

Teaching the Sermon: Lyric, Narrative, and T. S. Eliot

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the subsection of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* that is aptly named "The Fire Sermon." The hybrid nature of this famous poem makes it open to a variety of readings, and these readings are often conflicting. Thus, the work, in spite of being a seminal text in literature, can be difficult to teach due to the complexity of the piece itself. This fact makes choosing a pedagogical approach to teaching *The Waste Land* a challenge. With the goal of making Eliot's poem more explorable, this thesis will undertake the task of an examination of "The Fire Sermon" using two distinctive theories. The theories in question are the theory of the lyric, exemplified by Jonathan Culler's writing, and the theory of heteroglossia established by Mikhail Bakhtin. However, that analysis will be merely a stepping stone for a more strictly pedagogical question that this project seeks to answer. That question is, namely, the query of which branch of contemporary theory, narrative or lyric, is more apt to present the issues inherent in "The Fire Sermon" in an effective and teachable manner. Both positions have a number of positive attributes and elements that make them uniquely suited to the examination of Eliot's writing.

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## GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Teaching poetry can be a difficult task. The basic question of “Why should I study poetry?” is one that many a professor has had to answer. While the scholarly community has done a decent job of articulating the value of the liberal arts, the specifics of how to teach difficult poetry is more of a gray area in scholarship. Certainly, a number of articles, opinions, and theories on how to best teach poetry exist, but creating a clear blueprint with examples of how to apply complex theories to a poem is essential to guiding new instructors into the field of teaching poetic works before an audience. This thesis is a work that shows several of the methods of studying poetry via an examination of several important poetic and narrative theories and the theorists that created said methods, and then the thesis undertakes a practical examination of a poem, a section of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*. The purpose of this thesis is to make critical theories and abstract ideas more applicable and valuable as usable tools in the classroom, rather than having them exist as ideas without a practical application. Knowledge is, after all, something made to be shared.

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## Table of Contents

<b>CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW AND KEY ISSUES</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>CONTEXT WITHIN THE POEM AND THE ISSUE OF EDITION:</i> .....	22
<b>CHAPTER II: LYRIC IN “THE FIRE SERMON”</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<i>A LYRIC READING:</i> .....	39
<b>CHAPTER III: NARRATIVE HETEROGLOSSIA IN “THE FIRE SERMON”</b> .....	<b>56</b>
<i>A NARRATIVE READING:</i> .....	67
<b>CHAPTER IV: PEDAGOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND A CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>77</b>
<b>WORKS CITED</b> .....	<b>80</b>

## Chapter I: Literature Review and Key Issues

T. S. Eliot is a landmark and, in some ways, controversial figure in literature. His poems are intriguing, enlightening, and they are filled with elements both scholarly and satirical. That mixture of elements contributes to a great scholarly interest in the poet, both in his day and in contemporary scholarship. While Eliot himself is long since deceased, his legacy is a living and breathing entity that continues to enrapture would-be poets, researchers, and students of English Literature across the globe. Those are the positive elements of Eliot's legacy; there are a number of confusing elements that correspond to that legacy as well. Eliot's writing style can be esoteric, his references misunderstood, and the patterns of his mind misconstrued to formulate inaccurate and widely differing opinions as to what Eliot "actually meant" in his writings. While the same can be said for other famous authors such as Seamus Heaney, Anne Sexton, or even the famous Bard, William Shakespeare, Eliot's relative popularity and modernity unite to make it especially difficult to understand him without the proper teaching about his work and the proper context for it. Essentially, modernity is both the blessing and the curse of T. S. Eliot, as his works can be easily but incorrectly taught to students while, unwittingly, the instructor is given the erroneous perception that his or her teaching method is sound due to the "ease" of understanding Eliot's difficult references and unique methods of conveying meaning. To wit, the issue is that the seeming readability of Eliot's work makes the work itself deceive the instructor. Simply teaching by studying Eliot's allusions and references is not a suitable pedagogical technique if one wishes to convey the full meaning of Eliot's writing.

As this thesis will contend, the context of Eliot's works is that of a man struggling to give voice to his innermost voice. His numerous and sometimes obscure references are used to enact a

deeply inward struggle. As he weaves tighter phrases and situations from religious, literary, mythic, and personal contexts, he presents us with a man, a writer, struggling to reconcile what could be seen as competing desires—to speak authentically but also to speak in the voices of others, to touch upon the wordless but also to leave it unsaid but implied. This is made critically clear in *The Waste Land*, one of Eliot's most famous and most easily misread pieces.

*The Waste Land* is, at its core, a hybrid piece about the struggle of the poet. Within that poem, Eliot wavers between outside opinions and voices as he grapples with his innermost self. The voices he uses over the course of the poem range from gossiping women, Andrew Marvell, William Shakespeare, Israel in exile, Buddha, Tiresias, the voice of creation itself, and more. Because there are so many competing elements in *The Waste Land*, it is easy to get lost in the information being presented, rather than focusing on the innermost struggle of the author. The information and the struggle must both be taken into account. The author, in a depressed and desperate state, wrestles with the seemingly dead space he is in; he uses the voices of others to enact a study of himself, and that creates an innermost tension. This tension is akin to a taut wire string, vibrating as it is stroked. Eliot strokes the string, causing a tension as the string is pulled taut between its contrasting hooks; for Eliot these would be life. While the echo is in doubt, and what Eliot actually meant by his words is in question, the tension itself is undeniable. Understanding and contextualizing this tension properly is key to understanding Eliot's writing. Thus, it is also the key to learning to teach that writing in a sound manner. Never is this issue clearer than in Section III of *The Waste Land*, "The Fire Sermon." The speaker of said section is a persona Eliot adopts to make his point, an implied author who voices his struggle through his narrator. Yet, even that fact is difficult to ascertain, as scholars have noted that the actual speaker of the section seemingly changes several times. Nevertheless, the choir of competing voices in

“The Fire Sermon” is the way the reader knows that Eliot is struggling; he needs more and more voices to describe what he is trying to articulate. Thus, “The Fire Sermon” becomes an immensely difficult section to understand. In dealing with this multitude of voices, a cursory viewpoint that studies only the allusions is easy; a more difficult task would be working out the inner drama of the lines. In order for the instructor to teach it properly, the section must be studied properly. Hence, a proper pedagogical teaching method must be learned and applied by the instructor to his or her own study before he or she can even begin the difficult task of teaching students to appreciate Eliot’s work.

An example of this sort of difficulty can be found in the character of Tiresias, often referenced as the central figure of Section III. Tiresias, as an exemplar of the poem’s complexity, shows both the unique nature of the poem and the difficulty of teaching it. The character, as the later sections of this work reveal, is one of conflict and change. True to his myth, Tiresias encapsulates the voices of the male and the female genders in a single being. This encompassing nature brings with it multiple desires and feelings that make Tiresias a divided figure, split between the genders he exemplifies. That conflict in his character shows, in essence, the tension of the poem as a whole in a single multi-faceted character. To explore the character of Tiresias, the instructor is forced to convey a mixed message through the study of an extremely unorthodox individual who exists in a cacophony of competing elements, metaphors, and bits of historical and theological thought. With that example in mind, the difficulty in teaching *The Waste Land* is therefore born not from ignorance, folly, or poor intentions on the part of the instructor, but it is born of the sheer difficulty of correctly interpreting the poem. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that it can be seemingly easy to “get” what Eliot is saying. The story of Tiresias is fairly easy to understand in the context of his being a mythological figure, but to understand the full

depth of the character of Tiresias in the poem requires the reader to grasp multiple different issues. In essence, the poem's readability can create the illusion of a simple reading while obfuscating the complex issues at work within the body of the poem. While some may argue that all interpretations are equally valid if they can be supported by elements of the text, the underlying fact is that Eliot had a purpose in writing the way he did. In essence, Tiresias is used to voice a certain viewpoint. That viewpoint can be discovered by a careful examination, but again it can be misunderstood due to the complex way Eliot is conveying his points in a seemingly readable poem.

The above creates a frustrating conundrum for any scholar to undertake in study or in teaching, especially before a classroom of students who may have little to no experience studying more complex poetic forms. In order to create a sound pedagogical teaching method, this thesis takes the inherent hybrid nature of the poem into key consideration and undertakes the construction of an analysis of "The Fire Sermon" subsection of *The Waste Land* using two of the more dominant methods of studying works of a hybrid nature, those methods being the theory of the lyric poem and the idea of heteroglossia. These methods, in contrast to one another, each hold a unique position within the field of literary study. The methods are contrasting in their nature and they compete in their purpose. Lyric is held to be the most ancient form of poetic self-expression via its mental drama, and it is a form that is simultaneously being reborn through the ages. Heteroglossia, with its nature of competing voices and influences, has become a staple piece of scholarly study of the novel, and it was held by its creator to be the encompassing finale that erases more antiquated ideas of meaning-making in poetry. Heteroglossia's creator saw his creation as being the defining viewpoint that all students should use to study what he saw as being the "superior" novel. To wit, it was meant to replace all other forms of poetic and

narratological study. Both theories contradict one another by the basic essence of their conventions, with lyric's being a pattern of mental movements that cause the reader to enact the author's own mindset and heteroglossia's seeing story as a volume of competing yet intertwined narratives, but both hold key components of understanding and literary theory that can be extremely useful for creating a careful examination of *The Waste Land*. A careful examination leads to a sound understanding of the text, and that sound understanding is absolutely essential to creating an accurate pedagogical method for teaching *The Waste Land*.

In order to set the stage for a pedagogical examination of "The Fire Sermon," take a look at Eliot the man and the poet. Famous for his intellect, wordplay, and the deep sense of personal emotion that he can convey, T. S. Eliot is heralded by many as being an essential figure in the study of modern and contemporary literature. The former idea is due to the fact that he, along with his contemporaries Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats, and Wallace Stevens, is regarded as being one of the foremost innovators of the "modernist" form of poetry and one of the most notable poets of his century. The latter idea is due to the fact that Eliot's literary legacy is vast. Not only did Eliot himself write an impressive corpus of work, he also influenced innumerable poets via the lasting impact of said corpus of work. Even the later Confessional Poets, such as Sylvia Plath, harken back to T. S. Eliot in one way or another.

Eliot's life was not an easy one, however, and he often wrote out of a sense of deep personal angst. From "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" to his famous *Four Quartets*, one of Eliot's greatest repeated struggles was the conflict with his own sense of morality and, for that matter, his sense of reality. That conflict was the struggle between the interior, more bestial, desires he felt and the "good" man he wanted to be. This makes the poet himself something of a tragic figure in literature. As the cliché saying goes, one must suffer in order to write. Eliot

suffered more than enough in his lifetime. With a divorce and a nervous breakdown being just some of the issues he faced, Eliot is a colorful and tragic figure indeed. The destruction of his marriage led to the deepening of his mental issues and anxiety, and that anxiety led him to doubt his morality and his very identity during his time in a mental facility. Effectively, Eliot was in a cycle of pain. This colorful nature became moderated by his intellect as he attempted to convey meaning in his poetry, as he attempted to convey his pain by rationalizing and analogizing his issues. Yet his pain is perhaps more vivid because of that element of conflict, the tension, between the rational and the irrational. That tension is the struggle for control, for true expression, even as Eliot doubts his ability to give a voice to his turmoil. This conflict is the mark of Eliot's great works, and it is something that is noticeable within Eliot's poetry. In his famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot draws a distinction between "...the mind which creates... [and the] man who suffers... [whose] passions... are its material" (Eliot 944). The mind creates and studies what it has created. The man suffers, withstands and expresses his passions, which the mind moderates with reason and conscience. The mind of the artist, Eliot writes, is something similar to a "...shred of platinum..." (Eliot 944). In that mind different and often conflicting emotions and experiences are brought together to form something impersonal and new. This thesis contends that Eliot is continually calling attention to the tension between these (at times) irrational elements and the rational means by which they are integrated and explained.

As Eliot's own unique gravitas as a poet is born out of these elements of discord, and that gravitas has a number of hallmarks to it, it is natural that scholars have noted the tension within Eliot's poetry. Eliot's own ethos as a poet and writer is something that must be examined as part of a study of the man. Eliot was deeply concerned with the authentic nature of his works, and he

spoke on such issues often: “But when Eliot exhorted the students of Milton Academy to be sure their wishes, thoughts and feelings were genuinely their own, he also suggested that for him the task was never easy” (Bush 6). With his mental difficulties, and his great learning, Eliot wanted to be certain that the person he presented within his poetry was his true self, and he implored the students of Milton Academy to do the same thing. Basically, Eliot wanted to be certain that the “true voice” was actually the voice of the author. That, given that Eliot also tried to overlay his writing with allusions and that he had to struggle with making certain that he was not writing purely out of anxiety, made the sincerity of his self-presentation something critically important to Eliot. To be certain of one’s own goals is a modern and contemporary issue that also harkens back to the poetic considerations of Plato and Aristotle. Plato, in his famous *Republic*, decries poetry as being inherently deceptive. To Plato, the poet was presenting a fabrication of the issues he or she was trying to convey. In other words, a recounting of the events put to poetic verse was incapable of accurately representing the events. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, thought that even an inaccurate representation of events could hold an element of accuracy if the author’s intention was to convey the truth. The basic question of whether one’s own will for the future is one’s own is a common issue and a recurring question in poetry. The question of thought and intent is equally so: is one individual thinking independently? Or is that individual simply repeating the thought processes taught to him or her as a child? And feelings, those wry and flighty emotions that come and go like a passing breeze through a summer field, how genuine could they be? Eliot was studying these contradictory and difficult questions with fervor and imploring his readers, listeners, and friends to consider them themselves.

Eliot’s study leads to one of the first problems Eliot faced: who was this true self he was trying to impart with such brutal honesty? More so, would that self change over time, or as Eliot

learned a different way of looking at himself? The essential question of his own personal identity was something that troubled Eliot, and that led him to study himself and censor himself in a rigorous manner: “A man does not emphasize the need to ‘be sure’ of feelings unless he is himself habitually questioning them. Eliot’s remark bespeaks a mind used to distrusting spontaneity and relying on conscience not only for moral guidance but also for emotional censorship” (Bush 6). Spontaneity, going back to the Romantic Poets such as Wordsworth, is a hallmark of creative work. The uncontrolled “burst” of creativity that needs to be channeled to produce art ends up being both a friend and an enemy to the struggling author. To distrust one of the foundational elements of his own practice foreshadows and coincides with Eliot’s search for authenticity. The abrupt and spontaneous outbursts could not be tested as they would occur without a control. That is to say, the outbursts were seemingly random events. Furthermore, an idea born out of spontaneity could not be replicated or studied in the same conditions from which it was born. The unstructured nature of creativity left itself unsuitable for testing, and the ability to test something is the ability to determine the truthfulness of it. Sheer honesty was something Eliot prized, and he displayed that with a near-scientific need for the ability to test that honesty.

To Eliot, the search for self, for truth and identity in the writing of poetry, was beholden to conscience and reason. To subordinate the search for self, a deeply emotional thing, to something like reason is to impose a new layer of difficulty on the search. To put it simply, human beings are emotional, irrational creatures. That is what the Romantic Poets attempted to harness in their writings by insisting that spontaneity was the core of true creativity and genuine, artful, poetry. Yet the young Eliot wanted to guide himself through the irrational via a rational search for meaning and truth, as he showed by his process of testing his own writing and thinking through his original writing of *The Waste Land*. To do so, particularly given his mental

breakdown, required the use of various different techniques and theories, as Eliot felt the need to have criteria by which to judge his own intentions. Fortunately for Eliot, he had already been educated in many of these fields during his time at Harvard. From American to French poetic styles, Eliot had already expanded his mind with philosophy, rhetoric, mythology, psychology, science, and more. Similarly, at the time Eliot began his poetic career, Eliot met and interacted with poets such as Ezra Pound and James Joyce, and he pursued a career in teaching in institutions such as the Royal Grammar School situated in Buckinghamshire. As his learning and teaching interests expanded, so too did his search for answers, and he was ultimately only partially able to harness what he learned and apply it to his search.

