses the term 'scene' to describe 'a quasi-setting in which one or more embodied quasi-characters can be glimpsed. Such a scene may be one of wooing, a stroll in the woods, or any other situation in which at least one human subject is present at a specific time and place in a certain situation' (2007:110). This can be easily applied to *How He Saw Her*, despite the thinly drawn characters of Cupid and the woman, who are less developed than the protagonist, and so may be deemed 'quasi-characters'. Fludernik also offers Walker's definition of 'scene', which is 'a crucial moment abstracted from an implied enclosing story' (1998:35). 'In a scene,' explains Fludernik, 'a specific time and location are *suggested*' (2007:10) (emphasis mine). It is not necessary for the time and location to be exactly mapped out, but there should be a sense that a specific time and location exist.

Returning to Christina Rossetti's *Song* (appendix 8.2.1), the time and location of the future world in which most of the poem focuses are far less clearly specific. The speaker is not dead yet, and so the location of the grave, where the speaker asks their 'dearest' not to plant roses or a tree, is not yet a specific place. Similarly, these actions (not singing sad songs and not planting roses etc.) do not happen at a specific

time, but the instruction is for him to *continually* abstain from these actions. Although we generate a text-world in which we see him following her instructions (and also a text-world where he does these things) the actions that take place in this world are less narrative because of the nature of the discourse in which we are told about them. Similarly, the description of the speaker's future, in which they will not 'see the shadows', 'feel the rain' or 'hear the nightingale/Sing on, as if in pain' is not specific, but a general description of their continuous future experience. There are no specific shadows or a specific rain shower, or even a specific nightingale.

I do not believe that this lack of specificity makes this future world *non*-narrative, but it does result in a low level of narrativity. The reader will still create text-worlds in which these events occur, but the lack of specificity means that the scenes foreground the reason for and the purpose of the discourse rather than the narrative itself.

Walker's definition includes the phrase 'implied enclosing story' (1998:35) which is created by a scene. In the case of *Song*, the bones of an implied story occurring in the initial text-world (where the speech act of the poem occurs) can indeed be put together from the modal text-worlds of the poem. As I explained in my introduction, by giving instructions to the speaker's 'dearest', the poem implies that they are someone who is likely to otherwise sing sad songs and plant roses over the grave, and therefore that their relationship is close enough for the 'dearest' to be caused significant grief by their death. Similarly, by focusing on what the speaker will *not* be doing after their death, it is implied that they currently see shadows, feel the rain, and listen to the nightingale singing.

These actions are only possible implications by the poem, and as such are even less narrative than the predictions of the continuous actions that will occur in the future. However, all these implications and weakly narrative descriptions of the future still create an implied narrative about the two consciousnesses of the poem. The initial text-world (where the discourse is taking place) has very little world building, but enough character building occurs in the embedded text-worlds of the poem to imply the details necessary to make this a quasi-scene. To use Fludernik's description of an allegorical poem by Geoffrey Chaucer, 'One can picture a situation in which the protagonists are enmeshed... The vignette is a segment of their life story, so to speak' (2007:110). The reader may imagine that the speaker is speaking to their 'dearest' from their death bed, for example. The poem is therefore weakly and ambiguously narrative, but there are still enough details for a story to be suggested.

A similarly ambiguous narrative can be found in the apocryphal Ernest Hemingway short story of just six words:

For Sale. Baby Shoes. Never worn.

(This piece of flash fiction was almost certainly not written by Earnest Hemingway himself, but by John DeGroot, in a fictional account of Earnest Hemingway's life in his play *Papa* (1989) (Wright, 2012).) Wright discounts this as a narrative, as 'A reader

may sense that there is a story behind the six words and may even want to know what the story is, but that doesn't make the six words themselves a story' (2012:10).

However, discounting *Baby Shoes* as a narrative because the events are implied rather than explicitly reported causes problems for fiction in which implication is used to transmit major story details. For example, if the narrative of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* was based purely on the explicit details we are given by the narrator, the narrative is no longer about a woman's suffering from post-natal depression in traumatic isolation and her subsequent descent into psychosis, as these are details that are inferred by the reader. Taken literally, it becomes a story about a woman who is trapped in the wallpaper and who the narrated-I then frees. Similarly, the reader is likely to picture the events of the Duke and Duchess's relationship in Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess* quite differently to the way that they are recounted in the poem, and Ernest Hemingway's short story *Hills Like White Elephants*, in which the explicit detail, according to Wright, 'consists of little more than dialogue between a man and a woman drinking beer while waiting for a train in Spain' is commonly interpreted to be a conversation about abortion, though this is never explicitly mentioned (2012:8). In both *Hills Like White Elephants*, *My Last Duchess* and *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the story we hear is not necessarily the story that is explicitly told. If Wright accepts that *Hills Like White Elephants* tells a narrative of two people discussing an abortion, then it is problematic to argue that *Baby Shoes* is not a narrative about why the baby shoes were never worn and are now for sale.

Herman argues that readers 'use an assumption of tellability to orient themselves to the story' (2009) and this may cause readers to infer type II events from the available information, meaning that the more banal or less interesting plausible interpretations of *Baby Shoes* are discounted in favour of those which would make the story more tellable. Walsh believes that the 'presumption of relevance... drives the reader's search for an appropriate interpretative context (2007:30) and therefore that readers will assume that investing 'interpretative effort' (2007:31) in understanding a story will lead them to create a satisfying narrative in the process of reading a fiction. Just as Culler's and Leech and Short's experiments demonstrate the reader's propensity to identify textual features in a poem as lyrical, readers of text presented to them as narrative fiction are likely to look for ways to make the story tellable through inference. If *Baby Shoes* was presented as a classified advertisement, rather than a short story written by Ernest Hemingway, readers may be less likely to assume that the event prompting the shoes' sale was type II.

These implied narratives may be weaker than explicitly stated narratives, but discounting them from narrativity entirely would remove many of the most interesting and arresting events and details from a great deal of narrative fiction. Crucially, if we agree that *Hills Like White Elephants* is a narrative about abortion, and my last Duchess is about murder then it must leave space for Christopher Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* to encode a narrative about the attempted seduction of someone by a shepherd. This does not make *The Passionate Shepherd*

to his Love a narrative poem, but there is enough detail to create a weak, implied narrative, without which, the poem would make little sense.

However, the idea of a quasi-narrative is a useful one, as it acknowledges that the line between narrative and non-narrative texts is not always explicit and obvious. Narratives which are communicated by text must be interpreted by the reader, and readers are accustomed to solving puzzles, filling in gaps and 'reading between the lines' when presented with literature, possibly even more so with poetry than with prose. The fact that a full narrative is not entailed by a text does not mean that a reader will not infer one, or that they will not infer details with which they can fill out a quasi-narrative.

In a more complicated case, Fludernik also dismisses the possibility of narrativity in the more typically lyric and poetic *The Sick Rose* by William Blake' (admittedly in her earlier analysis, rather than in her later work in *Theory into Poetry*) because as the poem addresses a flower, 'neither a specific fictional situation nor a person's consciousness (even the rose's in anthropomorphic reinterpretation) can be made out' (1996:265).

The Sick rose

O Rose, thou art sick.
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

I do not agree that a fictional situation cannot be made out in this poem, nor do I agree that the 'Rose' addressed is clearly a flower. The 'rose' of the title is uncapitalised, suggesting a flower, but the capitalisation of 'Rose' in the poem could point towards a woman's name (and Blake's illustration includes both rosebuds and female figures). In either case, 'Rose' has a 'bed/Of crimson joy' which has been found by 'The invisible worm/That flies in the night/In the howling storm' and now she is 'sick' as her life is being destroyed by the worm's 'dark secret love'. This situation might be fantastical (as with the literal storyline of *Animal Farm*), difficult to visualise or comprehend, or confusing, but there is still a fictional situation and also a narrative present. There is at least as much here as E. M. Forster's 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief.' Taken literally, the narrative of *The Sick Rose* is confusing, but it is still present. Fludernik discounts it as a narrative not because the literal meaning of the poem is not narrative, but because (as with *How He Saw Her*) the reader tends to view it as symbolic. As she points out, 'the symbol has not given rise to a variety of situational naturalizations that have, precisely, imported a narrative reading into this poem' (1996:265). What is interesting here is that Fludernik thinks that some of the interpretations of the poem are narrative ('they see

the rose as a woman, they interpret the sickness as sexual guilt, and so on' (1996:265)) but that the poem itself is not. The narrative is, she claims, 'imported' into the poem, rather than being in the poem to begin with. 'Imported', however, suggests that the interpretations have been imposed on the poem rather than informed by it. Seeing the rose as a woman is not a particularly difficult leap from the poem itself, especially considering the original illustrated publication of the poem, which featured feminine figures within the rosebuds. The various narratives are inferred by the reader based on the poem itself, just as the narrative about abortion in *Hills Like White Elephants* is inferred from the text, rather than being explicitly placed in it. The fact that the readings of *The Sick Rose* are 'entirely metaphorical' as Fludernik says, does not make them non-narrative. Metaphors, like nearly any literary technique, can be used in the production of narratives. In addition, the meaning of many metaphors themselves must be 'imported', as what is meant by most metaphors cannot be precisely identified from the words themselves (something I will examine more closely in a later chapter.) For example, there are many possible reasons that Seamus Heaney might have compared the dead kittens to 'wet gloves' but none of these are explicitly stated in the text. For example, Johnston argues that the simile 'hides metonymically the agents of death, Taggart's hands within the gloves' (2003:115) which is certainly plausible, but is not entailed. All of the possible interpretations of this simile must be inferred by the reader using contextual and encyclopaedic knowledge. In short, much of the meaning, including the narrativity, of literary and poetic texts seem to have been 'imported' as they come from implicature rather than explicature.

What makes *The Sick Rose* less narrative than *How He Saw Her* is that these metaphorical interpretations are only weakly implied by the text. There is no universally recognised clear or satisfying resolution to the poem (as can be demonstrated by the wide variety of possible interpretations that Fludernik discusses (1996:265)). And, as is the case with the other metaphorical and allegorical texts discussed, it is likely that the open-ended nature of the metaphors means that more than one narrative will be imagined. This results in a focus on the poem's lyricism, rather than its narrativity. Despite the backgrounded or sketchily presented narrative, the speaker's role is still clearly mediatory.

3.3 Metaphor and Metonymy as modes of discourse

Another model that attempts to distinguish between poetry and prose is Jakobson's theory that prose and metonymy on the one hand and poetry and metaphor on the other are binary opposites. By metaphor, he is not referring to the poetic device, but to a broader mode of discourse, where the text is organised by similarity rather than contiguity. Metonymy is a related concept to narrativity, as contiguous events are required for a narrative. However, instead of linking metaphor with poetry, and metonymy with prose as Jakobson does, in this section I argue that these modes of discourse are better used to examine the distinction between lyricism and narrativity. As I have demonstrated, lyric and narrative poetry are often conflated, which results in narrative poetry being treated as aberrant lyric. Any narrativity

communicated by lyric speakers is therefore ignored or dismissed by critics, in favour of privileging the speaker's 'emotions, reflections and other mental states and activities' (Wolf, 2005:36). Similarly, Lodge's use of Jakobson's ideas results in the over-privileging of metaphor in poetry to the extent that metonymic poetry is treated as aberrant.

Jakobson posited a 'binary opposition' between metaphor and metonymy in both art and literature early in the twentieth century (Lodge, 1977:73). Jakobson originally saw them as 'two poetic types – prose of association by contiguity, of movement within a single world of discourse, and poetry of association by comparison, joining a plurality of worlds' (1948). The former is metonymy and the latter is metaphor. In his essay *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* (1971:58), he supports the claim that they are fundamentally different and opposed by discussing speech difficulties. Instead of categorising speech aphasia on the basis of the difficulty with sending or receiving messages, Jakobson makes a distinction between two types of aphasia, by relating them to disturbances of the axis of 'selection and combination' (Lodge, 1977:77).

An aphasic who struggles with selection will feel 'unable to utter a sentence which responds neither to the cue of his interlocutor nor to the actual situation. The sentence "it rains" cannot be produced unless the utterer sees that it actually is raining' (1971:64). 'Even more striking,' writes Lodge, 'a patient asked to repeat the word "no", replied "No, I can't do it". Sufferers of this type of aphasia require context to make utterances, and cannot 'consciously "select" from an abstract paradigm' (1977:78). Words can never be used in the abstract, and are always connected to their context.

In contrast, aphasics with 'contiguity disorder' struggle with keeping their words in an understandable order and may even be unable to use words with a purely grammatical function. They are 'confined within the paradigmatic dimension, a world in which signs relate primarily, sometimes exclusively, to other semantically connected signs and become resistant to the contextual dimension of the syntagm and prelinguistic circumstances' (Bradford, 1994:10). Such a patient 'deals with similarities, and his approximate identifications are of a metaphoric nature... *Spyglass* for *microscope*, or *fire* for *gaslight* are typical examples' (Jakobson, 1971:72) as these represent similar concepts.

The existence of these two contrasting linguistic disorders is excellent evidence for the positioning of metaphor and metonymy as two structuring principles of human thought and discourse. In visual art, Cubism, which breaks objects into constituent shapes, is metonymic, whereas Surrealism, which combines objects based on their contrast or similarity rather than their contextual connection, is metaphoric (Lodge, 1977:79). However, whilst Jakobson originally saw the two of them as different discourse principles, he later refined this to claim that poetry, with its 'metrical patterning and use of rhyme and other phonological devices emphasizes similarity' (for example, a rhyme pairs words with similar sounds, but different meanings,

causing a comparison between the two), was essentially metaphoric, whereas prose was essentially metonymic (Lodge, 1977:80) without discussing poets who choose to write without either metrical form or rhyme, or whether the resulting poems are somehow less poetic (or perhaps, ridiculously, not poems at all.)

However, although we cannot use Jakobson's axes to reliably separate poetry from prose without ignoring free verse and narrative poetry, the description of metaphor as fundamentally poetic (rather than fundamental to each individual poem), and metonymy as therefore prosaic and narrative, does offer some explanation for the different ways in which prose and poetry are constructed and affect us, and also our differing expectations of them. Prose is *expected* to be narrative, and therefore its reporters are thought of as narrators before any evidence of narrativity is found, unlike poetry which is assumed to rely on similarity rather than contiguity, and therefore the speakers are assumed to not play a narratorial role.

Lodge summarises Jakobson's application of the axis of metaphor and metonymy to art in general by grouping opposing artistic approaches into either metaphor or metonymy. For example, drama is seen as being 'analogous to rather than directly imitative of reality' (Lodge 1977:81), and is therefore metaphoric, whereas film creates an 'illusion of life', with objects and events placed in their expected contexts, and is therefore metonymic. This is not to say that film is restricted to metonymy and drama to metaphor, (Jakobson linked the cinematic technique of montage with metaphor) but that these are their primary and expected *discourse modes*, just as metaphor is the most common discourse mode used in poetry. Similarly, we can clearly expect to find more use of metrical patterning in poetry than we can in prose, even though metrical patterning, rhyme and other sonic devices can be found in prose, and poetry can exist without it. It is also clear that similarity does not require regular form or metre any more than metonymy requires a lack of such. Therefore, if we disregard Jakobson's assumption that poetry is metaphoric *primarily* because it draws attention to the phonetic properties of its language, we can still examine whether or not he is right that metaphor is 'the line of least resistance' for poetry (Lodge, 1977:88).

Lodge compares metaphoric and metonymic description, placing short pieces of descriptive writing about cities on a 'spectrum of discourse' between the metaphoric and metonymic poles. On the far end of the scale of metonymic writing, he discusses an encyclopaedic entry for 'Birmingham', which lacks any "'poetic" coloration' at all (1977:94). The entry demonstrates no clear use of metonymy or synecdoche as literary techniques, but as the selection of information and the way in which it is presented is (presumably) governed entirely by the purpose of the encyclopaedia, it can be said to be dominated by context and to be almost purely referential, and is therefore metonymic. On the other end of his spectrum, as an extreme example of metaphoric description, he places T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Interestingly, the extract he chooses from *The Waste Land* is firstly 'deceptively metonymic' and only 'explodes into metaphor' with writing that is clearly free speech, rather than description (1977:103). This means that although his extract

from *The Waste Land* may be the most metaphoric piece of writing he chooses, if only the description was focused on, the most clearly metaphoric piece of descriptive writing would be from Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* in which although we are given a catalogue of 'contiguous items', Lodge argues that these items are presented metaphorically (1977:99).

Rubik purposefully chose poetic prose and prosaic poetry to demonstrate the grey area of definition between the two genres, and so as one would expect, placing her examples on a spectrum of discourse, as Lodge does, would not be easy, and would probably result in a jumble of poetry and prose, with Seamus Heaney's similes and unromantic language placed further along the metonymic pole than the more poetic, metaphoric language of Peter Carey and Stephen Crane. This does not demonstrate that Lodge is wrong to consider poetry more metaphoric than prose, as Rubik was attempting to demonstrate the overlap between the two genres, not that the two genres cover the same ground entirely. However, it does complicate Lodge's (and Jakobson's) claim that poetry is predominantly metaphoric and prose metonymic that the most metaphoric of Lodge's examples of descriptive writing is *Bleak House* and not a poem. This is clearly not a simple distinction between poetry and prose, but between two modes of discourse which can be utilised by both.

Lodge claims that unlike a writer of prose, a poet 'is constantly diverted from combining items in a natural, logical or temporal succession (and therefore narrative) by the arbitrary demands of the metrical form he has elected to employ' and that 'Rhyme, especially, is apt to prevent the poet from saying what he originally intended to say, and to lead him to say something that he would not otherwise have thought of saying' (1977:89). As has been made clear, this immediately presents us with some difficulties, as poetry cannot be relied upon to use either the rhyme or 'metrical patterning' that Jakobson and Lodge expect, especially not since the 'radical' changes to our conceptions of the poetic which Bradford claims occurred between 1915 and 1975 with the rise of free verse (1993:29), nor can (to a lesser extent) prose be relied upon to eschew them, as Rubik has demonstrated.

Lodge, however, does consider free verse towards the end of *The Modes of Modern Writing*, when he discusses Phillip Larkin's poetry, (some of which is free verse). Phillip Larkin is, claims Lodge, 'a "metonymic" poet' whose use of metonymy in an 'inherently metaphoric mode... is (whether Larkin likes it or not) an "experimental" literary gesture' (1977:214). This is not just because of his rejection of poetic form (some of the poems Lodge considers use rhyme and rhythm, and plenty of his poetry uses fairly traditional forms, as Jakobson would expect) but because 'his poetic style is characterized by colloquialism, low diction and conscious cliché,' making his poetry appear 'daringly, even shockingly unpoetic' (Lodge, 1977:214). As Adamson argues, Phillip Larkin is hardly the first poet to have attempted to use 'ordinary' rather than poetic language, and what may appear 'daringly' or 'shockingly' unpoetic on publication nearly always becomes conventional as it is adopted by later poets (1998). Phillip Larkin's poetry may appear unpoetic to Lodge in 1977, but his style appears far less unusual today, when examples of metonymic poetry are much easier

to find. Historical shifts in style often results in what was previously 'daring' or 'shocking' becoming an accepted and unremarkable part of the genre, and therefore basing our understanding of what is 'poetic' or 'unpoetic' on what appears to break current generic conventions will almost inevitably cause problems as these conventions change.

For example, Lodge describes *The Whitsun Weddings* as having 'a characteristically casual, colloquial tone', 'near-redundant specificity ("One-twenty", "threequarters-empty")' and scenery 'evoked by metonymic and synecdochic detail ("drifting breadth", "blinding windscreens" etc.)' (1997:217) rather than the metaphoric imagery Lodge believes we have come to expect from poets like William Wordsworth (1997:215).

That Whitsun, I was late getting away:
Not till about
One-twenty on the sunlit Saturday
Did my threequarters-
empty train pull out, All windows down, all
cushions hot, all sense Of being in a hurry gone. We
ran Behind the backs of houses, crossed a street Of
blinding windscreens, smelt the fish-dock; thence The
river's level drifting breadth began, Where sky and
Lincolnshire and water meet.

However, Lodge's description of Philip Larkin's poetry as metonymic (and James Joyce and Virginia Woolf's prose as metaphoric) certainly makes Jakobson's theory more useful and applicable. As Rubik demonstrated, there is a hazy boundary between poetry and prose where many of our assumptions about what they are and what they do can mislead us. Whilst Lodge still insists that poetry is 'inherently metaphoric' (1977:2014) his recognition of the existence of metonymic poetry and metaphoric prose points towards a different conclusion: poetry is not *inherently* metaphoric, it's just that poetry, based on the body of work currently available to him, is more *likely* to be written in the metaphoric mode. The distinction here is crucial, as if we declare poetry to be an inherently metaphoric mode, it means we view poetry like Philip Larkin's and Seamus Heaney's, William Carlos Williams (of whose poem, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, Altieri said 'No poem in English is more metonymic' (1976:111)), Ezra Pound (Nänny, 1980) and many other prominent twentieth and twenty-first century poets to be aberrations. Considering Bradford's belief that our conception of what poetry is changed between 1915 and 1975 (1993:29), it is understandable for Lodge, writing in the 1970s, to consider such poetry to be experimental. Philip Larkin and William Carlos Williams (amongst many others) were pushing the boundaries of poetic style, which makes it inevitable that Lodge and others would view their poetry through the lens of the poetic features that were expected but not present. Since then, however, poetry that dispenses with metric form or rhyme, or which avoids the 'over-structuring of language and a tendency to deviate from common usage' is simply too common today to be considered primarily in terms of how it deviates from this poetic prototype. Nearly

two decades ago, Rosemarie Waldrop saw metonymic poetry to be common enough that she believed we were 'in a period of tension' (1996) between the metaphoric and metonymic approaches to poetry. Such poems are no longer so 'shocking' or radical that they should be considered *primarily* through their deviance from previous lyrical norms.

3.3.1 Historical changes to poetic form and expectations

It is not just the shift from a predominantly metaphoric mode that has changed in the way that writers approach poetry. Free verse poetry is unremarkable in the twenty first century, but Bradford points out that 'many of the early reviewers of free verse poems [before 1915] regarded the unmetrical, unrhymed line as a meaningless echo of its regular counterpart' (1993:29), which demonstrates the importance that was once given to a poetic feature which is now considered optional. There was a radical change between 1915 and 1975, Bradford argues, in what was considered poetic (Bradford, 1993:29), and this may account for the shift in what makes a poem recognisably a poem from features which stem from poetry's orality, and the experience of hearing it rather than seeing it (as was the case with Old English poetry) to the visual appearance of the poem on the page. What we understand to be poetry is constantly changing, and so are the poems themselves.

Adamson goes further and argues that this constant pushing at boundaries and shifting in poetic norms is a *feature* of poetry, and is in itself poetic. She points out that there have been 'two revolutions in the history of poetic language since 1776' and both of these are identified by 'a return to common speech' (1998:589). Not only was Modernism declared 'return to common speech', but it was a 'counter-revolution against Romanticism' which was in itself a revolution that attempted this same return (1998:589). Later, Phillip Larkin argued that Modernism itself fosters 'elitist and difficult forms of writing which *remove* literature from common speech', just as the Modernists had claimed of the Romantics (1998:589). This suggests that his metonymic style was not intended to be just transgressive poetry, but was intended to transgress the boundaries of literary style in general

These attempts at 'common speech' by Philip Larkin and others can also be contrasted with the arguments of the Russian Formalists, who argued that poetic speech was in opposition to everyday language, and that it transformed, deviated or violated 'the elements of colloquial speech' (Karcz, 2002:165). Adamson, to some extent, supports this claim as none of the literary texts she examines are like ordinary conversation, and she argues that 'there is never "a return to common speech" in literature: all literary representations are idealisation' (1998:597), but the repeated attempts to try, or at least to write poetry that is not restricted by the current dominant forms, show us how easy it is to accidentally define current poetic conventions, rather than poetry itself.

To go back to an earlier point in poetry's history, Bradford claims that John Milton's *Paradise Lost* was as transgressive to poetic convention in the eighteenth century as free verse was in the mid-twentieth century (1993:76). Before *Paradise Lost*, blank

verse was only considered suitable for drama (Bradford, 1993:76). John Dryden claimed that this was because without rhyme, the line could not be accurately heard, and the line was a crucial component of poetic discourse (Bradford, 1993:76). Implicit in this statement is the belief in a poetic *listener* rather than a reader, which in itself is a demonstration of how far our expectations of poetry have changed. However, less than two decades after *Paradise Lost*'s publication, 'blank verse had become fully established as a vehicle for the non-dramatic poem (Bradford, 1993:81). Subsequently, the Romantics used blank verse predominantly for 'introspective "high Romantic" discourse' (Bradford, 1993:151) rather than drama, and this was no longer surprising or controversial. The Victorian poets, Bradford claims, further moved beyond any 'predictable, causal relationship between the verse form of the poem, the issues addressed by it, its predicated situation and its dominant thematic motif' (1993:150-1). Whereas in the eighteenth century, it was believed that 'the ability of the couplet to isolate a specific issue or physical element made it the ideal vehicle for the public or satirical poem' and the Romantics used the ballad for 'the rural or gothic tale' it is difficult, Bradford claims, 'to find similar generic-stylistic correspondences in Victorian verse' as such 'implicit regulations had become far more flexible' (Bradford, 1993:151).

Iambic pentameter, which was the 'metrical norm' for poetry since William Shakespeare and John Milton's work was described as 'monotonous' by William Blake in 1820 (Adamson, 1998:615) and was later rejected by the Romantic poets, who wanted the rhythm of poetry to be closer to that of 'passionate speech' (Adamson, 1998:616). The metre of Romantic and Victorian poetry, Adamson claims, represents experimentation designed to rid poetry of 'the iambic foot; the five-stress line; and finally, rhyme' (1998:616). With the arrival of Modernism, and the vastly increased use of free verse, the regulations of style were even further compromised and there are no longer any 'particular syntactic or metrical rules' that the poet is expected to adhere to (Bradford, 1993:154). Adamson argues that this pushing at the boundaries of poetic expectations resulted in poetic lines that became so long that they 'blur the boundaries between poetry and prose (Adamson, 1998:622). All that we are left with to define poetry is, Bradford claims, 'the line' (1993:194), whether that is demarcated visually or aurally.

The historical changes to both the restrictions placed on poetic form and the expectations surrounding what a poem 'should' be identified by both Adamson and Bradford alert us to the possibility that any accurate definition can quickly cease to be useful. The generic norms that these definitions attempt to identify may very well instead be indications of the style of the current period, and as such are unlikely to hold. Tynjanov, a prominent Russian Formalist, discussing the evolution of literature, is critical of any attempt to define literary genres as a whole, arguing that the features of literary genres change too quickly to be accurately defined. For example, 'what was called an ode in the 1820s by Fet was so labelled on the basis of features different from those used to define an ode in Lomonosov's time' (1929:70). Similarly, the genres of short stories, novellas and novels have changed to such a great extent that they can now only be adequately defined by 'the quantity of

printed pages' (1929:70) and not by any textual features. It is vital, therefore, to acknowledge the historicity of literary style, and therefore to expect that this style will change in unpredictable ways. Claims that poetry with overt narrativity or metonymic features are aberrant lyrics, ignore such shifts and tend to ignore any mediation and narrativity performed by the speaker in favour of privileging monoperspectivity.

3.3.2 Metonymic poetry

As Rubik's analysis of Seamus Heaney's *The Early Purges* (appendix 8.3.1) demonstrated its lack of poeticisms, examining it is a good way of further challenging the notion that poetry is inherently metaphoric and therefore that the lyric is prototypical for poetry.

Seamus Heaney's writing is, like Philip Larkin's, noticeably unmetaphoric and avoids poeticisms. Like Philip Larkin, he does use some metaphors ('the snout of the pump', 'like wet gloves', 'mealy and crisp as old summer dung') but these stand out due to the predominantly colloquial language of the 'defiantly down-to-earth speaker' (Rubik, 2007:203) and the metonymic organisation of the text, where the description and sequence of events follow a contiguous pattern. As Lodge writes of *The Whitsun Weddings*, 'the metaphors are foregrounded against a predominantly metonymic background' (1977:217) and here they are used to highlight the childish sentimentality of the narrated-I, contrasted with the straightforward slang of 'Dan Taggart' ('scraggy wee shits') and finally, due to life on the 'well-run farm', the speaker ('And now, when shrill pups are prodded to drown/I just shrug, "Bloody pups"'.) The last stanza, with its use of cliché, could almost be speech.

Similarly, the following poems which I believe all display a similar 'casual, colloquial tone', 'near-redundant specificity' and 'metonymic and synecdochic detail', can all be found within the same contemporary poetry anthology (*Staying Alive*, edited by Neil Astley (2002)).

Happiness (appendix 8.3.6), written by Raymond Carver in 1996, uses such straightforward language that rather than have their happiness described through typical metaphoric devices such as metaphor or through evocative metonymic description, we are simply told that the two boys 'are so happy'; an interesting choice considering that the perceived happiness of the two boys is the supposed catalyst for the speaker's thoughts on happiness in general. Similarly, the philosophical climax of the poem in the final stanza is written in straightforward, unpoetic terms without metaphor or other 'poetic' devices beyond that of internal deviation in presenting the word 'Happiness' as a single sentence. The 'casual, colloquial' tone is clear in phrases like 'the usual early morning stuff' and 'they are doing this thing'. As Lodge says of Philip Larkin, the two boys are 'observed with the eye of a novelist or documentary writer and allowed to stand, untransformed by metaphor, as indices of a certain recognizable way of life' (1977:217) as they perform the mundane task of delivering newspapers. The speaker here is narrating the action, despite being a diegetic part of it.

Although the poem focuses more on the thoughts and experience of the speaker than it does on the two boys being observed, it sticks to a clear chronology, and contiguous events. The speaker is awake early in the morning, drinking coffee and looking out of the window, three situations which are clearly linked in both context and ordered chronologically. The boys are observed through the window, and the passage of time is shown through the increase of light as the sun rises. The events are described in concrete rather than abstract parameters, and are given significance by the speaker's interpretation of what has been observed, and by the final stanza, which attempts to link the simple narrative with a broader observation.

William Stafford's *Travelling through the Dark* (1977) (appendix 8.3.7) is similarly unmetaphoric, without regular metre or rhyme. Like *The Early Purges*, *Happiness* and *The Whitsun Weddings*, *Traveling through the Dark* is based around the narration of ordinary events, but with the speaker's parting thoughts giving the reader a sense of broader significance. Although Rubik says that *The Early Purges* resists 'allegorical meaning', the contrast between the distress of the narrated-I at the death of the kittens and the nonchalant drowning of the puppies in the final stanza is clearly linked to the difference between the 'town' and the 'well-run farm', and less clearly between childhood and adulthood. *Traveling through the Dark* is similarly practically minded and also has some of the specificity of *The Whitsun Weddings* ('on the edge of the Wilson River Road'). The dead deer is metonymically described as a 'heap', and even when describing the unborn fawn the poem lacks the emotive metaphors of *The Early Purges* (aside from the almost clichéd, and therefore unremarkable, personification of the wilderness, and the purring of the engine). Like *The Whitsun Weddings*, the coda of the last lines, where we are given a sense of why the speaker wants to tell us their story, occurs within the narrative of events (on the train, after having observed the weddings, in the case of Philip Larkin, or by the side of the road, before pushing the deer into the river, in the case of William Stafford). There are metaphoric touches, however. Most notably in the similarity drawn between the possibility of swerving on the narrow road, and the 'swerving' of the speaker's thoughts before the deer is pushed. Perelman calls the speaker of this poem 'the persona of the real life self, speaking normally' (1980), which (if we leave aside the rather confusing concept of what 'real life' refers to) could equally apply to any of the metonymic poetry I've considered, including other poems from the same anthology (such as Matthew Sweeney's poem, *Tube Ride to Martha's*).

These few poems do not demonstrate that poetry as a whole is as metonymic as prose, or that poetry is not predominantly metaphoric, but they do demonstrate that contemporary metonymic poems are not difficult to find, and are too numerous to still be considered radical divergences from the norm. From my introduction, despite the lack of individual metaphors, Simon Armitage's *Poem* (appendix 8.1.1) relies on connecting together a series of unconnected actions in order to examine their similarity. Both techniques are available to poets. This use of metonymy within poetry should also prime us to examine these texts for contiguous events, and therefore for narrative. Importantly, examining a text for narrativity demonstrates any narratorial role performed by the speaker, and makes perspectives other than

that of the assumed poet easier to find, even if the text demonstrates only a low level of narrativity.

3.4 Tellability

I have shown so far that some narrativity is present in a variety of lyric poems, but in order for a text to be considered narrative, narratologists have argued that it must also be tellable. Tellability is a related concept to narrativity which focuses on what makes the narrative events worthy of telling. A narrated text might meet all the criteria for narrative that I have defined in 3.3, but if the events do not interest the reader or the story is judged to be pointless then it will be said to lack tellability. In this section, I argue that tellability is a useful narratological concept when assessing the level of narrativity in a text, and that the presence of narrativity but not tellability will result in the backgrounding of the events and a focus instead on a text's lyricism. Lyric speakers, therefore, can still be examined in terms of the communicative hierarchy proposed by narratologists without the events that they mediate becoming the focus of the poem. Tellability is therefore useful in further refining Fludernik's assertion that a lyric poem can make use of backgrounded, implied or quasi narrativity.

Ryan defines tellability as what 'makes stories inherently worth telling', arising from its 'newsworthiness' or 'unusual character or expectation-defying nature of the information' whereas narrativity is 'a property found in all texts interpretable as stories' even if the reader finds them pointless or uninteresting (2010:589-90). This may also be explained by separating events into type I and type II events. A type I event is 'a general type of event that has no special requirements' and a type II event requires extra features, such as 'relevance, unexpectedness, and unusualness' (Huhn, 2009:80). Type I events may make a text narrative, therefore, but without type II events, this narrative may not be considered eventful, or tellable.

Some narratologists, including Bruner (1991), Fludernik (2003) and Prince (2008), believe that the two concepts cannot be separated so easily, and that tellability is required for narrativity to be present. This more narrow approach to what makes a text narrative requires type II events, so as to make the narrative interesting to the reader. Tellability may arise from the complication in the narrative or from the evaluation which comments on the event, both structural elements of the story identified by Labov (1972). An example of this would be the pregnancy of the dead deer in *Travelling through the dark*, which complicates the speaker's reaction to finding the animal's body in the road, and causes him to pause rather than simply do what is 'usually best' (which was set up as part of the story's orientation in the opening stanza). *Travelling through the dark* also fits into Todorov's narrative structure (1969): the state of equilibrium is disrupted by the discovery that the deer is pregnant with her unborn fawn is still alive inside her, and recognising this causes the speaker to pause rather than follow the expected course of action, but ultimately they roll the body over the edge of the road, which resolves the conflict.

As Ryan says, the most important requirement in making a narrative plot tellable is 'the existence at some point of conflict' (2010:590) such as the speaker's dilemma in *Travelling through the dark*, though she also suggests that 'conflict is so fundamental to stories that it could be regarded as a condition of narrativity and not merely of tellability' (2010:590). It can hardly be a surprise to the reader that when the speaker's love in *Waiting* drops her coat that it will 'slide to the floor in a blue heap', for example, which would arguably reduce the level of narrativity in the poem.

However, Ryan points out that although Labov's story structure and the concept of tellability are crucial in understanding 'popular' literature, 'high literature often prefers to make art of the not-tellable, thereby following the footsteps of Flaubert, who claimed that *Madame Bovary* was 'a novel about nothing' (2010:590). It may not be the tellability of the events which encourage the readers' of *Madame Bovary* to read on, but 'the main character's unfulfilled desires' and 'the conflict between the possible world and the actual situation she finds herself in' which, although not real events in the world of the novel, must be 'part of the narratological interpretation of Flaubert's narrative structure' (Herman and Vervaeck, 2001:155). Herman argues that postmodern writing often intends to frustrate 'attempts to attribute significance to events' (Herman, 2009). It seems likely that just as poets push against the boundaries of our expectations for lyrical poetry, prose writers may be exploring the boundaries of narrative and tellability.

Rather than preventing any narrativity, low tellability in texts such as *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love* and *Waiting*, resulting from a lack of conflict and satisfying resolution in the action, may instead result in the backgrounding of the narrative elements. Fludernik argues that a lyric poem 'does not primarily tell a story' (2007:103) or have a 'foregrounded plotline', but can have residual or implied narrativity (2007:104). However, a poem such as *Travelling through the dark* has a short but tellable story. This is not to say that the poem has no lyrical elements, but it is the action of pushing the dead deer into the river which resolves the poem, and this foregrounds the narrative.

Hühn, on the other hand, argues that the lack of tellable physical events does not preclude lyric poems from being eventful or tellable. He argues that lyric poetry still has a clear 'point' which 'makes it worth telling', and therefore that rather than referring to action, lyrical plots 'typically refer to ideas, memories, desires, emotions, imaginations and attitudes' (2005:155), (a list which is similar to Wolf's argument that lyric poetry concerns itself with 'emotions, reflections and other mental states and activities' (2005:36).) For example, in *I wondered lonely as a cloud*, Hühn argues that what makes the poem 'eventful' is 'the sudden transition from the unreflected singular experience (told in the past tense) to the repeated and infinitely repeatable ("oft", 19) renewal of this joyful experience through recollection and imagination (told in the present tense)' and this event is 'defined by its surprise-effect, its unpredictability' (2005:154). This clear transition also marks a shift in the speaker's position, and a clear distinction between their speaking and their experiencing selves.

Hühn's analysis demonstrates why narratological analysis is a useful tool for examining how the structure of a lyric poem makes it 'tellable' despite the lack of type II events. However, if we define 'ideas, memories, emotions, imaginations and attitudes' (2005:155) as events, it erases the distinction between lyricism and narrativity texts. Although Hühn's analysis offers insight into how the states of mind in lyrical texts can be examined with the same precision that narratology uses to examine events, I would argue that it is still useful to examine lyric poetry through the lens of traditional narratology to verify the presence of narrativity within the lyric. In *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, Hühn is correct that what makes the poem interesting and arresting to the reader is this shift in attitude, from narrating a past experience to present recollection, but I would also argue that this foregrounds the lyrical elements of 'ideas, memories, emotions, imaginations and attitudes' rather than the narrative elements of action and events.

In order to demonstrate that lyric speakers are not predominantly monologic or monoperspectival, but that they can utilise the same variety of positions that narratologists posit for prose narrators, it is necessary therefore for my analytical chapters to examine texts which foreground lyricism rather than tellable narrative events. In addition to my argument in the previous chapter that a reliable speaker increases lyricism, I have also now demonstrated that a lack of focus on narrative events and the foregrounding of the speaker's thoughts, emotions or psyche also increases the text's potential for lyricism.

3.5 Narrativity and lyricism in *The Early Purges*

As discussed earlier, Rubik argues that *The Early Purges* transgresses the traditional boundaries of lyric poetry in part because of its high level of narrativity. She does not consider whether or not the poem could be something other than a lyric. In this section, I will argue that the poem displays a low level of lyricism and a high level of narrativity, which makes it a narrative poem rather than a lyric. What may be leading Rubik to consider it a lyric is the apparent similarity between the speaker and Seamus Heaney himself. Similarities between the speaker and the poet are likely to lead us to assume that the poem is autobiographical, and therefore the speaker and poet are treated as identical. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the lyric frequently makes use of a reliable speaker which leads to the poet and the speaker appearing to be identical or at least potentially so, and biographical similarities between the speaker and the poet compounds this. This, in turn, increases attention on the absence of lyricism and treats this absence as significant, and reduces the attention on the speaker's role as a narrator. In this case, therefore, the poem is considered to be a personal poem for biographical rather than linguistic reasons.

Having defined narrative, and identified the wide range of narrativity present in poetry, it is clear that *The Early Purges* cannot be defined as non-narrative. There are certainly one or more events, involving 'characters, and what the characters say and do' (Abrams 2005, p. 181) in *The Early Purges*. Prince, Labov and Rimmon-Kenan's requirements for events that do not 'presuppose or entail each other' (Prince, 1987:58) can also clearly be met within most stanzas of the poem (the paws

scraping and the subsequent death of the kittens in the second stanza, the drowned kittens floating before being 'sluiced' out in the third stanza, and so on.). These events also fulfil Rimmon-Kenan's definition of narrative as 'the narration of a succession of fictional events' (1983:2). Hühn defines narrativity as 'the combination and interaction of two different dimensions, of sequentiality and mediacy' (2007:151), which again can easily be applied to *The Early Purges*, with its clear sequence of events, narrated by the protagonist's older self.

In addition to the narrative events of the poem, there is also a degree of tellability to the story of the young boy, horrified at the death of kittens. The story also makes some use of Labov's plot structure, with the trauma of watching Dan kill kittens, rats, crows, rabbits and hens leading to the resolution of his adult-self drowning puppies without sentiment.

Despite this foregrounded plotline, Rubik claims that its lack of lyrical features and the presence of narrativity means that it 'mocks the lyric' (2007:206) and does not consider the possibility of it being a narrative poem, as opposed to a transgressive lyric poem.

Hühn believed that the distinction between lyric and narrative fiction was that the events in lyric poetry are 'usually of a mental kind', such as the narrator dreaming back to the daffodils in *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (2005:148). This is not the case in *The Early Purges*, where the most striking events (the purges themselves) are observable and concrete. Though it is possibly true that the mental shift from horror and fear at killing animals to indifferent acceptance is a key feature of the poem, this is a response to the physical events of the narrative.

Of course, having a narrative does not mean that *The Early Purges* is not a lyric poem, as Hühn demonstrates by examining *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*. To see how far we can define *The Early Purges* as lyric, we should hold it up against Wolf's lyric framework (2005:36), to see if it meets enough of the criteria to qualify. To do so, I have grouped the framework's points together by their broader focus. In doing so, I will both demonstrate the lack of lyrical features in *The Early Purges* but also challenge the existence of some of these in more clearly lyrical poems.

3.5.1 Creativity with language

- the lyric allows a maximum of 'poetic freedom' from the conventions and constraints of everyday language in communicating experience, emotions, reflections and other mental states and activities and enables poets to make a maximum use of all components of oral and written language, including imagery, self-referentiality and the acoustic dimension of language...
- it allows authors to play and experiment with language and meaning like no other literary genre ...
- the uniqueness of lyric discourse allows poets to use language in a most emphatic and memorable way, in addition - and depending on historical aesthetic conventions - also in a particularly 'beautiful' way...

- the lyric can also be used to render language opaque and difficult and thus can slow down the process of reception (Wolf, 2005:36)

This section is the least relevant to my concerns about the lyric speaker, so will only be briefly considered. As has been demonstrated by Rubik and discussed in my previous chapter, if the lyric does allow the poet freedom from 'the conventions and constraints of everyday language' and 'to play and experiment with language and meaning', Seamus Heaney does not make particular use of this, nor can the language be described as 'opaque'. There is some figurative, metaphoric language, but this is easy to understand, and does not lend itself to multiple interpretations (such as the 'snout' of the water pump). Some of the language could be perhaps described as emphatic ('scraggy wee shits'), but the poet emphasises the straightforward brutality of farm life without using poetic 'beauty'. Rubik's careful analysis of the poem clearly demonstrates the lack of lyrical language asked for by Wolf's framework. The language of the poem is not obviously lyrical, therefore.

3.5.2 Minimal world-building

- the lyric provides a means of evoking (elements of) a fictional world through minimal units; liminally, it allows poets to construct worlds in which there are no external developments nor (series of) actions but which consist only of a single state of mind...
- in the construction of fictional worlds, the lyric, as different from narrative fiction, also permits a maximum freedom from probability, chronological or logical order and coherence as well as from referential contexts (Wolf, 2005:36)

The poem details external developments, and these make up narrative events which are probable, chronological, logically ordered and coherent (the drowning of the animals by both Dan Taggart and the first-person narrator, for example). In addition, there is a sense of narrative resolution when we realise that the child has grown up to become someone very much like Dan Taggart, despite their earlier horror.

Additionally, the poem details more than one state of mind. For the majority of the poem, we are expected to empathise with the child through the use of evaluative language use as the 'sickening' killing of animals and the fear that this prompted, and also in the description of him 'sadly' hanging around the farm. However, in the last stanza this shifts, as the child has grown up into an adult who kills puppies (and presumably other animals) with the same pragmatic callousness that so horrified them in childhood, describing their earlier attitude as 'false sentiment'. It is clear, therefore, that it is the speaker's past self who finds the deaths 'sickening' and not the adult speaker. Although it is this later consciousness which narrates the story, this does not interfere with giving us access to the child's emotional reactions, and it is only once this part of the story has been told that we find out that the narrator now views these emotional reactions as 'false sentiments'. Therefore, with regard to these two related criteria, *The Early Purges* clearly does not qualify. However, my study of *Song* and Huhn's study of *I wandered lonely as a cloud* (two uncontroversial

examples of lyric poetry) should call Wolf's argument about the single state of mind into question. Both these poems made use of different states of mind, and in my next chapter I will argue that shifting and even conflicting perspectives are often key to poetry achieving a lyrical effect.

