

THE LYRIC AS THE VOICE OF PAIN: INDIVIDUAL SUFFERING
IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLO-AMERICAN POETRY

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Bircan Nizamođlu, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Lyric as the Voice of Pain:

Individual Suffering in Contemporary Anglo-American Poetry

There is an emerging trend in contemporary studies on lyric poetry, namely the exploration of the social, moral, ethical, and worldly aspects of the lyric, a genre that has been viewed as the realm of the subjective. This tendency overlaps with recent interdisciplinary scholarship on the inexpressibility of private pain, which leads critics to search for alternative avenues for the representation of individual suffering. Drawing on contemporary lyric theory and studies on private pain, this dissertation explores how Ted Hughes in *Prometheus On His Crag* (1973), Kate Daniels in *The Niobe Poems* (1988), and Alice Oswald in *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* (2011) utilize lyric devices to give voice to the body in pain. Employing the selected four lyric parameters (the focus on the subjective, lyric address, lyric temporality, and intense formal structuring), this study examines how these three lyric sequences revisit mythological bodies in pain both to uncover and to subvert ideologies regarding the suffocating experience of individual suffering. This dissertation seeks to place lyric theory in dialogue with recent scholarship on private pain so as to address a gap in existing criticism with regard to the privileged position of lyric poetry in terms of communicating private, somatic, and complex experiences. Thus, it aims to contribute to contemporary studies on lyric theory and the representation of individual suffering by analyzing the lyric strategies these three poets use to cast light on the dark geography of private pain.

ÖZET

Acının Sesi Olarak Lirik:

Çağdaş Anglo-Amerikan Şiirinde Bireysel Acı Çekme

Lirik şiir üzerine yapılan çağdaş çalışmalarda; öznelğin alanı olarak görülen lirik türünün sosyal, ahlaki, etik ve dünyevi taraflarını incelemek yükselen bir trenddir. Bu eğilim, eleştirmenleri bireysel acı çekmenin temsili için alternatif yollar aramaya yönelten kişisel acı konusundaki son disiplinlerarası çalışmalarla örtüşmektedir. Bu tez, çağdaş lirik teorisi ve bireysel acı üzerine yapılan çalışmalardan faydalanarak, Ted Hughes'un *Prometheus On His Crag* (1973), Kate Daniels'ın *The Niobe Poems* (1988), ve Alice Oswald'un *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* (2011) eserlerinde acı çeken bedene ses vermek için lirik araçlardan nasıl faydalandıklarını incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, seçilen dört lirik parametreyi kullanarak (öznele odaklanma, lirik seslenme, lirik zamansallık, ve yoğun biçimsel yapılanma) üç lirik şiir dizisinin boğucu bireysel acı çekme deneyimine dair ideolojileri hem açığa çıkarmak hem de yıkmak amacıyla mitolojik acı çeken bedenleri tekrar nasıl ele aldığını irdelemektedir. Lirik şiirin kişisel, bedensel ve karmaşık olanı ifade etmesi açısından ayrıcalıklı pozisyonunun mevcut eleştirideki eksikliğine değinmek için bu tez lirik teori ve kişisel acı üzerine yapılan son çalışmalar arasında bir diyalog kurmayı hedeflemektedir. Böylece, bu çalışma üç şairin kişisel acının karanlık coğrafyasına ışık tutmak için kullandıkları lirik stratejileri inceleyerek lirik teori ve bireysel acı çekmenin temsiline dair çağdaş çalışmalara katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I think we get a closer description of the way it [poetry] has always operated if we regard it as nothing more than a facility for expressing that complicated process in which we locate, and attempt to heal, affliction – whether our own or that of others, whose feelings we can share. The inmost spirit of poetry, in other words, is at bottom, in every recorded case, the voice of pain – and the physical body, so to speak, of poetry, is the treatment by which the poet tries to reconcile that pain with the world. (Hughes, 2009, p. 458)

Since the 1960s, social scientists have called for new strategies to communicate what the body in pain experiences. Most of these theorists have agreed that private pain resists language. Although each language has its own way of signaling signs of pain through interjections, which are, according to Saussure, often mistaken for “spontaneous expressions” triggered by natural forces (p. 69), such conventional linguistic mechanisms indeed fail to communicate the real experience an individual goes through when s/he is in pain. Because it belongs to the realm of an individual’s body, pain, according to these critics, is inexpressible, unable to be shared, and non-representable. As the author of pioneering works on this subject, Veena Das (2007) draws attention to “the absence of any standing languages through which the pain could be addressed” (p. 38). Focusing on transactions between language and body, Das (2007) questions whether and how one “may move out of the inexpressible privacy and suffocation . . . of pain.” (p. 40). In a similar vein, since individual suffering, as opposed to mass suffering referring to a shared experience, tends to remain private, personal, and hence, much more inaccessible, Elaine Scarry (1985), the writer of the ground-breaking *The Body in Pain*, rightly observes that when one tries to understand another body’s physical pain, s/he actually struggles to enter an “invisible geography” (p. 3). Taking this into account, an interdisciplinary approach

has been promoted to unravel the complicated nature of individual suffering and what the body in pain experiences. Besides medical, sociological, anthropological, and psychological studies, literature comes to the fore because suffering has always been a perennial theme in literary works. Moreover, “literary texts, after all, tend to deal with the more ambivalent and amorphous areas of experience where simple definitions break down or prove inadequate” (Hillman & Maude, 2015, p. 1). This is the reason why various critics take literature as an avenue for the representation of complex phenomena resisting ordinary uses of language. Well-known for her contributions to trauma studies, Cathy Caruth (1996), for example, draws attention to how Sigmund Freud utilizes a literary work, namely Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, in his conceptualization of trauma in the third chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (p. 3). Drawing on Freud's reference to Tancred's unknowing murder of his beloved Clorinda, Caruth (1996) argues that

It is the moving quality of this literary story, I would suggest—its striking juxtaposition of the unknowing, injurious repetition and the witness of the crying voice—that best represents Freud's intuition of, and his passionate fascination with, traumatic experiences. If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. (p. 3)

For Caruth (1996), that trauma cannot be located in a “simple violent or original event in an individual's past” opens up possibilities for its indirect representation in the texts of psychoanalysis, literary theory, and works of literature (p. 4).¹ In a

¹ The traditional conceptualization of trauma that can be traced back to Freud's writings and found in Caruth's works points to a problematic past experience that continually haunts an individual in the future: “[i]n its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (Caruth, 1996, p. 11). This unwitting repetitive impulse is what Freud (1920/2001) calls “traumatic neuroses” especially visible in the dreams of his patients as “the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident” (p. 13). The selected works analyzed in this study do not show this main defining sign of trauma, namely the repeated revival of the traumatic moment, but rather focus on the plight of the body in pain at a given moment. For this reason, the theoretical framework of the present study is not specifically informed by trauma theory but refers to it at various moments when the

similar vein, the widening gulf between pain and language exemplifies such a complex phenomenon. For this reason, literary scholars have participated in this interdisciplinary endeavor by asking the question of how the study of literature can shed light upon the body in pain, an “invisible geography” (p. 3) as Scarry (1985) calls it. The word “geography” is indeed an apt choice here with regard to the connotation of ordering what is chaotic and cannot be perceived wholly by the human mind at a time. Combining Greek “geo”, meaning “earth”, and “-graphy”, denoting “writing”, the etymology of the term demonstrates its materializing aspect: the surface of the earth is schematized, and hence, textualized through the study of this discipline. What about the materialization of the body in pain through literary texts, especially through lyric poetry associated with subjective experience and bodily sensations in Western literature? Can we assert that lyric poetry maps out the suffering zone of an individual in a way that ordinary language cannot and has the potential of turning the invisible into the perceptible? Can the lyric be “the voice of pain”, as Ted Hughes asserts in the opening quotation (2009, p. 458), through which poets articulate private pain, thus making it a shared experience?

Responding to recent interdisciplinary scholarship on the complicated nature of private pain, this dissertation explores how contemporary Anglo-American poets utilize the genre of the lyric sequence to represent individual suffering.² In this study,

speakers in the selected sequences exhibit signs of trauma. The conclusion offers possible routes for future studies on lyric poetry and its relation to trauma narratives.

² Taking a holistic approach to the conceptualization of suffering, this study evaluates both mental and physical pain as a somatic experience, and for this reason, it does not differentiate them as distinct modes of suffering. Along with many other critics, Talal Asad (2003) points to the inevitable blurring of lines between physical suffering and mental pain: “All feelings of pain involve physical changes that are not only internal to the body (muscular, biochemical) but also externally visible (voice, demeanor, gait) and culturally readable. This fact alone complicates the too-neat distinction between physical pain and mental pain. Distressing emotions, too, are connected to chemical disturbances in the body. And chemical imbalances- whether associated with trauma or malignant cell growth – are as ‘physical’ as torn ligaments. It may be that physical pain is typically located by the sufferer in particular parts of his or her body and that this is what distinguishes it from mental distress. But mental states – themselves closely connected to social circumstances- are central in the experience of physical pain” (p. 83).

I argue that lyric poetry is a privileged channel to express individual suffering due to its focus on subjectivity and various generic devices, such as lyric address, lyric temporality, and intense formal structuring. Likewise, the selected contemporary poets, namely Ted Hughes in his *Prometheus On His Crag* (1973/2005), Kate Daniels in *The Niobe Poems* (1988), and Alice Oswald in *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* (2011), employ these characteristic effects of the genre to reflect on the plight of the body in pain and unravel age-old ideologies regarding the inexpressibility of individual suffering.³ I analyze these three works with regard to how lyric devices pave the way for the representation of individual suffering without subsuming it under these ideological frames available in mythological narratives.

These three poets do not belong to a certain poetic movement. Yet, they have a shared agenda in these selected words, which is employing lyric devices to rehandle classical myths on individual suffering in lyric sequences.⁴ In addition to this common move, there are several reasons why I focus on contemporary Anglo-American poetry after the 1970s: as Ramazani (2003) rightly observes, there is an evident emphasis on the personal in poetry in the late 1950s and the 1960s (p. xlv). This has been represented by various groups such as the Movement poets, the Black Mountain School, the Beats, the New York school of poets, and confessional poetry, all of which “turned against New Critical norms of impersonality and formal regulation” (Ramazani, 2003, p. liii). Moreover, these poetic movements reacted against the elitist agenda of the first-generation modernists by promoting a

³ Henceforth, as a matter of convenience, I will not refer to the dates of these sequences in the following quotations and references.

⁴ Although the present study is a primarily formal analysis, the thematic significance of the revisited classical myths will be kept in sight due to the fact that any generic study should encompass formal, thematic and rhetorical functions associated with the selected genre. However, it should be specifically noted that this dissertation does not offer an analysis of how classical myths on suffering are adapted by contemporary poets, which would be an interesting topic for another study focusing on the thematic revisiting of these myths.

democratic view of poetic language, and accordingly, supported the egalitarian opening of poetic form in an experimental manner (Ramazani, 2003, pp. xlvi-xlvii). This attitude became evident especially after the 1970s when the desire to have more personal introspection in poetry met the newly evolving pulse of giving voice to the under-represented. For this reason, Anglo-American poetry after the 1970s can exemplify how lyric poetry can publicize private pain that resists representation in language.

This chapter begins with a bird's eye view of modern and contemporary Anglo-American poetry with regard to how various poets engage with the question of representing suffering in disparate manners. Then, I present a brief account of the early definitions of the lyric and discuss the flourishing of the lyric sequence in the early modern period by paying particular attention to the public aspect of the genre. This conceptualization of the lyric as a genre that opens up new possibilities for the publicization of private pain is followed by a section that focuses on parallelisms between mythic and lyric acts of building communities. It explains why this study focuses on lyric sequences revisiting classical myths. This discussion is joined with a section on contemporary lyric theory and sequentiality, revolving around the previously overlooked social uses of the lyric. In the last section of this introductory chapter, I introduce the four lyric parameters I employ in this study, namely the focus on the subjective, lyric address, lyric temporality, and intense formal structuring. I explain the functions of these generic devices in terms of representing pain and this section serves as the broader background to my discussion on the communication of individual suffering in the selected contemporary lyric sequences. Finally, I offer a brief outline of the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Suffering in modern and contemporary poetry: A brief review

As Iain Wilkinson (2005) contends, “wherever humanity records its voice, then it always speaks of suffering. It appears that we cannot keep silent and remain unmoved before its presence” (p. 1). This is especially true of literature. From the very beginning, Western poets have offered various portrayals of suffering and Homer’s preliminary works, namely the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, stand as examples of this tendency. The opening lines of these works instantiate their focus on pain and suffering: Whereas the *Iliad* refers to “the anger of Peleus’ son Achilles / and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians” (Homer, trans. 1974, Book 1, ll. 1-2), the latter delineates the protagonist, namely Odysseus as the man who saw “many cities of men”, “learned their minds”, and suffered “many pains” (Homer, trans, 1997, Book 1, ll. 4-5). In this manner, both epics draw the reader in by appealing to what man has not ceased to be affected by, and many authors have made use of this strategy.

Since the attempt to find an appropriate language inherently encompasses the re-evaluation of “frames” through which we experience, represent and construct the world, one cannot avoid acknowledging the significance of genres in the portrayal of suffering in literary works. As John Frow (2008) asserts, questions of genres “go to the heart of the way meaning and truth are structured, circulated, and controlled in a set of complex social relations of discourse” (pp. 11-12). In this respect, genre issues in literary works on suffering are of utmost importance in constructing a language capable of expressing the plight of the body in pain. It does not escape the reader that when the topic is individual suffering, lyric poetry has a distinctive place among other poetic genres in the Western canon. Referring generally to short, non-narrative, and personal poetry in Anglo-American literature, the lyric foregrounds the

persona's emotions and thoughts and offers the reader a diversity of voices through portrayals of various personae. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the disposition to write lyric poems on suffering gained a new direction as conviction in traditional values and relative optimism gave way to the sense of uncertainty and instability. Written in the aftermath of the first World War, William Butler Yeats' "The Second Coming" (1920/2003) manifests this new consciousness: a huge change was close at hand and it was expected to have devastating effects on what had been taken for granted previously:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned; (ll. 3-6)

This harshly tragic and cynical conception of life can also be observed in the works of many war poets, such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Isaac Rosenberg. As a soldier and poet, Wilfred Owen, for example, felt the poetic responsibility to witness and reconfigure the faces and bodies of young men (Corcoran, 2007, pp. 89-90): In a letter of 1917, Owen says "[i]t will never be painted, and no actor will ever seize it. And to describe it, I think I must go back and be with them" (p. 521). For Owen, giving voice to these bodies in pain is crucial as they are not able to speak on their own behalf. His lyric poem "The Calls" (written in 1918) instantiates this sentiment that the poet cannot be indifferent to such a call:

For leaning out last midnight on my sill,
I heard the sighs of men that have no skill
To speak of their distress, no nor the will!
A voice I know. And this time I will go (Owen, 1973/1974, ll. 25-28).

The poem represents the voices of fighting men as pre-semiotic "sighs" in contrast to "words or sentences" and emphasizes that they are not inclined or able to speak of

their plight. However, Owen recognizes and stresses the idea that the experience of these soldiers should be portrayed as they cannot put it into words themselves.

Along with the dark atmosphere of the war, the rapid transformation brought about by urban life and technological advancements encourage poets to construct new forms to reflect on modern experience, as exemplified by T. S. Eliot's experimental *The Waste Land* (1922/2003). However, this does not mean a complete break with older conventions. On the contrary, in his *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, Eliot (1998) builds a bond between the modern poet and his predecessors through his concept of tradition: it is a "timeless" and "simultaneous order" whereby both the twentieth century poet and his precursors mutually exert influence over each other, leading to Eliot's argument that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone" (p. 28). So, the modern poet, according to Eliot, is not expected to give voice solely to his individual ideas, but also to the collective. To this end, he promotes the mythic method as a crucial norm in the poetic agenda of modernist poetry, which attests to the need for the coexistence of the personal and the communal. Reviewing James Joyce's *Ulysses* in his "Ulysses, Order and Myth", Eliot (2005) praises Joyce for formulating a method through which he employs the pattern that Homer's the *Odyssey* provided and for managing to build parallelism between the contemporary and the classic (p. 167). In this respect, Joyce met the standard Eliot set in his *Tradition and the Individual Talent*. Myths continued to serve the interests of modernist poets in their endeavor to portray the new, complicated, and chaotic experience of the modern age.⁵ By referring to the Icarus myth, W. H. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" incorporates this inclination to reflect human suffering almost as an ordinary quotidian detail that can be easily ignored:

⁵ I will return to the use of myths in lyric poetry in the section on parallelisms between the mythic and the lyric.

“the expansive delicate ship that must have seen / Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky, / Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.” (Auden, 1939/2003, ll. 19-21). In a similar vein, William Carlos Williams (1960/2003) portrays Icarus’ drowning in his “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” as an insignificant event, reduced to “a splash quite unnoticed” (l. 19).

Whereas Eliot was influential in various schools of Anglo-American poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was resistance to his ideas especially in the second half of the age. There were critics and poets who did not appreciate what Eliot meant by “we” and found it, along with his mythic vision, too structuralist, elitist, and even patriarchal. Dissenting voices and crosscurrents triggered the proliferation of forms, movements, and modes of expression, especially after the Second World War. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the rise of Hitler, the Holocaust, and Fascism spreading over Europe led many to think of the age as catastrophic and to feel on the edge of the apocalypse that had been foreshadowed by Yeats in “The Second Coming”, among many others. Unprecedented extremes of violence, torture, bloodshed, and the due recognition of human suffering made authors address social suffering, trauma and personal histories of wartime experience in a myriad of ways. Poet-soldiers wrote about the Second World War by following the path of the First World War poets. Keith Douglas was one of these poet-soldiers and his works are replete with references to his predecessors. In “Desert Flowers” (written in 1943), for instance, he paid tribute to Rosenberg by acknowledging that he can “only repeat what you [Rosenberg] were saying” (Douglas, 1978/2000, l. 2). In this poem, Douglas, like Owen, situates a suffering person in the realm of the pre-semiotic through a comparison with trees (l. 13) and undertakes the difficult task of singing “of what the others never set eyes on”

(l. 16). He stresses the same idea in his prose writings. In “Poets of This War”, written in May 1943, for instance, he claims that “there is nothing new, from a soldier’s point of view, about this war except its mobile character . . . hell cannot be let loose twice: it was let loose in the Great War and it is the same old hell now” (qtd. in Piette, 2007, p. 112). Pointing to new technologies and mass industrial warfare, he downplays “the mobile character” of World War II and what seems to matter is the common result, suffering. On the other side of the coin, there were poets following the model promoted by the *Personal Landscape* journal founded by Lawrence Durrell, Robin Fedden and Bernard Spencer. Apolitical, anarchist, and individualist, these poets reacted against the idea of war poetry as a genre, and instead, promoted the exploration of personal experiences in wartime (Piette, 2007, p. 121). Although their common theme was suffering, the difference between these two groups lies at the heart of conceptualizing the war as either private catastrophe or collective experience (Piette, 2007, p. 122).

As stated above, in contemporary Anglo-American poetry, mass evil and violence triggered various responses and there has been a contest between two major tendencies: on the one hand, we have the enduring influence of the formalistic aesthetics of modernist poetry, supported by the methods of New Criticism along with its promotion of the literary text as “the well-wrought urn”, “where the meaning and the structure coalesce” (Williams, 2011, p. 32). On the other hand, the reader encounters what Blasing calls “an anti-formalist revolt that reaffirms presence and process in open forms” (2009, p. 1). This was partly the result of the belief that there is a “correlation between early modernist literature and authoritarian politics” and “totalitarian theories of form [are] matched or reflected by totalitarian politics” (Kermode, 1967, p.108), which were viewed as the cause of evil, violence and

suffering in the late twentieth century. In addition, Eliot was the defender of the well-known doctrine of the first-generation modernists, namely the “impersonality of poetry”: in his *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, he famously asserts that “the emotion of art is impersonal” (Eliot, 1998, p. 961). However, “many of the best-known poetry after World War II reclaimed a fiercely personal poetry for the late 1950s and the 1960s” (Ramazani, 2003, p. xlv). The influence of this tendency has endured in the second half of the twentieth century. Among the babel of miscellaneous voices, Al Alvarez’s anthology, *The New Poetry* (1962/1963) occupies a central place in contemporary Anglo-American poetry. He highlights the influence of the political and sociocultural environment over contemporary poets in his opening essay in “The New Poetry”, subtitled “Or Beyond the Gentility Principle”: “Gentility is a belief that life is always more or less orderly, people always more or less polite, their emotions and habits more or less decent and more or less controllable; that God is more or less good” (p. 21). However, this age demands to recognize that our lives “are influenced profoundly by forces which have nothing to do with gentility, decency, or politeness” (Alvarez, 1962/1963, p. 22). On the contrary, poets have to face “forces of disintegration which destroy the old standards of civilization. Their public faces are those of the two world wars, of the concentration camps, of genocide, and the threat of nuclear war” (Alvarez, 1962/1963, p. 22). Alvarez highlights the close relation between poetics and politics in the second half of the twentieth century. The first edition of this anthology includes works by various Anglo-American poets such as Ted Hughes, whose another work, namely *Prometheus On His Crag*, is included in this study, and confessional poets, such as Robert Lowell and John Berryman. The second edition includes Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath, significant female poets whose poems are

often grouped under the term of “Confessionalism”. By utilizing collective images, such as classical myths or historical references, these poets juxtapose social and individual suffering in their lyric poems. Published in 1965, Plath’s “Daddy” (1965/2003) exemplifies such a collocation by employing the Holocaust as a metaphor illuminating the depiction of a problematic father-daughter relationship.

In terms of communicating individual suffering, confessional poetry has been one of the most significant movements in late twentieth-century Anglo-American poetry. Prominent in the United States especially in the 1950s and 1960s, confessional poets responded to contemporary anxieties concerning the “death of privacy” (Nelson, 2002, p. 1) and constructed “strategies of self exposure” (Waters, 2015, p. 380). One of the consequences of this return to the self is that female poets came to the fore. The female body, along with its under- or misrepresented experience, becomes the focus of their poetry. Although they cannot be evaluated solely under the category of the confessional movement, Adrienne Rich’s, Sylvia Plath’s, Anne Sexton’s, Louise Glück’s and Sharon Olds’ poems exemplify this stance. At this point, the significance of French Feminist theory should be recognized as it builds a link between poetry and the articulation of bodily experience. The French Feminists explore how language and society interact in the exclusion of women from the position of subjectivity and call attention to the need for a special language. Luce Irigaray (1984/1993) expresses this concern in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* by asserting that while “man is forever searching for, building, creating homes for himself everywhere: caves, huts, women, cities, language, concepts, theory, and so on” (p. 141), women are in need of a language as “ [t]his linguistic home that man has managed to substitute even for his dwelling in a body, whether his own body or another's, has used women as construction material, but (therefore?)

it is not available to her” (p. 107). In line with this search for a female language, another French Feminist, Julia Kristeva (1974/1984) differentiates between what she calls “the semiotic” (the pre-verbal stage) and “the symbolic” (the realm one enters after the acquisition of language): she makes use of the song-like aspect of poetic language to situate the “chora” within the semiotic and claims that the reader can find the semiotic rhythm in poetic language (p. 29). So, poetry, according to Kristeva (1974/1984), stands as a revolutionary realm, which is not completely but partially independent of the symbolic along with its institutionalized and patriarchal language as it offers glimpses of the chora.⁶ Likewise, Hélène Cixous (2010), in “The Laugh of Medusa”, draws attention to the parallelism between the repression of women’s bodies and the repression of their writing (Segarra, 2010, p. 20). Similar to the way contemporary critics dwell on the voiceless body in pain and its representation, Cixous endeavors to give voice to the silenced female body. She asserts that “woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies . . . Woman must put herself into the text- as into the world and into history- by her own movement” (Cixous, 2010, p. 27). The aim is to make the suppressed and the private public: communicating female experience will make people recognize that women can occupy the position of subjectivity. For such a purpose, Cixous (2010) goes back to exceptions showing women as subjects holding out against oppression and she states that “only the poets- not the novelist, allies of representationalism” can achieve such a portrayal since “poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive” (pp. 31-32). Although Kristeva and Cixous do not

⁶ In the next chapter, the Kristevan concept of poetic language is discussed more extensively as it is employed to examine the closing poem of Hughes’ *Prometheus On His Crag*.

specify poetry as the lyric, the first critic's focus on "rhythmical" elements and the latter's special emphasis on the "song" can make us think that they view lyric poetry as a revolutionary realm beyond ordinary lines of thought, enabling one to articulate the plight of the voiceless.

Even when it is highly personal, lyric poetry is closely linked to the domain of the public for Confessional poets and French Feminists. Still, there have been two clashing ideas on this subject: at the end of his 1942 essay "Cultural Criticism and Society", Theodor Adorno (1967/1983) claims that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (p. 34) and critics interpreted this as "a judgment upon the impossibility of writing lyric poetry" after the Holocaust since "the viability of the single expressive voice in poetry is called into question" (Williams, 2011, p. 60). Later, in his "Selections from Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems Lecture Fourteen", Adorno (1997/2003) revisits his claim to prevent misunderstanding: "I would readily concede that, just as I said after Auschwitz one *could not* write poems- by which I meant to point to the hollowness of the resurrected culture of that time- it could equally well be said, on the other hand, that one *must* write poems" (p. 435). As far as this study is concerned, the question may not be whether writing poetry is barbaric or that we should continue to write poems. They should be reformulated so as to show how the writing of lyric poetry in the contemporary age may be functional in terms of publicizing private experiences.

In addition, there were poets such as Seamus Heaney, Jerome Rothenberg, Charles Bernstein and Rita Dove, among many others, who acknowledge the political role of (even personal) poetry and the necessity of the poet's addressing the public sphere by employing personal accounts and/or building analogies with historical events and myths (Williams, 2011, p. 91). In his 1988 interview with

Randy Brandes (1988), Seamus Heaney, who, with the political turmoil in Northern Ireland in mind, answered whether and how poetry could counter the barbarism of the age in this light:

Can you write a poem in the post-nuclear age? Can you write a poem that gazes at death, or the western front, or Auschwitz- a poem that gives peace and tells horrors? It gives true peace only if horror is satisfactorily rendered. If the eyes are not averted from it. If its overmastering power is acknowledged and unconcerned, so the human spirit holds its own against its affront and immensity. To me that's what the 'end of art is peace' means. (p. 21).

For Heaney, what is at stake is the very endeavor to show and look at another's suffering and poetry cannot be free of such responsibility. Likewise, Charles Bernstein (1988) insists on poetry's relation to the public realm, especially when the topic is suffering: "[i]n contrast to-or is an extension of ? - Adorno's famous remark about the impossibility of (lyric) poetry after Auschwitz, I would say poetry is a necessary way to register the unrepresentable loss of the Second War" (217). In the contemporary era, poetry's responsiveness to sociocultural issues and world events that have victimized many people has been promoted so much so that there are poems filled with a montage of quotations from interviews, sound bites, and testimonies. These poems blend the voice of the poetic subject with the political language of administrators. Eliot Weinberger's *What I Heard About Iraq* (2005), which focuses on the USA's entry into the Iraq War, exemplifies this method. The speaker in Weinberger's poem refers to the clashing statements of the politicians: "I heard the president say: 'We'll find them. It'll be a matter of time to do so'" (2005, p. 27). Later, he adds "I heard Tony Blair say 'We know that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, and we know that we haven't found them, that we may not found them.'" (Weinberger, 2005, p. 68). Although the anaphora of "I heard" and the title may give the impression of a passive speaker who just listens to what is said

and repeats them, the very act of repeating in a subversive manner is the revolutionary critique the poem offers. In addition, the speaker presents the number of civilian casualties, which keeps increasing throughout the poem. In this manner, the number of dead civilians and the sentences of the politicians are juxtaposed in a suggestive manner, almost showing the absurdity of all ideological claims which turn individuals into numbers broadcasted whereas those people giving voice to these ideologies stand as individuals with their names and statements. As Nerys Williams (2011) contends, “Weinberger reminds us how political language shields its audience from uncomfortable truths and miscarriages of justice” (p. 79). At this point, poetry can (and maybe should) remind us that we do not talk about numbers but suffering and dying individuals.