It seemed that Eliot's quest was doomed to frustration and failure, as he sought a path laden with deep and dividing contrasts. Eliot desired to be an authentic and original poet, and yet his search was built upon the knowledge of others, of poetic conventions already in use. He was attempting to take the search for self and moderate it with reason. Is it any wonder that Eliot encountered such difficulties? These difficulties led to frustration that came through in his writing, and a desire to give voice to what Eliot saw as going unsaid, as scholars Ronald Bush, Helen Gardner, Calvin Bedient, Lawrence Rainey, and Grover Smith have all said with their own words.

It would be remiss of this thesis to continue without considering classical and contemporary interpretations and criticisms of "The Fire Sermon" as part of the exegesis of said section. To study the poem without taking into account the voices of noteworthy scholars is to court disaster via making obvious mistakes, even if the background reading only furthers the clinical nature of argument in the short term. In the long term, establishing a cohesive pedagogy for teaching Eliot requires the toleration of a capacious study of the background material, if only

so that it can be compared to the upcoming pedagogical techniques. To wit, the scholarly background, though perhaps not of direct use in the classroom, is of use to this thesis via providing a ground from which the pedagogical arguments can be successfully launched.

To begin a study of the scholarship on *The Waste Land* is to delve into how scholars have conceptualized Eliot's mindset: "In the period of 'Gerontion' and *The Waste Land*, Eliot's poetry is obsessed with disclosing the self 'who does not speak' and exposing 'the self that wills'" (Bush 43). Obsession is, to put it mildly, not a healthy thing. However, Bush may have merely used the term to show the depths of Eliot's preoccupation with his search, as opposed to referring to an unhealthy need. Nevertheless, for a scholar to call Eliot obsessed with his search is to hint at the depth of Eliot's desire for the fruition of his quest for identity. Eliot himself gives words to his search by calling it the quest for the self that does not speak. In other terminology, he was looking for an authentic expression of his innermost self. To find that expression, he utilized tools given to him by past writers, and his vast intellect was capable of absorbing many different viewpoints that he could use to explore his inner turmoil. Yet none of that satisfied him, as the quiet sense of frustration and desperation that is inherent within his portrayal of himself is displayed abundantly with his own harsh judgments of his character within his poetry. He had to give voice to something that was always present, but never spoke what it actually wanted to say, and that left him feeling as if he had not fulfilled his goals. This, ultimately, fueled his obsessive quest further.

Furthermore, the disclosing of the self that does not speak brings to mind a confession. A confession is a type of unburdening, even as the act of confessing, itself, creates a new stress and a new burden on the confessor. Speaking the unspoken is to take up a new burden; that is the act of speaking something that perhaps should not be spoken. Again, Eliot's search was mixed with

a desire for relief, and the dread of the manner in which he sought to express that relief. In order to express the truth that he wanted to convey, Eliot would have to not just confess, but expose his inner self to the eyes of a prying audience. The elements of Eliot's search were, again, a source of oppositions and disputes with his own thinking. Thus, the overall narrator of *The Waste Land* is Eliot himself, but it is not the complete man. Rather, the narrator is a version of Eliot that he presents to confess and grapple with these issues of voicing something that he could not bring himself to fully articulate. The narrator effectively is both the speaker of the poem, and the subject of the poem itself.

The ever-present voices and internal conflict reached their united apex with *The Waste Land*. Perhaps this is fitting, given that Eliot wrote said poem shortly after his stay in a mental hospital. With that, *The Waste Land* is a turning point within his poetic career, as it exemplifies Eliot's personal ethos at a time when he himself was struggling to define his innermost self. That struggle to define himself emerged in the poem as a desire to voice the voiceless, to reach his innermost self even as he feared it. For purposes of this thesis, and as referenced by the authors within the literature review section under different terminology, this could best be encapsulated as a tension between competing desires. However, Eliot was also deathly afraid of what that tension could be if he examined it, even as he longed to reach out and touch it. He was a deeply conflicted man, split between competing desires and craving relief. Helen Gardner remarks that this internal conflict, and its culmination, is best presented as a type of apprehension: "In the earlier poetry the apprehension is a kind of glass through which he views the world; it is a dark glass through which life is seen with a strange clarity, but drained of color and variety" (Gardner 99). Apprehension is a type of tension, and in this case that tension can be linked to the multitude of threads Eliot is attempting to weave together even as his sanity and mental health are

fluctuating. In order to explore his innermost voice, and give expression to it, Eliot approaches it with both apprehension and an eagerness born out of a desperate need to convey something authentic and true. Yet, he feels he must moderate his approach by applying reason to his nervous and irrational thoughts. What Gardner has hit upon is the essential underlying theme of the poem, which must be crystalized for the poem to be understood. That theme, fittingly given what Eliot is wrestling with through the text, is tension and conflict. And, from Gardner's viewpoint, the conflict is brought about by Eliot's attempt to control the uncontrollable. This is both, in a sense, ironic and compelling in that it is part of what generates the very tension Eliot is articulating and navigating.

Eliot's insistence on controlling the glass he is viewing the world through is therefore part of what pains him. And, ironically, he would ultimately have to relinquish that control via his expression of the inner voice. A confessor is fully aware that he or she does not have control over the audience's reaction. This truth is the reason such things are done in the presence of a priesthood dedicated to providing forgiveness. For Eliot, there was no priesthood. Instead, there were readers who would judge him as they saw fit. And worse, there was Eliot himself. In this exploration of identity, Eliot's own viewpoint of himself could make or break the poet.

Yet, in spite of his apprehension, fear, tension, and nerves, the viewpoint he presents is siphoned of color, likely by Eliot's own insistence on using a sense of reason to decipher the inherently emotional issues he is categorizing and studying. To wit, his insistence on finding rational reasons for irrational feelings, and then seeing them through a moral lens, as Bush indicated, brought him to the point of siphoning the color and passion out of the things he was studying. In other words, Eliot's insistence on describing the irrational through rational terms was part of his pain. This presents, most fitting given its title, *The Waste Land* as the glass

through which the world is viewed in its deadest and grayest state. Yet ironically even in that state, the agonizing tension itself hints at a source of life.

As Gardner remarks on the mixture of emotion and logic, light and darkness:

“Paradoxically the acceptance of the shadow lessens the darkness; the darkness of *The Waste Land* becomes a kind of twilight” (Gardner 99). A twilight comes before the darkest night, or the coming of the brightest day where it is referred to as a dawn, yet it is also a twilight in that light and dark intermix themselves as the sun rises. Either way, Eliot was ultimately hinting at something that was coming. Furthermore, not only does that hint at death, a closure, or a new life, it hints at acceptance of something coming that Eliot could not fully control. Acceptance is part of confession. The words “Father, forgive me for I have sinned” require the confessor to admit that he or she has done an act of darkness and to release control of that slight against God. Hence, the above quotation encapsulates the relationship between the sinner and the priest: that of a son or daughter speaking to a mentor or a fatherly figure. Confession effectively places the confessor in a vulnerable and subordinate position where he or she must accept his or her wrongdoing and admit it to a kind of sympathetic judge. Accepting that darkness and releasing it allows the individual to shed the burden, even as the acceptance and confession bring new pains to life in a twilight of guilt and hope.

In this twilight realm where light and shadow intertwine is the voice that Eliot is both looking for, the voice unheard, and that he is trying to speak through. Even as the darkness is lessened by his acceptance, his voice is muted because it is whispering in a mixture of elements of light and dark. Thus, Eliot is both on the cusp of something, and within the crux of his problems, all within the body of a single poem. Therefore, *The Waste Land* itself is the twilight

peak of the mountain Eliot climbed in his journey, and his resolution in reaching that mountaintop and his exhaustion are both exemplified within the poem.

For Lawrence Rainey, one of the more contemporary scholars studying the work, the poem's twilight is an example of the issues of modern poetry. The role of the conflicting and paradoxical elements is, in and of itself, an example of one of modernism's unique attributes. Modernism encapsulates and uses classic information and sources to try to create new meanings within poetry: "The modernists were obsessed with history. They mourned it and damned it, contested it as tenaciously as Jacob wrestling with the image of God..." (Rainey 71). Jacob famously wrestled with God for an entire night and only realized who he was truly grappling with at the coming of dawn. At that dawn, Jacob was both blessed by God and given a permanent handicap, a crippling, in the form of a lame hip. Thus, the metaphor is apt for the modernist. The modernists grappled with large issues, but like Jacob, they grappled with them in darkness. The darkness of ignorance, madness, war, or other such issues depended largely on the poet in question. For Eliot, what he was grappling with was the darkness within his own mind. And, for a modern poet such as Eliot, once the wrestling was done, he would, like Jacob, be both blessed and crippled by winning and getting what he searched for. He could reach a new meaning, write an original work, but only after struggling through a long wrestle with an all-powerful force and emerging forever changed by it. Thus, the elements Eliot was trying to unite had a unique and horrifying power to the modernist. For the modernist, the struggle with those elements was a spiritual quest even as the modernist poet undertook the task of writing out his or her innermost thoughts and fears. Eliot, clearly, was within this paradigm.

To the modernist, history, mythology, and theology were things of a sublime nature that he or she grappled with even as he or she utilized them. These elements were beautiful in the

context of providing a fertile ground from which a poet could pluck individual tidbits of story and weave them into a new and coherent whole, and terrible or terrifying in that the stories had been told by others before them. Ezra Pound famously rebuked renowned translator Divus for this in the first section of his *Cantos*: “Lie quiet Divus. I mean, that is Andreas Divus,” (Pound 68). That was a way of showcasing both Pound’s love and hate for the use of history within his works, and his determination to carve out something new and original even as he was borrowing heavily from Divus himself. While using history as one sees fit was, at the time, something of a controversial move, the modernists wielded their knowledge of lore with a degree of skill that made their works inherently original even as they borrowed heavily from source materials.

For Eliot, this usage of source materials amounted to a cacophony of potential voices to choose from to use within the body of his poem. Rainey remarks on this by saying of a renowned man of letters: “Bishop, however inadvertently, has also stumbled across one of the major sources of the poem’s uncanny power, our extreme uncertainty over just who is speaking at any particular moment in *The Waste Land*” (107). That uncanny power can lead into uncanny confusion if the reader does not slow down and carefully parse the work with a discerning eye. The voice of the example character of Tiresias becomes an attempt at creating a guiding light in that land of confusion. As Eliot explicitly uses the ancient Greek character with the first person, Tiresias stands out as a way of Eliot’s declaring “This is me speaking through this character from myth.” And he is speaking with the utmost truth in that inner voice that cannot give voice to itself. But even that is subject to interpretation, as Eliot is speaking through the guise of another character named Tiresias, and that other person has worn the veil of being a man and a woman at different points in his existence. Paradox and apprehension are fully at work and they are displayed with abundance even as Eliot confesses. For Rainey, then, this paradoxical poem could

be said to conceptualize and display the merits and demerits of modernism in one complex work. The merits in its beauty and brilliant use of outside voices, and the demerits in the confusion those voices can lend to the poem, create a complication in deciphering what Eliot meant when he used those voices. Effectively, the poem's tension, to Rainey, was the quintessential modernist pressure of interweaving past and present to formulate something new.

This interweaving is not without scholarly controversy. In fact, it is the cause of radically differing interpretations of the poem. In challenge to the ideas of Bush, Gardner, and Rainey are the ideas of Calvin Bedient, professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles. For Bedient, the poem, particularly "The Fire Sermon," is split between Christian and Pagan, male and female, righteous and sinful, and fantasy and reality. Again, this is a type of tension in that the poem is divided between issues. However, Bedient argues that the tension is different in its nature and expression. While Bedient would agree with the general observations of the poem as being born of contrasting elements, what the individual observations mean are radically different to him, and they are actually problematic. For example, the general idea about Eliot's confessional speaker's being in a type of spiritual exile is addressed: "For the same reason that he can only 'speak,' he is a cultural stray (and still more a stray from the Absolute)..." (109). Essentially, the basic idea of Eliot as a man grasping for some sort of awakening or redemption from within a dead and decaying wasteland is there. But, in terms of personality, the motivations of Eliot himself or the speaker of the poem are different. Whereas a "standard" examination posits that Eliot is in a spiritual exile, Bedient puts it in terms of his being a stray from the culture of the day, the Almighty, and reality itself.

In Bedient's thinking, rather than just a man struggling to come to terms with the truth via a series of personas and movements of the mind, Eliot is a man on the verge of madness, or

he holds the appearance of madness for the sake of the poem: “More, he is still hysterical enough (as will appear) to be undecided between being a man or a woman (or both at once in a disjunctive synthesis)” (114). In the above quotation Bedient returns to the element of the poem used earlier as an example of the type of tension found within the poem: the divided character of Tiresias. The use of the example of Tiresias, commonly regarded as a critical factor in reading “The Fire Sermon” section of the poem, becomes rather different here, a persona decided upon by Eliot as reaction to Eliot’s own indecisiveness about his own condition and mental health in a cultural context. To Bedient, Eliot’s grappling with hysteria is seen in the explosive interweaving of the forces of the Pagan world of nymphs, Tiresias, unchecked human sexuality, and Christianity. In essence, Eliot used mythology and theology as part of an attempt navigate his issues. Yet, in contrast to many scholars, Bedient holds the role of Tiresias as one that has been vastly overused and overrated by critics and scholars: “A similar exaggeration of Tiresias’ importance...” (129). Tiresias was referenced by T. S. Eliot himself as being the key player within the poem. For Bedient to call the use of such a figure exaggerated is a startling remark, and further a remark that is rooted in Bedient’s reading of the poem as satirical. For him, Tiresias is an artifact, a piece of cultural mythology that is used for a wry purpose. To Bedient, that is as far as the role of the mythical figure goes.

Furthermore, the role of Tiresias, in Bedient’s sort of reading, is quite different from the central role he plays in a more standard reading: “The protagonist becomes Tiresias only for the sake of a skit in which everything sexual is automatic, degrading, and comic” (130). Whereas scholars suppose that the subtly referenced romantic overture on the part of the merchant is a disruption that leads to the sense of disturbance and insight that Tiresias is used to convey, Bedient considers the Greek soothsayer as something to be used both to make a point and make a

farce of the point Eliot is trying to make. For the central figure of this section of the poem to be comical drastically alters the sense of disturbance in the poem into something of a theatrical satire. While the poet may indeed be using Tiresias, to Bedient, that use is filled with a sardonic irony. To wit, Bedient sees the poet as being obsessed with physical elements and sensuality even as he was appalled by them: “Yet how distracted by the sensual the protagonist is, how held back by his own fascinated disgust” (117). Tiresias the gender-changing prophet is the exemplar and personification of the poet’s problems, as opposed to being something of a clarifying element, in that type of reading. Both male and female, Tiresias is a contrivance used to display the poet’s insecurity and depression in a clever, but still sarcastic or farcical, manner. In that way, Tiresias is an example that shows the tension of the poem, but in a manner that is ultimately sarcastic.