3.5.3 A self-reflexive, monoperspectival consciousness

- **The lyric enables authors to treat their subjects from the monoperspectival point of view of one consciousness and allows them in particular to simulate an immediate access to the innermost recesses of a human mind without having to justify either the access to, or the content of that mind, as would, for instance, usually be the case in the stream-of-consciousness novel...**
- **the lyric enables poets to use this consciousness not as a means of shedding light on elements of external reality but of revealing itself, its thoughts and in particular its emotions (Wolf, 2005:36)**

This, and the other more lyrical examples I have examined, are no more monoperspectival than most first person narration. There is a clear distance in *The Early Purges* between the narrating-I, speaking as an adult who (along with Dan Taggart) thinks that drowning puppies 'makes sense', and the narrated-I, who is frightened and traumatised by the routine killing of animals on the farm. This distance between them creates the tension of the poem, rather than the focus being on the singular perspective of the narrating consciousness. This is a good example of what Bakhtin called 'double-voiced discourse' because it 'serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions' (1986: 324); in this case, the genuinely felt fear and horror of the child at witnessing the death of the animals, and the narrating consciousness, who believes such an emotional response to be misguided and sentimental. The child's perspective both gives us insight into the fear and horror at observing death, and also allows the narrating consciousness to demonstrate the shift from 'false sentiment' to believing that such deaths simply make 'sense'. However, although *The Early Purges* again does not meet Wolf's criteria, I do not consider this significant, as I have failed to find evidence of this monoperspectivity in even his example of a quintessentially lyric poem.

3.5.4 Fictionality and world-building

- **the lyric permits an oral performance without play-acting...**
- **the lyric permits poets to combine perspectival views on minimal world elements with a maximum of implications for a general model of the world and a maximum of transferability to the horizon of individual recipients (Wolf, 2005:36)**

With these criteria, Wolf is attempting to separate lyric poetry from dramatic monologues (2005:27) which if read aloud, require 'role-playing' as a specific fictional character, and also the more extensive world-building that makes a poem specific to the setting and characterisation, rather than generalisable to broader human experiences (such as Lord Byron's narrative poem, *Don Juan*). Wolf argues that the

lyric should be 'performative' but should not 'entail dramatic-role-playing or acting' but instead, the poem should be plausibly 'the speech act of the reciter' (2005:28). Adamson argues that the dramatic monologue uses a 'fully fictionalised speaker' in an attempt to 'see the world from another speaker's point of view'. Broadly speaking, reading a lyric poem should not require pretending to be someone else. If the narrator of the poem is also a clearly defined character (as is the case in *My Last Duchess* and *The Early Purges*), then the specificity of narrative, discussed by Rubik and Fludernik, is important here, as the more specific the narrative details of the poem, the more play-acting will be required when reading or reciting the words of the speaker. Here is another example where the precision of narratology would be useful in examining the poetic speaker – much of the drama from these 'fully fictionalised' speakers in dramatic monologues arises from their unreliability, and the way that the reader is inclined to judge or examine their characters (Phelan 1996:32, Langbaum, 1957:75). Homodiegetic character narrators, who are a part of the experiences that they relate (Fludernik, 2012:27), are all potentially unreliable, but the text may or may not make use of this reliability and encourage the reader to examine them.

The narrative of *I wandered lonely as a cloud* is short, and the poem contains few biographical details about the narrator, but there is still a small element of 'dramatic role-play' in placing ourselves in the narrator's position. Fludernik believes that lyric poems will be read for their 'allegorical meaning', but the degree to which *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* can be applied to the experiences of the generalised reader will vary hugely depending on who is reading it. Even if the reader had had these experiences before, unless they are doing so right at the time they are reading the poem, there is an element of imagination still necessary which can be classed as 'play-acting', though the characterisation of the speaker is slight enough that this is probably not definable as 'role-play'. This speaker, therefore, is autodiegetic, but there is no indication that they are unreliable or that we should judge them, which is what would increase the 'play-acting' and therefore reduce the lyricism.

Wolf explicitly claims that his prototypically lyric example, *Song*, by Christina Rossetti, fulfils this requirement, and in terms of action and specific setting, this poem does require less 'play-acting' than *I wandered lonely as a cloud*. However, even though this poem lacks much specificity in the initial text-world, it still does require a degree of 'dramatic role-play' or 'play acting' in order to imagine oneself in the position of communicating to a 'dearest' about death. The poem does not recount a universal human experience, but the situation is one that is easy to relate to for most people, and because of the lack of world building in the initial text-world, a reader placing themselves in the position of the narrator will require less acting to do so than is the case with *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* or *The Early Purges*.

Instead of considering *Song* to require no 'play-acting' at all, it is more useful to place the degree of play-acting required to perform the poem on a spectrum, much as Lodge does when comparing the level of metonymy in various texts. *Song* requires very little play-acting, but it does still require some. *The Early Purges*, however,

contains so much narrative detail in the setting and characterisation of the narrator and the narrated-I that it could almost be considered a dramatic monologue. Aside from a lack of unreliability, the poem fulfils many of the requirements offered for definitions of the genre, such as 'colloquial language or at least language with an oral flavour' (Howe, 1996:3), sympathy for the speaker and the speaker's viewpoint (Langbaum, 1957:77), and arguably a 'case-making' or 'argumentative tone' (Everett, 2003) and conflict of some kind (Howe, 1996:13). All that is lacking is a clear dramatic scenario that would explain why the narrator is telling us the story (Everett, 2003), which Adamson argues results from deictic markers which give dramatic monologues the impression that the speaker is 'speaking to an interlocutor who shares his spatio-temporal location' producing the effect of 'situated' speech (1998:670-1). Correspondingly, the 'presence of an auditor' is sometimes considered necessary to the dramatic monologue (Howe, 1996:3), but as this would exclude many of Robert Browning's most famous examples of the genre, such as *Caliban Upon Setebos* and *Johannes Agricola* and it would probably exclude *Porphyria's Lover*, where the presence or absence of a listener is not clearly defined, this should not be considered a necessary feature (perhaps part of a framework, as with Wolf's lyric framework, instead). Because of this, Everett (2003) loosens this rather rigid requirement, and instead suggests that 'the reader may instead take the part of the listener, and this point of view is always available within the form' whether or not the listener is present, (though this is so broad it could encompass most lyric poetry, especially with a clear lyric-you.)

As *The Early Purges* lacks a clear auditor, narratee or lyric-you, it could also be considered a soliloquy, which Langbaum describes as requiring 'self-absorption and internal debate' (1957:157). Although there is the positioning of two opposing viewpoints here (child and adult, town and country) there is no sense of conflict in the narrator's current state of mind. If there is an 'argumentative tone' it is directed against those who would sympathise with the child and condemn Dan Taggart, rather than evidence of internal conflict. The poem focuses on how the resolution was reached, not the struggle to reach that resolution.

Therefore the poem cannot be considered a clear example of dramatic monologue or soliloquy, (nor does it neatly fall into the lyric genre) but the fact that it meets some of the requirements for both of these is partly due to the clearly characterised speaker, about whom we are given biographical detail and a personality (and so could be accurately referred to as a 'persona'). It is therefore difficult to imagine reading the poem without 'play-acting' the part of the narrator, as they are a lot more specific than the transferable lyric-I expected by Wolf and Rubik.

The poem details actions taken by characters, and the protagonist's emotional reaction to them. The drowning of the puppies in the final stanza is more abstract, as there is a sense that the narrator is referring to the general act of drowning puppies ('And now, when shrill pups are prodded to drown/I just shrug, "Bloody pups"') rather than one specific event (as is the case with the trauma caused by witnessing the drowning of the kittens). Even so, as Rubik points out, the drowning of the

puppies is not an allegorical drowning, but one that actually occurs in the fictional world of the poem (probably more than once). Reading this poem would require a great deal of play-acting, therefore, as the events and experiences the narrator is commenting on are specific, and not generalizable.

It is also possible that the reader would not want to endorse the position of the speaker (which is that killing animals in this way 'makes sense', and to suggest otherwise is 'false sentiment'). Reading the poem, therefore, would require play-acting the part of someone with different moral values, and make it less easy to treat the poem as applicable to general human experience. Those readers with experience of farm-life, on the other hand, may very well agree with the speaker and consider the moral position well-justified by the poem. Johnston describes the tone of the poem as 'uncertain' and claims that irony is directed both at the animal-rights sentimentalist and the strong farmer (2003:114), therefore it is ambiguous whether or not we are expected to view the adult speaker's casual attitude to killing animals as rational pragmatism, or a coping strategy for his traumatic childhood experiences.

However, it is possible, perhaps even likely, that a reader might not notice the degree of play-acting required, as the experiences of the narrated-I can be easily matched to the biographical details of Seamus Heaney himself. As I have demonstrated, the lyric has often been associated with 'personal' poetry, and there is frequently little effort made in separating out the poet from the poem. This assumption of autobiography is at its most stark when considering Sylvia Plath and other confessional poets, and the limiting and misleading effects of this will be considered in a later chapter.

O'Donoghue, in *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, describes three of his poems as 'autobiographical' (2009:27, 47, 160), and Parker claims that all Seamus Heaney's poetry with child protagonists, such as *The Early Purges*, is autobiographical (1993:68). *The Early Purges* specifically, Parker believes, is likely to have been based on Seamus Heaney's experiences of 'cruelty which he observed or in which he participated' (1993:35) and 'memories from his earliest experiences' (1993:65). Knowing that Seamus Heaney was born and raised on a 40-acre farm (Parker, 1993:1) makes it easy to link the events of much of his poetry with his biographical details, and also means that whether or not we view the speaker as misguidedly callous, we will likely ascribe this sentiments of the speaker to Seamus Heaney directly. This means that his poetry is less likely to be viewed as play-acting, as although it would require play-acting for most of his readers, we recognise that it requires almost no play-acting for him. It is unlikely that this poem will be interpreted as 'an attempt to see the world from another speaker's point of view' (Adamson, 1998:671) if this speaker's point of view appears so close to Seamus Heaney's own. This knowledge is also likely to affect whether or not we judge the speaker's moral position, as Seamus Heaney's farming experience makes it more likely that this is something that he himself endorses, and therefore the speaker is less likely to be seen as a character whose callousness is being held up for judgement.

Had a poem recounting the same story and experiences been written by Christina Rossetti or William Wordsworth, the gap between the poets' experiences and the experiences detailed by the poem would have been clear. Critics assessing the poem would know that the detail of farm life offered would not reflect Christina Rossetti's or William Wordsworth's life or experience, meaning, I believe, that the poem would be far more likely to be treated as narrative or dramatic and less likely to have been read as a transgressive lyric. In this case, it is the similarity between the events described and what we know of Seamus Heaney's life that causes Rubik to treat the poem as transgressive lyric rather than narrative poetry, I believe. The assumption that lyric poetry is 'personal' to the poet is what is misleading.

Whether or not *The Early Purges* is autobiographical, and the narrated-I is intended to be directly equivalent to a young Seamus Heaney or not should not change whether or not the poem tells a story. Biographical links between the poet and the narratives they create do not make them less narrative, nor do they result in more or less 'play acting' on the part of the reader. Autobiography and narrative are not mutually exclusive, and autobiography is often discussed in terms of both narrative, and narratological tools are used to analyse it.

The reason that autobiographical links between the writer and the text are more misleading in poetry than in prose is because of our assumption that lyric poetry is personal to the poet who wrote it. Therefore *The Early Purges* is seen as a 'transgressive lyric' rather than a narrative poem, despite the fact that it fulfils few of the criteria for being a lyric poem and a great deal of the narrativity is foregrounded.

It is this confusion between the poet and their creations, itself arising from the misleading definitions of lyric poetry and poetry in general, that is the cause of a great deal of misconception about poetry, I believe, and it is also the driving force behind why we treat the lyric speaker so differently from the prose narrator, despite their similarities.

3.6 Brevity and implied narratives

In this section I will argue that the detail and specificity required for full narrativity naturally predisposes short texts like lyric poetry to a lower level of narrativity. However, short prose narratives are not impossible. By examining some examples of 'hint fiction' I argue that the assumptions of tellability can be used to infer narrative specificity from even very short texts. These implied narratives are often an essential part of lyric poems, as the creative use of language often results in a degree of interpretive challenge to the reader. 'Deciphering' a poem may require filling in gaps in the narrative, therefore, and this should demonstrate the importance of applying the full communicative hierarchy used to examine prose narration when considering the position of the lyric speaker.

Perloff explicitly claims that 'For "long" and "brief" [poems] we can easily substitute the words "narrative" and "lyric"' (1996:158). The conflation of brevity and a lack of narrativity is a mistake, I believe, but I do think that Perloff is right to make a

connection (one that Wolf discounts), and that examining this helps to pin down why lyric poetry is assumed to be a non-narrative genre.

Perloff's statement was a response to Edgar Allen Poe's influential essay, *The Poetic Principle* (1850) in which he goes so far as to say that 'a long poem does not exist' and that even the phrase 'a long poem' is 'a flat contradiction in terms' (1850:1). Assuming that Poe means 'a long lyric poem' rather than any long poem, Perloff summarises his position as being that 'only the condensed lyric utterance - the cry of the heart - can produce the elevation of soul and "psychic intensity" that is the aim of all art. Mere story, it would seem, could never produce the Longinian transport' (1996:158).

Perloff also includes the following (translated) statement from Baudelaire,

We can cut wherever we please, I my dreaming, you your manuscript, the reader his reading; for I do not keep the reader's restive mind hanging in suspense on the threads of an interminable and superfluous plot.
(Baudelaire, 1893, cited in Perloff, 1996:158).

Baudelaire connects plot with 'interminable' length, and feels that cutting down a text in length results in removing (or perhaps just reducing) what might otherwise lead to a narrative story. Perloff contrasts the 'condensed lyric utterance' with 'mere story', as if a story cannot be short, or communicated in a condensed form. (Though Baudelaire's dismissal of narrative as 'interminable and superfluous' may help support Fludernik's definition that lyric can be narrative, as long as it is not primarily so. Whatever Charles Baudelaire was prioritising in his poetry, it clearly was not plot, even if plot does occur.)

Zuk points out that Poe's insistence that a long poem must be viewed as a 'series of lyrics' excludes narrative poetry. 'When Poe's taste triumphed at last and extended works were written as a series of lyrics,' writes Zuk, 'the long poem did indeed wane in popularity' (Zuk, [2013]) though he does not offer any examples of these poems. However, Zuk notes the continued popularity of the long narrative poem, such as Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* and Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*, and which he believes disprove Poe's position that long poems 'fail'.

What these critics do not discuss is a more basic connection between narrative and length: the longer a fictional text is, the more information and detail it is likely to contain. The more information and detail it contains, the less likely it is that the reader will look outside the text for allegorical readings or interpretive possibilities, and the more likely it is that there will be enough detail in the scenes and the characters to create a clear story without needing to infer one. This means that longer texts are not only more likely to be viewed as narrative, but they are more likely to foreground the narrative with tellable events.

To return to Fludernik's and Rubik's distinction between allegory and the 'quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience' required for narrative, the less detail about 'real-life experiences' given in a text, the more likely it is to be read not as a fictional

narrative, but as an allegory for other events and experiences. In other words, longer texts are more likely to be perceived as narrative not just because we expect narrative texts to be longer, but because we are more likely to connect together the narrative information in them to create a story.

This is not to say that there is a straightforward link between brevity and lack of narrative. To return to flash fiction, even very short pieces of 'microfiction' often create narratives more complicated than E. M. Forster's, albeit through implicature of various degrees of strength, rather than explication. Robert Swartwood published *Hint Fiction* (2011), a collection of very short stories (all 25 words or fewer) many of which demonstrate clearly how stories can be narrated through implication, and for many of which far more meaning must be 'imported' than for *The Sick Rose*. For example, *Cure* by Kevin Hosey has much in common thematically with *Tube Ride to Martha's*, except that *Cure* implies, rather than entails, that the story ends with the detonation of a bomb that kills the protagonist.

Cure, by Kevin Hosey

Triumphant, Mr. Masuyo held the frail child. After years, he finally had a cure. Outside, the sun warmed Hiroshima. And then he saw the flash.
(Swartwood, 2011:34)

Although the 'flash' in the story is only implied to be caused by the bomb, and could theoretically be caused by something else, the strong connection that Hiroshima is likely to have with this historical event is almost certainly enough for the reader to use that implication as part of the narrative. To strengthen this, it is worth considering that if the 'flash' is read to be something else (a camera flash, or the glare of the sun on the Doctor's window) that the story would be less tellable. The reader's assumption that any story they read will be tellable and therefore worthy of their interpretative effort will almost certainly lead them to infer events which make the story so.

Hayles and Montfort (2012) consider another story from the collection:

Reminder, by Marchall Ryan Maresca

The tiny stain never came out. No one else would notice, but he always knew. They were his favorite pants.
(Swartwood, 2011:150).

Hayles and Montfort ask 'Is the stain from semen, blood or simply food? The story does not indicate, but readers know enough to be drawn to the enigma and to create a sketch of the protagonist' (2012:453). The cause of the stain in this story is less clearly implied than the 'flash' of the previous one, but as Hayles and Montfort argue, it is still likely that readers will attempt to resolve the gaps in the narrative to create a satisfying story.

Swartwood's examples of 'hint fiction' complicate Rubik's distinction between the reading strategies of prose and poetry. In the introduction to the collection, he argues that good storytelling does not do all the work for the reader, but offers

tantalising gaps that the reader must 'fill' (2012:25). Requiring the reader to do at least some of the work makes sure that 'the reader truly becomes engaged in the process'. In 'hint fiction' the work is thrown even more heavily onto the reader, as they are 'only given a hint of a much larger more complex story' (2012:25).

Rather than choosing to either consider these very short texts as prose, and therefore 'viewed as primarily narrative' or poetry and therefore viewed for its 'interpretative challenges' (Rubik, 2007:201) it seems that readers of Swartwood's collection are expected to do both. Both the complete title and subtitle of the book (*Hint Fiction: An Anthology of Stories in 25 Words or Fewer*) and Swartwood's introduction repeatedly use the words 'story' and 'fiction' whereas 'poem', 'poetry' and even 'poetic' are not used at all. It is not necessary to present a text as a poem for it to be read for its 'interpretative challenges', therefore, it is just necessary that these interpretive challenges are present and foregrounded by their necessity in resolving the text.

However, the interpretive approach that readers are likely to use in deciphering *The Sick Rose* is likely to be different to *Reminder*. Although both texts offer multiple possible resolutions, the interpretive challenge in *Reminder* is of a more narrative nature - what caused the tiny stain on his favourite pants? - rather than the metaphorical attempt to resolve *The Sick Rose* by finding the targets of the metaphors. It is likely that the reader will view the stain on the man's pants as representative of a significant event that he cannot forget, but it is not likely that they will view the pants themselves as symbolic. These texts, therefore, foreground the narrativity, rather than the more lyrical and allegorical effect of *The Sick Rose*.

Rather than dismiss such texts as narrative, as Fludernik does, Hayles and Montfort call fiction which requires heavy input from the reader, and which offers multiple likely solutions to the gaps in explicature 'interactive fiction'. While critics such as Wright conclude that without offering an explicit narrative there is no story, Hayles and Montfort instead argue that the reader of such short fictional texts is participating in the construction of a narrative, or perhaps even several possible narratives (2013:454).

It seems worth considering, therefore, whether or not these 'interpretative challenges' are expected by the reader because the text is a poem, or necessitated by the brevity and lack of explicature in the text. When Swartwood started collecting his very short stories, he did not require that they tell their stories through hints, just that they tell them in 25 words or less. The result was that the authors almost universally used heavy implication to tell their stories. Quite simply, the shorter a text is, the more 'work' the reader is likely to do in deciphering it. The longer a text is, the more likely it is that it will contain the detail that the reader would otherwise need to infer (including narrative, story and plot).

If 'long' and 'brief' can be substituted for 'narrative' and 'lyric' in poetry (Perloff, 1996:158) this may be simply because the shorter a text is, the more likely it is to be read as allegory, as it is less likely to contain the detail that make the experience or

feelings described difficult to apply to the reader. To take another example from Swartwood's collection, Kirsten Beachy's *Fertility*, despite being presented as prose in a collection of prose stories, has a profoundly lyrical effect, with the explicit narrative details backgrounded by the final sentence.

Fertility by Kirsten Beachy

My Muscovy duck hatched seventeen ducklings - along with four chicks from eggs the hens snuck into her nest.

I'm still waiting.

(Swartwood, 2011:45)

We are not told what the narrator is waiting *for*, and so we are likely to resolve this using the information in both the previous sentence and the title of the story. There is a strong contrast between the exacting specificity of the first sentence and the open-ended second sentence, and so this second sentence therefore becomes the focus of the poem, as this is the part of the text that offers an 'interpretative challenge'. In this case, therefore, does the text foreground 'a sequence of events that move dynamically in space and time' or 'a simultaneity, a cluster of feelings or ideas that projects a gestalt in stasis' (Friedman, 1989:164)? Is this a story about the impressive maternal efforts of the Muscovy duck, or about the narrator's desire for a child? The position of this story as prose fiction will not prevent the reader from focusing on the narrator's 'wait' rather than on the more narrative account of her duck, and correspondingly this focus does not detract from the overall narrative, in which these two factors have been woven together by the reader. In many ways, the narrator of *Fertility* operates much like many lyric speakers. The setting out of the final, short sentence in its own paragraph calls to mind the purposeful use of line breaks and 'white space' and the move from the specific and narrative to the personal and lyric is a common approach in lyric poetry, as I will demonstrate in my next chapter. The space and emphasis given to the final sentence also makes it more likely that the text is read for its 'universal significance' (Rubik, 2007:202) rather than purely for its narrative. The text, like many lyric poems, attempts to communicate a state of mind and an emotional perspective that can be empathised with, rather than an intriguing story, as *Reminder* does.

In *Fertility*, the gaps in the narrative that cause the reader to work with the text interactively to create the full story were at least partially necessitated by the length restrictions. The longer a text is, the more those gaps are likely to be filled by elements of the text, and the less likely it is that the text will be able to keep its fictional consciousness or consciousnesses in a state of a 'gestalt in stasis'. There will be more change, both in the events and in the fictional personas' states of mind, and therefore more narrative elements.

These tricky cases, which fall between the clear poles of lyric and narrative, demonstrate that although we can create frameworks for lyric poetry, we should be careful not to therefore assume that a poem displays the features of this framework

because it is a poem. To do so would be to ignore the strong lyrical elements of prose like *Fertility* and to treat *The Early Purges* as a 'transgressive lyric' rather than a short narrative poem.

3.7 Conclusion

When lyric is considered to be the default form of poetry, narrativity and metonymy become transgressive features no matter how often they are used. To some extent, therefore, the causes of the assumed 'personal' nature of lyric poetry are tied up in assumptions and definitions of the genre, and these must be separated from the textual features of the poetry itself. 'Lyric' must not be used as a synonym for 'poem', therefore, as this privileges one genre of poetry and makes the others inappropriately aberrant. Making use of narrativity in poetry is not at all transgressive or unusual, just as narrative texts can routinely make use of lyricism. Correspondingly, much of what is termed 'poetic' would more accurately be described as 'lyrical', as the boundaries of poetry and prose have been pushed so far that they arguably demonstrate a 'mutually shared function' (Tynjanov, 1929:71). There is no justification, therefore, in assuming that lyric speakers are 'personal' to their poets, as such an assumption is not made of prose narrators.

In our desire to categorise texts into poetry or prose, lyric or narrative, we should not therefore make assumptions about what we will find in individual poems. As has been demonstrated, writers frequently subvert the expectations of their chosen form, and these subversions often become conventional. These assumptions have led to particularly limiting studies of the lyric speaker, which my thesis aims to correct. In addition, there will always be texts that purposefully or otherwise do not fit tidily into one category or another, as Rubik demonstrates. Many of the previously upheld boundaries between genres have been crossed so often that they are now only relevant in a historical sense, and yet our expectations because of these boundaries often remain and serve to limit the potential of our analysis of these poems. As Fludernik and Hühn point out, lyric poetry can make use of narrativity, and to assume that it does not merely because it is lyric, or worse, because it is a poem, serves to flatten out the layers of fictionality and mediation, and over-identifies the poet with the speaker.

Lodge and Jakobson expect poetry to predominantly use the metaphoric mode and prose use the metonymic mode, but as has been demonstrated, these expectations have been subverted so often that such 'transgressions' are now entirely conventional. Similarly, Rubik sees *The Early Purges*' straightforward story that 'resists allegory' as 'transgressive' (2007:206) because she sees lyric as the dominant form of poetry, and she does not acknowledge that narrative poetry has a long and, again, entirely conventional history.

Lyrical texts may lack foregrounded narrativity, but this does not mean that they cannot make use of narrativity any more than narrative texts cannot make use of lyrical features. Examining the narrativity present in lyrical poetry can therefore free poetic criticism from some of these assumptions, as it is clear that many lyric

speakers are telling stories. Although these stories may not be foregrounded, their role should still be analogous to narrators. In my next chapter, I will examine how these poetic speakers perform a similar role to that of prose narrators when mediating not just between the various levels within the poem, but between shifts in perspective and meaning which complicate and increase the ways that the speakers are positioned. Treating them as monoperspectival windows into the poet's or even the speaker's soul will miss this complexity, and is limiting and misleading. Without this understanding, poetry will continue to be discussed and analysed as if it lacks these features whether or not they are present. However, by examining individual lyric poems without these misleading expectations, we can not only challenge these misconceptions, but offer new insights into how lyric poetry produces its effects.

4. The Lyric Turn

Wolf claims that lyric poems ‘consist only of a single state of mind’ and that they are ‘monoperspectival’ (2005:26). Although he does not argue that multiperspectival poems cannot be lyric, in this chapter I argue that the monoperspectivity of the lyric has been greatly overstated. In fact, a common feature of lyric poems is a turn which can be used to encode multiple, conflicting perspectives on the same topic within the same text, creating multiple perspectives in the same text with the speaker mediating between them. My examination of poetry which demonstrates particularly prominent turns demonstrates therefore that the speaker’s role is mediatory. These turns (often called ‘voltas’ when discussing sonnets) allow meaning to be condensed into comparatively short texts. These shifts do not only challenge the assumption of monoperspectivity and monologicity of lyric poetry, but in doing so they demonstrate that the lyric speaker can occupy multiple positions and use multiple narratorial styles within the same text to mediate between different versions and voices of the self. In order to demonstrate the polyphony of conflicting perspectives within the same text, I will be using narrative concepts of perspective and Bakhtin’s concept of double-voiced discourse.

You fit into me

you fit into me
like a hook into an eye

a fish hook
an open eye

Bakken, in his chapter for Theune’s book *Structure and Surprise* which focuses on poetic ‘turns’, uses Margaret Atwood’s poem *you fit into me* to demonstrate an ironic turn (2007:10). The first two lines of the poem will almost certainly be read as the opening of an uncomplicated and potentially erotic love poem, argues Bakken, in which the simile is read positively (2007:11). However, the last two lines ‘deflate such possibilities violently and entirely’ (2007:11). The turn in a lyric poem is therefore defined as a point where what has gone before must be re-evaluated or is given new significance, as is the case here.

This deflation does not erase the original interpretation of the opening two, however. Reading the ‘hook’ and the ‘eye’ as two complementary pieces of haberdashery rather than a fish hook and a human eye is not an incorrect interpretation. As Bakken says, ‘What kind of connection could be more symbiotic and comfortable than a hook and eye fastener? The hook and eye require one another to serve their combined purpose of drawing together two pieces of fabric or the two lapels of a jacket. Read sexually, as an image of penetration, the first two lines suggest erotic fitness of the very best kind: compatibility, natural rightness, pleasure’ (2007:11). This means that it is not a *mistake* to consider the poem

romantic and positive until the poem's turn, but that incorporating both interpretations is essential in any analysis of the poem's overall effect.

It's not quite accurate, therefore, to say as Bakken does that the 'fish hook' and the 'open eye' redefine the original simile. Instead, they have offered an *additional* definition, and it is the contrast between the two that gives this very simple poem its weight. Bakken describes this effect as leaving the reader 'grasping at an image of utter incompatibility' (2007:11). The speaker, therefore, makes use of two opposing perspectives on the topic by first offering us a positive and romantic poetic image, then turning this around and demonstrating a more violent and unpleasant interpretation, and using these two conflicting viewpoints to better demonstrate the strength of their feeling towards the addressee.

This turn, therefore, is more than a shift in topic or the conclusion to a proposition or situation, which is the minimum we would expect from the volta in a sonnet (Evans and Cushman, 2012:1296). Voigt says that the voltas in Petrarchan sonnets mark the shift between 'a situation and its implications, a question and its answer, doubt followed by comfort, experience and then meaning, or past difficulty and present resolution' (1999:131) which can lead to the presentation of 'simultaneously a contradiction of what has preceded and a natural fulfilment of it, with new rhyming sounds in a new, looser pattern' (1999:131). Such turns, as with the Margaret Atwood poem above, result in multiple readings and perspectives on the same text, all of which must be considered if the full effect of the poem is to be synthesised.

In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate that by analysing such turns, we can demonstrate that the lyric is neither monoperspectival nor lacks mediation, but that by utilising such turns, poets can encode multiple perspectives within the same text. As I have argued, the brevity of poetry is a defining and important feature, and creating poems in which the same text has more than one use is one reason why these poems end up short, or perhaps why poets are able to keep them short.

Theune's book, *Structure and Surprise* is an attempt to examine this little-discussed phenomenon in poetry, albeit for the purpose of improving the teaching of creative writing rather than improving poetic criticism. Interestingly, Theune also agrees that the late-Romantic view of poetry, as typified by Wordsworth's description of poetry as 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', is out of date and incomplete (2007:3). Theune argues, as I do, that viewing poetry as 'a kind of magical process in which a poem springs forth from the poet's inner self' (2007:3) limits our understanding of poetry, and further. Theune intends his book to demonstrate the sort of turns or voltas that poetry exhibits as a first step to better teaching writers how to utilise a complex variety of poetic structures, whereas I will be examining poems for the effect of these structures on perspective and narrative mediation.

Clear turns, in which the reader's expectations are manipulated, overturned or subverted, are a common feature of lyric poetry, but not one which has received a great deal of attention. As Theune points out, 'turns' are most often discussed in terms of *voltas* in the sonnet (2007:1). Indeed, *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of*

Poetry and Poetics has no entry for *turn*, and though it does include an entry for *volta*, this is not much more than a hundred words. This entry for *volta* defines it as ‘a musical and prosodic term for a turn, particularly the transition point between the octave and sestet of the sonnet (Brogan, 2012:1527). *Volta*, in this context, is a narrower term than the broader poetic turns discussed in Theune’s *Structure and Surprise*, as it combines a clear ‘turn in thought’ (Brogan, 2012:1527) as with the poem above, with a change in the structure of the poem. In the Italian form of the sonnet (often called Petrarchan) the octave and the sestet are clearly separated by not only different rhymes, but different rhyming schemes (usually *abbaabba* and *cdecde* respectively) (Brogan, 2012:1527). Voigt explains that ‘the traditional sonnet... links the binary rhyme scheme to argument and paradox’ (1999:131) making the volta a turn in more ways than one. An example of a Petrarchan sonnet is William Wordsworth’s *London 1802*, in which the octave describes the sad decline and corruption of London and its inhabitants as the reason why England needs Milton and the volta marks the shift to the sestet praising Milton. This change in focus is accompanied by the expected change in rhyme scheme, with no cross-rhymes between the octave and the sestet, further foregrounding the change. However, this volta ‘signifies a change in subject matter’, but unlike Margaret Atwood’s poem, this does not result in a radical re-reading. Although voltas are best known in sonnets, sonnets will not necessarily demonstrate the most significant turns. However, many sonnets make use of dramatic voltas, such as the poem I examine in 4.1, where the volta effectively negates much of what has gone before.

4.1 Negation and double-voicing

In this section, I will examine the ways in which William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130 (appendix 8.4.1) makes use of negation and parody in order to encode conflicting viewpoints on the same topic. As with Margaret Atwood’s poem, the turn produces almost a complete inversion of what has gone before, but in this case both perspectives are fully synthesised.

The volta occurs at the final rhyming couplet (l. 12) and is marked by the signifying phrase ‘And yet’. Until this point, it is unclear why the speaker is rejecting possible ways of praising the subject, but the final couplet gives us a new way of understanding what we have read so far. In the final couplet, the speaker finally says that they ‘think’ the many comparisons in the poem are appropriate, despite having spent ten lines explicitly stating that they are not.

Explaining the multiple perspectives created by the turn of this poem requires examining the extensive negation used. Stockwell argues that negation is best explained using text-world theory. A negation ‘creates a mental world-switch from the current text-world in to a world with a different ontological status... In order to process a negation, the reader must imagine - however temporarily or transiently - another world in which the state of affairs following the negation does exist: this subworld is then tagged as being in a negational relationship with the text-world’ (2009:34-35). This means that although we are told that the subject of the poem has eyes which are ‘nothing like the sun’, this necessitates us creating a text-world in

which someone's eyes *are* like the sun, in order for us to negate it. In addition to this, Nahajec points out that negated statements such as these 'can trigger more meaning than their positive counterparts' (2009:112) and therefore the reader here will assume that there is 'an expectation' that the mistress 'eyes *are* like the sun' 'whilst at the same time defeating this expectation' (2009:115).

In this case, the negated text-world is something much closer to what is expected from a love poem. Pequigney claims that the poem is a 'spoof' of the traditional approach of using hyperbolic praise to construct a love poem (1985:166) and Szybist agrees that the poem is 'mocking the Petrarchan tradition of love poetry in which male speakers hopelessly idealize the female objects of their affection' (2007:42), so it is in this negated text-world that this more conventional and straightforward praise occurs and the subject of the poem is idealised. This means that the speaker references not just general declarations of love, but a specific kind of love poetry. The negated text not only favourably compare someone to coral, snow and roses, but creates a hypothetical poem of the sort that the speaker is mocking, with another hypothetical speaker who uses hyperbole to express their love. The reader must imagine a text-world in which this more conventional poem exists in order to recognise what it is that is being parodied. This could also be described as a form of schema change – the challenge to traditional and expected forms (such as conventional love poetry) is considered typical in literary texts by Semino, who, in support of Cook (1994) claims that literature has a tendency to 'challenge and modify the readers' existing schemata' (1997:152).

Szybist describes the resolution to the poem as both 'a defence of his own mistress and an attack of the sincerity of the other poems' (2007:42) but in addition to this, I believe that the two text-worlds (one in which the 'mistress' is not praised, and the negated one in which she is) are synthesised: despite objectively knowing that the mistress is not worthy of the sort of praise heaped upon the subjects of traditional love sonnets, the poem finally aligns the depth of feeling for her with those expressed in the very poems this one is deriding. If we create a negated text-world in which she is praised, we are also likely to look for reasons why this is relevant to the poem. One explanation is the parodic purpose, which has been clearly documented by critics, but I believe another explanation is that the speaker is internally making the comparisons only to discard them as illogical. They believe their love to be 'beyond compare' which is why these comparisons have come to mind. They have considered comparing her eyes to the sun, her cheeks to roses, and so on, but realise that such comparisons are illogical. The mistress cannot be accurately described using elaborate comparisons, but she is still 'beyond compare', just as the poets of the derided sonnets claim their lovers to be.

When the speaker instructs us to create the text-world in which the hypothetical poem exists, they do so to mock *and* adopt the sentiment it expresses. The speaker therefore holds two conflicting positions: they are both mocking hyperbolic praise, but claiming to match the depth of feeling expressed by it. The voice of the hypothetical poet is not subsumed or engulfed by the speaker's own voice, but both

voices are required to express the complexity of the speaker's love. In addition, as with the Margaret Atwood poem, once the volta of the sonnet has occurred a re-reading, in which the lack of praise can be seen as romantic, rather than derision for her lack of beauty, is possible. Ultimately, the volta results in the poem both changing and reinforcing the same schema.

This is an example, therefore, of Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse which serves two voices at the same time – exactly the sort of complexity which Bakhtin believes does not occur in lyric poetry. Although Bakhtin argues that poetry is the monologic 'pure and direct expression of [the poet's] own intention' (1981:285) in this poem, the speaker takes the discourse of one voice (the hypothetical, hyperbolic poet) and mocks it without undermining it. Both perspectives on the hyperbolic praise exist in the speaker's words. The speaker holds and communicates both positions. Szibist describes this turn as 'concessional' as its turn 'admits something that is (or seems) counter to the position it ultimately unfolds' (2007:41). Once this unfolding has occurred, the reader can reconstruct the poem and can now see that the speaker does intend to praise their mistress with the same words that seem to be disparaging to her. This is an example of the heteroglossia that Bakhtin argues is a feature of the novel, as it is clearly 'another's speech in another's language' which 'expresses simultaneously two different intentions' (1981:184).

Bakhtin also explicitly labels parodic texts like this as double-voiced. Parody uses the discourse of another voice, and treats it in a 'critical or hostile fashion' (Morson and Emerson, 1990:152). In a parody, we can 'sense the discourse of the other' (the discourse of the traditional Petrarchan poet, in this case) and 'introduces into that discourse a semantic intention that is directly opposed to the original one' (Bakhtin, 1963:193) which 'subjects the other's words to harsh treatment' (Morson and Emerson, 1990:152). This clearly describes *Sonnet 130*, which invokes a hypothetical poet and their poetry in order to mock it, resulting in a poem which is 'an arena of battle between two voices' (Bakhtin, 1963:193). This 'battle' goes further than just a battle between the speaker's parody and the hypothetical Petrarchan poet's hypothetical poem, but is between the two jointly held perspectives of the speaker themselves. They are parodying the words of the hypothetical poet, but also upholding them as true. The speaker's feelings for the mistress are therefore in conflict – they recognise that she cannot accurately be described using hyperbolic comparisons, but conflictingly believes that 'any she belied with false compare' which is a hyperbolic comparison itself.

It is these jointly presented conflicting viewpoints and contradictory perspectives (in what is an extremely famous and well-examined poem) which should challenge the idea that lyric poetry is monologic and monoperspectival. The speaker here takes up multiple, conflicting positions, resulting in a poem which is both a mocking parody and a sincere declaration of love. As one of the most well-known lyric poems in the English language displays double-voicing, lyric speakers cannot be defined as monologic and monoperspectival.

Jeffries questions the idea that schema-change is fundamental to literariness, because what might be schema-changing to one reader, might be schema-reinforcing to another. She writes about Sujata Bhatt's poem about sexual desire in pregnancy, *White Asparagus* and points out that the speaker's experience cannot be shared by 'Men, childless women, [or] those who are sick throughout pregnancy' (2001:337). However, although different cultural experiences may change how the reader responds to this sonnet, the challenge and ultimate reinforcement of the *speaker's* schema is what structures this poem.

Like Theune, I am proposing that the turn, which has been a long accepted feature of the sonnet, should be considered a common structural feature of lyric poetry in general. To demonstrate this, the rest of this chapter will discuss other forms of lyric poetry from the twentieth century, all of which utilise turns that allow the speaker to take multiple positions.

4.2 General and personal perspectives

In this section, I will examine a poem with a similar turn, but one with even greater effect of shifting perspectives, Elizabeth Bishop's poem *One Art* (appendix 8.4.2). This poem demonstrates that lyric speakers can move the focus from the general to the specific, and encode both perspectives in the final effect. The early part of this poem appears to be giving advice or persuading to a certain course of action.

One Art

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster,

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

The only pronoun in these first stanzas is 'you', but because of the imperative verbs it is clear that this is instruction or advice rather than a second person narrative. This is heightened by the plural in 'lost door keys' with no possessive pronoun or article, which suggests that this is merely an example of the sort of loss to which 'you' should become accustomed, rather than a specific event (or a specific key). Although we are instructed to imagine ourselves losing our door keys, this is not a specific narrative of the future, and therefore although it demonstrates some narrativity, cannot be said to be fully narrative.

Lahey points out that the use of imperative verbs suggests both a 'speaker' and an 'addressee' which inhabit the initial text-world of the poem, and that the

combination of a second-person address and imperative verbs 'work[s] to involve the reader in the character-initiated discourse' (2005:22). There is no mention of an 'I' who is giving 'you' this advice, but the way the advice is presented implies a communication between them. Even if this 'you' turns out to be a specific fictional character in the text-world, using the second person 'always seems to involve the actual reader' (Fludernik 1995:106), and so the effect of this poem is likely to be that the reader positions themselves as the recipient of this advice rather than the giver, or at least feels able to do so. So far there is no indication that this is a specific 'you', meaning that this 'you' is likely to be impersonal, operating as 'a colloquial stand-ins for the indefinite pronoun one' (Furrow, cited in Herman, 1994:4.42) for which Herman gives the examples of 'proverbs, maxims, recipes, VCR instructions, song lyrics, and, though they might tell you otherwise, astrologers' prognostications' (1994:4.42). Therefore we are likely to resolve it as generalised, and imagine ourselves as potentially rather than specifically addressed.

Due to the lack of any deictic references to whoever it is offering this advice (such as first person pronouns), this generalised address directs our attention at the advice rather than the consciousness advising us, or a specific person who might require the advice. As long as you are someone who is familiar with door keys, it is easy to place yourself in the position of the 'you' and perhaps be reassured by the message that these losses will not 'bring disaster. As I previously discussed, Fludernik and Rubik both believe that the allegorical possibilities of lyrical poetry are key to our understanding of what poetry does, and Wolf's framework for lyric poetry includes the claim that it features a 'maximum of implications for a general model of the world' (2005:26); in this case, the application of the instruction in the poetic world to our own lives, and the discourse world is straightforward. Rather like *Nothing Gold Can Stay* (appendix 8.2.3), the poem so far focuses our attention on the 'wisdom' on offer rather than on the character of the adviser.

Introducing deictic shift theory, Stockwell explains that 'The world of a literary text consists of one or more deictic fields' and these 'are usually arranged around a character, narrator or narratee' (2005:47). In this case, the deictic field centres on a generic 'you' that a reader can place themselves into and therefore we are led to imagine ourselves doing these things. Gavins points out that deontic modality (which includes requests and instructions, like imperative verbs) 'set up an unfulfilled, future situation... in a sub-world separate from the text-world in which they have been created, allowing the discourse participants to conceptualize both the proposition being modalized and the speaker's attitude towards it' (2005:85-6). Very little happens in the initial text-world, therefore, but instead the world building is done in modalised world-switches created by it.

The imperative verbs, however, keep it in mind that someone is telling us what to do. We are not just imagining ourselves accepting the fluster of lost keys, but we are being explicitly instructed to do so by someone, even if (as with *Nothing Gold Can Stay*) their character is not foregrounded so far.

This can be seen by the text-world diagram of the first two stanzas of the poem (figure 4.1) where the world-switches are prompted by this addresser, but are focused on the addressee:

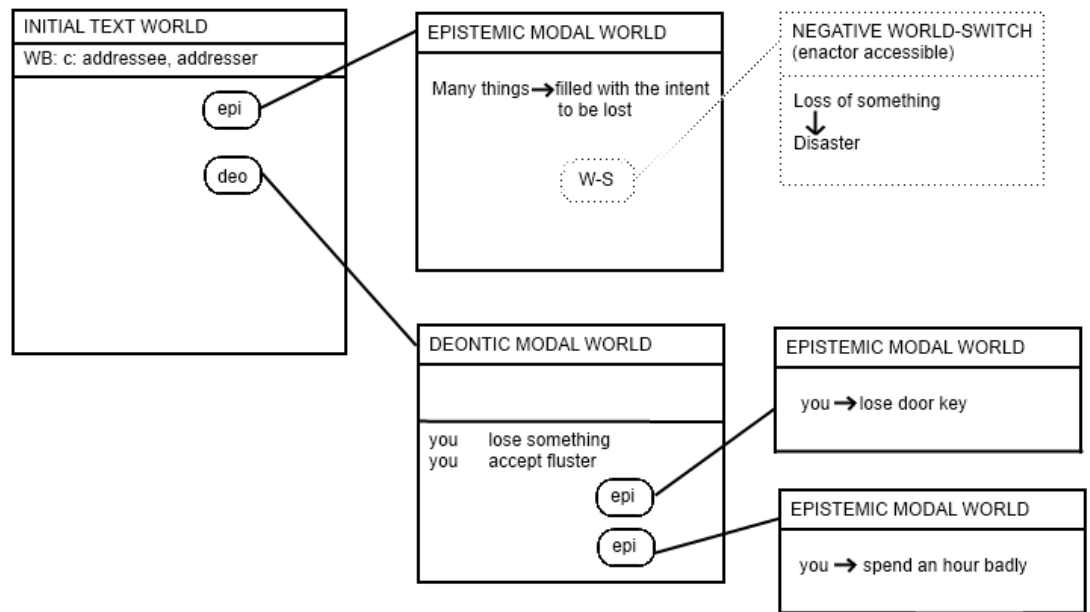


Figure 4.1

The poem is mediated, therefore, as the main enactors of the poem are mediated to us through the initial text-world. The speaker has the same mediatory role as that of a narrator: as Chatman says, ‘insofar as there is telling, there must be a teller, a narrating voice’ (1980:146). We certainly are not ‘direct witnessing’ (Chatman, 1980:147) the losses, but are explicitly told to imagine them. This telling, to use Chatman’s words, ‘presumes a teller’ (despite the lack of deictic references to this teller) and therefore clear mediation.