1.2 The early definitions of the lyric: From the private to the public?

As seen in this brief review of modern and contemporary poetry, there has been a plurality of voices, forms, and idioms with regard to the representation of suffering. Different poetic agendas revolve around two questions, namely whether it is possible for poetry to reflect upon immense suffering the twentieth and twenty-first centuries brought about and what ways should be followed to realize this aim. Is there a language capable of articulating the barbaric and violent face of these centuries? And what about the individual body in pain? Keeping in sight these recent developments in contemporary Anglo-American poetry in the late twentieth century, can we say that contemporary lyric poetry has the potential of becoming a suitable medium to make private suffering public?

These questions require a closer look at the main characteristics of lyric poetry from a historically informed perspective. The early conceptualizations of the

lyric highlight the genre's exclusive engagement with private thoughts, subjective sensations, and somatic experience. However, the lyric has always resisted any formulaic and single definition, which makes it open to experimentation. This has posed a set of challenges for Western genre theorists throughout the ages. For instance, in Roman and Greek antiquity, the term "lyric" is used only in a narrow sense, excluding elegy and iambos. Still, its modern meaning is comprehensive, including these two forms, owing to Goethe's influential theory of "natural forms", which became standard from the late eighteenth century onwards (Budelmann, 2009, p. 3). As iambos, elegy, and lyric all have a common basis in the domain of private sensations expressed mainly in the here-and-now atmosphere, the lyric has turned into an umbrella term encompassing what are now viewed as sub-genres.

The inconsistency between the ancient and modern scopes of the term "lyric" is not the only challenge. As Felix Budelmann (2009) observes, "lyric poetry is largely absent from the text that has shaped western poetics more than any other: Aristotle's *Poetics*" (p. 4). Since genres are constructed with relation to each other and their boundaries are determined in an intertextual way, the absence of the lyric as one of the main genres in *Poetics* has obfuscated its relation to other genres conceptualized in this text, namely tragedy and epic, and complicated the task of defining lyric poetry. Even today, we do not have a sole answer to the question of what the lyric is. So, "'lyric' is never a self-evident concept" (Budelmann, 2009, p. 4). Changing over centuries, the meaning of the term has been regenerated with every theoretical text in genre studies and poetic activities of various lyric poets regardless of whether evolving definitions are expanding or restricting. As Culler (2015) rightly observes, "lyric poetry has a long history in the West but an uncertain generic status" (p. 1).

That the genre has defied any totalizable and unified definition results in the coexistence of many different and even conflicting descriptions of the lyric. In spite of the elasticity of the term, there is a common strategy that characterizes most of these attempts to describe the lyric, which is going back to the roots of the genre in ancient Greece. The term “lyric” appeared first in the second century BC with reference to the works of nine poets, namely Pindar, Bacchylides, Sappho, Anacreon, Stesichorus, Simonides, Ibycus, Alceus, and Alcman. The Alexandrian scholars found the works of these poets similar to each other as their poems are intended to be sung with a lyre (Bowra, 2000, pp. 2-3). Although its origins are lost, the efflorescence of lyric in the seventh century when the epic, the dominating genre of the previous period, was losing its popularity “shows that times had changed and that the epic no longer satisfied all the spiritual needs of man” (Bowra, 2000, p. 9). This shift from the world of epic to that of the lyric is significant as genres and cultural transformations are always interrelated. The Greek lyric can be viewed as an extension of rising individualism under the influence of Greek city-states promoting independent self-rule in the Archaic age. Later, in the classical period, with the transition from poleis to democracy, the awakening of a new individualism reached its peak. Solon, a lyric poet and lawmaker, was hailed as “the founding hero of democracy” in Athens, and he “defends his political and economic reforms in iambic verse” (Allan, 2014, pp. 40-41). The rise of democracy was both triggered by and nurtured individualism, characterizing the environment from which the lyric originates. This sentence can also be observed in developments in visual arts. Because of the increasing contact between the Greek Mediterranean and the East between the mid-eighth to mid-seventh centuries BC, the Egyptian canons of proportion were adopted by Greek sculptures, which resulted in the construction of

“kouroi”, meaning “male youth” (Squire, 2011, pp. 35-36). Made up of materials like marble and limestone, kouroi have been regarded as the first stage of monumental human sculpture (Harris, Hughes, Osborne, Robb, & Stoddart, 2003, p. 117). They became the epitome of balance, poise and equilibrium between the late seventh to early fifth centuries BC (Squire, 2011, pp. 35), the period that witnessed the rise and prominence of Greek lyric poetry. The very appearance of kouroi in visual arts in this age shows how the body of the individual was gaining importance. The evolution of these statues, which is characterized by an increasing sense of verisimilitude in terms of lifelikeness and anatomical correctness, indicates the special place the individual body occupied in the discourse of the period. Later, with the Greek Revolution in the Classical period from about 500 BC, individualistic overtones in art became more visible as “the symmetry of their [kouroi’s] tense posture is finally broken when their bodies receive a slight twist, so that life seems to enter the marble” (Gombrich, 1962, p. 99). The shift in style was from a more rigid and schematic model to a more lifelike one (Harris et al, 2003, p. 118), and this paved the way for the detailed representation of the body of the individual.⁷

Returning to literature, although the lyric owes a lot to the epic in many respects, such as acknowledging the influence of Olympian gods over individuals and the use of narrative elements, it is different from epic poetry in terms of the poetic persona’s turn to his/ her body and its present plight as the subject of a literary work, thanks to which subjective sensations and individual judgments have gained importance (Snell, 1946/1953, p. 54). As with the sculpture of the period, the body of the individual was foregrounded in literature and became a characterizing aspect of lyric poetry.

⁷ It should be noted that Greek individualism and lifelikeness embodied by classical sculptures do not mean a quasi-photographic realism, but refer to a blend of naturalism and idealism, and hence to the beauty standards of the age, offering aspirational bodies (Harris, et al, 2003, pp. 118-120).

One can observe this focus on the private body in Sappho's Fr. 31, in which the speaker examines her own bodily reactions in a detailed manner:

Fortunate as the gods he seems to me, that man who sits
opposite you, and listens nearby to your sweet voice

And your lovely laughter; that, I vow, has set my heart
within my breast a-flutter. For when I look at you a
moment, then I have no longer power to speak,

But my tongue keeps silence, straightway a subtle flame has
stolen beneath my flesh, with my eyes I see nothing, my
ears are humming,

A cold sweat covers me, and a trembling seizes me all over,
I am paler than grass, I seem to be not far short of death...
But all must be endured, since ... (pp. 19-20).

The poem epitomizes how the focus in lyric poetry shifts from narrative elements to private sensations with its move from the external to the internal. The very first lines of the poem depict a triangular love story with characters of a man, a woman and the speaker, and hence, it offers narrative elements. The speaker sees the man sitting near the woman and this scene triggers her somatic responses stemming from the passion of love. Employing a vocabulary of sensation and highlighting the conditions of various bodily parts such as her tongue, skin, eyes, ears, and flesh, the speaker focuses on her body in the second part. She explains that it is not possible for her to speak as she suffers from pangs of love, which exemplifies what Scarry (1985) calls "the shattering of language" that individual suffering centrally entails (p. 5). It is not enough for the speaker to say that she cannot speak. She directly refers to a bodily organ, the tongue, which cannot function, thus exhibiting the embodiedness of suffering. The intensity of passion is reflected through the depiction of the speaker as the body in pain. However, contrary to her assertion, the jealous speaker indeed articulates how she feels: she is almost on the verge of death, which has conventionally been compared to any experience of great physical suffering. By

drawing an analogy between her painful experience and death, the speaker again underlines how voiceless she is despite the fact that the reader hears her voice in the lyric mode. She employs the oxymoron of burning and freezing to articulate the plight of her body in pain and compares her body to the field grass, which seems livelier than her trembling yet enduring body. The speaker, in this respect, stands as a body in crisis. In *On the Sublime*, Longinus (Trans. 1999) includes a reading of this poem, arguing that the fragment exemplifies sublimity in its choice of constituent elements (p. 199). According to Longinus (Trans. 1999), what makes Sappho's Fr. 31 a powerful poem is the way she reflects on the body in pain:

Is it not wonderful how she summons at the same time, soul, body, hearing, tongue, skin, all as though they had wandered off apart from herself? She feels contradictory sensations, freezes, burns, raves, reasons, so that she displays not a single emotion, but a whole congeries of emotions. Lovers show all such symptoms, but what gives supreme merit to her art is, as I said, the skill with which she takes up the most striking and combines them into a single whole. (p. 201)

For Longinus (Trans. 1999), the poem derives its power from Sappho's treatment of the body in pain as something that both belongs to and does not belong to the subject (p. 201). Moreover, what the speaker goes through is indeed a shared experience, but the way she combines opposing sensations into a complex whole makes her work unique (Longinus, trans. 1999, p. 201). Reflecting on the fragment and Longinus' reading of it, Denys Page (1955) draws attention to "the uncommon objectivity of her demeanour toward her own extremity of passion; the accurate definition of its physical symptoms; the rare gift of vivid, brief, and precise expression" (p. 27). The persona approaches her sensations as if they belonged to another one. This stance might stem from the ambivalent model of agency characterizing her plight: she cannot exert control over her body, exhibiting various signs of passion, yet it is through this body that she tries to explain her situation.

The comparison between the divine and the human draws attention to the common human condition of embodiedness in Sappho's poem. As Denys Page (1955) notes, the portrayal of the man as an "equal of the gods" resembles formulas found in praises of men on any sort of appropriate occasion (p. 32). Here, Sappho seems to revisit this convention not to express admiration for another, but to delineate the condition of the suffering speaker more accurately. The opposition between the divine and the human, represented by the man and the speaker, might be interpreted with regard to the link between having a body and being vulnerable to pain. Analyzing Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, Elaine Scarry (1985) notes that "God's invisible presence is asserted, made visible, in the perceivable alterations He brings about in the human body" and these manifestations of the divine mostly refer to the cases where human beings suffer from the pains of childbirth, floods, and plagues" (p. 183). In most of these scenes of hurt, god is represented as a bodiless voice whereas men and women are voiceless bodies (Scarry, 1985, p. 200). Unlike this tradition, classical Greek gods are indeed anthropomorphic and can suffer like human beings while they are superior in many aspects, as their immortality epitomizes, and can inflict pain on human bodies. However, they cannot manifest their real "bodies" in front of human beings but appear through shape-shifting. For this reason, they are "bodiless" in the sense that they cannot show their original forms to man. For Scarry (1985), the divine signifies bodiless power and the human denotes embodiedness, thus the comparison is actually between being unsusceptible and susceptible to suffering, as to have a body is to be vulnerable to pain (p. 183). In Sappho's poem, this argument finds a parallel in the man's sitting with the woman and enjoying her company whereas the speaker suffers from the lack of her affection and love. He stands as a foil for the suffering human speaker, who displays the

physicality of passion through various bodily symptoms. With this metaphor, Sappho builds a connection between the private and the public by showing how the bodily symptoms of the speaker stem from the mode of somatic existence all human beings share.

Whereas the lyric focus on the body of the individual has been emphasized by various theorists, this crucial link between the private and the public has often been downplayed. However, throughout the ages, lyric poets have invented new structures of feeling, which have made the private communal, turning a group of listeners/readers into a community that can communicate through these constructions. This generic trait stems from the classical heritage of the lyric. Mark Griffith (2009) highlights this function in his “Greek Lyric and The Place of Humans in the World”: not only by addressing gods but also by writing poems about the issues of public concern, including war, politics, and civic ceremonies, and by supplying young people with songs and dances for pedagogical purposes, lyric poets “were explicitly or implicitly involved in the building of (a) human community”, such as those composed of “a group of like-minded symposiasts or citizens” (p. 83). Likewise, analyzing Pindar’s victory odes, Gregory Nagy (1990) argues that the vision of the Panhellenic community was partially constructed by lyric poetry and poetic performance (p. 114). Of course, this does not only derive from the rhetorical function or the thematic content of these works, but also from the musical aspect of classical lyrics and this is the reason why Nagy underlines the performative aspect of the genre. As Griffith (2009) observes, “music with its repetitive rhythms, combinations and juxtapositions of voices and limbs and strong emotional effect, has always been one of the strongest promoters of social cohesion and fellow-feeling; and much Greek lyric clearly participated in this dynamic” (p. 85). For Griffith, this

musical performance points to a lyric mode of the construction and maintenance of communities. One of the most significant results of the lyric's capacity to build communities is cultivating emotional sensibilities beyond their ordinary limitations, which may lead the audience to "new states of awareness" (Griffith, 2009, p. 93). Thinking of how our current frames of thoughts have proved to be inadequate in articulating individual suffering, this aspect of the genre, namely its capacity to construct structures of feeling, to form communities, and to invent a set of conventions that appeal to a group of people, may indeed contribute to make private pain public. This characteristic has become an enduring feature of the genre and continued to define it throughout the ages.

A brief look at the eras in which the lyric was a prominent genre stands as a proof of its social functions. For instance, it was employed by various Renaissance poets to delve into another personal issue, namely desire. By following the footsteps of Petrarch, poets constructed a lyric discourse with a set of conventions and stock expressions to make the individual communal. In many of Renaissance lyric sequences, the topic appears to be the speaker's love for a woman, yet the inner life of the lover, his psychological depths, and physical sensations are foregrounded through various tropes.⁸ Even though a heightened sensitivity to subjectivity is at the core of Renaissance lyric poetry, one should not ignore its public dimension. As Roland Greene (2001) notes, every sonnet, a lyric sub-genre especially employed in this period,

seems a uniquely personal event or artefact- and its speaker often declares the singularity of his or her experience- and yet the multiplication of the form by the tens, hundreds, and thousands reveals it as a widely held template, a fictional genre as well as an index of cultural modernity. The sonnet enables European cultures ... to share a technology of ideation and feeling ... to

⁸ Examples include, but are not restricted to, Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*, first published in 1591 and 1595 respectively.

think through a common medium, all the while professing the particular identity of each society, poet, and speaker (p. 222).

Thus, even when the lyric explores the dynamics of one of the most intricate subjects, namely desire, it stands as “a common medium”, assigning a group identity to certain people. This can be compared with how Roland Barthes (1977/2001) uncovers that we express one of our most personal feelings, namely love, with the common sentence “I love you”, which does not refer to “the declaration of love, to the avowal but to the repeated utterance of the love cry” (p. 147). This repetition shows how we give voice to private desire by using habitual statements. In the same manner, lyric poetry, through a set of shared codes, constructed a common language for individual sensations, hence offering Renaissance poets possibilities to make the private public.

As stated earlier, the lyric was made into a major genre in the early nineteenth century owing to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1819/2010) system of genres, which he calls “three natural forms of poetry”, namely epic, lyric, and drama (p. 227). When the lyric was rising as a vital literary genre in Western culture, what made it distinctive was again its engagement with subjective experience. Hegel’s (1835/1975) influential theory attests to the centrality of subjectivity in the Romantic understanding of the lyric, as for him, the content of the lyric

is not the object but the subject, the inner world, the mind that considers and feels, that instead of proceeding to action, remains alone with itself as inwardness and that therefore can take as its sole form and final aim the self-expression of subjective life. (p. 1038)

However, for Hegel, the term “subjectivity” does not refer solely to the realm of the private, rather it has further connotations. It paves the way for unity and universality in lyric poetry: first and foremost, the subject brings together various aspects, themes, and motifs, and hence the centrality of subjectivity stands as “a formal

unifying factor” (Culler, 2015, p. 100). Secondly, the subject supplies us with “something universally human so that we can feel in poetic sympathy with it” (Hegel, 1835/1975, p. 1121). The lyric bridges the gap between the personal and the collective, the subjective and the universal in Hegel’s theory and in the Romantic understanding of the genre. This can be observed in the manifesto of British Romanticism, namely “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth. Mainly concerned with the communication of feelings, Wordsworth (1802/2010) calls himself “a man speaking to men” (p. 567), meaning an individual who, as a member, addresses a group of people sharing the same social codes, and is therefore open to communication and empathy.

This aspect of the lyric is worthy of note if we are to think of it as a genre that has the potential of articulating the plight of the body in pain. Many theorists writing on the inexpressible and incommunicable nature of individual suffering note how difficult it is to form a “we” when one tries to make sense of another’s suffering. Scarry (1985) explores this situation by comparing having pain and observing a person in pain: whereas the first refers to certainty as it can be grasped effortlessly, the latter denotes remaining in doubt about the very existence of pain or even being totally unaware of it (p. 4): “Thus pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed” (p. 4). Hence, the observer and the person in pain stand as very distant galaxies (Scarry, 1985, p. 3). Similarly, for Sontag (2004), “no ‘we’ should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people’s pain” (p. 7). Analyzing the effect of war photographs, Sontag (2004) illustrates the difficulty of assuming a “we” in the face of others’ suffering by drawing the reader’s attention to how a single photograph may lead to various conflicting reactions: “Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing

responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness, continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen” (p. 13). Since it is not enough for one to see another body in pain and it is not easy to create a “we” that can understand the pain of others, the shared codes that lyric poets have invented and use to communicate the personal may stand as alternative means of assigning a group identity to certain people and enhancing empathy, crucial for the communication of individual suffering.

1.3 Where the mythic and the lyric overlap: The function of community building

As stated earlier, the scope of this dissertation is limited to the formal analysis of the selected sequences in terms of representing private pain through the use of lyric devices. Yet, as the selected poets rehandle classical myths in the lyric mode, a brief overview of contemporary adaptation theory might shed light on their motives in these rewritings. The two leading figures in adaptation studies, namely Julie Sanders and Linda Hutcheon, underline how adaptations both pay homage to and depart from source texts in a set of different manners. In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Sanders (2006) highlights this two-way move by saying “[a]daptation both appears to require and to perpetuate the existence of a canon, although it may in turn contribute to its ongoing reformulation and expansion” (p. 8). Hutcheon (2006), likewise, draws attention to the coexistence of these two motives in *A Theory of Adaptation* by stating that adaptation “is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new” (p. 20). Both critics point to the significance of generic shifts in revisiting texts with an interpretive and creative impulse. According to Sanders (2006), the re-interpretive act may include “the movement into a new generic mode” (p. 2), thus “[a]daptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre

into another generic mode” (p. 18). Similarly, viewed as “*a formal entity or product*”, an adaptation, for Hutcheon (2006),

is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works. This “transcoding” can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a manifestly different interpretation. (pp. 7-8)

Although Hutcheon offers generic shifts and changes of frame as different strategies for adaptation, generic transformations indeed reshape frames through the construction of new focal points and the expansion and/ or omission of some parts of the source text. In this respect, this study contributes to existing scholarship on adaptation theory by showing how generic transformations result in the modification of frames and prepares the ground for the burgeoning of new ones.

As Sanders (2006) rightly observes, myths have always attracted adapters as “[m]ythical literature depends upon, incites even, perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts” (p. 63). The metalanguage of the myth, Sanders (2006) argues, has been an “accessible code to discuss and communicate complex, and often troubling ideas” (p. 69). As a significant channel used to communalize private emotions and build communities, lyric poetry has incorporated or alluded to mythic narratives throughout the ages. In the previous sections, I have already dwelt upon the use of classical myths in modern and contemporary Anglo-American poetry. Yet, it is important to note that one can even trace back this tendency to the classical examples of the genre in which the speaker refers to well-known myths in the articulation of his/ her plight. Examples include, but are not restricted to, Sappho’s Fr. 16, in which the lyric subject evokes the classical myth of Helen so that she can comment on

Anactoria in the lyric now.⁹ In Sappho's poem, the reader recognizes how myths offer a bunch of shared images that the poet can benefit from in her endeavor to communalize private emotions. This collective repertoire answers the question of what it is to be human in various ways. Thus, the potential of myths can pave the way for underlining common vulnerability inherent in corporeal existence. In this respect, myths and lyric poetry meet in the common move of paralleling the individual at the level of the communal, which bears special significance in terms of communalizing the experience of the body in pain. The possibility of forming communities that can share structures of feeling lies at the heart of both mythic narratives and lyric poetry, an overlap that can serve the aim of representing private pain.

Linked to the function of building communities, there are three main reasons why I have chosen these sequences, which revisit myths, in a formal study. First and foremost, the significance of myths, for this dissertation, lies in the way they offer a shared language. They provide poets with a collective language to express suffering within the context of a vehicle, which is, in the present study, lyric poetry, enabling the communication of private pain. In the selected sequences, Ted Hughes, Kate Daniels, and Alice Oswald utilize the Prometheus myth, the Ovidian Niobe myth, and Homer's the *Iliad* respectively. It is evident that they rely on the canonical authority of these myths in Western literature so as to present their own take on them, thus exemplifying the double move of reviving and recreating source texts at the same time.

Secondly, classical myths on individual suffering inform the reader about how individual suffering has been perceived in Western culture. Thanks to the use of

⁹ The third chapter offers a more detailed reading of the poem in light of C. M. Bowra's commentary (2000) on the use of myths in classical lyric poems. Bowra's model offers a methodology to analyze the use of the mythic frame in Kate Daniels' *The Niobe Poems*.

lyric devices, these poems both unravel and subvert the age-old ideologies attached to these myths, which confine the body in pain to silence, passivity, and darkness. In this respect, these sequences attest to what Sanders (2006) calls “oppositional, even subversive” adaptations (p. 9), which may offer “a revised point of view from ‘the original’, . . . voicing the silenced and marginalized” (p. 19). The plight of the body in pain exemplifies such an experience that tends to remain underrepresented. In Ted Hughes’ *Prometheus On His Crag*, the poet, for instance, utilizes the Prometheus myth, which paves the way for the discussion of the working mechanism of torture as well as the representation of the victim’s pain. Kate Daniels, in her *The Niobe Poems*, dwells on the Ovidian Niobe myth, which has occupied a significant place in Western culture with regard to the conceptualization of grief as an inexpressible mode of suffering depriving one of language and agency. *In Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad*, the reader encounters Alice Oswald’s renewed focus on minor soldiers in the Trojan War, which, for the informed reader, evokes a cosmic war taking place at the level of the human and the divine and motivated (and almost justified) by the cultural significance of the heroic ideal.

Lastly, because classical myths offer narratives the Western reader is already familiar with, various lyric strategies that these poets employ to communicate individual suffering stand out in their works. Thereby, it becomes clear that the original contributions of the poets heavily depend upon the generic effects of lyric poetry. Instead of the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus, Hughes focuses on the power struggle taking place within Prometheus’ body as he is subjected to torture. In addition, Hughes employs the genre of the lyric sequence so that he can reflect on the temporal experience of the victim of torture and the ambivalent model of agency characterizing the body in pain. Daniels communalizes Niobe’s grief not only by

changing the ending of the story in which the modern Niobe survives after the death of her child, but also through the use of the ritualistic aspect of the sequence.¹⁰ In Oswald's rehandling of the Homeric epic, the elimination of the frame narrative and her utilization of the lament tradition underline the lyric spirit of the work, which aims to reflect on the individual suffering of soldiers without justifying the causes of the Trojan war.

What characterizes all these three reasons is that these poets not only rely on the communal connotations of the selected myths, but they also employ the lyric function of building communities in the sense that they encourage readers to alter their conception of individual suffering and to share another's pain by participating in the world of the lyric text. This experience may pave the way for the articulation and thus the communication of individual suffering. In this respect, the lyric and the mythic overlap with regard to how they both carry out the function of publicizing the private.

1.4 Contemporary theory and sequentiality: Towards a social understanding of the lyric

As discussed in the previous sections, although lyric poetry has been viewed as the seat of the subjective, its generic power lies in communicating individual experience at the public level. Recent studies on the lyric point to what one can call the social function of the genre. Critics often draw upon the preliminary functions of the lyric when the genre flourished in classical Greece, particularly its performative and ritualistic aspects, which have an enduring impact on lyric poetry throughout the ages. Thus, searching for a transhistorical definition of the genre and questioning its

¹⁰ Throughout this study, I employ the term "ritualistic" to refer to Culler's (2015) conceptualization of lyric poetry as a genre intended to be repeated by the reader (p. 37). Roland Greene's use of the term "ritual", likewise, refers to the performative aspect of the lyric (1991, p. 5).

capacity to give voice to moral, worldly, public, and ethical concerns stand as two rising trends in lyric studies.

Existing scholarship on this topic falls roughly into two opposite camps in terms of whether lyric poetry can engage with ethical, political, and moral issues: on the one hand, lyric poetry, as a genre of timelessness, is viewed as a retreat from the world of action (Cameron, 1979, p. 243). Although Sharon Cameron (1979) evokes the collective aspects of the genre, which she traces back to the lyric's choral voice "disguised under the cloak of a customary first-person speaker" (p. 207), all lyrics, according to Cameron (1979), "posit speech outside of the action from which they exempt themselves" (p. 243). In this respect, Cameron's conceptualization of lyric poetry is not linked to any social, political, and/or ethical actions. On the other hand, there are critics who draw attention to the social undertones of lyric poetry: Virginia Jackson (2005), for instance, links the omission of the sociohistorical aspects of lyric poetry to the construction of academic models of lyric reading, which effaces social contexts of poems: the lyric thus emerges as "a creature of modern interpretation", which realizes its shift toward personal and cultural abstraction (pp. 71 and 74 respectively). Likewise, Mark Jeffreys (1995) dwells on various conceptualizations of the lyric and different modes of interpretation in lyric studies when he discusses the political and historical possibilities of the genre. For Jeffreys (1995), "the assumption of the transhistorical definability of lyric" causes "blindness to the political and historical dimensions of those texts" (p. 197). However, a trans-historical treatment of lyric devices and generic aspects may pave the way for the analysis of the genre's social uses: Roland Greene (1991), for instance, focuses on the ritual mode of the lyric to highlight the social capacity of the genre: transgressing temporal, spatial, and ideological boundaries, lyric poetry may indeed prepare the

ground for a radical collective experience (p. 7). Moreover, to foreground the social efficacy of the lyric, Jonathan Culler, in his *Theory of the Lyric* (2015), and John Michael, in “Lyric History: Temporality, Rhetoric, and the Ethics of Poetry” (2017), refer to the epideictic nature of lyric poetry, aiming to change, improve or comment on current conditions, which was especially evident when the genre flourished in ancient Greece (Culler, 2015, p. 128 and Michael, 2017, p. 267). As Culler states (2015), the sphere of private life is demarcated as the domain of the lyric, but this does not make it solely a domain of reflection and expression or exploration of a tumultuous inner life, but it also offers “a set of social attitudes” (p. 314). So, lyric poetry has various social roles, such as its “contribution to structures of feeling, community formation, instantiation of ideology or its disruption and exposure, subversion or containment” (Culler, 2015, p. 348). Building on Culler’s focus on the epideictic nature of lyric poetry, Michael (2017), in a similar vein, foregrounds the ethical, political, and social aspects of the genre:

The ethics of poetry is not a fixed or formal function of the text that might be determined at the moment of its genesis, but an artifact of reading and of the readers who are touched by the text or miss its point, are moved by its description or fail to feel its power. The political engagement of poetry—like the pursuit of poetry as an escape from politics—depends on the power and the fragility of language, the possible force and potential failure of the word in the world, to be actualized by the reader, intertwining literature, history, and ethics with incalculable yet always potentially important effects. (p. 281)

Situating possible social influences of a lyric poem in the future act of the lyric reader, Michael underpins the lyric’s potentiality that may be functional in the communication of private experience that otherwise tends to remain underrepresented.

The questioning of the social function of the lyric can be broadened with reference to the opposite and complementary works of narrative traits and the lyric impulse in lyric sequences. Standing as an extended lyric incorporating other generic

elements within itself, lyric sequences open up new possibilities for the representation of the subjective by blending the lyric and the mimetic in the sense that it contains elements of a story within the lyric mode. Of the aforementioned critics, Roland Greene (1991) particularly focuses on lyric sequences in his *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence*. For Greene (1991), the lyric sequence, as a poetic form, was invented by Francesco Petrarca and was the product of European humanist culture (p. 3). The genre flourishes in a humanist phase “in which each work is largely concerned with representing the states and actions of a unitary human self - a self struggling to seem unitary” (Greene, 1991, pp. 13-14). Greene (1991) calls such works “nominative” as “they posit and name selves (Louise Labé, Astrophil, Babbling Will) and are, in turn, often themselves named after those person-representations” (p. 14). For Greene (1991), what characterizes the lyric sequence as a genre is “the dialectical play of ritual and fictional phenomena” (p. 5). By ritual elements, he refers to the iterability of the genre: “lyric is utterance uniquely disposed to be re-uttered” (Greene, 1991, p. 5) and, hence standing as “a performative unity into which readers and auditors may enter at will” (Greene, 1991, p. 7). With the term “fictional”, he refers to the elements of represented speech, which point to other narrative possibilities in the genre (Greene, 1991, p. 10). While the lyric reader or audience can become part of the world of the lyric through its ritual dimension, the fictional aspect of the genre “represents an alternate world into which we enter not as assimilators but as respected observers” (Greene, 1991, p. 10).