Grover Smith’s earlier work contrasts Bedient’s. While Smith would argue that the context from which Eliot borrowed the elements of his Tiresias is critical to understanding the poem, even if it was satirical, it is perhaps more important to examine the way Smith himself categorized Tiresias, in contrast to Bedient, and the way the mythological figure is used in “The Fire Sermon.” Smith remarks in an earlier portion of his study of Eliot: “Many critics have seen in Eliot’s use of myth what I shall call the ‘nostalgic’ implication. If, so their reasoning runs, primitive life expressed its wholeness, its harmony, in myth and ritual, then Eliot invoked these primitive forms to contrast with them the social sterility of his own time” (55). Although Smith does not say outright that he is in full agreement with that idea, he does use it to begin his study of Tiresias, the character. Nostalgia is the wistful longing for what was, a perceived or imagined better time. Taking Gardner’s and Rainey’s viewpoints into mind, this nostalgia is mixed with a subtle horror at the implications of that emotion. Eliot, in this perception of Tiresias, is using the

character to express a longing for the magical and mythical, as opposed to the polluted and morally fraught period in which Eliot was living.

However, to classify the character of Tiresias as being an incarnation of harmony may be quite the odd choice to make. Although the Greek Pantheon could be seen as a set of orderly individuals, their legends are filled to the brim with chaotic and selfish actions on the part of the gods. The Apple of Discord which brought about the Trojan War is a famous example. Other examples are Apollo's attempted assault on Daphne and the murder of children, by Apollo and his twin Artemis, because the children's mother insulted the Titan Leto, mythologically believed to be the mother of Apollo and Artemis. And Tiresias, a man both blessed repeatedly and cursed just as much by those ruthless gods as he swapped genders repeatedly, is certainly not an example of stability or harmony in a conventional sense.

Perhaps the key to understanding how Tiresias could be an example of harmony is within Smith's use of the idea of rituals. Smith speculates on the possible role of Tiresias by remarking on the role of similar gender-bending individuals in myth: "The function of the transsexual or eunuch priesthood was to serve in acts of fertility magic whereby seed was sacrificially spilled. It is possible that the striking of the serpents symbolized this process; equally likely that it symbolized the unmaning of the novice entering upon the female role" (104). Tiresias, in that reading, was serving something of a holy role. By being switched from male to female and then back, he was serving as omen of new things to come in his myth and in *The Waste Land*. That element is teachable in a classroom, but it is still somewhat bogged down by the study of what the hermaphrodite's role was. Notice that the role of these hermaphroditic individuals was in rites of fertility, rites meant to bring about the conception of new children, the seeding of crops, and the coming of change. From that reading Tiresias is a figure of myth and

hope. This makes Tiresias similar to and different from the eunuch Saint Philip encountered and baptized in Acts 8:26. However, in this example, the Greek magic ritual would have been seen as blasphemous and the baptism holy by Christian thinkers. The biblical eunuch was a symbol of an overlord's power over his servant, forcing the poor individual to undergo the removal of part of his nether regions, similar to the overriding will of the priests in the fertility ritual, while the baptism brought him new life.

Yet, even in a hopeful reading that makes Tiresias a symbol of magic and fertility, there is still a subtle disquiet in that Tiresias is, according to myth, forced into his transformations, just as the eunuch likely was. Tiresias is not a willing priest or a happy participant in the rituals. Perhaps alluding to this bit of subtle discord is Smith's own remark: "On the artistic level only, the poem works a reverse transformation of Tiresias the blind into Tiresias the all-seeing" (55). There is an irony and conflict in that. Even though Tiresias is supposedly a blind figure, he is also a figure who sees everything Eliot needs him to know in the poem itself. Effectively, Smith shows that the role of Tiresias is both serious and sarcastic. Tiresias is, effectively, yet another source of conflict within the poem due to the role the Greek character plays and what that character's backstory is. Bedient and Smith, again, saw the tension within the poem, and each scholar attempted to conceptualize it in a different way. Bedient saw it as something of a satire, a parody of seriousness, and Smith saw it as nostalgia mixed with a sense of horror and ritual. These men were encapsulating the same tension Bush, Gardner, and Rainey remarked upon, but they focused it sharply upon the voice of Tiresias in order to provide a fulcrum for understanding the poem's issues. While that is a noteworthy refinement down to a single issue, it is still lacking adequate gravitas to hold as a sound pedagogical technique for reading the entirety of the poem. Tiresias is found only in "The Fire Sermon." And while that segment of the poem is the most

critical piece of the poem, the most often cited and read, it is scaffolded by other sections of note. Therefore, a pedagogical technique must be based on interpretation of the main element present, Tiresias, but it also must catch the subtle details that combine to make Tiresias the climax of the section. In literary terms, reaching the crux of the novel or poem without the “build-up” and the smaller elements that weave into that summit of writing is a deficient pedagogical technique.

All of the scholars who have spent time studying *The Waste Land* and Eliot himself have found different manners of expressing the internal tension they discovered with the voices Eliot was using. Bush called it an obsession, Gardner a twilight gray, Rainey deemed it a type of power in the tradition of modernism, Bedient deemed it a satirical farce, Smith a type of horror mixed with a nostalgia for the rituals of the mythic past. All these were and are different ways of describing the voices Eliot used within the poem. Those voices were, to reduce the poem to incredibly simplistic terms, the way Eliot sought to navigate and explain the tension in his viewpoints. Ironically, rather than easing the navigation for the reader, they made it more difficult. The voices themselves were used to convey and exemplify tension as Eliot felt it, but the voices themselves caused more tension as they spoke. This led to the voices being taken to the forefront of many a scholar’s writings, and the underlying essential tension being lost in the medium used to convey it. In all of these scholarly opinions, the tension is visible, defined, and put to use explaining the poem. Yet, with all of these methods of studying how Eliot is struggling to voice the voiceless, there is a lack of a unifying element to bring cohesion to the readings. Each author examined above struggles to define the tension, and as such each defines it differently. Without a proper definition, how could one teach this poem in a pedagogically stable manner? The conflicting viewpoints breed a variety of readings, each different, some to the degree of seeing elements of the poem as being examples of the absurd. The scholarly

background of “The Fire Sermon” serves to show, ultimately, why a new attempt to define the tension of the poem in a teachable way is needed, just as much as it shows that the tension is present.

Further compounding this dispute in the scholarly background is the difficulty of establishing a genre for the poem itself. It is, quite clearly, a poetic work. But is it a narrative poem? A modernist poem? Categorizing *The Waste Land* can be a difficult task for the student of English literature. Effectively, before one could even establish which scholar one could use as a primary pedagogical inspiration, one could get bogged down in issues of definition of the overall poem itself. Due to the poem’s complex and modern nature, multitude of voices, and openness to interpretation, the work itself can be open to many, often conflicting or widely different, readings and viewpoints that can be supported by the text itself. The scholars referenced in this thesis clearly show that the poem is open to interpretations in meaning, so why would it not be open to questions of genre? As remarked upon before, *The Waste Land* is a hybrid piece, encompassing techniques from several genres and multiple different historical and mythological backgrounds. That alone is a notable consideration, as any method or critical lens used to teach the poem must capture the multiple potential meanings held within the body of the text. Enter into the debate of both interpretation and genre the terms of lyric and heteroglossia, each of which have hybrid elements themselves, and the debates and the pedagogical issues of the poem are simplified.

#### *Context within the Poem and the Issue of Edition:*

At its core “The Fire Sermon” is the story of a man grappling with his innermost self via a series of movements of the mind. Into this one should remember that there are, roughly, six key elements that make up “The Fire Sermon.” These elements could be understood as scenes. The first scene begins with a speaker walking along the river Thames, remembering portions of

Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Paul-Marie Verlaine, Mrs. Porter and her daughter, Psalms, and the legend of Philomela. As the poem goes on, the speaker himself never leaves the riverside. Instead, the audience sees the speaker struggling with his issues in a series of additional imagined scenes: the encounter with Mr. Eugenides, the story recounted by the voice of Tiresias, the speaker's trek through the city, the voices by the Thames, and a prayer by Saint Augustine. The reader needs a defining method of holding these elements together. Be it lyric or heteroglossia, the poem demands a pedagogical lens to base a reading on so that students can hold all the issues together. Just from a surface-level catalogue of the pieces of literature, mythology, and religion that Eliot used, the reader is given a hint as to the complexity of the poem. To ease that complexity while fully illuminating the poem is, therefore, the challenge for the instructor.

For the instructor, Edmund Spenser's famous axiom, that literature is meant to "Teach and delight" the reader, is put to the test. Students may find themselves rapidly growing bored by the clinical issues of scholarly terminology, background, edition, and more. Raising these issues can seem to be mere trivia that removes the joy of learning from the study of the poem. Eliot's poem is certainly meant to teach both himself and the reader, but the delight that comes from unfolding the various difficult elements can quickly turn to distress without a grounding element. While the various elements listed above generally are that grounding element, they themselves can also be used to detract from the tension that needs to be explained as part of the poem. This, effectively, presents the pedagogical problem of the would-be instructor just going over the very basic elements of "The Fire Sermon." The problem is, again, not something born out of foolishness or ill intentions, but it is born out of the sheer difficulty of understanding Eliot's work. Thus, in order to refine the poem to a workable and stateable form for teaching, simply

deciding on an edition from which to launch a single pedagogical method that encapsulates and grounds the elements of the poem is an element of pedagogical choice and a grounding element, as there are differing editions of the text. In fact, the text was edited by Ezra Pound, so there are differing source texts as well. Which contemporary textual version should be utilized for the classroom is an issue in and of itself, as are the issues of edition. However, those issues are for scholars to debate, and not for students to be taught. For purposes of this thesis, as the focus is on the pedagogical use of theory in order to make teaching Eliot's poetry less of a task, the issue is not which version is fully what Eliot wrote in contrast to what Pound edited, but which version is most used. That version is the one presented in the *Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*. Although that version itself is compiled from two sources, the "original" version edited by Pound and Eliot that was released in *The Criterion*, and Eliot's later released notes, the Norton is the most commonly used, and arguably the most practical, edition for the classroom. With issues of grounding elements and edition settled, which pedagogical technique, lyric or heteroglossia, is more valid and lively as the better technique from which to launch a study of the poem is now dependent on an understanding of what those terms mean.

## Chapter II: Lyric in “The Fire Sermon”

Lyric poetry is still being defined as a field of study within the wider range of poetic genres. This is ironic as the poetic form itself is ancient, by far more so than some individuals may think or even imagine. To study the lyric poem's conventions is to enact a study of the very history of the birth and refinement of poetry itself, spanning over half a dozen different eras and many different poets and artists. Essentially, the “undefined” field of lyric itself defined poetry for hundreds of years, and current scholars struggle to define the lyric. Jonathan Culler, one of the main contemporary sources on lyric poetry and literary theory in general, has traced the origins of the lyric form back to ancient Greek poetry that was eventually turned into music and preformed with a lyre. Yet, even that ancient element does not fully capture the root of the poetic form, or hint at its full depth. Lyric poetry clearly derives its name from the fact that the poems were originally put to verse or song. As rhyme has long since been a staple of poetry, this should be of little to no surprise to anyone. What makes the idea of the lyric unique is not just its origins, or its evolution over time, but what the term “lyric poetry” has come to encompass in centuries since its original conception as a medium for imparting meaning to the reader.

Lyric has come to mean a series of movements of the mind within poetic verse. Far from just being the confessions of a tired poet who has given thought to his or her innermost pain, such as in the manner of a Plath or a Lowell, the lyric has come to mean a particular type of poetic drama unfolding on the paper in a unique way. That uniqueness is, in no small part, due to the heavy amount of effort involved in understanding the lyric. As Susan Stewart writes in Chapter Two of *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature*: “Lyric, in contrast, is always overdetermined; its images, symbols, sounds, the very grain of the voices it suggests, all compete for our attention and throw us back, whether we are listening or reading, to repeated

consideration of the whole” (45). Overdetermined ideas can, at first glance, be erroneously taken to mean simplistic ideas. That is not what Stewart’s use of the word indicates at all. The lyric’s overdetermination is due to careful precision on the part of the author. Words are chosen and utilized with a skill and care alike to those of a master artist painting at an easel, with the artist being terrified that single drop of paint can ruin the image being painted. That is because the word fits wholly into the greater context of the poem, so words and ideas can be revisited. The overdetermination of the lyric focuses the reader inward, on the work itself and on the poet’s mind. The basic question of why the text is formulated in a certain way becomes key, as is understanding why the poet chose that language or word in the first place. Hence, this overdetermined, some might say exaggerated, nature is meant to constantly call the reader back into focus on the poet’s thoughts. Simply put, this poetic form uses the tried and true practice of calling the reader’s attention back to the subject at hand, a common pedagogical technique that hints at the purpose of the poetic form overall. This is a common, simple, but frustrating technique, as many a student of the lyric could say. The lyric is a subject that demands great effort be put into deciphering it. Thus, it is both deeply illuminating and rather frustrating to newcomers as it can seemingly be a struggle just to devote the effort needed to immerse oneself in the lyric.

The subject at hand in the lyric poem is more than just a musing on the speaker’s inner pain. To the contrary, a lyric poet takes the reader in an entirely different direction that allows the reader to think and feel as the poet does, somewhat in the same way a philosopher imparts knowledge with the hope of a protégé’s understanding it. As surely as Stewart later remarks on the various contrasts between philosophy and lyric, she also comments on a number of similarities: “Yet both philosophers and lyric poets are solo speakers, and their common material

is language—indeed, they share the same language, for it is not that there are separate tongues for each” (45). Comparing a poetic form to an ancient discipline such as philosophy could be seen as a startling claim. Even though the lyric is, in and of itself, an ancient poetic form, to claim that the lyric is similar to a discipline that an individual could devote his or her entire life to is quite a claim to make. Yet the claim was made for a good reason, as the two share a similar sort of root: “Here, lyric poetry and philosophy can both be seen to stem from traditions of wisdom literature wherein speakers who are *vates* or sages deliver prophecies, oracles, and other powerful utterances that will be deciphered or interpreted by ordinary men and women” (Stewart, 46). A prophecy, a cryptic message from God, a word from the wise, a parable to be deciphered, and more, are all ways to define the lyric poem. In biblical theology most of the ancient prophecies were simple in hindsight. Lyric has no hindsight. Instead, it is up to the reader to decipher the author’s thoughts. Stewart is therefore explicitly placing the lyric in a long tradition of literature meant to reveal wisdom to the reader, but only if the reader is paying attention and reading closely. Notice that Stewart places the poet in the form of the learned teacher. Be this learning in the form of schooling or of lifelong experience, the poet fulfills the role of the sage or the prophet, albeit one who is dealing with his or her own internal tensions and drama.

At its core lyric can be said to be a form of a pursuit. The pursuit lyric represents is a search for an authentic meaning, something Eliot was notably concerned with. The wise teacher is effectively teaching him or herself even as he or she teaches the reader. How can this statement be considered to be accurate? Because the poet is undertaking a study of his or her own mind. As Stewart remarks: “In Herder we find lyric apotheosized as the form that unites all reasoning, perceiving, desiring, and feeling and so best expresses the totality of human life.

Those physiological dimensions of lyric expression condemned by Plato are here inseparably bound to psychology and the possibilities of self-knowledge” (59). Thus, according to Johann Herder, the lyric is the consummation of literature. It is the universal “whole” that can encompass reason and desire, unite the rational and the irrational, and express human life on the page of a literary work. That is, effectively, an extremely grandiose claim. Plato would certainly disagree, and he would likely be horrified by the attempt to unify all human experience in the embodiment of a single poem. In fact, many contemporary scholars argue for the unique nature of each individual’s experiences and call the “universal” a cliché or naïve concept. Nevertheless, Herder’s theory brings to mind the possibility of learning about oneself. If, as Eliot believed, there is a voice that does not speak but desperately wants to reveal itself, what better medium to explore that idea than the lyric poem?