However, in the fourth stanza, the speaker becomes more significant (though as we have already assumed the existence of an addresser , this does not constitute a turn).

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

Here, the poem shifts from offering instruction to giving specific examples suffered by the speaker, which are the sort of losses that should be taken in one’s stride, and there is a corresponding shift from the present to the past tense. This is where ‘speaker’ becomes rather limiting, as the ‘I’ who loses their mother’s watch does not

occupy the same diegetic space or the same text-world as the 'I' who is telling us about that loss, or the 'I' who is missing them. Again, the most useful ideas come from narratology, with the distinction between the narrating-I and the experiencing or narrated-I (as discussed by Stanzel (1986)). There is both a speaking-I here, who offers us the advice to practise losing things and tells us about the things that they themselves have lost, and an experiencing-I who exists only in the sub-worlds in which these losses occur.

It is ambiguous whether or not we are being presented these losses from the perspective of the past self or from the perspective of the speaking-I who mediates between us and them. 'I lost my mother's watch' could present either the perspective of the I who lost the watch or the speaker who is telling us about it. The speaker's imperative 'Look!' is neither clearly proximal nor distal (in contrast to 'look at this, here' which is proximal or 'look at that, over there' which is distal). It both draws our attention to how the experiencing-I's house 'went' but also echoes the previous imperative verbs from the speaker, making the distinction between the two unclear. Similarly, although the perspective of the speaking-I is clear when they use the present tense to tell us that they 'miss them', it is not clear which one finds the loss of all these items and places to be not 'a disaster' – is it something the speaker realised subsequent to their loss, or did the experiencing-I find these losses not disastrous when they happened? In addition, some of these losses are not specific enough to display full narrativity: 'I lost two cities' describes two separate losses, and the loss of 'some realms I owned' is even less specific. Although the losses are described in the simple past tense, and describe a clear material process, this does not mean the perspective is clearly associated with either the past or the present self. Instead, the speaking and experiencing-I are drawn closer together and their perspectives cannot be clearly separated.

Although the past self in this case is not fully explored enough to have a separate voice to that of the speaker, it is important to note that they are still separate, with one describing the losses and the other actually losing things. The past self is a separate manifestation of the speaker, and should not be confused with the speaker themselves, just as the narratives of first person narrator must be clearly separated from their narrated self (whether this gap is large, in the case of L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* where the narrator is separated from their narrated self by decades, or barely present at all, in the case of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* whose narrator seems to be speaking with a great deal of immediacy). The assumption of monoperspectivity in the lyric obscures this distinction, long discussed in prose fiction by narratologists, and furthermore obscures the mediation between us and the speaker's past losses. Just as first-person narrators in prose fiction are distinct from their past-self who is experiencing the events, we should be aware that first-person speakers in poetry may very often be mediating between us and a past (or perhaps future) version of themselves. Although it is a stretch to call what is happening in this poem *narrating* (as the losses described seem to be examples, rather than important, specific events that will lead to a story) like a narrator, they are mediating between us and the other deictic fields of the poem. This mediation

between us and the enactors of these sub-worlds makes the role of the speaker clearly a mediatory one.

In these stanzas, the locus is on the speaker's past self, and this is the first use of the first person pronoun. Although the appearance of the first person pronoun is not unexpected, this creates a deictic shift from imagining ourselves coping with possible future losses to centring ourselves on the specific past losses of the speaker. The deictic field shifts from our possible future actions, to their specific actions in the past. This also focuses our attention on to the speaker, who was previously almost as unobtrusive as the one in *Nothing Gold Can Stay*. Now, we characterise them as someone who has experienced the sort of losses they are advising us about, and that although these losses weren't disasters, that they have struggled with loss: the things lost were 'loved', 'lovely' and 'missed'. This places a focus of the poem on the speaker's thought processes and emotions, in contrast to the dispassionate advice of the first stanzas.

Such perceptual deictic shifts, from one deictic field to another, are common in both poetry and prose. These shifts from one person to another have been examined to a great extent in poetry by several stylisticians, including Jeffries, using the poems *Mittens* by Peter Sansom and *Pain tells you what to wear* by Mebdh McGuckian (2008), Stockwell, examining the multiple shifts in perspective in the poems *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley (2007) and John Milton's 'Sonnet XX' (2002), and by Felson (2004) examining the way in which deictic centres are obscured as well as shifted in Pindar's Ninth Pythian Ode. This in itself should be a challenge to the supposed monoperspectival nature of lyric poetry, or at least should demonstrate that poetry can utilise the same complexity of shifting perspectives that prose can (though, due to brevity, these shifts may not be as numerous!)

The shift from the generalised advice offered to an addressee to description of the past experiences of the speaker can be described as a step down the deictic fields. As an example of this Stockwell suggests a narrative in which the deictic centre is shifted temporally to an earlier point in the narrator's life, and describes this as a 'push', as it pushes us down another level of the virtual places of deictic fields (2005:47).

Even at this point, however, it is possible that these more personal, specific examples of losses are only offered to strengthen the persuasiveness of the advice, and are narrated from the point of view of the speaking-I rather than to specifically immerse us in their past losses. The shift from the locus of the second person to the first person would constitute merely a deictic shift, rather than also a turn, if it were to end here, or to continue in this vein. The poem is still prototroptic until the final stanza, which contains the following dramatic turn in both tone and purpose.

- Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

This turn causes a re-evaluation of the rest of the poem. The reader is likely to attempt to map the 'you' of this stanza to the 'you' which previously they believed had referred to them. However, the 'you' of this final stanza is someone who has been lost (and is possibly even dead) so is clearly not the same 'you' in the early part of the poem. This 'you' is also clearly not the earlier addressee, as the speaker has lost them, so cannot instruct them about how to handle their own losses. This 'you' seems to be an 'address to and/or by the members of some fictional world' (Herman, 1999:1.1) and is therefore concrete, whereas the preceding 'you' was generic and generalised. The lack of deictic congruity between the two different referents of the same pronoun demonstrates the size and significance of the turn.

Nesme describes the poem as 'Spelling out a litany of lost objects which culminates in the figure of the addressee apostrophized in the last stanza' which clarifies that although the earlier part of the poem appears to be prototroptic, it is more connected to the speaker's personal struggle with loss than it first appears. The poem seems to be 'reclaiming loss as an art which like any other may be mastered' but this mastery seems more and more difficult as the poem progresses. As Nesme points out, the losses increase in significance, 'ranging from an innocuous set of keys to "two rivers, a continent," and finally the "you" of the last stanza' (2004:8). As the losses increase in severity, so does the emphasis on the first person and their experiences, as if control over the objectivity and the initial prototroptic purpose were slipping. Another way that this slipping of control is communicated is through breaking the conventions of the villanelle, by varying the repetitions slightly, and increasing these differences as the poem progresses. 'In keeping with the conventions of the villanelle,' Nesme explains, 'the signifiers "master" and "disaster" placed at the end of lines 1 and 3 recur in various positions in each stanza before being united again in the final couplet of the last quatrain. Contrary to those conventions, however, Elizabeth Bishop chooses to vary the contents of lines 1 and 3—unlike other contemporary poets who when using the villanelle form simply repeated lines 1 and 3 without variation in the final couplet. It is thus as if "disaster" tightened its grip on the poem while mastery becomes increasingly difficult to assert.' (2004:9)

The most significant indicator of this slip is the italicised and parenthetical 'Write it!' Unlike the other imperative verbs, it is unlikely that the reader will believe this to be directed at them. The graphological presentation combined with the fact that we are reading a poem, a written piece of text, means that we are likely to interpret this as referencing the writing of the poem itself.

In my previous text-world diagram of the poem, I placed the speaker and the addressee(s) in the initial text-world. The level above this is the discourse world, which Gavins describes as requiring 'at least one speaker or writer and one or more listeners or readers' (2005:10) and this discourse world only comes into being when these participants actively engage in communication with each other. In this case, the participants are the real Elizabeth Bishop (who wrote the poem) and those of us

who choose to read the poem. When we read the poem, we create the initial text-world in which we initially appear to be instructed to practise losing things, and then the subsequent subworlds in which these losses occur. However, the reference to the writing of the poem itself causes us to create an even higher level deictic field (a process which Stockwell describes as a 'pop', to correspond with 'push' (2002:47)) where a poet is physically writing the poem. This means that what appeared to be the discourse world (at one level above the address by the speaker) was actually the initial text-world, in which a fictional poet is struggling with the process of writing the poem, and this was obscured from us until the last line. In other words, not only does the speaker mediate between us and their past experiences and between us and our potential future experiences, but this speaker is mediated to us through a poet in the initial text-world.

On re-reading the poem, as with both *You fit into me* and *Sonnet 130*, we can see both the original effect (that of simple advice, shifting to the experience which led to this advice being offered) and a new reading created by the final stanza. Considering the final image of a poet forcing themselves to admit that a loved one has been lost by writing it down, and the fact that they are clearly struggling to label such a loss as 'no disaster', comparable with the other losses described, we can now see another possibility: that this (supposed) poet is also intended to be the recipient of the advice, and the framing of this process as advice to an addressee (a frame which seems to gradually fall apart as the poem progresses) is a way of attempting to come to terms with this great loss. Although the final 'you' refers to a specific person, Nesme describes this concrete, lost 'you' as 'apostrophized' rather than directly addressed (2004:8), and so although they are being addressed grammatically, this poem is not clearly directed at them. This can be seen by the final stanza, where although 'you' are grammatically addressed, the instruction to '*write it!*' is aimed at the 'I' who is writing the poem instead. The primary intention of the poem is not to speak to the lost love, but to fully accept that the loss of this person is not a disaster. This can be seen by the use of the proximal 'you' to refer to them, rather than the more distal 'he' or 'she'. The struggle to let go of the lost person and accept that their loss is not a disaster, despite looking that way, is reflected in the inability of the speaker to write about them indirectly, despite their attempts at writing something.

It is possible, therefore, that encoded in the 'you' of the earlier part of the poem, which is likely to be interpreted as the generalised reader, is also a reference to the speaker themselves. Fludernik points out that 'you' can be used in several different, overlapping ways in narrative, including as a way of addressing the speaker themselves by offering 'a pretense of gnomic truth applicable to the current reader' (1995:107) which could clearly apply to *One Art* where the poem at first appears to be intending to advise the reader before the turn allows us to view this address as also self-directed. This means that the poem has two possible addressees marked by the same pronoun, and two clearly different perspectives that the speaker uses. Herman details 'five functional types of textual you' (1994:1) which can occur in second person narratives, including the generalised address. The fifth of this, 'doubly deictic you' is possible because of the pronoun's polysemy, and refers to cases when

more than one meaning is evoked, resulting in the superimposition of 'two or more deictic roles, one internal to the discourse situation represented in and/or through the diegesis and the other(s) external to that discourse situation' (1994:1). In this case, the 'you' in the earlier part of the poem refers to a generalised and indefinite reader and also to the fictionalised speaker, making this poem a clear example of double-voiced discourse.

As with *Sonnet 130*, this revised view of the poem does not engulf the original voice of the speaker. When the speaker says 'The art of losing isn't hard to master' we can see that this serves two purposes at once as it is offered from two distinct perspectives: initially, from the perspective of someone offering dispassionate and impersonal advice to the reader, who then offers illustrative examples from their own life, and then on reading the poem in full, these words can also be seen to come from a less confident perspective, in which the speaker is struggling to internalise the advice that they are giving. For the poem's effects to be achieved, both perspectives on the same words must be available to the reader, meaning that like *Sonnet 130*, this poem is not monologic, but uses the same words in more than one voice.

The progression of pushes and pops in the stack of deictic centres can further demonstrate this. As Stockwell points out, we expect a text with numerous pushes to also use a corresponding number of pops: 'flashbacks usually return us eventually to the current time; plays within plays do not take over the entire narrative' (2005:48). A poem that begins, as this one does, in a text-world in which a speaker is offering advice and helpful instruction to someone is expected to end there. Disrupting our expectations in this way is noticeable, and therefore 'we like to make an issue or theme out of it' (Stockwell, 2005:48). Stockwell describes an example of such a disruption in *Ozymandias*, which 'ends deictically stranded at a distance from our own readerly deictic centre' (2005:48).

One Art pushes from the initial text-world in which a speaker is communicating to an addressee, to various epistemic future text-worlds which shift the locus to the addressee's possible future. From there we are pushed temporally to various earlier points in time where the speaker experienced losses and are offered retrospective assessments that these losses now (in the time of giving the advice) do not seem like disasters. Although we pop out of these flashbacks, we do not pop back into the same place as where we left. We would expect this pop to put us back into the deictic centre of the addressee (a generalised 'you'), but this addressee has gone, and instead the speaker is alone, apostrophizing to an absent lost love (a specific 'you') and addressing themselves at a higher deictic level (that of the self-referential 'write it'). The lost deictic field can now be seen as a coping mechanism, rather than an intentional piece of communication between us and them. Although the reader is likely to have felt addressed by the opening of the poem, by the end, they are likely to notice all the more clearly that they are not involved.

The effect of this turn can be more clearly seen when compared with a poem with a similar topic. Maya Angelou's *No Loser, No Weeper* (appendix 8.4.3) makes the same

comparison between lost items and a lost person and only reveals this comparison at the end of the poem. Both poems, therefore, list lost items (the axis of metaphor, rather than metonymy, as the purpose is to compare them) and then turn at the end to make it clear that these losses are present in the poems to better communicate the depths of emotion caused by the loss of a loved one. However, the emotional engagement of the grieving character of Maya Angelou's poem can be seen right from the beginning of the poem. It is clear that she is sad because she has lost something, and the only turn that the poem uses is in revealing which loss has caused the emotional impact that is being communicated in the poem (l. 14).

No Loser, No Weeper is presented in a style more like narrative prose than many poems. The narrator takes up few words of the short poem, but there is a short descriptive phrase in the first line ('then she bent her head') which gives the poem the beginning of a narrative scene. This should still be described as a quasi-scene, rather than a full narrative scene, as the details are not fleshed out: we do not have a clear idea of who this woman is speaking to, or where or when she is, but the clear indication that she is speaking in a world that is embedded within the narrator's world, and mediated to us through them, that she is speaking to someone with a clear purpose of communicating her emotional state and that we know something of her movement and body language as she speaks gives the impression that a more detailed scene is possible. This makes this poem more clearly mediated in a way that literary criticism, narratology and linguistic study are set up to (and expect to) illuminate and therefore is more likely to be read as a poem using narrative, despite the narrative feeling thin and incomplete, and the narrator/speaker's role being small.

Importantly, despite these clear markers of narrativity (a third person narrator mediating between us and a character who uses direct speech) *No Loser, No Weeper* displays the more straightforward use of perspective and voice. The revelation at the end of the poem that the woman has lost a 'lover-boy' does not change the perspective of the poem or give us a new interpretation of any of the voices the poem presents in the way that the similar revelation fragments the perspectives in *One Art*. The poem is still clearly about a woman who is telling someone she calls 'madam' about her losses. The use of mediation through the narrator does not make her dialogue double-voiced, therefore, to the same extent. Whereas *One Art* used double-voicing to both offer sage advice from someone experienced in losing things and simultaneously personify this someone as struggling to follow this advice with the same words, in *No Loser, No Weeper*, what the narrator 'means' by the character's dialogue and what the character herself 'means' by it are closely aligned. There is no dual perspective on the dialogue, despite the obvious mediation on the part of the narrator.

One Art, on the other hand, with its complicated and initially obscured first person narrator, and its purposeful deflecting of the poem's multiple viewpoints by presenting the poem as a piece of impersonal advice, makes far less use of narrative features such as speech marks and reporting clauses (which make the deictic shifts

and world-switches more obvious) and so is more likely to be viewed, as lyric poems are, flatly: monoperspectival and unmediated. However, it is *One Art* which demonstrates the most complex shifts in perspective, and which makes the most use of double-voiced discourse. Once the turn in the poem has occurred and the poem has been read fully, it is clear that the opening advice does serve more than one purpose from more than one perspective.

In terms of topic, *One Art* is easily used as an allegory for many readers' experiences of personal loss of loved ones. As I have discussed, Fludernik and Rubik argue what may appear to be narrative scenes or characters in poetry are not narrative when they are used for the purpose of allegory, rather than telling the story itself (Fludernik, 1996:265 and Rubik, 2007:202). In this poem, the description of the lost 'you' is brief, vague, and un-gendered, making it easy to substitute the described experiences with our own, making it potentially allegorical. However, the way that the reader is likely to feel addressed by the early part of the poem makes this less likely. Although the use of the first person is often described as offering 'a perspective for the reader to enter the text-world' (Jeffries, 2008:71) and therefore providing an 'effect of vicarious experience' (Fludernik, 1995:106), in this case, the use of the imperative means that we are more likely to position ourselves as the subject of this instruction. This does not make the poem less allegorical, of course, but means that we are attempting to map ourselves (and our lives and experiences) onto the addressee's deictic field, rather than the speaker's. The experiences that 'you' are instructed to have are more easily applicable to generalised experiences (lost keys, as opposed to losing a mother's watch), not to mention the fact that losing items is more easily imagined than offering advice to others about how to go about approaching loss. This means that although, at its core, this poem uses a lyric-I discussing their love for a lost lyric-you, we are ultimately prevented from identifying with either of them. The position in which we placed ourselves is completely erased by travelling through the deictic planes, isolating the speaker even further. This manipulation of the deictic stack to subvert our expectations is part of what creates the unsettling effect of the poem, in a similar way to *Ozymandias*, except in this case, rather than being left in one of the embedded worlds of the poem, the poem ends in a deictic world from which we have been excluded, and the fact that we thought we were included to begin with makes this exclusion all the more stark.

As I have explained, it would be a mistake to interpret the first stanzas as producing an 'incorrect' reading once the poem has been read through, even though finishing the poem causes the reader to update the text-worlds that the poem had earlier created. It is perhaps useful to consider this initial reading as a sort of poetic 'red herring' – the equivalent of a plot twist. In the diegetic world of the text, plot twists, revelations and poetic turns demonstrate something that was true all along. In this level of the text, the murderer of a hypothetical mystery novel did not only become the murderer when their identity was revealed; they were the killer all along. In the discourse world where the reader is reading the text, however, this person only becomes the murderer after this revelation. To say that our belief in the innocence of a fictional murderer or the unromantic nature of *Sonnet 130* is an incorrect

reading would be to suggest that the text would be improved by revealing the mystery at the beginning.

Not every text with a narrator or an addressee will have a clear defined narratee/addressee, but if there is one present, then the reader will attempt to position themselves in this deictic centre, rather than in that of the narrator. In the case of this poem, the addressee is more clearly defined than the speaker to begin with, but then the situation is reversed, as the addressee and the speaker collapse together, and what we thought of as the addressee position to begin with is revealed to never have truly existed in the world of the poem. In this case, the shifting of the deictic centres goes from the reader, to the addressee, to a character in the diegetic level of the poem (who happens to be a possible future representation of the addressee, who is 'practising' loss, as instructed by the speaker). From here, we shift to the character of the speaker's past self, and then back and forth between there and the speaker themselves (a process that Macrae describes as deictic 'toggling' (2010)).

The poetic turn at the beginning of the final stanza requires the reader to revisit much of their experience. This 'you' is a character at the diegetic level (through being another one of the losses of the speaker's past self) but also grammatically maps them onto the position of the addressee, challenging our previous assumption that the addressee of the first three stanzas was a general one, applicable to the reader.

Of course, an 'impossible' or apostrophised addressee like this is not unusual. The letters in Lionel Shriver's epistolary novel *We Need To Talk About Kevin* (2003) appear at first to be written for the audience of the narrator's husband, Franklin, but towards the end of the novel we realise that he is dead, and so will never read them. Considering that the narrator speaks of Franklin in the present tense ('Franklin, I know you feel otherwise') this is clearly an intentional twist in the tale, and leads us to re-consider our previous assumptions about the purpose of the letters. It also, as with *One Art*, confuses the separation of the narrator from what has been narrated, as it brings into the foreground the narratorial communication process, and makes this communication part of the narrative.

The italicised '*Write it!*' seems like a break from this level and references the extrapoetic level, in which there is a poet physically writing the poem (making this poem self-referential – a common feature of lyric poetry). As we can read '*Write it!*' in the poem, it cannot be functionally a part of the extrapoetic level, so instead must be referencing an additional level that we were not previously aware existed, between that of the poet and what we thought of as the speaker, in which the physical person of the speaker is in the process of creating the overall poem which they communicate at the extratextual level. The overall effect (in the discourse world, where we are actually reading the poem) is that Elizabeth Bishop has written a poem about a fictional poet (who might be confused with the real poet, Elizabeth Bishop) struggling to come to terms with their loss and instead accidentally

communicating the overwhelming enormity of it, and this reading occurs at the extrapoetic level, in which we read the text.

Once we are aware that the speaker is a poet trying to come to terms with their loss (rather than just advising us about how to handle loss) another possible implication of the early use of 'you' is available to us, which is that 'you' could actually refer to the speaker themselves. It is the speaker who needs to be convinced that a great loss is 'no disaster', and so although they seem to be creating generalised advice, we can see that they are one of those that needs to heed it. As I have said, the early use of imperatives discouraged this option and more pointedly marks the 'you' as referring to a generalised reader, making this possibility both a perspective shift and also an example of double-voiced discourse. Both concrete and generic referents of 'you' occur within the same text, and this text can be read as both advising the reader of how to cope with loss but also as an account of how poorly the speaker is coping with their own loss.

The fact that twists and turns in the experience of reading of both *One Art* and *We Need to Talk about Kevin* occur at the supposed mediation or the extra-textual level indicates that a higher level of narration has existed all along. Lionel Shriver's narrator is not merely narrating, but exists at a diegetic level in which she is writing letters to her dead husband in order to process her shock and grief at the events she has experienced. The speaker of *One Art* is not explaining how to handle losses and communicating their own, but has experienced the loss of a loved one so traumatic that it feels like a 'disaster' no matter how much they struggle to rationalise it. The fact that action, experience or emotion occurs at the level in which we would expect narration or mediation to occur does not make the whole text unmediated, therefore, despite a potential lack of mediation between us and the experiences of the narrator/speaker. Or, to put it another way: if lyric poetry such as this is unmediated (as so many definitions of the lyric claim), so is *We Need to Talk about Kevin*.

The more narrative effect of Maya Angelou's poem is also a consequence of the lack of involvement that this narrator has in the poem, and here we run into difficulties in comparing these poems, and also the comparisons between poems and prose in general. If we were to discuss 'the persona' or 'the speaker' of *No Loser, No Weeper*, would this refer to the woman who has lost her 'lover-boy' or to the reporter who has placed speech marks around her words and merely tells us 'then she bent her head'? Only the former literally speaks and has a clearly defined physical and temporal presence. In comparing the two losses, we end up comparing an embedded fictional character of one poem, with both the speaker and the character of other (which resolve to the same person).

Narrative texts like *We Need To Talk About Kevin* or *No Loser, No Weeper*, are not called unmediated, whereas lyric poetry is often *assumed* to be unmediated. The brief 'Write it!' demonstrates, I believe, that not only does *One Art* make use of mediation, but that there is an extra level of mediation that is only demonstrated to

us in that last stanza, after the turn occurs. This level may be only briefly referenced, but this is also true of the highest level of mediation in *No Loser, No Weeper*.

One Art demonstrates, therefore, that the lyric speaker not only makes use of double-voicing, but that by utilising strong poetic turns, then can mediate between shifts in perspective that can cause us to re-evaluate the speaker's motivations, and even to create weak narratives to explain these. Through the use of the turn, not only does this speaker demonstrate that the same complexity of perspectives found in narrative texts can be utilised in lyric poetry, but by comparing this poem to a narrative poem without such a turn, it is clear that such complexity cannot be associated with narrativity alone.

4.3 Persona and the unobtrusive speaker

Another poem which makes use of a dramatic turn is Adrian Henri's poem, *Tonight at Noon* (appendix 8.4.4). The speaker in this poem does not offer a conflicting perspective on the text previous to the turn, but instead offers no clear motivation or persona until the turn, which occurs in the second to last line. Until the turn, there is no self-reflexivity and no sense that whoever is telling us this is experiencing it, meaning that 'the speaker's character is not a functional part of the poem' (Phelan, 1996:32) and remains unobtrusive until the final two lines.

By Lodge's standards, this poem is more metaphoric than most lyric poetry, certainly more so than any poem I have considered so far, as the majority of the poem consists of a sequence of events connected predominantly by their improbability, all of which will occur 'tonight at noon', itself an impossibility. This list of similar occurrences has no contiguous connection, and so does not contribute to a narrative, no matter how hard the reader might try. In addition, the list of improbable and impossible events does not suggest any sense of purpose or argument. Improbable or impossible events which might be considered undesirable ('Children from happy families will be sent to live in a home') are given equal weight to events likely to be considered desirable ('America will declare peace on Russia') and events which are neither, or perhaps morally neutral ('The first daffodils of autumn will appear'). The world created in which all of these impossible or improbable things occur is neither utopian nor dystopian, and so it is almost impossible to discern the purpose of imagining such a world. The reader is likely to view the connections between the statements as something of a puzzle, but the final effect is so chaotic that the solution is nearly impossible to reach until the turn. This lack of discernible motivation makes the character of the speaker even less discernible than that of *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, who at least has a clear message that they wish to convince us of. In addition, attempting to resolve this unresolvable puzzle prevents the reader from focusing on this speaker, as what they are telling us is far more interesting.

It would be difficult to claim that the consciousness reporting *Tonight at Noon* is 'narrating'. However, there is a clear lack of expected judgement on the character of this consciousness, making their communication closer to narration than to character dialogue (or monologue). Not only is there a narrator-like focus on external events,

but the text is stylistically similar to some description which occurs in narrative prose, however. For example, the metaphoric descriptive prose of Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, as discussed by Lodge:

Fog everywhere . Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights.

If we were to set this prose out with line breaks, as *Tonight at Noon* is, the comparison becomes clearer.

Fog everywhere .
Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows;
Fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city.
Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights.

The repeated 'fog' in *Bleak House* and the repeated 'tonight at noon' in *Tonight at Noon* more clearly show both the lyrical and descriptive effect of Charles Dickens' prose and Adrian Henri's poem.

It is useful to note that what Charles Dickens does in this short passage is to create the character level at which the events of the novel will occur. Although this character level is not fully developed by the end of this extract, and the characters have not yet appeared, this character level still exists. Similarly, what the speaker of *Tonight at Noon* is doing is creating a character level, even though at this stage of the poem we do not know what it will be used for, or whether any fully developed characters will exist in it.

Lodge describes this passage as a 'sequence of short, literal descriptive details' (1977:p. 100). I would argue that we only interpret these as 'literal' because they are plausible, and therefore will be read as actual description of the scene. *Tonight at Noon* is unlikely to be read as literal because it is so difficult to conceive of a world in which all those things occur, but it is still a sequence of descriptive details, which is something we would expect from a narrator rather than a diegetic character. Adrian Henri himself describes the poem as a 'catalogue of images' and an 'image sequence' (1968).

Until the final few words of the poem it is impossible to know the purpose of this description. It is likely, therefore, that a reader will try to construct a possible world in which these things all occur. However, it is impossible to derive one cohesive explanation that would connect these events other than their thematic similarity. (Or at least, I cannot do it.) The series of images are chaotic: utopian descriptions are given equal weight to dystopian or surreal descriptions. So neither a narrative, a clear persona, nor an argument that we are being persuaded of can be found. Like Charles Dickens, Adrian Henri's descriptive details *could* be leading towards setting

the scene for a full narrative (though, as I've said, it is difficult to imagine what form it would take), but instead, it takes a different direction. Right at the end of the third and last stanza, the poem's turn occurs.

Girls in bikinis are moonbathing
Folksongs are being sung by real folk
Art galleries are closed to people over 21
Poets get their poems in the Top 20
There's jobs for everybody and nobody wants them
In back alleys everywhere teenage lovers are kissing in broad daylight
In forgotten graveyards everywhere the dead will quietly bury the living
and
You will tell me you love me
Tonight at noon

In the last ten words of a poem that is over two hundred words long, we are suddenly presented with a much more recognisable lyric feature – not just a lyric-I, but also a lyric-you, both of which are entirely absent from the poem up to that point. The 'you' and the 'me' occur at the character level of the poem, mediated to us through the speaker, and this 'me' is a projection of the speaker themselves.

This gives us the 'point' of the poem, and an explanation as to why a string of similar images was listed for us. The line 'You will tell me you love me' is set apart from the rest of the stanza by the previous single-word line 'and', and the white space around this marks both a distinction between the previous improbable events and this one, and also slows down the reading and provides a pause to give the line weight. Without the expectation that what follows 'and' will be yet another impossible occurrence, the reader would not know that 'you' will never 'tell me you love me'. The turn of the poem therefore resolves any doubts we had about the purpose of describing the images. Whether or not this deflation of our expectations is 'violent' as in *You fit into me* or something more subtle (perhaps a shift from humour to pathos) will depend on the reader's prior interpretation of the 'catalogue of images'.

Tonight at Noon is a poem of unrequited love, rather than the lost love of *One Art*. Interestingly, there is no explicit description of the speaker's feelings. Instead, the poem foregrounds the seeming impossibility of the lyric-you loving the lyric-I. The focus on this impossibility leads us to infer that this is of significance to the speaker, which in turn leads us to infer that they are in love with them. As with *One Art* (but unlike *No Loser, No Weeper*) the depth of the emotion is left for us to deduce, rather than being explicitly explained.

The purpose of the description in the poem is not to build a scene for a narrative, therefore, but to better emphasise the impossibility of what is desired – for 'you' to profess love. The speaker is not offering the description of a narrative setting, but emphasising (or perhaps struggling to come to terms with) the impossibility of their love being requited. The important question in relation to this chapter is, therefore,

why would Adrian Henri obscure this? And why disguise the speaker as a minimally-voiced narrator, setting an series of absurd and impossible scenes?

As with *One Art*, and to a lesser extent *You Fit Into Me* and *Sonnet 130*, I believe that part of the purpose is so that the text of the poem before the turn is used twice, to create two effects. One reason why I decided to discuss both *One Art* and *Tonight at Noon* in separate sections, examining the effects of the poems up to the turns and after them, is that I believe that the experience of reading any poem with a significant turn is shaped by our experience of reading it without knowing the turn will come. The poem up to the turn and the complete poem should almost be considered as two different texts. Although Adrian Henri describes *Tonight at Noon* as 'a catalogue of images' the final effect is different. The reader will only treat the poem as primarily a sequence of images up to the turn. After this, the poem becomes 'a surrealist... love poem' (Reynolds, 2006) which details the 'absurd trauma' of 'unrequited love' (Misener, as quoted in Yandoli, 2014).

The effect of the reading up to this point still impacts our interpretation of the poem after the turn. Adrian Henri himself was determined that every poem he wrote 'had to have a surface meaning... Maybe you could get to another meaning by reading it, but it had to mean something immediately' (Henri, as quoted in Du Noyer, 2007:6). This is precisely how poems with effective turns operate – there is an immediate meaning (romance in *You Fit Into Me*, advice in *One Art*, and disparagement of a lover in *Sonnet 130*) and the reader '[gets] to another meaning' by reading to the end of the poem. These two meanings are communicated to us by the same text, giving the same words on the page multiple meanings and creating multiple perspectives on the same topic. In *Tonight at Noon*, the 'catalogue of images' can be read as absurdist, building a surreal and impossible narrative scene and as emphasising the speaker's hopeless love.

Phelan argues that referring to the organising consciousness of a poem as a 'persona' can be misleading. Associated, as the lyric is, with presenting a state of mind or a thought with 'universal significance', it is often assumed that this means that the speaker will have significance to the poem. In this case (so far, at least), as with many others (such as Simon Armitage's *Poem* in appendix 8.1.1, and *Nothing Gold Can Stay* (appendix 8.2.3)) 'the speaker's character is not a functional part of the poem' (Phelan, 1996:32) something which again aligns them more with mediating prose narrators than with fictional characters.

In *Tonight at Noon*, the character of the speaker is purposefully backgrounded by the chaotic and confusing descriptive phrases, none of which draw attention to the speaker's feelings or their position. The speaker is barely 'a functional part of the poem' at all. It is only when the turn occurs in the last two lines that the speaker becomes the focus of the poem, and this then provides new meaning to the 'catalogue of images' which now serve to highlight quite how impossible it is that the speaker's love will be requited. Through the turn, the speaker of *Tonight at Noon* is able to be both unobtrusive and the poem's ultimate subject.

4.4 Reliability and mediation

All three speakers are purposefully mislead the reader by taking multiple positions, creating multiple readings of the same text. Despite this, they cannot be considered unreliable, as I will explain in this section, and this reliability explains some of the close association that lyric speakers have with their poets. Instead, these turns should be considered as part of their mediatory role.

As I discussed in 2.2, unreliable narration leads to the reader judging and assessing the character of the narrator, and this creates distance between the implied author and the narrator. When the author of a text knows something that their narrator does not, this highlights the distance between them. Lyric speakers, on the other hand, are frequently considered identical to their poets. However, although the turn that these speakers create is intentionally misleading, it does not result in the reader doubting the speaker's conclusions or questioning their judgement. We do not question the speaker's love for their mistress, or whether or not the speakers in *One Art* or *Tonight at Noon* truly desire their absent loved ones.

Conversely, the person experiencing loss in *No Loser No Weeper* is a character in the story, rather than the speaker themselves. This character may possibly be judged by the reader because of her unsettling assertion that she 'ain't threatening' the person she addresses as 'Madam', and this, along with the minimal description of her actions creates the most clearly personified fictional character discussed in this chapter. It is the norm for those at the character level of narration to be assessed and judged by the reader, just as unreliable narrators are. In fact, unreliable narrators nearly always also exist as characters in the stories that they are telling (Fludernik, 2012:27).

The speakers of the other poems do not come in for this judgement. They may expose their inner thoughts and feelings, but they do so intentionally, and although they hold back their true feelings, they do so to better expose themselves rather than to hide something from us. As Wolf argues, the lyric speaker 'is used not as a means of shedding light on elements of external reality but of revealing itself, its thoughts and in particular its emotions' (2005:36). On the other hand, if the character who rather threateningly denies threatening 'Madam' reveals herself as dangerous and results in our questioning her judgement, this does not appear to be intentional.

Poetry which exhibits 'disequilibrium with what the speaker reveals and understands' (Langbaum, 1957:146) and therefore uses an unreliable speaker, marks them as dramatic monologues, rather than lyric poetry (Langbaum, 1957; Howe, 1966; Phelan, 1996 and Jerman, 1957). As I discussed in 2.2, narrative unreliability results in a narrator who cannot be considered identical with the author, as so many lyric speakers are considered identical to their poets. The speaker in *One Art* is aware of their own struggle, and they are consciously attempting to deal with it by writing the poem. This makes the speaker of *One Art* 'highly self-reflexive', as Miller stated the lyric speaker should be (1994:10). As Hühn points out, lyric poetry frequently involves 'the speaker thematizing him- or herself' (2005:235) and doing so knowingly.

The speakers in these poems reveal their own thought processes ('self-absorption' again) rather than their characters. However, were a poem to focus on their personas, in the way that the dramatic monologue focuses on the character of its speaker, the types of perspective shifts that I have discussed here would become difficult to execute. In a dramatic monologue or soliloquy, in which we are supposed to be able to imagine the speaker as part of a clear narrative setting, speaking for a clear purpose (such as the Duke of Ferrara speaking as he shows his collection of artworks to a visitor in Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess*), such a turn would require us to either not realise that we are reading a dramatic monologue or a soliloquy until the shift, or to believe we are reading one until the shift occurs. This would make their performance extremely difficult, as it would reveal the shift and therefore make the definition questionable. The same is true for the foregrounding of the persona: it is one thing for a persona to accidentally reveal something of themselves that causes us to judge them, but it is far less likely if the persona is hidden from us or absent entirely for part of the poem. I would not argue that such lyrical poems are impossible, but I have not yet found any examples, and there are certainly none in *Structure and Surprise*.

Attempting to imagine such a poem demonstrates why the voice of the lyric, which is far less likely to have a specific setting and clearly characterised speaker, is closer to those of the narrators of prose fiction rather than the characters within them. Characters within a narrative occupy a specific physical and temporal space, whereas narrators have a far wider range of potential positions: they can play a diegetic role in the story that they tell or they can exist only in the narratorial level, and they can be strongly or minimally characterised. The ability to move between such positions demonstrates the lyric speaker's mediatory role.

Furthermore, it is not only the shifts in perspective which occur due to lyric turns that link these poetic consciousnesses with narrators, but their ability to obscure these shifts and use perspective to mislead the reader. The lyric turns I am examining here demonstrate the mediated nature of lyric poetry and the complexity of perspectives that the lyric speaker presents. That these speakers are usually aligned with fictional characters rather than narrators is a failing both of the way in which lyric speakers are conceived of and also of narratologists' lack of consideration of the lyric because of its assumed monoperspectivity and lack of narrativity and mediation.

The first person lyric speaker is the equivalent to the first person prose narrator, and as such comes to us no more or no less mediated. My argument does not hinge on the mediated nature of lyric poetry as much as it does the *equivalence* in mediation between the reader and the lyric speaker and between the reader and the prose narrator. Describing the first person poetic speaker as unmediated but the first person prose novel as mediated is to incorrectly align the first person lyric speaker with the narrated self of the first person prose novel, rather than the narrating voice.

In general (partly because of the length of the text, again) the character level of prose fiction is more developed and more obvious, which makes the mediatory role of the

prose narrator obvious. However, the character level of the poems I have discussed in this chapter do exist, even though they may be comparatively less developed. The speaker in *Sonnet 130* mediates between both us and the mistress and between us and the hypothetical poem that the speaker is mocking. The speaker in *One Art* mediates between us and both their past self and the projections of our potential future self, and the speaker in *Tonight at Noon* mediates between us and the bizarre world that they build, in which these impossible events occur. 'Hitler' and 'Nelson' are not fully developed characters in this poem, but they do exist at the character level, and the speaker is the mediator.

The turns that the speakers execute are therefore part of their mediatory role, and not only demonstrate the complex and even contradictory positions that speakers can take within lyric poetry, but also show the control that they have over the narrative levels within the texts, as narrators do. In addition, these turns only achieve these effects because the speaker is trustworthy, and uses the turn to better explore and expose their emotional state rather than to hide something from us, and this reliability obscures the distance between the speaker and the poet, making it more likely that we will assume that the speaker *is* the poet. Reliability is therefore a key factor in my answer to my first research question.

4.4 Conclusion

Sonnet 130, *One Art*, and *Tonight at Noon* utilise turns in perspective as well as topic and meaning. *Sonnet 130* begins by appearing to be a parody, referencing and mocking a hypothetical poem which espouses an emotion that the poem ends up claiming, therefore presenting two conflicting perspectives with the same words. *One Art*, and *Tonight at Noon* begin with an impression of detachment from the subject, with no use of the first person, and no sense of any motivation that the speaker may have for the communication. In all the poems, these shifts result in a new understanding of what has been read, with both conflicting meanings being synthesised to produce the poem's entire meaning. Not only does this demonstrate the error in defining lyric poetry as monoperspectival, but these multiple perspectives are often used to enhance the lyrical effect, increasing the density of meaning.

Such shifts and turns, which Theune and I argue are a significant feature of many lyric poems, do not only demonstrate a polyphony of perspectives and multiple layers of mediation, but this is facilitated by a *lack* of attention to the character of the mediator. These poems are not 'character studies', and their speakers perform a variety of roles within the same poems. If we assume that lyric poetry always 'personal' and presented by a central persona, our attention may misleadingly deflect onto the poet themselves, and the results of this will be the focus of my next chapter. Defining lyric speakers as 'unmediated' may be technically correct, but it ignores the mediation that takes place within the poems. These speakers mediate between us and the shifting, multiple perspectives of the poems, just as narrators do, something impossible for the character-speakers of the dramatic monologue to achieve. These multiple perspectives do not only challenge the assumed

monoperspectivity of lyric poetry, therefore, but also demonstrate the varied and mediatory role that the lyric speaker plays. It is only by reconsidering the definitions of lyric poetry and its speakers that the effects that produce such lyricism can be properly examined.

Having demonstrated that lyric speakers can be multiperspectival, mediatory, and capable of narration, my next chapter examines confessional poetry, a subgenre of the lyric in which the speaker presents the poem in such a directly personal style that this complexity may appear to be absent. This subjective style of narration is another factor which I will argue creates an impression of personalness. However, the framework of narratology demonstrates that the distinction between poet and the speaker, and the narrating and experiencing selves of the speaker, exist even when they are difficult to separate, and by examining how these layers have been obscured, we can better understand how the illusion of personalness has been achieved.

5. Confessional poetry

Confessional poetry is a subgenre of lyric poetry which is described as ‘more intensely’ personal than the lyric (Phillips, 1973:ix). Lyric poetry and speakers are frequently described as ‘personal’, including in definitions by Cuddon (1998:481), Miller (1994:10), Fowler, (1973:133-4), Phillips (1973:ix) and Fludernik (2005:99), but none of these definitions make it clear what is meant by this. This quality of personalness is therefore both considered crucial to the lyric speaker, but also undefined. As confessional poetry either exaggerates or shows this quality more intensely, it provides the ideal example to examine what is meant when we call a lyric poem and its speaker ‘personal’ and what linguistic features might have led us to define it as such. By doing so, I will demonstrate why it is that the use of this poorly defined term stems from the same misunderstanding that leads to biographical criticism, and why this is so damaging both to our understanding of the poetry and to our appreciation of the poets’ skill. Instead, I demonstrate that there are linguistic indices that make the poem appear personal which obscure the distinction between the the experiencing self and the narrating self, a distinction posited by narratology in first-person narratives.

Cuddon describes the speaker of the lyric poem as ‘not necessarily the poet himself’ (1998:481), Abrams says that the speaker ‘need not be the poet who wrote it’ (1981:146) and Scholes and Kellogg say that the speaker is ‘the poet or his surrogate’, (1966:4) all of which point to the idea that this ‘personalness’ may lead to the speaker being perceived as directly representing the poet. Conversely, Fludernik describes the *speaker* of lyric poetry as ‘personal’ (2005:99), which suggests that she is applying it to a feature of the poem rather than to the poet, and Cuddon describes lyric poetry as being written in a personal ‘fashion’ (1998:481) which suggests that it can be a linguistic quality. In spite of attempts not to attribute personalness to the poet, this frequently used and clearly significant term is being treated by some linguistically (though without defining it) and by some to mean that the poem is partly or potentially autobiographical (and in the case of Cuddon, both). This chapter will therefore offer a linguistic definition of ‘personalness’ based on my examination of the poetry of Sylvia Plath, which has attracted a vast amount of biographically-based criticism.

Confessional poetry focuses on the perspective of the speaker and their emotional trauma, creating the impression of a close, personal link between the poet and the poem, which in turn leads to a preponderance of biographical criticism. Applying narratological concepts of first person narration to two of Sylvia Plath’s poems demonstrates that despite their strong association with the biography of the author, the poetry is nevertheless a fictional representation of personalness. In this chapter, I will use point of view analysis and the narrative indices of subjectivity to examine how the perspective of these two poems creates an intensely personal text that

focuses tightly on that of the speaker as experiencing self rather than as narrating self which can be linked to the poet. In addition, due to the strong association of metaphor with emotion and therefore with subjectivity, I shall be analysing the metaphors to demonstrate that the poems foreground personal experience and the psyche of the experiencing self of the speaker rather than any narrative events which may have caused their suffering and which may be prompting critics to seek biographical connections.