In a similar vein, various critics focusing on Western lyric sequences draw attention to this interplay between lyric and fictional properties. Analyzing tone and vision in Pierre de Ronsard’s sonnet cycles, Donald Stone (1966) argues that

“[e]very Petrarchistic sonnet cycle is essentially a narrative of which the individual sonnet relates an isolated event or attitude” (p. 17). Individual poems, thus, stand as chapters, episodes, or subplots in Stone’s account of Petrarchan lyric sequences. M. L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall (1983), likewise, approach the genre as a whole composed of fragments. Instead of the term “lyric sequence”, Rosenthal and Gall (1983) employ the phrase “the modern sequence” which is, according to their definition,

a grouping of mainly lyric poems and passages, rarely uniform in pattern, which tend to interact as an organic whole. It usually includes narrative and dramatic elements, and ratiocinative ones as well, but its structure is finally lyrical. Intimate, fragmented, self-analytical, open, emotionally volatile, the sequence meets the needs of modern sensibility even when the poet aspires to tragic or epic scope. (p. 9).

The tension between the lyric and the narrative is also visible in Rosenthal and Gall’s account, which may be defined with many other terms, such as Greene’s “ritual and fictional phenomena” (1991 p. 5) or the poetic/lyric and the mimetic. However, the main idea behind the merging of these oppositional forces is that one can encounter fictional elements within lyric sequences although the ruling mode is in keeping with the lyric spirit. Indeed, this generic characteristic does not solely belong to lyric sequences as one can observe narrative elements even within a single lyric. In his “Plotting the Lyric: Forms of Narration in Poetry”, Peter Hühn (2005), for instance, utilizes narratology to examine what carries out plot-like functions in individual lyrics. For him, “[p]lots in poetry are typically constituted by mental or psychological incidents such as perceptions, imaginations, desires, anxieties, recollections or emotions and their emergence and development” (Hühn, 2005, p. 146). Such studies attest to the idea that tracing fictional aspects of a lyric poem depends on reading strategies and the methodology a critic uses in interpreting a poem.

Returning to Rosenthal and Gall's definition of the modern sequence, it is evident from their conceptualization of the genre that the main difference between a sequence and an individual lyric is that sequences open up possibilities for an extended representation of shifting thoughts and sensations, thus providing the reader with a broader account of what a subject in crisis goes through. For Rosenthal and Gall (1983), such an expanded treatment of the lyric subject responds to needs of the modern age (p. 9). With an eye to the selected sequences in this study, one can argue that the sequential aspect of these works bear significance in terms of the poets' attempt to cast light on private pain. The lyric sequence, as a genre, serves these poets in three different ways:

Thinking of the vernacular sequence's aforementioned function of forming communities and structures of feeling in the early modern period, one can raise the question of whether there can be "a lyric structure" for the articulation of individual pain. As intense formal structuring is one of the main traits that distinguishes the lyric from other genres, this study will examine its uses in the communication of suffering. All three poets utilize this generic characteristic in different ways: To create the effect of limbo and reflect on agency problems embedded in individual suffering, Ted Hughes benefits from parallel structures and plays with the visual pattering of the poem. Kate Daniels utilizes cross-genre parallelisms to highlight the often-overlooked performative aspect of the lyric, which enables the reader to participate in the world of the lyric, thus that of the body in pain. Alice Oswald employs a fragmented structure, which makes her sequence look like an open wound, hence creating the effect of looking at the wound on the part of the reader.¹¹

¹¹ In the following section, there will be a specific focus on this generic characteristic as intense formal structuring is one of the four lyric parameters I employ in this study.

The second feature of the lyric sequence that can serve the poets in expressing individual pain can be found in its offering an avenue for representing a broader account of changes in moods and shifts in emotions as well as giving voice to various speakers. In *Prometheus On His Crag*, Hughes makes use of this generic trait to portray Prometheus' ritualistic suffering in an eternal present. Daniels, in *The Niobe Poems*, moves from Niobe's suffocating grief to her subsequent acceptance of the death of her child, thanks to which she manages to live with this pain. Oswald, in *Memorial*, utilizes sequentiality to represent the suffering of all soldiers at the moment of death without grouping them in terms of race, class, or armies.

Finally, by playing with the tension between the ritualistic and the fictional, or the lyric and the narrative, these poets integrate plot-like elements and temporal structures in their lyric revisiting of myths on individual suffering. While Hughes represents the temporal experience of the tortured body in pain, Daniels moves from the mythic narrative framework to the lyric I, articulating her plight at the end of the sequence. Different from the strategies these two poets use, Oswald almost completely eliminates the plot and narrative elements, yet she benefits from the reader's familiarity with Homer's canonical text to present her new framing of the story in the lyric mode.

1.5 The communication of individual suffering through the use of four lyric parameters

Although the selected poets write sequences and benefit from cross-genre moments and transgeneric mutations, their works heavily depend upon the use of four lyric

parameters, which I employ in this study, namely the focus on the subjective, lyric address, lyric temporality, and intense formal structuring.¹²

In the previous sections of this chapter, the lyric's engagement with the private is discussed with reference to its capacity to focus on individual sensations and to communalize personal experience. Lyric sequences tend to offer a specified persona with a name but what makes the lyric subject distinctive is found at the heart of the conceptualization of lyric poetry as a performative genre. The song-like qualities of lyric poetry refer to the fact that it was originally a genre intended to be performed. When Horace followed the footsteps of Greek lyricists, he stripped the lyric of its performative elements. Yet, as Brewster (2009) argues, "[e]ven after poetry became primarily a matter of writing rather than oral performance, however, musicality continued to be regarded as a signature of the lyric" (p. 16). So does the performative nature of the genre. Lyric poets have not only used utterances by relying on their referential aspect, but also employed illocutionary and perlocutionary acts: referring to "the act I perform *in* speaking this utterance in particular circumstances" and "acts that I may accomplish as a result of the illocutionary act" (Culler, 2015, pp. 129-130).¹³ For this reason, lyric poetry cannot be conceived as a pure act of fictionalizing, but as a genre that puts stress on the conceptualization of language as action (Culler, 2015, p. 128). As this characteristic enables a lyric poem to bring about that of which it speaks (Culler, 2015, p. 131), I claim that it might be functional in articulating inexpressible individual suffering, hence making it communicable. In this respect, the lyric might not be viewed only as

¹² In selecting these parameters, I am inspired by Zettelmen's "tendencies" and Culler's grouping of lyric parameters. For more information on these two conceptualizations, see Culler (2015) pp. 33-34.

¹³ Culler (2015) uses John L. Austin's speech act theory in his analysis of how lyric poetry employs locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (pp. 125-131). For further information, see J. L. Austin, 1975.

a mere mode of representation, passively portraying the body in pain, but also as the very act of constructing a subject with his/ her own voice, hence actively resisting the suffocating silencing effect of pain and creating possibilities for the articulation of suffering. Thinking of Greene's conceptualization of the lyric I as an open position that the reader may occupy by participating in the world of the text (1991, p. 6), one can argue that the lyric focus on subjectivity helps the formation of the speakers who can utilize lyric structures to communicate private pain.

The second aspect of the lyric that might contribute to the portrayal of individual suffering is actually a characteristic that has not been on the agenda of most theories of the lyric, namely lyric address. Lyric address might be in various forms: it might directly address listeners or readers, it might be directed to a given name, or it might call on the elements of the universe, a figure of speech generally called "apostrophe". As Culler (2015) contends, "there seems to be no limit to the range of things that can be addressed by a lyric" (p. 211). Apostrophes work against "narrative and its accompaniments: sequentiality, causality, linear time, teleological meaning" (Culler, 2015, p. 225), thus it is one of the ritualistic aspects of lyric poetry. Addressing disrupts narrative temporality as "it is not a moment in a temporal sequence but a special "now" of discourse: of writing and poetic enunciation", hence it contributes to the construction of the iterable lyric present (Culler, 2015, p. 229), which is explained in the following paragraph. According to Culler (2015),
apostrophe and lyric address

posit a potentially responsive or at least attentive universe, to which one has a relation. Apostrophes invoke elements of the universe as potentially responsive forces which can be asked to act, or refrain from acting, or even to continue behaving as they usually behave (p. 216).

Like Culler, Michael (2017) bestows a social function on lyric address: in its address to its own futurity, the lyric, points to "an implicit or explicit 'you'", a figure of the

reader (p. 268). For Michael (2017), “[i]t is in the act of reading that any ethics of literature, any trace of poetry’s social and political power, must be sought” (p. 277). These notions of a potentially responsive universe and the future reader’s possible response to the ethic call carried out by the deictic address “you” are significant in terms of giving voice to the body in pain: lyric address seeks to create a relation between the sufferer and the inhabitants and elements of the external world, which are expected to partake in, show awareness of, and hence fight against suffering. For Scarry (1985), this is the essential premise of what she calls all “making” or “creating”: human beings are projecting creatures, for this reason, they “distribute the facts of sentience outward onto the created realm of artifice, and it is only by doing so that men and women are themselves relieved of the privacy and problems of that sentience” (pp. 244 and 288 respectively). Scarry (1985) acknowledges that this projection of aliveness onto nonliving things has been an old habit of poets, and it indeed shows how they wished for sharing sentient awareness with the inert outside world (p. 286). Lyric address and apostrophe epitomize this yearning as they demand something or somebody other than the sufferer to respond to another’s pain in some way. As Culler (2015) argues, “lyrics seek to remake the universe as a world” (p. 38). I claim that lyric address can exemplify this attempt in the communication of pain. Turning the body inside out through the projection of private feelings, lyric poetry may stand as an avenue for raising sentient awareness.

It has been stated that understanding the pain of another requires going beyond the boundaries of one’s body and stepping into an “invisible geography” (Scarry, 1985, p. 3). However, besides the spatial aspect, there are indeed temporal considerations. Grasping the plight of the body in pain necessitates entering his/ her temporality, almost setting foot in another time zone to have the normally

inaccessible knowledge of when the body feels pain, how it experiences fluctuations at different moments, and what “now” means to his/ her. At this point, neither the record of events in the past tense, nor the depiction of the present moment may suffice, but the unusual temporality of the lyric might be helpful. When we talk of temporality in lyric poetry in the Anglo-American tradition, the present tense has special significance as the lyric has conventionally been associated with the representation of the momentary, the current or what may be called the fleeting. Susanne K. Langer (1953) dwells on this tradition by noting that although the use of the present tense may be unusual for other sort of narratives, the semblance created in a lyric poem, which may include narrative elements within itself, is generally “that of a very limited event, . . . - the thinking of an emotional thought, a feeling about someone or something” (p. 208). Not external happenings but contemplation, motivating and containing the emotion, lies at the heart of the lyric poem, hence the natural tense of contemplation, the present, has been frequently employed (Langer, 1953, p. 208). However, this does not mean that there are no lyrics in the past tense. As Culler (2015) states, “lyrics very often offer representation of events” and framing past events is indeed a common lyric structure (p. 275). The use of the past tense can also be seen in lyric sequences characterized by the contrast between then and now, past and present (Culler, 2015, pp. 286-6, Greene, 1991, p. 19). Still, the present is of utmost importance as “the report of incident becomes subordinated to a meaning in the lyric present”, and the present relevance of the past event is implied in various ways (Culler, 2015, p. 278). According to Culler (2015), what makes these past incidents significant is the fact that they exert influence on the present moment (p. 278). Although the lyric, the narrative, and the dramatic may coexist in a lyric poem, all is framed and dominated by what he calls “the lyric present” (Culler, 2015,

p. 226), which is against linear time, as “it happens now, in time, but in an iterable now of lyric enunciation” (Culler, 2015, p. 289). Culler interprets the lyric’s link to the present tense by tracing its origin to the classical Greek lyric tradition, in which lyrics were performed with a lyre by a speaker within the framework of the here-and-now and lyric poetry was viewed as an enunciative and epideictic genre. The Anglo-American tradition of lyric poetry has of course evolved over centuries, but as stated earlier, there are certain enduring characteristics that have defined the genre. Lyric temporality is one of those survived features, making the lyric differ from narrative fiction. For Werner Wolf (2005), for instance, “in the construction of elements of fictional worlds, the lyric . . . permits a maximum freedom from probability, chronological or logical order and coherence” (p. 36). It has its own kind of temporality, characterized by its focus on the present, the momentary, and the fleeting, all of which become iterable. So, what we have in a lyric poem is the collapse of regular temporal structures at the lyric instant. David Baker (2007), likewise, draws attention to the distinctive temporal structure of the lyric and argues that poems have the capacity to propose a temporary alternative to the world, almost “formulating a parallel universe with its own temporality” (p. 36). This is significant because the body, as a time-bound entity, is difficult to pin down: “it is mutable, in perpetual flux, different from day to day and resistant to conceptual definition” (Hillman & Maude, 2015, p. 1). In the same manner, bodily sensations are fluid and dynamic. Although the lyric sequence may present an individual going through the pangs of pain at different moments through the use of narrative elements, in the lyric “now”, designating an alternative temporality, the body in pain and the reader/audience encounter each other, hence meeting in the same time zone. In the lyric instant, the reader/ audience not only shares the same “now” with the body in pain,

but also gets access to momentary individual affective experiences. Deictic language and all other devices of the genre stemming from the oratory nature of classical Greek strengthen the effect of the lyric present with regard to constructing an unusual, iterable, almost pinpointed, yet a timeless “now” to give voice to private suffering.

The last paradigm I utilize in this study is intense formal structuring, which manifests itself mainly through visual and oral elements. While visual structuring is related to the transformation of the lyric into the written tradition, oral features date back to the classical heritage of the genre. The oral structuring of the lyric refers to the elements related to rhythmical articulation, which denote all the song-like qualities of lyric poetry. A poem written in free verse with no rhyme can still have qualities of rhythmical articulation thanks to various figures of speech such as anaphora and parallel structures. What makes lyric poetry different from other genres is the fact that it foregrounds the materiality of language through various devices. This is the reason why Eva Müller-Zettelman includes “more intense formal structuring” and “greater linguistic deviance” in her definition of what lyric is (as cited in Culler, 2015, p. 33). In addition to metrical considerations, beats, and other elements depending on the repetition of various sounds, the lyric can be characterized by visual versification and phrasal arrangements. Oral and visual versification gives a poem a material body, thus opening up a new avenue for the communication of the somatic. We have already talked about Cixous’ writings and Kristeva’s arguments regarding the representation of the female body through poetic language. Whether it is female or male, the lyric, according to various critics, has a close relation to the body. For instance, Culler (2015) highlights the allure of lyric language by stating that “although our body has its own rhythms, of breathing and of

heartbeats, our rhythmic competence most often responds to rhythm as something exterior which nonetheless engages us, draws us to beat in time, finding or sensing a pattern, in noises, movements, action in the world” (p. 138). To refer to the way how rhythmical articulation in lyric poetry demands such a response, Northrop Frye (1957/2014) coins the terms of “melos” and “opsis”, the sound and visual pattering respectively (pp. 38-39). While melos attracts the ear by triggering “the hypnotic incantation that, through its pulsing dance rhythm” appeals to “involuntary physical response”, opsis has the potential of giving the linguistic a visible form and addresses the eye. (Frye, 1957/2014, pp. 38-39). What is significant in Frye’s account is that the lyric not only dwells on bodily experience in its content, but also formally communicates through the use of the somatic by addressing the body of the reader/audience. Mutlu Konuk Blasing (2007) is another critic who builds such a link between lyric poetry and the somatic in *Lyric Poetry: The Pain and The Pleasure of Words*. Her argument depends on the claim that the somatic and the semantic coexist in the lyric (Blasing, 2007, p. 11). For this reason, “we are never at home in poetry, for we experience at once the foreignness of the familiar language and the intimacy of the alien code” (Blasing, 2007, p. 9). Here, “the alien code” refers to non-semantic (material, bodily, aural) elements mostly disregarded in prosaic language. These elements are highlighted in lyric poetry through rhythm, meter, alliteration, assonance, and so on. By “stylizing the distinguishing sonic and rhythmic qualities of a language”, which are functional in meaning-making processes at the pre-verbal stage, lyric poetry can revive how humans communicate before language acquisition through the use of the somatic and juxtapose it with the semantic (Blasing, 2007, p. 11). Blasing’s argument may lead one to think that lyric poetry, owing to its somatic qualities echoed in its rhythmic articulation, is a radical realm independent of

language. However, for Blasing, this meeting actually exposes the subject's membership to a community formed through the common mother tongue. Focusing on how a child learns language by mimicking rhythmical structures, Blasing argues that "the rhythmic body *is* the 'socially constructed body'; rhythmization *is* socialization, and it secures meaning. And it is difficult to tell apart bodily responses to poetic rhythm from our total memory of verbal rhythms" (Blasing, 2007, p. 58). Once again, as in Frye's account, what is at stake about the relationship between the lyric and the somatic is not only the thematic representation of the corporeal, but also a radical mode of communication through the somatic devices of the lyric. Blasing highlights the idea that even when a lyric poem represents subjective experience, its communication is based on the shared linguistic code of the community. So, the semantic in lyric poetry, according to Blasing's model, can offer glimpses of the somatic, which cannot be hosted by the discourse of our ordinary lives, and the semantic and the somatic are intricately linked in the lyric.¹⁴

All these critics' contentions are suggestive in terms of the communication of pain and chime with one of the models Veena Das (2007) explores in her "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." To show how one's pain may reside in another body, Das (2007) focuses on a scene from Wittgenstein's *The Blue and Brown Books* where a person in pain is asked by another to touch the painful spot with his hand, and the one in pain does so with closed eyes (p. 39). When the suffering individual opens his eyes, he realizes that he is not touching his aching hand but that of the healthy interlocutor (Das, 2007, p. 39). This movement is

¹⁴ A similar merging of the somatic and the linguistic is available in the Kristevan poetic language discussed in the first section of this chapter. According to Kristeva (1974/1984), what makes poetic language revolutionary is its capacity to evoke the semiotic, referring to pre-Oedipal drives, in the symbolic, denoting the realm of the linguistic which is characterized by a clear distinction between the subject and the object (pp. 26-27 and p. 29 respectively). Thus, poetry stands as a radical domain where somatic drives meet linguistic representation, which they originally resist.

significant for Das (2007) since it epitomizes making “a claim on the other – asking for acknowledgement that may be given or denied. In either case, it is not a referential statement that is pointing to an inner object” (p. 39). So, it’s not the referential content of the inner state of being in pain, but the possibility of making the other person’s body receptive of another’s pain which is of utmost importance in the communication of suffering. Reflected through somatic rhythmical articulation or oral versification, targeting the senses of hearing and seeing respectively, the lyric representation of the bodily experience of another is there to be grasped by the reader/ audience through the use of his/ her own body, which may pave the way for the communication of pain beyond ordinary lines of thought.

In line with the recent theories of the lyric, and especially by following Jonathan Culler’s debate in *Theory of the Lyric* (2015), I argue that the selected lyric sequences utilize these four parameters to give voice to private pain, an experience that often resists representation. Ted Hughes, Kate Daniels, and Alice Oswald employ, modify, and expand these parameters in their endeavor to represent individual suffering by revisiting classical myths in the lyric mode. Juxtaposing the personal and the collective, the selected works of these poets all express a concern for how they can realize the potential of the genre to give the body in pain a language.

The current debates on the inexpressibility of individual suffering and the argument that contemporary Anglo-American lyric poetry opens up new possibilities for articulating the plight of the body in pain comprise the main body of this study. To this end, this dissertation includes an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. The sequences analyzed in this study are selected as exemplary cases, especially with regard to the disparate ways they employ and experiment with lyric

conventions. Moreover, to correspond to a plurality of voices, styles and modes in Anglo-American poetry after the Second World War, this study will analyze a mostly ignored lyric sequence, namely *Prometheus On His Crag*, by Ted Hughes, a canonical poet, who was the Poet Laureate between 1984 and 1998, a lyric sequence by a lesser-known poet, Kate Daniels' *The Niobe Poems*, which has not attracted as much critical attention as it deserves, and *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad*, which is the latest work of Alice Oswald, praised as a possible future Poet Laureate.

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter focuses on *Prometheus On His Crag* (1973) by Ted Hughes and it explores how the sequence gives voice to Prometheus when he is subjected to torture, a moment in which an individual, according to Scarry (1985), is highly aware of oneself, one's body, and its boundaries along with its fragility (p. 47). Yet, the victim of torture becomes suspicious of whether the body belongs to the self or the enemy, the agent of agony, because the body, turning against the self, becomes the source of pain (Scarry, 1985, p. 47). The chapter will examine what kind of subjectivity Hughes' lyric sequence depicts in terms of Prometheus' complicated relation to his own body. Hughes represents the classical figure neither as the savior of human beings, nor as the epitome of the rebellious spirit, but as an individual in pain, who continuously questions the boundaries of his body and faces the limits of his agency. By employing the selected four lyric parameters, I explore the ambivalent model of agency the poem depicts and I discuss how the poem elaborates on questions of authority and power found at the very core of the somatic experience of individual suffering.

The next chapter examines how Kate Daniels, in *The Niobe Poems*, utilizes these four lyric devices in the communication of suffering, which in this case is the grief of a mother. Daniels offers various accounts of the Niobe myth at the beginning of her work, including Ovid's the *Metamorphoses*. She plays with the instructive maxim conventionally associated with the Ovidian Niobe myth, which is the inexpressibility of grief. Although there is no shape-shifting in Daniels' rewriting, she borrows Ovidian metamorphoses as a trope and the poetic personae keep shifting although they are all called Niobe. The sequence, thus, is characterized by a plurality of voices. This chapter analyzes the intersubjective model of the persona, ritualistic and fictional temporalities as well as transgeneric moments Daniels constructs to articulate Niobe's grief as an experience that can be shared and communicated.

The fourth chapter is devoted to an example of cross-genre transplantation, namely Alice Oswald's *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* (2011). As a British poet and classicist, Oswald revisits a canonical text, Homer's the *Iliad* and portrays the suffering of its minor characters in line with the egalitarian concerns of contemporary Anglo-American poets. Focusing on the shift from the world of epic to that of the lyric, the chapter explores how this generic modification influences the representation of bodies in pain at the battlefield along with the reason why Oswald depicts the minor characters of this well-known epic in the lyric mode. It discusses how the selected four lyric parameters serve Oswald not only in portraying the suffering of the soldiers at the moment of death but also in giving voice to the chorus of mourners, which Oswald borrows from the classical lament tradition.

The last chapter compares and contrasts various formal strategies in the selected poems in terms of how they contribute to the representation of the body in

pain. In addition, the selected poets' conceptualizations of the lyric sequence are scrutinized in the conclusion. It also suggests alternative routes for future studies on the representation of private pain in contemporary lyric poetry.

CHAPTER 2

TORTURE IN TED HUGHES' *PROMETHEUS ON HIS CRAG*

[S]tories think for themselves, once we know them. They not only attract and light up everything relevant in our experience, they are also in continual private meditation, as it were, on their own implications. They are little factories of understanding. New revelations of meaning open out of their images and patterns continually, stirred into reach by our growth and changing circumstances. (Hughes, 1994, p. 141)

Revisiting the Prometheus myth in a lyric sequence composed of twenty-one short poems, Ted Hughes rehandles an age-old narrative that has an enduring influence in Western literature.¹⁵ The myth of Prometheus offers a critical commentary on notions of power, authority, rebellion, and subordination, especially with regard to the struggle between Zeus and Prometheus. Hughes' point of intervention in this classical narrative is found in his shifting the focus from the question of power in this conflict between two characters to that which takes place in Prometheus' body in pain. In his rewriting, Hughes enriches the reader's understanding of the classical myth by depicting the plight of Prometheus when the vulture physically tortures him, thus offering a subjective account of torture, which chimes with the foregrounding of the individual and somatic experience in lyric poetry. In line with his suggestion in the above-quoted paragraph from "Myth and Education," Hughes' rehandling of classical myths leads to new revelations. In *Prometheus On His Crag*, which is a rewriting of the Prometheus myth in a lyric sequence, these revelations are generally

¹⁵ Examples include Hesiod's *Theogony* as well as *Works and Days*, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Aristophanes' *The Birds*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "Prometheus" (1789), Lord Byron's "Prometheus" (1816), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), and Robert Lowell's *Prometheus Bound: Derived from Aeschylus* (1970). The dates refer to the first publications of these works.

about the nature of private pain and the possibility of its communication in the lyric mode.

As is the case with other works by Ted Hughes, *Prometheus On His Crag* has been interpreted in terms of Hughes' engagement with the classics and the influence of shamanism over his poetry. Existing scholarship has shed light on the link between the poet's use of mythological narratives and his training in anthropology, as well as the way he employs the characteristics of shamanism, particularly the traits of the shaman and the concept of shamanistic initiation. In "‘Mutilated towards alignment?’: *Prometheus On His Crag* and the ‘Cambridge School’ of Anthropology", Vanda Zajko (2009), for instance, elaborates on the collective significance of myths for Ted Hughes. Zajko (2009) refers to Hughes' study of Anthropology at Cambridge University, a department that has, in various ways, contributed to "the shift of focus away from myth to ritual" in the study of early religious practices (p. 102). The members of the Cambridge School believed that rituals express in deeds what mythology expresses in words (Zajko, 2009, p. 108). According to Zajko (2009), Hughes expands upon this tendency by using myths to form and better the condition of communities (p. 109). She argues that Hughes employs the Prometheus myth to this end by portraying Prometheus as a scapegoat "who pays the price for communal guilt . . . and whose triumph over death and symbolic rebirth has the potential to transfigure even the bread-and-butter lives of twentieth-century mortals" (Zajko, 2009, pp. 116-117). Similarly, in his *The Laughter of Foxes: A Study of Ted Hughes*, Keith Sagar (2000/2006) approaches Hughes' rehandling of classical myths in terms of the duality between death and resurrection (p. 24). Interpreting Hughes' take on the Prometheus myth in relation to his essay on Leonard Baskin's *The Hanged Man*, namely "The Hanged Man and the

Dragonfly”, Sagar (2000/2006) claims that Hughes’ Prometheus experiences a process of illumination, a symbolic liberation as he emerges “finally from the shell (with the help of the vulture/ midwife/ goddess) of his crucified body as weightless as a dragonfly” (p. 25), thus revealing what Hughes calls “mana”, “the goddess of the source of terrible life, the real substance of any art that has sub-stance, in spite of what we might prefer” (Hughes, 1990, p. 300).¹⁶ Offering an acute reading of the sequence in his *Patterns of Initiation in the Poetry of Ted Hughes from 1970 to 1980*, Michael C. R. Sweeting (1982) focuses on how Hughes’ work offers patterns of shamanistic initiation by configuring Prometheus between life and death, divinity and humanity, and the world of dream and the world of physical suffering (p. 117).