One of the modern scholars on the lyric is notable literary theorist Jonathan Culler. Culler sought to explain the myriad considerations of the lyric in his book *Theory of the Lyric*. Worthy of note is that Culler dedicated an entire book to clarifying and studying this concept, after years upon years of studying literary criticism. To begin his discussion, Culler remarks “Lyric poetry has a long history in the West but an uncertain generic status” (1). That observation fits quite well with what Herder was remarking on, albeit in a different way. Notice that Herder’s remark, echoed by Stewart, was on the subject of what lyric *does*, not necessarily what it *is*. Genre is a term of classification based upon what something is by what it does. In essence, form and function are linked in the sense of genre. Genre is also, conversely, an overused term in the modern scholarly world, and there are postmodern scholars who hold the belief that genre itself is an outdated and antiquated term. To wit, the genre was something that has been “surpassed” by contemporary works that blend different genres into one story. If the postmodern theories

espoused by scholars like Douglas Kellner are correct, the lyric was postmodern before the ancient era was fully developed, in that it transcends genres and is difficult to classify due to effectively wielding elements of multiple genres. If the postmodernist is incorrect, lyric is a genre with such a wide history and use that it is a feat in and of itself just classifying such a vast concept.

While the genre of the lyric is in dispute, the lyric itself remains a nebulous concept unless studied with a discerning eye. Culler further remarks “Lyric forms are not confined to one historical period but remain available as possibilities in different eras” (Culler 4). Not only is lyric difficult to define, its forms transcend and therefore cross over the barriers between eras and genres. This makes lyric a shifting concept, dependent on the poet and the era from which said individual is writing. Culler takes this shift to be not a hindrance, but a unique feature of the lyric that sets it apart from other poetic forms. Because of its ancient and vast nature, the lyric is something utterly different from other forms of poetry in that it is transcendent, ancient, but both “new” in the sense that lyric is slightly different from era to era, and renewable in that lyric keeps being recreated by each era. Thus, to place a single set of conventions upon it would be difficult. And, in point of fact, Culler is displeased with the notion of trying to do such a thing in the first place.

Furthering this displeasure is Culler’s disquiet with the attempt to bend the lyric to fit a single convention or way of thinking: “A further goal here is to combat what I take to be an unnecessary presumption of much lyric theory and pedagogy: that the goal of reading a lyric is to produce a new interpretation” (5). To Culler’s mind, new knowledge and the creation of it should not be the purpose of reading the lyric. In fact, that would be a misuse of the lyric. The lyric is something meant to be used as a tool for understanding a poem and hearing its implications,

studying it, and appreciating it. For Culler, the lyric is not a tool meant to launch a new critical theory or to challenge the implications of Western Culture in a poem. While it certainly can challenge the reader's thinking, it is not meant to shatter a specific ideology or craft a new one. Rather, it is an attempt to impart a way of thinking, of resolving tension. Culler steadfastly refused to even attempt to form a single theory of the lyric: "The features I identify in the lyrics I discuss do not constitute a checklist for deciding what is a lyric, but rather a system of possibilities that underlie the tradition and that ought to be borne in mind when reading poems that may have a relation to this tradition" (6). Thus, Culler has stated that his goal was and is to give the reader a way of studying poetic works through the encompassing lens of the lyric tradition, but he would not call himself the utmost authority on what constitutes a lyric and what does not. He provides examples of the form, but is careful to navigate the line between saying that his examples constitute the absolute form of the lyric. Rather, Culler says he has found several forms of the lyric, and he invites the reader to peruse this knowledge to discover what lyric does, instead of Culler offering a simple definition of what lyric is.

How can a scholar teach what something is, what a form does, when a foremost scholar refuses to define it in simplistic terms? Culler answers this challenge via a pedagogical technique familiar to many a teacher: modeling. In order to show the possibilities of the lyric, Culler performs a reading of nine different poems. These poems include Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite," the poetry of Horace, and a more modern example in William Carlos Williams's fragment of *Spring and All* that is commonly referred to as "The Red Wheelbarrow." That is a remarkable group of poems of radically different purpose, meaning, and conclusion, by authors of substantially different eras and worldviews. Nevertheless, there are common elements to the poems that can be used to form the foundation of an outline of the idea of the lyric, though not a

firm generic status. Of Sappho's poem Culler remarks: "For us, it is striking that this originary lyric seems intricately performative" (15). Culler's words there strike a unique chord in the scholarly world. Poetry is a thing to be read, but Culler treats Sappho's ode to the goddess of love as thing to be enacted, like the movement of a sword, the pirouette of a dance, or the baritone of a chorus. The term "enacted" brings to mind the conventions of the play rather than the poem. Furthering the idea of enactment is the following statement: "This example gives us lyric as performance and event, as a public act..." (Culler 15). Thus a criterion for the lyric is that it is something of an action. However, this enactment is a performance of the mind within the form of the poem itself. Although a poet may take a walk, a run, or a swim as he or she is mentally composing the poem, the lyric poem is a performance within the mind of the author and the audience. That differentiates the lyric from the play, where the action is enacted on the stage by the actors for the audience's consideration. While Prince Hamlet certainly goes through a psychological sequence of events and grapples with depression, his tale is told to the reader as story, not performed by the writer on the page unless the reader examines the script.

If the poem itself is a repetition of an event, it is merely a story. It would be an anecdote, a fiction, or a narrative. While those tools are certainly present with some lyric poems, they are tools of the form, not the totality of the form itself. To reduce lyric to the form of a simple story would, in Culler's eyes, drastically limit the poem to being something of an ordinary form of writing. Culler views the lyric as transcending that boundary in a fundamental way: "Second, the hyperbolic or extravagant character of this invocation of the other, which here takes the form of the multiplication of discourse and perspectives of the other, makes the poem not the fictional representation of an experience or an event so much as an attempt to be itself an event" (16). Invoking the other could involve using another's voice to express one's innermost pain and

struggles, as Eliot did. It could also take the form of simply repeating a quotation, a bit of song, a psalm, or humming a tune. What makes the above so useful to the theory of the lyric is the definition of the poem itself as being more than a narrative. To Culler, the lyric poem surpasses that by having the poem itself be an action, just as the narrative within the poem itself was a tool to convey a piece of the action.

Culler's lyric theory is puzzling in that it presents the poet as an actor, the poem itself as an action, and the reader as an actor, but again it defies the conceptions of theater or of simple poetry. Culler narrows down the distinction of what he believes to be one of the key aspects of lyric poetry: "Alluding to the varied style of the sound or music of such combinations, this poem emphasizes the self-consciousness of lyric, whose subject is not so much the affective states of joy, hope, despair, etc. but what can be said about them" (21). Not only does Culler directly link the movements of the mind, within the lyric poem, to its roots in music, he hits upon the reflexivity that is key within it. If a lyric poem is a study, undertaken by the poet and the reader, that study has to be repeatable and retrospective. In essence, the study is a study of itself and the subject in question. Perhaps *the* key element of lyric poetry is identified in discussion of Goethe's "Heath Rose" poem and the situation presented within that poem: "In addition to this performative aspect, of accomplishing what it names, the poem positions the reader as the speaker, who repeats this ritualistic discourse. This is a lyric where it would be pointless to ask who is speaking or in what circumstances" (Culler 24). As Culler says, the poem needs to do what it names. That is, the poem needs to have the poetic aspect, the movement of the mind or grappling with a certain problem or a set of problems. Differing from a poem that can be casually reread, the lyric is an almost religious ritual in the way it is performed. The lyric needs to be done carefully and properly. But it needs to be far more than a ritual, to be done over and over

again without feeling or verve attached to it. A lyric reading of a poem needs to be a sacred technique, something with an aura of awe and mystery about it. It needs to make the reader the poet, the poet the reader, and blur the lines between them until it is difficult to ascertain who is who. In order for that to happen the reader must be able to understand the poet, and that presupposes one of the pedagogical aspects of teaching the lyric: understanding via a reading of the material.

The reader needs to do more than take on the poet's persona for a second and then slip out of it. The reader must, in essence, become the poet him or herself and enact the poem. One of the most famous psalms in the Bible is Psalm 23, said by David, the most famous king of Israel. David states that he believes:

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures:

He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul:

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever. (*The New King James Bible, Psalm 23*).

In that most famous Psalm David reiterates a basic tenet of his theology: the Lord is his guiding shepherd. An oft repeated idea in Christianity is the idea of the Lord as the shepherd of a flock of sheep, meant to be the people of Israel. Here David states that he believes the Lord is so, and that the Lord will guide him to refuge, food, water, and safety. Thus the Lord is protector, guide, mentor, and friend, all in one being. Notice that David says this referring to God in the third person. The address is that of a man repeating something he understands to be true in order to comfort himself even as he addresses another party. It is less personal in that way. Yet, the poem undergoes a dramatic change when David begins speaking of the valley.

The valley of the shadow of death is a famous line, but to whom is the line addressed? The lines after it reveal that David is not addressing himself anymore: David is addressing God directly. God has become the “you” in a dialogue written in the second person. David addresses God not in the existential sense of addressing a power holding sway over his destiny, but in the manner of one man talking to someone present in the room with him. Thus, David goes from comforting himself via describing the role of God to asserting his knowledge to his Lord and guardian that no matter what happens, David will emerge from his trials victorious due to the

protection of the Lord. Then, David begins celebrating. The Lord will anoint his head with oil, a luxury item, and prepare a feast for him. The promise of a brighter ending after the walk through the valley is made clear. This brighter future ends in an even sweeter promise: David will always prosper under the protection of his shepherd. David has gone, in a single poem, from asserting his theological stance to reassure himself, to addressing his Lord personally, to celebrating the upcoming victory, to looking forward, with joy, to a brighter future.

Culler would argue that the psalm of David is a quintessential lyric poem. The reader not only repeats David's words, but he or she effectively take on the persona of David and metaphorically become the ancient Israelite by doing so. By repeating David's words, and moving through the transitions in address and tone, the reader reacts David's experience. The reader must feel, taste, and inhabit David's emotions that caused him to utter the Psalm in the first place. Remember that the Psalm is a reassurance and a comfort meant for David himself. What emotion the reader participates in is likely as dependent on the reader's own context as it is on the context of David, as the exact date and situation of the Psalm's writing is a debated topic. Thus, the reader and David become one as David reassures himself and addresses the Lord, before coming to a joyful realization that God will never leave one of His flock. That is part of the reason why Psalm 23 is such a well-known and beloved verse of comfort. The reader inhabits, becomes, David and cries out for a rescue before coming to the realization that the protector is already on guard. And the reader, if he or she knows the Bible well, knows that ultimately David received the comfort and aid he wanted. In essence, David's faith was fully vindicated. Thus, the reader performs David's prayer, becomes him, feeling his angst and fear, and feels also his hope in the promise, the certainty, of rescue from the situation he felt the need to pray for. The original psalm is reenacted. Thus, in reciting Psalm 23, the reader effectively

performs a lyric reenactment of David's pain, making the Psalm itself an event just as the original prayer was an event in and of itself.

Key to the idea of lyric is something Psalm 23 exemplifies through its use of the second person, the "you" being addressed and invited into the speaker's world. Without the turn to personal address David would have been left reassuring himself of what he already believed. With the turn in address David brought God into the conversation by addressing him directly and personally. This is similar to how Sappho's "Ode to Aphrodite" was an address in its own right, and William Carlos Williams's famous remarks on the importance of the wheelbarrow require a listener, even if that listener is his own inner self. The lyric is therefore a performance and an address rolled into one dramatic form of poetry. This is never exemplified better than the case of the reader inhabiting David, becoming him, for the duration of Psalm 23 and addressing the Lord. The reader goes through the step of reassuring him or herself of his or her theology, addressing God, before moving on to a celebration of the upcoming victory and the promise of a greater life after the conclusion of this trek through the valley.

To recap, as Culler says in Chapter III of *Theory of the Lyric*: "The lyric performance succeeds as it acts iterably through repeated reading, makes itself memorable" (131). That statement, in and of itself, is incomplete as a summary without further clarification. To distinguish something as a performance is to imply a form of action, as has been said above, with a goal and movement inherent within it: the mind of the author using the form of the lyric poem to confront profound personal or universal issues. Thus, in Culler's reading, lyric poetry is a form of making meaning, performance and action that is in the speaker's "now" and then repeated by the reader in the form of an action. This creates something of a reflected action between author and reader where they metaphorically become the same individual for a moment

as they address a person or an issue. The lyric author puts forth the basic, yet highly complex, lyric poem to be read by the reader. The reader in turn reads the poem slowly and carefully, and steadily deciphers the information buried within it by becoming the author via a lyric reenactment of the poem, which is in and of itself an action. That is congruent with Stewart's idea of the lyric poet's being something of a wise prophet, but it confirms the role of reader as the student. It also doubly confirms the role of the author as sage and student, and the reader as student and sage. They are both learning, studying, through the action taking place in the lyric form.

By its ancient roots in the song and the parable, lyric has a connotation of teaching. Teaching, fittingly, has a connotation of imparting knowledge about a particular subject. This is a fairly simple conclusion to reach. It also requires someone to teach, an addressee who will hear the knowledge. Following that train of thought is the idea that lyric poetry is a vehicle for the writer to teach a viewpoint on a situation. But, and this is a critical element to understanding the role of the lyric, lyric is also a performance by the author as much as it is an endeavor in understanding and an action by the reader. A performance requires effort, practice, and failure. Just as an actor on the stage takes a thousand takes to get a scene done to the director's satisfaction, a lyric poet must "practice" his or her lesson a thousand times before it can be considered "done" to his or her satisfaction. Effectively, the lyric poet is performing an act of teaching by teaching the act to him or herself first. In order to impart the lesson, the teacher must first understand what he or she is teaching. And from there the reader can then learn the lesson by performing the poem as a lyric event in and of itself. Lyric poetry, as a vehicle, is used by lyric authors to reach that understanding and to allow readers to not just mimic, but fully enact

the movements of the mind needed to reach that understanding for themselves. Thus the lyric poetic form is a transcendent theory, at least in the mind of individuals such as Culler.

As Culler says of the poet's process on teaching him or herself that meaning: "Society is always confronted with the problem of how matter is endowed with spirit or meaning, and poetry is one of several forces that at once makes this happen and explicates it..." (Culler 351). In essence, the lyric poet is studying him or herself in his or her own writings. As both writer, reader, and critic, the lyric poet is forced to take his or her ideas in hand and examine them with the careful and ruthless eye of a bird-of-prey looking for weakness in a rodent. The lyric must be predetermined and repeatable, but in order to reach that step of being repeatable by the reader it must be carefully repeated by the author. Effectively, lyric poetry forces the poet to be both wise sage and ignorant pupil at the same moment in time. Once the poem is completed, and only then, can the lyric process be repeated by a reader in turn. Thus, the lyric is a pattern of movements of the mind meant to find meaning. The author must then repeat those movements him or herself, both by repeating ideas within the poem and by editing his or her own work, cutting apart and examining his or her own thoughts and emotions again and again. Once that is complete, the poem is ready for the reader. The reader can, ideally, perform the same movements of the mind as the author. By reading through the poem, with its repeated inferences, and by reading carefully, a reader is taught to think in the same manner as the author was thinking when he or she wrote the poem. The lyric is more than just a form of poetry, it is a form of thinking in a particular manner and creating a performance, via the use of language, that enables the reader to enter into the manner of thinking for themselves. In that way, lyric poetry is a form of thinking, a performance that studies how meaning is created, interpreted, and imparted. This leads directly

into “The Fire Sermon” and its myriad of voices, tensions, and ideas as Eliot tries to make the reader understand what he has gone through.