5.1 The biographical fallacy

When lyric poetry is described as personal, this is often because the speaker is perceived as identical to the poet, and the content of the poem is therefore assumed to be autobiographical. In 2.1.1, I discussed the problems associated with treating Christina Rossetti's poetry as autobiographical. This is not because such an assumption is incorrect (though it may or may not be), but because it leads to poor criticism and is a degradation of the poet's skill. Virginia Woolf described Christina Rossetti as 'an instinctive poet' (1953:242) after lengthily discussing her life story and speculating about the motives behind her poetry. As Russ points out, 'With Mozart, this kind of creation means the facility and ease of a genius; with Rossetti it becomes a kind of intuition' (Russ, 1983:91). When poetry is assumed to be personal to the poet, the linguistic skill that goes into creating it is overlooked in favour of romanticizing a direct link between the poet's life and the text.

Bowra is quick to dismiss the possibility of Christina Rossetti's imagination, believing it to be impossible that she 'could write with this terrible directness if she did not to some degree know the experience which she describes' (Bowra, 1949:263). Packer goes to great lengths to examine Rossetti's life for clues about her narrative poem *Goblin Market*. She admits that 'It would be a mistake to identify Christina herself with either Laura or Lizzie' but goes on to do exactly that, saying 'one senses that she uses both her heroines to express her own attitude toward the moral question she raises in the poem' (1958:382). Hunt believed that Laura and Lizzie represented Christina and her sister respectively, and the fruit the goblin sells them represents a narrowly avoided 'elopement with a man who belonged to another' (1932:xiii). So after stating that attempts to associate Christina Rossetti with one of the characters in her poem would be mistaken, Packer uses this evidence to justify doing exactly that, and tries to justify identifying this hypothesised elopement as a way to better understand the poem. In her view, it is 'difficult to believe' that poetry as effective as hers 'could be the result of the imaginative fantasy of an untried woman who has put together her ideas about love from observation and books' (1958:379) as this would mean she was writing 'in an emotional vacuum, as the frenzied and erotic fantasies of a love-starved spinster' (1958:382). More troubling is that Packer uses this patronizing diminishing of her literary powers as justification to examine her personal life under the guise of literary analysis. The fruit in *Goblin Market* *might* represent an elopement that Christina Rossetti narrowly avoided, and therefore it is impossible to imagine that she could have written it without having experienced such a love affair, and therefore such a paramour must be found.

After supposedly identifying this paramour, Packer spends some time matching up the events of this imagined love affair with Christina Rossetti's poems *Birthday*, *Parting after Parting* and *Meeting*. Not only does this approach fail to tell us anything about her poetry in favour of focusing on biography, it is *bad* biography, based on little more than conjecture and the circumstantial evidence of visiting dates.

McDayter examined the fascination surrounding the poet Letitia Elizabeth Landon (usually known simply as L.E.L.) L.E.L. may not be as significant a poet as Christina Rossetti, but as McDayter points out, the obsession about how and why she died at the expense of the poetry that she produced is extreme. 'Even Enfield's biography was entitled L.E.L.: Mystery of the Thirties,' points out McDayter, 'drawing immediate attention to the controversy over the poet's death rather than to her literary life. The poet's body of work, it is implied, was important to document only inasmuch as it shed light on that far more interesting "body" - the near-dead body of L.E.L. discovered stretched upon the floor of her room' (2010:337). Viewing lyric poetry as 'personal' can lead to both a fixation with biography and the denigration of the poet's artform.

Such biographical criticism was commonplace and mostly unchallenged until Beardsley and Wimsatt famously argued for ignoring the author's intentions in literary criticism in 1946 and criticised attempts to make 'making judgements about a poem or novel based on one's knowledge of the writer's life' (1946:3). The New Criticism, therefore, sought to separate a text from its author, and instead attempted to base its criticism of the text alone. However, although this made critics aware of some of the problems associated with biographical criticism, Barthes argued that 'the author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines' when writing in 1967, and it was still the case then, Barthes claimed, that 'the explanation of work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author "confiding" in us.' (1967:143). In the interim, Willis defended biographical criticism by arguing that because a poet uses their experience in their poetry, 'the poet's experiences from diaries, letters, accounts of friends, and public records, may illuminate his poetry' but calls the converse, where poetry is treated as 'an autobiographical document', 'the biographical fallacy' (1951:971). Despite this, it is 'misreading a literary subject's works as though they were straight autobiography' which Winslow defines as 'the biographical fallacy' (1995:7).

Despite the strong influence of The New Criticism and Barthes calling for 'the death of the author', modern literary criticism is still rife with the biographical fallacy, as I will demonstrate.

5.2 Life Writing

Poetry is rarely explicitly published as 'autobiographical', and yet is frequently assumed to be so. There is no such wide-spread assumption in prose, which is far

more likely to be framed as 'fiction'. Autobiography, which is explicitly framed as being 'about' the writer, is a specific genre of prose writing, part of a broader genre called 'life writing' (which includes fiction with autobiographical elements, or autobiography which is presented as fiction). However, when prose is classed as autobiography, this does not lead to the same assumptions of a lack of creativity that it does in poetry. Gudmundsdóttir, writing in *Borderlines: autobiography and fiction in postmodern life writing*, argues that fictionality is a quality of creativity rather than something simply 'made up', and as such autobiography and other forms of life writing are equally fictional to other forms of prose fiction, as they all include 'structure, poetic or literary descriptions of people and places, ordering of events to create certain effects' to the same extent (2003:4). This is an important distinction, as I would argue that whether or not Christina Rossetti or L.E.L. were writing about their own lives and experiences, this does not entail a lack of creativity in their writing. Even if we were to assume that the lyric speaker is telling is about the poet and the poet's real experiences, this should not lead to the assumption that their writing is a direct window into their psyche, as it is often assumed to be, as I shall demonstrate.

The creative and fictive elements of life writing have long been acknowledged, most significantly by Eakin, who argued that 'writing which is explicitly autobiographical cannot be easily separated from fiction' as 'the self that is the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure (Eakin, 1985:3). It is impossible to conceive of narrative prose without treating it as fiction, argues Eakin, as 'fictions and the fiction-making process are a central constituent of the truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life' (Eakin, 1985:3). In short, even if Christina Rossetti had declared that *Goblin Market* was an allegory for her life in some way (which she did not), this would not make it any less a fictional story about two fictional sisters. Critics should be sceptical of any impression that what they are getting is 'the truth of life as it is lived', especially when (as is the case with the majority of lyric poetry) it is not claimed to be true.

In addition, even if the writing is explicitly stated to be based on real people and real events, and even if this is demonstrably true, any impression created 'that we are present to something that happened earlier' is still an 'illusion', claims Gudmundsdóttir (2003:6). Writing from 'the viewpoint of the past... implies fictionality, as we can never speak authoritatively from the past (Gudmundsdóttir, 2003:6), and so even if critics were convinced that the poetry of Christina Rossetti or L.E.L. was giving them information about their real lives, they should still treat this as a fictional approximation of the truth, rather than an unmediated access to it. Critics of autobiographical fiction, which is *explicitly* framed as 'true' or 'based on the truth' to some extent, are careful to avoid making these assumptions. As I will demonstrate, the links between lyric poetry deemed personal and the poets who write it have led to critics making the same assumptions that those who study life writing are careful to avoid.

5.3 Critical responses to confessional poetry

The obsession with the poet's biography is nowhere clearer than in the critical responses to 'Confessional Poetry' where the poets are assumed to be identical with their speakers more often than in any other poetic genre. As with the assumption that Christina Rossetti's poetry was merely 'the quaint singing with which a child amuses itself' (Lootens, 1996:63) rather than intelligently produced literature, Russ believes that the term 'confessional' is itself used to deny that the literature is art (1983:29). She quotes Stanley, who believes that there is a danger that confessional writing is seen as 'so personal in its content, so specific in its telling that... [it has no] value as "literature"' (1983:29). If, however, we examine the language of confessional poetry we can find evidence of why it is assumed to be so personally connected to the poet, which would allow us to both better understand how this poetry works and also demonstrate the skill of the poets who intentionally create this effect.

Russ believes that 'confessional' is a term used to denigrate women's writing, pointing out that some writing by men that could theoretically be deemed confessional (such as Gerard Manley Hopkins' sonnets) is not described as such. Erica Jong believes that 'confessional' is 'simply handy for dismissing art that the critic wishes to trivialise' and is 'a put-down term for women, a sexist label for women's poetry' (quoted in Russ, 1983:29).

However, Russ is wrong when she asserts that 'Plath is confessional; Allen Ginsburg is not' (1983:31). Allen Ginsberg's work is frequently defined as confessional in critical literature. Hoffman lists him as one of the 'major confessional poets' (1978:687). He is discussed in Gill's book, *Modern Confessional Writing* (2006), in which there appears a chapter which lists the poets who brought the term to prominence as 'Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, John Berryman and Allen Ginsberg' and also offers two examples of newer poets, Sharon Olds and Mark Doty (Gregory, 2006:33). Although this is a sexist phenomenon, male confessional poets do not escape either the label or the problems associated with it. After all, the critic who is believed to have coined the term that defined the genre, first used it to describe a male poet, Robert Lowell, in *Confession as Poetry* (1968). This is an issue that affects poetry as a whole, damages the reputation of many poets and limits the precision of their criticism.

The 'confessions' that make up confessional poetry tend to be viewed as the poet's confessions. Even *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry* describes confessional poetry as 'autobiographical', and then points out that discussion and criticism of the poems hinges 'on interpretations of the poem's relationship to the biographical poet' (Rosenbaum, 2012:297) rather than on the poems themselves. Just as the word 'personal' used to describe the lyric can result in a confusion between the poem and the poet's real life, even when the critic claims to treat the poem as fiction, confessional poetry is often assumed to be autobiographical and therefore the organising consciousness is often discussed as if it *is* the poet, even when a link is denied. This fixation on biographical links between poem and poet can lead, as with Christina Rossetti, to a lack of focus on the linguistic features of the poem, and a

denigration of the poet's skill. Fay notes that when critics examine the poetry of Sylvia Plath, 'the strictly regulated metre of her poetry is dismissed in favour of a reading that focuses on her multiple suicide attempts and nervous breakdowns, thus emphasizing the irrational and unregulated aspects of her work (1992:89) (though she does not offer an analysis of this regulation herself). As with most poetry deemed 'personal', not only might these biographical links be misguided, but more importantly, they lead to poor literary analysis.

What I am arguing for here is more than just a separation of the poet from the poem. Many other critics and some significant literary movements, such as the New Criticism and Formalism, have already emphasised the importance of examining literary texts through lenses other than biography. Despite this, the problem has remained. Unless we examine more closely what it is that is leading us to make these close links between the poet and their poem, the continuing confusion between the poet and their poems seems inevitable.

The confusion of speaker and poet is not always openly admitted to, however. Jones, when examining the work of Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Robert Lowell, calls a confessional poem one 'in which the persona is naked ego involved in a very personal world and with particular, private experiences' (1965:14). His definition of the word 'persona' is unclear, though it seems to be a half-way point between 'poet' and 'speaker'. Mills makes a clearer link between the speaker and the poet when he defines the subject matter of confessional poetry as 'the more intimate aspects of life, areas of experience that most of us would instinctively keep from public sight' (1965:156), which suggests that he sees the confession as real rather than fictional. Rosenthal claims that the major theme of confessional poetry is 'the private life of the poet himself, especially under stress of psychological crisis', and also describes Lowell's speaker as 'unequivocally himself' (1967:15). Phillips goes further and defines all lyric poetry as personal 'by definition', and confessional poetry as just 'more intensely so' (1973:ix). 'A confessional poem,' claims Phillips, 'is one which mythologizes the poet's personal life' (1973:11). With these definitions, there seems little space for confessional poetry to be fictional. Furthermore, they demonstrate the problematic nature of calling the speaker 'personal' without attaching this to a solid, linguistic definition.

As Perloff says, confessional poetry is 'consistently treated by critics as confession rather than as poetry':

when critics argue as Roger Bowen has recently done, that the main function of Lowell's *Life Studies* was a "personal catharsis" for the poet and that, once liberated from the "personal neurosis" and the "obsessive involvement with personal history" which characterize these confessional poems, he was psychologically ready to move on to a more "responsible" and more "public" poetry, I suspect that the nature of the confessional poem as a literary genre has been completely misunderstood. (1970:1)

As her evidence, she shows that at least two of the confessional poets themselves deny this strong link between their real lives and their poetry (1970:1). James Merrill, one of the confessional poets himself, makes it clear that whether a poem is autobiographical or not is not important – what makes a poem ‘confessional’ is that it appears that way. With his poetry, he attempts to ‘make it sound as if it were true’ rather than giving any genuine confession. For him, the confession is an ‘illusion’ (Sheehan, 1968:1). Robert Lowell stated in an interview that although his poetry is based on his real life, he does ‘a good deal of tinkering with fact’, which incidentally supports both Eakin’s and Gudmundsdóttir’s views on the fictionality of life writing and their claims that we should be sceptical that a text is true merely because it appears that way. He states that he is tricking the reader into believing that he or she is getting ‘the real Robert Lowell’ (Brooks, 1963:349), which very much suggests that he sees the quality of ‘personalness’ which critics are reacting to as a linguistic feature of the poetry itself, rather than any reflection on how close the ties are to his own life. On the other hand, Anne Sexton did suggest in interviews that her poetry was a reflection of her real life and described her poetry as ‘personal’ rather than confessional (Moore, 1985:50), but she also made the distinction between real events and the events described in her poetry: ‘I’ve heard psychiatrists say, “See, you’ve forgiven your father. There it is in your poem.” But I haven’t forgiven my father. I just wrote that I did’ (Moore, 1985:46).

Even when faced with this evidence, some critics will still insist that they are right and the poet themselves is wrong. Phillips acknowledges that several of the confessional poets do not consider their poetry autobiographical:

[Theodore Roethke] insisted, in two different essays, on the fictitiousness of [his] protagonist (“Not ‘I’ personally, but all haunted and harried men”). John Berryman also insisted on the mythological or fictitious nature of the protagonist of his Dream Songs: “The poem then, whatever its wide cast of characters, is essentially about an imaginary character (not the poet, not me) named Henry.” Lowell’s disclaimer begins, “This is not my diary, my Confession, not a puritan’s too literary pornographic honest, glad to share private embarrassment, and triumph”. (1973:12)

And yet in the very next paragraph, Phillips dismisses all this with a simple ‘Methinks the poets protest too much’.

Later in this book, he claims that the father and mother found in several of Theodore Roethke’s poems are his parents themselves (1973:116), that you can deduce the effect that John Berryman’s father’s death had on his life through studying his poetry (1973:93) and he makes a link between Robert Lowell’s loss of his Catholicism and his poetry becoming more ‘personal’ (1973:18). Beardsley and Wimsatt, both part of the New Criticism, were dismissive of the ‘intentional fallacy’ which resulted in poetic criticism focusing heavily on deciphering what the author *intended* their poems to mean rather than the poetry itself: as they say, ‘If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed,

then the poem is not adequate evidence, and the critic must go outside the poem—for evidence of an intention that did not become effective in the poem' (1946:469). However, biographical criticism has the potential to be far more damaging than attempting to recreate intention, as the poet's explicit intentions can be ignored or dismissed to justify the focus on their life, as has been the case with the confessional poets. This leads to poetic criticism that goes far beyond just attempting to recreate the 'design or plan in the author's mind' (Beardsley and Wimsatt, 1946:469) to assuming such design may be unconscious or unintentional, and that the poet does not have control over their craft.

It seems likely, therefore, that much lyric and confessional poetry is defined as 'personal' not because there is a close, personal link between the speaker and the poet, but because they have written the poem in such a way that there *appears* to be such a link. Whether or not a speaker is personal to the poet may be relevant to a literary historian, but it should not be relevant to the study of the poem itself. Semino points out that 'the degree to which readers assimilate the constructed poetic persona to the author will, however, vary from case to case, depending, presumably, on their knowledge and expectations about different writers and genres, and on their perception of each individual text' pointing out that Green assumes that the speaker of William Wordsworth's *Nutting* is Wordsworth himself, whilst wondering who the speaker of Henry Vaughan's *The retreat* could be (1992:126). It is reasonable, therefore, to examine these texts which have been so extremely aligned with their authors to see what features might have caused this.

When faced with a poem which sounds 'as if it were true' and the reader believes they are getting 'the real' poet, what should be examined is what makes it appear this way. If we assume that the poetry of the confessional poets is personal to them even though they claim not to have intended it that way, we are further denigrating their creative skills, and assuming that they do not control their own art form. Such criticism makes their poetry 'instinctive' in the way that Christina Rossetti's was assumed to be, and little more than an uncontrolled outburst. With such a starting point, it is unsurprising that the criticism of the confessional poets is dominated by analysing their lives, rather than analysing the literary skill behind their poetic creations. The focus on the lives of the poets leads to devaluing and ignoring their skill and therefore weakening the criticism which examines it.

Conversely, if we assume that the poets have 'tricked' us into making a biographical link between their poetry and their lives, and that their poetry only appears to be 'personal' because of features of the language that they purposefully utilised, then we can focus our attention on examining the texts and the creative skill which has gone into producing them. It is only by setting aside our fascination with the poets' lives that we can show the appropriate respect to their literary power.

5.4 Intensely personal confessional poetry: the case of Sylvia Plath

The assumption that the confessional poets write only autobiography is particularly obvious with regard to Sylvia Plath. It is rare that a critical account of one or more of her poems does not mention at least some biographical details about her life, her marriage and her suicide. For this reason, my examination of what makes a lyric speaker personal will focus on Sylvia Plath, and more specifically on two of her most famous poems, *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus*, both of which are frequently assumed to offer insight into the poet herself.

Steiner's *A Closer Look at Ariel: A Memory of Sylvia Plath* (1973) is, as the title suggests, based on the friendship between the author and Sylvia Plath during their time studying at Smith College where they shared a room. It is understandably focused on biographical details, therefore. Nash, reviewing this book, points out that many of these anecdotes are 'offered as an illumination of her work' (1974:267). Nash rather disparagingly criticises the assumption made by Steiner that study of Plath's life and poetry will ever lead to "solving the mystery" of Sylvia Plath' (1974:274) and claims that relating Plath's poetry to her life is an 'intrusion' that '[distorts] the shape of her poetry and her life, bending it all one way, to one goal' (1974:274-5). But even she claims that *The Bell Jar* describes how Plath 'returned to student life at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, after the nervous breakdown' (1974:271) and though she believes that some of Steiner's details may prejudice our readings of Sylvia Plath's poetry (1974:268), to demonstrate this, she compares Steiner's account of events to those in the *Bell Jar* (1974:269), which is assumed to be a more accurate representation of Sylvia Plath's real life despite being unquestionably prose fiction. Nash also mentions biographical details in passing, such as pointing out that *Poem for a Birthday* was 'written during her first pregnancy' and also claims that 'it was [Plath's] suicide that breathed life into the poems, proof that things really were that bad' (1974.) The idea that Sylvia Plath's death was required as 'proof' of her literary skill demeans her literary success, and is a stark demonstration of the risks of biographical criticism. If her work is assumed to make more sense when viewed through the prism of her life, her work itself becomes less worthy of academic study.

Aird, writing about *Lady Lazarus*, manages to claim both that the poem reflects Sylvia Plath's life and also that the poem has a minimal connection to her real life within the same sentence: 'As in 'Daddy' Sylvia Plath has used a limited amount of autobiographical detail in this poem; the references to suicide in 'Lady Lazarus' reflect her own experience' (Aird, 1973). Of course, she offers no evidence for the link between Plath's suicide attempts and this poem other than the similarity of events.

Uroff and Dickie, writing about the same poem, acknowledge that it is not autobiography but again, they cannot completely sever the poet from her speaker:

Although "Lady Lazarus" draws on Plath's own suicide attempt, the poem tells us little of the actual event. It is not a personal confession, but it does reveal Plath's understanding of the way the suicidal person thinks. (Uroff and Dickie, 1979)

In addition to this, they claim that the speaker is intended as a 'character' of Sylvia Plath. It is strange to claim that the poem has a scant connection to Sylvia Plath's real life but also unquestioningly assume that it is based on that life, and that the speaker is a representation of the poet herself.

Wagner-Martin discusses various aspects of Sylvia Plath's life in her book 'Sylvia Plath: The Critical Heritage'. She writes that 'The maiden she wanted to be was constantly losing to the poet she was and she knew it. She says it in "Spinster":' before going on to quote a stanza of the poem as if it were direct autobiography (1997:273). As Paul Mitchell argues, 'Plath-as-author exists as a fetishized object,' rather than either a real person or a literary speaker (2005:38). Her life is the focus of such interest that her work is seen to require study of it in order to examine it.

In the same paper, Mitchell catalogued a vast amount of literary criticism on Sylvia Plath's poem 'Edge' (which describes the scene after a woman killed her children and then herself) that explicitly links the consciousness of the poem back to the poet.

Jillian Becker speculates that 'Edge' 'suggests that [Plath] was thinking of killing her children when she killed herself'. Other critics have also sought to draw the connection between the woman in the poem and Plath herself. Seamus Heaney comments that the 'perfected economy line' particularly disturbs the reader because the poem is 'A suicide note', a point echoed by Sandra M. Gilbert, who describes 'Edge' as a 'Poem [. . .] with [its] head [. . .] in [the] oven'. It is interesting to note the difficulty that several critics have experienced when discussing 'Edge'. As Tim Kendall states, 'The final and unanswerable mystery which Plath leaves is how to read the woman's achievement' (1997:208).

And just as I was able to, he also finds plenty of critics that use biographical analysis whilst also claiming to reject such an approach.

Even those who have sought to resist biography, most frequently by suggesting that the woman is not Plath but Medea, have often been unable truly to disregard such an interpretation. Thus, Susan Bassnett suggests that 'A reading of Plath's poems that hunts for prefigurations of her suicide [. . .] is a restricted reading', yet she goes on to ask, 'Is there [. . .] a thought of dying *with* her children, like Medea?' Here, Bassnett's reading is similar to Becker's, both of which hypothesise that Sylvia Plath might have considered killing her own children, based on no more evidence than the similarity between her poem and the Greek myth. This is perhaps the most extreme (and offensive) use of poetry to examine biography that I have found.

Mitchell also finds a great number of critics who unsuccessfully attempt to separate the poet from her speakers by the use of the term 'persona':

Similarly, Linda Wagner-Martin, despite laying emphasis on the poem's use of persona, is unwilling to differentiate this voice from the person of Plath: 'the persona here has [. . .] [found] a mystical unity with the spiritual world, and she has thereby finally escaped—by journeying to the edge of the known world—that world that so increasingly frustrated her, and her writerly ambition' (1999:105).

Wagner-Martin's (non-) biographical position seems to be even more confusingly posited by Van Dyne, who states in the introduction to her study: 'I am not arguing for a "poetics of transparency" in which the woman writer is assumed to be writing directly and authentically from her lived experience'. Immediately before, however, she writes, 'In one of the last poems she wrote, Plath regards her life as if it were a completed oeuvre [. . .] "The woman is perfected"' (1993:1). Van Dyne's argument relies on the distinction that she makes between the person of Plath and the Plath persona that is used in her work. For Van Dyne, the poetry illustrates Plath's view of 'her life as if it were a text that she could invent and rewrite' (1993:1). While this is a valid and interesting approach to the work, it is important to note that Van Dyne's reading of 'Edge' does not escape the biographical, as she refers to Plath's situation at the time of the poem's production: 'Now, in February of 1963, barely thirty, Plath found herself a mother alone with two young children [. . .] The family script Plath hoped perhaps most to revise was her mother's self-sacrifice in her devotion to her children' (1993:1). To employ a biographical framework of analysis for 'Edge' is, however, to suggest erroneously that, in Foucault's words, the author is 'the unity and origin of [the text's] meanings'. (1989:44-45)

The examples of Wagner-Martin and Van Dyne are particularly interesting here, as they seem to think that they are writing about the poem's 'persona' and do not realise how closely they align this to the poet herself. The word 'persona' and its multiple uses and definition is partly to blame here; unlike the term 'narrator', the term 'persona' is used in so many different and conflicting ways that it is easy to use it when wanting to appear objective without actually displaying much objectivity at all. Originating, as the term does, from the masks worn by actors in Roman drama (Izenberg, 2012:1024), it is used as a way of talking about the poet behind the mask whilst appearing not to. Assuming that a poem's 'persona' has a life outside of the poem which includes the poet's 'writerly ambition' is the equivalent to calling the narrator of prose fiction the 'implied author'.

It seems almost impossible to write about Sylvia Plath's poetry without dealing with her biography. Not only do the majority of critics who claim to avoid biography frequently mention it anyway (as both Mitchell and I discovered), but to examine the text of her poetry without using her life as a lens is such an unorthodox and unusual

approach, that it requires a lengthy justification (again, as both Mitchell and I have done).

Even linguistic analysis can fall into the trap. Hassanpour and Hashim write a detailed Hallidayan analysis of Sylvia Plath's poem *Daddy* (which I make use of later in this chapter), offering an analysis of the transitivity in the poem to demonstrate the linguistic reasons behind the negative attitude towards the male addressee of the poem (2012). However, despite referring to 'the speaker', 'the female persona' and 'the speaker's father' throughout, Hassanpour and Hashim conclude that this demonstrates that 'Plath's outlook towards men shows a high degree of resentment and bitterness' and speculate about the poet's 'world view' (2012:126). Even linguists attempting objective analysis slip into using her poetry to create her biography, and end up using their results to judge the poet rather than the poem.

Freeman, despite an otherwise exact and objective analysis of Sylvia Plath's *The Applicant* does not even attempt to separate out the poet from the speaker, claiming in her abstract that her analysis 'reveal[s] the poet's own conflicted attitudes about marriage and the empty promises of a consumer society just four months before her suicide' (2005:25). Semino's earlier analysis of the same poem uses schema and text-world theory to demonstrate the use of heteroglossia through conflicting schemata in the creation of the poem's central marriage proposal (1995). However, despite a rigorous and useful linguistic analysis which clearly explains the poem's effect using the text itself, she still feels it necessary to point out that the poem 'was composed on 11th October 1962, a few days after Plath's decision to get a divorce from Ted Hughes and exactly four months before her suicide' (1995:92), describing this as 'significant' but without making any further use of this biographical information.

It seems that it is almost impossible to examine Plath's work without viewing it through the filter of her life, or at the very least referring to it. Not only this, but those seeking to directly examine Sylvia Plath's life do so by looking for clues in her poetry. Čermak and Kodorlov use Plath's poetry to conduct a psychological evaluation of her, declaring *Daddy* as a poem about 'her father' (rather than the speaker's father) despite admitting Plath 'distanced herself from the narrator of the poem' in interview (2004:493). Speaking in an interview with the BBC, Plath herself described the poem in clearly fictional terms:

[The poem is] spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyze each other - she has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it. (Plath, in Bundtzen, 2001, p. 31)

Čermak and Kodorlov claim that Plath's words, although her own, 'cannot be taken literally because they were spoken in public' (2004:494), which implies that they consider her poetry, conversely, to have been communicated privately. It seems unlikely that Sylvia Plath published her poetry internationally with the intention of

them being read by a small, private audience of close family and friends. So why would her poetry be any more trustworthy an account than an interview? This is perhaps indicative not just of the conformational bias of Čermak and Kodorlov, dismissing anything that might contradict their view of her poetry as autobiographical, but of the impression created by her poetry. *Daddy's* speaker appears to be so personal that perhaps it induced Čermak and Kodorlov to forget that they are reading published literature, written for a public audience.

It is perhaps unfair to treat this marrying of poet to poetic speaker as completely without foundation. It is not surprising that Semino (1995) and Freeman (2005) relate her conflicted and uncomfortable poem about marriage, *The Applicant*, to her much discussed unhappy marriage and subsequent divorce. *Edge*, the poem that Mitchell used in the above comprehensive study of critical attitudes, was written shortly before Plath killed herself, and the death of the female protagonist is definitely the subject of the poem. With a life so publicly discussed as Plath's, it is not unreasonable that a reader or critic might make the link between her life and her art. Even more overt is the link between her poem *Lady Lazarus* and the events of her life, where the number and the chronology of her suicide attempts up to that point can be closely matched to the poem. Phillips, when writing about John Berryman notes that although 'Berryman claimed they are about a character named Henry' that 'Henry has a daughter, as did Berryman; when Henry goes to Ireland, Berryman was on the ship as well' (1973:92) When the life of the poet is known, and there are such clear similarities between their documented life and the fictional lives they create, it is natural for any reader to make that link.

Whether or not the author wishes to connect their fictional work to their real lives, readers will try to do it anyway, even (to a lesser extent) with prose. Journalists and readers have travelled to Haworth and tried to locate the real Wuthering Heights and been unsuccessful (Top Withens in Haworth is the prime contender because of its locations but is clearly nothing like the house in the book) and there has been much discussion over who, exactly is the 'real' Lady Chatterly (usually Lawrence's wife herself, though opinion differs as to whether Lawrence cast himself as Mellors the gardener or Sir Clifford.) These details are naturally of interest to those with an interest in the texts. There is nothing unusual in wanting to know more about the authors of the books and poetry that we love any more than there is in wanting to know the details of the lives of celebrities. Where this becomes a problem is where it is imposed onto academic research. It is irrelevant to the study of *Wuthering Heights* whether or not Emily Bronte was inspired by a real house, a real location, or both, and both the characters of Mellors and Sir Clifford come in for sympathy and criticism by readers whether or not they cast the author in either or neither role.

This is more than just disagreement as to the autobiographical aspect of confessional poetry; there is a disagreement here as to what confessional poetry *is*. On the one hand, it is defined as poetry that communicates something personal and private about the poet and on the other hand, it is defined as poetry that *appears* to do so. The former would make it a genre defined by its autobiographical content, whereas

the latter would make it a genre defined by style. What I propose is that the levels of narration used by narratologists to separate the author from their narrator should be applied to lyric poetry, and therefore the personal revelations of confessional poetry should be clearly theorised as being personal to the speaker, and not the poet. If 'personal' is to be a useful (rather than simply ubiquitous) marker of lyricism, it should not be necessary to make links between a poet's life and their art in order to identify it. Indeed, doing so could limit our interpretations of the poems. For example, Rosenblatt believes that 'while the autobiographical origin of the experiences dramatized in Plath's work is clear' this is no reason to 'restrict the range of meanings elaborated by them to a merely private recitation of anguish' (Rosenblatt, 1979:21-2).

Documenting how the poems might link up to biographical information should not be the primary concern of the literary critic, nor should these links dominate the definition of an entire genre of poetry. If confessional poetry must have a strong autobiographical element (ignoring the dissent from the poets themselves, briefly) then what about poets whose lives are largely undocumented? For confessional poetry to exist as a valid genre, it must be possible to write it and recognise it without any overt biographical links at all.

I would suggest that the speaker of a confessional poem, if not making an overt confession, must at least cover topics or concepts that could be confessed or that a significant number of people would feel uncomfortable expressing. Rosenbaum describes confessional poets as exploring 'transgressive autobiographical subjects including mental illness, familial trauma, gender and sexuality and moral and political iconoclasm' (2012:296) and according to W.D. Snodgrass, the adjective 'confessional' implies 'that one is talking about some kind of forbidden activity and doing it in a rather lurid way' (Maio, 2006:282). With regard to Sylvia Plath and her poetry collection *Ariel*, this would certainly include *Edge*, *Lady Lazarus*, and *Cut*, but probably not *You're* (which I would categorise as a lyrical love poem, though an unconventional one) and *Morning Song*, which, although touching upon unromantic ideas about motherhood and giving birth, falls short of being transgressive, shocking or confessional.

Confessional poems often focus on mental health or personal trauma or, to put it another way, issues that might be discussed in various forms of counselling or therapy. In fact, plenty of critics think of confessional poetry as a form of therapy itself. Rosenthal, who is credited with creating the label of 'confessional poetry' called it 'soul's therapy' and 'self-therapeutic' (1959:154-5). Myers, when reviewing *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, defines the confessional poets seemingly entirely by their mental health problems, even going as far as to say that 'what distinguishes [Anne] Sexton's work from most of the genre is that she has survived' (1960:97), which seems to suggest that the work of the confessional poets can be differentiated not by the style of their poems but by the extent of their mental health issues. Spacks, when reviewing Anne Sexton's *45 Mercy Street*, feels that reading the collection we are being confronted with 'somebody else's breakdown' (1988:106).

Anne Sexton told interviewers that her poetry began as a form of therapy for her, and her therapist encouraged her to write as an alternative to suicide (Colburn, 1988:8) and it is perhaps this admission that leads so many critics to not only consider her poetry as therapy, but to investigate Anne Sexton's therapy itself as a way of informing understanding of her poetry.

As I have previously argued, the biographical or factual basis of the poetry should not be of primary concern with regard to its definition. Therefore whether or not the poetry helps with the poet's mental health problems (or whether or not the poet even has any) should not be relevant to any definition or to any literary criticism at all. However, this common link between the therapeutic possibilities of poetry and the confessional poets themselves suggests that issues relevant to psychological trauma or distress can be considered to be an important feature of confessional poetry.

The idea that confessional poetry can be seen as some kind of therapy for psychological distress or trauma leads me back to one of the arguments in my previous chapter – if there is a prominent 'persona' in confessional poetry (or any lyric poem), the focus should be on exploring its thoughts and feelings, rather than assessing and judging them. If a text invites us to judge a character, this places a clear distance between them and the writer who created them, leading to a less lyrical text. It is difficult to imagine a less personal poem than *My Last Duchess*, for example, which utilises double-voiced discourse to demonstrate that Robert Browning's moral judgement and interpretation of the events is very different from that of the speaker he has created.

As stated by some of the confessional poets themselves, it is important that the poem 'feels' personal, and the impression should be that the speaker is the poet themselves. This could be defined as an exaggerated example of a feature which is often considered essential in lyric poetry. Wolf discusses the importance of 'a seemingly unmediated consciousness or agency, perhaps even of a "persona" as the fictional origin of the text' (2007:27), unlike the fictional characters of a novel who are mediated through a narrator. As Wolf states, it is a common view of critics that the 'lyric-I' is unmediated and this is what leads to the view that lyric poetry is 'monologic' as Lamping describes it (2007:27). Interestingly, poems which actually are monologues are not described as monologic in this way as they are clearly works of fiction; readers rarely attribute the words or even thoughts of the speaker to the poet or writer. What is being defined is therefore not the number of consciousnesses in the poem, but the perceived gap between the poet and their speaker. In a dramatic monologue, this is usually a large and widely acknowledged gap. The speakers of dramatic monologues tend to reveal themselves by accident (Langbaum, 1957, Howe, 1966, Phelan, 1996, Jerman, 1957), which highlights the gap between the poet and their speaker, as they have different perspectives different levels of knowledge of the events discussed. Interpretations of Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess* may vary, but the reader never assumes that Browning is the Duke himself (MacMahon, 1996:217). Any highlighting of this gap between the speaker

and the poet will make it unlikely that the speaker will be seen as the poet themselves, making the lack of judgement and assessment on the speaker's character a crucial characteristic of what makes a poem personal (and therefore lyric, also).

When reading the poetry of confessional poets, this gap is often so small as to be non-existent, which is part of what I believe leads to the common assumption that every poem by a poet such as Sylvia Plath reflects her consciousness directly. From the perspective of genre, it should not be relevant whether the speaker *is* the poet or whether the speaker is a purely fictional, separate creation of the poet, or something in between; what is important is the effect the poem has on its readers, and in the case of the confessional poems the effect is clearly a sense that the poem is intensely personal, whether or not it actually is. For a poem to be linguistically defined as 'personal' there cannot be clear separation of the poet from the speaker. The two must appear to share relevance, rather than setting themselves apart as is the case in the dramatic monologue.

As has been said, Moore believes that a key definition of confessional poetry is that it is 'more intensely' personal than the lyric, (which is also personal, just less so) (1973:ix). Therefore, confessional poetry is a subset of the lyric, and as such, poems considered typical examples of the genre should fit within Wolf's framework (which I discussed in my introduction.)

Daddy (appendix 8.5.1) is one of the most well-known confessional poems by probably the most famous confessional poet of them all, Sylvia Plath.

Using Wolf's framework for lyric poetry (discussed in my introduction), it can be seen that this poem displays many of the features associated with lyric poetry, making it a good example of the genre and suitable for my examination of the lyric speaker. The poem has a clear sense of orality, shown in the exclamatory 'O you', for example which is a feature commonly associated with the lyric, (but which Wolf rejects as important). However, it could be argued that this sense of orality could conflict with Wolf's requirement for the language of the lyric to allow a 'maximum' of freedom 'from the conventions and constraints of everyday language. Part of the orality of Sylvia Plath's poetry comes from her use of informal language, and spoken English is nearly always more 'everyday' than written English. Lindberg-Seyersted describes Sylvia Plath's poetry as 'speech-like' (1997:19) and the language in *Daddy* specifically as 'very informal' using the 'slang and colloquialisms' of everyday speech such as 'gobbledygoo', and 'Polack'. This fits in with Phillips' claim that confessional poetry uses the language 'of ordinary speech' (1973:21).

However, the orality of the poem also comes from the use of sonic devices, which are clearly not what would be expected from everyday discourse. The repetition and rhyme in the first stanza ('You do not do' is repeated in the first line, and then rhymed with 'shoe' and 'achoo') almost bring the tone of a nursery rhyme, a form of verse designed primarily for speech or song, and the poet certainly felt free to

experiment with language, using 'chuffing' as a verb expressing train travel, and creating an adjective out of 'Meinkampf'.

It is difficult to linguistically prove whether or not the language in the poem is 'emphatic or memorable', as Wolf suggests it should be (2005:36), but it is certainly arguable in this case, considering the poem's popularity. In addition, the poem has a homodiegetic, first person speaker (a lyric-I), and this speaker's thoughts and feelings are the poem's locus.

Daddy fits well into Wolf's lyric framework, therefore, and is a suitable example of a lyric poem. It demonstrates freedom from everyday language, freedom from probability, chronological or logical order, and the use of the point of view of one consciousness (Wolf, 2005:36). In fact, perhaps echoing what Moore claimed, I would go so far as to say that a great deal of confessional poetry shows these lyric traits 'more intensely' (to quote Phillips, 1973:ix) than the majority of lyric poetry. The focus on the mind of the speaker, rather than the narrative that surrounds it, is a more common feature of confessional poetry than it is of lyric poetry in general, and as such it is more likely to be freed from 'probability, chronological or logical order and coherence' (Wolf, 2005:36) as I will shortly demonstrate that *Daddy* is.

5.5 The confessional poem and 'personalness'

In this section, I will set out my argument that lyric poetry is 'personal' because of an intense focus on the speaker's psyche, rather than autobiographical links with the poet.

In *Daddy*, aside from the speaker, the only other characters described are the 'Daddy' himself and a brief mention of another man the speaker describes as a 'model' of him. Although this poem, like Christina Rossetti's *Song*, has a lyric-I addressing a lyric-you, the addressee here is only invoked as a way of expressing the organising consciousness's feelings towards him. This is similar to *One Art*, where the lyric-you is spoken of, but is conspicuous in their absence. In both of those poems, the 'you' refers to a specific addressee who both cannot be the reader and who is apostrophised rather than directly addressed. The speaker's position is the only one available for us to take in such a situation. We have no access to any of these other consciousnesses or any chance to empathise with them. *Daddy* is not about either the father or the husband, even though the poem appears to be addressed to one of them; the only chance we have to characterise them is through the extremely emotive and subjective language of the speaker, as I'll demonstrate shortly. Both *Daddy* and *One Art* are about the addresser's thoughts and feelings about these other characters, rather than being about these characters themselves, although the two are linked. Accordingly, Phillips believes that *Daddy* is not about the speaker's father at all, but just the speaker's memory of him, and describes the murders in the poem as metaphorically referring to the killing of his memory (1972:60). Similarly, Nance and Jones believe that the poem is not about the *Daddy* figure, but the attempts the speaker makes to purge him from her psyche (1972:76), and Rosenblatt writes the poem is about the speaker's 'wish to overthrow his dominance over her

imagination' (1979). In Christina Rossetti's *Song* the addressee is a literal rather than an apostrophised one, and their thoughts and feelings are as important to the poem as the speaker's are. This is part of what makes *Daddy* a more 'personal' poem than *Song*: not because it is more personal to the poet that wrote it, but because it is a deeper, closer insight into the personal thoughts of the speaker who is presenting it to us, and because that speaker's consciousness is the only one which is important to the poem. *Song* gives us a more complete impression of not just the addressee's consciousness but also of the relationship between them. This focus on more than one independent consciousness does not make *Song* impersonal, but it does make it less personal than a poem which focuses entirely on the speaker themselves.

Confessional poetry is a subset of the lyric which is extremely personal to the speaker, therefore. I would propose that a confessional framework (and therefore the quintessential Confessional poem) should include these features in addition to those of lyric poetry:

- The mental suffering or existential angst of the speaker should be the focus.
- The topic is embarrassing, incriminating or upsetting to the speaker reporting it, without expecting us to distrust them, and gives the impression of something that the speaker would not want generally known. (This would account for Čermak and Kodorlov's strange idea that Sylvia Plath's poetry was not intended for public consumption.)
- The poem should not just be told from the speaker's point of view, the poem should focus on the speaker themselves.
- The poem should represent this speaker's attempts to internally manage or examine whatever it is that they are confessing, making the poem self-reflexive to some extent.

These features can be illustrated using *Daddy*, which is one of the most famous examples of the genre. The topic, with its implications of child abuse is clearly worthy of confession, and the use of the child-like word 'Daddy' as the title makes the poem even more uncomfortable to read. The mention of the speaker's suicide attempt brings in the aspect of psychological well-being and as the end of the poem suggests something of a catharsis ('you bastard, I'm through') this could link it with the idea of poetry as therapy, which is a common point of discussion for the critics. Sylvia Plath herself, when explaining the poem, says that the speaker of the poem must 'act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it' (Plath, in Bundtzen, 2001, p. 31), so the poem could legitimately be seen as an attempt by the speaker to rid herself of the hold her father's memory has over her. The use of the Holocaust as a metaphor is emotive and shocking, but the poem goes far beyond this to use images like human skin lampshades. This makes not only the topic shocking and emotive, but even the choice of poetic features. The poem also plays with

chronology (as per Wolf's lyric framework) and sticks closely to the speaker's point of view as it does so.

These features are what makes *Daddy* not only a good example of a lyric poem (possibly a better example, according to Wolf's framework, than the one he chooses himself) but also one of the most famous examples of confessional poetry, which is why I have used it to illustrate common features of the genre.

Of course, defining the confessional poem is only a first step to discovering what it is about poems that fit into this framework that makes readers and critics assume that the speakers are the same as the poets who created them. The claim that confessional poems are 'more intensely' personal than other lyric poetry (Phillips, 1973:ix) is key to this. It is this quality of 'personalness' which informs how closely it will be aligned with the poet's real life. Discovering what makes a poem appear personal is useful not just in the case of understanding confessional poetry, but would also further aid the precise study of the lyric speaker's positioning. If lyric and confessional poetry were called 'personal' because they appeared to be so, and the qualities that lead to this were identified, this would not only shift the expectations of lyric poetry away from autobiography but also focus attention on linguistic features, and therefore open up new avenues of precise and useful criticism.

As I have shown, when poetry is described as 'personal' this can mean *literally* reflective of the poet's personal life. Some lip service might be paid to the idea that it is a persona of the poet rather than the poet themselves who is baring their soul, but this rarely translates into an academic rigour in separating out the poet from the poem's 'persona' and no explanation is given as to what makes a poem 'personal' if it is not a personal connection to the poet. The narrative levels of communication which are so clearly theorised in narratology are noticeably absent from theoretical approaches to lyric poetry.

Saunders points out that the distinction between autobiography and the novel is not as clear cut as it first appears. There are 'fictive autobiographies' which *appear* to have been written by Robinson Crusoe, Tristram Shandy, David Copperfield or Jane Eyre, and what he calls 'autobiographical novels' which are novels which contain details which can be linked to the life of the author, such as Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage* or D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, neither of which are written in the style of an autobiography (Saunders, 2010). Novels can appear to be autobiographical without being so, and a novel with genuine autobiographical elements 'need not be cast into the form of an autobiography, though it might be, as in the fictive autobiographies David Copperfield and Villette'. As an example, he suggests that Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* may not appear to be autobiographical (and is certainly not about his experience of turning into an insect) but it could very well reflect his real experiences of 'alienation, or abjection' (Saunders, 2010) despite not appearing to be an autobiography. Saunders is pointing out the distinction between novels categorised by style (appearing to be autobiographical) and novels categorised by content (including or being based on the author's life or experiences).