Thus, the existing criticism has offered valuable insights into Hughes’ poetic agenda by dwelling on the influence of myths and shamanism over Hughes’ understanding of poetry and his conceptualization of the poet’s public role. However, critics have overlooked how Hughes, in *Prometheus On His Crag*, reflects on the ambivalent model of agency embedded in the experience of individual suffering by rewriting the myth in a lyric sequence, a genre which is closely associated with the momentary sensations of a poetic subject.¹⁷ If Prometheus is “the prototype of the human condition” in Hughes’ sequence, in Sagar’s (2000/2006) words (p. 132), his vulnerability, voicelessness, and the question of authority over the body bear special

¹⁶ Ted Hughes’ letter to Keith Sagar indeed undergirds such an interpretation. In his letter, Hughes elaborates on “the ‘birth’, in a supernatural, spirit, inner world, of Prometheus” (as cited in Sagar, 2000/2006 p. 28). For more information on Hughes’ conception of regenerative myths, see Sagar’s (2000/2006) first chapter, “The Mythic Imagination” in his *The Laughter of Foxes* (pp. 1-36). Moreover, talking to A.C Smith about *Orghast* (performed in 1971), a play written by Hughes and directed by Peter Brooks, Hughes indeed articulates the plight of Prometheus as a figure including “the elemental opposites, and in whom the collision and pain become illumination” (qtd. in Smith, 1972, pp. 132-133). In this play, Hughes revisits the Prometheus myth for the first time by devising a language out of sounds, and it inspires him to write *Prometheus On His Crag* (Gifford, 2009, p. 93).
¹⁷ In *The Laughter of Foxes*, Sagar (2000/2006) mentions Ted Hughes’ favoring of poetic sequences even though “[t]he usual form of myth is the folk-tale, the narrative or epic poem, or the poetic drama (often, for the Greeks, a trilogy of such dramas)” (p. 26). However, he does not focus on what kinds of effects this generic shift produces in Hughes’ *Prometheus On His Crag* per se.

significance as all these issues lie at the heart of understanding private pain, stemming from the common somatic nature of human beings. In this respect, Hughes' lyric sequence offers a representation of the often inexpressible plight of the body in pain. Moving beyond the existing scholarship on Hughes' *Prometheus On His Crag*, this chapter attends to Hughes' Prometheus as a vulnerable individual with a human body subjected to torture, or in other words, as a lyric self in crisis. In addition to lyric theory, this reading is informed by Elaine Scarry's account of torture in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* as well as Michel Foucault's conceptualization of the function of torture in public punishments in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison* as both theorists build a crucial link between pain and power in their analysis of the tortured body. This second chapter explores the poet's revisiting of the Prometheus myth in a lyric sequence in terms of how this generic transfiguration casts light on and problematizes the working mechanism of torture, thus contributing to the articulation of private pain and highlighting the difficulty of its expression.

This argument is developed in five steps. The first section briefly explains the generic difference between the classical accounts of the Prometheus myth and Hughes' version to shed light on how different genres frame the same narrative in disparate manners, mostly by shifting the focus of the myth. It also explicates how the title of the sequence underpins this generic transformation. The second part offers a detailed reading of the first poem of the sequence, highlighting agency problems embedded in the experience of individual suffering as well as the blurring of somatic boundaries. By paying particular attention to the significance of voice in lyric poetry, the third section explores how Hughes' sequence portrays the tortured subject as a persona who loses his control not only over his body but also over his voice. The

fourth section delves into how the torturer destroys both the subjecthood of the persona and his world, and in what ways Prometheus' resistance exemplifies the communication of pain through artistic performances. The fifth part focuses on the last poem of the sequence to explore Prometheus' ambiguous recovery in the realm of the pre-linguistic. Kristeva's concept of "the semiotic chora" guides the reading of the twenty-first poem in this section as it chimes with the pre-semiotic mode of physical suffering in Scarry's account of torture and shows how the lyric can cast light on complex phenomena that cannot be articulated solely within the realm of the linguistic. The conclusion summarizes the strategies Hughes utilizes in representing Prometheus' pain in a lyric sequence and stresses the significance of generic traits in the articulation of individual suffering in *Prometheus On His Crag*.

2.1 The Prometheus myth: Ancient versus modern, narrative versus lyric

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag (2004) rightly observes that "[t]he iconography of suffering has a long pedigree. The sufferings most often deemed worthy of representation are those understood to be the product of wrath, divine or human" (p. 40). As one of the most canonical and earliest texts in Western literature, Homer's the *Iliad* instantiates this tendency as an epic poem starting with the lines "[s]ing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus / and its devastations, which put pains thousandfold upon the / Achains" (Homer, trans. 1974, Book 1, ll. 1-2). Homer not only refers to Achilles' wrath at the very beginning but he also conceptualizes it as the frame narrative of the epic. The human interest in such narratives depicting great rage has endured throughout the ages as "[p]athos, in the form of a narrative, does not wear out" (Sontag, 2004, p. 83). Classical literature teems with such examples, and this is the reason why the Prometheus myth, for various authors,

stands as a narrative offering a critical commentary on power structures, resistance to authority, and punishment. Yet, neither Aeschylus in his *Prometheus Bound* nor Hesiod in *Theogony* and *Works and Days* presents the plight of Prometheus as a victim of torture in detail although they offer comprehensive accounts of the myth.¹⁸ Aeschylus' play begins with the scene in which Prometheus is chained to a rock, in the curb-chains made by Hephaestus following Zeus' order. This punishment is explained in connection with the necessity of accepting Zeus' authority as Might says:

Thy flower, fount of the arts, the light of fire,
He stole and gave to mortals. Such the sin
For which he must make recompense to heaven;
And so be taught to accept the tyranny
Of Zeus, and check his charity to man (Aeschylus, trans 2017, p. 1).

By stealing fire, thus triggering the betterment of human society, Prometheus initiates the fostering of civilization. However, this very act of improving the conditions of the physical existence of human beings on Earth is a transgression against Zeus' rule. Throughout the play, the reader/ audience witnesses Prometheus' dialogues with other characters, such as Oceanus, Io, and Hermes. All these conversations reflect upon Zeus' power and authority as well as Prometheus' disobedience rather than Prometheus' experience as a tortured body. At the beginning of Aeschylus' play, there is only a brief account of the kind of physical punishment he will be subjected to. Similarly, Hesiod plays down the somatic aspect of Prometheus' punishment. Instead of describing what Prometheus goes through when the eagle tortures him, Hesiod gives a larger account of the myth. He presents Prometheus' guilt in detail; that is, his sparing human beings the best parts of sacrificial meat and stealing fire for them. Then, he touches upon its results, namely

¹⁸ Aeschylus' play *Prometheus Bound* is the only surviving play from his larger trilogy, the *Prometheia*. So, there was actually a broader account, but unfortunately the modern reader does not have access to it.

Zeus' order of chaining Prometheus to a rock to be tortured daily by the vulture and the creation of Pandora. In these accounts, the authors presented the myth to their audience/ reader by constructing well-developed plots with a beginning, rising action and climax. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, there is even resolution, in which Heracles kills the bird and releases Prometheus from his distress with Zeus' consent (Hesiod, trans. 2006a, p. 45). As seen in these examples, not only Aeschylus' play but also Hesiod's epic poems are characterized by a narrative impulse. For this reason, one can see an intricate cause and effect relationship lying at the heart of their plots. All three works revolve around the two main characters' drives and actions to elaborate on the power struggle between Zeus and Prometheus.

In Ted Hughes' lyric sequence, however, the reader witnesses another kind of power question, which is embedded in the very experience of the victim of torture. Although some poems refer to Aeschylus' play and Hesiod's texts, Hughes' work keeps its focus on the plight of Prometheus as an individual body in pain, which is in line with the lyric spirit.¹⁹ Barbara Hardy (1977), in her *The Advantage of Lyric: Essays on Feeling in Poetry*, interprets the microcosmic focus in lyric poetry as one of the principles due to which the genre differs from fiction and drama. According to Hardy (1977), "[a]ll we are certain is the feeling, not the characters and conditions. Allusion replaces the detailed specifications of drama and fiction, whose business is telling as much as possible" (p. 3). This is the reason why the main distinctive generic characteristic of lyric poetry is its focus on a human subject. The very title of Hughes' sequence, namely *Prometheus On His Crag*, attests to this understanding. As Roland Greene argues (1991), the poetic form "vernacular lyric sequence" was

¹⁹ Throughout this chapter, there will be brief references to parallelisms between Hughes' rewriting of the Prometheus narrative and other versions of the myth. However, the chapter will mainly dwell on the significance of Hughes' revisiting the myth in a lyric sequence in terms of the articulation of individual pain.

invented by Francesco Petrarca and flourished out of European humanism in the early modern period (p. 3). Thereby, the lyric sequence is closely associated with individual somatic experience. Hughes' title points to the poetic persona by referring to a somatic experience that defines him; that is, his suffering on the rock. This is the moment that particularly humanizes Prometheus, who is originally a divine being. His human side is revealed through his vulnerability to external conditions and his "capacity to feel pain", so to speak. Thereby, in the very title of the sequence, Hughes' intention becomes clear: in line with the lyric impulse, Hughes limits the scope of the sequence by exclusively focusing on the plight of Prometheus when he endures the distress caused by the torturer; that is, the eagle. So, the question of power and authority, in Hughes' rehandling of the myth in a lyric sequence, does not refer to the dispute between the Olympian gods but to the struggle taking place within an individual body in pain when he is subjected to torture.

2.2 From "I am" to "Am I": Agency at stake

Hughes begins the sequence by presenting a conflict within the subject in pain in the first poem, with a delicate move from the assertion of identity to the very questioning of subjecthood:

His voice felt out the way. 'I am' he said

'Returning,' he said, and 'Now I am
Feeling into my body', and 'Something is strange -

Something is altered.' And he paused
Just within darkness, just within numbness.
He let his mouth-mask far off

Loll in the light.
'What has happened to me, what has altered?'
He whispered and he lay frightened -

Letting his veins venture for him
Feeling his ice-burned lungs gulp huge clarity
Letting his laborious chest lift him

Like the wingbeats of an eagle
and

‘Am I an eagle?’ (285)²⁰

The first line points to a moment of identity confirmation. The lyric persona’s first words (“I am”) stand as an attempt to realize self-affirmation, and in this respect, they are reminiscent of the Cartesian proposition, namely “*I think, therefore I am*” (Descartes, 1637/1968, p. 53). In *Discourse on the Method*, René Descartes (1637/1968) argues that one cannot be certain of the truth of other things s/he perceives, but even in this act of doubt, s/he finds evidence for his/ her own existence, a moment of confirmation stemming from his/ her mind’s work of questioning (pp. 53-54). For this reason, Descartes (1637/1968) contends that a person’s existence depends completely on his/ her capacity of thinking, and thus, the term “I” refers to the mind, which “is entirely distinct from the body” and “is easier to know than the body” (p. 54). The reader encounters such a moment of identity confirmation in Hughes’ poem. The fact that the first line begins with the words “his” and “voice” supports this effect: with a possessive pronoun and an emphasis on Prometheus’ voice, the sequence presents Prometheus as a subject with his own agency, ready and motivated to articulate his plight. The phrase “I am” corroborates the highlighting of the persona’s subjecthood through a lyric moment of self-assertion (l. 1). The second line; however, complicates the matter at hand, particularly through the use of enjambment. Hughes employs this figure of speech to connect the confident phrase of “I am” to the verb “returning” (l. 2), thus undermining the very effect he creates in the first line, as the word hints at agency at

²⁰ Throughout this chapter, I refer to line numbers in shorter quotations while I refer to page numbers when I quote a complete individual poem from the sequence.

stake. Portraying a persona who has just started to feel his body once again, the poem signals that Prometheus was unconscious, and the sequence begins at the very moment he starts to come back to his senses. If the lyric sequence, as Greene (1991) argues, was conceived and constructed as a fictional model of subject formation in the early examples of the genre (pp. 13-14), Hughes experiments with this prototype by beginning his sequence with a moment signifying a deformed subject. Moreover, Hughes' sequence stands close to other modern lyric sequences, which, as Greene (1991) observes, combines several voices (p. 14). Undermining the authority of the single and unified lyric persona, twentieth-century lyric sequences have contributed to the questioning of agency and the very idea of the autonomous self. This common move in modern and contemporary lyric sequences can be observed in Hughes' *Prometheus On His Crag*. In addition, he juxtaposes the first-person account of Prometheus, given in inverted commas, and the voice of the third-person speaker. The merging of these two voices not only enriches the representation of individual suffering, but it also exposes the limited perception and language Prometheus, with his tortured body, has.

Restoring his consciousness gradually, Prometheus feels an abnormality in his state. This sensation is highlighted through the use of parallel structures in the two consecutive lines: “[s]omething is strange - / Something is altered.” (ll. 3-4). Connected with a dash, the passage from the third line to the fourth one alludes to a moment of hesitation about Prometheus' own body, or more broadly, his existence. Hughes once again utilizes parallel structures in depicting this momentary uncertainty. The third-person speaker depicts how Prometheus, pausing “[j]ust within darkness, just within numbness,” starts to realize his condition of captivity as his mouth-mask falls off (ll. 4-6). That Hughes employs the word “numbness” to

depict the moment Prometheus recognizes his plight is very suggestive, especially in terms of the etymology of the term. Coming from the late Middle English “nome” (the past participle of the “nim” which means “to take”), the word originally signifies the condition of being “taken” and “seized”, as Prometheus on the crag is (“Numb”, 2019). Moreover, in its modern usage, “numb”, as an adjective, refers to being “deprived of the power of physical sensation”, while as a verb, it points to the lack of “feeling or responsiveness” (“Numb”, 2019). The words “power” and “responsiveness” bear particular significance for Hughes’ rehandling of the Prometheus myth. Denoting Prometheus’ physical incapacity to feel any sensation except for physical pain, the word connotes his lack of power over his own body, which is the reason why he, as a victim subjected to torture, ceases to become a subject with agency. Besides, as a prisoner, he is completely isolated. Hence, the issue of “responsiveness” does not only point to being deprived of sensation but also to his solitude. A further implication might be the very privacy of his pain: Hughes’ positioning him “[j]ust within darkness, just within numbness” (l. 5) begs the question of what if he is surrounded by other beings. In this respect, Hughes’ use of the term “numbness” is reminiscent of the way Scarry (1985) depicts individual suffering as a remote and “invisible geography”, bringing about the intricate problem of raising responsiveness to the pain of another (pp. 3-4).

The use of the word “numbness” in the very first poem requires further critical commentary as Hughes utilizes the term in his letter to Keith Sagar when he briefly mentions this sequence to him. Although he actually writes about one of his earlier sequences, namely *Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow*, Hughes alludes to *Prometheus On His Crag* to elaborate on its nature and main characteristics: “[s]ince then, I’ve written virtually nothing. The Prometheus

sequence is an expression of limbo- limbo in Persia, but limbo. A numb poem about numbness” (2009, p. 340). Referring to the *Orghast* project in Persia, which he conducted with Peter Brooks, Hughes reveals the ruling ideas behind the sequence: he first depicts the sequence as a representation of limbo, thus of liminality, an experience that characterizes the plight of Prometheus. Subjected to ritual punishment, he stands between life and death. Secondly, Hughes highlights the mood of numbness reflected in the sequence. In keeping with this stance, the sequence begins by portraying a clash between the formation and deformation of the poetic subject, who, as a prisoner subjected to torture, loses his power over the body as soon as he senses it again, hence experiencing numbness. It is known that Hughes has been fond of the genre of the lyric sequence throughout his career. Still, by considering the significance of this double move, namely the construction of the persona (who has been deformed recently) and portraying it on the verge of collapse, Hughes’ revisiting of the Prometheus myth in a lyric sequence seems to be an apt choice. As M.L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall (1983) observes in their *The Modern Poetic Sequence: The Genius of Modern Poetry*, the genre “modern sequence”, as they call it, is “a response to the lyrical possibilities of language opened up by those pressures in times of cultural and psychological crisis, when all past certainties have many times been thrown chaotically into question” (p. 3). According to Rosenthal and Gall (1983), this is the reason why the modern sequence, rather than individual short lyrics, successfully “fulfills the need for encompassing of disparate and often powerfully opposed tonalities and energies” (p. 3). The poetic persona Hughes constructs, likewise, is a self in the process of deconstruction and that of reconstruction, as the first poem indicates. By unraveling the dynamics of torture and

the plight of the body in pain, the sequence depicts the annihilation of the self and Prometheus' attempts to reform his subjecthood.

The difficulty of finding a voice to articulate the in-betweenness Prometheus experiences is highlighted in the next lines, first by referring to a mouth mask (l. 6), then to the way Prometheus gives voice to his questions through whispers although there is nobody around him to hear what he says (l. 9). That the third-person speaker mentions a mouth mask falling off in the sixth line makes one re-evaluate Prometheus' speech in the previous lines as internal monologues. This portrayal is in keeping with the age-old understanding of lyric poetry, which is expressed in John Stuart Mill's "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties": Mill (1833/1981) argues that "all poetry is of the nature of soliloquy" (p. 349) since "poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude" (p. 348). Likewise, Helen Vendler (1997) emphasizes the conceptualization of lyric poetry as private and internal speech by arguing that it is a "genre that directs its *mimesis* towards the performance of the mind in *solitary* speech" (pp. 1-2). However, what strikes the reader's attention is that after getting rid of the mouth mask, Prometheus speaks all alone in darkness by whispering (9).²¹ One wonders why he chooses to whisper at this point. If his motivation was to be heard by someone who would rescue him, he would definitely scream. One possible interpretation might be related to the lyric function of the publicization of the private. Reading a lyric poem, which communalizes personal monologues and moments of reflection, one enters the domain of the individual. Thus, the lyric poem assumes an audience who witnesses the revelation of the

²¹ In his "Prometheus", Lord Byron (1816/2005) touches upon the same issue by saying that the result of Prometheus' pity for human beings is "a silent suffering" (l. 6). Byron (1816/2005) depicts this experience as "[t]he suffocating sense of woe, / Which speaks but in its loneliness" (ll. 10- 11).

subjective, hence contributing to the communication of the private.²² Hughes underlines this lyric communication of the private by portraying Prometheus as a figure whispering his inquiries. Another reading of these lines may stem from Prometheus' endeavor to prove his status as an agent to himself by hearing his own voice. In extreme pain, the tortured prisoner feels a split between the self and the body, "between a 'me' and 'my body'", which is, for Scarry (1985), the very aim of the process of torture (pp. 48-49). Although the self is indeed inseparable from the body, it is associated with the voice and language as the body in pain becomes the cause of suffering itself (Scarry, 1985, pp. 48-49). In a similar vein, Prometheus, in Hughes' sequence, is having difficulty with identifying with his own body. Finding it "strange" and "altered", he cannot even call it his own body but "something" (ll. 3-4). Inquiring what is the thing that has been distorted, Prometheus asks two different questions separated by a comma: "[w]hat has happened to me, what has altered?" (l. 9). These two consecutive parallel structures reveal the clash between the self ("me") and the body (the thing that has been "altered"), a conflict brought about as the result of torture. Thereby, Hughes employs intense formal structuring to reflect Prometheus' dilemma at the textual level. By whispering these sentences, Prometheus realizes his deliberate or unintentional wish to hear his own voice, thus, confirming his self as an agent, who can assert control over language, although this is not the case with his body.

Another linked interpretation could stem from the close affinity between suffering and death. Depicting individual suffering as a near-death experience,

²² It should be added that in Aeschylus' tragedy, an audience is also available on the stage: in addition to the chorus, there are characters, (such as Oceanus and Io) who have conversations with Prometheus in pain and witness his pain. Classical epics and tragedies offer a conceptualization of the universe, different parts of which are tightly connected to each other. The reader encounters communications between the realm of the divine and that of the human. So, even in the representation of private scenes, the mythic model often suggests an audience.

Scarry (1985) discusses that the goal of torture is to make the body present through extreme pain and to render the voice absent (p. 49). This experience is mimetic of death in the sense that in death the body is still visible, thus present, "while that more elusive part represented by the voice is so alarmingly absent that heavens are created to explain its whereabouts" (Scarry, 1985, p. 49). By voicing these queries, Hughes' Prometheus proves that he still exists despite his lack of authority over his own body. Recognizing the passivity of his body, which is under the control of another, he does not remain silent. As he hears his own voice, he also confirms his somatic existence although his very corporeal nature is the reason for his vulnerability, hence for his pain depriving him of agency. Hughes utilizes the lyric focus on the human voice to unravel an ambiguous model of agency found at the very core of the experience of individual suffering: as the body in pain turns against itself, it becomes harder to locate somatic boundaries and to assert one's authority and power over his body as well as his voice.

After representing how Prometheus struggles for self-assertion through whispering, Hughes focuses on the minute details of Prometheus' tortured body in pain. He highlights its physicality, so much so that he describes how Prometheus' veins dare to, as the word "venture" suggests, continue to function under such circumstances (l. 10). Thereby, he complicates the question of agency, problematized through the conflict between the body and the voice in the previous stanza: the poem shows that Prometheus' body, as a mechanism on its own, has never been under his complete control. So, the body becomes both the generator of the experience of suffering and a possible healer that can restore its previous condition. Moreover, it is possible to build a link between Hughes' focus on the corporeality of Prometheus' body and his ideas on the materiality of a poem. The reader sees that even when it is

the locus of pain, Prometheus' body still works. In his essay "Capturing Animals", Hughes (1969) says that he views

poems as a sort of animal. They have their own life, like animals, by which I mean that they seem quite separate from any person, even from their author, and nothing can be added to them or taken away without maiming and perhaps even killing them. (p.15)

For Hughes, the poet is not able to exert control over his poem, just as Prometheus cannot exercise power over his body.

In the eleventh line, Hughes refers to Prometheus' isolated body confined in a cold environment and depicts his lungs as "ice-burned" (l. 11). In addition to describing the coldness of the air, this term is reminiscent of the imagery of suffering employed in the early modern predecessors of the genre. Juxtaposing opposite sensations, Renaissance sonneteers, particularly, depicted the pangs of love. In his sixth sonnet in *Astrophel and Stella*, Philip Sidney (1591/1922), for instance, alludes to poets, who frequently employ Petrarchan oxymorons. He imitates them by referring to how they speak "[o]f lyving deathes deer woundes, faire storms and flashing fyres" (l. 4). By evoking the way early modern poets represent the agony of love, Hughes utilizes this topos to depict Prometheus' pain.²³ In doing so, he highlights Prometheus' indeterminate situation between two opposites: as an individual in pain, he experiences a state of limbo between life and death, his functioning body and its aggravation, and also, as the question of agency suggests, between power and subordination. There might be another reason why Hughes employs the theme of Petrarchan love, thus including it as a subtext in a lyric sequence on individual suffering: love and suffering can be juxtaposed as parallels of

²³ One can observe a parallelism between the classical accounts of the Prometheus myth and the plight of the lover in early modern lyric sequences in terms of how both Prometheus and the Petrarchan lover welcome suffering. While Prometheus is punished for the benefit of humanity, most of the lovers in these works believe that enduring the pangs of love is indeed a necessary step one should take for the sake of the beloved.

“Eros” and “Thanatos”, thus pointing to the opposition between the two Freudian forces: while “the life instinct” motivates procreation and survival, “the death instinct” makes the body yearn for a return to an inorganic condition (Freud, 1920/2001, pp. 52-53). This in-betweenness is paralleled in Prometheus’ suffering as his wounds recover just to be opened again. In this sense, he is an epitome of the Freudian proposition that “*the aim of all life is death*” (Freud, 1920/2001, p. 38). As his death is repeatedly postponed in this ritualistic punishment, Prometheus instantiates the “lyving-deaths” Sidney (1591/1922) alludes to in his poem (l.4). In addition, love and physical pain can meet under the term “passion”, denoting not only desire but also suffering. Thinking of Prometheus’ punishment for the sake of the betterment of human beings, one may build a link between the passion of Christ and Prometheus, almost crucified on the crag. This interpretation chimes with those critics who approach the sequence as a poem of illumination achieved after Prometheus’ enduring great pain.²⁴ Yet, it may also block alternative readings of the sequence stemming from the secular conceptualization of pain as a destructive experience that should be eliminated.²⁵

Returning to the poem, in the following lines, the reader sees Prometheus breathing in “huge clarity” with his lungs and rising with a great effort (ll. 11-12). In the eleventh and twelfth lines, Hughes signals an upcoming moment of revelation. Through the word order, he again underlines how pain disrupts Prometheus’ status as a subject with agency, a moment highlighting the significance of intense formal structuring in lyric poetry: Prometheus is depicted as a passive subject “feeling” his

²⁴ See, for instance, Sagar’s *Ted Hughes* pp. 116-117, his *The Laughter of Foxes* p. 25, and Michael Sweeting, p. 138.

²⁵ Asad (2003) dwells on this distinction between religious and secular conceptualizations of pain by stating, pain, as passion associated with religious subjectivity, paves the way for identification with the Passion of Christ, and stands as an act of self-extension (p. 78). For secular agency, however, such a conceptualization of pain is regarded as “inimical to reason”, thus it strives to eliminate suffering taken as a human condition (Asad, 2003, p. 67). For more information on the subject, see Asad’s (2003) “Thinking about Agency and Pain”.

lungs gulp clarity and “letting his laborious chest lift him”, suggesting that the real action is carried out by his body parts (ll. 11-12). The reader again observes a distinction between the self and the body. Instead of saying Prometheus lifted his chest laboriously, Hughes prefers the phrase “laborious chest”, which particularly reveals how the poem attaches passivity to Prometheus, standing for the self associated with the voice, and activeness to the body. The ending of the poem builds an analogy between his last motion and the wingbeats of an eagle. Following this simile offered by the third person, the poem closes with a question posed by Prometheus, which is “[a]m I an eagle?”. After creating the impression that Prometheus will attain an acute understanding of what has happened to his body and realize the reason for his pain, Hughes plays with the expectations of the reader by ending the poem with a moment of complete confusion. Reflecting on the plight of a self in crisis, the first poem, thus, shows how pain causes the blurring of somatic boundaries. Even before remembering how the eagle has tortured him, inflicted wounds on and caused alterations in his body, Prometheus wonders whether he is an eagle. Here, Hughes’ use of the article “an”, instead of “the”, deserves attention. It raises the question of whether Prometheus cannot remember what has happened to him at all, even after he starts to come back to his senses. Although he whispers and gives voice to words and even to full sentences, Prometheus somehow associates himself with the torturer and mistakes himself an animal deprived of language. This misidentification holds special significance from several aspects. First and foremost, the ending of the poem points to how we habitually conceive the lyric. For Paul de Man (1985), “[t]he principle of intelligibility, in lyric poetry, depends on the phenomenalization of the poetic voice” (p. 55). So, the reader assumes that s/he hears the voice of a human being in lyric poetry. Hughes plays on this tendency by

portraying Prometheus as confused about his species. This strategy not only reflects how torture deprives one of his/ her humanity but also signals a return to the pre-linguistic stage. Rehandling the archetypal myth on torture, Hughes builds parallelism between Prometheus, the tortured victim, and the eagle, the torturer. Thereby, he reflects on the working mechanism of torture in which, according to Scarry (1985), not only the body in pain but also the person inflicting pain reverts to the domain of the pre-linguistic, a process which brings about “the negation of the torturer’s recognition of what is happening” (pp. 43-44.). Similarly, in the Prometheus myth, the torturer is presented as an animal without a mental capacity that enables it to build empathy with the tortured body. Hughes draws attention to this distinction between the animal torturer and the tortured human being by making Prometheus ironically associate himself with the eagle. In addition, this moment of confusion almost stands as Hughes' subtle touch on the concept of the lyric voice and the lyric sequence as a humanistic genre.

Despite Hughes’ abundant use of parallel structures, the poem represents an inversion at the macro level by moving from “I am” in the first stanza to “am I” in the last one. The shift is from creating the impression of a speaking subject as an agent to the body in crisis questioning his agency and failing in self-recognition. In this respect, the first poem undercuts the Cartesian proposition it evokes with the first line: the mind cannot know itself when the body is in extreme pain. The use of mental capacities, the poem implies, is not enough for self-recognition and self-assertion. In this respect, the poem epitomizes the state of numbness in the sense that the subject is not in control of his own body and sensations. As Scarry (1985) argues, the victim of torture "has been deprived of all control over, and therefore all responsibility for, his world, his words, and his body" (p. 47). As any person in great

pain does, he "experiences his own body as the agent of his agony" (Scarry, 1985, p. 47). For Scarry, this impression stems from the signal the body in pain gives, generating not only the feeling "my body hurts" but also the feeling "my body hurts me" (Scarry, 1985, p. 47). In this way, the victim's body is "made a weapon against him, made to betray him on behalf of the enemy, made to be the enemy (Scarry, 1985, p. 48). In a similar vein, Hughes depicts Prometheus' effort to understand the complex signal of pain. His own body is the very source of these sensations; therefore, Prometheus finds it hard to recognize it as part of the self. Instead, he thinks that his body must be the enemy itself. As the locus of pain, the body is perceived as the agent of pain, thus as the eagle. As mentioned earlier, Hughes' original touch in his revisiting of the Prometheus myth is found in his representation of Prometheus as a vulnerable body in crisis, which is in line with the nature of lyric poetry, a genre closely associated with private somatic experience. Prometheus' identifying himself with the eagle is one of Hughes' original contributions. Throughout the sequence, the reader witnesses such moments of confusion. In the eighth poem, for instance, Prometheus tries to figure out who the vulture really is and asks whether he is another "prisoner" or a "jailor", in other words, an individual subjected to subjugation or the agent of oppression (l. 13).²⁶ By blurring the line between the self and the other in the first poem, Hughes utilizes the lyric focus on bodily sensations to show how they can generate mixed signals and block one's understanding, even of, his own somatic condition.