### *A Lyric Reading:*

To understand the lyric nature of “The Fire Sermon” is to return to the section that the lyric portion of this thesis evolved from: the basic elements of the poem. In order to provide a foundation for a lyric reading of the poem, classical reading techniques and lyric must work hand-in-hand. To begin, the title of “The Fire Sermon” was taken from a speech by the Buddha, as the Norton edition’s page 479’s fourth footnote remarks: “In the *Fire Sermon*, Buddha counsels his followers to conceive an aversion for the burning flames of passion and physical sensation and thus to live a holy life, attain freedom from earthly things, and finally leave the cycle of rebirth for Nirvana” (Ramazani, Ellmann, and O’Clair). This first clue about its nature provides the first hint of duality within the opening lines of the section. The poem is initially staged around a sermon by the Buddha via its earliest reference. A sermon is, by nature, a warning, a parable, or a lesson meant to alert a flock of listeners about an issue that is dear to the preacher’s heart. In this case, the lesson is on the dangers of lust, passion, and desire. This provides a hint as to the tension that Eliot will explore through his poem. Eliot takes the metaphorical stage by putting forward an image of desolation for the reader’s, listener’s, attention: “The river’s tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf / Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind / Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed” (Eliot 173-175). From these sentences the audience receives a great volume of information that conveys the setting of the first lines of the section, not least that Eliot is using Spenser as an element, a voice, of his poem. Edmund Spenser was famous for his clever use of mythology, in this case, nymphs. Eliot borrowed, from the entire corpus of Spenser’s material, this reference to nymphs, and he changes

it into a reference to the nymphs having left their location. The insertion of this element may seem casual, but it is truly not, as a more careful examination will reveal.

The knowledge that this section borrows from a sermon by the Buddha is a telling clue that the content of the poem will have a spiritual component. But the description of the land itself is what brings the reader directly into a sense of ruin and decay. The Thames is desolate, and the land around it is brown, muddy, lifeless. The dead land is bereft of the merest signs that something could grow. And, to borrow from mythology and from Spenser, Eliot states that the nymphs are gone. A nymph is a classic spirit of life, liberty, and, sometimes, sensuality. The image is of a lifeless place where there was once life, love, nymphs, romance, and magic. All of that is what was, not what is, as Eliot, or his speaker, is walking along the river.

What is there along that river is empty, lifeless. Eliot makes the claim that “The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,” (Eliot 177). There is not even a shred of debris that could provide a hint that there was once life in this utterly desolate space. Not even the bones and garbage of humans who once inhabited the landscape remain, even if the individuals only did so for an afternoon lunch or walk by the river. Eliot is removed from everything, trapped in a dead space where he is left with only his thoughts and his bleak remembrances to provide him a cold company that offers no comfort. The emptiness outside of him therefore echoes the emptiness within the poet himself. Nature and man reflect one another, but that reflection is of a mirror desolate, not just a mirror seen through darkly.

While this picture is morbid enough, Eliot takes it a step further by personifying his spiritual struggles with another voice, that of the exile: “By the water of Leman I sat down and wept...” (Eliot 182). That line is a reference to the biblical narrative of the exile of the people of Israel into captivity in Babylon: “By the rivers of Babylon, / There we sat down, yea, we wept /

When we remembered Zion. (*The New King James Bible, Psalm 137:1*). In that time Israel was split between the primary kingdom, which fell from grace and was defeated by the Assyrians, and Judah, which fell from grace and was taken into captivity by the Babylonians. In that painful defeat the people of Israel slowly became aware of how morbidly corrupt they had become, and how far they had strayed from the covenant they had sworn through Moses and Joshua. Israel believed themselves separated from God by their own foolish choices, and they desperately clung to the hope of deliverance in spite of themselves and their sinful nature. That is a form of tension between hope and despair. In other words, this was a situation where mercy would have to overcome justice. Insert that knowledge into the growing image of Eliot's desolation. Eliot is hinting that he is exiled from grace, cut off from the source of salvation, and that if he is saved, it shall be in spite of himself and not because of himself. In a lifeless void and exiled from hope, Eliot has nowhere left to go. Yet Eliot takes the words of the Bible, and he alters them to suit his own purpose: from Babylon to the Leman. The Leman is a lake that Eliot visited when he was recovering from his nervous breakdown, so he effectively personifies Israel's exile as being within his modern life and the areas he saw everyday as a metaphor for his own pain.

In the midst of that empty nowhere Eliot says that he is trying to sing his lament: "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song, / Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long" (Eliot 183-184). Here he is imploring the river itself to be still. Rather than contemplating a biblical image of the triumphant Moses parting the waters, the reader studies a broken man requesting that the river stop rushing as he tries to give voice to his inner turmoil, as he tries to give that inner voice a chance to express itself. And yet again he borrows from Spenser, speaking a desire in another's voices. Eliot wants to confess, but the river itself is distracting him from whispering his song, his confession, so he uses another man's words to implore it to be silent for

but a moment. He cannot give voice to the inner voice he so longs to give words to, and even if he did, he is the only one present to hear his confession. Into this comes a sliver of life and death in the sounds of bones moving and the echo of a voice laughing: “But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear” (Eliot 185-186). The lines beginning “At my back” are partially borrowed from Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress.” In that poem the speaker uses this line as lead-in to the idea of the temporality and mortality of the speaker himself, just as Eliot himself is doing. This cold blast is a jolt of reality that forces the speaker to focus and speak further. From his trancelike confessional state Eliot is jerked back to reality, or what he perceives as reality, by cold air. And then there is the rattle of the bones, a possible reference to rolling the bones or rolling the dice, chance and fate, and insidious laughter. Who is the person taking amusement in this bleak situation? According to a Bedient reading, it would be Eliot himself, taking ironic pleasure in the seemingly ridiculous request to the river for silence. In that reading, it would be the near-hysterical chuckle of a man realizing his folly.

The first true sign of life is as dual-edged as the reference to Buddha and the rattling of bones as a sign of life. It is the scurrying of a rat: “A rat crept softly through the vegetation” (Eliot 187). Eliot plays with juxtaposition with this entrance of another living being into his poem. The rat is alive, but it is a vile thing. Rats were and are seen as harbingers of death, decay, disease, and as an affliction of the downtrodden. This irony, that the only sign of life is something that is equally a sign of death, personifies Eliot, again, as being something of a spiritual pauper. He is a man without the most basic means to support himself in the spiritual and moral sense, and the first sign of life entering his sphere of observation is a sign of ill tidings. This is yet another bit of horrific irony, that the first living thing he introduces in this section

besides himself is something so reviled. The tension is harkened back to, yet again, with a contrast between life and death in the form of a rodent.

Furthermore, the idea of death is hinted at, ironically enough, by an allusion to Shakespeare and his plays: “On a winter evening round behind the gashouse / Musing upon the king my brother’s wreck” (Eliot 190-191). Eliot borrows, as many including the Norton have remarked upon, this language from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. There are several elements that need to be taken into proper account here. First is that Eliot takes this voice from Shakespeare and applies it to a modern setting, just as he did by switching Babylon to the Leman. Here, Eliot takes the gashouse and uses it to center the fact that this language is being borrowed, but he is putting his own twist on it. The allusion is to the characters’ believing King Alonso was killed in a shipwreck. That brings to mind both the river Thames before Eliot, the idea of death, and the greater context of duality. Alonso was, after all, still alive. Eliot’s narrator, on the other hand, may not be so lucky if all he can see as being alive around the Thames is a rat.

Following the rat is the sound of the city behind Eliot: “But at my back from time to time I hear / The sound of horns and motors... (Eliot 196-197). That line is yet another reference to Marvell and the mortality of humanity, ironically used as it is. But this is the entrance of more life into this desolate space, yet it is overheard and not seen. Eliot himself is an observer of this life, not a participant in the unfolding actions of the day-to-day routine. Perhaps he is unable to connect with his fellow humans, or perhaps he is simply unwilling. Regardless, Eliot is alone in his twilight space, even as his imagination runs wild: “O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter / And on her daughter / They wash their feet in soda water” (Eliot 199-201). This is a reference to a rather odd song. While its full context is not needed for this thesis, what is needed is an understanding of what is going on: a cleansing. Mrs. Porter and her daughter are washing their

feet, a biblical act, associated with removing dirt, filth, and bringing a fresher, cleaner, being to existence. To another author this act would have been a sign of hope. To Eliot, it is something of a mixed metaphor, as the lines introducing Mrs. Porter have a lewd context that Eliot obliquely references with the following: “Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring” (Eliot 198). That line is rather alarming given the context from which Eliot is borrowing the reference to the moon. As footnote one on page 430 reveals: “Diana, the virgin goddess of the woods and hunting, was seen naked by Actaeon the hunter; she then changed him into a stag, to be hunted to death by his own dogs” (Ramazani, Ellmann, and O’Clair). In essence, the message of the cleansing of filth, a positive act, is marred by the hint of the slaughter that Diana unleashed in reply to Actaeon’s lustful gaze. This is yet another of a series of mixed messages on the part of Eliot. Yet Eliot mixes the message even further with another allusion: “*Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole*” (Eliot 202). That is a reference from Verlaine. The allusion is to the successful retrieval of the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail was the hope of all of Britain, for which the Knights of the Round Table had been searching for years. King Arthur himself failed to grasp it, due to being an imperfect man who was susceptible to the passions of the flesh. One knight finally conquered all of that, all the flaws of man, and reached it. That tale is an inspiring story that links the conquest of mortal flaws to the healing of a nation. Britain was, for all intents and purposes to the reader of the Grail story, something of a promised land. After all, the tale was told about a British folk hero, even if it was told by Verlaine, a French author, to a French audience. For this allusion to come at the end of a slaughter and a reference to song that some consider to have a rather bawdy implication certainly muddles the message further.

Following this is a series of brief descriptions including this oblique line: “Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug” (Eliot 204-205). By itself, that pair of lines means nothing. In the

proper context, they are an illuminating glimpse into Eliot's mindset. In Greek mythology the nightingale has a particular significance. Philomela was raped by her sister's husband, Tereus, and defiantly prepared to expose to her sister the Son of Ares's brutal actions. Being a son of the god of war, Tereus responded in a horribly brutal fashion: he sliced her tongue out of her mouth. Philomela used her weaving to alert her sister to her husband's crime, and together they killed Tereus's son and were nearly killed by the enraged father in vengeance. The gods took pity on the sisters and transformed them into birds, with Philomela becoming a nightingale and regaining her voice. This is tale of violation, vengeance, escape, and reclaiming what was lost in a new fashion. Perhaps most ironic of all is that the female nightingale, in nature, is practically silent.

For Eliot, the nightingale's tale is perhaps a metaphor for his own quest for an authentic, true voice. He is searching desperately for it, but he cannot voice it. His tongue has been sliced from him, and he needs to transform in order to get the capacity to utter his confession to the Thames. All of this is in a single scene of the speaker walking along the Thames and remembering the events. Not only is all of that information compacted into a single scene, but it also contains a reference to Philomela's earlier part in Section II, "A Game of Chess." There, Eliot explained her role more fully, but used her to a similar effect: a reference to the destruction of purity.

As Eliot is pondering the seeming surreal nature of the city and his mixed messages of purity and devastation, he remembers a possibly romantic offer of a weekend getaway. Into this comes the remembrance of the lustful merchant:

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant  
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants  
 C.i.f. Lodon: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole. (Eliot 209-214)

The arrival of the unshaven Mr. Eugenides marks a turn in Eliot's poem. Where before there was only a river that had no hallmarks of life, and a silent man overhearing but not participating in life as his voice was gone, the poem is disturbed by this proposition from the merchant from Turkey.

As Eliot says after this remembrance of a proposition of a getaway of possibly romantic or sexual ends: "I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, / Old man with wrinkled female breasts..." (Eliot 218-219). Observe that Eliot is now speaking through a voice. He lacks his own voice to give speech to his turmoil and thoughts, but perhaps he can use this figure from mythology to provide a way for him to speak his inner struggle, just as Philomela's tale was a way for her to express that she did not have a true voice. Through the voice of Tiresias, Eliot can access the language to express the tension he has been feeling all along. The Greek mythological figure Tiresias is a being of constant juxtaposition and duality. According to Greek legends he was a man who erred in the sight of the Greek Gods, usually presumed to be Hera or her Roman form who is called Juno, and Tiresias was cursed to live as a woman because of this. During this state of being, Tiresias accepted his changed state, married, and had children and a family. Shortly thereafter Tiresias was changed back into a man and left his family behind. During his lifetime, besides his transformation from male to female and back to male again, Tiresias was also supposed to be a great seer of the future, but he was also thoroughly blind. He served the Greek Gods, but he was ultimately struck down by one of the very beings he had spent his life serving. Constantly, Tiresias wavered between extremes via his state of being, actions, or the

actions of his patron gods. That shows that juxtaposition and irony are heavy in the persona of Tiresias as he wavered between two lives, and Eliot adds another dimension to this already complex figure whose voice he is borrowing: violation, possibly brought on by the recollection of the overture of Mr. Eugenides.

As the poem unfolds, Eliot imagines and relates the brief tale of a pair of lovers, though the use of that term is highly debatable in the situation he puts forth. The lustful young clerk, the man, is eager to partake of the pleasures of the flesh, while the typist, the woman he is dining with, is not interested in such an action in the slightest:

The time is propitious, as he guesses,  
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,  
Endeavors to engage her in caresses  
Which still are unreprieved, if undesired.  
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once. (Eliot 235-239)

In other terms, what the young man commences to do here is a form of uninvited sexual contact. The woman's silence is most decidedly not even close to a form of consent, but he takes it as such, uncaring of her feelings and reactions. That is a sexual assault. This effectively turns what should be a romantic moment of pleasure into an unnatural violation of the nature process of sex. While Greek myth is filled with such horrific references and scenes, the Rape of Persephone being a prime example, Eliot adds a unique trait to this one. Eliot tells us in his footnote, referenced in the Norton, that: "Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest... the two sexes meet in Tiresias" (Ramazani, Ellmann, and O'Clair 480 et al.). Through the focus of the voice of Tiresias, Eliot can finally express what he has been trying to say. Yet, even as he says it he has

to use this esoteric voice to make his confession: “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, / old man with wrinkled female breasts...” (Eliot 218-219). The reader finally hits upon the horrific confession that Eliot has been trying to make: he is both the clerk and the typist.

From the tale of the clerk and the typist the reader is given the impression of a sexual assault, and indeed that is what Eliot wanted to convey. What Eliot wanted to finally confess, however, was his unique position in relation to those characters. The reader is given this impression by the line about him having the bosom of a woman, and his remark: “(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed...)” (Eliot 243). By that set of lines, the reader is given the knowledge that this is, in Bedient’s terms, a synthesis. Just as the character of Tiresias was a synthesis of male and female within the context of this poem, possessing both male and female anatomy, Eliot is confessing that he has been both the male and the female in this horrifying tale he is telling. Eliot is effectively a synthesis of the man and the woman within the horrible scene he has put forth for the reader. To wit, he has been the violated and the violator, and he can only tell the reader that by recounting this story through the voice of Tiresias.