A similar distinction has not yet been made in poetry, as can be demonstrated by the lack of rigour surrounding the term 'personal'. Unlike in prose, there is no clear distinction between poetry which is based on the poet's life or experiences, and poetry which is written in order to create this impression. Without making this distinction in poetry, we risk the equivalent of assuming that Jane Eyre is Charlotte Bronte because the novel *appears* to be an autobiographical account.

Maio (2005), when writing about modern American 'personal poetry' (which encompasses the confessional) uses Trilling's distinction between sincerity and authenticity (1972). When a poem is interpreted as 'personal' this is because, Maio believes, it is written *sincerely* but it does not mean that the poem is an authentic representation of the poet. Maio writes that 'the personal poet, consciously or not, substitutes for his or her literal, historical self, a literary self as voice of the poem, one that is sincere but not altogether authentic' (2005:2), which supports the arguments from the critics of autobiography that such texts cannot be said to lack fictionality. Not only this, but true authenticity is impossible, Maio believes, even if the poet wishes to achieve it, as the 'very nature of a poet's craft... precludes that aspiration' (2005:2) which is a claim similar to Gudmundsdóttir's, that the nature of writing about the past, means that it can never be authentically presented. As I have said already, commenting on or verifying the level of authenticity (by matching up events in poetry with events in the poet's life) is not my concern, nor should it be the concern of any academic wishing to study *poetry* as opposed to *poets*. Claiming that poetry cannot be authentically autobiographical may result in more exact analysis than assuming that it is so, but it does not seem to preclude treating the poetry as autobiographical. Although Maio claims that the poet and the voice of the poem are distinct, he still claims that the voice of a personal poem presents 'one's subjective experience focusing on self-exploration leading to self-definition.' (2005:6) It is clear that the 'self' still refers, however inauthentically, to the poet.

Maio does, however, support my view that confessional poetry focuses its attention on this 'self'. He refers to Lowell, speaking at a reading of his poetry at the Poetry Centre, making a 'distinction between the "I" as observer of place and the "I" as the primary focus of the poem' (2005:46). Both of these positions would make the speaker homodiegetic, but if the speaker is also the subject or primary focus of the poem, then it is autodiegetic as well. If the poem is written in the first person (as most poetry deemed confessional is) this 'self' should be a homodiegetic and autodiegetic speaker, and the further the poem makes the consciousness of this speaker its subject matter, the more 'personal' the poem will be interpreted to be. As Lowell said, the 'I' should not just report events, but should be the focus of the poem, and therefore, the deeper the poem goes into the mind of the 'I' (as opposed to examining this 'I' for the purposes of character study), the more 'personal' the poem will be seen.

'Personal' can therefore be a useful term, distinct from 'autobiographical'. As Saunders says, writing which is written in such a style as to suggest that it is autobiographical is different to writing which is actually autobiographical. An

autobiographical poem need not, therefore, be a personal one, just as autobiographical writing may not take the form of an autobiography.

Because of the clearly excessive biographical criticism, confessional poetry is the ideal place to examine which linguistic features might be causing the critics to collapse the distance between poets and their speakers. If we acknowledge that there is a link between confessional poetry and poets who either took their own lives or struggled with suicidal feelings or depression (such as Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and John Berryman), then it is possible that the language that such poets use may have some common features that help explain the critics' interest in their lives. Stirman and Pennebaker (2001) conducted a computerised text analysis on 300 poems from nine suicidal poets and nine non-suicidal poets and found several linguistic markers to suggest significant difference between the two groups. Interestingly, they found little evidence that poets who killed themselves wrote about different topics to the non-suicide group. Their key findings were that

- '...the suicide group's poetry contained more first-person singular self-references throughout their careers.'
- '...use of the first-person plural, which might indicate an awareness of and an integration in social and personal relationships, was lower in the suicide group's poetry than it was in that of the nonsuicide group.'
- '...the effects for communication words (eg, talk, share, listen) indicates that the suicide group might have shown a decreased interest in social relationships ...'

There is evidence, therefore, that if a poet suffers from depression and has suicidal thoughts this may affect their writing and their depression may be reflected in the language of their poetry. What is interesting is that the features that Stirman and Pennebaker identified are similar to some of my claims about what makes a poem feel personal to its readers. Sylvia Plath was one of the poets that they used in their corpus, and her extensive use of first person pronouns can be seen in *Daddy*; there is at least one use in each stanza, and often two or more. Line 27 even consists of nothing but a first person pronoun repeated (in German). In addition, there are no uses of the first person plural, which as Stirman and Pennebaker say would indicate 'an awareness of and an integration in social and personal relationships' (2000). Stirman and Pennebaker suggest that suicidal poets' use of communication words (such as 'talk', 'share' and 'listen') might indicate a 'decreased interest in social relationships'. However, in *Daddy* there does not so much appear to be a decreased interest in social relationships as an inability to engage with them. The speaker tells us that she 'never could talk to' him because her 'tongue stuck in my jaw' and she 'could hardly speak', showing that she clearly wanted to communicate, but felt unable. She also cannot properly receive communication any longer as 'The black telephone's off at the root' and 'The voices just can't worm through'. Although this is

slightly different to the decreased interest in communication that Stirman and Pennebaker identified, it still demonstrates a clear *lack* of communication with the addressee, and this combined with the use of singular first person pronoun and lack of plural pronouns does suggest an isolated and inwardly focused poetic persona in the speaker. The only active communicative process she is the agent of is when she says 'I do', presumably at her wedding.

If the poems written by suicidal poets discuss relationships with others less and instead increase the focus on the speaker's perspective, this may very well intensify the impression that we are gaining access to the speaker's psyche and their thoughts and feelings.

In addition, poets who take their own lives are much more likely to have lives that people will want to examine. The fascination with Sylvia Plath's life is not purely because of her poetry, but because her life and death are an interesting topic, and as I have discussed, the fascination with L.E.L. seems to be more about solving the 'mystery' of her suicide than it is about her poetry. Therefore, if suicidal poets use language that makes their poems appear more personal, this will in turn cause readers and critics to look for links with their real lives, and if their lives are interesting or tragic, this will further intensify this interest. The biographical trap in this case is set by the language of the poetry, but reinforced by the tragic lives and deaths of some of the poets who use these linguistic features.

5.5.1 The personal focus of *Daddy*

Daddy purports to be about the speaker's father, but instead focuses on how he has affected the speaker. Unlike *Song*, in which I demonstrated a clear characterisation of the narratee of the poem, *Daddy* focuses more on the speaker's perception of him. The lines 'You stand at the blackboard, daddy,/ In the picture I have of you' (51-2) refers to a photograph rather than a description of a narrative scene, which suggests that although he is addressed in the poem, what is really being tackled are the speaker's memories of him, rather than him directly. In fact, the 'Daddy' in question is clearly dead, and the speaker herself tells us that she killed him (6). However, when she tells us that she killed him, she uses the present perfect tense rather than the simple past tense (6). This means that she is not simply focusing on his death, but on the continuing impact of his death on her, personally, since then, as the present perfect tense indicates an event which began in the past, but continues to have impact on the present' (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005:Ch. 6). In addition, his death is presented in a quite a paradoxical manner: we are first given the shocking news that she has killed him (6) but immediately after we are told that he 'died before [she] had time' to do so (7). This makes it more likely that the events are read as metaphorical, rather than as literal descriptions.

When we are told that she killed her father after he died, we therefore know that at least one of these deaths was a metaphorical killing (especially considering the description of him (though perhaps this refers to the other man) as a vampire who has been staked (76)). This is perhaps linked to her final statement that she is

‘through’, and rather than having killed his corporal body, she has killed the hold his memory has over her life, a view of the poem upheld by critics (Phillips, 1972:60, Nance and Jones, 1972:76 and Rosenblatt , 1979). It is this use of metaphorical, rather than direct action, that lets us know that this poem focuses on the speaker’s psyche, rather than events around her. Similarly, the brief mention of the ‘man in black with a Meinkampf look’ is introduced as someone the speaker ‘made’ rather than an independent consciousness – it is not him that the poem informs us about, but the speaker’s feelings surrounding her marriage to him.

5.6 A definition of ‘personal’

What I would propose is that rather than attempt to demonstrate the personal nature of poems by analysing them for biographical details, we examine the poems to determine what it is about them that leads us to expect these details to match up. This would mean that a personal poem would be one which appears to communicate something personal and private about the speaker, and it will appear as though the speaker is the one who wrote the poem. Such a definition is both congruent with the majority of definitions of lyric poetry, but avoids the trap of assuming that because a poem appears personal, that it is personal to the poet.

My examination of *Daddy* has pointed us to a few of these possible features, but to justify my claim that these poems represent an extreme of poetic personalness, it is necessary to find further linguistic features in this and other poems which create the impression that the poet and the speaker are the same person.

Using *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* as examples, I propose that the prototypical personal poem:

1. uses an autodiegetic and homodiegetic speaker
2. does not highlight the distance between poet and speaker through ‘character study’ or encouraging us to judge the speaker, and does not lead us to believe that the speaker is untrustworthy
3. does not allow us access to other consciousnesses or expect us to empathise with them
4. has the thoughts and feelings of the speaker as its subject
5. foregrounds these thoughts and feelings rather than the events that prompted them
6. can be identified as such without referencing the poet’s biography

The last of these points has no relation to Wolf’s framework, but the others can all be connected to the lyrical features he identifies. Instead of requiring a ‘monoperspectival consciousness’ as he does, I require that the poem focuses on the consciousness of the speaker, to the exclusion of anyone else referenced, and like Wolf, I require that this speaker reveals ‘its thoughts and in particular its emotions’

rather than 'elements of external reality'. My requirement that the speaker should be the focus without their character being assessed is, as I have discussed, related to his requirement that reading the poem should allow 'oral performance without play-acting' (Wolf, 2005:36). A 'personal' poem is therefore a subset of lyric poetry, in which certain features common in lyrical poetry combine to create the illusion that the poem reflects the poet themselves.

My second point on this prototype (that the poem should not highlight the distance between the poet and the speaker) was discussed earlier in this thesis. The poetry of Sylvia Plath is, as I have demonstrated, nearly always interpreted as directly reflecting her personally, and her speakers are nearly always considered mouthpieces for her feelings. This requires that the speaker be reliable, as an unreliable speaker would indicate that the speaker and the implied poet take different positions. As I have pointed out, the lack of clarity in what exactly has happened to the speaker in *Daddy* makes it impossible to judge her response to them, and therefore there is no reason to consider her an unreliable speaker.

My third, fourth and fifth points all reflect the consciousness of the speaker, and how this speaker's feeling and thoughts are focused on to the exclusion of both narrative events and other consciousnesses. To examine which linguistic features might contribute to this, we can examine how the poems represent the speakers' experiences and thought processes through methods other than metaphor, and how the language demonstrates the speakers' emotive responses to the subject matter. If the speaker's perspective and thoughts are centred on with enough linguistic features, this will result in a poem which both makes these thoughts and feelings central, and if this is reported to the exclusion of description of the events that the speaker experiences, then this will fulfil the third and fourth of my criteria.

In order to demonstrate these features in both *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus*, we can again look at how similar effects are achieved in prose narration, where the degree of 'of access to the psychology of the characters' can be examined (Edmiston, 1989:729). There has been a great deal of work concerning how third person narrative combines the narratorial voice with the character's perspective in order to represent not only their speech and thought, but also to narrate from their subjective perspective, mediated through an authorial narrator. Studies of free indirect discourse and empathic narrative have traditionally focused on third person narration, and the same effect in first person narration has been 'discussed rarely and dismissively' (Adamson, 1994:63). However, as Edmiston points out, a first person narrator can not only use 'his own, subjective point of view', but can also 'adopt the point of view of the hero, his earlier incarnation' (1989:730). Adamson argues that subjectivity in narrative developed through first-person narration (1994). She discusses the use of the 'was-now' paradox, which is used to make past events co-temporal with the present moment of the narrative and therefore indicate that the narrative is offering the perspective of the protagonist and their experiences. Adamson examined the four works 'most commonly cited as the novel's ancestors'

for the use of 'was-now' tokens, and found that the two first-person narratives made far more use of this subjectivity marker than the two third-person narratives.

Therefore, although this poem was written in the first person, I believe examinations of subjectivity in narrative can provide a useful framework in examining how a similar effect is achieved in *Daddy*, as first person narration can still make use of free indirect discourse.

As this thesis argues, poetic speakers have more in common with narrators than they do with fictional characters, because they mediate between us and past or future events, the various perspectives offered by the poem and even other consciousnesses, but they are rarely recognised as such, meaning that the relevant narratological approaches are rarely applied. In this case, I believe that examining the poems for subjectivity features, as discussed in section 2.2.1 of this thesis, will best explain how the speaker's intense emotions are communicated. Examinations of subjectivity markers such as these can be used to show how *Daddy* creates the impression of being extremely personal to the poem's speaker, and how this speaker becomes the 'subject of consciousness' (Brinton, 1990:366).

5.6.1 Metaphor as emotion

As already demonstrated, lyric poetry is associated with the 'personal', so it seems logical that the more poetic a text, the more likely it is to be perceived to be personal. Gibbs claims that not only can metaphor be used to 'evoke deep emotional responses' (2002:13) but that 'metaphor is fundamental to our cognitive understanding of emotions' (200:14). Pointing out research by Kovecses, (2000a, 2000b) and Yu (1998) that demonstrates that 'talk of emotion is replete with metaphor' he argues that metaphor is often how we conceptualise and express emotion (200:14). Metaphor is therefore a useful avenue of study when examining subjectivity in a text's point of view.

Lakoff and Johnson's work was crucial in demonstrating that metaphor was not a purely 'poetic' phenomenon, but a part of ordinary speech and thought. They argue that metaphor can be explained by defining one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. For example, the conceptual domain ARGUMENT IS WAR results in many common expressions, such as 'I demolished his argument' and 'I've never won an argument with him' (1980:5). Many of these conceptual domains reference emotions, such as ANGER IS HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER, which is utilised in expressions such as 'You make my blood boil', 'simmer down', and 'blowing off steam' (Yu, 1998:51). Gibbs found that describing emotion through the use of conceptual metaphors in this way resulted in them being interpreted as more intensely felt (2002).

This use of metaphor to explain emotion will therefore be more pronounced, Gibbs argues, in 'descriptions of intense as compared to mild emotional states' (2002:15). A great deal of lyric poetry deals with emotion, but confessional poetry very often attempts to express difficult and upsetting emotions which are *intensely* felt by the speaker, as I will demonstrate. It may be possible, therefore, to use metaphor to

explain why *Daddy* is considered more personal than Christina Rossetti's *Song*, and William Wordsworth's *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, both of which are often read as personal to their respective poets, but not to the extent that they are used to pick apart their psyches as is common with the poetry of Sylvia Plath. Although nearly all of the poems I have examined so far are deemed to be personal to some extent, it is clear from the volume of speculation on her life, that the confessional poetry of Sylvia Plath is viewed as extreme examples of both intensity of emotion and personal relevance to the author. In addition, *Daddy* is an extreme example of a metaphoric text, and makes extensive use of metaphor in its reference to the speaker's psyche and emotional state.

Interestingly, W.D. Snodgrass claimed in his essay 'A Poem's Becoming' that when he began to write poetry, he attempted to write in the mode of the New Criticism, using an 'obscure and dense texture' to create a 'very difficult and very intellectual poem'. He offers an example of a poem he attempted to write about 'the loss of religious faith' but this meaning was obscured through his use of an 'intellectual' metaphysical conceit, in an effort to erase the personal. (1975:42-43) Maio sees this approach as almost the opposite in concept to that of the confessional poets. Although it is true that The New Criticism did regard personal experience as a less than suitable topic for poetry, it seems strange to claim that metaphysical conceits are incompatible with personal poetry when considering Sylvia Plath. The extended metaphor of the Holocaust running through *Daddy* is part of what makes this poem both ambiguous and also gives a clear connection to the psyche of the speaker, making it also deeply personal.

For example, describing the speaker's father as a 'black shoe' in which the speaker has to live creates a claustrophobic image (and also calls to mind the nursery rhyme about the old woman who lived cramped in a shoe with her many children, which supports the other, often reported, echoes of nursery rhyme in the poem.) In addition, by describing him as an object, she is dehumanising him and making it less likely that we will empathise with him, all of which further places the emphasis on the speaker.

Most metaphors can be most straightforwardly viewed as an 'A is B' comparison between two entities, with A being the 'tenor' ('the underlying idea or principal subject that the vehicle refers to') B being the 'vehicle' ('the imagery that is used to refer to the tenor', and the common properties of both being called the 'ground' (Csábi, 2014:209), an idea first put forward by Richards in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936). Lakoff and Johnson used the terms 'target' and 'source' instead of tenor and vehicle, respectively (1980). Thus, in the opening line of William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 130*, 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun', the mistress' eyes are being compared to the sun. This makes the eyes the tenor/target, and the sun the vehicle/source, with the ground being their possible shared characteristics. Presumably, eyes are compared to the sun because they are dazzlingly beautiful and bright, for example. Of course, in this case, her eyes are *not* like the sun, which requires us to both imagine how the two could possibly be equated (the ground), but

then negate it. Similarly, in the metaphor in the first stanza, discussed above, the father is the tenor/target and a black shoe is the vehicle/source.

However, not all metaphors are explicitly resolvable into an 'A is B' equation, or can be realised as such. When William Wordsworth writes that the speaker's heart 'dances with the daffodils' it is clear that this dancing is metaphorical, but what this dancing is a metaphor for is not explicit. Nørgaard, Busse et al. claim that 'the vehicle (or source) must be set out explicitly, whereas the tenor (or target) may be merely implied' (2010:107). They offer the example of 'my rose is crying' which they describe as an example of implicit metaphor, because it is not explicitly stated that the rose is a person. A heart which 'dances' is therefore an implicit metaphor, because it is clear, but not explicit, that the heart is being personified by being compared to a person (who is dancing). In the line 'The waves beside them danced', Steen describes the 'waves' as 'an entity that is actually present in the text-world' which is 'connected to a non-literal predicate, "dance," which indicates a property of the referent by predicating over it (1999:508). Such metaphors 'predominate' over the 'A is B' type, Steen claims (1999:509). Similarly, in the opening line (and title) of 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', to better identify what is being compared to what, Steen expands it to 'I wandered while I was lonely as a cloud is lonely' (1999:515), which again shows that the cloud in the comparison is being personified in order to describe it as 'lonely'.

Even metaphors which can be easily translated into 'A is B' are not always explicitly resolvable. Pilkington discusses metaphors such as 'Sam is a pig' and 'Richard is a gorilla' which are only clear if you are able to infer which quality it is that both Sam and pigs, and Richard and gorillas, share (2000:88). This requires not only knowledge of gorillas and pigs, but a cultural knowledge of what gorillas and pigs usually represent. Pigs are associated with greediness and messiness, for example, making 'Sam is a pig' resolvable to either 'Sam is greedy' or 'Sam is untidy' or both. Similarly, when the speaker of Christina Rossetti's *Song* instructs her addressee to 'be the green grass above me' when she is dead, this is clearly metaphorical; she is asking him to behave in a way that is similar to grass. This is more difficult to resolve than 'Sam is a pig' as there are not the same, straightforward cultural or contextual assumptions about grass as there are about pigs. It is impossible, therefore, to pin down exactly what this metaphor means, as the explicit resolution is not available.

It is also important to point out that even when metaphors do seem fairly easy to decode, other inferences may be possible, even if they are unlikely. The fairly straightforward-sounding 'Juliet is the sun' could mean 'Juliet is the largest gaseous blob in the solar system' as Stern points out (2000:50), but this resolution is unlikely to be inferred in either this or in 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun' because of our cultural understanding of why people and eyes would be compared to the sun. Decoding metaphor is therefore not a straightforward linguistic process, but relies on encyclopaedic knowledge of the relevant contextual details evoked by the metaphor's vehicle. Someone who is not familiar with the cultural stereotype that pigs are dirty and greedy will not be able to resolve 'Sam is a pig', or may perhaps

resolve it in a different way to the one we would expect. Stern offers the example of 'bedbug' which is a term of endearment in Nigeria, but Americans are likely to translate 'she is a bedbug' to mean 'she is a nuisance' (2000:272). Similarly, the speaker of *Daddy* frequently compares herself to a Jew. Jewishness clearly has a wide range of cultural associations possible (which will also vary across cultures), but by also using Holocaust imagery, and discussing her father's German heritage and calling him a Nazi, this makes the strongest implications those of oppression and torture. It is the oppression, death and victimisation of the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis which is therefore most strongly evoked, rather than other ideas about Jewish people that the readers may have available as part of their encyclopaedic knowledge.

This understanding of metaphor (as resulting from shared understanding of relevant contextual details) comes primarily from Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory account of metaphor which hinges on their claim that 'an utterance does not encode the speaker's meaning but is merely a piece of evidence for it' (2012:16) and as such, may be interpreted to mean different things by different people. This means that some utterances will provide stronger evidence than others for their intended meaning (or meanings), and some metaphors will be easier to decode.

In *Daddy*, there is what appears to be a narrative, syntactically at least, with the speaker both acting and being acted upon, but these actions are entirely metaphorical, which makes it difficult to piece together a clear, chronological narrative. She tell us that she 'lived' in him, and barely dared to breathe or sneeze, but it is impossible to resolve this metaphorical description of action and find out exactly how this oppression occurred or what happened that made her so frightened. It is not clear what 'an engine, an engine' refers to, and though it seems unlikely that she is literally being sent by train to 'Dachau, Aushchwitz, Belsen' (31-33) there is no way of pinning down exactly what action this metaphorical journey is being compared to. Similarly, when the speaker says that she was scared of his 'Luftwaffe' (42) or that he 'bit' her heart (56), these are not transparent A is B metaphors, and they do not pin down a narrative of what, exactly, happened between the two of them. In the case of the latter, what did he do that she is metaphorically comparing to a bite? Such metaphors imply the tenor of the metaphor so weakly that an almost unlimited number of resolutions are possible, none of which are clearly 'correct'. This unlimited number of possibilities make it impossible to precisely piece together 'a succession of fictional events', as Rimmon-Kenen requires for a narrative (1983:2). We know that something happened to the speaker, but we do not have enough information to decode the metaphors and find out what.

Instead, what these metaphors do is give an impression of how the speaker felt when they happened, and therefore focus our attention on the speaker's feelings rather than the events that provoked them. As Gibbs says, metaphor allows people to discuss their abstract emotional states and feelings in concrete terms (2002:15). Rather than describe the (apparently terrible) events of her childhood, these metaphors compare how it felt to endure them to that of Jews trapped in

concentration camps, creating a concrete image to represent her feelings. Similarly, when she describes the 'vampire' with 'a love of the rack and the screw'(66) who 'drank [her] blood' for seven years (72-3), the way that this man tortured and drained her is impossible to define, but her experience is focused on instead. Being drained of blood makes one weak, and vampires are monsters and villains in contemporary cultural understanding. We do not know what he did, but we can see that she viewed herself as his victim and him as her oppressor. The experience of being married to him is compared to the torture of 'the rack and the screw' but what exactly he did that caused this suffering is impossible to decode from the information that we are given. As Nørgaard et al. argue, 'the tenor (or target) may be merely implied' (2010:107) and this, of course, means that some implications will be weaker or stronger than others. In this case, the speaker does not provide enough evidence for us to discover exactly which events she is comparing to torture. We cannot discover what happened to her, therefore, but we do know how it felt.

This feature is discussed by Wolf in his framework, where he states that 'the lyric enables poets to use this consciousness not as a means of shedding light on elements of external reality but of revealing itself, its thoughts and in particular its emotions' (Wolf, 2005:36). This poem represents an extreme of this feature, as not only has light not been shed on the external reality of the events that the speaker references, but they have been purposefully obscured so as to make the thoughts and emotions of the speaker even more central. The lack of illumination as to what exactly has happened also prevents the reader from judging the speaker, as there is insufficient detail with which to assess whether her response is proportionate or justified. The speaker in Robert Browning's *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* makes it equally clear that he feels wronged by Brother Lawrence, but as he offers bizarre and illogical reasoning for his hatred, readers are unlikely to side with him or consider his griping justified and instead are likely to respond by judging and assessing his character. The speaker in *Daddy* simply does not offer enough detail for us to examine her motives, and therefore there is no unreliability to highlight the distance between the poet and the speaker.

Considering the complexity of the metaphors, it is perhaps understandable that critics attempt to uncover what exactly the poems are about in order to decipher them, instead of examining the broad range of weak implications produced. The speakers of both poems presumably know which events in their lives are the tenor of the metaphors that they create, so a 'solution' to the puzzle at least theoretically exists (in the text-world of the poem, at least) but is tantalisingly out of reach. In addition, in the case of poets who took their own lives, it is not uncommon to treat this death as a 'mystery': as has been discussed, a prominent biography of L.E.L. was entitled *L.E.L.: Mystery of the Thirties* (McDayter, 2010:337) and Steiner suggested that studying Sylvia Plath's writing might result in 'solving the mystery' of her suicide (Nash, 1974:274). This results in both Sylvia Plath's poetry being used to solve the 'mystery' of her life, and her life being used to attempt to solve the mystery of her poetry. In the case of her poetry, at least, it is likely that this impression of a mystery is intentional. In observing the lack of a clear resolution, we should not be

attempting to solve it, but examining the effects of such a broad range of possible meanings.

Towards the end of the poem the husband and the father blur together somewhat, as it is the husband who is described as a 'vampire' but the 'you' of the poem (the 'Daddy') whom she claims to have staked. This makes little sense from the perspective of narrative, but does make the link between husband and father clearer as it demonstrates that the speaker finds separating the two difficult (supported by her describing one as a 'model' of the other). In the final stanza, the image of villagers 'dancing and stamping' on the dead body because 'they always knew it was you' perhaps even suggests that the two men were just one person all along. Unless we consider the possibility that she has literally married her father by accident, this confuses the narrative, but gives clarity to the speaker's feelings about both. Her conflicted and difficult feelings about her father resulted in a difficult and conflicted marriage to a man that she considers to be almost identical.

The narrative is vague and mostly present by implication only, but the poem instead focuses us on how suffering through the events felt for the speaker. The resulting effect is that we are given not only access to the speaker's psyche, but this psyche is foregrounded.

Similarly, *Lady Lazarus* (appendix 8.5.2) uses striking and often shocking metaphorical imagery (it, along with *Daddy* and *Mary* are sometimes called Sylvia Plath's 'Holocaust poems') which creates the impression of intense emotion, but these metaphors are not easily resolved, obscuring the possible narrative details that would explain them.

As with *Daddy*, *Lady Lazarus* creates the impression of a complex and specific narrative through the use of metaphors which are impossible to resolve precisely. We do not know exactly what happened that led to her describing her 'right foot' as 'a paperweight' or what happened to her that could be described as having worms picked off her body 'like sticky pearls'; instead, we are given an impression of how these events made her feel. Although the worms are described 'like sticky pearls', and are probably related to her (presumably metaphorical) death, even the worms themselves are a metaphor for something. My inference is that the worms represent the symptoms of her anguish, and she feels that they are prized like pearls by the doctors who see her as a 'pure gold baby', but I cannot prove this linguistically, nor would I deny that alternative resolutions of the metaphor are valid. Lee Ai Ling suggests two possibilities for Sylvia Plath's description of her skin as 'bright as a Nazi lampshade': either that she is 'alluding to the historical use of Jews as guinea pigs in experiments related to eugenics and biological warfare during the Nazi regime' or that she is making 'a binary opposition with her use of "Jew", the oppressor and the repressed, where she speaks of those who tried to prevent her wish to actualise herself' (2004:7-8), and although both of these resolutions tell us how she was made to suffer, neither give us any indication of what happened to cause this suffering. Rather like *The Sick Rose*, it is unclear how the metaphors should be resolved, but it

seems clear that a reader will attempt to resolve them rather than viewing them literally.

The effect of tricky or unresolvable metaphors with multiple possible implications can be examined using relevance theory. As Sperber and Wilson argue, any metaphor will be 'presumed to be relevant enough to be worth processing' (2012:105) and therefore the reader will assume that the metaphors in Sylvia Plath's poetry can and should be deciphered for the poem to be understood. Not only this, but because 'every act of inferential communication conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 2012:105) the reader will assume that these metaphors are the *best* way for the ideas to be communicated. According to Sperber and Wilson, poetic effects using metaphor are achieved when 'relevance is achieved through a wide array of weak implications which are themselves weakly implicated' (2012:122). Similarly, Pilkington describes poetic metaphors as 'complex thoughts communicated as a wide range of weak implicatures' (2000:106), and argues that 'the richer and more creative the metaphor, the wider the range of weak implicatures' (2000:100). With metaphors which are challenging or even impossible to precisely resolve, the reader 'has to work harder to find assumptions that the concepts might share' (Pilkington, 2000:100) and this results in 'a more diffuse range of assumptions being made weakly salient' (Pilkington, 2000:101).

As an example of such a metaphor, Sperber and Wilson discuss 'the fog comes on little cat feet' which by comparing 'some typical movements of cats' with 'the movement of fog' evokes 'an array of implications having to do with silence, smoothness, stealth' though none of this is explicit (2012:200). The less explicitly a metaphor (or any utterance) creates meaning, 'the greater the freedom of interpretation left to hearers or readers (Sperber and Wilson, 2012:200). The metaphors I have discussed in *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* are even more difficult to resolve than 'the fog comes on little cat feet'. When the speaker of *Lady Lazarus* describes her skin as 'Bright as a Nazi lampshade', this is difficult to resolve because associating brightness with 'Nazi lampshades' is even more challenging than associating 'silence, smoothness, stealth' with cats' feet. The more difficult a metaphor is to resolve, the wider the range of implications that it will have.

However, many of the metaphors are even more challenging to decipher, because the tenor of the metaphor is not revealed to us. When she tells us that she 'rocked shut/As a seashell' we can easily associate being closed with seashells, but it is not clear how a person can be shut in this way. When the reader has to resolve what happened to the speaker that she describes as 'an engine' taking her to concentration camps, not only are there many weak implications produced by comparing something to a train going to a concentration camp, but this effect is increased when the reader has no way of knowing what happened that is being described in this way. Such metaphors, which are impossible to resolve precisely, lead to poetry like *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* where the metaphors produce a wide array of implications 'achieving a powerful overall effect that varies from reader to reader and reading to reading' (2012:125). This variation means that 'solving' the

puzzle of the metaphors is impossible, though our assumptions of shared relevance mean that we try.

This assumption of shared relevance means that it is likely that a reader will assume that one of the many implications of the metaphor is 'correct' even though they are unlikely to know which one this is. The speaker is the one who lived through the experiences that they describe metaphorically, so presumably they had specific experiences in mind, even if they do not communicate or explain what they are. This results in another poetic effect that leads us to consider the poem 'personal': when the topic of the poetry is the thoughts and feelings of the speaker, irresolvable metaphors such as these are likely to be interpreted as representing this speaker's thought processes. The speaker in this case is communicating their thoughts rather than explicitly explaining what has happened to an addressee, therefore fulfilling Wolf's requirement that the lyric uses its speaker 'not as a means of shedding light on elements of external reality but of revealing itself, its thoughts and in particular its emotions' (Wolf, 2005:36).

Not only does the metaphoric description prevent the reader from understanding the external reality which the speaker references, but the poem clearly references the speaker's body. There are numerous references to the speaker's body parts: her 'skin' (4), her 'right foot' (6), her 'nose', 'eye pits, and 'full set of teeth' (13), 'hand and foot' (28), 'hands' (31), 'knees' (32), 'skin and bone' (33), her 'scars' (58), her 'heart' (59), her 'blood' (62), and her 'hair' (64 and 83). This repeated reference to her body in relation to the events makes it clear how these events are affecting her rather than what is actually happening, further emphasising the personal perspective of the speaker. *Lady Lazarus* also has a number of attributive and identifying processes which describe the speaker, further placing her own self at the centre of the poem. In addition to the description of her 'right foot' as 'a paperweight' (although the verb indicating the process has been elipted here), she also describes herself as 'a smiling woman', 'I am only thirty', 'I may be skin and bone', 'I am the same identical woman', 'I am your opus' and 'I am your valuable'. This frequent use of attributes and identifiers to describe her makes her own self the focus of the poem, especially considering the disordered and confusing way in which she describes her addressee(s), which I will describe shortly. When she is the agent of material processes, the only agency these seem to give her is the power to repeatedly die (although the first time 'was an accident'). She repeatedly refers to these deaths or attempted deaths as simply 'it', even in the first line, and 'it' is something that she actively does, and she 'can do it exceptionally well'. It is her body and her deaths which are the predominant focus of the poem.

Both *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* explore and explain the thoughts and feelings of the speaker whilst also vilifying those the speakers feels have wronged them. As I explained in chapters 3 and 4, the in-depth communication of the speakers' thoughts and feelings without any expectation that we should criticise or examine their characters or choices is part of what makes the poem lyrical rather than dramatic. This reduces the play-acting required, while the implication that there are clear and

detailed events which the speaker has participated in increases it (Wolf, 2005:36). However, unlike *The Early Purges* and even *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, the events in these poems have been expressed through metaphors with not only multiple implications, but an almost unlimited number of possible tenors due to the lack of clearly shared relevance. Only the speakers themselves have a clear understanding of the relevant information necessary to select the 'correct' events which are being described metaphorically, and this further places the locus of the poem on their thoughts, as this is all that can be clearly discerned. The speakers do not appear particularly interested in explaining what has happened to them, or of convincing us of their point of view. Instead, they express their thoughts and feelings, without concerning themselves with whether or not they will be understood. In a similar way to how *One Art* offered and then removed the position of the addressee, *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* describe events metaphorically to create the impression that the poems are more important to the speaker than they are to us, which again creates the impression that the poems are 'personal'.

5.6.2 The continuing effect of the past on the present

Although in both poems there is a speaker in the present discussing events from their past, these events are often reported in such a way that minimises this distance and makes their impact on the speaker in the present clear. Cohn calls narration which makes use of the distance between a narrator and their narrated past-self to give the reader more information that the narrated self can know 'dissonant first-person narration' whereas 'consonant first-person narration' avoids this distance. She offers Knut Hamsun's *Hunger* (1890) as an example of consonant first-person narration, as 'Not once in this entire novel does its narrator draw attention to his present, narrating self by adding information, opinions, or judgements that were not his during his past experience' and also describes the novel as 'wholly self-centered, indeed self-obsessed' (Cohn, 1984:158). This erasure of the distance between the speaker and her past self is part of what makes this such a personal poem, and it also makes it clear how deeply the events she references have affected her. This fits with the common interpretation of *Daddy* that it is about her attempts to kill her memory of him (Phillips, 1972:60) and purge him from her psyche (Nance, 1972:76). This would both explain why the description of the past clearly has such an effect on the speaker in the present, and also why the poem appears to be so personal.

Both poems make extensive use of the present perfect aspect. Huddleston and Pullum claim that 'the present perfect is a compound tense combining past and present' and that when it is used, it indicates that what happened in the past has 'some kind of relevance' to the present (2005:Ch. 6). Adamson discusses Samuel Taylor Coleridge's and Ezra Pound's similar use of the present perfect to make it clear that 'the speaker is not only reporting a past event but also a current existential condition and its continuing affective power' (1998:667-8).

For example, when the speaker in *Daddy* says 'I have had to kill you', she is referring to an event in the past (he is clearly dead when the speaker is speaking) but the use of the present perfect tense makes it clear that this event is affecting her currently.

This can also be seen in the opening stanza, where she describes him as a 'black shoe/In which I have lived like a foot' and later where she says 'I have always been scared of you'. The use of the present perfect tense here makes it clear that is currently living 'in' him, and she is currently scared of him, and yet we know that he died before the poem began. This strengthens the impression that what we are reading is an account of the speaker's trauma as she experiences it, despite the fact that the events occurred in the past. This can also be seen by the fact that the villagers who 'never liked you' are described using the progressive aspect and are 'dancing and stamping on you' in the present. Without the progressive aspect, the straightforward 'they dance and stamp on you' may create the impression that this is activity that the villagers do regularly, whereas 'they are dancing and stamping on you' is likely to be interpreted as indicated a dance 'in progress at the present moment' (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005:Chapter 7). Presumably these villagers are a metaphorical representation of aspects of the speaker herself, and therefore the use of the progressive here enhances the effect that this poem was produced whilst she reacts to and is affected by his death. It is not the events which we focus on, but their continuing effect on her. This effect is enhanced by the use of non-finite verbs in the phrases 'Barely daring to breathe or Achoo' and 'Chuffing me off like a Jew' in which the lack of tense obscures the fact that these two events occurred in the speaker's past. In addition to the merging of the perspectives of the speaker and their past self, another feature of the progressive aspect is that is often used to signal 'expressive emotional involvement,' (Fludernik, 2003:200)

Lady *Lazarus* opens with 'I have done it again', which both indicates that what she has done affects the present, but also links this event with similar events even further in the past with 'again'. *Lady Lazarus* also references the past with its use of present tense when we are told that 'I manage it' once every ten years, which not only connects these several past events together, but reports them using the present tense despite the fact that the events have happened at the time of reporting. Although she says that she has 'done it' she also refers to this event with the present time proximal 'this' in the line 'This is Number Three'. In both poems, the use of the present perfect tense indicates that the 'concern' of the poem 'is with present results of past events' (Huddleston and Pullum, 2005:Ch. 6).

The use of the first person means that there is greater scope for this merging of the narrator's present vantage point with that of the narrated character's experience. First person narrators have the option of distancing themselves from their past, narrated self (in novels such as L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* and Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, for example) but the speakers in these two poems instead report events in such a way that makes it clear that the experiencing and speaking self have the same perspective on events. In the case of *Lady Lazarus*, this explicitly goes back decades. This merging of the emotional response creates the impression that the speakers are still dealing with the trauma that they recount, thereby increasing the foregrounding of their emotional state and increasing the 'personalness' and the confessional nature of the poems.

5.6.3 Referencing the world as familiar

One of the features that Brinton suggests creates an impression that the character's perspective is being presented is that 'in represented speech and thought, pronouns, demonstratives, definite articles, and definite noun phrases which have no antecedent in the previous discourse may occur' (Brinton, 1990:366). The deictic references to person or place may not be resolvable for the reader, therefore, as the speaker discusses what has happened to her so tightly from her perspective that it is difficult for the reader to decipher what it is that she is communicating about. The speaker in *Lady Lazarus* uses frequent exophoric deictic references to events as well as people. For example, she begins by telling us that she has done 'it' and that she manages 'it' once every ten years and later tells us that the first time 'it' happened, she was ten and the second time she meant 'to last it out'. It is possible to infer that these refer, deictically, to suicide attempts or near death experiences (she does use 'it' at least once to clearly endophorically refer to 'dying' in l. 43-5), but by not referring to them explicitly, the impression is created that the speaker is not attempting to 'identify them for the reader' (Brinton: 1990, 366) but instead demonstrating how she conceives of them herself. This creates the impression of personal and private discourse, rather an attempt to make herself understood, therefore fulfilling my second and third criteria for prototypically personal poetry.

As I have already argued, one of the reasons that both these poems appear deeply personal to its speaker is that there are fewer attempts to make their meaning explicitly clear to the reader. The complicated and irresolvable metaphors in *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* create the impression that what we are reading is not an attempt to explain the events to the reader but is an unfiltered expression of how these events have made them feel. The speakers do not tell us what has happened to them, but refer to these events through complex metaphor. Similarly, Brinton argues that when representing a character's perspective, the narrator will use pronouns or names 'which show their relationship to the SELF' (1990:366) rather than which identify them for the reader. Most obviously, this is shown by the use of social deixis, with the speaker referring to her father by the familiar form 'Daddy' (called a form of 'intimate address' by Fludernik (2003:41)).

The addressees of *Lady Lazarus* are marked deictically in ways that do not necessarily make their identity clear to the reader, and the speaker seems to confusingly and chaotically shift who the addressee of the poem is (which is in itself a technique which focuses us on the speaker's perspective). At the beginning of the poem, there is no clear addressee, but one is later revealed, along with an imperative verb when the speaker instructs her 'enemy' to 'Peel off the napkin'. However, this enemy is later referred to by the plural 'them' and even later by various singular forms: 'Herr Doctor', 'Herr Enemy', 'Herr God' and 'Herr Lucifer' (and it is not clear whether these refer to the same man, or to four different men). At another point in the poem, the addressee is the far more general 'Gentlemen and ladies'. Rather like the apostrophised 'Daddy' in *Daddy*, it is unlikely that the reader will position themselves as the speaker's 'enemy', as their description is too specific and clearly references a specific role in the speaker's life. Unlike *Daddy*, the referent of 'my enemy', 'them',

'your', Herr Doctor', 'Herr Enemy', Herr God' and 'Herr Lucifer' seems to both reference a role filled by several people (who have at various points 'called' her back from the dead and can be gathered together as the 'men' that she will 'eat like air') and at other times, it seems to reference a specific 'doctor' who is the 'same brute' with the 'same face'. 'Herr God' and 'Herr Lucifer' could be metaphoric descriptions of the same enemy who she calls 'Herr Doctor', or they could explicitly reference God, as Buell believes, meaning that the poem positions the 'cosmic force that has created matter and consciousness' as a 'totalitarian and destructive one' (Buell, 1976:203). The speaker's feelings are clear, but whom she is addressing or referring to shifts, leading to further foregrounding of the speaker's thoughts and feelings and an obfuscation of those of the other characters she references.

Daddy's apostrophised addressee is much clearer, and it is much easier for the reader to avoid positioning themselves in his deictic field. In *Lady Lazarus* it is possible that the reader will take the position of the general 'Gentlemen and Ladies' who are titillated by the 'strip tease' making us complicit in her humiliation and abuse. However, as with *Daddy*, the external forces at play are unclear and described metaphorically, which results in more focus on the speaker themselves.

However, whenever one or more of these characters are addressed, these addresses are always in terms that demonstrate how the speaker feels about them or how they relate to her. For example, the speaker demonstrates their relationship to her using the possessive pronoun in 'my enemy', and calls herself 'your opus' and 'your valuable' which demonstrates her perception of how she perceives her relationship to them. This positioning of herself as something that belongs to them, (through the repeated use of 'your') is intensified by metaphorically referring to herself as valuable or desired objects like 'fine/Jew linen', 'pure gold baby' and 'a paperweight'.

However, despite making use of the direct address in 'O my enemy', the use of direct questions such as 'Do I terrify?', making extensive use of 'you' and 'your' to refer to them, and also using the personal possessive 'my enemy' to position herself in relation to them, she also uses the third person 'them' and 'they' when describing what they are doing or have done to her, which as Wales says, creates distance. 'They' and 'them' can create a sinister effect, and Wales points out that Margaret Atwood uses 'they' as a stylistic marker of control in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1996:61).

Her relationship towards these shifting addressees is also indicated using social deictic markers. Social deixis can be defined as 'the aspect of sentences which reflect or establish or are determined by certain realities of the social situation in which the speech act occurs' (Fillmore, 1975:76). This would include devices to marking personal relationships, such as the pronouns I discussed above, but also the choices of 'kinship terms' (Fillmore, 1975:76) which make the father feel closer to the speaker in *Daddy* (though only to make his abuse all the more horrific). In the last line of *Daddy*, the 'intimate' use of 'Daddy' is undermined and contrasted by the insulting address 'you bastard', which uses a personal pronoun to make it even more accusatory. In *Lady Lazarus*, the speaker separates herself from the addressees by

using the more formal (and in the context of the Jewish symbolism, insulting) 'Herr Doktor'. This means that when she is not referring to them using the disparaging pronoun 'them', she is using direct insults or overly formal forms of address ('Herr'), which further prevents us from taking their side.

Although it is unclear whether 'my enemy', 'Herr enemy', 'Herr God' and 'Herr Lucifer' refers to the same addressee or many, when she refers to the 'peanut-crunching crowd', she tells us that they watch 'them' unwrap her which suggests that it is the crowd, rather than a specific 'enemy' who is being addressed by 'Gentlemen, Ladies' as they are the ones who are watching the 'strip tease'. 'Gentlemen, Ladies' is a formal address, which creates distance between her and the crowd, but also deictically suggests that she is a performer, and they are an audience, supported by the reference to 'peanut-crunching' and 'strip-tease'. These pronouns and references to 'my enemy', 'Herr enemy' and 'Herr Doktor' do not only create the impression of a subjective, personal perspective because of their discussion in terms of their relationship to the speaker, but because it is even difficult to identify how many people they are referring to. The addressees are less important than the speaker's position.