To emphasize further how the body becomes both the source of and subject of pain, the enemy and the victim, Hughes makes use of the materiality of his poem and depicts the juxtaposition of the self and the other, the tortured and the torturer at

²⁶ The reader can observe this merging of the victim and the torturer in Prometheus' body in the second and third poems, the analysis of which can be found in the following sections.

the textual level. The lineation of the poem parallels the shift from self-assertion through “I am” to the problematization of agency through "am I". The reader sees that the last two lines do not follow the regular order of the lines in the poem. Hughes implies the divergence of the fourteenth line (solely comprised of the word “and”) from the preceding lines by aligning it with the end of the previous stanza. Similar to the alignment of the fourteenth line, Hughes starts the fifteenth line with a greater gap. These two lines stand apart from the rest of the poem, thus supporting the contrast between "I am" and "am I." Thereby, Hughes creates an opposition between “inside” and “outside” within the poem. As an articulation of the self in crisis, the first lyric in Hughes’ sequence formally reflects the conflict between “me” and “not me”. This interplay between the self and the other, the subject and all external things he perceives, again brings to mind the Cartesian model, which Hughes seems to evoke only to subvert it in the latter part of the poem. Although the placement of the lines of the poem indicates a boundary between the subject and the external, the reader sees that Prometheus cannot draw such margins and his mental capacity does not enable him to differentiate himself from his surroundings or to perceive himself as an agent with the ability of thinking that proves his existence.

Moreover, the construction of clear boundaries between the internal and the external is indeed a characteristic effect of physical pain according to Scarry (1985):

The first, the most essential, aspect of pain is its sheer aversiveness Pain is a pure physical experience of negation, an immediate sensory rendering of “against,” of something being against one, and of something one must be against. Even though it occurs within oneself, it is at once identified as “not oneself,” “not me,” as something alien that it must right now be gotten rid of. (p. 52)

Likewise, Prometheus’ failure in self-recognition points to an understanding of the body as the agent of pain positioned “against” the self. For this reason, Hughes does not integrate this last part where Prometheus mistakes himself for the eagle for the

rest of the poem. By aligning it to the right corner, Hughes makes the last line stand for the external while the rest of the poem represent the internal. Still, the very combination of these two parts in a single poem shows how pain blurs the line between inside and outside. The merging of these two answers the question of how Hughes problematizes agency in the first poem. For the tortured self, pain provides an ambivalent experience, which both belongs to and does not belong to the self. This is what Scarry (1985) calls “the double experience of agency”: pain is a rendering of “a something at once internal and external” (p. 52). Even when there is an actual enemy or weapon inflicting pain upon the body, one does not feel this external agent but his own body as the cause of his wound (Scarry, 1985, pp. 52-53). Similarly, upon returning to his senses, Hughes' Prometheus' body is both part of and against himself. "Feeling into [his] body", Prometheus incorporates the beak of the vulture into his somatic existence (l. 3), and thus becomes not only the victim of the eagle but the eagle itself.

2.3 Appropriating the body, usurping the voice: A lyric subject without the power of speech?

If lyric poetry is “the phenomenalization of the poetic voice” (p. 55), as Paul de Man (1985) argues, the power of the lyric subject mostly lies in his/ her capacity to articulate his/ her plight. Paul De Man’s use of the term “phenomenalization” is key to understanding how the reader conceives lyric poetry: this voice is not available as a sensory experience, but the principle of the lyric, for De Man (1985), depends on creating effects of voice through the use of various strategies (p. 55). Encountering a lyric poem, the reader assumes that s/he hears a speaking subject. This is an indispensable aspect of a poetic persona the reader takes for granted. Other aspects of

the subject may vary (man/ woman, young/ old, celebratory/ mourning, and even alive/ dead), but s/he is supposed to have his/ her own voice through which s/he can articulate his/ her plight.²⁷ However, what if his voice does not completely belong to him anymore? The very first words of Hughes' sequence, "his voice" (l), raises the question of what kind of voice one expects to hear in a lyric poem representing a state of limbo experienced by a tortured body in extreme pain.

Throughout the sequence, the third-person speaker becomes the dominant voice while the reader occasionally hears Prometheus' own words. This distribution parallels the in-betweenness that Prometheus, as a self in crisis, experiences: like his body, his voice both belongs to and does not belong to him. The reader encounters this third-person speaker in the second poem. While the first poem starts in *medias res*, without offering the beginning of the Prometheus myth, the second one creates the effect of an ending by saying that Prometheus "relaxes / In the fact that it has happened" (ll. 1-2). Connecting the title of the second poem; that is, "Prometheus On His Crag", to the first stanza as the subject of the first sentence, Hughes repeats the title of the sequence. In addition, Hughes makes the reader wonder what he will depict in the rest of the sequence as the lines suggest a completed action, which he has not started to represent in detail yet. Still, the third-person speaker continues to reflect on the thoughts of Prometheus, who is nailed to a rock. "Nevertheless, now he exults - like an eagle", acknowledging the fact "[t]hat cannot be otherwise / And could not have been otherwise / And never can be otherwise" (l. 7 and ll. 10-12 respectively). Ending all three successive lines with the same word, Hughes attaches a fatalistic tone to his second poem. The poem closes with a sentence employing a

²⁷ One can think of Thomas Hardy's "Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?" (1913/2017) in which the reader hears the voice of a dead man.

of suffering extended into an eternal present. In this respect, Hughes' use of "now" is close to what Culler (2015) calls "the lyric present," denoting a special moment of a repetitive present (p. 226), or in Culler's terms, "an iterable now of lyric enunciation" that is against linear time (p. 289). This continuous moment of "now" attests to the overall tone of the sequence as it reflects a state of limbo, without a beginning or an end. Thus, one cannot make sense of Prometheus' voice and words with reference to a temporal scheme. In harmony with the lack of time-based structures, the poem does not offer a well-developed narrative but an expanded lyric "now", composed of momentary impressions presented in disarray.

Returning to the end of the second poem, the reader encounters a conflict in the last lines: although he is "helpless" and still subjected to torture, Prometheus feels "his strength" (ll. 15-16), an expression which sounds quite ironic given that he is a prisoner with no hope of escape. One might expect to see the first signs of resistance in the next poem, but the reader again finds Prometheus in a miserable condition in the third one. Hence, the only strength the persona mentions must belong to the torturer, the eagle. This contradictory representation might be taken as a reflection on how torture is intricately linked to power structures. For Scarry (1985), the gist of power relations in torture relies on "the translation of all the objectified elements of pain into the insignia of power, the conversion of the enlarged map of human suffering into an emblem of the regime's strength" (p. 56). She explains how the torturer empowers himself by inflicting wounds upon the victim's body:

As an actual physical fact, a weapon is an object that goes into the body and produces pain. As a perceptual fact, it lifts the pain out of the body and makes it visible or, more precisely, it acts as a bridge or mechanism across which some of pain's attributes- its incontestable reality, its totality, its ability to eclipse all else, its power of dramatic alteration and world dissolution- can be

lifted away from their source, can be separated from the sufferer and referred to power, broken off from the body and attached to the regime. (p. 56)

Likewise, Foucault views penal torture as “a differentiated production of pain, an organized ritual for the marking of victims and the expression of the power that punishes” (34). Both in Scarry’s conceptualization of torture and in Foucault’s account, the marks the torturer left on the body of the victim stand as the signs of power. In Hughes’ poem, as an agent of the regime, the torturer, namely the eagle, similarly, derives its power from the powerful reality of Prometheus’ wounded body in pain. Lacking control over his own body, Prometheus yields to the regime. Since the strength of this regime depends upon Prometheus’ body in pain, which confers its reality on the authority of the ruler, his body is not only the locus of pain but also becomes the very site of power, thus Prometheus feels “his strength” (l. 16). Through his representation of the poetic subject as a self in crisis whose body signals empowerment and subordination simultaneously, Hughes reflects on the questions of power and authority embedded in the experience of individual suffering brought about by torture.

To elaborate on private pain further, Hughes constructs a poetic voice that generates the effect of being in a state of limbo through repetition. Out of the twenty-one individual poems in the sequence, fifteen poems start with the same title; that is, “Prometheus On His Crag”, hence repeating the title of the sequence over and over again. In this respect, the title of the sequence functions as a refrain connecting individual lyric poems to each other. The main characteristic of refrains in the lyric, according to Culler (2015), is to disrupt narrative and bring it back “to a present of discourse” (p. 24). Hughes’ sequence depicts a moment of present that is eternally repeated and this iteration creates the impression of being stuck in a state of limbo. Like his use of the lyric “now”, Hughes’ utilization of the refrains produces the

effect that time does not proceed at all and the sequence is trapped within a continuous present as Prometheus in pain is. Hughes shows how pain destroys mental schemes by which people normally make sense of the universe. Moreover, the refrain includes lyric address within itself. Like refrains, addresses in lyric poetry work against the narrative aspect of the lyric sequence. Addressing the lyric subject by evoking his imprisonment on the crag, the refrain/ title of the sequence highlights Hughes' focus on the subjective and the momentary in his rehandling of the Prometheus myth. Moreover, as Culler (2015) argues, the gist of lyric address lies in its presenting "a potentially responsive or at least attentive universe" and relationality among its inhabitants (p. 216). Hughes' address to Prometheus instantiates responsiveness to somatic pain in the sense that the reader is continually reminded of the lyric subject's plight and his suffocating suffering. Hence, the sequence invites him/ her to practice understanding the pain of another.²⁸

The third poem continues to represent Prometheus' lack of control over his somatic capabilities, this time by presenting him as a figure "[p]estered by birds, roosting and defecating" all over his body (l. 1). That Prometheus is bodily contaminated by birds presents an image underlining the connection between the persona and the eagle again: he can be physically compared to a bird, signaling the torturer's power over his body. The birds cause so much trouble that Prometheus shouts "a world's end shout" (l. 4). This almost apocalyptic phrase underpins the liminality the body in pain experiences: he is not dead, but he is not completely alive either. Neither fully in control of his body nor in a position to articulate his condition, Prometheus poses an ambivalent model of agency as he loses authority over not only his body but also his voice, thus returning to the realm of the pre-

²⁸ Hughes does not utilize this generic parameter, namely lyric addresses, as much as Kate Daniels and Alice Oswald do in their sequences. The following chapters will offer a more detailed discussion of the function of lyric address in the communication of private pain.

linguistic. A significant dimension of physical pain, according to Scarry (1985), is “its ability to destroy language, the power of objectification”, which is a major source for human self-extension (p. 54). Even when torturers do not destroy the voice of the sufferer completely by murdering him/ her, they temporarily break off his/ her voice by “making it their own, making it speak their words, making it . . . be silent when they want its silence” (Scarry, 1985, p. 54). Positioning the persona within the domain anterior to language, Hughes both underlines how Prometheus, deprived of his somatic and linguistic abilities, bodily and vocally evokes the image of a bird, thus the torturer. As his body ceases to be his own, Prometheus cannot give voice to well-articulated words or sentences. Rather, his voice is heard through his screams, reminding the reader of the chattering of the birds and the sound of the wind Hughes depicts in the second line of the poem (l. 2). While “the birds became what birds have ever since been” (l.11), Prometheus’ world, identity, corporeal existence, and human voice are shattered.

In his following poems, Hughes again highlights the torturer’s appropriation of the voice of the victim and the language-destroying capacity of physical pain caused by torture. Briefly discussed in the introduction, Sappho’s Fragment 31 problematizes the inexpressibility of individual suffering through the representation of the persona’s tongue, unable to articulate her plight in the face of love pangs. Similarly, Hughes employs the image of a tongue, thus referring to pain’s resistance against language as well as the larger framework of the Prometheus myth: the sixth poem of the sequence depicts Prometheus biting “his prophetic tongue off” (l. 1). Hughes’ use of the phrase “prophetic tongue” is reminiscent of the etymological root of Prometheus’ name, signaling “forethought”. It also points to the secret which, in Aeschylus’ account of the myth, Prometheus withholds from Zeus: in Aeschylus’

play, Prometheus informs the audience that Zeus is fated to be dethroned by his own offspring (Aeschylus, trans 2017, p. 39). He adds that none can prevent the upcoming end of Zeus' tyranny as "[o]f all the gods instruct him, only [Prometheus]- / [Prometheus] knows the manner of it" (Aeschylus, trans 2017, p. 39). When Zeus sends Hermes to find out which marriage will lead to his downfall, Prometheus does not reveal the details of this prophecy, and instead he says

No rack nor Pillory can Zeus devise
To move me to manifest these things
Till he release me from these insolent bonds.
So, let him hurl his sulphurous flames from heaven,
With white-winged snow and subterranean thunder
Make chaos and confusion of the world!
Not thus will he constrain my tongue to tell
By whose hand he from tyranny shall fall (Aeschylus, trans 2017, pp. 43-44).

The classical play, thus, lays bare an internal part of the power struggle in torture. Zeus' order of chaining Prometheus to a rock to make the eagle feast on Prometheus' liver every day is no longer only a punishment for Prometheus' favoring the human race. As his rule is in danger, Zeus makes Hermes question Prometheus regarding the prophecy. Zeus seems to believe that torture will trigger confession and Prometheus will reveal the secret as he is already under harsh conditions. In this respect, the relation Zeus builds between torture and confession, in Aeschylus' play, is reminiscent of Foucault's conceptualization of torture which acts as an authentication device in ritualistic displays of punishment: "[t]he body interrogated in torture constituted the point of application of the punishment and the locus of extortion of the truth" (42).²⁹ Yet, Prometheus says that he will not reveal the secret unless Zeus frees him from the chains. Thus, his public punishment involving torture within itself

²⁹ There is a contrast between how Foucault and Scarry reflect on confession in torture: Foucault asserts that confession proves the crime and justifies punishment (42). Scarry (1985), however, warns that the act of interrogation may be a fictional justification for the act of cruelty in torture (p. 35). The torturer, for Scarry (1985), does not seek for confession, but for the materialization of the power of the regime through the use of the victim's body (p. 27).

does not pave the way for confession. Similarly, in Hughes' rehandling of the myth, Prometheus' biting his tongue signals endurance, his unwillingness to submit to Zeus' will. Although lyric poetry is characterized by the common moves of uncovering the private and publicizing the innermost thoughts of an individual, Hughes plays on the conventional understanding of the genre by portraying a persona whose voice the torturer seeks to appropriate to protect his own hegemony. In addition, Hughes signals how power structures have always worked similarly by connecting this classical scene of torture to a modern environment at the end of the sixth poem with the following lines: "[b]elow, among car-bumpers and shopping baskets, / a monkey of voice, shuffling Tarot, / For corpses and embryos, quotes Ecclesiastes" (ll. 10-12). The poem, thus, stands as an example of bathos as it shifts from the portrayal of the classical persona in pain to the ridiculous words of a modern charlatan who makes use of religion and Tarot to sound like an authority figure with knowledge of the future. In addition, this connection between the ancient and the modern brings to mind the working mechanism of modern interrogations.³⁰ As Scarry argues, interrogation stands as the verbal counterpart of the torturer's physically inflicting wounds on the body of the victim (28). Hughes' sixth poem indeed reflects such an understanding of torture composed of verbal and physical aspects by showing Prometheus biting his tongue, a body part standing as an epitome of his linguistic capacity. At this point, it is important to note that Scarry specifically draws the reader's attention to how the torturer's interrogation leads to a misunderstanding about the nature of torture: the need for information is taken as the

³⁰ This is the only lengthy reference to the modern age and its elements in Hughes' sequence. In the rest of the sequence, Hughes evokes modern elements generally through his use of similes: in the fourth poem, for instance, Hughes represents the vulture's speech as "headline letters" which are "black, bold, and plain" (p. 287). The last poem, likewise, compares the blood the mountain utters to "puddled, blotched newsprint" (p. 296). The fact that these references are related to printed media platforms may draw attention to the textuality of Hughes' sequence, which is a self-standing artifact. It may also point to how modern power structures use these platforms, which can function as authentication devices.

reason for physical cruelty although the aim is to authenticate invisible power through the use of a visible body in pain (Scarry, 1985, p. 28). Aeschylus' play reveals this real motive behind torture; that is, the endeavor to bestow visibility on the power of the regime, by showing that even before Zeus' power is at stake due to the knowledge Prometheus withholds, Zeus has already utilized Prometheus' body as a spectacle proving the greatness of his rule. This portrayal of Prometheus as a victim of torture confirming the power of the regime also chimes with Foucault's notion of "punishment as spectacle", which he employs to depict penalties in the pre-modern era. The visible intensity of pain in the ritual of public torture, according to Foucault, turns "the shame inflicted on the victim into pity or glory" (9). The body of the condemned becomes "a manifestation of force or ... justice as the physical, material and awesome force of the sovereign" (50). The human body, in this respect, stands as a site of the power of the torturer both in Scarry's account and in Foucault's conceptualization of public torture. In its different versions, the Prometheus myth instantiates the struggle for power between Zeus and Prometheus. Hughes builds on this integral element in the Prometheus narrative by detailing the question of power in terms of its reflections observable in Prometheus' body in pain. He materializes the issues of power, resistance, confession, and torture at the level of the somatic by representing Prometheus' biting "his prophetic tongue off" (l. 1), thus approaching these concerns from a perspective informed by the subjective account of the victim.

The learned reader can recognize further references to Prometheus' secret in other poems. In the ninth poem, for instance, s/he hears Prometheus' first-person account. Unlike most of the poems in the sequence, this poem does not start with the title "Prometheus On His Crag". Instead, in keeping with the lyric focus on the present and the momentary, Hughes employs the temporal deictic "now":

Now I know I never shall

Be let stir.
The man I fashioned and the god I fashioned
Dare not let me stir.

This leakage of cry these face-ripples
Calculated for me- for mountain water
Damned to powerless stillness.

What secret stays
Stilled under my stillness?
Not even I know.

Only he knows – that bird, that
Filthy-gleeful emissary and
The hieroglyph he makes of my entrails

Is all he tells. (p. 289)

At the very beginning, the poem highlights the overarching mood of the sequence, namely numbness, with the first two lines. The reader encounters Prometheus as a subject losing faith in his capacity to move even slightly. Even the sentence structure suggests inaction, pointing to the lack of control found at the core of the mood of numbness: he does not simply say he will not be able to move anymore, but employs a passive sentence; that is, “I never shall / be let stir (ll. 1-2). Prometheus thinks that it is not possible for him to exert control over his own body anymore, and no one (as the line “[t]he man I fashioned and the god I fashioned” suggests) can help him in restoring his authority over his somatic existence (l. 3). He feels that even his cries are damned to “powerless stillness” (l. 7). Thereby, the poem indicates how the torturer has usurped his voice: unable to use language, Prometheus believes that his screams are useless. The word “stillness” denotes a lack of movement and sound, thus connoting the torturer’s taking over Prometheus’ physical and verbal power. Prometheus’ repetition of this term in the eighth and ninth lines (“[w]hat secret stays / Stilled under my stillness”) almost points to a moment of realization regarding his

lack of authority over his body and voice (ll. 8-9). Prometheus' body and voice have been completely invaded by the torturer so much so that he no longer knows any secret kept from the agent of torture. For Prometheus, there is not one private thing left, not even a secret. Rather, he thinks that only the torturer, the eagle standing as the "emissary" of the hegemonic power (l. 12) (like Hermes in Aeschylus' play), can have the knowledge of the prophecy he does not intend to share with Zeus. The torturer's overwhelming control over Prometheus' body is depicted in the closing lines of the poem by presenting the body in pain almost as an open wound:

Prometheus feels that the eagle does not tell the secret but makes a hieroglyph out of Prometheus' entrails and this spectacle becomes "all he tells" (l. 14). This final image in the ninth poem signifies that the secret is still part of Prometheus' body, but since he feels acted upon by the eagle, the prophecy is no longer under his control as his body is not his own. The ending of the poem, thus, points to the ambivalent model of agency embedded in the experience of the victim of torture. Moreover, Hughes represents the eagle as a torturer speaking through the infliction of wounds on another body. Thinking of speech as a source and/ or the manifestation of power, one can see that Prometheus' body becomes a canvas for the eagle. In this respect, the poem exemplifies Scarry's (1985) argument that the body in pain becomes an authentication device for the power of the torturer, corresponding to that of the regime (p. 27). While the lyric is the genre mostly reserved for the formation of a fictional persona and the expression of his/ her private thoughts and bodily sensations, Hughes' poem represents the deformation of subjecthood, thus standing as a commentary on how the torturer appropriates the body in pain, turns it into the voice of the regime, and utilizes its striking reality to confirm invisible power structures.

2.4 Prometheus and civilization: Undoing the subject, unmaking his world

In addition to Prometheus' prophecy, Hughes covertly refers to the larger framework of the classical myth by evoking the "civilizing motive" behind Prometheus' stealing of fire. In the thirteenth poem, for example, Prometheus "[h]eard the cry of the wombs. / He had invented them. / Then stolen the holy fire, and hidden it in them." (ll. 1-3). Giving people fire, Prometheus contributes to the advancement of the human community in the classical myth. Hughes presents his take on the myth by portraying Prometheus as the inventor of the "wombs" into which he hides the holy fire. Thus, the wombs become the symbols of enlightenment, advancement, and improvement, signaled by the image of fire in the classical accounts of the Prometheus myth. The vulture, in Hughes' version, was "the revenge of the wombs" it "would awake him, / as long as there were wombs / Even if that were forever" (l. 11 and ll. 13-15). Juxtaposing Prometheus' idealistic civilizing aim and the revenge of the vulture, Hughes constructs a clash between betterment and deterioration: on the one hand, Prometheus improves the corporeal condition of human beings by giving them fire to adjust the environment according to their somatic needs. On the other hand, this action leads to the worsening of his bodily plight as the vulture turns Prometheus' body into a site of punishment. The binary model Hughes underpins in this poem can be interpreted in light of Scarry's argument on the dynamics of "making" and "unmaking" observable in the working mechanism of torture.³¹ For Scarry (1985), the torturer seeks to inflict harm upon the victim not only by putting his subjecthood and agency in question but also by destroying his world ground (p. 41). To do so, he utilizes various props, originally aimed to improve the bodily

³¹ One can interpret Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a novel particularly focusing on the human acts of "making" and "unmaking." Shelley's subtitle recognizes the author's debt to the Prometheus narrative, thus pointing to the dilemma between human betterment and degradation found at the center of the classical myth. Hughes builds on the same opposition to highlight the lyric's capacity to articulate private pain, as the analysis below demonstrates.

condition of human beings, as weapons, or in other words, the agents of pain (Scarry, 1985, 41). Even the very room the victim is imprisoned in epitomizes this transformation: originally “made” to be a shelter, the room is “unmade” as it becomes the locus of torture (Scarry, 1985, p. 41). The use of objects in torture is of utmost importance as they are projections of humans’ perception about their sentience, hence epitomizing human “making” (Scarry, 1985, p. 307). So, what is intended to remake human tissue unmakes it when it turns into an agent of pain in torture (Scarry, 1985, p. 41). Hughes’ vulture, likewise, turns the signs of improvement, namely “wombs”, on their heads to inflict wounds on Prometheus’ body. Hughes’ use of the image of the womb is parallel to Scarry’s commentary on the room in that both images stand as shelters, thereby connoting protection from external conditions. Saying that the vulture continues to torture Prometheus as long as wombs exist, the third-person speaker shows the power struggle taking place not only between the torturer, standing for the regime, and the victim but also that between the acts of making and unmaking: it takes the wombs Prometheus has “invented”, corresponding to “making”, as the motive of revenge, which denotes the process of “unmaking”.³²

The image of the womb Hughes employs is also reminiscent of one of the core aspects of the Prometheus myth, namely his foresight. Owing to his ability to see what will happen in the future, Prometheus stands as the womb of all history in the sense that he has access to all future potentialities. This conceptualization of the womb as the source of future possibilities bears significance for the ninth poem analyzed above in which Hughes evokes Aeschylus’ account of the myth by referring to Prometheus’ prophecy regarding the end of Zeus’ rule. Yet, in the ninth poem, the

³² This chapter will return to the image of the womb in the analysis of the last poem with regard to its connection to the pre-semiotic.

reader sees that Hughes' Prometheus cannot exert control over his prophecy and feels that the vulture owns his secret (l. 11). Nor does he change the course of events to escape from Zeus' torture. The thirteenth poem, similarly, reflects on this inescapable suffering by saying that Prometheus would endure this pain "as long as there were wombs / [e]ven if that were forever" (ll. 14-15), a statement associating wombs with the future.

Despite this grim tone, Hughes focuses on the creative engagements of Prometheus in pain. His act of "making" is manifest in the twelfth poem of the sequence in which Prometheus, still chained to a rock, sings a song alone:

Prometheus On His Crag

Had begun to sing
A little before dawn
A song to his wounds.

The sun signalled him red through his closed eyelids
The vulture rustled
And the smoulder of man rose from the cities

But he went on singing –
A pure
Unfaltering morphine
Drugging the whole earth with bliss. (p. 291)

The poem opens with the specification of the time Prometheus begins to sing. Like the rest of the sequence, the twelfth poem situates Prometheus, as well as his song, into a liminal mode of temporality, chiming with Hughes' calling his sequence "an expression of limbo" (2009, p. 340): Prometheus does not start to sing in the morning or at night but "[a] little before dawn" (l. 2). In the first stanza, Hughes identifies a target for Prometheus' song, namely "his wounds" (l. 3). The tortured and prisoned subject does not sing a song to a void but channels his creative activity directly into his body. The second stanza reveals that Prometheus' eyes are closed while he is singing. In the meantime, the vulture moves around and makes sounds while human

beings carry on their daily lives in the cities thanks to the fire Prometheus brought to them, as signaled by the image of smoulder. Prometheus, however, is not intimidated by the threatening vulture hovering around the crag. Nor does he find consolation in people's improved condition in the cities. Completely focused on himself, he continues singing, a creative act which Hughes calls "a pure unfaltering morphine" (ll. 8-9). The use of the term "morphine" supports the effect of numbness depicted in the sequence. However, it does not denote passivity. The poem represents the song that is compared to morphine as a remedy for Prometheus' wounds. It is almost a salve applied directly on his skin to relieve pain.³³ The poem shifts from this microcosmic portrayal to a macrocosmic one in the last line by depicting his song with an effect of "[d]rugging the whole earth with bliss" (l. 10). Thus, in addition to soothing Prometheus' pain, the song exerts influence over all beings on earth. Like the fire he steals to better the condition of human beings, Prometheus' song aims to improve the somatic existence of human beings, thus underpinning the therapeutic power of art. Moreover, the move from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic is observable in terms of Prometheus' relation to the external world. As seen in the discussion of the previous poems, Prometheus is always concerned with his bodily plight due to the extreme pain he has to endure. As Scarry (1985) notes, the larger the prisoner's pain becomes, his/ her world gets smaller, and by comparison, the torturer's world is enlarged (p. 56). As Hughes maintains the lyric focus on the subjective, the reader witnesses these shifts as processes taking place within Prometheus' body, as exemplified by his mistaking himself with the torturer. Thus, Prometheus' world shrinks into his immediate reality, his wounds, and the suffering

³³ Hughes' portrayal of the song as a medicine can be compared to the healing effect Kate Daniels attaches to the song sung by Niobe the nun. For more information, see Chapter 3. This discussion on Daniels' representation of the therapeutic power of music and poetry also includes references to Theocritus "Idyll XI", in which Polyphemus's song stands as an ointment for the pangs of love.

caused by the torture of the vulture. However, by singing a song, which stands as an act of self-extension, Prometheus reconnects with the universe.