Although Eliot aligns himself more with the voice of the woman in the initial section, the critical confession that he has enacted this horrific act himself takes place during the assault and the man’s thoughts and actions. It is important to note that Eliot places his parenthetical remark between lines describing the clerk. Eliot begins: “His vanity requires no response, / And makes a welcome of indifference” (Eliot 242). There the reader is given the knowledge that the indifference is considered to be a sign of approval, and that that is a recurring situation. Yet the scene ends with the crucial negative remarks: “Bestows one final patronising kiss, / And gropes

his way, finding the stairs unlit..." (247-248). Eliot places Tiresias's comment about foresuffering this scene within this sequence of lines describing the clerk's actions. By its placement, that remark is a critical aside saying that he, Eliot speaking through Tiresias, has experienced each element of the scene. As this thesis reads it, Eliot uses the doubled voice of Tiresias to acknowledge that he has suffered in advance the implications of being both parties. This requires essentially aligning himself with the man as well as the woman. Inserting the parenthetical remark in the middle of the account of the clerk's actions, as Eliot did, suggests that it is important for the reader to see that both positions meet in him. It is there, in the culmination of the clerk's assault, that Eliot indicates the synthesis that Bedient saw, for Eliot is saying that he is both the clerk and the typist as the violation reaches its fruition.

Via the allusion to Philomela, Eliot implies that he has been more than groped and violated, he has been raped and mutilated. But, horrifically enough, he has also been the one doing the raping and performing the mutilation to cover up his own wrongs. It is important to remember that all voices and allusions within this poem ultimately come back to Eliot himself. To wit, Eliot confesses his nature as being both light and dark, twilight, through the voice of Tiresias. He has been the receiver of unwanted advances, again a possible reference to Mr. Eugenides, and he has felt that sense of having his equilibrium disrupted by the shattering effect of being violated. Eliot is both the criminal and the victim, the violator and the violated. He can see both sides because he has lived both sides.

Thus, Tiresias is the very key to understanding what Eliot is grappling with in this section. Can an individual be both a monster and a moral being at the same time? Eliot ponders that very question in this empty vacuum he is within. As Tiresias had lived all sides of the violation, and of life itself, so too was Eliot trapped within the frame of his own mind,

remembering who he was, is, and pondering who he will be as his sanity itself eroded and he sought help for it. But he does not simply come out and say this. Tiresias is a tool that makes Eliot's conflict both more vivid and more in need of study to him. Perhaps that is an intentional quirk of Eliot, to occlude his meaning with another voice, or perhaps he truly needed someone who could encompass all the viewpoints he is trying to express and found the ancient soothsayer apt for that purpose. Perhaps still his tongue was slashed out, and he could voice his horror only through Tiresias.

Eliot continues on from this by personifying himself differently via a different anecdote: that of a man walking the streets and hearing the record the violated woman plays, and later the sounds of life around him: "O City city, I can sometimes hear / Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street, / The pleasant whining of a mandolin" (Eliot 259-261). Eliot is imagining overhearing life and action but is not participating within them, not even on this imagined walk through the city, hearing imagined music. Eliot himself, or his speaker, has never left the Thames. Still, something has changed from the earlier context of the poem. Eliot is recalling being within the city, within life. Although he was still isolated and alone during that time, he recalls observing life around him even if it was not fully present within him. Although he is still just an observer or a man with a vivid imagination, there is a spark of something more there. He is within a setting where something could happen, and that is the difference between the Eliot at the start of "The Fire Sermon" and the Eliot towards the end of this section of the poem.

From there Eliot jumps into a lightning-quick series of poetic moves and references: "The river sweats / Oil and tar / The barges drift" (Eliot 267-269). The river is now a stained place, and it is sweating, filthy, and a working thing. No longer is the river silencing him, but it is instead fulfilling a purpose as a commercial transit route. It is full of oil and tar, the refuse that

was absent earlier. There are signs, disgusting signs, that life is around this river. Furthermore, barges are present, with vivid slashes of color visible in both their sails and the very bearing of the vessels: “The stern was formed / A gilded shell / Red and gold” (Eliot 281-283). Red is the color of blood, but it is also the color of life. The color of red has long been considered the color of romance as well. Thus, even in this muck, there is just a hint of that sensuality that Eliot was looking for earlier. Gold is a valuable currency, but it is also something that many have killed over. Both colors are full of opposites and contrasts. This takes place even as, ironically, Eliot’s mind is putting more contrasts into place. There are no boats on the river. The river he is imagining is that of the “present” Thames, which his speaker has been walking along or standing beside. The boats are from the Elizabethan period, a remembered time of royalty, romance, and pride. Yet those images of an idealized era are on a filthy river.

From all of the above reading the reader is presented with a picture of Eliot’s mindset. He is broken, but he cannot fully express that in the most basic language. Instead he draws on metaphors, history, and more to present his damaged mindset in a cryptic way. He is truly within the twilight wasteland he describes. But, and here is the rub, Eliot shies away from the sparks of life when they try to catch his attention. He is an observer in these scenes and settings he is imagining, not an actor. Furthermore, when hints of life do come in, the laughter with the rattling of bones, the rat, the date gone poorly, the ships, he sees the promises of these things in a negative lens. He is both the violator and the violated. The beautiful ships he sees are sailing within a river of muck and refuse that humans have violated nature with, just as surely as Eliot himself felt violated. The splashes of color and the hints of life, both good and ill, are quickly brought into the context of depression, death, and decay. And Eliot, ruined Eliot, is unable to bring up even indignation: “He wept. He promised ‘a new start.’ / I made no comment. What

should I resent?" (Eliot 298-299). That is a voice and a conversation Eliot overheard, a series of events in real life that mirrored Eliot's own ruined state. He is broken, and he cannot bring himself to muster the basic rage at his state. Rage, from a psychological sense, is preferably to utter despair. Eliot is unable to even raise the most basic indignation at what is going, so broken is he.

Eliot winds this section towards its end with several cryptic lines, the first of which is: "I can connect / Nothing with nothing" (Eliot 301-302). If there is nothing to connect, how can nothing be connected to anything? Furthermore, there is nothing for this man to try and connect it to. But he says that he is able to do it anyway. That is a seemingly casual reference to the fear Eliot felt while he was in the asylum. Here, now, Eliot is striving onward, grasping for something more, even as he denies life when he sees it. Eliot concludes with a reference to faith: "To Carthage then I came // Burning burning burning burning / O Lord Thou pluckest me out / O Lord Thou pluckest // burning" (Eliot 308-311). Eliot concludes with a reference and two prayers mixed into one. The reference to Carthage is an allusion to Augustine, one of the greatest Christian theologians of all time, but from before his conversion. In essence, that is from before Saint Augustine became the famous theologian. The burning is a reference to Buddha, and his warnings about the burning being the nature of desire: something that consumes. So Eliot remembers Augustine again, this time redeemed, and begins to utter a prayer. He is both praying for salvation and commenting that he is slowly burning in the melting acid of his own depression. If that were truly all that there is to this section of the poem it would be a morbid work indeed. Fortunately for the reader, there is more to this section than that.

The ending of "The Fire Sermon" shows a summary of the movement of Eliot's mind. He went from Augustine before the man became great, to falling into a burning pit of desire. From

within that burning he finally reached out for help. Though the call for help is incomplete, cut-off, it is there. That is the key movement for the lyric thinker. Eliot has gone through a series of mental gymnastics to find words to express what he feels. He used the elements of Shakespeare, Mrs. Porter, Tiresias, etc, to do so, and finally reached a place where he could examine himself and reach out for help using the voice of Augustine. That is the lyric reading of this section. The lyric reading ends with hope because the protagonist has moved beyond his pain, and his desire to voice the voiceless, to begin actually voicing the voiceless and crying aloud his desire for help and for redemption.

To recap, Eliot takes life and mixes it with death in a twilight gray wasteland. The catch to that trick of his mind is that he is intermixing the elements of light and shadow. There is life within this section of the poem. There is a blank river Thames at the beginning, but the river is ever flowing. There is the rattle of bones, but there is ironic laughter. There is a depressed man overhearing the city with a filthy rat for company, but the man is alive and fishing. The violation occurred, but it ended. The boats are sailing in a defiled waterway, but the hulls of the vessels are gleaming with life and beauty in spite of this. He is burning, but he is also praying for divine intervention. The mixed message of this section is that of life coming out of death, which Eliot conveys by trying to cover life with death or show bits of life in the midst of death.

Though this mixture of life and death may strike the reader as odd, it is a place where something could bloom and grow. Eliot's metaphors were constantly of something coming from pain. Philomela became something more, something beautiful, as a result of all that she had endured. Tiresias became a legendary soothsayer and prophet for what he endured. To endure pain and to grow, to change, is the message here. That message is, however, occluded by the mixture of elements Eliot presents. It is, again, a gray twilight world, with both life and death

present and grasping for attention. What makes this section of the poem hopeful is that Eliot finally got his authentic voice out. Though he had to use another voice, he finally gave his confession. The painful moment of admitting his faults is over, and the hint that redemption is around the corner is what Eliot's closing prayer indicates. Though he is burning, it is the burning of his sins being burnt out of him as he admits and accepts them. This is a fascinating manner for a poet to grapple with his own damaged psyche, and a hybrid of many elements of writing and different narrative and poetic styles that are being used to navigate the poet's tension.

By navigating his internal tension this way, Eliot made the poem immensely complex. The voices he used, the references, the constant juxtaposition between life and death, pleasure and violation, can easily seem to be radically disconnected without the underlying tension being studied in the proper context. The tension effectively unites the elements, and the lyric lens allows the elements to be glimpsed and understood as the reader enacts Eliot's horror for themselves. Thus, "The Fire Sermon" is the key to understanding the greater poem, and it is the most lyric section. The reader is forced through the same intimate sense of violation that Eliot lived through, and the reader emerges from that brief existence as Eliot with a greater understanding of him. It is not necessarily a pleasant thing, until the reader remembers the hope Eliot continuously grasped for within the poem.

In this way the lyric reading of the poem is, in and of itself, a valid one. It does, however, take some effort to get to that reading. As this thesis has shown via the sheer difficulty of defining the terminology of the lyric, even Jonathan Culler, the most famous modern theorist of the lyric, has shown hesitance by his refusal to define lyric in simple terms. This difficulty in simplifying the meaning of the lyric amounts to the fundamental discussion of what the lyric is, the differences it has across eras, and how it can be used in a classroom setting. Culler, notably,

refused to define it in exact terms, instead presenting several different examples of different lyrics across myriad of eras. This indicates that the pedagogical implications are that the lyric theory is one that is immensely useful to the study of the poem, but it is also difficult to use because its basic form is difficult to define in clear, simplistic, language that is distilled and relatable to a student body. In essence, the lyric in “The Fire Sermon” requires a subtle and keen understanding of multiple different elements of literature, psychology, mythology, and Christianity in order to explore in proper terms. From this angle the lyric is both valid and difficult, as many such literary studies are, but ultimately well worth studying as part of an exegesis of Eliot’s works. The richness of the lyric is in the powerful understanding a lyric reading conveys to the reader after he or she has enacted the lyric movement of reenacting what the author originally felt. The difficulty of the lyric is that a reenactment is a difficult thing to teach in its full complexity.

### Chapter III: Narrative Heteroglossia in “The Fire Sermon”

To take a contrasting viewpoint on the lyric is to oppose its complexity, while at the same time acknowledging its utter usefulness from a pedagogical viewpoint. The lyric is, after all, quite a thing to grapple with in an intellectual study. Culler, in an effort to define what the lyric does, spent over 350 pages just to define a loose set of conventions as to what the lyric does, as opposed to setting forth a simple formula for what it is. This is mainly because the lyric is such a unique phenomenon in terms of literary theory, and its formula changes by the era it is presented in, as Culler indicated. That means that a “one size fits all” terminology for it can easily fall into the trap that this thesis is trying to avoid: taking an incomplete viewpoint on something and assuming that this viewpoint is the whole of the object or work in question. It is easier to show what the lyric does rather than to tell a class what a lyric is. The lyric’s nature is one of: “Show, don’t tell.” While the same can be said for many a literary theory or way of thinking, the lyric also relies on the reader’s *need* to do the action that is shown by the author. The lyric movement of the author’s mind is something that must be repeated by a reader time and again. With each reading, the lyric becomes steadily clearer in detail and richer in scope as more of the poem’s meaning is revealed. Thus, the lyric’s innate validity as a structure for understanding poetry is somewhat challenged by its convoluted nature. A basic way to instruct is to set a basic term, such as *ethos*, and then apply it via a series of examples, and then have the class repeat that application under the instructor’s guidance. For the lyric, “reenactment” or “enactment” are the basic terms, but they require intensive reading in order to fully crystalize as meaningful classifications to a would-be student. Thus, the argument against the lyric is not an argument against its validity, even in spite of its uncertain generic status, but the argument lies in the position that the lyric is difficult to teach to a class of students in a pedagogically sound way.

Certainly, a class of upper-level English literature or creative writing students may be interested enough to take a course that uses lyric as a cornerstone of its pedagogy, but would students with a passing interest in English, taking required English courses alone, be willing to try to grapple with the complexities of lyric poetry? Would those individuals be willing to feel the physiological disturbance and violation that Eliot voiced through Tiresias? Lyric's deep and personal nature can, effectively, make it a subject that is in a rather difficult place in the pedagogical view of things.

In contrast to the ideas of the lyric as a pedagogical technique are the ideas of narrative, expanded into the ideas of heteroglossia as a method of understanding poetic works. Narrative poems are not a "new" idea. Although they may bear different names, many categories of poetry contain narrative elements or are narratives themselves, such as Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. Therefore, the basic conventions of narrative are a reasonable starting place for the would-be scholar and instructor of poetry. Due to its hybrid nature, *The Waste Land* itself encapsulates an internal narrative, albeit a mixed one that uses contrasting voices to enact meaning. Before a full narrative reading of "The Fire Sermon" can be undertaken, an examination of the basic ideas of narrative theory and the fundamentals of heteroglossia must be performed with alacrity.

Narrative, the subject of narratological study, is as old a concept as the idea of the lyric. Narrative is, broadly defined, anything that tells a story. In order to bring Bakhtin's heteroglossia into the proper context, it is necessary to examine the framework of the tradition that his heteroglossia expands on. In *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*, scholars Steven Cohan and Linda Shires put forth the difficulty of establishing a definition of what narrative is: "A narrative recounts a story, a series of events in a temporal sequence.

Narratives require close study because stories structure the meanings by which a culture lives. Our culture depends on numerous types of narrative: novels, short stories, films, television shows, myths, anecdotes, songs, music videos, comics, paintings, advertisements, essays, biographies, and news accounts. All tell a story” (1). To wit, a narrative tells a story in a sequence, ideally a temporal one. This temporal sequence is the flow of events in the story, the beginning, middle, and end in a logical sequence that creates a narrative structure. That outline can, however, be a stylistic convention. Many an author likes to pepper a story with flashbacks and jumps that move the narrative framework around for the sake of creating and maintaining reader interest. The larger term for narratives in contemporary term is the novel: a literary work based almost entirely around narrative. Novels are, by their nature as narrative constructs, a type of story. As a novel has its established beginning, middle, and end, its storytelling nature fits under the genre of narrative perfectly. The same criteria would fit short stories as well.

Narratives are also, critically, a cultural phenomenon which the culture itself is both built by and dependent upon. Narratives in politics are an old tradition. Narratives of family struggles, heroes and villains, epics and legends, and more, are everywhere within the contemporary American culture. These are, in fact, so commonplace that defining something as a narrative can be startling due to the simple fact that narratives are so common that they are able to slip beneath an observer’s notice.