These forms of address are also evaluative, and although it is not clear who they are referring to, it is clear what the speaker thinks of them. Fludernik argues that 'evaluative designations' that refer to other characters, including 'epithets', (such as 'you bastard' and the other ways she refers to her addressees I discussed above) are a key indicators of subjectivity (2003:141) as the reader is therefore viewing these characters through the evaluations of the speaker rather than from a more objective viewpoint.

Brinton argues that represented speech and thought contains 'certain lexical items which express the character's emotions, attitudes, judgments, evaluations, and beliefs, his "epistemic and judgmental meaning" (Fillmore 1975:16)' (Brinton, 1990:366), and Fludernik argues that 'evaluative adjectives that lexicalize a speaker's attitude towards the modified person or object' (2003:258) will create the impression of subjectivity. This use of lexical items 'which express the 'character's emotions, attitudes, judgments, evaluations, and beliefs' are key to my argument that these poems are prototypically personal. When the speaker in *Daddy* refers to her father by addressing him metaphorically as 'black shoe', 'Panzer-man' and calling her husband 'the vampire', these are terms that offer the speaker's evaluative opinion of him, and demonstrate how she feels about him, even when this is at the expense of the reader's understanding. Her subjective, personal position is also enhanced by the use of evaluative adjectives such as 'ghastly', 'freakish', 'beautiful', 'weird', and describing him as a 'Fascist' with a 'brute/brute heart of a brute'. In narration, this use of evaluative language, as long as it is 'appropriate to the reported speaker's outlook' (Fludernik, 2003:256), serves to highlight the narrator's point of view (Fludernik, 2003:27).

Fludernik argues that in narrative, 'evocation of orality... requires the avoidance of literate vocabulary and complex syntax....and also do not shy away from expressing their feelings and views emphatically' and she contrasts this with 'typical narrators' who are more likely to be 'bland, reliable, neutral' and she calls this type of narration 'pseudo-oral' (2009). Features of orality can therefore be associated with subjectivity in presenting the personal perspective of the speaker or narrator. I have discussed some oral features of the poems already, but in addition, *Lady Lazarus* makes use of oral discourse markers such as 'O my enemy' (11) and 'So, so, Herr Doktor' and *Daddy* uses 'O You'. *Lady Lazarus* also uses the exclamation 'What a trash'.

Both of these also poems feature 'incomplete sentences' which create the illusion of a lack of editing and therefore that what we are reading is the 'stream of consciousness' of the speaker, increasing the impression of spoken language. In *Lady Lazarus*, stanzas two and three lack the main verbs which would indicate the connection between 'my foot' and 'a paperweight', for example. Presumably, the verb 'to be' has been ellipped in this, and also in 'my skin [is]/Bright as a Nazi lampshade'. However, some caution should be drawn here, as the sort of ellipsis that is common in both poems which creates this effect is extremely common in lyric poetry and does not always intend to create the effect of 'direct quotation'. A key feature of the lyric, Wolf argues, is 'freedom from everyday language' (2005:36), and condensing the meaning by removing grammatical elements is common in lyric poetry (Levins, 1971), and is connected to Shklovsky's view that poetry is more densely packed with meaning than prose (Vitale, 2012:89). Therefore a lack of grammatical cohesion may have less significance in lyric poetry than it does in prose fiction, or at least may be less indicative of a subjective viewpoint. With that proviso, the lack of complete grammar in both poems is still significant, as this is combined with other indicators that the speakers either cannot or are not interested in clearly articulating their thoughts. This is explicitly referenced in *Daddy* by the speaker's explanation of why she 'could never talk' to her father because 'the tongue stuck in my jaw./It stuck in a barb wire snare', and this is demonstrated by the line 'Ich, ich, ich, ich' which both demonstrates her inability to speak but also links the German word 'ich' with the metaphorical barbs that mean she 'could hardly speak', further increasing the orality of the poem and emphasising how she felt oppressed by her German father. *Lady Lazarus* lacks much complex subordination, including connectives, and several clauses that could be connected together are instead presented as simple sentences:

I do it so it feels like hell.
 I do it so it feels real.
 I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
 It's easy enough to do it and stay put.

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This leaves the connection between the statements implied, which again creates the impression that the speaker is not filtering or reorganising her thoughts for our benefit. This is even more pronounced when the sentences are incomplete:

Ash, ash---

You poke and stir.

Flesh, bone, there is nothing there----

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It must be inferred that what 'you' are poking and stirring is the ashes, and that 'you' can find nothing in them. It must also be inferred that these ashes come from whatever caused her to 'turn and burn' in the previous stanza, though that in itself is not clear.

5.6.4 Mental processes

Another key factor in the subjectivity of the poems is the emphasis on the speaker's feelings, thoughts and emotions, evidenced in the use of the verb 'feels' in lines 46 and 47 of *Lady Lazarus* (and due to the merging effect discussed above, it is often unclear whether these refer to the speaker's current state or their past self, or more likely both, due to the lack of evaluation of her past.)

Halliday argues that our 'conception of reality is that it consists of "goings-on": of doing, happening, feeling, being'. When these happenings are expressed by language, this can be examined by the system of transitivity which 'specifies the different types of processes that are recognised in the language and the structures by which they are expressed (1985, p. 101). Transitivity analyses help us to identify not simply what the text expresses, but how that meaning is presented (Simpson, 1993:88), and this approach is therefore useful in examining how language can encode perspectives on events and how a speaker's perception of these events is represented.

Mental processes are 'concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness' (Halliday, 1985:245) and therefore can give us insight into the speaker's thoughts and experiences. Hassanpour and Hashim use transitivity to demonstrate that the speaker in *Daddy* 'is mostly associated with mental processes such as "feeling", "imagining" and "wishing"' (such as 'daring' and 'been scared') and when she is the agent of material action processes, these are nearly always described in 'a make-believe way' which do not offer her real agency, but demonstrates that she 'wants to exact revenge, but does not have the agency to fulfil her revenge' (2012:128). For example, although she kills him, this 'is an unreal and an imaginary act' which 'has not been fulfilled' (2012:127). Hassanpour and Hashim use this to demonstrate the speaker's lack of agency and her victimisation by her father and husband, but by making so much use of mental rather than material processes, this also means that the text focuses on expressing the speaker's 'emotions, attitudes, judgments, evaluations, and beliefs' rather than the physical events which may have prompted them (2012:124).

Hassanpour and Hashim also point out that it is the two men who are the actors in the majority of material action processes in the poem. However, these actions frequently involve the speaker as their goal in some fashion. For example, when he bites, it is her 'pretty red heart' which is the goal of this process, and the husband drinks her blood. When these processes do not explicitly have her as their goal, their effect on her is heavily implicated, such as the reference to 'the rack and the screw'. However, although these processes are of material action, they are of metaphorical action. Hassanpour and Hashim argue that the father is 'a doer' who is 'doing an act which is "biting" causing injury' (2012:127) but he is clearly not actually biting. These material processes are reported in such a way that what is emphasised is not what has happened, but the psychological effects of these actions on the speaker.

These features have the effect of centring our attention on the speaker's feelings and their experience, to the exclusion of the other characters referenced. The speaker not only does not give us access to the consciousnesses of the other characters, but both poems are told entirely from the perspective of the speaker, with any description of other characters or their actions serving only to better explain the speaker's experiences.

5.6.5 Autobiography and subjectivity features

Many of these subjectivity markers serve to obscure the narrative structure behind the poem in order to focus on the speaker's experience. The use of subjective deixis, metaphor and mental instead of material processes in these two poems makes understanding what has happened to the speaker more difficult, as the poems are more expressive than communicative.

There is another effect of the lack of clear events on which to create a narrative, which is that it becomes easier to use Sylvia Plath's life as material with which to 'solve' the metaphors. To define *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* as autobiography, it's necessary to find evidence that Wordsworth went for the same walk that the speaker did, and there are sufficient details in the poem that make it possible to see how far Wordsworth's life matches up with the events of the poem. In this case, it is probable that the poem was inspired by a real event, documented in his sister's journal, but that the narrative of the poem is still 'made up', as according to Dorothy Wordsworth, he was not alone [2012]. However, in *Daddy*, the only details in the poem which need to be clearly matched to Sylvia Plath's life for it to be a possible contender for autobiography are for her to have troubled feelings about her father and an ex-husband. The fact that Sylvia Plath's father actually was German makes it even easier to match up the poet with the poem. The fact that he was not a Nazi, and her mother was not Jewish is usually dismissed, or treated as metaphorical, though Aird speculates that had Otto Plath not come to the USA he *could* have been a Nazi, and Aurelia Plath, being Austrian could *theoretically* have had Jewish ancestry (1973), which shows the lengths to which biographical criticism will reach to find satisfactory conclusions. However, as most of the action in the poem is described in metaphor, there is a broad swathe of possibilities as to what actually happened,

making it even more likely that critics will be able to find reasons to define the poem as autobiographical.

However, although this biographical research sometimes produces plausible resolutions for *Daddy* and its metaphors, these resolutions tend to narrow the range of implications for the metaphors and therefore reduce the impact of the poem. McNeil, failing to find evidence that Sylvia Plath was mistreated by her father, wonders if the anger expressed is just because her father died when she was young, and she felt abandoned by him, summarising the poem as 'if Daddy died and hurt me so, he must be a bastard' (1987). Williamson considers that because Otto Plath was a militant pacifist and he believes that *The Bell Jar* demonstrates her 'longing' for him, it is more likely that the poem is 'masochistic', and rather than discussing 'what [Sylvia Plath] really feared--abandonment, indifference--malignity or persecution is substituted'. This leads him to the unusual conclusion that the contrast between Sylvia Plath's father and the 'brute' described in the poem creates 'comic incongruity' (1984). Such readings would mean that whatever is being compared to the suffering of the Jews during the holocaust, it really was not as bad as the poem suggests. The fixation on using biographical details to produce criticism results in limited readings.

Similarly, *Lady Lazarus* is nearly always interpreted as being about Sylvia Plath's suicide attempts (see analysis by Buell (1976), Van Dyne (1983) and Boswell (2008) for examples of this), which of course does fit rather well with the poem's metaphorical use of death and resurrection. However, limiting the implications of Lady Lazarus's resurrections to Sylvia Plath's specific suicide attempts again reduces analysis of the poem to biography. Bollas and Schwartz's attempts to link *Lady Lazarus* not only to Sylvia Plath's life, but to the life they have inferred from her other poems, lead them to claim that *Lady Lazarus* is about Sylvia Plath's relationship with her father, and therefore flatten out the poem's shifting between generalised and specific addressees into the real Otto Plath. They speculate about how 'by focusing murderousness on herself rather than on the father who left her, she could have partially denied the magical idea that her bad feelings toward him caused his death' (1976:155) which ignores the complexity of the poem's shifting addressee and the content of the poem itself in favour of psychoanalysing the poet.

Assuming that the 'self' of personal and confessional poetry is directly reflective of the poet leads, as I have shown, to the chasing of biographical details which are possibly inaccurate and almost certainly lead to limited analysis.

Interest in the reality of William Wordsworth's real experiences behind *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* is likely to focus on whether or not he saw daffodils when walking, and where this was, so the beautiful landscape that inspired him can be visited (or at least, this is likely why the *Visit Cumbria* website features Dorothy Wordsworth's journal entry). Although the poem focuses on the experience of the speaker, this is not the 'cathartic', visceral poem that *Daddy* or *Lady Lazarus* are, and so it is unlikely to lead to intense interest or speculation on the poet's inner life.

What this shows is that the confessional poet, attempting to write a poem that dissects their speaker's psyche, has few options available when trying to distance their real lives from the lives within their poetry. Lyric poems like *I wandered lonely as a cloud* have clear narratives that focus our attention on events, which are less interesting for critics wanting to analyse their poets. For the confessional poets, either their lives match up with the details in their poems, in which case they are seen as clearly autobiographical, or their lives and poetry are interpreted to make sure that they *do* match.

5.7 Examining a less personal confessional poem

As I have explained, *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* are extreme examples of the personal lyric, and demonstrate many features which are likely to lead to the reader associating the speaker closely with the poet, as so many critics have done. However, many other lyrical and even confessional poems may still be demonstrably personal, but not prototypically so. For example, Anne Sexton's poem *And One For My Dame* (appendix 8.5.3) touches on similar themes to *Daddy* by comparing the speaker's father to her husband, and also uses a homodiegetic speaker, but in this poem the speaker gives so much more attention to the father and the husband that they are not as clearly autodiegetic. This results in a poem with a far less personal effect, despite its classification as 'confessional'.

Anne Sexton is another of the confessional poets who killed herself, leading to a huge amount of speculation on her life and mental health through her poetry. For example, Lord and Stone use this poem to speculate about Anne Sexton's feelings towards her father and what that might mean for her mental health in the journal *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* (1973) and it is explicitly described by MacGowan as being about Anne Sexton's 'ambivalent feelings about her father' (2008:140).

Unlike *Daddy*, this poem discusses the speaker's father's actions with explicit details. These actions are generalised rather than referring to specific incidents, however. This generalisation is often marked by modal verbs, such as when the speaker tells us that he 'could' sell a hundred bales of wool, which indicates that this refers to his ability to sell in general rather than to an actual incident in which he made a sale. Similarly, we are told that 'each sentence he would utter' at home was the same as what he had told 'the buyer who'd paid him off in butter.' This clearly does not refer to a specific incident where he said the same sentences as he had said to one specific buyer, but instead indicates a general pattern of activity in the home, and how the father behaved in general. The speaker tells us what happened 'each night' rather than describing one particular night in general. This makes the poem less narrative, but builds a clearer picture of what the father was like, as the action refers to many incidents rather than describing only one.

There is very little use of the unresolvable poetic metaphor which gives both *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* the impression that we are gaining access to the speaker's thought processes. Here, the father is not only clearly a salesman, but we are told that he specifically sells wool 'to Fieldcrest, Woolrich and Faribo' which makes other

interpretations about what he did impossible. We are also given details about his time on the road, and his skills as a salesman. This is very different to the metaphorical descriptions of the father's actions in *Daddy* which cannot be resolved to reveal what actually happened. In addition, there is a distinct lack of ambiguous deixis: when 'it' is used in the third stanza, it is a straightforward anaphoric reference to two noun phrases in the previous line ('the miles and the sales'). The speaker here calls her father 'my father' which serves to explain his relationship to her, rather than evoke it through the more intimate 'daddy'.

The specific details offer a different challenge to biographical criticism. With *Daddy*, the lack of explicit or even implied detail about what actually happened between the speaker and her father meant that critics could very easily find ways to make the poem fit aspects of Sylvia Plath's life (though as I have pointed out, the lack of evidence of any abuse that Sylvia Plath may have suffered at the hands of Otto Plath did lead some critics to make unusual conclusions). With *And One for my Dame* there are many clear details which would need to be matched before a critic could claim that the poem is 'about' Anne Sexton, and in this case it is fairly easy to do: Anne Sexton's father was a wool salesman (Middlebrooke and Hume, 2000:xi), and her husband eventually worked for the same business (Middlebrooke and Hume, 2000:xii). Accordingly, the evidence that MacGowan gives for describing the poem as about Anne Sexton's husband and father is that the poem 'parallels the selling careers of her father and husband' (2008:140). It is undeniable that there are some clear parallels between this poem and Anne Sexton herself, but if 'personal' is to be a useful description of poetry, it must be applicable even if biographical details like this are unknown. In other words, if we are considering how personal the poem is, biographical detail should be irrelevant.

I believe that *One For My Dame* has a far less personal speaker than either *Daddy* or *Lady Lazarus* because the focus on action (albeit general rather than specific incidents) means that my third criterion cannot be met. In *Daddy*, the reader is left to imagine what the father could have done to make his daughter suffer so much, whereas in *And One for my Dame*, the reader is instead told what the father (and husband) did, and the reader must piece together why this is significant to the speaker. We are told that her father plans his trips with 'his heart already pushing over the red routes of the nation' while she sits 'at my desk /each night with no place to go,/opening the wrinkled maps of Milwaukee and Buffalo' which strongly implies (but does not entail) that she is envious of his freedom. Similarly, the link that the speaker makes between her father and her husband is implied, rather than explicitly set out as it is in *Daddy* (where the speaker tells us that she 'made' her husband by modelling him on her father). The similarities between the husband and father in *And One for my Dame* are obvious (both taking long and adventurous road trips to sell wool while she stays at home) but what it means for the speaker is merely implied.

In addition, as I have discussed, the father in *Daddy* is only discussed in order to better express the speaker's feelings towards him, and for her to accuse him

(posthumously) of cruelty. The father in this poem is not only discussed, but his perspective is sometimes even the locus of the poem. Some of the details that the speaker gives us can be plausibly still from her perspective, such as her description of him as a 'born talker' who 'could sell one hundred wet-down bales/of that white stuff' (though it should be noted that such descriptions still refer to his proficiency at his job, rather than his relationship to her or how this affected her). However, when she describes 'his heart' before he leaves for travelling as 'already pushing over the red routes of the nation' this gives us information about his consciousness which cannot be said to be plausibly part of her diegetic understanding (although she could be extrapolating or guessing). In addition, she offers details about his death, despite not being present. The speaker is, therefore, giving or attempting to give information from his perspective, rather than just her feelings about him, and the narration cannot be said to be entirely internal. He does not exist in the text-world merely to give us more insight into the speaker's psyche, but he is a subject of the poem in his own right.

As Edmiston says, first person narration does not entail internal focalisation, although this is a common misconception (1989:730). Internal focalisation is 'the presentation of events by a character within the fictional world' (Edmiston, 1989:730) but many of the events discussed in this poem are narrated by a speaker who is not present. It is plausible that she is extrapolating or guessing the information she tells us, but this does not alter where the focus of the poem is placed when she does this, especially as so much of the poem places us in the deictic field of the husband or the father. For example, when 'he hid/in his bedroom on a three-day drunk' rather than focus on the perspective of the daughter outside the bedroom, we are told what he did inside ('he typed out complex itineraries, packed his trunk'). There is no indication that the speaker's past-self saw what he was doing, or that her description was a result of observation, leaving the possibility that this is external first person narration, and therefore reducing the impression that this poem is personal to the speaker.

It is even a description of the father which begins the poem: 'A born salesman'. In the second line of the poem we realise we are viewing him from her perspective when he is described as 'my father', which describes him in terms of his relationship to her, but the opening line of the poem positions him as a focus in his own right. The second stanza of the poem makes no mention of this relationship to her at all, but focuses on his abilities as a salesman and the third stanza only implies her perspective by mentioning their mutual 'home'. The fourth stanza refers to how his selling brought home the money which filled 'my plate', but these references to the speaker and her perspective are in the minority. Although we know we are being told about him by his daughter, she is absent from a great deal of her description of him and his actions, and her perspective on his actions is not offered.

As Hashim and Hassenpour point out, the material processes in *Daddy* very often have the speaker as their goal, and she can only react emotionally to these. The father in *And One For My Dame*, on the other hand, is the actor in several material

processes that do not involve the speaker at all. He 'hovered/over the Yorkshire pudding', 'typed out complex itineraries' and 'packed his trunk'. These actions do not involve or affect her grammatically, and therefore he is far more of an independent character than the father in *Daddy* who is only described and discussed in terms of how he relates to the speaker and how his actions affected her.

This poem is less personal than *Daddy*, therefore, as it is not purely an examination of the speaker's psyche or innermost thoughts and feelings, and any insight into these must be inferred from the specific details about what she is describing. In *Daddy* the specific details are implied only by what the speaker tells us about how they affected her thoughts and feelings, and how she resolves the damage done to her psyche.

This is not to argue that *And One For My Dame* is not at all personal, merely that it is not *prototypically* personal by my criteria, as *Daddy* is. The fewer linguistic markers may explain why although Anne Sexton's life is of great interest to both critics and biographers, this particular poem has not received a great deal of critical attention. Unlike some of her other poems, such as *Her Kind* (and the poems of Sylvia Plath which I have examined here) this is not an examination of the speaker's psyche, but something more akin to the more narrative Seamus Heaney's *The Early Purges*, with its reminiscences over past events. If we ignore the biographical details that link Anne Sexton to the poem, (as I strongly believe that we should) then although this poem can still be deemed lyric, it should not be categorised as a confessional poem.

5.9 Conclusion

If we wish to really understand and appreciate the artistry behind poetry that appears personal, we should consider that the existence of this expected link between the poet and the poem is evidence not of a lack of fictionality, but of the poet's mastery of the form. Whether or not *Daddy* or *Lady Lazarus* is based on anyone's real life experiences, as James Merrill says, the key is that Sylvia Plath has made it sound as though it is. By examining what it is that makes it sound this way, we can both refine our understanding of lyricism and also provide some much needed defence against the limitations of biographical criticism.

This will also help us to refine our understanding of the lyric speaker, who as I've pointed out is often defined as 'personal'. By analysing poetry which offers a close examination of the speaker's psyche, it is clear that not all or even most lyric poetry takes an approach like this, and therefore defining lyric poetry as 'personal' over-privileges the poetic speaker's perspective in some poems and obscures the effect when the speaker is genuinely presented as personal in others. A greater understanding of the range of perspectives offered by lyrical speakers would help not only understand how some poems produce the illusion of being personally connected to their poets, but also a better understanding of poems which utilise their speaker in different ways.

6. Conflict Poetry

In my previous chapter, I examined poetry which is assumed to be autobiographical despite few links to the poets' real lives. In contrast, conflict poetry is a subgenre of the lyric which is *explicitly* linked to real events, often experienced by the poet themselves. Unlike confessional poetry, these poems frequently divert attention from the personal perspective of the speaker in order to better focus our attention on the suffering of others or the readers' complicity in the events. This makes it an ideal type of poetry with which to examine the positioning of the speaker, as it demonstrates that lyric speakers can take a variety of non-personal positions even when they can be considered autobiographical representations of the poet.

So far, I have argued strongly for a separation of the poet from their speakers when analysing and assessing their work. Biographical criticism leads to categorising poetry as lyric or personal, despite the linguistic features which I believe should suggest otherwise. This, in turn, leads critics to assume that the poem is 'about' the poet or a persona of the poet, and therefore that the speaker is monoperspectival and the poem unmediated. Focusing on the life of the poet can also lead to restricted and misleading analysis in comparison to examining the poem as a self-contained art form. However, it is important to temper this argument to make sure that it accounts for poems which clearly reference events in a poet's life.

The poems I examine in this chapter still display the same complex fictional layers that would be expected in a fictional text despite evidence that links the events of the poem to the poets' lives. In fact, these poems nearly always avoid the overt personalness of the confessional poetry I have examined. They are less an exploration of their speakers' psyches than they are a way of communicating the horrors of war and explicit attempts to educate or change the generalised addressee's perspective on them. As such, understanding something of the real, historical events that they are based on is crucial to understanding the effect of the poem. In this chapter, I will therefore demonstrate that there is a clear distinction between poems which are personal to the speaker's psyche and poems which make use of historical or personal events in the life of the poet themselves, knowledge of which are often essential to understanding the poems.

To achieve this, I will be examining lyric poetry about conflict and war. Unlike the majority of lyric poems, these poems not only reference real-world events but they require some understanding of these events for the poem to be fully understood. This is in contrast to the confessional poems I considered in my previous chapter where real-world events were applied to the poems to the detriment of linguistic analysis, whether or not they fit and whether or not they produced more useful analysis. This makes conflict poetry an ideal subgenre of the lyric with which to study how a poem can require understanding of contextual knowledge to analyse it without falling into the biographical trap, and also how despite the demonstrable

personal links between the poet and their poem, it is the *lack* of linguistic features that indicate personalness which creates much of the impact of all but one of these poems.

6.1 Impersonal autobiographical poetry

On 4th June, 1989, ‘several hundred’ people were killed during a ‘bloody military operation to crush a democratic protest’ in Tiananmen Square in Beijing (BBC, c2008). James Fenton’s poem *Tiananmen* (appendix 8.6.1) does not explicitly reference this massacre of civilian protesters by the Chinese army, but makes very strong implications that these are the events the poem discusses.

As Sperber and Wilson explain, when something is communicated to us, it ‘conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance expectation’ (2004:249). In this case, the poet including the time and place when the poem was written at the end of the poem will be assumed relevant in some way (especially as this is not standard practice in poetry – none of the other poems I have considered so far do this). The fact that James Fenton wanted his readers to know that he wrote this poem in Hong Kong less than two weeks after the massacre does not leave much room for a poem called *Tiananmen* to be about anything else. This, combined with the mention of ‘blood’ and the enforced silence surrounding the events, make the link between the poem and the massacre a very strong implication. (As Lim wrote in The Washington Post, the censorship by the Chinese government of all mention of the deaths at Tiananmen is extreme: Wikipedia in China ‘does not have an entry for the entire year of 1989’ and mourners are even forbidden to publicly grieve those who died that day (Lim, 2014).) Sylvia Plath’s poetry may be interpreted to reference her suicide attempts, but as I demonstrated, the implications that lead us to connect her poetry to her real life are usually weak. *Tiananmen*, on the other hand, leaves little option other than to interpret the poem as referencing this event.

By clearly putting the place and date of writing as a footnote to the poem, it is likely that James Fenton wants us to know that not only did he write the poem, but that he was there. The date given is not the date of the event itself, and so it is drawing our attention to the fact that the poem was written after the event, but close enough to it that we recognise that James Fenton has personal knowledge of it. Despite this personal connection to James Fenton, the poem does not utilise the linguistic markers which would mark the poem as ‘personal’ to the speaker.

Instead, *Tiananmen* predominantly uses a mostly generalised ‘you’ as the locus of the poem. ‘You’ cannot see where the dead have been and ‘you’ cannot speak of them. This places the addressee(s) rather than the speaker at the deictic centre of the poem. Neither, interestingly for a poem which takes a real world event as its subject, is the reader placed into the deictic centre of those who were present. Transitivity was introduced as a framework in 5.6.4 as it encodes perspectives on events, is therefore a useful way to examine a speaker’s experience or consciousness (Halliday, 1973). It is a useful tool in narrative analysis (Simpson, 2004:74) and in this

chapter will be applied to examine how the speaker presents the events that they narrate.

A transitivity analysis of *Tiananmen* demonstrates that the people who died in the massacre are mentioned only as objects or concepts which ‘you’ relate to, and the majority of processes that ‘you’ are the agent of are either processes of perception or verbiage. This means that the dead are neither acted on nor are they ever the agents of the processes. Not only this, but these processes are nearly always modified by modal verbs which explain what ‘you’ may not or cannot do, which has the effect of removing any agency that would otherwise be given. The first (and as they are repeated, the most prominent) mentions of the victims of the massacre is in the phrase ‘And you can’t tell/Where the dead have been’.

You	can’t tell	where the dead have been
Sensor	Perception process	Phenomenon

You	can’t tell	what happened then
Sensor	Perception process	Phenomenon

You	can’t speak	Of Tiananmen
Sayer	Verbiage process	Verbiage

Here, ‘the dead’ are not even the phenomenon that ‘you’ cannot perceive; we are only told that we cannot perceive where they have *been*. The second reference to them is the even more indirect ‘what happened then’, which again means that we are not invited to empathise with the suffering of those that died, but we instead are focused on the lack of evidence for their deaths. Finally, the victims of the massacre are subsumed in the overall phrase ‘of Tiananmen’ which becomes a metonym for the events at Tiananmen Square as a whole. The victims’ emotional state or what it is that they experienced is never referenced by the poem, making it impossible for them to become the poem’s locus. Aside from one metonymic reference to their ‘blood’, the victims are most frequently invoked by mentioning the place that they died. Not only this, but ‘you’ relate to them by *not* thinking or talking about them, rather than by interacting with them directly.

Later, even these oblique references are removed, and the process of perception becomes intransitive:

You	must not speak
Sayer	Verbiage process

You	must not think
Sensor	Perception process

Here, what it is that ‘you’ must not speak or think about is left implied. The lack of any phenomenon that ‘you’ must avoid thinking of, or any specific verbiage that ‘you’

must not say out loud takes the focus away from those that died, and instead focuses the poem on the enforced silence surrounding the deaths. In addition, it means that what must remain unspoken and what should not be thought about is intimidatingly broad. The first material process that 'you' are the agent of refers back to the same enforced silence:

You	must not dip	your pen in ink
Actor	Material process	Goal

Although 'dip' is a material process, the agency that might be afforded to 'you' is negated by the fact that this is preceded by a strong deontic, negated modal verb, making it something that you 'must not' do. In addition, although this phrase has a goal, unlike the previous two intransitive phrases, it is left unsaid what it is 'you' are not permitted to write about, which produces a similar effect to the forbidding of speaking or even thinking in general. The poem deictically references 'what happened then' and 'what happened there' but although it is possible to resolve 'then' and 'there' to the time and place of the massacre, there is no way to resolve 'what happened', as the events are unable to be detailed. It is not the massacre itself or the suffering of the victims which is evoked here, but the enforced silence surrounding the events. Surprisingly, for a poem about a massacre, the victims are noticeable by their absence.

Comparatively, the 'cruel men' are described in some detail:

The cruel men	are	old and deaf
Identified	Attributive process	attribute
[The cruel men]	[are]	ready to kill
Identified	Attributive process	attribute
[The cruel men]	[are]	short of breath
Participant	Attributive process	attribute
[The cruel men]	will die	
Participant	Behavioural process	
[The cruel men]	will lie in state	in Tiananmen
Participant	Behavioural process	Circumstantial element (destination)

(Ellipted information is presented in square brackets.)

The 'cruel men' who presumably caused the massacre and enforced the subsequent silence are directly described, unlike their victims. We are told what they are like, and what their deaths will be like. When they die, their bodies will 'lie in state' in Tiananmen, whereas those who died in the massacre have been so erased that no

trace of them can be found. The square itself is 'clean', and no trace of their deaths or their blood can be found.

The only linguistic reference to the speaker themselves is in the use of the plural 'our' (l. 37) – there is no use of 'I' at all. Even here, all the speaker is doing (collectively speaking) is keeping the truth of what happened in the 'dark', rather than being given any real agency by a material process, or even any description of how the speaker feels or what they perceive. Despite James Fenton making his personal relationship to the events clear, this poem does not display the most basic linguistic markers of personal poetry, therefore, nor does the poem create a strong persona in the speaker. The speaker is not demonstrably homodiegetic, and as such clearly cannot be autodiegetic. The speaker's perspective is present, but not focused on: it is not even the events themselves which are important, but the silence and censorship surrounding the events and the 'cruel men' whom we are encouraged to despise. The inclusion of when and where James Fenton wrote the poem does not make the poem more personal, therefore, but links the poem to a real world event, and encourages us to trust James Fenton's knowledge of the events that he writes about.

This poem, therefore, demonstrates a distinction that should be made between personal poetry which leads us to believe we are gaining insight into the 'real' poet, and poetry which attempts to give us insight into real events. Referencing real events which the poet has personal experiences of does not make the poem personal to the poem's speaker. In the case of *Tiananmen*, the speaker of the poem is abstract and impersonal, and although it is possible to infer details about the speaker from what they choose to tell us, their character is not illuminated nor is their perspective made available to us. This is not an introspective or internally focused poem, as the confessional poetry I discussed is, despite the clear connection between the events discussed and the poet.

It is therefore essential to separate out poetry which appears to be personal from poetry which we know has a personal link to the poet themselves. Despite the personal involvement of James Fenton in these events, the personal involvement of the speaker cannot be the focus of the poem, as this is never explained. The effect is to avoid attention on the persona of the speaker, and instead focus our attention on what is happening after the events at Tiananmen Square.

6.2 Personal autobiographical poetry

Poetry which references or discusses real world events may also be personal, according to my definition. Tatamkhulu Afrika's poem *Nothing's Changed* (appendix 8.6.2) is set in District 6 in South Africa, and as with *Tiananmen*, the poem makes strong implications that link it to the real conflicts that occurred there due to Apartheid. Unlike *Tiananmen*, *Nothing's Changed* shows many features of personal poetry, in which the speaker's thoughts and feelings are not only present, but are the focus of the poem. This demonstrates that the level of autobiography of a poem is not connected to whether or not the speaker is positioned as personal.

As Jakobson describes with Boris Pasternak's prose (1935), Tatamkhulu Afrika uses his description of the surroundings to reflect the emotions of the protagonist. In Boris Pasternak's prose, 'the immovable outlines of roofs grow inquisitive, a door swings shut with a silent reproach, the joy of a family reconciliation is expressed by a growing warmth, zeal and devotion on the part of the lamps' and in *Nothing's Changed*, the weeds (unwanted plants) are 'amiable' and 'purple flowering' whereas the 'brash' restaurant that the speaker wishes to bomb 'squats' amongst the 'incipient' planted trees. We are given not only a clear sense of injustice that something has been cleared away to make way for a 'whites only' restaurant where the speaker does not 'belong', but this is communicated to us through the perspective of a speaker personally connected to the events, making them homodiegetic (part of the diegesis of the poem) and autodiegetic (the protagonist or subject of the poem). Just as Sylvia Plath's metaphors do, these literary devices offer us insight into the psyche of the speaker, except in this case, the more metonymic and narrative writing also gives us a strong sense of time, place and embodiment for the speaker, something I demonstrated was impossible to conclusively identify in either *Daddy* or *Lady Lazarus*.

This poem has a higher level of narrativity than *Tiananmen* because although the latter referenced a specific place, the poem was *about* that place, rather than set there, and had no clearly embodied protagonist (or speaker). The speaker tells us that 'Tiananmen/Is broad and clean' but there is no indication of where Tiananmen was in relation to either the speaker or the addressee(s). In *Nothing's Changed* the homodiegetic and autodiegetic speaker is actually in District 6, walking through it, and describing what they see, which meets Fludernik's requirement for 'experientiality' and also for a narrative scene, where 'a specific time and location are suggested' (2007:110). Tiananmen Square was merely discussed in *Tiananmen*, whereas District 6 is being experienced by the speaker, making this poem more focused on their personal connection to the setting.

This greater degree of narrativity is used to describe the experience of walking through (what once was) District 6 in such a way so as to emphasise the thoughts and feelings of the speaker. For example, the fact that the speaker is in District 6 is not just something that they 'know', but this knowledge is something felt by progressively more emotive physical descriptions starting with 'but my feet know,/and my hands,' to 'the soft labouring of my lungs,/and the hot, white, inwards turning/anger of my eyes.' In contrast to the less personal speaker of *Tiananmen* who is not directly referenced by any of the processes of the poem, the speaker here is either the actor or the goal (at least meronymically, in the case of 'trouser cuffs') in the majority of processes. The first stanza describes how the landscape interacts with the speaker, and rather by describing his feet as treading on the stones or crunching the cans, the objects in the scene are given the active processes and the speaker is merely the location for these to occur.

Small round hard stones	Click		under my heels
seeding grasses	Thrust	bearded seeds	into trouser cuffs

Cans, trodden on,	Crunch		
Actor	Material process	Goal	Circumstantial element

Despite the fact that it is the speaker who is walking through District 6, the description of this walk makes them passive, and gives the agency to the landscape that is being traversed. By making the landscape the actors in material processes the impression is created of an active, living landscape which, as Tatamkhulu Afrika himself described, is 'resisting' the speaker's intrusion (BBC, c2014a). As with *Tiananmen*, this poem is focused on a real location which is crucial to understanding the historical details the poem bases itself on, and by giving agency to this location, our attention is more keenly focused on its importance.

The description of the landscape also serves to give the poem a clear, physical setting which is enough for a narrative scene. In addition, by relating the landscape to the speaker's body, we also gain a clear sense of their physical presence in the scene. They are physically present, and experiencing the location, and by describing how the landscape acts on their body parts, their physical sensations are made prominent. In contrast, the speaker of *Tiananmen* had no clear location, and the only hint to their physical self was the reference to 'our heart of hearts' which only involves a body part through metaphor.

The poem gives us a strong sense of the speaker's perspective when how clearly they 'know' is emphasised far more than what it is that they know:

My feet	Know	[that this is District 6]
My hands	[know]	[that this is District 6]
the skin about my bones	[knows]	[that this is District 6]
the soft labouring of my lungs,	[know]	[that this is District 6]
the hot, white, inwards turning anger of my eye	[knows]	[that this is District 6]
Sensor	Cognition process	Phenomenon

This attributes mental processes to the speaker's various body parts, which in turn metonymically intensifies their position as focaliser and locus of the poem. The experiences that the speaker had are so intense that they are now an ingrained and indelible part of their physical body, and this body is made more prominent by the references both to what it can sense, and how it is acted upon by the landscape that triggers the emotion. (In contrast, the speaker of *Tiananmen* had no mental processes attributed to them at all.) The final phrase goes further than metonymy, and makes the 'anger of my eye' the sensor, which personifies the emotion felt by an already personified body part. In the final stanza of the poem, it is the speaker's hands that 'burn' for a stone or a bomb rather than the speaker themselves. The repeated attention to the speaker's body parts emphasises the depth of their emotion which is felt physically, rather than purely being a mental process.

In fact, most of the processes which the speaker performs are cognition. In addition to the list of body parts that 'know' they are in District 6, the speaker 'knows' where

they belong, and rather than simply describing what is inside the restaurant, the speaker tells us that they 'know[s]' what they will see before they look, foregrounding their mental processes rather than their surroundings. This results in a strongly personal speaker, who tells us more about how the events at District 6 affected them than it does about the events themselves. In addition, the attributing of cognitive and sensory experiences to the speaker's body parts means that the anger felt is presented as something that the speaker does not control: it is their hands that want the bomb, and it is their body parts which have the emotional reaction to the location. As Simpson says, this type of meronymic agency 'often makes what [characters] do, say or think appear involuntary, cut adrift from conscious intervention' (2004:77). These emotions are uncontrollable and actively caused by District 6 itself.

Relevance theory can again help us to link this poem to the historical events surrounding District 6. The fact that the speaker 'knows' that it is District 6 because of their 'anger' strongly implies that they are angry because of what happened there. Even the last line of the poem (which comes at the end of a stanza in which the speaker is interacting with their surroundings, creating both narrative scene, action and experientiality) focuses on the speaker's thoughts by explaining why the anger is so deeply felt. The physical events of the poem are not particularly interesting: what is foregrounded is the interaction between what the speaker sees and how this makes them think and feel. The most memorable and perhaps shocking 'event' in this narrative occurs in a possible sub-world, in which the speaker either smashes the glass of the restaurant with a stone or destroys it with a bomb. This does not actually occur in the diegetic world of the poem, but only as the speaker's fantasy, again emphasising what it is that they think rather than anything that has happened.

The fifth stanza of the poem uses the second person, rather than first person. However, it seems likely that the 'you' of this stanza includes the speaker themselves. I assume that the reason they know that the 'working man's café' sells 'bunny chows' which can be eaten 'at a plastic table's top' without actually being there (as the café is 'down the road') is because they have done so, and therefore I also assume that 'take it with you' is a description of something that the speaker has done, rather than an instruction to the reader. The location of the café itself is 'Down the road', which relates it distally from the speaker, further linking them to the 'you' in the stanza (despite the distance – as Jeffries argues, even distal deixis further solidifies a speaker as the focaliser of a poem (2000)). This use of you, which does not refer clearly to an addressee, is surprisingly, as identified by Wales (1996:78-81) and Hyman (2004:163), and Hyman also discusses its use for self-address, where a speaker uses 'you' to discuss themselves, describing this as 'I -> you transfer' (367). The use of 'you' here provides a deictic shift from the narrative of the poem to a description of general events at a distant location.

The café 'sells/bunny chows', and as they are plural, the impression is created that this is something that the café does constantly, rather than this being a specific sale. The 'you' here is not the generalised reader, therefore, but instead indicates that the

action it details is not specific or being currently experienced by the speaker.. As the speaker is the focaliser of this poem, distal deictic markers increase the ease with which we can take the speaker's perspective. This brief shift from the use of the first person does not make the poem less personal, therefore, as it both gives us a stronger sense of where the speaker is located, and also a better idea of where it is they feel that they do belong, if it is not here in District 6.

Unlike *Tiananmen*, *Nothing's Changed* fulfils many of the features I described as being prototypically personal. There is a homodiegetic and autodiegetic speaker, and the speaker's mental processes (and their emotional responses to their surroundings) are a major feature of the poem. In addition, although the sense of narrative scene and action is far stronger here than in the Sylvia Plath poem, the strongest impact of the poem comes from something that the speaker wants to do, rather than any action occurring in the poem. Aside from a brief mention of a 'guard', there are no other consciousnesses presented. Although the continued injustice in South Africa after the fall of Apartheid is crucial to understanding the poem, this poem remains one that is personal to its speaker. In contrast the speaker in *Tiananmen* is not the agent in any clear behavioural or material processes, and despite the repetition of a specific place, the speaker is not clearly located there. *Tiananmen* is not *about* the speaker, and is therefore not autodiegetic, making the poem markedly less personal by my definition.

These two poems demonstrate that fictionality, narrativity and personalness are separate qualities, which should not be assumed to occur concurrently, and the truth of the events referenced by the poem should not lead us automatically to link the poet to their speaker or centring the poem on this speaker.

6.3 Encyclopaedic knowledge of real life events

If we recognise that the focus on a personal speaker does not necessarily make the text less fictional than a non-personal text like *Tiananmen*, where is the line to be drawn between limiting and misleading focus on real life events (such as Sylvia Plath's suicide) and recognising that poems can reference and require knowledge of real life events? This question is tackled in Fish's article, 'Interpreting the Variorum' (1980) where he uses his analysis of Milton's *Sonnet XVIII* (appendix 8.6. 3) as evidence that the purely text-based approach I am advocating for is flawed as a method of engaging with literature.

Fish describes the sonnet as shifting between 'plea', where God is called upon to avenge the fallen faithful, and 'complaint', as to how God could have allowed the tragedy to occur at all (1980:153). The poem ends, Fish claims, 'with an affirmation of faith in the ultimate operation of God's justice.' (1980:153)

However, to Fish this affirmation is a little hollow, as the Waldensians (whom he recognises as the subjects of the poem) *did* follow God's laws, and yet were still massacred. 'In other words,' Fish writes, 'the details of their story would seem to undercut the affirmative moral the speaker proposes to draw from it...' (1980:153) and he believes that any reading of the poem which is less than ringingly

affirmational is produced not by ‘...the words on the page but of the experience of the reader.’ (1980:153) The Waldensians are not mentioned in the poem, so any reading which is affected by including them cannot be simply attributed to the words on the page. Similarly, one could argue that unless the reader uses their knowledge of the history of District 6 in a reading of *Nothing’s Changed*, they may not realise why the speaker might be so angry to see evidence of racism in this particular location. Tatamkhulu Afrika himself has said that he wrote the poem in 1991 after the fall of Apartheid (BBC, c2014a). If we consider the history of District 6, then the fact that there is no sign saying that the restaurant is a ‘whites only inn’ does imply that this poem is set after Apartheid, as during Apartheid such segregation was overt and did make use of such signs. Unless the reader recognises the relevance of the fall of Apartheid (and possibly also the election of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress to government) they might not know why the speaker would expect anything to have changed, and therefore the final line (and the title) would not have the same impact. With both poems, therefore, the meaning of the poem depends on historical and contextual knowledge. Clearly, a certain degree of external knowledge must be combined with the texts in order to produce the readings that I am discussing here, and this calls into question my rejection of Sylvia Plath’s biography when analysing her poetry.

I would argue that there is a discernible difference between attempts to map Sylvia Plath’s poetry onto her life and mapping the events of this poem onto the historical accounts of the Waldensians. Although ‘the words on the page’ do not reference the Waldensians any more than Sylvia Plath’s poetry references Ted Hughes or Otto Plath, the title commonly given to the sonnet (*On the Late Massacre in Piemont*) has been neglected in Fish’s account. The whole history of the event which inspired this poem is not detailed in full, but it is clearly referenced in the poem by the mention of the ‘bloody Piemontese’. To produce Fish’s reading, the reader is expected to know at least the basics of the events in Piemont, just as he or she is expected to be familiar with the vocabulary of the poem. While he believes that ‘it is the structure of the reader’s experience rather than any structures available on the page that should be the object of description’ (1980:154) in the example he gives, it is the text, not the reader’s experience, which should be given credit for prompting the reader to consider the Waldensians.

If those attempting stylistic analyses of this poem confined themselves to the strict denotational values of language, then the mistake would be in insufficient understanding of linguistics. The equivalent mistake in analysing Sylvia Plath’s poetry would be in ignoring the reference to the Holocaust in *Daddy* or to the biblical story of Lazarus in *Lady Lazarus*, rather than ignoring the similarities between the events of the poem and the events of Sylvia Plath’s life, which are not explicitly referenced or even strongly implied.