More importantly, Prometheus' song is Ted Hughes' original contribution. The link Hughes builds between music and healing begs the question of whether he attributes any remedial effect to his poetry, or more specifically, to his sequence *Prometheus On His Crag* in this case. This inquiry deserves attention especially because of the age-old relation between lyric poetry and music, stemming from the practice of the classical lyric poets, who used lyres in their performances. Despite its dark tone, Hughes' sequence parallels Prometheus' theft of the original fire in terms of its capacity of what Scarry (1985) calls "making", denoting the construction of physical or verbal objects "which realize the human being's impulse to project himself out into a space beyond the boundaries of the body" (p. 39). Prometheus' civilizing motive behind stealing fire is to ameliorate the corporeal condition of people as it can provide a source of warmth, protection, and so forth. In addition, by giving them fire, Prometheus encourages humans to engage in the acts of making. As modes of self-projections, these "making" activities can transform the universe into a world that is not indifferent to human sentience, thus fighting against the precariousness of somatic existence. Likewise, Hughes' sequence contributes to the same endeavor by highlighting human vulnerability by giving a detailed account of what Prometheus, as a tortured prisoner, goes through as pain deprives him of his agency, consciousness, and control over his body, thoughts, and voice. In this respect, there is a sharp contrast between the numbness depicted in the sequence and the sensations Hughes seeks to trigger in the reader. Prometheus' inertness is counterbalanced against the potential of Hughes' sequence, which can raise

responsiveness to another's pain and a new awareness on the effects of individual suffering.

The seventeenth poem offers a commentary on these two aspects of human civilization, namely the acts of making and unmaking, and their relation to the common somatic condition of vulnerability. The poem begins with three successive negations:

No God- only wind on the flower,
No chains – only sinews, nerves, bones.
And no vulture – only a flame

A word
A bitten-out goblet of sun

Buried behind the navel, unutterable.
The vital, immortal wound (ll. 1-7).

As Prometheus' world ground shrinks to his immediate reality concerning his corporeal plight, he could no longer think of God, his chains, signaling divine punishment, nor even the vulture. In the face of such pain, which has the capacity of unmaking the subject and undoing his world, the larger frame of reference available in the classical myth, including Prometheus' civilizing mission, loses its importance. What really matters for Hughes' Prometheus under torture is bodily sensations and his experience gained through the use of the five senses. This is the reason why he mentions the sound of the wind on the flower. His gradual disconnection with the larger external universe results from excessive pain, which makes him feel his bodily parts, such as sinews, nerves, and bones, to which a healthy individual would not pay any attention under normal conditions. Instead of the vulture, he recognizes a flame, which might refer to how he describes the effects of the wounds on his body. Moreover, the poem points to a concealed and unspeakable word, signaling how these sensations cannot be represented in language. All that matters for Prometheus

in pain derives from the impact of the “vital, immortal wound”, referring to the paradox in Prometheus’ suffering; that is, he suffers as a human being does although he is an Olympian god (l. 7). Still, even if he is a divine being, he cannot articulate such a somatic experience in full words but can only give voice to “[o]ne nuclear syllable, bleeding silence” (l. 8). The phrase “bleeding silence” juxtaposes Prometheus’ appropriated body full of “bleeding” open wounds with his usurped voice, giving way to “silence”.

Hughes shifts the focus in the rest of the poem by referring to Aeschylus’ play and Hesiod’s versions of the myth. For Hughes, both classical authors overlooked a character in this myth:

The character neglected in this icon

Is not moon-head Io, or the hornet
that drove her through the limits.
It is not the vulture

With its solar digestion.
Is not even Epimetheus, the twin
Who got away, in the end, with the heaven sent-girl. (ll. 9-17)

He presents this new character through a series of negations, both uncovering the sequence’s relation to the classical myth and underlining its point of intervention, which is to depict human vulnerability by relying upon various cultural elements the Prometheus myth evokes. By mentioning Io, Hughes actually refers to the visitors in Aeschylus’ account who cannot offer Prometheus any consolation or convince him to submit to Zeus’ authority. With his references to Pandora and Epimetheus, Hughes signals Hesiod’s well-developed narratives. However, he introduces an original element, namely a “tiny trickle of lizard” (l. 21), who is

Listening near the ear of Prometheus,
Whispering – at his each in-rip of breath,
Even as the vulture buried its head-

‘Lucky, you are so lucky to be human!’ (ll. 22-25)

For the reader who is familiar with Hughes’ cruel model of the universe, which depicts grim realities in nature with a touch of black humor, the closing of the poem is not surprising at all. Although it gives ear to Prometheus’ painful sighs and sees how the vulture destroys human tissue, the lizard makes an ironic comment on the precariousness of somatic existence. By covertly referring to the classical accounts of the myth, the ending of the poem represents Prometheus as a human in a tragic condition, or in other words, a lyric subject in crisis, rather than a rebellious divine being with a noble aim the reader expects to meet in a tragedy or an epic poem. Hughes shows that his point of intervention in this rehandling of the Prometheus myth depends upon an exclusive focus on individual suffering, thus on the corporeal nature of human beings, making them open to assault. When the topic is physical pain, what seems private is closely connected to the communal, and Hughes highlights this link by emphasizing what makes Prometheus “human” is his vulnerability.

2.5 A return to the semiotic: Articulation and recovery in the realm of the lyric?

As discussed in the previous sections, although Hughes revisits the Prometheus myth in a lyric sequence, a genre combining lyric elements with narrative ones, he does not indicate progress in terms of plot or character development. Instead, the reader encounters a lyric subject who is trapped in an eternal present, almost paralleling the iterative lyric now, as he goes through the same painful experience over and over again each day. He displays an ambivalent model of agency as a lyric persona who

keeps questioning his subjecthood, linguistic capabilities, authority over his body, the limits of his power over his own voice. As somatic boundaries between the torturer and the victim of torture have blurred, this inquiry is paralleled at the level of knowing who the persecutor really is. However, in a quite unexpected manner, the last poem of the sequence, the twenty-first one, signals a plotwise development in a rather ambiguous fashion:

His mother covers her eyes.
The mountain splits its sweetness.
The blue fig splits its magma.

And the cry bulges.
And the veiny mire.
Bubbles scalded.

The mountain is uttering
Blood and again blood.
Puddled, blotched, newsprint.

With crocus evangels.
The mountain is flowering
A gleaming man.

And the cloudy bird
Tearing the shell
Midwives the upfalling crib of flames.

And Prometheus eases free.
He sways to his stature.
And balances. And treads

On the dusty peacock film where the world floats. (p. 296)

The twenty-first poem depicts Prometheus' release from his chains, thus from his punishment, without indicating how it takes place. The reader does not know whether Zeus has forgiven Prometheus or whether there is a savior who frees him. Ironically, Hughes juxtaposes the closing of the poem with an image of a beginning; that is, birth, encouraging the reader to interpret the last poem as Prometheus' rebirth. This is the reason why Terry Gifford (2011), in his "Introduction" to *The*

Cambridge Companion to Ted Hughes, claims that in the final poem Prometheus is “reborn to freedom, a changed person who . . . treads with a new awareness and a responsibility for his footprint on the delicate, fragile, beautiful and dust world” (p. 9). Although the poem does not offer any information on what Prometheus’ new responsibility is, a lot of critics agree with Gifford in terms of the poem’s presenting a fresh start, coinciding with a moment of enlightenment, as the phrase “the gleaming man” suggests (l. 12). Keith Sagar, for instance, dwells on the influence of the Manichean vision over Hughes and asserts that Hughes’ fondness of the Prometheus myth can be explained with reference to tragic art’s capacity of transforming “pain into illumination and balm” (2009, pp. 116-117). Likewise, for Michael Sweeting (1982), who interprets *Prometheus On His Crag* as a work abounding in the motifs of shamanistic initiation, “the sequence ends with a number of images of initiatory release. Prometheus is ‘[a] gleaming man’ like the Manichean Redeemer rising from his prison abyss to sit on his throne of glory” (p. 138).

I agree with all these critics examining the end of the sequence with reference to how it suggests “a new beginning” and “illumination,” reached at the end of a period of suffering. Their arguments find support in shamanistic images which are indeed among the common traits one can observe in Hughes’ oeuvre.³⁴ However, by limiting the analysis of the twenty-first poem to the influence of shamanism and the Manichean vision over Hughes’ poetry, one misses the mark in the closing of the sequence; that is, the way it points to an unusual language, thus to its status as a lyric poem. This interpretation makes sense especially if one thinks how Hughes first employed the Prometheus myth in *Orghast* by inventing a language depending on

³⁴ According to Sweeting (1982), shamanistic motives can be seen in Hughes’ poems depicting the universe as the source of both chaos and healing, a representation which points to the shamanistic conceptualization of “restoration of cosmic balance and healing” (p. 9). For more information on Hughes’ relation with the tenets of shamanism see Sweeting’s Chapter I, namely “Ted Hughes and Shamanism” (pp. 9-42).

instinctual sounds. In his interview with Clive Wilmer, Ted Hughes explains that the gist of the experiment in the play is its search for a kind of theatre “which would communicate to all human beings in that it wouldn’t have the divisiveness of being characterized by a single culture or a single language” (p. 38). Hughes says that there was no language at the beginning of the rehearsals and they were searching for “some sort of musical or other kind of expressiveness”, thus giving actors “a sequence of cries which had no verbal meaning” (p. 38). According to Hughes, a musical language “just automatically” evolved out of their experiments and it almost felt like an “instinct” (p. 38). In a similar vein, the closing poem of *Prometheus On His Crag*, I argue, situates the lyric subject within the realm of a musical and instinctual language, depending on pre-linguistic signs and gestures, rather than that of a verbal one. On the one hand, it teems with preverbal sounds, such as “the cry” that “bulges” as well as the mountain “uttering [b]lood” instead of any words or sentences (l. 4 and ll. 7-8 respectively). On the other hand, the twenty-first poem offers kinetic imagery, presented both through movements in nature, such as scalding “bubbles” (l. 6), and through Prometheus’ treading on a new fragile surface (ll. 18-19). Unlike other critics who evaluate the closing of the sequence as a resolution signaling Prometheus’ achieving a new consciousness, Susan Bassnett (2009) refers to its ambiguity by paying particular attention to how the twenty-first poem works through such movements:

What the sequence of Prometheus poems shows . . . is Prometheus slowly coming to terms with his own suffering and in the final poem being reborn into a new dimension, where he ‘treads / On the dusty peacock film where the world floats’. There is no solution proposed here, no promise of better things to come, but there is a definite sense that his agony has come to an end. What he will do now, what words he will use to communicate in this new state of being remains unknown. As he ‘eases free’, the images are all about his movements, not his voice: he sways, balances, then treads. Like a small child he has taken his first tentative step. (pp. 73-74)

The focus on the infant-like state of Prometheus, the suggested birth-scene in the poem, pre-linguistic sounds and movements available in his natural surroundings, and his cautious and slow gestures, I contend, can point to an alternative reading: the twenty-first poem, I argue, depicts a return to the beginning, signified by the maternal and the womb, instead of a new start, which bears significance in terms of the articulation of private suffering in the lyric mode.³⁵ In this respect, given the lyric spirit of Hughes' work, the last poem lends itself to an interpretation in light of Kristeva's idea of poetic language and its revolutionary capacity, which she explains with the terms "the semiotic" versus "the symbolic".³⁶ As mentioned briefly in the introduction, Julia Kristeva (1974/1984), in her *Revolution in Poetic Language* juxtaposes two modes of language, namely ordinary language versus poetic language. To do so, she differentiates between what she calls two inseparable modalities "within the signifying process that constitutes language", namely the semiotic and the symbolic (Kristeva, 1974/1984, p. 24). Although there are nonverbal signifying systems (such as music) which exclusively depend upon the semiotic, the subject, according to Kristeva (1974/1984), is always both semiotic and symbolic as s/he cannot produce a linguistic signifying system based totally on one of these two modalities (p. 24). The semiotic points to pre-linguistic drives and stands as a realm encompassing what Kristeva (1974/1984) calls "the chora" ("space" in Greek), a term she borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus* in which the concept has maternal overtones, thus connoting "the womb". Kristeva (1974/1984) defines the chora as "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in

³⁵ Indeed, the sequence has already built an analogy between the body in pain and the infant in the eighth poem in which Prometheus wonders whether he was "new born or wounded fatal" (l. 7). Whereas he is able to move and tread on a fluid surface in the twenty-first poem, Prometheus cannot not walk or crawl in the eighth poem, pointing to his limited agency displayed through his incapacity to control his bodily motions.

³⁶ For a reading of Hughes' *Cave Birds* in light of Kristeva's concept of the semiotic chora, see Paul Bentley's (1998) *The Poetry of Ted Hughes: Language, Illusion and Beyond*, pp. 87-90.

motility that is full of movements as it is regulated” (p. 25). The chora, as “rupture and articulations”, is analogous only to “vocal or kinetic rhythm”, and Kristeva (1974/1984) associates the semiotic chora with pre-Oedipal drives that lead the infant to the mother (pp. 26-27). The symbolic, on the other hand, denotes the realm of ordinary language in which the subject, following the acquisition of language, differentiates himself/ herself from other objects (Kristeva, 1974/1984, p. 29). For Kristeva (1974/1984), literary texts, especially poetry and works written in an avant-garde style, contain the possibility of evoking the semiotic within the symbolic, thus pointing to a rupture, a revolutionary moment of linguistic signification including the flow of drives within the symbolic (p. 88).

Thinking of Kristeva’s semiotic rhythm which is “musical, anterior to language, but restrained by a single guarantee, syntax” (Kristeva, 1974/1984, p. 29), it is possible to interpret Hughes’ lyric sequence as a combination of the semiotic and the symbolic. The last poem in his work attests to the unraveling of the semiotic within the symbolic through its maternal imagery and focus on nonverbal movements and gestures. If private pain resists language, and hence, remains within the realm of the pre-semiotic, Hughes’ last lyric poem offers an avenue for a return to this domain. This is realized through a return to the womb, connoting the maternal, thus Kristeva’s semiotic. The image of the womb has already been utilized in the thirteenth poem as the place where Prometheus hides fire, thus as a symbol of advancement and improvement that signals a moment of betterment in Prometheus’ physical condition. Therefore, the last poem may point to a subject whose ambiguous recovery takes place in the Kristevan semiotic, thus in the lyric. The rhythmic imagery in the poem, as exemplified by bubbles, (l. 6) denotes the realm of the semiotic and hence the lyric, encompassing the musical within itself. The natural

landscape, like Prometheus, is situated within the pre-linguistic. It is portrayed almost like a body in pain, with "veiny" mire and uttered "blood", which gradually recovers from its suffering as the mountain "flowering / A gleaming man" suggests (ll. 11-12). Thereby, the poem reflects private pain and subsequent recovery at the level of the macrocosmic. This bears special significance if one thinks of semiotic and communicative questions inherent in the Prometheus myth. Although the different accounts of the myth have disparate focal points, there is a cluster of core elements one can associate with the Prometheus narrative. The character's suffering in silence and his resistance to give voice to the prophecy that puts Zeus' rule in danger are among these Promethean qualities and Hughes builds on it with reference to Prometheus' tongue (l. 1) in the sixth poem. The Prometheus narrative thereby embodies the clash between the semiotic and the symbolic, as Kristeva uses the terms, in the sense that Zeus tries to push Prometheus to enter the realm of the symbolic, or in other words, that of the language, whereas Prometheus insists on staying in the domain of the semiotic although this decision prevents him from articulating his plight by using ordinary language. Hughes' take on this conflict unravels in the last poem where he situates Prometheus' recovery in the semiotic, pointing to the affinity between lyric poetry and the semiotic mode of communication by highlighting their rhythmic qualities.

Returning to the poem, it does not escape the reader that even the vulture, referred to as "the cloudy bird" in the poem, takes part in this birth scene, by midwifing a "crib of flames" (l. 15). In this manner, Hughes portrays the vulture as a necessary figure in the poem in terms of the articulation of pain. As the torturer, it is the very cause of Prometheus' wounds. In addition, all it stands for, such as the hegemony of the regime and its struggle for power, is integral in Hughes' uncovering

of the dynamics of torture. Prometheus' ambivalent recovery, in this respect, may refer to the communication of his pain in the lyric mode. He is set free from the dark and mute geography of pain at the end of the lyric sequence in the sense that previous poems shed light on the working mechanism of torture and explicate how the persecutor tries to destroy the victim both verbally and physically, hence communicating Prometheus' plight as an individual body in pain. Hughes' twenty-first poem in the sequence, thus, presents both a moment of self-consciousness in terms of pointing to its status as a lyric poem and signals the idea that lyric poetry may pave the way for the expression of individual suffering generally confined in the realm of the pre-linguistic, as it encompasses the domain of the semiotic within itself. Hughes places the possibility of healing within the realm of the semiotic, thus within the lyric. This interpretation resonates with Hughes' definition of poetry, which was given at the beginning of Chapter I. To recall it briefly, the inmost spirit of poetry, for Hughes, is "at bottom, in every recorded case, the voice of pain – and the physical body, so to speak, of poetry, is the treatment by which the poet tries to reconcile that pain with the world" (2009, p. 458). According to Hughes, poetry, as an expressive facility, is designed to elucidate the complex phenomena of not only mapping but also curing various causes of suffering. This potential stems from Hughes' conception of poetry as "the voice of pain", uncovering the realm of the somatic in the lyric, and corresponding to the Kristevan semiotic. Hence, according to Hughes, the representation of individual pain itself is an integral part of treatment. Poetry, for Hughes, has the capacity of giving voice to such a suffocating experience, hence publicizing the private and triggering a recovery process. The last poem of the sequence, likewise, emphasizes this healing power of the lyric by depicting

Prometheus standing on his own feet in an environment surrounded by pre-linguistic sounds and rhythmic movements.

2.6 Conclusion

Taking poetry as the “voice of pain” (2009, p. 458), Hughes revisits the Prometheus myth in a lyric sequence. This generic transformation enables him to explore the experience of individual suffering with regard to the ambivalent model of agency, the disappearance of somatic boundaries, the significance of the control over the voice, the acts of “making” and “unmaking”, and a possible recovery that can only be initiated through the articulation of pain. Hughes’ account of the Prometheus myth, thus, approaches the classical narrative from a new perspective and expands upon it by detailing the experience of the tortured. In *Prometheus On His Crag*, this is realized through the lyric focus on the subjective, the ritualistic lyric present paralleling the temporal experience of the persona, lyric address embodied both as the refrain and the title, and intense formal structuring, visually paralleling Prometheus’ dilemmas regarding who he is. The end of the sequence calls attention to the lyric form and its closeness to a musical, kinetic, and instinctual language to offer the genre as a significant channel for the communication of pain.

CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGING NIOBE'S SUFFERING IN SILENCE:

GRIEF IN KATE DANIELS' *THE NIOBE POEMS*

Grief has always been viewed as a suffocating experience whereby the individual becomes speechless, isolated and catatonic. This is especially the case when the mourner cannot recover from excessive grief, and instead, lives with depression. In his “Mourning and Melancholia”, which is regarded as a foundational text on grief, Sigmund Freud juxtaposes these two concepts to explore the experience of grief and its different manifestations. Both mourning and melancholia are characterized by similar reactions, such as turning away from worldly concerns, the loss of capacity to love, and disregarding all other purposes and interests except for those related with the loss of a loved person (Freud, 1917/ 2001, p. 244). Yet, according to Freud, what distinguishes these two from each other is that while the world becomes poor and empty for the mourner, the patient of melancholia feels that his/ her ego is emptied out (Freud, 1917/ 2001, p. 246). As a worthless and morally contemptible person, s/he “expects to be cast out and punished” which leads to the transformation of an “object-loss” into an “ego-loss” (Freud, 1917/ 2001, p. 246 and p. 249 respectively).³⁷

The Ovidian myth of Niobe instantiates such a bereaved mother, who cannot communicate her suffering after the death of her children. Thus, she transforms into a stone, shedding tears of sorrow continually. The classical myth indeed informs us about the age-old conception of extreme grief in Western culture, which Freud (1917/2001) describes with the term “melancholia”: unable to responding to the

³⁷ On this topic, see Freud's “Mourning and Melancholia” and David L. Eng and David Kazanjian's “Introduction” to *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*.

death of her children, Niobe annihilates her ego through her metamorphosis, thus paralleling the loss of the object(s) of love at the level of the ego. Like the Prometheus myth Ted Hughes rewrites in his sequence *Prometheus On His Crag*, which is explored in the previous chapter, the myth of Niobe depicts the plight of an individual who is condemned to eternal suffering by the Olympian gods. Thereby, the mourner's expectation to be punished, in Freud's terms, is realized through divine intervention in the classical narrative. The elimination of the self through metamorphosis renders Niobe voiceless in the Ovidian account and the reader acknowledges the incommunicability of grief. Building on Freud's theory of melancholy and mourning, Julia Kristeva (1987/1989) points to this problem of representation in her *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. She revisits the Freudian melancholy and argues that the subject does not mourn for the loss of an object but for what she calls the "Thing," which Kristeva (1987/1989) defines as "the real that does not lend itself to signification" (p. 13). Employing the metaphor "the black sun", Kristeva (1987/1989) delineates how such experience resists communication like "a light without representation" (p. 13). Niobe, as a stone with tears of sorrow in Ovid's version of the myth, is the embodiment of this Kristevan black sun in the sense that she stands as a subject that cannot articulate her plight in the realm of language.

Revisiting this classical myth, which represents grief as an inexpressible private mode of suffering, Kate Daniels' lyric sequence *The Niobe Poems* (1988) portrays a mother who is not turned into a stone but gradually detaches herself from all consuming grief. Daniels' generic choice is of utmost importance here when one thinks of the genre's well-known capacity for building a persona over a sequence of poems. If grief is characterized by the obliteration of the ego, the lyric sequence

should be positioned at the very opposite pole due to its construction and communication of fictional subjects. However, opening up a space for a lamenting poetic voice is not the only strategy Daniels utilizes to resist the silencing effect of grief. Daniels both employs and plays with various conventions of the lyric sequence, including the very notion of the unified speaker: after offering various accounts of the Niobe myth at the beginning of her work, Daniels continues with her version in which Niobe is introduced firstly as a mother whose son was drowned in a river. Yet, Daniels does not give voice to a stable lyric I, nor does she introduce a single modern Niobe, but Niobes, all suffering from different causes. Moreover, towards the end of the poem, Daniels shifts from past accounts to the lyric now and from Niobes to a lyric I, who offers herself / himself as a model to be followed by the reader in terms of expressing private pain. This movement from the myth, standing for the collective, to the individual is indeed a common strategy that Western lyric poets have used through ages.

By employing four lyric parameters (the focus on the subjective, lyric address, lyric temporality and intense formal structuring) with regard to their role in Daniels' rehandling of the Ovidian myth of Niobe, this chapter explores how *The Niobe Poems* constructs avenues for the communication of individual suffering. In *The Niobe Poems*, Kate Daniels, I argue, offers a new understanding of grief through the use of these lyric devices in the communication of the personal. I examine how she endows Niobe's grief with significance for the reader by paying attention to the ritualistic dimension of and deictic devices in her sequence. The chapter begins with a short section on the lyric rehandling of myths to underpin the tendency of articulating the private within the frame of the collective in Western poetry. Reading Sappho's Fr. 16 in light of C. M. Bowra's model, this section offers a methodology

for interpreting the intertextual beginning of Daniels' sequence. This is followed by an analysis of Daniels' take on the lyric subject, her use of lyric address to promote a responsive universe, the ritualistic lyric present as the indicator of the ethical capacity of the genre, and the use of the formal structure in foregrounding artifactuality as well as the performative aspect of the lyric.

3.1 Confining the mourner within the pre-linguistic: Bowra's triad, the illustrative myth, and the instructive maxim

In his *Greek Lyric Poetry: From Alcman to Simonides*, C. M. Bowra (2000) discusses how Greek myths, as collective narratives belonging to the realm of the public, are employed in classical lyric poetry, a genre exclusively focusing on the private and the momentary. He points to a formal structure, which I call "Bowra's triad", composed of "the illustrative myth, the instructive maxims, and the personal references" (Bowra, 2000, p. 39). According to Bowra (2000), this is a significant characteristic of choral lyric poems in the classical age, but actually, it is possible to trace it to monodies as classical lyricists used this pattern to publicize private experience through collective mythological narratives. Sappho's Fr. 16 exemplifies this characteristic interplay between the collective and the individual:

Some say a host of horseman, others of infantry, and others
of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the dark earth:
but I say it is what you love.

Full easy it is to make this understood of one and all: for
she that far surpassed all mortals in beauty, Helen, her
most noble husband

Deserted, and went sailing to Troy, with never a thought for
her daughter and dear parents. The [Cyprian goddess] led
her from the path...

... [Which] now has put me in mind of Anactoria far away;
Her lovely way of walking, and the bright radiance of her

changing face, would I rather see than your Lydian
chariots and infantry. (pp. 52-53)

The poem begins with a priamel, which shows the influence of the Homeric epic by referring to horsemen, infantry, and ships.³⁸ In line with these possible answers to the question of what the most beautiful thing is, the second stanza offers Helen as a model to follow or reject. After the reference to the mythic narrative, the persona gives his/ her answer, “Anactoria”, in the present tense. The shift from the exemplum of Helen belonging to the past (and standing for the illustrative myth) to the present occasion is indicated through the words “me” and “now”, pointing to the lyric persona and lyric temporality. Each time a poet performs this lyric poem or the reader repeats these lines, the deictics “me” and “now” will refer to different individuals and moments respectively. Hence, they belong to the ritual mode of lyric poetry, in Greene’s terms (1991, p. 7), since such a lyric construction of “subjectivity” and “now” is coextensive with the performance of the poem. Therefore, deictic pronouns foreground a shifting model of subjectivity, which is intended to be communalized, and temporal deictics designate a special present in lyric discourse as they keep being re-contextualized in each repetition. Arguing against the general tendency to interpret Sappho’s fragments in historical and cultural contexts, Matthew Gumpert (2001), in *Grafting Helen: The Abduction of the Classical Past*, takes these deictics in Fr. 16 as “the operational signals of the performative work of the lyric voice”, referring to the iterable quality of lyric poetry, “designed to be spoken and re-spoken over and over again, and always in the present tense” (p. 94). This repetitive aspect of the genre lays bare the special nature of lyric temporality which is explained in the introduction: even when a poem refers to past

³⁸ For a detailed discussion of the function of the priamel in classical lyrics, see Elroy L. Bundy’s *Studia Pindarica*. Here, Bundy (1986) also analyzes how Sappho employs this device as a means of highlighting her choice in Fr. 16 (pp. 5-6).

events, their importance lies in the way they contribute to what Jonathan Culler (2015) calls “the lyric present” (p. 226), which is against the linear time, as “happens . . . in an iterable now of lyric enunciation” (p. 289). Sappho’s Fr. 16 goes back to the myth of the Trojan War to communicate the subjective at the moment of utterance. Each participant of the poem is expected to adopt the lines as his/ her own, therefore there is no stable reference for “me” and “now”. For this reason, the last part of Bowra’s triad, namely the personal reference, is unavoidably publicized in the lyric present. Despite its focus on the private, the poem constructs a collective act owing to these deictic devices of the genre.³⁹

Likewise, revisiting a classical myth in a lyric sequence, Kate Daniels elaborates on individual suffering by framing it under the collective myth of Niobe. *The Niobe Poems* starts with various references to other accounts of the classical myth. This moment of intertextuality, I argue, constitutes the first part of Bowra’s triad, namely the illustrative myth. Unlike Sappho’s shift from the myth to the personal in a single poem, Daniels moves from the mythological account to the private within a sequence. Her technique also reminds the reader of the modernist pastiche and montage in the sense that she uses direct quotations from other texts in the paratextual section called “How the Myth Was Handed Down”. Daniels’ first quotation is from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which highlights how Niobe is reduced to silence and passivity in the classical account:⁴⁰ “No sign of life at all: the tongue was frozen / To the roof of the mouth; no pulse beat in the veins; . . . and the vitals

³⁹ On the nature of deictics, see Benveniste’s (1966/1971) *Problems in General Linguistics*.