To continue with this train of thought, while many of the literary forms listed by Cohan and Shires fit under the category of narrative with ease, the others can be bemusing or concealed at first glance. Films, in spite of the contemporary film’s heavy digital nature, are effectively stories put to a video format, with the similar conventions of a beginning, middle, and end told in a sequence with only stylistic differences. Television shows, following the same criteria, are a

series of short narratives strung together in a sequence. Myths are stories passed on by oral or written tradition. Similarly, anecdotes are tales meant to establish or reaffirm a point, and songs, music videos, comics, paintings, and all other such mediums contain a story in their delivery. Effectively, under the basic criteria of something expressing a narrative in a sequence, even Michelangelo Buonarroti's famous Pieta statue is one of the most famous examples of a narrative being told in an economical and visual way. The stone image is that of the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Jesus Christ directly after his death by crucifixion at Calvary. The story held within the earthen surface is that of a mother mourning her beloved son, whom she had tried to stop from continuing to preach the message which led to his death, and her anguish is relatable and communicable to all through the expressions on her stone face, the placement of her hands, and the gentle cradling of her dead son. Effectively, narrative is omnipresent.

If everything from a novel to a statue can serve as an example of a narrative unfolding, narrative as a category is intimidatingly large to consider. Shires and Cohan remark on the openness of the narrative system with this: "The structural principles of similarity, placement, and difference organize 'narrativity', that is, a field of signification in which the familiar narrative units of story, character, temporal order, focalization, and so on, all function as signs in the same way that words and images do. A given narrative can be segmented, broken down for purposes of analysis" (52). That is still an immensely broad definition. In fact, it might be easier to categorize what art does not fit under Shires and Cohan's definition of narrative. Regardless, similarity refers to the sequence of events containing meaningful relations to one another. Even "shocking" events in a narrative structure fit, as the author employs them to disrupt the narrative and "reset" the narrative into a new narrative sequence that takes the disruption into consideration.

Furthermore, even a 360-degree turn in a narrative structure is a deliberate choice, meant to take the narrative in a new direction while still retaining elements of the earlier story.

Placement is comparable to similarity, in that the placement of events, characters, and elements of plot follows a deliberate pattern that contributes to the overall narrative sequence. Difference is best defined as disruption in the flow of the plot. Difference is therefore a deliberate tool wielded by the author to enhance a given narrative. A notable example of difference would be the infamous scene in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* in which Darth Vader informs Luke Skywalker of their familial relationship. This singular moment drastically disrupted the storyline, showing difference between what Obi-Wan Kenobi had related about Anakin Skywalker and who and what Darth Vader fundamentally was to Luke. Indeed, where Luke initially saw Vader as the murderer of his father, the revelation changed his viewpoint to cause him to see Vader himself as being his father's fallen form. With that, the internal narrative of Anakin and Luke Skywalker within the greater storyline was disrupted in a manner that made the event famous. Difference is the unexpected, the disruption, contrast, or juxtaposition, and that is a type of tension wielded by the author.

Authors, in what Shires and Cohan refer to as units, wield other tools of the story that are called character, temporal order, and focalization. The story is, essentially, the world unfolding for the audience's pleasure or horror. Without the basic story, the narrative sequence of conflicts and meetings, the other tools are abstractions. Characters are the essential actors of narrative, like Jack in the "Jack Tales" that are popular in Appalachia. Without the humanness of the constructs called characters, there is no reason for an audience to invest time or interest in a narrative. Temporal order is, again, something that the author can play with to suit his or her needs. Most stories are told in a sequence, an order that indicates that the beginning is the earliest portion of

the story, the middle the ascent to the climax, and the end the climax, the aftermath of the climax, and the viewpoint of how the world has changed since the beginning. Focalization is the last but, ironically, the most important element of narrative. In effect, focalization is what the story focuses on and why. An example of this in terms of this thesis would be Eliot's focusing on Tiresias as a narrative element to lend a voice through which Eliot could voice his horror at the violation he was describing. Focalization is, to put it another way, the attention of the author and the audience.

To summarize what Shires and Cohan's vast definition entails, a story has elements of plot, character, order, focus, time, drama or tension, and a logical pattern to the story. That is still a rather broad definition of narrative, but it serves the purpose of establishing the criteria from which something can be considered a narrative. From that definition, can a poem be considered a work of narrative? Indeed, it can. Shires and Cohan reference this point explicitly: "Today narratives tend to be in prose, although that has not always been the case by any means. Homer's epics, for example, are poetic narratives, and so are Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Harry Chapin's song 'Taxi': each tells a story in verse" (1). This is, again, an encompassing claim. Poetic theory would regard epic, drama, and lyric as being different but similar types of work, each individual, unique, and with their own conventions and famous examples to support that uniqueness and to differentiate them from each other. Shires and Cohan reference this argument, and tactfully disagree: "That narrative recounts and drama enacts persuades some critics to propose a strict definition of narrative as a purely verbal medium. Other critics, ourselves included, believe that the term 'narrative' applies to the visual medium of storytelling as well" (2). Thus, Shires and Cohan argue that narrative's openness allows it to encompass multiple genres, conventions, and mediums of communication. Where scholars draw

lines between genres, this definition of narrative wipes those lines away and proclaims that all stories fall under the category of narrative. That is a claim that is almost imperial in its nature, that upsets the conventions of a dozen different theories of literature.

Yet narrative's open nature is both a strength and a weakness. In theory, it is as difficult to articulate in generic terms as the lyric is. Narrative's own broad nature, shifting from era to era, makes it a large intellectual construct to consider in its full breadth. For example, consider the role of women in narratives going back thousands of years. Female storytellers and protagonists were rare, Sappho being a notable female poet, but they are increasingly common in the contemporary setting with J. K. Rowling and her *Harry Potter* series and Diana of *Wonder Woman* being just two casual examples. Thus the conventions of narrative authors and narrative protagonists have, just as lyric definitions have, shifted over the course of time as the cultures utilizing the narratives have shifted. This is an element of similarity between lyric and narrative: they shift over time. Yet narrative's advantage over the lyric in this area comes from a simple element of human nature: the species loves stories. Judith Weissman studied the links between literature, biology, and psychology in a review of earlier works by remarking on the autobiography of Harvard Professor E. O. Wilson: "The second half of the book—about graduate school and his subsequent teaching career at Harvard—is called 'Storyteller,' not because, as the poststructuralists would have us believe, science is only an arbitrary narrative, but because storytelling is our oldest and most impressive way of passing on our ideas, our values, even our discoveries" (668). Storytelling's ancient nature begins in the earliest days of mankind, and it is in the earliest days of childhood that humans are first exposed to stories. The simple fairy tales told to children reluctant to sleep would be an example of this, and the classic Brothers Grimm stories are an even more potent example of this idea. Humans distill lessons, values, and our

principles into the comforting form of stories and pass them on to impressionable young minds from the time a baby is in his or her crib. That is a generalization of the art of storytelling, to be sure, but one supported by authors such as Weissman and Wilson. In essence, the terms “narrative” and “story” are more familiar launching points for a conversation on the aspects of a piece of literary work than the term “lyric.”

Narrative theorist and Russian writer Mikhail Bakhtin clarified the idea of the uniqueness of the narrative, as presented in the novel, into the term called “heteroglossia.” Bakhtin saw the novel as a hybrid form that was inherently superior to all other forms of literary discourse, poetry and generic prose included. Again, this evokes an almost imperial tone: the one form that rules above all others and transcends them by incorporating elements from many genres. This could be a true statement, depending on the theorist whose work one considers and whose opinions one takes as fact. That idea is something entirely other to debate, as that argument crosses genres and theories of style in a way that is not entirely relevant to the pedagogical questions this thesis seeks to explore. Instead of debating the merits of focusing literary study on the novel, this thesis seeks to interrogate the use of heteroglossia itself.

Heteroglossia’s nature is, perhaps fitting given the nature of the poem it will shortly be applied to, a hybrid state of being. Hetero, the prefix of the word, means “other.” “Glossia,” not a true word in and of itself, has a meaning related to the speaking of tongues or the use of language. The biblical speaking of tongues would be an interesting example to examine. As said in Acts Chapter II, Verse 4: “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (*The New King James Bible*). This unique phenomenon is referred to by biblical theorists as glossolalia: speaking in tongues. From that the reader is given the information that heteroglossia, by its roots, is something that is transcendent

and that it relates to speaking other languages. Thus, the word “heteroglossia” can be roughly translated as “other tongues.” This sets the tone for what it does from the first glance at the term in question; the establishment of a new way of discussing issues in the narrative or the novel: “But it was precisely these concrete analyses and these attempts at a principled approach that made patently obvious the fact that all the categories of traditional stylistics—in fact the very concept of a *poetic* artistic discourse, which lies at the heart of such categories—were not applicable to novelistic discourse” (Bakhtin 261). To Bakhtin’s mind, the previous styles of studying literature, poetry, and language in general all fell short of the task of analyzing the novel. These styles include the ideas of playwriting, poetry, epic poetry, drama, the short story, and more. Effectively, Bakhtin felt they were insufficient to the task of analyzing the diverse combination of elements that he saw as being inherent in the form of the novel. This was a sweeping criticism, a demand for a “reset” of literary analysis in light of the burgeoning form called the novel.

In order to create a terminology that was applicable to the task of studying the novel, Bakhtin set his mind to creating an entirely new definition that could grasp the various poetic and narrative styles that were at play in the novel, effectively creating new terminology to match the novel form. In order to do that he had to take the consideration of the novel’s hybrid nature as a foremost element of what it was he was trying to analyze: “The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” (Bakhtin 261). In simple terms, the theory Bakhtin was seeking to create would need to encompass a multitude of different writing styles, as well as a variety of different speech and voice types. But it had to do more than that, it had to both exemplify and clarify those voices in ways that the older styles did not. If a novel was drawn from multiple different societal influences and historical, mythological,

and biblical sources, then there was a cacophony of different sources, different voices, competing for attention in the novel. Bakhtin demanded the exemplification of those voices by defining them in concrete terms, and the clarification of those voices by studying their role and stating what their fundamental purpose is within novelistic discourse.

To Bakhtin, then, the novel was different in its natural discourse by the very fact that it was a plural entity in the form of a singular narrative: “The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (Bakhtin 262). The artistic organization of these voices was the use of basics of narrative structure, voice, style, time, and the usage of plot. However, to Bakhtin’s eyes the novel was transcendent in that it was inherently a communal construct, a social chimera encompassing all styles and many voices that could be isolated and heard as being parts of the greater voice of the author. Effectively, there were many voices working as an orchestra of meaning and small stories, some meant to promote the flow of the narrative and some meant to disrupt it as part of the narrative techniques employed by the author. That is the nature of heteroglossia, a cacophony of voices and stories encompassing various genres, social lives, positions in society, the language of unique fields such as engineering or English, and more. And that is the basic definition of both what it does and what it is: a collection of voices and smaller narratives that are expressed by those voices. For Bakhtin the hallmark of heteroglossia was and is as follows: “Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation), is *another’s speech in another’s language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (Bakhtin 324). The terminology and role of the voice of another as a tool to convey, create, or remark upon meaning is the fundamental consideration of heteroglossia. For an example of heteroglossia in the use of everyday discourse, the Virginia Tech Department of

English uses the terms of ethos, pathos, logos, and Kairos quite heavily in the English Composition 1105 and 1106 classes. For Bakhtin those words in the everyday speech of the instructors would be an example of heteroglossia. The instructors are using words given meaning by the voices of ancient Greek scholars, and those terms are used by the contemporary instructors as a tool within everyday discourse. Therefore, the instructors effectively borrow the voices of Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, and others when they use those terms. These terms are also an example of the use of refracted voices to reinforce authority, as in the case of a pupil borrowing a quotation from another source to lend greater credence to his or her voice as an author.

Notice that Bakhtin explicitly references the novel as the forum for this discourse. That somewhat derisive dismissal of poetic and other discourses in favor of “superior” novelistic discourse is an anachronism. To put it bluntly, poems of a hybrid narrative and poetic structure of the sheer complexity and beauty of *The Waste Land* were few and far between in the oppressive Russia of Bakhtin’s day, and the novel was the rising star of literary discourse via such literary figures as Fyodor Dostoevsky. In fact, it was via his studies of Dostoevsky that Bakhtin became a noted literary critic. Regardless of that, Bakhtin’s somewhat narrow dismissal of poetry as a genre, in favor of the novel, holds only the bearing of a reminder of the author’s original intentions as they related to his time frame. Bakhtin’s heteroglossia was a revolutionary way of looking at a new and exciting manner of discourse, the novel, and part of his ethos in the construction of heteroglossia was to glorify the subject he was studying and to dismiss the standard-bearers that literature held as seminal in earlier ages, such as poetry.

To apply heteroglossia to poetry, then, may be seen as an inherent irony. Indeed, it is. The hybrid nature of *The Waste Land* demands nothing less than an idea that can encompass its

full breadth of elements, both poetic and novelistic. Thus, Bakhtin's heteroglossia, a tool meant to encapsulate the novel as a hybrid form that contains multiple elements of different styles and voices, is fitting for the pedagogical examination at hand, even if the author himself would have been perhaps exasperated by the use of heteroglossia for the purposes of deciphering an "outdated" form such as poetry.

### *A Narrative Reading:*

To begin a reading from the point of a view of a narrative theorist is to begin with many of the same elements as the lyric theorist would. There will indeed be overlap between the two viewpoints, simply because they are describing the elements of the same poem. For the narrative viewpoint, the use of the Buddha's sermon as the title and the foregrounding element is a literary reference to the genre of the sermon, just as it is in the lyric reading. It references the unique narrative present within the sermon in question: a repudiation of the desires of the flesh. That is unsurprising, as there are truly only so many ways that once can interpret that reference. It is, again, a foreshadowing that this poem will have spiritual elements to it. To begin the poem properly, from a narrative viewpoint, is to set the stage of the world that the protagonist will be moving within.

For the start of the context of the protagonist's world, the title of "The Fire Sermon" must be taken into account again. Again, as page 479's fourth footnote remarks: "In the *Fire Sermon*, Buddha counsels his followers to conceive an aversion for the burning flames of passion and physical sensation and thus to live a holy life, attain freedom from earthly things, and finally leave the cycle of rebirth for Nirvana" (Ramazani, Ellmann, and O'Clair). While this explanation brings to light a context similar to that used in the lyric reading's interpretation, it also provides a different clue as to how Eliot is using his background material. By incorporating

Buddha's narrative into the greater story of the poem, even if only by a reference, Eliot is deliberately borrowing the Buddha's point: that desire is a burning, consuming thing that must be conquered. Thus, the title, in a narrative sense, conveys heteroglossia in that it signals that there is another voice, another narrative, that Eliot is using to refract his own voice and that he is using it to give a foreshadowing of the subject of the poem. With that as context, the poem becomes an easier thing to read.

As in the lyric reading, the title provides a hint as to the tension that Eliot will explore through his poem. Eliot's opening lines, however, become the narrative hook that is meant to draw the reader into the scene he is portraying and placing the narrative's protagonist within: "The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf / Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind / Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed" (Eliot 173-175). Again, Spenser plays a key role, just as much as the principle of placement does. Spenser's story is reversed from its original intent, and the new reference, that of the nymphs departing, places Eliot within the context of borrowing Spenser's voice and telling a miniature narrative. The magic and the nymphs are gone. Eliot's bemused and depressed speaker is left walking along an empty river, with nothing for company but his broken memories.