Sperber and Wilson’s claim that we assume optimal relevance (2004) is helpful, therefore, in explaining how readers link these poems to the real world events which inspired them despite the lack of explication. We assume that the ‘bloody

Piedmontese' or 'District 6' are referenced for a reason, and look to our understanding of these phrases to find possible implications. This means that the reader must share relevance with the poets for this to happen. Someone who has never heard of Tiananmen Square or District 6 will not understand these implications, perhaps resulting in confused or incomplete readings, or perhaps they might notice this lack of shared relevance and investigate the unknown references. As Sperber and Wilson explain, implications can vary in their strength: a proposition is strongly implicated if understanding it 'is essential in order to arrive at an interpretation that satisfies the expectations of relevance raised by the utterance itself' and is weakly implicated if 'its recovery helps with the construction of an interpretation that is relevant in the expected way, but is not itself essential because the utterance suggests a range of similar possible implicatures, any one of which would do' (Sperber and Wilson, 1986). The use of the phrase 'bloody Piedmontese' strongly implies the poem's connection to the massacre of the Waldensians. A reader who had not heard of the Piedmontese or Tiananmen would have a good idea of what needed to be investigated, therefore, in order to understand the poem better. In Sylvia Plath's poetry, however, there is no such clear linguistic pointer telling the reader that they should know more about her life story.

It is in this distinction which I believe the difference between poetry which focuses on or references specific or real events, and poetry which is assumed to have a biographical link to the poet lies. In attempting to connect one of the many weak implications of Sylvia Plath's poetry to a specific event in her life, the reader or critic is reducing the range of interpretations possible and elevating a weak implication into a strong one, further reinforcing the assumption that personal poetry is personal to the poet. However, in resolving a strong implication in order to make a link between a specific reference and the text, we do not need to reach outside the text itself to do so. The events at Tiananmen Square are connotated by the word 'Tiananmen' itself, and these events are a matter of public record. As Sperber and Wilson would say, these events are part of the encyclopaedic entry for *Tiananmen*. Information such as this is 'selected ad hoc to determine the occasion-specific interpretation of a word' (2004:267). A distinction should be made, therefore, between potential connections to private events and explicit or strongly implied links to public events.

Fish seems to have a 'dictionary' view of linguistic meaning, in which it is assumed that 'only a small subset of our knowledge of a concept needs to be represented as the meaning of a word' (Croft and Cruse, 2004:30). Fish's view is that only what is now deemed 'linguistic knowledge' (which 'concerns the core meaning of lexical items' (Keifer, 1988:2)) is part of the text. Other forms of knowledge are now considered relevant to deciphering linguistic meaning, such as conceptual knowledge 'which has to do with the predictable modifications of the core meanings in various contexts', and of course encyclopaedic knowledge, which comprises 'knowledge which is associated with a word but which is not immediately relevant to linguistic structure' (Kiefer, 1988:2). So, for example, 'Lazarus' is a proper noun, but knowledge of the biblical story of Lazarus can be used as encyclopaedic knowledge to

contextualise the use of the name in Sylvia Plath's poem, and therefore view it as a poem about re-birth or resurrection in some form.

This encyclopaedic knowledge could also be described using text-world theory. All discourse, including the reading of poetry, takes place in the discourse world where 'at least one speaker or writer and one or more listeners or readers' (Gavins, 2007a:10) are communicating with each other. Both the poet and the poem's readers exist in the discourse world, along with 'all the personal and cultural knowledge those participants bring with them to the language situation' (Gavins, 2007a:10). A reader with an awareness of the biblical story of Lazarus will bring that knowledge with them into the discourse world when reading *Lady Lazarus*, for example. If the reader did not have this knowledge, or if the reader of *Tiananmen* or *Nothing's Changed* was not aware of the respective political or historical events, then this would cause a 'mis-match in cultural knowledge' between the poet and the reader (both participants in the discourse world) (Gavins, 2007a:23). This lack of shared relevance or 'mis-match in cultural knowledge' is a common experience in reading literary texts, Gavins points out, as we are frequently separated from the writers who produce the texts we read by time and space, as well as cultural knowledge and encyclopaedic knowledge (2007b:137). Gavins describes how such a mis-match is recognised and negotiated by the participants in a real-life encounter when buying a sandwich (2007a:19-24), and although such a literal negotiation with Tatamkhulu Afrika or James Fenton is likely to be impossible, the reader can similarly recognise that something is being referenced that they did not bring to the discourse world (toponyms such as 'Tiananmen Square' or 'District 6' for example), and can therefore use inference to identify what gaps in their cultural knowledge should be filled in order to correctly build the text-world of the poem. She also points out although recognising and attempting to fill in the gaps caused by such distance is 'second nature to most literate human beings', these gaps do alter how texts are perceived, meaning that our interpretations of these poems will be different based on the different levels of knowledge about the specific conflicts we bring to the discourse world (Gavins, 2007b:137).

Like Sylvia Plath, many links between Tatamkhulu Afrika's biographical details and his poem are possible. He lived in District 6 before he and everyone else was cleared out in order to make the area 'whites only' (Baderoon, 2012:510) and at the time of writing this poem he was a convicted terrorist for African National Congress's military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. His name (which means 'Old Man of Africa') is a praise name given to him by his fellow combatants, which he subsequently made his legal name (Baderoon, 2012:510). Knowing this information, it becomes easy to link the speaker of this poem to Tatamkhulu Afrika himself, and to therefore assume that he, personally, wants to resume terrorist activity with 'a stone/a bomb'. In addition, unlike Sylvia Plath, Tatamkhulu Afrika has gone on record to say that the poem *is* autobiographical, and the poem describes a walk that he took through District 6, having avoided it for a long time due to his painful memories (BBC, c2014a).

However, this does not alter the meaning of the poem any more than knowing that Sylvia Plath's father was German helps to understand *Daddy* – it merely links the poems back to their lives. Conversely, linking Edge to Medea gives us some possible motivation for the deaths, and therefore why the dead woman might be wearing 'the smile of accomplishment'. Knowing that Tatamkhulu Afrika's biographical details match up to those of the speaker in the poem might make some of the implications of the poem stronger (the reader is probably more likely to view the speaker as a former terrorist who has used bombs, for example, rather than someone who perhaps wishes to take up terrorism for the first time) but it does not change or add implications. In fact, assuming that the speaker represents Tatamkhulu Afrika directly could limit the impact of the poem: he is white, and the race of the speaker is not specified, but is heavily implied to be black. Possibly, the alienation of the speaker who feels potentially targeted by the guard at the 'whites only' restaurant would be reduced in the mind of the reader if they pictured this speaker as white. Interestingly, although the BBC revision video for the poem interviewed Tatamkhulu Afrika discussing the real experiences the poem details, their dramatic representation of the poem presents the protagonist as a man of colour (BBC, c2014c). Despite a clear personal link between the poet and the speaker, asserted by the poet himself, and many of the features which I have demonstrated show it to be linguistically personal to the speaker, it is *still* possible and even beneficial to view the speaker as someone other than the poet.

Similarly, much has been written on the subject of Shakespeare's 'Dark Lady' or his 'Fair Youth', for instance (Fort, 1927), but very little of it has altered our understanding of the effects produced by the sonnets themselves. The text of the line 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun' from *Sonnet 130* (appendix 8.4 1) may include the concept of having a 'Mistress', the conventional practice of describing the eyes of a beautiful person as bright, and the idea of the Sun but they do not include the identity of one specific woman. In contrast, if the deaths of the Waldensians had only recently come to light, it would, as Fish points out, change the understanding of the poem considerably, and if *Tiananmen* or *Nothing's Changed* were read without the encyclopaedic knowledge of either the massacre of Apartheid and District 6 available to the reader, then the resultant interpretations of those poems also would be very different.

There is a huge spectrum, therefore, between an over reliance on the pure, denotational meaning of texts which could result in distorted and incomplete readings of these poems, and the literary biographer and historian, who cannot examine the poetry of Sylvia Plath or John Milton without considering her marriage and suicide or his blindness and Protestantism.

It seems foolish to pick a point on this spectrum and declare it as the only correct one. Even prominent stylistician Peter Stockwell included the biographical detail of Milton's blindness in his article 'Miltonic Texture and the feeling of reading' (2002:1), and similarly it is difficult to read Plath's *Lady Lazarus* without considering that the suicide attempts it describes might be autobiographical, but in both cases, if you

want to examine how the poems do what they do, the centre of that should be the text itself. If considering biographical detail does nothing apart from lock you into one of the possible implications of the poem (such as assuming that 'light' is only visible light in John Milton's *On His Blindness*, or that the death refers to only suicide attempts in *Lady Lazarus*, or that the speaker's 'daddy' in *Daddy* is only a metaphorical Nazi because Otto Plath was not one) then analysis that requires it should be treated sceptically. Such analysis elevates one of the many possible weak implications created by the poem to the 'correct' resolution of the poem, and in doing so diminishes the poetic effect.

Of course, it is not necessary for every analysis of a poem to examine every part of it, and so these aspects of the text need not be considered every time, but events, people and places referenced within a poem should be considered as part of the text. With this considered, literary critics who focus their research on biographical and historical details have a valuable role to play in stylistic analyses, as their research can help us determine what should be considered encyclopaedic knowledge and what should be considered an over-reliance on context and biography.

These conflict poems reference real events, which are publicly known and have historical significance. In contrast, the details that biographically-based criticism attempts to bring into analysis of the confessional poets' works is private information about the poets. A clear distinction should therefore be made between poetry which references specific events and poetry which appears personal to the poet themselves, and it should be recognised that fitting into one category does not mean that the poem will also fit into the other, nor does it mean that the textual mechanisms through meaning is created should be ignored in favour of the poet's biography.

6.4 Poetry of the First World War

Poetry written about the First World War presents an interesting case study for the examination of this distinction between misleading biographical criticism and references to real world events within the text, as the poetry is not only widely considered to be nonfictional, but is also tightly wound up with cultural understanding of the war. The enormous volume of poetry written during the First World War and subsequently published in Great Britain was described as a 'hurricane of poetry' by one contemporary newspaper (Longley, 2005:57) and the phrase 'soldier poet' was almost 'a tautology' (Longley, 2005:58) as poetry became one of the primary ways in which the soldier's experience was communicated to the Home Front, 'a phenomenon unmatched in other combatant countries' (Longley, 2005:57).

Despite the radically different subject matter, there are some similarities between the ways in which confessional poetry and the poetry of the First World War are viewed. Just as the confessional poets are assumed to be writing autobiographical poetry about their own experiences, so the soldier poets are assumed to be writing from their direct experience. Campbell goes as far as to suggest (rather disapprovingly) that 'the single most important defining element of the genre is this

emphasis on personal experience' (1999a:204). Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen's poetry (amongst others) was considered important not only for its literary merit, but as voices which communicated the authentic truth about the 'numbing brutality' of the war, and the two poets 'came to stand as the preeminent voices of anti-war feeling' (Goldensohn, 2012:1531).

However, even if we are to assume that their poetry relies on their personal experience, this does not mean that it is personal to the speakers they create. In addition, despite the fact that these war poems give a clear indication of being based on 'real' events, they display multiple perspectives and many levels of mediacy, and do not present a purely 'personal' account of the events that the poets experienced.

In my last chapter, I said that a personal poem should give some insight into the speaker's psyche, and the thoughts and feelings of that consciousness should be the subject of the poem. Such a poem is likely to appear to be personal to the poet whether or not it is. If so, many of the poems of the First World War present an interesting problem, because by discussing the collective experience of soldiers, they often avoid presenting one consciousness, and instead use the plural first person. One example is Wilfred Owen's *Exposure* (appendix 8.6. 4).

This horrifying poem focuses on an unusual aspect of trench warfare – misery caused by winter, as opposed to the enemy guns. This poem has a clear element of narrativity: there is a clear setting, the action takes place at a specific time, and there is also enough to satisfy Fludernik's requirement for experientiality. In fact, the characters' experience is the subject of the poem.

The processes that the soldiers perform demonstrates their lack of control over their situation and surroundings:

Our brains	Ache		Experiencing
we	keep awake		Material
sentries	Whisper		Verbal
we	Hear	the mad gusts tugging on the wire	Mental
We	only know	war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.	Mental
We	Watch	them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance	Mental
We	Cringe		Material
[We]	Stare		Behavioural
we	Drowse		Behavioural
our ghosts	Drag		Material
We	turn back	to our dying	Material
we	believe not otherwise	can kind fires burn	Mental
The burying-party	pause	over half-known faces	Material
All their eyes	are	Ice	Behavioural
Participant	Process	Goal/phenonemon	Process type

Many of these processes are intransitive, meaning that the soldiers are acting, but without a goal that they can change; the soldiers 'whisper', 'stare', 'drowse' and 'keep awake'. In addition to being intransitive, these processes are not material processes, but are all either sensing or behavioural, giving them even less control over their surroundings. Many of the transitive processes are also mental rather than material processes, meaning that the soldiers are merely observing or perceiving their surroundings rather than altering them. The soldiers 'hear', 'watch' and 'know' things, but do not affect anything. Included in this should also be the burying-party who 'pause' over the faces of the dead comrades that they must bury but are not described as actually burying them, and the fact that the soldiers 'turn back' to dying. Dying is one of the few things that the soldiers are able to actually do.

'Our ghosts drag home' is another of the few material processes that the soldiers are the agents of, but by choosing their 'ghosts' as the subject, the text still emphasises their lack of agency and their lack of control.

In comparison, the weather and their surroundings are given several transitive material processes. The winds 'knife' them and dawn 'attacks' them, which personifies these natural phenomena as intentionally wounding them. The wind is also 'mad', which attributes it a mental state, and 'tugs' on the barbed wire and the flakes of snow comes 'feeling' for their faces. The weather and surroundings are actively and purposefully causing the suffering felt by the soldiers, and this suffering is the focus of the poem, as the title suggests.

Interestingly for a poem about war, it is the weather which is the enemy here rather than any enemy combatants. The enemies' guns sound 'like a dull rumour of some other war', and the bullets are described as 'less deadly' than the snow. Instead of fighting that 'other war' the men are contending with the dawn's 'melancholy army' which actively and intentionally 'attacks' them. This makes the men even less powerful and more helpless. Even without a physical enemy to fight, they are still under attack, and losing.

What complicates this is that although the speaker is homodiegetic to the poem's setting, this speaker appears to be speaking for all the soldiers present. All the processes that I have described refer to the collective group of the soldiers, whether they perform the process, or are affected by it. If the speaker is one of these soldiers (which would be a logical assumption to make) they have not offered any indication that their experience or consciousness is separate or distinct, leaving open the possibility that this is not a singular speaker, but instead several speakers. Alber et al. define 'we' narration as 'when a narrator consistently speaks in the first person plural' and this becomes 'unnatural' when 'the speaker violates linguistic conventions by refusing to identify him or herself at appropriate moments' or 'when the narrator describes the thoughts or perceptions of other minds that he or she cannot know, or when the "we" extends over many years and geographical areas' (2013:np). In this case, the singular speaker does not separate out the collective experience until the final stanza, which references 'they'. Aside from this brief discussion of 'the burying

party' who bury those of the group that died overnight, everything that happens and everything that is experienced happens to all of them, but this is enough for it to be categorised as 'unnatural' by this definition. Marcus, on the other hand, disagrees with Alber et al., and argues that when 'we' narrators represent more than two people (as in this case) it is not 'contradictory' when they refer to members of the group (2008:15). In the sentence 'we promised to help our friend, but one of us refused to promise this', Marcus argues that it is only 'logically inconsistent' if the 'we' is used by only two narrators (2008:15). The use of 'they' by a 'we' narrator is therefore unlikely to be perceived as 'unnatural', as there are clearly more than two soldiers represented by the 'we'.

Even discounting this, however, the speaker in this poem does seem to have access to all of the consciousnesses present, which would still makes this an 'unnatural narrative' by Alber et al.'s definition. As already pointed out, there are several mental processes which seem to be shared by the whole group. Some of the mental perception processes, reflecting what the group can see or hear, are plausible without access to the group's consciousness (the speaker could have extrapolated based on their own experience, or guessed based on observation) but when we are told that 'we only know that war lasts, rain soaks and clouds sag stormy', which describes the limits of all of their mental capacities, for this to be true, rather than based on one speaker's guesswork, it requires either the presentation of collective consciousness, or an 'I' who has access to all of the soldiers' consciousnesses. The group even seem to share the same internal monologue: 'What are we doing?' and 'Is it that we are dying?' both of which occur at the end of a stanza which refers to the group as 'we', strongly implying that these questions are being asked by the whole group.

Fludernik does not even consider it plausible that 'we' narration could achieve this presentation of collective consciousness, because the we-texts she examined predominantly used the first person. She does, however, describe texts which use 'they' (a distal rather than proximal collective pronoun) as moving 'into the purely fictional realm as soon as their multiple protagonists... are presented as multiple experiencers whose consciousness, opinions and attitudes are represented in detail (1996:167-8). Viewing such texts as able to report the thoughts and feelings of a group of people is, claims Fludernik, 'a completely unrealistic reading since the group's opinions and thoughts are unlikely to be synchronized in this manner' (1996:168). Margolin similarly believes that

...whenever mental factors, such as the beliefs, attitudes, internal states... are concerned, the "we" sayer's only knowledge of them is indirect, based on his/her inferences from the others' behavior and claims in interpersonal space. Any "we felt," "we thought," "it occurred to us" statement in a first-person plural narrative, unlike "we ran" or "we found ourselves at," is internally heterogenous, based as it is on the individual speaker's immediate knowledge of his/her own psyche, and on (defeasible) hypotheses formed by

this "we" sayer regarding his/her coagents. meaning that 'we' is actually I + other(s)' rather than 'I + I' (2001:246).

Similar to Fludernik's position, Margolin argues that in first-person plural narratives 'There is always a single "we" sayer on the highest level of textual embedding' (2001:244). This would mean that there is a single speaker in *Exposure* who is speaking on behalf of the group of soldiers. Margolin bases this on a study of narrative prose which uses the plural first person, and found only 'three texts (Armah 1973; Faulkner and Silvain 1971)' with 'a total absence of "I" on the levels of narration and narrated alike, turning the speaker into an unspecified voice emanating from somewhere within the group' (2001:244). Margolin does not account for these texts or discuss whether or not it is possible that they lack a specific 'we sayer' but the assumption is clearly that 'we' in a text must either be separable into an 'I + other(s)' or be 'impossible'.

This would make *Exposure* a poem with a single speaker who makes impossible claims to know what their fellow soldiers are thinking, rather than set of speakers sharing the same thoughts. However, *Exposure* offers no indication of an 'I' voice within the 'we', making assuming that there is one potentially misleading. If the speaker of this poem is in fact a group of speakers, speaking simultaneously, then there would be no violation of linguistic convention in reporting shared internal experiences or feelings. Here is an example of how narratology has restricted itself by focusing on prose,. Such narratives may be difficult to achieve in prose, but perhaps because of the comparative brevity of poetry, the form of unusual pronomial narrations such as this can be achieved without the unnaturalness that Margolin assumes will be present. Fludernik claims that studies of we-narration are limited by a 'rather sparse corpus of we-texts' which means that some forms of we-narration remain only 'theoretically available' (and mentions Margolin's work as the most significant in the area)(1996:298). By restricting their approach to prose, narratologists are therefore missing out on opportunities to expand their corpus of unusual pronomial narratives. In this particular case, also, not only is the poem short, but the action of the narrative itself actually details a great deal of literal *inaction*. The topic of the poem is that 'nothing happens' and apart from the soldiers 'watching' or even 'dying' most of the action involves things happening to them (the winds 'knife' them, dawn 'attacks' them and frost 'shrivels' them) so it is easier to countenance the possibility that the actions described are taken or experienced collectively. Fludernik finds collective narrativising 'completely unrealistic' as 'the group's opinions and thoughts are unlikely to be synchronized in this manner,' (1996:168) but Wilfred Owen manages this by describing how the soldiers' mental capacity has been reduced by the intensity and longevity of their suffering. The soldiers even only 'half' know each other's faces. The reduction of their mental and physical capacity to such an extent that their behavioural and mental processes can be described collectively in this way is one of the topics of the poem.

It should also be noted that due to the lyric's association with performance and song that it is quite possible to imagine a choir singing songs which use 'we' without assuming that they are 'speaking' for one voice in that multitude. (Take, for example, song lyrics like 'together we learn to read and write' or 'we are the world, we are the children'.) That is not to say that I believe that the poem cannot be read as using an 'I' who speaks for the group, only that there is no clear indication one way or the other. Certainly, a group of speakers (rather than a speaker who speaks for the group) resonates well with the collective suffering of the soldiers, which is the topic of the poem.

In the final stanza, the 'we' is separated out by the references to 'The burying-party', as I mentioned above. Even here, however, they are referred to in the plural, rather than given a sense of individuality, and the final line of the poem makes it clear that they are still included in the 'we'. This could be an indication that there is a singular I who is speaking for the group, and who is not part of the burying-party, but if the text had used 'we' to refer to the burying-party, this could be inferred to mean that the 'I' speaker is part of the burying party, and were merely sub-dividing the collective experience from which they were speaking. If we assume that a plural voice will always mean the presence of a singular one, we will find reasons to infer one in every text. Just as the singular narrator who uses 'we' can on occasion 'dissociate him/herself from the other members' and then 'return to the common/general "we" stance' (Margolin, 2001:255) these minor incidents of separation do not make the text any less an example of we-narration.

It does not seem like a stretch to assume that Wilfred Owen wrote this poem based on his own experience of trench-warfare, or that he wished people reading his poems to understand what trench life was actually like. Focusing too much on his personal link to the material might, however, cause us to miss the interesting narrative possibilities of a *natural* first-person plural perspective, rather than a 'we sayer' speaking for 'a group of people linked by some tie' (Margolin, 2001:254). This tie is, in fact, an important factor in assessing the effect of the poem. Wilfred Owen here is not emphasising his personal experience, but the common experience of the trench soldier. If we treat this poem as personal, we may actually be working against Wilfred Owen's literary intentions. As with *Nothing's Changed*, the poem may be based on the poet's real experiences, but this does not mean that a clear impression of the speaker being the poet is created.

Margolin argues that collective narration results in the individuals in the group being 'regarded not as those of autonomous, unique individuals but as those of members of a group' (2000:595) which certainly suggests that this feature is one which should be considered as contributing to a less personal poem than one written in the singular first person. Similarly, Marcus points out that 'plural "we" may assist the narrator in avoiding his or her personal responsibility' (2008:15) which also suggests that plural first person is a way of avoiding focus on the individual perspectives and psyches of those who are speaking or narrating. The overall effect of this is the reduction of the individuals concerned to little more than their shared suffering, to

some extent de-individualising and depersonalising them. In the last stanza, the phrase 'this mud and us' co-ordinates the two as equals, meaning that even God (through 'his frost') does not distinguish between the two. This removal of the soldiers' individuality and humanity is supported by the reported reduction in their mental capacity, which is reduced by the intensity of their suffering with the result that they 'only know' about the suffering they are experiencing. They are no longer 'autonomous, unique individuals' as Margolin says, and anything that could have enabled us to distinguish between them has been removed.

This depersonalisation has a dual-effect, therefore: it not only emphasises a particular aspect of the suffering of the trench soldier, but it also separates the poem from Wilfred Owen's personal experience himself by encouraging us to consider the collective suffering of the whole group. This poem may be based on Wilfred Owen's personal experience, but it is the ubiquity of what he suffered amongst the soldiers that is being communicated, rather than his own, unique and personal experience.

This depersonalisation and even dehumanisation is not unexpected in Wilfred Owen's poetry. Penny discusses the dehumanisation in Wilfred Owen's poetry, claiming that the description of gas as 'bitter as the cud' and the soldiers as 'blood-shod' in *Dulce Et Decorum Est* (appendix 8.6.5) echoes 'these who die as cattle' in *Anthem for Doomed Youth*, and this connection highlights the animal implications of 'blood-shod' (2011:165). Although these poems are demonstrably personal to Wilfred Owen, it would be a mistake to consider them to be personal poems in a linguistic sense, as much of his writing focuses on the lack of individuality afforded the soldiers, and the collective nature of their suffering. Unlike *Nothing's Changed*, this poem is not about one person's emotional reaction to injustice or suffering, but a description of the suffering that all the soldiers in this situation were subjected to.

This poem is also considerably more narrative than either *Daddy* or *Lady Lazarus*. The action in both of those poems was described metaphorically, and because of the wide range of possible implications that these metaphors produced, these actions were impossible to resolve into a clear narrative with a setting and specific time. Those poems lacked the world-builders that *Exposure* uses to create the setting of the trench. The greater degree of narrativity in *Exposure* is easy to demonstrate by how much easier it is to describe what actually happens in it, or rather, what has happened to the speaker(s).

It is much easier to argue that *Exposure* is based on Wilfred Owen's life (he was a trench soldier, after all) but despite the ease with which his biography can be matched to the poem, the poetry of Sylvia Plath examined here should still be considered more 'personal', both for the foregrounding of thought and feeling over anything which actually happened, and for the unquestionably singular speaker. *Exposure* does, of course, make it clear what the soldiers were feeling as a result of the action of the poem, but there is still a far clearer sense of what it is that actually happened to them which caused them to feel this way, and it is not merely their suffering, but what it is that caused their suffering, which is likely to horrify the

reader. As I argued in my previous chapter, this makes this poem less prototypically personal. In addition, the fact that the poem encodes the possibility of *speakers* rather than just one speaker makes it even less likely that the poem will appear personal to Wilfred Owen, as the experience detailed is collective rather than individual.

Daddy and *Lady Lazarus* appear to be personal to the real poet (leading many critics to discuss the poet's biography rather than the poems themselves) whereas *Exposure* may reflect the poet's real experiences, but without the emphasis on any one individual's thoughts and feelings. Sylvia Plath's poetry appears personal but there is little evidence that it is autobiographical, whereas Wilfred Owen's poetry appears less like a window into his own psyche, but with far more evidence that it is based on his life.

One of the most well-known and well-regarded poems to have been written about the First World War is *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, also by Wilfred Owen (appendix 8.6.5). Andrew Motion implicitly emphasises the poem's historical and literary significance, when he claims that the poetry written during the First World War caused the phrase 'Dulce et Decorum Est' to become 'that old lie' rather than a 'patriotic imperative' (Hollis and Keegan, 2003). Like *Exposure*, it makes use of the plural first-person, but unlike *Exposure* there is a clear, singular 'we' sayer (as Margolin would say), who separates themselves out from the group half way through the poem.

Until line 14, it would be possible to interpret the speaker as a collective voice, rather than just one of the group. Not only are 'we' described as being 'bent double' and 'coughing like hags', but the speaker also describes their internal states as being 'Drunk with fatigue'. This means that although the speaker is homodiegetic to the setting and to the action, they could be interpreted as having some access to the consciousnesses of the other soldiers with them, making this either an 'unnatural narrative' (Alber et al., 2013) or this access is merely 'based... on the individual speaker's immediate knowledge of his/her own psyche, and on (defeasible) hypotheses formed by this "we" sayer regarding his/her coagents' rather than their actual knowledge (Margolin 2001:246). Although there is a clear sense of the soldiers' suffering in this section of the poem, this suffering is largely implied by behavioural and material processes, rather than explicitly communicated using mental processes. Unlike *Exposure*, the discussion of the group's internal state is brief, and it is not difficult to imagine how the speaker extrapolated from their own experience or observation, making the latter a possibility.

As with *Exposure*, one possible effect of this use of plural narration is to suggest that the soldiers' suffering has removed their individuality or even their humanity, to some extent. When there is some separation in *Exposure*, this is still referred through the plural pronoun 'they' and even when the speaker of *Dulce Et Decorum Est* tells us that some had lost their boots, they do not tell us whether they are one of those people, or how they know this, meaning that an opportunity to flesh out individuals of the group or to more clearly indicate the consciousness of the speaker

is not taken. Rather than being spoken from the perspective of an individual who is experiencing and watching the other soldiers, the collective experience of exhaustion and misery is communicated. Rather than learning about Wilfred Owen's psyche specifically, the reader is more likely to feel that they have learned something about the horrors of being a trench soldier in general, which includes the dehumanisation of war.

However, in line 14, the perspective switches to that of the speaker themselves. Not only does the speaker break away from the group and shift the locus of the poem to their own deictic centre, using 'I', but they also break one of the other soldiers away, and describe what happens to him from this perspective. Unlike *Exposure*, but like the prose texts that Margolin examined, this 'we' can be described as 'I + other(s)' (2001:246). The speaker themselves 'saw him drowning'. Up until this point, the action has been collective, with everything from the tortuous march and the 'ecstasy of fumbling' to put on gas masks being experienced by all of those present, but as one of them fails to get their mask on, this necessitates his separation, both from the group experience and also linguistically, as he is referred to in the singular. Not only this, but he is literally broken away from his comrades by his death. 'He' dies, while 'we' survive.

Ducte Et Decorum Est does not become a more personal poem because of this shift, however. If anything, the degree of introspection on behalf of the speaker reduces from this point. Although it is the speaker's experience of watching the man 'guttering, choking, drowning' which is described, rather than the dying man's actual suffering, after a brief mention of how this experience has affected them (by haunting their dreams), the speaker shifts the locus of the poem to a hitherto unmentioned addressee and then explicitly attempts to change our/their opinions on war.

Whether or not the reader will view the 'you' (also referred to sarcastically as 'my friend') as referring to them may change as the poem progresses. The reader may, at first, place themselves directly in the 'you' position, as someone who did not see 'His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin' or hear 'the blood/Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs', but in the last few lines this addressee is further defined as anyone who has not seen or heard such things but who would also tell children 'that old lie'. By telling us that if 'you' had seen or heard the man's death 'you' would not believe that it is sweet to die for your country, the speaker creates a conditional world-switch in which this is the case, despite the fact that it is not. As Gavins explains, 'In traditional grammar, conditionals are divided into two components: the protasis and the apodosis. The protasis is the part of a conditional which sets up a theoretical situation and marks it as remote from actuality... In all cases, the protasis establishes an epistemic modal-world which has its status as an unrealised possibility made linguistically evident' (2007a:121). The addressee, therefore, did not see or hear the man's death, but we are required to create a text-world in which they did in order for the apodosis of the conditional to be realised. The apodosis 'defines a situation which is consequent on the protasis' and 'normally contains the function-

advancing information which takes the initial hypothetical situation to a further point or conclusion' (Gavins, 2007a:121). In this case, the apodosis clause is 'you would not tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est /Pro patria mori.' This conditional negation results in the conception of a text-world which *does* depict the actuality: 'you' did not see the man die, and therefore 'you' *do* believe that it is sweet to die for your country. By creating this text-world, we also can infer that the only reason that people *do* believe that it is sweet to die for your country is that they do not have first-hand experience of the horrors of trench warfare as the speaker does.

The beginning of the conditional clause marks a turn in the poem. Up to that point, the poem was more like *Exposure* in tone, with the focus on the collective suffering of the soldiers and this collectivity used to dramatically demonstrate the brutality of war as one soldier is separated out by death. Also like *Exposure*, the poem displays some narrativity: although there is insight into how the protagonists feel and think, unlike *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus* it is clear what events caused these feelings. Both poems have clear settings and describe specific events, as I have already demonstrated in *Exposure*, but the soldiers in *Dulce Et Decorum Est* have far more agency afforded to them:

we	cursed	through sludge	
we	turned our backs		on the haunting flares
[we]	Began to trudge		towards our distant rest
Men	marched		
Actor	Material process	Circumstantial element	Goal

('Cursed' is a material rather than verbal process in this context, as it refers to their movement.)

These material processes of which the soldiers enact do not create the same lack of power over their surroundings as the soldiers in *Exposure* are subjected to. In *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, some of the soldiers may have 'lost their boots', but they still keep going, albeit limping with bleeding feet, whereas in *Exposure*, the soldiers are literally dying from exposure, and as such can do little to control the action of the poem. However, although the two poems differ in how active or passive their protagonists, what happens to them in both is clear. This is to be expected in a poem which explicitly intends to educate readers who do not know what horrors happened in the trenches.

However, after this turn, marked by the conditional clause in line 17, *Dulce Et Decorum Est* becomes less narrative, as the speaker instead speaks to an addressee rather than narrates their past experience.

This direct address to the reader, rather than focusing on the personal thoughts and feelings of the speaker, is a common approach in much war and protest poetry, including *Tiananmen*. The last stanza of Siegfried Sassoon's poem *Suicide in the*

Trenches (appendix 8.6.6) also uses a story about the horrors of war to rebuke the addressee.

This poem is less narrative than either of the Wilfred Owen poems, as the action is less specific. Presumably, he did not only grin once at life 'in empty joy' or sleep 'soundly' on one occasion for example, making the action of this stanza general rather than specific. This results in less experientiality from the boy (who is the subject of the poem) in the first stanza at least. The events of the second stanza are more clearly narrative, as this refers to a specific suicide, and more clearly indicates the boy's experience. The speaker appears homodiegetic by telling us that they 'knew' him, but their position is unclear. We do not know how they knew about the boy's grinning, his sleep, his whistling, or his death, and there are no markers which would indicate the speaker's physical position in any of these events.

The speaker does mediate between us and him, however, including some access to his consciousness. As the speaker claims to have known this boy (making them homodiegetic to some extent), they cannot logically know that he 'slept soundly' unless this is an 'unnatural narrative' or the speaker is extrapolating based on their own experience. In either case, this makes the poem less personal to the speaker, as the character of the boy is clearly more the focus. In addition, the final stanza uses a similar tactic to *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, by connecting together a lack of knowledge of the death associated with a positive attitude towards war. For both poems, the focus is external to the speaker: they are attempting to communicate a specific experience or incident to their addressee(s) in order to imply that a positive attitude to war is based on ignorance of such specifics. It is the attitude, thoughts and feelings of the addressees which conclude the poems.

Several factors, therefore, make *Dulce Et Decorum Est* less linguistically personal than *Daddy* or *Lady Lazarus*. The speaker seems primarily concerned with convincing their listener of something, rather than of communicating their experience (as with *Exposure*). As Campbell argues, 'To classify *Dulce et Decorum Est* as a direct representation of warfare is to stop reading the poem halfway through' before this direct address begins (1999a:213). As with Christina Rossetti's *Song*, this explicit appeal to an addressee results in the creation of other consciousnesses (those who believe 'that old lie' and someone who will sing 'sad songs', respectively) which are mediated to us through the speaker. In addition, the poem is more narrative than Sylvia Plath's poems, which further places the emphasis on events, rather than purely foregrounding the resulting thoughts and feelings of the speaker. This results in poetic criticism that may include the details of Wilfred Owen's life, but does not use his poetry as source material to understand his psyche and mental state, unlike the more personal poetry of Sylvia Plath. Instead, Wilfred Owen's poetry is used to understand the experiences of *all* trench soldiers during the war, as Campbell points out (1999a).

Linguistically, therefore, the poem can be seen as less personal than *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus*, though more personal than *Nothing Gold Can Stay* or *Tiananmen*, which do

not include enough world-builders or deictic markers of proximity to make the speaker a clearly defined persona. Perhaps this comparative lack of personalness is surprising, as Wilfred Owen's and Siegfried Sassoon's poetry is considered 'real', but it is consistent with the other linguistic features of their poetry, which is usually concerned with convincing the reader of the horrors of war. As Campbell says, the point of *Dulce Et Decorum Est* is not simply to communicate to us the realities of trench warfare, but to convince us that 'If *you* could see the realities of war, *you* would not promulgate the ideology that allows this to go on. By extension, *you* bear the responsibility for the passive suffering from the "vile incurable sores" on this "innocent tongue." And the officer poet is going to make *you* quite aware of this predicament that you have gotten yourself into' (1999a:212). Instead of personalising the experiences in these poems, the poets depersonalise them, to both emphasise the universality of the suffering in the trenches, and to induce guilt at the way that the war dehumanises and treats human life as expendable.

6.5 Encyclopaedic knowledge in the poetry of the First World War

As I have mentioned, the poetry of the First World War was influential far beyond the literary sphere. Sylvia Plath's poetry may be read as a way to understand her life and experiences, but poets such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Isaac Rosenbaum have been used to try and understand the experiences of the millions of trench soldiers, many of whom died at the front, including Wilfred Owen himself. However, the type of conflict (mustard gas and trench warfare) is entailed, and the more specific conflict of the First World War is implicated through many details of these poems, such as the interminable length of the conflict in *Exposure*, and the contrast between the naïve 'smug-faced crowds' at home with the misery of the soldiers in *Dulce Et Decorum Est* (as Campbell points out, the Times published articles with titles such as 'Renewal of Youth,' 'Glorious Baptism of Fire,' 'Heroes: Response to the Ideal' throughout the war (1999a:203)).

However, what frequently discussed but not entailed is Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon's personal combat experiences. In fact, as I have demonstrated, their poetry often avoids the sort of linguistic features that would lead us to focus on the poet in favour of emphasising the broader suffering of all the soldiers, and the brutality of the war in general. I believe the reasons that many confessional poems result in the reader assuming that they are getting the 'real' poet, as Robert Lowell said are identifiable to a large extent in the linguistic features of the poems. In the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, on the other hand, the linguistic features instead point our attention at the real world events that the speakers are observing or experiencing. These events can be said, therefore, to be part of the text of the poems in a way that the poets' specific experiences are not, and relating these poems to the First World War (or the massacre at Tiananmen, or the clearing out of all non-white residents from District 6) is not the same as relating Sylvia Plath's poetry to Sylvia Plath's life.

Gavins examines Frank O'Hara's poem *The day lady died*, and argues that the text-world created by readers of the poem 'is likely to differ considerably' based on whether they have 'personal experience and direct knowledge of the scenes and events depicted in the text', or whether they must rely solely on 'the rich deictic detail' of the poem (2007b:137). Similarly, the text-world constructed by someone who did have experience of the First World War is likely to differ considerably from those of us who have no such experience. However, the poetry of the First World War was written, it is frequently argued, to educate a poorly informed public back home about what life was like as a soldier, and in the case of *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, *Suicide in the Trenches*, *Anthem for Doomed Youth* and many others, also to explicitly blame this public for unknowingly perpetuating these horrors (Longley, 2005:57). Wilfred Owen wrote poetry which was intended to 'educate an ignorant civilian populace of brutal realities it would prefer to ignore' (Campbell, 1999a:209) and therefore these poems explicitly *expect* the reader to come to the discourse world lacking in sufficient experience and encyclopaedic knowledge to fully understand the experiences that are being communicated to them. As Campbell puts it, 'If *you* could see the realities of war, *you* would not promulgate the ideology that allows this to go on (1999a:212) showing that only those who did not see the horrors of war that the trench soldiers experienced are addressed by the poem.

Gavins demonstrates how this 'remote readerly perspective' (2007b:138) in *The day lady died* affects the construction of the text-worlds presented by the poem. Frank O'Hara uses the informal names 'Patsy' and 'Mike', which creates the impression that the speaker expects that 'the reader too already has an acquaintance with them' (2007b:140). The poet uses 'an informality and familiarity which makes this readerly experience hospitable even to the most remote co-participant in the split discourse-world (2006:143). In contrast, in much of Wilfred Owen's and Siegfried Sassoon's poetry, this 'remote readerly perspective' is explicitly addressed. These poets know that they are divided from their readers by time, space and personal experience. Campbell argues that by attempting to bridge this gap, 'the poets also become caught in an epistemological trap: they cannot truly inform an audience who lacks the experiential basis for understanding their work, and the only way an audience can acquire such a basis is to experience combat, at which point they are no longer the noncombatant audience the poetry assumes' (1999a:210). This 'inevitable tension' between what the poets know and what they believe their non-combatant readers know 'runs through all of their most famous texts' (Campbell, 1999a:210).

Bringing in factual and contextual information (whether through our existing encyclopaedic knowledge or through seeking it out) to our readings of these poems is not the same as falling prey to the biographical fallacy, therefore. There is a clear difference between seeking out biographical information about the poet to try and better understand their poetry and including historical and publicly available information either entailed or strongly implied by the text of the poem. Especially when, in the case of the poetry of the First World War, the speaker invites us to examine our knowledge (or lack of it) of the events that they discuss.

6.6 'Combat Gnosticism'

With all of these poets, however, it is likely that their message (as distinct from the literary merit of their poetry) is taken more seriously because they are perceived to have experienced the subjects of their poetry. Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon's poetry was considered to be explicitly anti-war, and was thought to have had an impact on the general public's views. Similarly, if Sylvia Plath had lived a long and happy life, it may be that her insight into suffering, depression and abuse might not have been considered valuable, even if the literary value of her poetry was still recognised.

However, just as assuming that Sylvia Plath's poetry is an unmediated description of her own experiences creates poor and limiting criticism, Campbell details the risks from an emphasis on the 'real' combat experience in war poetry. In his article 'Combat Gnosticism', Campbell argues that because there is so much emphasis on the poets' combat experiences, the criticism of the poetry 'does not so much criticize the poetry which forms its subject as replicate the poetry's ideology' (1999a:203). The most celebrated of the poets of the First World War were not just in the military, but were combatants, and this has led to what Campbell terms 'combat gnosticism' in which only combatants in a war have a 'kind of gnosis, a secret knowledge which only an initiated elite knows (1999a:204). The idea that only those who fought in the trenches can understand war is explicit in the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, of course. As Campbell points out, *Dulce Et Decorum Est* blames civilians 'for holding unrealistic assumptions about the war while the Latin tag, a popular gravestone motto for the war dead, is twisted for all the irony it can muster' (1999a:211). Not only this, but as I have demonstrated, both *Dulce Et Decorum Est* and *Suicide In The Trenches* explicitly link these unrealistic assumptions with a lack of combat knowledge or experience. Campbell's assertion is that the criticism of the poetry has focused too much on replicating this ideology, found within the poetry, rather than on criticising the poetry itself. Although certainly not as intrusive into the personal life of the poets as criticism of confessional poetry is, 'Mainstream criticism of First World War poetry has been primarily biographical in approach' (Campbell, 1999a:210) which has limited it to attempting to make the same protests against war that the poetry does. An important example of this, Campbell claims, is Fussell's book, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975). Campbell argues that Fussell 'stressed the importance of the poet as witness to the slaughter of the Western Front, the man whose biography remains important because he was actually there and can thus provide us with the Truth of War' (1999a:210).

Just as Campbell warns of the limitations to literary criticism from an emphasis on poetry written by those with direct experience of the trenches, MacDonald, in her introduction to the anthology titled *Anthem For Doomed Youth* warns of the limitations to historical research from an over-emphasis on these celebrated poets as source material. She argues that it would be 'a mistake to form a definitive judgement of the First World War based on the powerful impressions they convey' as they were 'poets, not reporters' (2000:xviii) and by using them as our main primary

historical source material we ‘obfuscate the facts and impede understanding of the spirit of the times’ (2000:xvii). The combatants were not the only people to have been affected by the war.

Not only does the focus on the ‘truth’ of these poems limit the criticism, it over-privileges poets with combatant experience to the detriment of others. Campbell details ‘an immense body of texts’ written by women whom the ‘mainstream war literature covertly silences’ and which were ignored until feminist critics sought them out (Campbell, 1999a:203-204).

This is a useful warning against the same biographical and historical approach to literary criticism that plagues the confessional poets. Despite the undeniable link between the poetry and events in the real world, critics should still be mindful of the dangers of focusing too much on these links rather than the texts themselves. However, without a stylistic approach, Campbell’s warning is unlikely to improve things, as he offers nothing in place of biographical criticism. If separating poetic criticism from its fixation with history required more than just pointing out the problem, then the problem would have been solved by Barthes’ *The Death of the Author* (1967) or The New Criticism. To truly uncouple poetry from the biographical fallacy that is limiting our understanding of it, our understanding of what poetry is and what it can do must be updated by examining the poems and their speakers themselves, rather than holding on to outdated and misleading assumptions of monologicity, monoperspectivity, non-narrativity and persona.

6.7 The Death-Bed

To conclude my analysis, I will be looking at *The Death-Bed*, by Siegfried Sassoon (appendix 8.6.7). This poem demonstrates nearly all of the features which I have argued are wrongly considered to be either absent in lyric poetry or are simply unnoticed.

This poem uses a third person, heterodiegetic narrator, which makes it easy to separate the events from the poet himself. It is almost certainly based on Siegfried Sassoon’s experiences at war, but it clearly cannot detail *his* personal experience, as this would require him to either have been able to read the dying man’s dreams, or to have died himself. Of all the poems I have considered in this chapter, this one makes the fewest demands on our encyclopaedic knowledge of the First World War, and as such, focusing on Siegfried Sassoon’s experience and personal involvement may not only be irrelevant to our understanding of how the poem works, but actually goes against the final effect of the poem, which, like many others, is to challenge, convince or even guilt the reader into agreeing with the speaker’s stance.