⁴⁰ Daniels also refers to Homer’s *Iliad*, Dante’s Canto XII of *the Purgatorio*, and Edith Hamilton’s *Mythology*, Robert Graves’s *The Greek Myths*, and Barbara G. Walker’s *The Woman’s Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, C.G. Jung and C. K. Kerényi’s *Essays on a Science of Mythology*, and David Ignatov’s “Mother and Child” (as cited in Daniels, pp. x- xii). All these references bear significance in terms of exposing the privacy and inexpressibility of grief in the Niobe myth. Yet, Ovid’s text is crucial for my argument as it hints at a possible answer to the question of how to communicate individual suffering. I contend that Daniels makes use of a like-minded strategy in her rehandling of the myth in a lyric sequence.

hardened / To rock, but still she weeps” (as cited in Daniels, p. x).⁴¹ The classical Niobe’s metamorphosis expresses grief as a somatic experience that cannot be communicated verbally but only through shape-shifting. Like Sappho’s Fr. 31, which has been examined briefly in the introduction, Ovid employs the image of a “tongue” to highlight the difficulty of articulating pain. In her *The Body in Pain*, Scarry (1985) argues that “[p]hysical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned” (p. 4). This is what happens to Niobe in her transformation to a rock: on the one hand, she is no longer a human, hence does not have necessary body parts to speak. On the other hand, she still has human tears. Niobe becomes an in-between figure in the sense that she is neither a mortal human being with a vulnerable body, nor a rock without sentience.⁴² As N.S. Boone states (2016), “Niobe, by being turned to stone, occupies a kind of eternal present” (p. 214), yet this unusual temporality is characterized by silence. Her only somatic response is pre-linguistic tears.⁴³ She is confined to eternal mourning from which she will not recover.

Daniels’ reference to the *Metamorphoses* has further significance in terms of Ovid’s two opposing ways of depicting characters who are suffering from grief: while the mourners who communicate with another person recover from their grief and survive, those who fail in publicizing the private undergo a transformation (Gentilcore, 2010, p. 108). Gentilcore (2010) points out this contrast by noting that

⁴¹ All references to the *Metamorphoses* is from the edition translated by Rolfe Humphries as this is the version Kate Daniels quotes from in her sequence.

⁴² For incomplete transformations and the Ovidian paradox of simultaneous presence and absence in the *Metamorphoses*, see Penelope Murray’s “Bodies in Flux: Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*” (1998/2003).

⁴³ Here, I employ the term “pre-linguistic” along the similar lines of Scarry’s (1985) use of the phrase “a state anterior to language” (4). However, it should be noted that Niobe’s metamorphosis can also be described with the word “post-linguistic” since she loses her linguistic skills due to excessive grief. The loss of language, in Niobe’s situation, points to severe suffering, an experience, which resists representation within the domain of the linguistic.

[t]hese individuals go outside their obsessive their grief to listen to another and sometimes tell their own sorrows. By the act of voicing their grief, these men and women provide direct contrast with the voicelessness that, as we have seen, is so characteristic of all-consuming grief (p. 108).⁴⁴

Thereby, if one does not exclusively focus on the Niobe myth but takes all the mourners in the *Metamorphoses* into account, it is clear that there is an alternative path for the mourner other than transformation: if private suffering is communicated between different subjects, it does not deprive one of his/ her body, agency, voice, and subjectivity (Gentilcore, 2010, p. 108). In this sense, “the instructive maxim” of *Metamorphoses*, in Bowra’s terms, is not the inexpressibility of private suffering, or how this experience confines one to the pre-linguistic, but the necessity to communalize the subjective. Ovid covertly suggests a model for recovery, which depends upon an intersubjective understanding of private pain.

After supplying the reader with quotations from different accounts of the Niobe myth, Daniels introduces her version in which she resists the isolated and catatonic model of grief through various strategies, all of which depend upon the characteristic effects of lyric poetry. By employing these features of the genre, she indeed underpins the idea, which is already hinted in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; that is, the only way to fight against individual suffering, divesting one of his/ her body and voice, is to turn it into a shared experience. In the next sections, I will explore how Daniels uses the focus on the subjective, lyric address, lyric temporality and intense formal structuring in highlighting this instructive maxim.

⁴⁴ At this point, it is crucial to note that the ability to speak is a distinctive feature of human beings for the classical mind. Aristotle, for instance, refers to speech as the basic difference between humans and other animals: “Nature . . . has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech” (Aristotle, trans 1992, p. 60).

3.2 The focus on the subjective: The intersubjective persona and the lyric poet as the maker of “artifacts”

In her *The Niobe Poems*, Daniels utilizes the lyric focus on the subjective in the communication of private suffering mainly through two strategies: firstly, she constructs a model of an intersubjective persona, and secondly, she portrays the lyric poet as the maker of artifacts.

Daniels’ work, as a lyric sequence, is part of the age-old tradition of the vernacular lyric sequence. As stated in the introduction, this poetic form was invented by Francesco Petrarca and emerged out of European humanist culture (Greene, 1991, p. 3). As “normative sequences”, in Greene’s terms, the early examples of the genre are often named after their speakers (1991, p. 14). Similarly, Daniels gives the name of the mythic figure to her sequence, which creates the impression that there will be a single self, a stable lyric persona, whose voice the reader will hear. Indeed, the very first part of the sequence supports this effect: following intertextual quotations, Daniels lists the characters in the myth (such as Leto, Artemis, Apollo, the Niobids, Amphion) in a page titled “Dramatis Personae” and she introduces Niobe as “the mortal mother of fourteen, seven sons and seven daughters, who inherited the fatal arrogance of her father, Tantalus, who had offended the gods, thus incurring his own eternal punishment” (p. xiii). Reminding the reader of the beginning of a play, this part alludes to a single Niobe whose story is identical to that of the classical figure.⁴⁵ As it offers some other characters besides Niobe, the reader may expect to encounter a variety of voices in the sequence. However, the issue of multiple voices is complicated as the following poems contradict this introductory part by offering many different Niobes: for instance, in

⁴⁵ I dwell upon the significance of this intergeneric section in detail under the subheading of “Intense formal structuring: The materiality of the sequence, intertextuality, and cross-genre references”.

“The Gods Are Optional”, the reader learns that Niobe is a mother of a son who has drowned in a river (p.4), in “Child Abuse”, she is a farm wife with seven children who beats her daughter with a switch (p.17), she is depicted as a woman living in a desert in “Ethiopa” (p.48), becomes Rosa Parks (although she is still named “Niobe”) in “Bus Ride” (p.49), and a nun who, like a phoenix, burns to live again in “The Fire Mystery” (p. 51).⁴⁶ Most of the poems in the sequence portray the plight of the modern Niobe, mourning for her son, thus she stands as the uniting point. Yet, Daniels continues to refer to the myth and these other modern-day Niobes, so the reader is expected to identify which Niobe each poem denotes. In *Grafting Helen*, Gumpert (2001) argues that early modern sequences, which are full of “substitute encounters, mediated marriages, imitation bodies”, offer unions at metaphorical levels through the trope of courtly love (p. 106). Daniels, in a similar vein, constructs a metaphorical model of unity through her take on the stable and single lyric self. Thus, playing with a strategy utilized by early modern lyric poets, Daniels builds on and experiments with the notion of the “unified” persona, which characterizes the early examples of the genre.

This intersubjective persona has further significance in terms of Daniels’ female touch upon the Ovidian myth: While Ovid depicts a single Niobe who turns into a stone as a result of her extreme grief, depriving her of agency and voice, Daniels “mobilizes” various Niobes whose voices merge into each other in a lyric sequence. In this respect, Daniels’ strategy parallels Irigaray’s attempt to come up with a female language that encompasses multiplicity within itself. In her essay “When Our Lips Speak Together”, Irigaray (1976/1980) points out how “to speak in

⁴⁶ Although the Niobe myth is not originally linked to the mythological figure of the Phoenix, Daniels includes it under Dramatist Persona (xiii), and thus, underlines her original contribution to the myth in the poem “The Fire Mystery”. (p. 51)

the same language” results in producing the same story (p. 69).⁴⁷ Promoting “oneness”, male discourse has left women “only absences, defects, negatives”, forcing them to keep still as [i]f you [women] move, you disturb their [men’s] order” (Irigaray, 1976/1980, p. 71). The Ovidian myth indeed instantiates such a female character: lacking a language to articulate her plight, or more specifically her grief, the Ovidian Niobe is immobilized through her metamorphosis, confined to stillness, oneness, and voicelessness, the terms Irigaray associates with the position reserved for the female in patriarchal discourse. Not to produce the same story, Daniels shifts the generic frame and plays with the traditional notion of the unified lyric persona. For Irigaray (1976/1980), to create a special language that can accommodate the feminine, one should embrace multiplicity, which she explains with the metaphor of two lips, not only denoting a mouth but also connoting the vagina:

Open your lips, but do not open them simply. I do not open them simply. We-you/I- are never open nor closed. Because we never separate simply, *a single word* can’t be pronounced, produced by, emitted from our mouths. From your/ my lips, several songs, several ways of saying echo each other. For one is never separable from the other. You/I are always several at the same time (p. 72).

Daniels creates an Irigarayan echo through her intersubjective model of the lyric subject. Thereby, she resists not only sameness, or in other words univocal speech linked to masculine discourse in Irigaray’s account, but also constructs various voices as Irigaray (1976/1980) suggests: “[s]tretching out, never ceasing to unfold ourselves, we must invent so many different voices to speak all of ‘us’, including the cracks and faults, that forever won’t be enough time. . . . we have so many different dimensions” (p. 75). That Daniels does not idealize all Niobes as perfect mothers attests to this understanding of multiple voices. In “Child Abuse”, for instance, Niobe the farm wife is a mother of Lucille, a twelve-year-old girl who enjoys

⁴⁷ The essay was originally published in 1976 as “Quand nos lèvres se parlent” in *Cahiers du Grif* no.12, between pages 23-28.

reading. Niobe, however, “can’t read” and thinks that “she doesn’t need anything / from books” (Daniels, l.1 and ll. 2-3 respectively). She loves her daughter

But the row of books
in the pastor’s parlor
is torturous to her: the worlds
of words and pictures
where she never go. (Daniels, ll. 15-19)

Feeling that she does not belong to the world of the pastor’s books, Niobe gets enraged, and all of a sudden, she “strips a switch / from the cherry tree and beats / her daughter’s legs until they bleed” (Daniels, ll. 27-29). Daniels portrays Niobe the farm wife as a miserable woman “with seven children and an ailing man” with her own mistakes in raising Lucille (Daniels, l.4). Thus, she does not construct an ideal image of Niobe as a mother, but includes figures with their own flaws, or in Irigaray’s (1976/1980) terms, “cracks and faults” (p. 75).

Daniels also utilizes the deictic nature of pronouns, especially “she” which the third-person speaker employs to refer to different Niobes, and that of the lyric I in the sense that it does not refer to a single persona, but to disparate Niobes at different moments. For instance, while the word “she” refers to a poor and cruel Niobe in “Child Abuse,” the third-person speaker utilizes the pronoun in “Ethiopia” to refer to Niobe living in the desert with no water and food, yet trying to protect her children from the desert sun:

She spends her days bent over
like an umbrella, bent over
the little dying things
that make no noise. (ll. 2-5).

Likewise, Irigaray’s use of language in her essay reflects such a model of multiplicity that she seeks to construct in a female mode of writing. As her translator Carolyn Burke (1980) notes in Introduction to Irigaray’s essay, Irigaray

exploits the differentiation of gender and number in the French past participle to create simultaneously a female singular-and-plural . . . Similarly, the use of a double subject (*tu/je*) reaffirms the desired mutuality of female relations in writing. In this text which attempts to embody female difference, however, *tu* and *je* are not fixed persons. Fluid and changing, they are . . . two aspects of the self, and more, as the reader is gradually drawn into an exploration of plurality (pp. 67-68).

Daniels' play with the pronouns parallels Irigaray's use of language in her essay in the sense that they both create characters who are in a constant state of flux, thus pointing to the possibility of a language that welcomes plurality.

Daniels further reinforces the notion of multiple voices through a constant shift between third-person and first-person accounts: at the beginning of the sequence, the reader hears the voice of a third-person persona, portraying various Niobes in multiple contexts. The first poem of the sequence, namely "The Little King", for example, focuses on the night the modern Niobe conceives her son, who will be drowned in a river. The persona wonders whether the gods were watching even then and saying

that's him, that's the one
we want, the one
we get to have
because we're strong enough
to take him," (ll. 9-13).

The persona underlines the indifference of the gods to human suffering in the classical myth. They are trying to prove their strength by making an individual suffer from grief. The persona dwells on this topic further by inquiring whether they (the Olympian gods) care at all "about the mortal mother / he'll leave behind" along with her wailing and weeping (Daniels, ll. 15-18). This is in line with Scarry's (1985) argument that God's invisible presence, in Western tradition, is frequently "asserted, made visible, in the perceivable alterations He brings about in the human body", including wounding (p.183). This stems from the idea that "the body in its most

intense presence becomes the substantiation of the most disembodied reality”, be it belief in divine beings or an ideology (Scarry, 1985, p.194). Similarly, in the classical Niobe myth, the power of the Olympian gods is materialized in Niobe’s grief, and Daniels’ third-person poem foregrounds the capacity of the human body to confer reality to abstractions.⁴⁸

In the latter part of the sequence, the reader encounters first-person accounts of many Niobes, indicated with inverted commas.⁴⁹ “After the Funeral”, for instance, shows the catatonic plight of the modern Niobe, suffering from the loss of her son. Lying face to face with her husband on their bed, Niobe says:

We just lay there
awake, I think, no part
of our bodies touching. The pills
making our breathing
almost invisible, almost silent.” (Daniels, ll. 19-23)

Such poems contribute to Daniels’ re-visioning of the myth in the modern context, hence, are part of the “illustrative” myth in Bowra’s terms. They exemplify what Greene (1991) calls “the construction of a fictional situation” (p. 10). In this respect, the third-person poems attest to the narrative aspect in Daniels’ sequence. Likewise, the poems offering represented speeches with inverted commas stand as what Greene (1991) calls “a person-representation” (p. 10) as they depict Niobe as a character with her own voice. Hence, they are part of the fictional dimension, supporting Daniels’ rewriting of the myth at the thematic level. In the lines quoted above, the reader sees that the modern Niobe does not metamorphose into a rock after the death of her son. Still, her numbness, resulting from the pills (a modern element Daniels

⁴⁸ This can be compared to how Alice Oswald, in *Memorial*, underpins this problematic aspect of the human body: she rejects the portrayal of the soldiers fighting in the Trojan War as part of the greater collective body of an army. See Chapter 4 for a detailed account of how war makes use of the vulnerability of the human body and how Oswald employs lyric devices to strip soldiers of the collective meanings attached to them in the *Iliad*.

⁴⁹ Unlike other first-person accounts of various Niobes, the poem “Before the Funeral” offers a monologue by the modern Niobe’s friend (Daniels, p. 40).

introduces in her rewriting), underpins the lack of agency in individual suffering. Describing the couple's breathing as "invisible" and "silent" (Daniels, l. 23), the poem represents Niobe and her husband almost breathless, thus presenting grief as a near-death experience. The concepts Niobe employs to depict their plight; that is, invisibility and silence, are indeed how one can define inexpressible private pain. This idea of how individual suffering resists communication is further supported by the position of the couple's bodies: the lines emphasize that there is no physical contact between Niobe and her husband at all although they both suffer from the loss of their son.

After this interchange between third-person and first-person poems, the reader encounters an ambiguous lyric I in the last poem, "Epilogue", who turns out to be the third person narrator of the myth. S/he closes the poem by talking of his/ her personal experience in a covert manner:

*If Niobe had not lived
I could not talk to you now.
I could not love
anything at all.
No one at all. (Daniels, ll. 24-28)*

This move parallels the shift from the classical myth to the personal reference in Bowra's triad, or from the myth of Helen to Anactoria in Sappho's Fr. 16. Moreover, it shows Daniels' play with the Ovidian concept of metamorphosis, which she expresses as the necessary move from the pre-linguistic and isolated mode of suffering to the communicated one: although the *Dramatis Personae* introduces Niobe as a mother turned into a rock, the "Epilogue" portrays the modern Niobe's gradual recovery from grief. Then, the poem shifts into the personal reference part, in which the reader encounters a lyric I. There isn't much information about this persona. However, it is clear that s/he has taken this new Niobe as a role model,

hence managed to cope with his/ her distress. This is reminiscent of the persona in Sappho's Fr. 16, who has followed the footsteps of Helen and valued Anactoria more than anybody/ anything else.

Through her reaction against the notion of a single lyric self, Daniels disrupts the conventional continuity in terms of the lyric persona, characterization, and poetic voice. Thereby, she creates an intersubjective model of the lyric subject, chiming not only with Irigaray's model of a language embracing multiplicity, but also with the route Ovid indicates for recovery from grief. In this sense, her experimentation with the concept of metamorphosis goes a step further: it does not only signal a route for recovery from excessive grief (through a passage from the pre-linguistic to the communication of suffering), but also stands as a trope for an intersubjective model of lyric persona: the classical Niobe's story is related to other Niobes in the sequence thanks to this metamorphosis at the level of characterization. Thus, as a lyric sequence, *The Niobe Poems* does not only offer a self in crisis, but a babel of voices, all united under the given name of "Niobe".

This move is of high importance as it reflects Daniels' play with the idea of the stable lyric subject: unlike the humanist conviction, characterizing the birth of the genre of the lyric sequence, Daniels exposes the unstable aspect of subjectivity. Hence, her sequence exemplifies what Roland Greene (1991) calls "artificiality" (p. 14). Greene (1991) utilizes this term to denote a new formal and ideological disposition the genre had moved toward in the first decade of the twentieth century (p. 14). According to Greene (1991), in such poems characterized by artificiality, several independently realized voices contribute to a composite fiction and this merging of voices puts the idea of a unitary selfhood into reexamination (p. 14). Moreover, "this new disposition often entails an acknowledgement that the work

does not tell of experience lived or seen, but is a thing made” (Greene, 1991, p. 14). This chimes with the very term Greene employs as the word “artifact” refers to a human construction. Similarly, Daniels’ deliberate attempt to break the illusion of a self, uncovering his/ her innermost thoughts, sensations, and feelings reflects the sequence as “an object” made by an individual for other people.

In addition to emphasizing the key role of artifactuality in lyric sequences, Daniels’ highlighting of the materiality of her work tallies with the strategy Elaine Scarry offers to fight against the inexpressibility of private suffering: in *The Body in Pain*, Scarry (1985) distinguishes between “unmaking” and “making”. She argues that “making” refers to human beings’ creative capacity to better the conditions of the external world in accordance with the plight of the body whereas “unmaking” signals “uncreating of the created world” in the sense that the products of civilization turn against the human body by inflicting wounds on it (p. 45). To avoid the suffocating and isolating aspect of suffering, Scarry (1985) promotes the “making of artifacts” through which individuals may project their body into the external world and which, in turn, can remake the human sentience (p. 307):

The woman making the coat, for example, has no interest in making a coat per se but in making someone warm: . . . she is at work to remake human tissue to be free of the problem of being cold. She . . . accomplishes her goal by indirection- by making the freestanding object which then remakes the human site that is her actual object. So, too, the poet projects the private acuties of sentience into the sharable, because objectified, poem, which exists not for its sake but to be read: its power now moves back from the object realm to the human realm where sentience itself is remade. (p. 307)

Similarly, Daniels’ treatment of her work as “an artifact” makes the reader view the sequence as an objectified product of human “making”, in Scarry’s terms, which aims to improve the conditions of the body. According to Scarry (1985), this mode of artistic creation is “a sustained attempt to lift the interior facts of bodily sentience out of the inarticulate pre-language of ‘cries and whispers’ into the realm of shared

objectification” (pp. 10-11). Likewise, thanks to the intersubjective model of the lyric subject, *The Niobe Poems* does not stand as an expression of a single personality, which has been the dominant idea of the lyric due to the legacy of Romantic poetry. Rather, it is an artifact, a freestanding object, intended to be shared in a collective manner.

Moreover, Daniels’ sequence is laden with figures that are engaged with such creative activities for the benefit of other people. In “The Fire Mystery”, for example, the reader encounters Niobe the nun and her song into which the auditor may participate at his/ her will. The beginning of the poem shows a Niobe, who is surrounded by terrified people, waiting to watch what she will do (Daniels, ll. 1-7). There is a priest who pours gas around the place Niobe sits, and takes matches without saying anything (Daniels, ll. 8-11). Niobe does not pay attention to the priest. Instead, she is “making / her phoenix song already / waiting for the sun’s rays / to light her up” (Daniels, ll. 10-13). The reader learns that this Niobe is also suffering from maternal grief, as the poem refers to “the voices of children” which she can still hear and remind her of how she felt their mouths when she breastfed them (Daniels, ll. 16-22). This might be the reason why she is punished in this way, as nuns should lead a celibate life. Although she “wants them back”, she is also aware of the fact that this is not possible anymore (Daniels, ll. 23-24). However, unlike the mythic Niobe, who becomes an in-between figure between life and death, Daniels’ Niobe the nun thinks that “she can still live again / if she can die” (Daniels, 1988, ll. 26-27). Hence, she imagines herself as Phoenix.⁵⁰ The poem ends with the image of Niobe’s burning body, singing:

⁵⁰ It should be noted that Ovid is among those who retell the myth of Phoenix. In the Book XV of *The Metamorphoses*, he narrates the story of Phoenix. However, in his version, the bird is not reborn out of its ashes. Instead, it dies in the nest it builds out of various plants, and from its dead body, a new bird comes to life (Ovid, trans. 1983, p. 377).

Reduced to dust
and embering ashes
the heart remains
unburnable.
Like a dependable motor
that always starts,
it will beat again
in the bodies of those
who want it to, (Daniels, ll. 34-42)

Singing before the public, Niobe the nun resembles, in some senses, classical lyricists, especially with regard to the elements of performance and melody highlighted in the poem. There are various classical poems that revolve around stories of such figures singing a song, reminding the reader of the lyric poet and his/her performance. One may think of the Cyclops Polyphemus and his song for Galatea in Theocritus "Idyll XI". In his pastoral lyric, Theocritus appears in propria persona as a poet counseling his friend Nicias, a doctor suffering from the pangs of love. He says "[n]o other remedy is there for love, Nicias, neither unguent, methinks, nor salve, save only the Muses; and this remedy is painless for mortals and pleasant, but hard to find" (Theocritus, trans. 1965, p. 87). Singling out the effect of "the Muses" for their healing power, Theocritus elaborates on this idea further by giving the example of Polyphemus's love for Galatea, who remains indifferent to his love. Thanks to his song, the Cyclops communicates his suffering, and thus, comes to terms with the idea that Galatea is not interested in him at all and there will be others who will requite his love. The idyll ends with Theocritus' words: "Thus did Polyphemus shepherd his love with minstrelsy, and fared easier than if he had spent gold" (Theocritus, trans. 1965, p. 91). Comparing Polyphemus to a minstrel, the poet says that the Cyclops manages to fight against pangs of love thanks to his song. As the words "unguent" and "salve" indicate, Theocritus interprets Polyphemus' lyric as

a sort of effective ointment applied on a wound. He highlights the therapeutic power of poetry, which can restore or better the health of an individual.

Likewise, Kate Daniels, in “The Fire Mystery”, focuses on the trope of singing. Due to the way she performs her song, Niobe the nun can be compared to a lyric poet performing a poem. It is possible to view her in light of Scarry’s model of the poet, whom she juxtaposes with the coat maker to highlight his/ her capacity of “remaking” the participant: Niobe the nun “projects” the human sentience to initiate a change in the sentience itself, in Scarry’s terms. To do so, she sings the above quoted lines, promoting an intersubjective understanding of suffering: in her song, Niobe the nun employs the image of the heart, which originally belongs to the burned body but will continue to beat in the bodies of those who want it to do so. Taking Niobe the nun as the epitome of the lyric poet, I argue that the heart, the beating of which is reminiscent of rhyme and rhythm in poetry, is a metaphor for the lyric poem. In line with the argument I propose above, those people who accept this heart to beat in their bodies, denote the lyric audience, be it the reader or the auditor. The image of the heart constitutes a powerful metaphor in the sense that it directly enters into the body of another, hence eliminates somatic limits in the communication of pain. In this sense, it is reminiscent of Theocritus’ comparing of the Cyclops’ song to some “salve”: this analogy points to a physical connection through the use of the word “salve”, which is applied directly on the skin (Theocritus, trans. 1965, p. 87). Theocritus encourages Nicias to follow the way Polyphemus fights with sorrows of love since he believes in the healing power of the song and its communicative capacity. Niobe the nun, similarly, invites the audience to adopt the heart/ lyric poem as his/ her own, which carries her grief within itself. As stated before, lyric poetry has a ritualistic dimension, stemming from the classical

heritage of the genre. Thus, its characteristic effects depend on its repetition by and/or before various people within different contexts. In this respect, “The Fire Mystery” underpins the idea that the heart, or the lyric poem in other words, will refashion its participants and make them realize that pain can be communicated within the community lyric poetry constructs. Discussing the ritual dimension of the lyric, Roland Greene (1991) contends that “[t]hrough the enactment of the poem as a collective score, the participant typically transcends the prosaic uses of its constitutive elements and attains an experiential identity with a subset of his or her culture” (p. 6). To do so, the participant enters into the poem by shedding his or her all-too-specific identity and returns back to his/ her everyday self, which is restructured or reanimated (Greene, 1991, p. 6). Likewise, through the image of the heart beating in other people’s bodies, Daniels’ poem encourages such a participation in the world of the lyric poem. In this sense, “the mystery” (in the title of the poem) refers to how Niobe symbolically dies as an individual yet lives again like a phoenix as her poem exerts influence over other people in each performance: there is a movement from the individual to the collective. Hence, Niobe the nun becomes the “maker”, the one who constructs “artifacts” for others, in Scarry’s words.

Here, it should be specifically noted that “artificiality” was part of an important topos in early model lyric sequences, namely blason. While preliminary examples portray the male persona as a unified self, the female stands almost as an artifact, an aesthetic and constructed object like a statue or an artwork, which is constantly compared to natural elements. Gumpert (2001), in his *Grafting Helen*, observes this move in Ronsard’s *Amours* 23 (1552), which compares the beloved to coral and marble (p. 171). He argues that converted into mineral mosaic, the female body is constantly “broken down and put back together” through such blasons

(Gumpert, 2001, p. 171). The same attitude of breaking the body of the female into pieces can be seen in Shakespeare's anti-blazon poem, "Sonnet 130", comparing the mistress's lips to coral (l. 2). Daniels, however, subverts this gender role division by making Niobe the nun "the maker" of artifacts instead of an artifact. Besides, there is no single Niobe but multiple Niobes, each giving voice to their experience in fragments, a mode of writing which highlights how Daniels reacts against privileging the idea of the unified self over the fragmentary. Even the way Niobe the nun encourages the audience to adopt her "heart" points to the unmaking and remaking of bodies. This dual movement may be reminiscent of dismembering and reassembling of female bodies in early lyric sequences, a poetic convention foregrounding artifactuality. However, Daniels does not associate this continuous process of unmaking and remaking with gender roles but with the refashioning of the lyric audience.

The way Daniels depicts Niobe the nun as a singer with a vulnerable body, on the other hand, may be interpreted in terms of her gender. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Hélène Cixous (2010), in "The Laugh of Medusa", builds a link between women, as the repressed, and poetry, as the locus of the unconscious that can give voice to the oppressed (pp. 31-32). Cixous (2010) builds on this connection by asserting that "[i]n women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which, once we've been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us- that element is the song" (p. 33). Similarly, Niobe the nun's power lies in her song, which not only becomes a channel for her self-expression when her body is at stake as she is subjected to severe punishment but also stands as an artifact that has the capacity of exerting influence over others. As seen in the aforementioned discussion, the overall

structure of Daniels' work relies on the trope of artifactuality, hence reflecting the sequence as an object made. Thereby, not only in "The Fire Image", but also in the whole sequence, Daniels' play with the lyric subject, character and voice points to the social capacity of the lyric in remaking individuals to fight against the isolated mode of private suffering.

3.3 Lyric address: Poetry as a means of constructing a responsive universe

"The Fire Image" points to a relation between the lyric poet and the participant with regard to the capacity of the lyric to bring about a change in the lyric audience. Lyric address offers another way to build such a link: resisting the narrative aspect of the lyric (Culler, 2015, p. 225), lyric address constitutes a moment of poetic utterance in which the addressee is asked to be part of lyric discourse. In his *Theory of the Lyric*, Culler (2015) draws attention to the significance of lyric address as a generic effect, which seeks "to establish relations between self and other" (p. 225). Owing to this device, lyric poetry cannot solely be viewed as the manifestation of the self and his/her inner thoughts, sensations, and/ or meditations. Rather, it stands as a social act in the sense that it encourages communication among different individuals. As Culler (2015) argues, lyric address points to "a subject asked to respond in some way" (p. 237). By asking the audience/ reader to react to a given situation, lyric address posits "a potentially responsive or at least attentive universe, to which one has a relation" (Culler, 2015, p. 216). Hence, it may provide the reader with an alternative path for the communication of private suffering among individuals.