As in the lyric reading, Eliot makes the claim that "The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers," (Eliot 177). Narratively, Eliot has the broken river and the broken man echo one another as they form the main scene of the story. All other scenes within the story take place within Eliot's imagination, with this empty river and empty man being the only things actually "present." A point within the lyric reading is that the river and the man are similar to one another, but this parallel is a calculated and classic narrative technique in the narrative reading: nature mirroring man's ruination. The scene matches the hero, as it were. While nature is in ruin,

Eliot applies heteroglossia again by borrowing the voice of Israel in exile: “By the water of Leman I sat down and wept...” (Eliot 182). Just as before, Eliot is borrowing the narrative and voice of Israel and applying it to himself. The story, subtly altered as it is by the use of the Leman instead of Babylon, becomes a refracted version of Eliot saying “I am like the exiled Jewish people.” Furthermore, the miniature narrative is one of punishment, deprivation, exile, and the desperate hope for redemption. A reader could easily get this inference simply by knowing the background material Eliot is referencing: the exile in Babylon. Even as Eliot uses this to convey his own despair, the original voice is still strong enough to provide the basic gist of narrative context to the reader via the placement of the reference.

In the midst of this empty exile, Eliot says that he is trying to sing his lament as something of a dirge to himself: “Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song, / Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long” (Eliot 183-184). Again, this is heteroglossia in that he is borrowing Spenser’s voice and adding that to his broken narrative, but he does so in an alarming way. Eliot hints at his own temporality in that he says that he is not going to speak for long. Why is that so? Eliot hints at a greater darkness coming into this morbid place. His time is short, and his placement by this river has brought him into the opportune moment to tell his story. This is meant to ramp up the tension in the reader, and it is meant to foreshadow the oncoming darker elements of the poem.

While Eliot proclaims his time to be brief, and insists that he has something critical to say, he cannot bring himself to actually voice what that something he wants to utter is. Instead, he puts forth several smaller narratives that interweave to make his story become clear. But even as he tries that, he is running out of time: “But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear” (Eliot 185-186). Marvell’s line is similarly used to

lead into the idea of the temporality and mortality of the speaker himself. Something is lurking behind Eliot, chuckling icily as Eliot ponders his fate and his mental state. A blast of cold air, a realization of the coming end, is what Eliot finds here. Marvell's voice is twisted from a loving letter to his mistress to being a freezing reference to the specter of death looming over Eliot's shoulder. And to further this is the fact that a sign of life comes in: "A rat crept softly through the vegetation" (Eliot 187). A rat, a harbinger of the plague, is the most hopeful thing Eliot can lay his eyes upon in this desolate place. Death is lurking at his back, and its herald calls his attention. The tension is rising as Eliot searches for the words to begin his confession. Effectively, narrative turns the underlying tension into the dramatic skill of an author enrapturing his audience as he builds his story towards a climactic success or failure.

In a similar manner to the lyric reading, death is hinted at by the speaker's using the voice of Shakespeare: "On a winter evening round behind the gashouse / Musing upon the king my brother's wreck" (Eliot 190-191). Eliot is in mourning, in a way. While he is mourning for himself, certainly, he is also mourning for the loss of the romance and the idealism that the idea of the magic of Prospero and the king in *The Tempest* represented. There will be no miracle return of the king. Instead of experiencing magic, Eliot is left an ordinary man remembering the destruction of his magic and his dreams behind what he describes as being a gashouse. He is in an utterly ordinary urban world, with its decay and trappings, and all he can do is ponder the death of the hope he was looking for.

Following the rat and this narrative in the voice of Shakespeare is the sound of the city behind Eliot: "But at my back from time to time I hear / The sound of horns and motors..." (Eliot 196-197). This is, again, a Marvell reference. From behind Eliot, he hears the sound of ordinary life going onward. Behind him is where something that was laughing at his pain was.

Behind him is the emptiness that he is trying to leave behind. The sounds of life become an echo of despair, a reminder of what was and what brought Eliot pain. And into this comes Mrs. Porter, a sign of cleansing and hope: “O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter / And on her daughter / They wash their feet in soda water” (Eliot 199-201) Would that that was all there was to her narrative, and that would be hopeful indeed. As the lyric reading revealed in detail, the reference is both a pleasing and horrifying thing that foreshadows even more doom: “Diana, the virgin goddess of the woods and hunting, was seen naked by Actaeon the hunter; she then changed him into a stag, to be hunted to death by his own dogs” (Ramazani, Ellmann, and O’Clair). Mrs. Porter and her daughter become a hint at the forbidden pleasures of the flesh, a tempting visage that will turn into a virago should Eliot reach out and grasp it. Like the unfortunate Actaeon, he will be hunted down like a dog if he acts upon his desires. And he must resist the impulses of the flesh if he is to succeed: “*Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole*” (Eliot 202). With the promise of the Holy Grail at the end of his trials, Eliot tries to keep himself afloat in this drowning sea of depression and darkness. And that attempt falls flat. The only way the perfect knight was able to reach the Holy Grail was by conquering his human desires. As a narrative theorist would say, desire is the essence of character. A character is routinely summed up as “What do I want?” Conquering desire to the point that it has no influence would leave Eliot something other than a man. Through the voice of Verlaine, Eliot says that he has no way out. If he goes forward and touches the passion he will be ripped apart like a wild dog. If he conquers the passions he is wrestling with, he may yet live, but will he still be a man?

Eliot fears that he will become something more or less than human if he actually succeeds at conquering himself and giving the voiceless the voice it needs: “Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug” (Eliot 204-205). As for Philomela, Eliot uses her in a different way here.

Recall that the legend of Philomela was that of a woman who was horribly violated by the runaway lust of her brother-in-law. In response to her rape, she and her sister killed innocent children and faced the enraged rapist in a dreadful situation before being “rescued” by the gods. That rescue turned them into animals and not human beings. Passion led to the violation of Philomela, passion led to the death of children, and passion led Philomela to being changed into something other than a human being. That nightingale was a beautiful thing, but it was still not human. It was something that could only sing or cry, not something that could think or write poetry. In essence, Eliot uses the voice and narrative of Philomela to ask the question: if he got away from these passions, what would he become? Would he be more or less?

Into this, once again, comes the remembrance of the lustful and unshaven merchant and his overture:

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. Lodon: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole. (Eliot 209-214)

Just as before, the arrival of this character marks a change in Eliot’s poem. Here, the smaller narrative of Eliot being propositioned is again used as a segue into the story of Tiresias. The voice of Tiresias therefore becomes the final, unifying voice, in the heteroglossia of voices and narratives that Eliot has been using to tell his problems to the reader: “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, / Old man with wrinkled female breasts...” (Eliot 218-219). Tiresias is the “I” that Eliot uses. By using this first-person voice, Eliot acknowledges his own

familiarity with the voices of the clerk and the typist. The violation in the story of the clerk and the typist is another story within the smaller story of Tiresias, heteroglossia within heteroglossia, as it were. Eliot overlaps the voices to make the final claim: “(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed” (Eliot 243-244). Again Tiresias returns as the key to understanding the tale Eliot is weaving: it is a confession. Through the mixed narrative he uses Tiresias to present, Eliot is claiming that he is both the clerk and the typist. But there is even more to this part of the tale, and it is even worse, than that. Eliot is saying that he is both Philomela and Tereus. He is the victim of rape who became a murderer, and he is the rapist. He is both monster and victim, innocent who turns to depravity and the depraved party who instigated the series of events in the first place. Not only that, Philomela’s way out was something that turned her into something inhuman. Eliot is left with nowhere to go, neither back nor forward. He can only remember and imagine.

The song that the violated woman “plays” in Eliot’s imagination is her attempt to move on to everyday life after she was assaulted. Similarly, Eliot remembers the everyday life that he cannot enjoy anymore: “O City city, I can sometimes hear / Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street, / The pleasant whining of a mandolin” (Eliot 259-261). Sometimes he can recall the happiness of an instrument, a walk, a drink in a bar, or another form of simple pleasure. They are gone to him now. This broken figure beside the Thames cannot take part in everyday joys anymore. It is not that he does not “see” them or remember them, but it is that he cannot feel joy anymore. Stuck in a state where passion makes him both the victim and the victimizer, and any attempt to move on from that state would move him back into being in either of the above situations, Eliot can only imagine an Elizabethan time of ships and romance: “The stern was formed / A gilded shell / Red and gold” (Eliot 281-283). This is wistfulness, nostalgia for the

past. As in the lyric reading, this is an utterly mixed message. The river is still filthy, and the ships are pieces of the past long gone imposed on a lifeless terrain and a river that is filled with oil and the waste of human excesses.

Overhearing a promise of a new relationship, Eliot can only echo the dismissal presented by one party in the exchange: “He wept. He promised ‘a new start.’ / I made no comment. What should I resent?” (Eliot 298-299). From this overheard voice Eliot brings in a further narrative voice, this one proclaiming the utter desolation of Eliot himself. Eliot is too empty to feel even rage. Here, he has made his confession, death is looming over his shoulder, and this voice serves to illuminate the simple fact that he has hit rock bottom and he cannot see a way out of this mess.

In his own voice Eliot says: “I can connect / Nothing with nothing” (Eliot 301-302). This is a sarcastic and melodramatic reference. If there is nothing to connect to nothing, nothing is all there ever was. Eliot’s emptiness is “out there.” Left with nothing, he can only bleakly muse on connecting nothing with nothing, and he is left with the sarcasm of the attempt. It is a wry admission of coming to his wit’s end. With nothing left to connect, and his confession made, Eliot gives up his spirit: “To Carthage then I came // Burning burning burning burning / O Lord Thou pluckest me out / O Lord Thou pluckest // burning” (Eliot 308-311). Buddha’s prayer was a reference to the idea that Buddha was right. Eliot was trapped between two passions, both of which were horrible to him. He could become the violator again, and force his desires on innocent people. Like Tereus, he could take what he wanted with no regard for the feelings of others. This fear is likely a reference to Eliot’s own nervous breakdown. The fear of a good man is that he is, quite simply, not a good man. The nearly obsessive-compulsive question here is: what if I let go and become a monster? A rationalist would say that that fear itself signals the

unlikely nature of that possibility. For Eliot, trapped as he felt, he could only see the monster lurking and waiting to be unleashed.

Similarly, Eliot could become the victim again. He could give up. This would entail a lethargic stance on life, an ongoing apathy towards Eliot's personal space and dignity being violated by an abusive other individual. Like the woman in the clerk and the typist, he could just let everything happen instead of fighting back and exercising his agency by thinking through his issues.

The third option was to move beyond both. And that idea, perhaps, terrified him more than anything. Even as he used heteroglossia to confess, through the miniature narratives embedded within the story, the voices of Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Paul-Marie Verlaine, Mrs. Porter and her daughter, Psalms, the legend of Philomela, Mr. Eugenides, Tiresias, and Augustine, he shuddered at the idea of moving beyond this. Desire and fear become the key components of this section. Unable to see a way out of his conflicting desires, which he saw as bestial things, and frightened of the future, Eliot gives his confession, looks back nostalgically, and gives in. Where the lyric sees the prayer as a movement of the mind in that Eliot is finally able to partially speak, the narrative sees it as a conclusion. Eliot has no way out, and so he gives his will over to Providence and burns in his desire, using the voice of Augustine to show that he is requesting salvation even while he is dying. The section ends with burning, and that is a perfect lead into Section IV, "Death by Water." In the terms of the classic narrative cycle, Eliot's protagonist is brought to his death. It is common, and an echo of the crucifixion, that the hero of the story must suffer, bear sin, and die before being reborn. From a narrative reading, Eliot uses this section of the poem to show his suffering, his bearing of his own sins, and the beginning of his death. Where the lyric reads this as a hopeful beginning of his rebirth

via his ability to partially speak his pain, the narrative reading takes this to be the downfall before the coming resurrection.

Ultimately, Section III's mixture of elements is effectively captured by both theories of literary criticism. The use of narrative theory and heteroglossia effectively streamlines the elements lyric examines and provides a more brisk reading of the poem. The pedagogical question, however, is: which reading is truly better for bringing students into the richness of T. S. Eliot's voice?

## Chapter IV: Pedagogical Considerations and a Conclusion

The lyric and narrative, refined to heteroglossia, both have similar but competing strengths. The strength of the lyric is its breadth and how it brings the reader into the mind and metaphorical “place” of the poet. It, in a shockingly effective fashion, makes the author and the reader into a symbiotic duo. The reader enacts what the author felt and becomes the author for a brief series of moments. Thus, the reader is brought into the story and the psychology of the author in a deeply intimate way. That intimacy could be disturbing for some students, as Eliot’s confession via Tiresias is inherently alarming in that he clarifies that he knows both the monster and the victim due to being both of them, but it is also enlightening. Lyric’s strength is in that inherent intimacy and the sense of understanding that the reader gains upon concluding a lyric reading.

Lyric’s weakness is the amount of time needed to grasp the concepts behind it. As Culler noted, the lyric is something that transforms by era and by author. That changeable quality makes it difficult to simplify down to a single encapsulating term. From that lack of a single unifying element to order a lyric reading, it takes multiple readings, as lyric theorists note, to ultimately grasp what a lyric poem is saying. This process makes lyric a more daunting mental endeavor, and it requires that the reader be willing to put a considerable amount of him or herself into the reading of the poem. Again, the intimacy of lyric is a strength, but it is also a weakness. A dismissive student of a “hard” science is less likely to be interested in investing him or herself in a “soft” lyric reading that demands a great deal of mental exertion.

Narrative’s strength is its familiarity to most individuals. Even as narrative definitions and heroes change by era, as the example of Diana of *Wonder Woman* fame showed, they are recounted so often that they become part of the everyday lives of human beings. As Weissman,

Wilson, Cohan, and Shires remark, narratives are built into the culture of humanity. Narratives take place in the workplace, television, YouTube, novels, Twitter, Facebook, and a thousand other such places. The idea of narrative, once simplified to that of a story, is a casually learnable thing. As narratives are such a commonplace thing to encounter, it is an easy task to create a familiar ground for students to launch a study from. The strength of narrative expanded into heteroglossia is how it encapsulates the various competing references, ideas, and quotations under one umbrella term that allows the reader to grasp and study the poem's text. As narrative is the root, and heteroglossia is the defining of elements of narrative, making a jump between them is not a terribly difficult thing to do.

The weakness of narrative, unfortunately, also is within its commonness and the ease of which it may be understood. It is, to put it simply, everywhere. Thus, a narrative reading can be seen as being the "easy" way out of a problem. That fact, along with the "soft" nature of the skill of reading poetry, makes it less strenuous for a reader or a student; a student may be thinking of a class featuring a narrative reading of poetry as an easy, inconsequential, thing to take. Similarly, heteroglossia can be dismissed by the student as being a fancy term for using references and quotations from other sources, a bit of trivia to remember for a quiz.

Lyric's difficulty and intimacy and narrative's ease and casual nature are at odds with one another. Yet, as this thesis has shown by the readings from both viewpoints, they both bring something to the table of pedagogical considerations. Where one fails at something, the other succeeds, and that fact makes them, ironically enough, suitable for study with one another. The pedagogical idea presented here is that both are valid in the proper context to formulate a lyric heteroglossia. Narrative and heteroglossia are simple and direct "ins" to the content of the poem, and lyric is the encapsulating element of all that is inherent within the poem. As narrative,

heteroglossia, and lyric cover each other's weaknesses well, have them be taught in a sequence. Narrative and heteroglossia are the easier terms, more suited for lower-level poetry classes. Their casualness and ease of use can be utilized by an instructor as part of a greater examination of the ideas of poetry, literature, or creative writing within the context of an overview course. Lyric, due to its intimacy, should be reserved for higher-level courses. In the case of *The Waste Land*, narrative and heteroglossia should be applied to the brief overview of a handful of lines or a single section that the student is likely to receive in a Critical Reading or introductory course. The lyric, deeper in meaning, should be utilized in the more complicated and higher-level English courses, the senior and graduate classes.

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