6.7.1 The poetic persona

I have written before about how describing the speaker or narrator of poetry as a ‘persona’ implies that these voices are fully developed personas, focused on by the poems and worthy of focused examination. The concept of the poetic persona implies a direct, non-fictional connection to the poet, as the word is often used as a way of talking about the poet without appearing to do so. Just as the narrator in

prose fiction can be highly involved in the events or not, with a clearly defined persona or mind-style or not, the speaker in lyric poetry can be anything from the subject of the poem to 'not a functional part of the poem' at all (Phelan, 1996:32).

Unlike the more personal and prototypical lyric poetry that I have considered in this thesis (such as *One Art*, *Daddy*, or *Nothing's Changed*) the protagonist of this poem is not the speaker, but instead the protagonist is mediated to us through a third person narrator. The consciousness which is the focus of much of this poem, and through whom much of the poem is focalised, is the man on the death-bed himself, not the speaker telling us about him. The voice speaking to us in this poem cannot be Siegfried Sassoon's, and so can at best be a fictional rendering of the sort of thoughts and feelings he expects dying soldiers to experience, which is what we would expect from most writers of fiction. In this case, the term 'poetic persona' to refer to the speaker is misleading, as it implies that the speaker's persona, rather than the protagonist's, will be the focus of the poem. The dying man has a far more important 'persona' in this case.

Jeffries argues that when a poetic speaker does not situate themselves in a clear place, time or person using text-world builders such as proximal deixis this means that the poem 'supplies no specific personal viewpoint at all' (2008:82). However, her example (*Pain Tells You What To Wear*) is of a speaker who offers few world builders or proximal deictic markers at all, whereas in this poem the speaker does offer these, they just do not situate themselves in the world that they create. It is the man dying on his death-bed who is situated with walls 'around' him, and who drops 'Through crimson gloom'. The one or possibly two other people who seem to be nursing him at his bedside at one point hold water to his lips and later are simply 'beside' him. These deictic expressions 'cause the reader to take up the deictic positioning of the character, place and time which are indicated by the textual triggers' (Jeffries, 2008:71) rather than the position of the speaker.

The speaker also gives us clear access to this character's consciousness. He is the participant in several mental processes (such as ')

which clearly makes him the focaliser for much of the poem. Additionally, as he is unconscious for much of the poem, the speaker tells us a great deal about what he thinks and feels than what goes on around him. The person who gives him a drink of water is just 'someone', because he is unaware of who they are, which makes his consciousness the locus and his perspective the focal one. When he is unconscious and dreaming of rowing, we are given access to his dreams, and it is only in these dreams where he can be the participant in material processes, dipping his oars in the water.

However, the speaker also tells us things that the dying man explicitly does not know. When it rains, he can hear it 'rustling through the dark' but despite the fact that he cannot see it, we are told that there is 'Warm rain on drooping roses; pattering showers/That soak the woods'. This shifts the locus of the poem from the dying man's perspective to the perspective of the omniscient, heterodiegetic speaker.

Similarly, the speaker tells us that 'he could not see the stars' and so the description of them 'Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud' cannot come from his perspective. Most clearly, the poem continues after his death to tell us that 'far away' there was the 'thudding of the guns' (thematically demonstrating that his struggle is over, but reminding us that it is not over for the rest of the combatants). This poem utilises clear perspective shifts, therefore, back and forth from that of the man dying in his hospital bed to the omniscient perspective of his surroundings, and it is the speaker who mediates these.

A further perspective is added when the speaker more clearly gives us their own opinion on the events, giving us some sense of their persona. As all of the other poems of the First World War that I have examined do, this poem explicitly appeals to the reader and tells us how we should think and act now we have been told something of the conflict. We are told to 'Light many lamps and gather round his bed' and to 'Lend him your eyes, warm blood, and will to live./Speak to him; rouse him' because we 'may save him yet'. This shifts the poem from past-tense narrative, to an appeal for us to act in the present. These imperative verbs imply the 'I' perspective of the speaker addressing the explicitly mentioned 'you', but the lack of any 'I' again makes the speaker less of a focus than what it is that they are communicating to us. As with *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, the poem attempts to convince us that 'you bear the responsibility' (Campbell, 1999a:212), except in this case it is our responsibility to fight for his life, and to resurrect his will to live. The use of imperative verbs earlier in the stanza mean that when the speaker asks 'how should he die/When cruel old campaigners win safe through?' it appears that this is a question that they are asking us, and therefore encouraging us to contemplate. As with *Exposure*, *Suicide in the Trenches*, this poem explicitly attempts to change the way we think about the conflict, rather than simply offering their personal experiences.

This shift from omniscient reporting on the events of the hospital to direct address to the reader is of a different kind to the direct addresses to the reader in *Exposure* and *Suicide in the Trenches*, however, as instead of being told that the events are our fault and that our position is purely down to ignorance, in *The Death-Bed* we are being asked to intervene with the narrative of the poem. The speaker creates the impression that we could somehow save this man's life, and therefore direct the course of the narrative. Of course, this is impossible, and the speaker returns to past tense reporting of the events to tell us how the man dies, and how the 'thudding of the guns' continues.

As with many of the other conflict poems I have examined here, the speaker mediates between us and the world that they are communicating to us about, and they explicitly intervene to tell us how we should react and how we should think based on this. The language of the poems point us away from the speakers to focus on the more generalizable and presumably ubiquitous suffering and death of the war and to our own responsibility towards it. These may be personal appeals on behalf of the poets, but they are not particularly personal poems.

In one of the few pieces of criticism based on this particular poem, Campbell demonstrates this trap. Not only does he conflate the speaker with Siegfried Sassoon by claiming that the poem details 'the pleas of a poet desperate to save him' (1999b:120), that 'the poet pleads on his behalf' (1999b:121) and that finally 'the poet's passionate pleading has fallen on deaf ears' (1999a:121) it also discusses the poem's apparent origins which 'amalgamates two experiences, "a memory of hospital at Amiens and a canoe on the Cherwell" (WP, p. 53)' (1999b:120). Campbell spends so much time discussing the poets' 'pleading' that the subject of these pleas is mentioned only once in passing. The abstract, omniscient nature of the narration is not mentioned, nor is the impossibility of this speaker being literally Siegfried Sassoon himself. By focusing on his assumed connection between the poet's speaker and the poet, Campbell demonstrates the risks and limitations of persona-based, biographical criticism, which leads to an over-emphasis on the poetic speaker's thoughts and feelings in cases where the poem itself is attempting to direct our attention elsewhere. This is not to say that the poem's speaker does not have a clear agenda, but to make this the centre of the poem rather than how the reader is being convinced to heed this (brief) pleading is to only examine one of the poem's multiple perspectives.

This poem, like many which I have examined, does not utilise a single, unmediated voice. Assuming that poems do, and treating those which do not as divergent or transgressive limits and distorts our interpretations and expectations (if these features are noticed at all). We may end up assuming that the absence or presence of expected features is necessarily significant, as Rubik does when she identifies the narrativity in *The Early Purges*, and with the poetry of the First World War, an over-emphasis on biography and the 'persona' of the poem leads us away from the language and intentions of the poem.

Although I believe Phelan is right that the character of a poem's speaker is not always 'a functional part of the poem' he is wrong to leap from this to assume that this means that 'the distinction between speaker and author does not exist here' (Phelan, 1996:32) and this poem clearly demonstrates this. The speaker in this poem cannot be easily projected onto Siegfried Sassoon, and in fact the poem's language should warn us against doing this.

6.7.2 Narrative

Against the majority of literary definitions, I have argued that the lyric poem is not non-narrative, even though narrativity clearly plays a less central role than it does in narrative poetry. By defining lyric poetry as non-narrative rather than examining the lyric for narrativity, critics have failed to identify the narrating that poetic speakers often do. In *The Death-Bed*, the organising consciousness performs the same role as the narrator of prose fiction, mediating between the reader and the other characters, and focusing our attention on those who are discussed, rather than the voice which is communicating to us.

This poem not only has many elements of narrativity but the narrativity is of a type clearly identifiable with prose fiction. Elizabeth Bishop's *One Art* also demonstrates complex shifting of perspectives, but in *The Death-Bed* the omniscient, heterodiegetic narrator makes both the mediation and the shifts between offering us the dying man's perspective and commenting on it much clearer, as this is more akin to the perspective shifts found in prose fiction with third persona narrators. There is also a clear story here, with events presented in an uncomplicated, chronological order.

In 3.1 I attempted to mark the distinction between lyric and narrative poetry, but this does not mean that there is a clear axis between the two. The presence of narrativity does not preclude or reduce the possible presence of lyricism. It should be noted that many of Wolf's defining characteristics of lyric poetry do not preclude narrativity. For example, this poem also makes use of some 'extravagant linguistic deviation' which Rubik agrees is a feature of lyricism (2007:201). A gust of wind blows 'the curtain to a glimmering curve', the stars are 'Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud' and the rain is metaphorically 'Gently and slowly washing life away'.

There is some similarity here with *How He Saw Her*, which was one of the poems that Fludernik examined in *Towards a Natural Narratology* (1996) with the arrival of the figure of Death. Fludernik believes that the inclusion of a dialogue between the speaker of the poem and Cupid means that the poem does not use 'specific fictional personae but posits a hypothetical or allegorical scenario (1996:265). In response to this, I argued that this is an over-simplification, as it precludes the possibility that the reader will both create text-worlds in which Cupid and death exist as a fully realised fictional characters, but also recognise that these text-worlds are metaphorical, and the events in them are allegories. In this case, the distinction between death as an abstract concept and death as a character in the poem is even less clear, as Siegfried Sassoon refers to 'death' rather than 'Death' which makes their actions less clearly literal. Despite the lower-case 'd', death's actions are as clearly narrative as those of the dying soldiers. Death 'stepped toward him, paused and stared' and uses direct speech. This use of allegory and metaphor is not in opposition to narrativity, but instead is one of the ways in which lyric poetry is more likely to display narrativity than prose fiction. Because this form of narrativity is used more often in lyric poetry, and lyric poetry is often defined (rather than proved) to be non-narrative, forms of narrativity that the lyric does display are often discounted.

'Death' may be an ambiguous mix of fictional character and allegory, but this does not mean that their actions do not contribute to the poem's overall narrative. Whether or not you view death's actions as literal or metaphorical (or more likely, as both), it is clear what events are being represented – the soldier dies. The increased lyricism produced by giving an abstract concept actions and characterisation does not reduce the narrativity in the poem, but does increase the lyricism.

6.8 Conclusion

The poems I have examined in this chapter demonstrate the need for a more precise distinction between a poem's use of encyclopaedic knowledge and an assumption that the poem is autobiographical. A basis in the poet's experience should not mean that the poem is a personal one. By defining these conflict poems as 'personal' because of their use of the poets' real experiences, we both over-privilege the poetry of combatants (which cannot be justified from the perspective of academic literature study) and under-examine the interesting differences between the ways in which lyric poetry utilises its speakers. These poems use mediated narration, shifts in perspective, voices other than singular first-person, a focus on 'educating' or changing the views of the reader, and a focus on other characters which direct us away from the speaker's perspective. If the poetry of the First World War (which is unquestioningly part of the English literary canon of lyric poetry) complicates so many expectations of the lyric, it is likely that our definitions and expectations are holding us back from fully understanding what it is that poetry is and what it can do. Without recognising and analysing the features that poetry actually displays, rather than focusing on the ones we expect to find, we will not be able to correct criticism's predilection for the biographical fallacy, and will continue to underestimate the variety of linguistic features that lyric poetry utilises

7. Conclusion

This thesis set out to challenge the idea that the lyric speaker is a monoperspectival monologic and personal reflection of the poet who communicates without mediation or narration. To do this, I used narratological tools to demonstrate that the lyric speaker is capable of the same range of positions as the prose narrator. This is crucial, as many definitions of the lyric speaker assume that it is not the equivalent to a narrator, but instead that it is equivalent to a fictional character who speaks without the mediation provided by a narrator. As lyric poetry is so frequently assumed to be autobiographical, the assumption that the speaker does not mediate therefore in turn leads to the assumption that the speaker offers direct access to the poet. This, in turn, leads to a preponderance of biographical criticism despite many attempts to point out the importance of a text-based approach.

This thesis is clearly not the first attempt to sever the connection between the poet and their speaker, but biographical criticism still dominates much consideration of lyric poetry, as I demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6. By examining features of subjectivity identified by narratology in lyric poetry, I have offered an alternative approach to merely pointing out the flaws of biographical criticism, and instead identified linguistic features that may be causing it and offered a way of separating out the biographical and historical details that poetry directly references from those which are being imposed on the reading.

The findings of my research, therefore, offer a new consideration of the lyric speaker, which demonstrates its equivalence with the prose narrator and offers new tools to keep criticism focused on the text instead of the poet. Chapter three demonstrated the narrativity and mediation present in several quintessential lyric poems, thus providing evidence of the relevance of narratological theory to the analysis of the lyric. Chapter four demonstrated the multiple positions of the speaker within the same text, thus challenging the assumption of monoperspectivity typically assigned to the lyric. This demonstrates clearly that the lyric speaker can be aligned with the prose narrator. Narratological theories can therefore be applied to the study of the lyric speaker, and as narratological theory clearly separates the narrator from the author, and provides detailed frameworks for examining this and other various levels of narration which have been well examined in narrative prose, it can give us the tools to approach the lyric in a more theoretically consistent way.

These two chapters laid the groundwork for using narratological tools to examine the positioning of the speaker in chapters five and six. Confessional poetry, which I examined in chapter five) has attracted more biographical criticism than nearly all other types of lyric poem. The speakers in these poems are often assumed to be identical to the poets even when the poets deny the connection, but by analysing the point of view of the lyric speaker, I demonstrated that these speakers make use of

the features of empathetic and consonant narration which obscures the distance between the speaker and the poet. In chapter six, I examined the lyric speakers in poetry about real conflicts written by poets whose lives have a documented historical connection to the experience they write about. These poems reference historical information which is publicly known, and therefore part of the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge, unlike the confessional poems of chapter five which only implied connections to private events. Despite this, the speakers of conflict poetry frequently do not make use of the same features of subjectivity, but instead focus on the experiences of a group, or on how events affected participants other than the speaker. These two chapters, therefore, demonstrate that there is no connection between poetry with autobiographical content and the style of the poem, and instead show a wide range of potential positions for the lyric speaker, whether or not the poem reflects the poet's personal experiences.

7.1 Answers to my research questions

This thesis attempted to answer three central research questions:

7.1.1 (a) Why is the lyric speaker so often considered identical to the poet and therefore an unmediated direct expression of the poet's thoughts and experiences?

In answer to question (a), I have demonstrated that biographical details are not sufficient to explaining the pervasive assumption that the lyric speaker is the poet. In chapters five and six, I pointed out that confessional poets frequently disavow the connection to their own lives despite utilising a speaker who appears to be the poet. Conversely, the poets who explicitly call on the readers' encyclopaedic knowledge about real conflicts and assert the autobiographical nature of their poems focused on collective rather than personal experience, and emphasised the culpability of the reader. The knowledge of the life of a poet is therefore not sufficient to justify collapsing the distance between the poet and the speaker.

Many definitions of the lyric speaker (and lyric poetry by extension) lack proper examinations of real examples of lyric poetry as their basis, as I demonstrated in my introduction, and therefore make demonstrably false claims or limiting conclusions. Lyric speakers are often defined as 'personal' without explanation as to whether 'personal' is a quality of the text or whether it refers to the relationship between the text and the poet. Although lyric speakers are frequently defined as 'personal', my examination of how lyric speakers narrate and mediate in chapters three and four demonstrates clearly that not all or even most lyric poetry attempts to create the personal and limited perspective of one speaker. Answering this research question was important, therefore, as the current definition of the lyric speaker as 'personal' over-privileges the speaker's perspective in some poems and obscures the effect when the speaker is genuinely presented as personal in others. In addition, I believe that a great deal of the language of poetic criticism attempts to avoid appearing to make use of biographical criticism whilst actually making use of it. For example, the poetic 'persona' is often used in a way which suggests that it is a 'mask' of the poet, and therefore allows critics to discuss the poet's life or psyche using the poem as a

lens. This leads to an over-examination of the poetic speaker, which may not be appropriate. Lyric poetry, like narrative prose, uses reporting consciousnesses with a wide range of prominences, and although lyric poetry may currently make more use of first person internal perspectives than narrative prose, many lyric poems do not make use of a clear persona or a speaker with a clearly defined deictic field.

Although limiting definitions of the speaker are clearly a problem, there are certain features of lyric poems which may inadvertently encourage biographical approaches to their criticism. Poems which do make extensive use of a first person, internal perspective and which focus on the speaker's thoughts and feelings, rather than narrative events, are more likely to be viewed as 'personal' I argued in chapter five, and therefore these are more likely to be assumed to be autobiographical. Instead of assuming that poetry which appears to reflect the poet's real life experience does so, I argue that we should examine the linguistic features which may have caused us to make this assumption, and separate these from the contextual information, such as our knowledge of the poet's biography.

Doing this would enable us to acknowledge the reasons why biographical criticism continues to be a major approach to lyric poetry, despite the attempts of the Russian Formalists, New Criticism and most recently Stylistics to move beyond it, whilst keeping our analysis rigorous and linguistic. Further evidence for this separation is found in lyric poetry which is assumed to be personal because of contextual information about the poets, such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon's combat experience, but which makes use of many linguistic features which reduce the importance of the poetic speaker's perspective in comparison to poetry which is more prototypically personal.

7.1.2 (b) Can lyric poetry instead make use of the same complexity of perspectives, voices and mediation that narrative prose does?

Chapters three and four also answer question (b) and demonstrate that lyric poems commonly do make use of mediating narration, narrative and as wide a variety of perspectives as can be found in prose. Recently, Hühn has argued extensively for the presence of narrativity in lyric poetry, but believes that the narrative is based on mental rather than physical events (2004, 2005 and 2016). Although this is an important contribution to the theoretical approaches to lyric poetry, I instead demonstrated that the same narrativity which is used in prose fiction is present in lyric poetry, and like Fludernik (2005), I argue that what makes a poem lyric rather than narrative is that the narrative is backgrounded, implied or incomplete, but it should not be assumed to be absent. In chapter three, I demonstrated that lyric speakers narrate, albeit quasi or implied narratives, and therefore both prose and poetry should be considered equally capable of lyricism and narrativity. Even poetry deemed prototypically lyric made some use of narrative and lacked a monologic perspective. In less typical examples of the genre, deviations from these expectations are even more pronounced.

The brevity of lyric poetry may be a significant factor here, as this prevents the narrativity in lyric poetry from being developed beyond implied or quasi-narratives (just as it did with the very brief 'hint fiction') but also makes it more likely that multiple layers of possible meaning may be encoded into the same text, thus increasing the density of meaning available in a short text, as I demonstrated in chapter four. Viewing the poetic speaker as an organising consciousness, equivalent to a narrating voice rather than the voice of an unmediated fictional character, makes it possible to view how these multiple perspectives are presented. Using turns in perspective and meaning, the speakers in chapter four took several conflicting positions within the same poem, therefore lyric poetry cannot be assumed to offer only the perspective of a personal speaker. In fact, my examination of the collective perspective in conflict poetry in chapter six demonstrates that lyric poetry may make use of we-narration and other unusual pronomial narration to a greater extent than prose narration, thus again complicating the idea of monoperspectivity.

7.1.3 (c) What linguistic and narratological features in poetry deemed 'personal' to the poet might be creating the illusion of personalness, causing us to reduce this potential complexity to unmediated and monologic autobiography?

In answer to question (c), I examined confessional poetry, which is a type of lyric poetry deemed highly personal and therefore attracting a huge amount of biographical criticism, and demonstrated that this poetry attracts a greater degree of examination of the poets' psyches because the poetry minimises the appearance of distance between the poet and the speaker. My research is therefore uniquely positioned to separate the quality of 'personalness' as exhibited by a speaker through textual features from any assumption that this speaker is a personal reflection of the poet. This requires a reliable, homodiegetic and autodiegetic speaker, who focuses entirely on their own thoughts and feelings rather than any events surrounding them, without offering access to other consciousnesses, and who does not offer detail that would lead us to judge their experiencing self. Intensely personal lyric poems will often therefore lack clear details that would allow us to identify what has happened to cause the speaker's emotions, as these emotions themselves will be centred. In contrast, the events in the conflict poems of chapter six were carefully detailed, including place names, dates and the physical realities of trench warfare. But in spite of drawing our attention to the realities of the events, they do not foreground the speaker's experience of them, and this explains why such poetry is still used as a historical account of trench warfare in general instead of purely a way to understand the poets' direct suffering.

Treating lyric poetry as a monoperspectival window into the poet's soul, therefore, is limiting and misleading. Without this understanding, poetry will continue to be discussed and analysed as if it lacks these features whether or not they are present. It is my hope that by identifying the misconceptions in the definitions of lyric poetry and by refining the key terms, such as 'personal' we can move towards a more precise understanding of the breadth of effects that lyric poetry can produce.

7.2 Possible extensions of my research

7.2.1 Personal poetry:

It is beyond the scope of my research to test my prototype for personal poetry on readers. I claim that poems which fit my prototype will appear to be personal to the poet even if the reader is unfamiliar with the poet's biography, but have not proved this empirically; my claims are based on textual analysis alone. It would be interesting and illuminating to see if I can verify the claims of my analysis by using reader-responses. By offering examples of poetry which does and does not fit my prototype I could test my claim that the features of my prototype lead to the reader associating the poem more closely with the poet's life. However, to use confessional poetry as an example would require readers with sufficient literary competence to read and understand these difficult and often confusing poems but who are not familiar with either the poems they are presented with or with the lives without knowledge of the poets who wrote them. Using Sylvia Plath's poetry in such a study would be tricky, therefore, as her biography is widely known. Knowledge of the poet's biography would be a complicating factor in such a study, as to properly test my hypothesis it is crucial to separate out the textual features from the reader's ability to match the poem to events in the poet's life. In chapter three, I suggested that this knowledge of Seamus Heaney's life is what led his poem *The Early Purges* to be considered a lyric poem with transgressive and unexpected narrativity, rather than a narrative poem where the narrativity would be unremarkable. Without the knowledge that Heaney grew up on a farm, this poem might not have appeared to offer a personal, lyrical perspective but a more narrative, fictional one. Properly testing my theory would therefore require applying it to a broader range of poetry to find sufficient examples from other, less well-known poets that can be presented anonymously.

In the process of examining the positions of the lyric speaker, I also necessarily had to provide a definition personal poetry. As this was not the only purpose of this thesis, I feel that this aspect of my research could be pushed further. I found making links between narratological examinations of different kinds of narration particularly useful here, and it would therefore be interesting to see if other types of poetic speaker could be better examined in this way. Although I used Brinton's checklist of features for internal narration to demonstrate that Anne Sexton's *And One For My Dame* cannot be considered to focus entirely on the speaker's perspective, it would be useful to see how far these ideas can help us to understand lyric poetry where the speaker is even less prominent, and considering the association of the lyric with 'personalness' whether this reduces the impression that the poem is a lyric.

7.2.2 Persuasion and conflict poetry

Examining the poetry of the First World War demonstrated the limitations of a focus on the poet's experience, as assuming that the speakers of Wilfred Owen's and Siegfried Sassoon's poems reflected their perspective directly and non-fictionally has largely limited the criticism of their poetry to how the poems communicate combatants' experience. However, as I demonstrated, these poems frequently

address the reader directly and make the reader complicit in the horrors of war that the poems detail. It would greatly extend our understanding of this poetry to consider how far the persuasive effects can be positioned in opposition to the traits indicating 'personalness' which I identify, as this seemed to be the case in the poems which I studied. A greater sample would help to verify this.

It would also be illuminating to examine protest poetry to see how far my observations about conflict poetry apply. Protest poetry is a subgenre of the lyric with a great deal of crossover with conflict poetry, but which may intent to persuade the reader to take up a cause or a certain political position instead of informing them about events. Because of this, protest poetry also addresses the reader, and I suspect that it may do so more extensively than conflict poetry. Whereas conflict poetry often seeks to criticise the reader and make them feel complicit in the horrors of war, protest poetry instead is a call to action, and therefore perhaps will demonstrate even fewer features of personalness.

7.2.3 Examining the lyric features of prose

As Rubik points out, there is a great deal of overlap between poetry and prose, and although it is clear that poetry can be narrative (and not necessarily through being a 'transgressive lyric' as she argues) it would be useful to examine these prose texts which display lyrical features further to see if doing so could refine conceptions of lyricism. Instead of viewing poetry and prose as entirely separate genres, we could perhaps begin to see both poetry and prose in terms of narrative and lyric, and treat both as equally available to the two genres. To do this, the distinction between what is currently called 'prose poetry' and 'lyrical prose' could be better examined to see how far 'poetry' and 'lyrical' are being used as synonyms, and how far 'lyrical prose' is being used to describe narrative prose with lyrical features. It is my expectation that both prose and poetry could be viewed as either lyrical or narrative, with of course an understanding that such a designation is a spectrum, rather than a binary.

If a definition of 'lyric' can be accurately applied to both poetry and prose, this would free it from the current conflation of lyric and narrative poetry, as exemplified by Wolf (2005) and argued against by Perloff (1982) and ensure that it is not tied down by our expectations of poetry or prose, which as I have demonstrated, change and are updated constantly as writers expand them.

7.2.4 Extending studies of 'unnatural' narration and unusual pronomial narratives

As I point out, unusual forms of pronomial narration might be more common in poetry than in prose, and therefore once the overlap between poetry and prose is better understood, poetry might prove useful in extending Margolin's (2001) and Fludernik's (2005) research into these unusual forms of narration. Fludernik has attempted to study we-narration, but has found only a 'rather sparse corpus of we-texts' with some forms only 'theoretically available' (1996:298). The use of 'we' is far more common in poetry, especially poetry written to be spoken or sung by groups of

voices, and therefore by expanding their studies to include poetry, narratologists have the opportunity to expand their corpus of unusual pronomial texts.

7.3 Concluding remarks

Although my original intention was to demonstrate the limitations of viewing the speaker as monologic and monoperspectival, I believe the most significant and potentially useful outcome of my research is my examination of personal poetry. My intention is that rather than simply avoid biographical criticism, stylisticians can instead examine what textual features are causing it be applied to some poems and poets more than others, and therefore avoid, rather than merely argue against, further biographical criticism.

It is my hope that this thesis can contribute to the useful and growing discussion started by Hühn (2004) and Muller-Zetzelmann and Rubik (2005) who all join my complaints about the lack of precision in theoretical approaches to lyric poetry. By recognising the narrative possibilities within lyric poetry, new tools become available for its study, and by letting go of misguided notions of monologicity, we can more precisely examine how lyric poetry produces its effects.

8. Appendix

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 *Poem*, by Simon Armitage

And if it snowed and snow covered the drive
he took a spade and tossed it to one side.
And always tucked his daughter up at night
And slipped her the one time that she lied.

And every week he tipped up half his wage. 5
And what he didn't spend each week he saved.
And praised his wife for every meal she made.
And once, for laughing, punched her in the face.

And for his mum he hired a private nurse.
And every Sunday taxied her to church. 10
And he blubbed when she went from bad to worse.
And twice he lifted ten quid from her purse.

Here's how they rated him when they looked back:
sometimes he did this, sometimes he did that.

8.2 Narratology as a theory of mediation and point of view

8.2.1 *Song*, by Christina Rossetti

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me 5
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain; 10
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember, 15
And haply may forget.

8.2.2 *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know,
His house is in the village though.

He will not see me stopping here,
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer, 5
To stop without a farmhouse near,
Between the woods and frozen lake,
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake,
To ask if there is some mistake. 10
The only other sound's the sweep,
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep, 15
And miles to go before I sleep.

8.2.3 *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf. 5
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

8.3 Narrativity in lyric poetry

8.3.1 *The Early Purges*, by Seamus Heaney

I was six when I first saw kittens drown.
Dan Taggart pitched them, 'the scraggy wee shits',
Into a bucket; a frail metal sound,

Soft paws scraping like mad. But their tiny din
Was soon soused. They were slung on the snout 5
Of the pump and the water pumped in.

'Sure, isn't it better for them now?' Dan said.
Like wet gloves they bobbed and shone till he sluiced
Them out on the dunghill, glossy and dead.

Suddenly frightened, for days I sadly hung 10
Round the yard, watching the three sogged remains
Turn mealy and crisp as old summer dung

Until I forgot them. But the fear came back
When Dan trapped big rats, snared rabbits, shot crows
Or, with a sickening tug, pulled old hens' necks. 15

Still, living displaces false sentiments

And now, when shrill pups are prodded to drown
I just shrug, 'Bloody pups'. It makes sense:

'Prevention of cruelty' talk cuts ice in town
Where they consider death unnatural
But on well-run farms pests have to be kept down. 20

8.3.2 *I wandered lonely as a cloud*, by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 5
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay: 10
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay, 15
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood, 20
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

8.3.3 *The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*, by Christopher Marlowe

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks, 5
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies, 10
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of th purest gold; 15

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love. 20

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

8.3.4 *Waiting, by Yevgeny Yevtushenko*

My love will come
will fling open her arms and fold me in them,
will understand my fears, observe my changes.
In from the pouring dark, from the pitch night
without stopping to bang the taxi door 5
she'll run upstairs through the decaying porch
burning with love and love's happiness,
she'll run dripping upstairs, she won't knock,
will take my head in her hands,
and when she drops her overcoat on a chair, 11
it will slide to the floor in a blue heap.

8.3.5 *How he saw her, by Ben Jonson*

I beheld her, on a day,
When her look outflourished May,
And her dressing did outbrave
All the pride the fields then have.
Far I was from being stupid, 5
For I ran and called on Cupid,
'Love, if thou wilt ever see
Mark of glory, come with me.
Where's thy quiver? Bend thy bow.
Here's a shaft; thou art too slow!' 10
And withal I did untie
Every cloud about his eye.
But he had not gained his sight
Sooner, than he lost his might
Or his courage; for away 15
Straight he ran, and durst not stay,
Letting bow and arrow fall;
Nor for any threat or call,
Could be brought once back to look.
I, foolhardy, there uptook 20
Both the arrow he had quit
And the bow, which thought to hit
This my object. But she threw

Such a lightning, as I drew,	
At my face, that took my sight	25
And my motion from me quite;	
So that there I stood a stone,	
Mocked of all, and called of one--	
Which with grief and wrath I heard--	
Cupid's statue with a beard,	30
Or else one that played his ape	
In a Hercules's shape.	

8.3.6 *Happiness*, by Raymond Carver

So early it's still almost dark out.
I'm near the window with coffee,
and the usual early morning stuff
that passes for thought.

When I see the boy and his friend	5
walking up the road	
to deliver the newspaper.	

They wear caps and sweaters,	
and one boy has a bag over his shoulder.	
They are so happy	10
they aren't saying anything, these boys.	

I think if they could, they would take	
each other's arm.	
It's early in the morning,	
and they are doing this thing together.	15

They come on, slowly.
The sky is taking on light,
though the moon still hangs pale over the water.

Such beauty that for a minute	
death and ambition, even love,	20
doesn't enter into this.	

Happiness. It comes on
unexpectedly. And goes beyond, really,
any early morning talk about it.

8.3.7 *Traveling through the Dark*, by William Stafford

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car	5
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;	
she had stiffened already, almost cold.	
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.	

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason-
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting, 10
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red; 15
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all- my only swerving-
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

8.4 The Lyric Turn

8.4.1 *Sonnet 130*, by William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. 5
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound; 10
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

8.4.2 *One Art*, Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent. 5
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went. 10
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster. 15

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

8.4.3 *No Loser, No Weeper*, by Maya Angelou

"I hate to lose something," then she bent her head
"even a dime, I wish I was dead.
I can't explain it. No more to be said.
Cept I hate to lose something."

"I lost a doll once and cried for a week. 5
She could open her eyes, and do all but speak.
I believe she was took, by some doll-snatching-sneak
I tell you, I hate to lose something."

"A watch of mine once, got up and walked away. 10
It had twelve numbers on it and for the time of day.
I'll never forget it and all I can say
Is I really hate to lose something."

"Now if I felt that way bout a watch and a toy,
What you think I feel bout my lover-boy? 15
I ain't threatening you madam, but he is my evening's joy.
And I mean I really hate to lose something."

8.4.4 *Tonight at Noon*, by Adrien Henri

Tonight at noon
Supermarkets will advertise 3p extra on everything
Tonight at noon
Children from happy families will be sent to live in a home 5
Elephants will tell each other human jokes
America will declare peace on Russia
World War I generals will sell poppies on the street on November 11th
The first daffodils of autumn will appear
When the leaves fall upwards to the trees 10

Tonight at noon
Pigeons will hunt cats through city backyards
Hitler will tell us to fight on the beaches and on the landing fields
A tunnel full of water will be built under Liverpool
Pigs will be sighted flying in formation over Woolton 15
And Nelson will not only get his eye back but his arm as well
White Americans will demonstrate for equal rights
In front of the Black house
And the monster has just created Dr. Frankenstein

Girls in bikinis are moonbathing 20
Folksongs are being sung by real folk
Art galleries are closed to people over 21
Poets get their poems in the Top 20

There's jobs for everybody and nobody wants them
 In back alleys everywhere teenage lovers are kissing in broad daylight 25
 In forgotten graveyards everywhere the dead will quietly bury the living
 and
 You will tell me you love me
 Tonight at noon

8.5 Confessional Poetry

8.5.1 *Daddy*, by Sylvia Plath

You do not do, you do not do
 Any more, black shoe
 In which I have lived like a foot
 For thirty years, poor and white,
 Barely daring to breathe or Achoo. 5

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
 You died before I had time--
 Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
 Ghastly statue with one gray toe
 Big as a Frisco seal 10

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
 Where it pours bean green over blue
 In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
 I used to pray to recover you.
 Ach, du. 15

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
 Scraped flat by the roller
 Of wars, wars, wars.
 But the name of the town is common.
 My Polack friend 20

Says there are a dozen or two.
 So I never could tell where you
 Put your foot, your root,
 I never could talk to you.
 The tongue stuck in my jaw. 25

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
 Ich, ich, ich, ich,
 I could hardly speak.
 I thought every German was you.
 And the language obscene 30

An engine, an engine
 Chuffing me off like a Jew.
 A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
 I began to talk like a Jew.

I think I may well be a Jew.	35
 The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna Are not very pure or true. With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack I may be a bit of a Jew.	40
 I have always been scared of you, With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo. And your neat mustache And your Aryan eye, bright blue. Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You--	45
 Not God but a swastika So black no sky could squeak through. Every woman adores a Fascist, The boot in the face, the brute Brute heart of a brute like you.	50
 You stand at the blackboard, daddy, In the picture I have of you, A cleft in your chin instead of your foot But no less a devil for that, no not Any less the black man who	55
 Bit my pretty red heart in two. I was ten when they buried you. At twenty I tried to die And get back, back, back to you. I thought even the bones would do.	60
 But they pulled me out of the sack, And they stuck me together with glue. And then I knew what to do. I made a model of you, A man in black with a Meinkampf look	65
 And a love of the rack and the screw. And I said I do, I do. So daddy, I'm finally through. The black telephone's off at the root, The voices just can't worm through.	70
 If I've killed one man, I've killed two-- The vampire who said he was you And drank my blood for a year, Seven years, if you want to know. Daddy, you can lie back now.	75
 There's a stake in your fat black heart And the villagers never liked you.	

They are dancing and stamping on you. They always knew it was you. Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.	80
--	----

8.5.2 *Lady Lazarus*, by Sylvia Plath

I have done it again. One year in every ten I manage it--	
 A sort of walking miracle, my skin Bright as a Nazi lampshade, My right foot	5
 A paperweight, My face a featureless, fine Jew linen.	
 Peel off the napkin O my enemy. Do I terrify?--	10
 The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth? The sour breath Will vanish in a day.	15
 Soon, soon the flesh The grave cave ate will be At home on me	
 And I a smiling woman. I am only thirty. And like the cat I have nine times to die.	20
 This is Number Three. What a trash To annihilate each decade.	
 What a million filaments. The peanut-crunching crowd Shoves in to see	25
 Them unwrap me hand and foot-- The big strip tease. Gentlemen, ladies	30
 These are my hands My knees. I may be skin and bone,	
 Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman. The first time it happened I was ten. It was an accident.	35

The second time I meant To last it out and not come back at all. I rocked shut	
As a seashell. They had to call and call And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.	40
Dying Is an art, like everything else. I do it exceptionally well.	45
I do it so it feels like hell. I do it so it feels real. I guess you could say I've a call.	
It's easy enough to do it in a cell. It's easy enough to do it and stay put. It's the theatrical	50
Comeback in broad day To the same place, the same face, the same brute Amused shout:	
'A miracle!' That knocks me out. There is a charge	55
For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge For the hearing of my heart-- It really goes.	60
And there is a charge, a very large charge For a word or a touch Or a bit of blood	
Or a piece of my hair or my clothes. So, so, Herr Doktor. So, Herr Enemy.	65
I am your opus, I am your valuable, The pure gold baby	
That melts to a shriek. I turn and burn. Do not think I underestimate your great concern.	70
Ash, ash-- You poke and stir. Flesh, bone, there is nothing there--	75

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

80

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

8.5.3 *And One for My Dame*, by Anne Sexton

A born salesman,
my father made all his dough
by selling wool to Fieldcrest, Woolrich and Faribo.

A born talker,
he could sell one hundred wet-down bales
of that white stuff. He could clock the miles and the sales

5

and make it pay.
At home each sentence he would utter
had first pleased the buyer who'd paid him off in butter.

Each word
had been tried over and over, at any rate,
on the man who was sold by the man who filled my plate.

10

My father hovered
over the Yorkshire pudding and the beef:
a peddler, a hawker, a merchant and an Indian chief.

15

Roosevelt! Willkie! and war!
How suddenly gauche I was
with my old-maid heart and my funny teenage applause.

Each night at home
my father was in love with maps
while the radio fought its battles with Nazis and Japs.

20

Except when he hid
in his bedroom on a three-day drunk,
he typed out complex itineraries, packed his trunk,

his matched luggage
and pocketed a confirmed reservation,
his heart already pushing over the red routes of the nation.

25

I sit at my desk
each night with no place to go,

opening thee wrinkled maps of Milwaukee and Buffalo,	30
the whole U.S., its cemeteries, its arbitrary time zones, through routes like small veins, capitals like small stones.	
He died on the road, his heart pushed from neck to back, his white hanky signaling from the window of the Cadillac.	35
My husband, as blue-eyed as a picture book, sells wool: boxes of card waste, laps and rovings he can pull	
to the thread and say Leicester, Rambouillet, Merino, a half-blood, it's greasy and thick, yellow as old snow.	40
And when you drive off, my darling, Yes, sir! Yes, sir! It's one for my dame, your sample cases branded with my father's name,	45
your itinerary open, its tolls ticking and greedy, its highways built up like new loves, raw and speedy.	

8.6 Conflict Poetry

8.6.1 *Tiannanmen*, by James Fenton

Tianamen Is broad and clean And you can't tell Where the dead have been And you can't tell What happened then And you can't speak Of Tianamen.	5
You must not speak. You must not think. You must not dip Your brush in ink. You must not say What happened then, What happened there. What happened there In Tiananmen.	10 15
The cruel men Are old and deaf	

Ready to kill	20
But short of breath	
And they will die	
Like other men	
And they'll lie in state	
In Tianamen.	25
They lie in state.	
They lie in style.	
Another lie's	
Thrown on the pile,	
Thrown on the pile	30
By the cruel men	
To cleanse the blood	
From Tianamen.	
Truth is a secret.	
Keep it dark.	35
Keep it dark.	
In our heart of hearts.	
Keep it dark	
Till you know when	
Truth may return	40
To Tiananmen.	
Tiananmen	
Is broad and clean	
And you can't tell	
Where the dead have been	45
And you can't tell	
When they'll come again.	
They'll come again	
To Tiananmen.	

Hong Kong, 15 June 1989

8.6.2 *Nothing's Changed*, by Tatamkhulu Afrika

Small round hard stones click	
under my heels,	
seeding grasses thrust	
bearded seeds	
into trouser cuffs, cans,	5
trodden on, crunch	
in tall, purple-flowering,	
amiable weeds.	
District Six.	
No board says it is:	10
but my feet know,	
and my hands,	
and the skin about my bones,	
and the soft labouring of my lungs,	

and the hot, white, inwards turning
anger of my eyes. 15

Brash with glass,
name flaring like a flag,
it squats
in the grass and weeds, 20
incipient Port Jackson trees:
new, up-market, haute cuisine,
guard at the gatepost,
whites only inn.

No sign says it is: 25
but we know where we belong.

I press my nose
to the clear panes, know,
before I see them, there will be
crushed ice white glass, 30
linen falls,
the single rose.

Down the road,
working man's cafe sells
bunny chows. 35
Take it with you, eat
it at a plastic table's top,
wipe your fingers on your jeans,
spit a little on the floor:
it's in the bone. 40

I back from the
glass,
boy again,
leaving small mean O
of small mean mouth. 45
Hands burn
for a stone, a bomb,
to shiver down the glass.
Nothing's changed

8.6.3 *Sonnet XVIII*, By John Milton

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones;
Forget not: in thy book record their groans 5
Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow 10

O'er all th' Italian fields where still doth sway
 The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
 A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

8.6.4 *Exposure*, by Wilfred Owen

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us...
 Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...
 Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...
 Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
 But nothing happens. 5

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire.
 Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.
 Northward incessantly, the flickering gunnery rumbles,
 Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.
 What are we doing here? 10

The poignant misery of dawn begins to grow...
 We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.
 Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army
 Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of gray,
 But nothing happens. 15

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.
 Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
 With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause and renew,
 We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
 But nothing happens. 20

II

Pale flakes with lingering stealth come feeling for our faces -
 We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed,
 Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,
 Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.
 Is it that we are dying? 25

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires glozed
 With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;
 For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;
 Shutters and doors all closed: on us the doors are closed -
 We turn back to our dying. 30

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;
 Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.
 For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;
 Therefore, not loath, we lie out here; therefore were born,
 For love of God seems dying. 35

To-night, His frost will fasten on this mud and us,
 Shrivelling many hands and puckering foreheads crisp.

The burying-party, picks and shovels in their shaking grasp,
 Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,
 But nothing happens. 40

8.5.5 *Dulce et Decorum Est*, by Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots, 5
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
 Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time, 10
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
 And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—
 Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight, 15
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin; 20
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest 25
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
 Pro patria mori.

8.6.6 *Suicide in the Trenches*, by Siegfried Sassoon

I knew a simple soldier boy
 Who grinned at life in empty joy,
 Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
 And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum, 5
 With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
 He put a bullet through his brain.
 No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
 Who cheer when soldier lads march by, 10
 Sneak home and pray you'll never know

The hell where youth and laughter go.

8.6.7 *The Death-Bed*, by Siegfried Sassoon

He drowsed and was aware of silence heaped
Round him, unshaken as the steadfast walls;
Aqueous like floating rays of amber light,
Soaring and quivering in the wings of sleep.
Silence and safety; and his mortal shore
Lipped by the inward, moonless waves of death. 5

Someone was holding water to his mouth.
He swallowed, unresisting; moaned and dropped
Through crimson gloom to darkness; and forgot
The opiate throb and ache that was his wound. 10
Water—calm, sliding green above the weir;
Water—a sky-lit alley for his boat,
Bird-voiced, and bordered with reflected flowers
And shaken hues of summer: drifting down,
He dipped contented oars, and sighed, and slept. 15

Night, with a gust of wind, was in the ward,
Blowing the curtain to a gummering curve.
Night. He was blind; he could not see the stars
Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud;
Queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green, 20
Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes.

Rain—he could hear it rustling through the dark;
Fragrance and passionless music woven as one;
Warm rain on drooping roses; pattering showers
That soak the woods; not the harsh rain that sweeps 25
Behind the thunder, but a trickling peace,
Gently and slowly washing life away.

He stirred, shifting his body; then the pain
Leaped like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore
His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs. 30
But someone was beside him; soon he lay
Shuddering because that evil thing had passed.
And death, who'd stepped toward him, paused and stared.

Light many lamps and gather round his bed.
Lend him your eyes, warm blood, and will to live. 35
Speak to him; rouse him; you may save him yet.
He's young; he hated war; how should he die
When cruel old campaigners win safe through?

But death replied: "I choose him." So he went,
And there was silence in the summer night; 40
Silence and safety; and the veils of sleep.

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