Similarly, Daniels relates Niobe's tragedy to the reader in "The Death of the Niobids" through lyric address. Situated in the first part of the sequence, the poem depicts the plight of the classical Niobe after the loss of her children. Therefore, the

poem belongs to the first part of Bowra's triad, namely the illustrative myth. It depicts what happens after the catastrophic death of the Niobids in the first stanza by saying "[a]fterwards it was very still. / . . . The sun beat down / on the broken bodies." (Daniels, ll. 1-7). The second stanza begins with an address saying "[i]f you had come upon it / would you have believed / what you saw?" (Daniels, ll. 10-12). To highlight how terrifying the scene is, the persona does not describe the conditions of the bodies in detail, nor does s/he passively narrate what has just happened. Instead, she challenges the reader to bear witness to this calamity through lyric address. The stanza juxtaposes the image of the disaster with the overall atmosphere in the country, which is "at peace but the family / slaughtered at the municipal park" (Daniels, ll. 14-15).⁵¹ The poem portrays the catastrophic microcosm by comparing it to the undisturbed macrocosm, and the very juxtaposition of these two highlights the need for a response from the external world.

Following these lines, the poem again employs lyric address at the beginning of the third stanza, which speculates on how the reader would act when s/he encounters Niobe in grief: the persona asks whether the reader would be the one who has "shaken [his/ her] head / and hurried on, disbelieving?" or the one "who told her [Niobe] to submit / and advised her to accept / whatever the gods dished out" (Daniels, ll. 16-17 and ll. 26-28 respectively). This constant movement from depicting the disastrous scene to addressing the reader and vice versa shows the persona's reaction to the serene atmosphere surrounding the tragedy of Niobe. S/he resists a model of universe, which is indifferent to an individual's suffering. For this purpose, s/he relies on his/ her audience, and expects him/ her to respond to Niobe's

⁵¹ Here, through the term "the municipal park", Daniels refers to her modern re-visioning of the myth in which Niobe's son drowns in the river at the park. As discussed under the sub-title of "The Focus on the Subjective", these references to various Niobes become a strategy to represent Niobe as an intersubjective character and persona.

plight. This expectation pertains to the function of lyric address in Culler's theory (2015), which fulfills "a long-standing lyric task of making a planet into a world" (p. 242). In this sense, the way Daniels utilizes lyric address in "The Death of the Niobids" foregrounds the social bearing of the lyric as it affirms the necessity of one's responsiveness to the pain of another.

In the previous section, I have argued that Daniels deliberately reflects her sequence as an "object made", or an "artifact", as the terms used by both Greene and Scarry, in different contexts. I have dwelt upon how a lyric poem may epitomize the act of "making an artifact" as a social action. Here, owing to the link lyric address builds between different people, the social function of the lyric poem becomes clearer: as Scarry (1985) notes, artifact "(whether an art work or instead an object of everyday use) is intended as something that will both enter into and itself elicit human responsiveness" (p. 175). Lyric address underpins this capacity of poetry as an artifact to evoke, or at least to ask for, a response. The use of this generic device supports my argument that Daniels' adaptation of the classical myth does not solely depend upon the thematic re-visioning of the Niobe narrative, but also on her formal engagement with the lyric sequence as she uses the characteristic effects of the genre. In addition, her use of lyric address is in line with the path Ovid hinted at in the *Metamorphoses*: as discussed before, although the Niobe myth expresses grief as a private and suffocating mode of suffering, other myths Ovid rehandles in the *Metamorphoses* show that the communication of grief among different individuals may become a strategy to resist the effects of all-consuming grief (Gentilcore, 2010, p.108). This is what Daniels does through her use of lyric address: "The Death of Niobids" does not depict Niobe as an isolated figure. Rather, it constantly relates her plight to the reader by asking what his/ her response would be.

Furthermore, Daniels differentiates between what would be right and wrong responses at the end of the poem. By addressing those who advised her to accept the punishment of the gods, the persona says “[y]ou were the one / she looked in the face / and told to fuck off” (Daniels, ll. 37-39).⁵² The persona criticizes the instructive maxim associated with the Niobe myth; that is, she has to submit to the will of the gods even when they cause suffering. To do so, Daniels reimagines Niobe as a figure who has survived after the death of her children and she does not abstain from showing her reaction to other people in a bold manner.

“The New Niobe” is another poem in which Daniels uses lyric address. This time, however, she employs a different strategy to promote human responsiveness in the communication of suffering. The poem portrays the modern Niobe, who has lost her son, yet has come to terms with what has happened as it is evident in her words ending the poem: “[i]t happened. / He died. / I live” (Daniels, ll. 55-57). In line with the polyphonic nature of the sequence, the poem starts with the third-person, but ends with the above quoted sentences of the modern Niobe, which are indicated through the use of italics. This intersubjective aspect of the poem is enriched through lyric address, which relates the plight of the modern Niobe to the reader by making him/ her realize that s/he might be in the same position:

Now she knows:
fate flies down
whenever god feels like it
and happens like a TV show
or someone else’s tragedy
published in the paper
then one day the tragedy is yours, the name
is yours, the obituary
yours. The photo
in the paper
is your backyard.

⁵² Daniels’ diction here can be compared to other modern and contemporary Anglo-American poets (such as Philip Larkin) who use resentful language and slang in lyric poetry, conventionally characterized by elevated diction.

The dead boy on television
Your dead boy. (Daniels, ll. 10-22)

It does not escape the reader that Daniels introduces the modern media in this part where she tries to build a relation between the body in pain and other people. This parallels how the contemporary reader frequently confronts various images of suffering in the media. As Susan Sontag (2004) notes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, “[b]eing a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is quintessential modern experience” as “[w]ars are now living room sights and sounds” (p. 18). By relying on this common experience, Daniels’ persona warns the reader that their tragedy might become a so-called “image” in the media. In this way, s/he reminds them of their vulnerability.

As Scarry (1985) argues, “the pains occurring in other people’s bodies flicker before the mind, then disappear” due to the “absolute split between one’s sense of one’s own reality and the reality of other persons” (p. 4). Likewise, the classical Niobe myth exposes human failure with regard to understanding how a person in grief feels. Her metamorphosis into the rock indicates that we cannot attribute any reaction to a body in pain other than pre-linguistic cries. Similarly, those images about another’s suffering in the media appear as “rocks” to us, in the sense that we cannot figure out how they feel, hence we tend to view them as “senseless” images, devoid of sentience and agency. In her address to the reader, Daniels’ persona resists this illusion. This is why s/he starts the poem by saying “[i]t’s a myth she’s a rock. / She’s a new woman, hard / where she was soft before / and full of a new self-knowledge” (Daniels, ll. 1-4). In this way, the persona points to the “myths”, ancient or modern, that people consciously or unconsciously construct with regard to the pain of others. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Daniels refers to the media in

her rewriting of the classical Niobe myth.⁵³ The poem makes the reader reflect upon how s/he responds to the suffering of others by taking into account his/ her embodiedness, which makes everyone open to assault, thus the common human condition of embodiedness may play a key role in recognizing the pain of others.

In addition to promoting responsiveness and reminding the reader of his/ her vulnerability, Daniels also employs lyric address to show how a suffering person may benefit from the communication of pain. As stated before, the persona depicts the recovery of the modern Niobe from excessive grief and tells the reader that she becomes a role model for him/ her in the last poem, “Epilogue”. Moreover, the persona addresses the reader and says “[i]f Niobe had not lived / I could not talk to you now” (Daniels, ll. 24/25). In this manner, s/he highlights the circle of communication the sequence seeks to build: this new Niobe has triggered the recovery of another, who can communicate with the reader (“you”) now. Hence s/he indirectly teaches the same instructive maxim; that is, the necessity to communicate private suffering. From this respect, the last lyric address in Daniels’ sequence fulfills the function Culler confers upon this generic device. For Culler (2015), lyric address is a distinguished trope as “it makes its point by troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit of communication itself” (p. 13). Likewise, Daniels’ last address foregrounds the significance of chains of communication in fighting against private suffering. In this sense, the sequence again supports the Ovidian path for recovery implied in the *Metamorphoses*.

As seen in these examples, lyric address resists the idea of lyric poetry viewed solely as the genre of the private. Instead, it highlights possible relations lyric poetry can build among different people. From this respect, lyric address is the most

⁵³ This shows that the classical myth of Niobe is not only about the inexpressibility of private suffering, but also about how people fail in their attempts to understand the pain of others.

direct invitation for the audience/ reader to become part of lyric discourse. In her *The Niobe Poems*, Daniels employs this generic device to make use of its characteristic effects, thus raising human responsiveness, highlighting vulnerability as a common somatic condition, and foregrounding the benefits of constructing circles of communication.

3.4 Lyric temporality: The measure of ethical capacity in poetry?

Both generic paradigms analyzed above (the focus on the subjective and lyric address) heavily depend upon another effect of the genre, namely lyric temporality. Lyric temporality may work in different ways in each poem or sequence. However, it has a characteristic imprint, which dates back to the classical heritage of the genre. Although modern lyric poetry is no more intended to be sung before an audience, its performative aspect has survived in its “ritual element”, as Roland Greene uses the term. From this respect, lyric poetry has a special temporality as it creates moments of iterable poetic utterances. As stated before, Culler (2015) calls this special “now” of lyric articulation “the lyric present” (p. 226), which is in line with the repetitive aspect of rituals. Sappho’s Fr. 16 offers such a temporality, which becomes functional in moving from the past to present to publicize the personal.

Likewise, Daniels, in *The Niobe Poems*, employs the Niobe myth to endow it with significance in the ritualistic lyric present. Under the sub-title of “The Focus on the subjective: The intersubjective persona and the lyric poet as the maker of ‘artifacts’”, I have explored how Daniels creates a polyphonic and hence intersubjective account of the myth by playing with the idea of the lyric persona. What’s significant in terms of lyric temporality is Daniels’ poems standing as dramatic monologues (such as “After the Funeral”) indeed creating a past to be

juxtaposed with the lyric present. Another example of such monologues is “The Bedspread”, in which the reader encounters the difficulty the modern Niobe has in accepting his son’s death. Looking at the bed of her deceased son, she says

“A hundred times I have made this bed,
smoothed the tufted white cotton
over the colorful sheets, tucked
a thick fold under the lumpy pillow.
And more often I have lain here
with a small child, his yellow hair
spilling over both of us, silliness
filling the bedroom air. (Daniels, ll. 1-8).

Although Niobe says that she “can understand how a child falls in the river / how water takes the breath away” (Daniels, ll. 16-17), it is evident that she cannot detach herself from her extreme grief at this point. This is the reason why she tells the reader that she cannot understand how the grandfather of her son unmade the bed “where no one would ever sleep again” to “wrap the little body in” when the divers pulled him from the river (Daniels, l.31 and l.12 respectively). In Niobe’s monologue, the reader witnesses the revival of the past in the present, thus signs of trauma: the memory of her child keeps haunting her. If trauma is an experience of an unexpected event to which the individual responds through uncontrolled repetitive and intrusive actions, as Caruth defines the concept (1996, p. 11), Niobe’s response indicates her wish to return to an old repetitive habit; that is, the making of her son’s bed, so that she can exert control over her life again. This interpretation chimes with the Freudian idea (1920/2001) that “[w]e describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield” (p. 29). Niobe tries to restore this shield by returning to her past routine at the present moment. Returning to the temporal structure of the poem, the use of the present tense here is close to direct speech in other genres, and inverted commas support this effect. Due to the fictional mode, the reader does not become part of the poem as a

collective experience. Rather, s/he hears the first-person account of the modern Niobe, trying to come to terms with the tragic reality that she has lost her son who was sleeping in that bed the night before. Thus, the effect of “After the Funeral”, “The Bedspread”, and similar poems, marked with inverted commas as “person representations”, in Greene’s terms, does not rely on the performative aspect of the genre.

Towards the end of the sequence, the reader encounters three poems, namely “Ars Poetica”, “The New Niobe”, and “Epilogue”, which are different from earlier ones in terms of temporality. The “lyric present” operates on two different dimensions in these poems: on the one hand, it highlights the change in Daniels’ Niobe at the fictional level. Unlike the mythic figure, she manages to detach herself from her grief. In “Ars Poetica”, for instance, the persona says “[a]t last, her hands are not shaking. / Finally, her eyes are dry. / She thinks of the dead / calmly, without terror” (Daniels, ll. 1-4).

At the ritualistic level, on the other hand, the “lyric present” turns the last poem, “Epilogue”, into a collective and performative event into which the reader can participate. The poem begins by portraying the current plight of Niobe:

Now in the evening
she sits on the long lawn
sloping down to the water
and listens to the waves slapping (Daniels, ll. 1-4).

The second lyric now compares the present mood to the recent past: “The furrows where the feelings have ground through before / are less tender now” (ll. 6-8). These two deictics both refer to the temporal axis defining Niobe’s gradual recovery as a character, whose voice has been heard in the previous poems. Then, a third “now” appears in a different way, connected to a lyric I:

Usually she rocks in a brown wood chair
on the dampening grass, shadows descending
from her long dark hair.
And if you cruised up that river
in a quiet boat, you could see her
as I do, the invisible scaffoldings
of strength and pain. *If Niobe had not lived*
I could not talk to you now.
I could not love
anything at all.
No one at all. (Daniels, ll. 18-28)

I have already referred to this last part of the poem with regard to how it supports the intersubjective nature of the sequence and how it employs lyric address to reflect upon the communicative capacity of the genre. Yet, it has further significance in terms of lyric temporality: similar to Sappho's opening the mythic frame to the present moment through the use of the lyric "now" in Fr. 16, Daniels recontextualizes the Niobe myth in the ritualistic lyric present. The shift from the illustrative myth to a personal reference, in Bowra's terms, depends upon her use of lyric temporality. Besides, thanks to the "lyric now", the persona can address the reader at the special moment of lyric articulation. In this sense, the narrative aspect of the lyric sequence is disrupted by the apostrophic, and the fictional gives way to the ritualistic.

Moreover, it does not escape the reader that this part of the poem is written in italics. This is parallel to how the poem "The New Niobe" ends with the modern Niobe's words in italics, "She can say, [*i*]t happened / He died. / I live" (Daniels, ll. 56-58). In addition to representing Niobe's acceptance of loss and subsequent detachment from excessive grief, these lines reflect the use of italics as a means of highlighting utterances. In this respect, the "Epilogue" offers the personal reference part as an utterance to be re-uttered in the ritualistic "lyric now". The poem does not give any details about what kind of individual suffering the persona has undergone

and this enables the reader to adopt the lines in various contexts.⁵⁴ Like Sappho's poem, the personal turns into the collective in the lyric now. The classical Niobe myth denotes an eternal present of suffering and silence, as N. S. Boone suggests (2016, p. 214). However, Daniels' sequence disrupts this idea by offering the reader the eternal present of the ritualistic lyric temporality to turn individual suffering into a shared experience. From this respect, lyric temporality, I argue, signals the social capacity of the genre thanks to its ritualistic dimension.

Indeed, this function of the lyric has already been signaled in "Ars Poetica", which relies on Horace's well-known formula, "ut picture poesis". In his foundational work "Ars Poetica", Horace (Trans. 2010) builds a relation between these two arts and says "poetry is like painting" (p. 130) as the way the reader interprets a poem is similar to how a person views a painting. Daniels makes use of this Horatian link in her poem: after losing her son, the modern Niobe consoles herself with the idea of how bad her tragedy might have been (Daniels, ll. 8-9). The reader expects her to refer to the Ovidian myth where all seven sons and seven daughters of the classical Niobe die. The reference to the Horatian formula further encourages such an expectation since in his *Ars Poetica* Horace (Trans. 2010) argues that a writer should follow conventions in his/ her revisiting of classical myths (p.124) and he highlights the necessity of studying "Greek models night and day" (p. 128). Yet, Daniels' Niobe meditates upon a modern painting, namely *My Parents* by Henry Koerner, who lost his parents in a concentration camp during WWII:

⁵⁴ As Sharon Cameron (1979) rightly observes, the lyric posits a speaker whose "origin remains deliberately unspecified, unlike that of characters in narratives, whose first task is to particularize themselves" (p. 208). For this reason, Cameron (1979) views the lyric as a departure from "the finite constrictions of identity" (p. 208). Lyric sequences, on the other hand, generally particularize their speakers so much so that they even give names to these speakers. This stems from their narrative quality linked to the fictional dimension of the sequence. By introducing the lyric I as an anonymous persona in the lyric now, Daniels plays with this characteristic of the genre in the "Epilogue". This paves the way for the communalization of private suffering as the reader can reutter the lines as his/ her own.

His tragedy eventually became a picture
- a beautiful picture.
Then someone bought it from him
and took it away” (Daniels, ll. 38-41).

It is possible to approach this painting as an artistic resolution for a trauma narrative. That the artist repeats his traumatic experience in a painting points to Caruth’s conceptualization of trauma and repetitions following this experience not only as the expression of the incomprehensibility of death but also that of one’s own survival (1996, p. 77). If the repetition becomes “the very attempt to claim one’s own survival”, in Caruth’s terms (1996, p. 64), then Koerner’s painting stands as the relieving of his trauma in the form of an artwork that bears witness to death and survival. Similarly, “The Epilogue” bears witness to the survival of modern Niobe and Daniels shifts from a microcosmic portrayal of modern Niobe’s plight to a macrocosmic one by according the same function of communication to painting’s sister art, poetry. Like Koerner’s painting, “Epilogue” is there to be owned by a reader, but this time, through his/ her iteration of lines. In this respect, Daniels’ “instructive maxim” again diverges from that of the classical Niobe myth thanks to lyric temporality: grief, or any other type of individual suffering, should not be a suffocating experience, confined to the domain of the pre-linguistic and that of the private. Furthermore, Daniels’ original contribution may trigger a change in the participant, be it the reader or the auditor as “Epilogue” promotes the participant’s return to a renewed self whose opinion on the inexpressibility of private suffering is altered. S/he hears and gives voice to a new account of the myth in which Niobe has triggered the recovery of another person, who is talking in the lyric “now” (l.25). Once again, Daniels’ re-visioning of the myth depends upon the way she employs a characteristic effect of the genre, which is, in this case, ritualistic lyric temporality.

I have discussed earlier how the sequence stands as an artifact, made for the benefit of other people due to Daniels' intersubjective model of the lyric persona and her focus on the lyric poet (Niobe the nun in "The Fire Mystery") as "the maker of objects". In a similar vein, "Ars Poetica" expresses poetry as an artifact, this time by comparing it to another art form, painting. This comparison chimes with the Horatian understanding of poetry as a craft. In his practical approach to the nature of poetry, Horace presents rules and conventions about various technical aspects of literature, such as unity, consistency, meter, and subject. Likewise, Niobe visualizes how the painter is engaged in an artistic activity by thinking of it as a "*task*" with its own technical aspects (Daniels, l. 34). The very italicization of the word highlights the reference to the Horatian conceptualization of art as a craft:

For a short while, he had only
a *task*: combining color
on the palette;
a *problem*: how thickly
to apply the paint. (Daniels, ll. 33-37)

Niobe's paying attention to these practical aspects of painting underpins the artifactuality of Daniels' sequence. The poem's emphasis on minute details composing a whole makes the reader rethink the status of poetry as a craft. Yet, Daniels' Niobe also takes into account the communicative function of art. This is the reason why she enjoys imagining

the painter at his easel
temporarily relieved
of his tragic history
and personal pain. (Daniels, ll. 29-32)

It is evident from these lines that Daniels' Niobe views art as a way to communicate private suffering: it both creates a link between the artist and the audience and paves the way for the artist's self-expression. Although Niobe's "Ars Poetica" does not dwell upon how a poem can achieve these effects, the title leads the reader to reflect

on the social and communicative capacities of lyric poetry in terms of whether it can carry out these two functions attributed to painting.

3.5 Intense formal structuring: The materiality of the sequence, intertextuality, and cross-genre references

It is clear from my discussion in the previous sections of this chapter that Daniels uses different methods throughout the sequence to signal that her revisiting of the Niobe myth depends upon not only thematic changes but also the formal strategies she employs. Accordingly, the very form of the poem reflects her primary concern, namely publicizing private suffering through the use of lyric devices, in various ways, including self-conscious, self-reflexive, intertextual, and transgeneric moments in the text.

I have argued that the sequence stands as an artifact owing to its intersubjective model of the lyric persona, which resists the conventional generic unity of the self. In addition, I have contended that there are some poems (“The Fire Mystery” and “Ars Poetica”), which communicate this idea through their focus on artistic activities and figures like a lyric poet and a painter. Likewise, the last poem “Epilogue” contains a self-conscious and self-reflexive moment on the status of an artwork as an artifact. After depicting the recovery of the modern Niobe, who sits on the grass in her garden and calmly watches the waves (Daniels, ll. 2-3), the persona says

[p]ain is distant, forged
into an object outside herself,
a beautiful curiosity
she can hold in her hands:
A Chinese box or a jigsaw puzzle,
needling the intellect
and ignoring her feelings. (Daniels, ll. 11- 17)

The Ovidian myth represents how the pain of grief will be inflicted on Niobe's body with regard to the changes it will cause, and hence depicts her as a rock with human sentience, yet without agency. However, Daniels' persona imagines pain as an object independent of Niobe's body so much so that she can hold it in her hands. The way s/he speculates on what kind of an object it might be reveals its similarity to the object the reader holds in his/ her hands: like Daniels' lyric sequence, composed of small poems, the thing in Niobe's hands is depicted as a Chinese box or a jigsaw puzzle, both referring to objects characterized by a part-whole relation. Moreover, these metaphors have further significance if the reader takes into account the function Daniels imparts to them: like Daniels' box and puzzle, poetry might be a way to "ignore" one's feelings in the sense that lyric poetry, standing as a collective speech act, has the potential of resisting an isolated and suffocating mode of private suffering. It can stimulate or "needle", in Daniels' words, the "intellect" for this purpose. By building a link between poetry and these objects, the lines offer two metaphors which are self-conscious with regard to the representation of the sequence as a verbal artifact and self-reflexive in terms of foregrounding its material aspect. It is almost inevitable for the reader to go through these lines without recognizing the indirect reference to the object s/he holds in her hands at that moment.

Furthermore, Daniels underpins the materiality of her lyric sequence by aligning her work with another contemporary poetic convention, which is the revisionary myth-making tradition, employed by various Anglo-American women poets such as Sylvia Plath, H.D., and Carol Ann Duffy. To do so, she starts her work with a quotation from Adrienne Rich's well-known poem "Diving into the Wreck": "the thing I came for: / the wreck not the story of the wreck / the thing itself and not

the myth” (as cited in Daniels, ll. 61-63).⁵⁵ The word “wreck” is redolent of the fragmentary structure of Daniels’ sequence. Resisting the unity of the subject, *The Niobe Poems* is a fragmented whole where various accounts of different Niobes both stand apart and merge into each other.⁵⁶ Moreover, the part Daniels quotes is of special significance in terms of her poetic project in *The Niobe Poems*. “Diving into the Wreck” instantiates the revisionary aesthetics Rich explains in her “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision” (1972), which is regarded as a manifesto of revisionary mythmaking poetics in contemporary Anglo-American literature. For Rich (1972), re-vision is a strategy for survival through “the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction” (p. 18). Revisiting age-old narratives constructed from a patriarchal viewpoint, a female poet, according to Rich (1972), should promote the idea that “women can no longer be primarily mothers and muses for men: we [women] have our own work cut out for us” (p. 25). Kate Daniels employs a similar strategy when she rehandles the Niobe myth in a lyric sequence: omitting the metamorphosis of Niobe, which turns her into a sort of a “wreck” (as indicated by her poor mental health and physical condition), Daniels focuses on different Niobes’ accounts in which these characters manage to survive and communicate what they have gone through in different ways. Rich’s use of the word “wreck”, for Daniels, may denote how narratives informed by a male-dominated perspective victimize women in pain by ignoring their voices and confining them to silence. From this respect, these oft-quoted lines may point to the way the Niobe myth is revisited in Daniels’ sequence: to focus on the suffering of ancient and modern Niobes, Daniels enters the myth from a new critical direction,

⁵⁵ Likewise, Alice Oswald makes use of Rich’s project of “diving into the wreck” when she gives the sub-title of “An Excavation of the *Iliad*” to her work. For more information, see: Chapter 4.

⁵⁶ The way Daniels plays with the idea of the fragment can be compared to how Alice Oswald employs the fragmented form in reflecting her work, *Memorial*, as a sort of ruin. Hence, she gives the impression of looking at an open wound. For Oswald’s use of fragments, see Chapter 4.

which depends upon her emphasis on the social and communicative capacities of the lyric. Thus, she refashions the myth's core material in the form of a lyric sequence. Moreover, Daniels' reaction to the destructive effects of all-consuming grief is reminiscent of Rich's elaboration on silence in her "Cartographies of Silence". The very title of the sequence denotes the idea of giving a concrete form to silence to represent it. In the third poem, Rich (1978/2006) defends the idea that that silence "is a presence" and says "it has a history a form / Do not confuse it / with any kind of absence" (ll. 10-13). In her revisiting of the Niobe myth, Daniels, similarly, depicts various cases in which different Niobes articulate pain, hence resisting not only the silencing aspect of suffering but also its inexpressibility', which reduces the experience of the body in pain to absence. Moreover, in her seventh poem in "Cartographies of Silence", Rich (1978/2006) indeed singles out the capacity of poetry in giving shape to silence and says "at the will of the poet the poem/ could turn into a thing" (ll. 5-6). She further elaborates on her conceptualization of poetry as a genre having solid effects on individuals by saying

If it could simply look you in the face
with naked eyeballs, not letting you turn

till you, and I who long to make this thing,
were finally clarified in its stare (ll. 9-12).

Like Daniels, Rich views poetry as a way to promote responsiveness as its very gaze demands acknowledgement. Moreover, it builds a connection between an "I" and a "you", who reach a new level of understanding through poetry. Similarly, by revisiting not the "story" but "the wreck itself", Daniels' sequence does not offer solely a passive representation of the Niobe myth. Instead it seeks to become a shared experience among different lyric participants, who become connected to each

other by adopting the ritualistic parts of the work. Daniels' rehandling of the Niobe myth, thus, offers a fresh perspective by highlighting the social capacity of the lyric.

In addition to the use of self-conscious, self-reflexive, and intertextual moments, Daniels highlights the new form the myth is written in by borrowing from conventional devices of another genre, namely drama. In the contents pages, the reader recognizes that the sequence is divided into four scenes, namely "The Gods/ The Myth/ The Accident", "Before the Accident/ A Family Romance", "After the Accident/ The Funeral", and "The End of the Story/ A New Narration/ A New Niobe" (Daniels, pp. 4-5). This division is sound in terms of how narration proceeds at the fictional level of the sequence. Yet, as it is stated before, Daniels does not construct a new account of Niobe, which is narrated in a passive manner. Instead, she revisits the myth in the way Sappho does in her Fr. 16: there is a shift from the mythic framework to the expression of the individual. This constitutes a special speech act where the personal turns into the collective thanks to the ritualistic dimension of the lyric. By organizing her work in the form of a play, Daniels foregrounds the performative aspect she seeks to promote in her sequence: lyric poetry is, by nature, there to be re-uttered. Its possible social effects may be realized only if the participant adopts the lines as his/ her own through repetition. Yet, it is easier to disregard this performative aspect of the lyric as the genre is no more intended to be sung before an audience. In addition, as Culler (2015) discusses, there is a tendency to read almost every lyric poem as a fictional speech of a character, stemming from the centrality of the novel in Anglo-American theoretical discourse (pp. 2-3). As the performative aspect of drama still survives in modern times, Daniels deliberately crosses conventional boundaries between these two genres. Through this

transgeneric moment, the poet reminds the reader of the performative quality of the lyric, which still survives in its ritualistic dimension.

Furthermore, as aforementioned, she lists the *dramatis persona* at the beginning of the sequence (Daniels, p. xiii). This stands as a reaction to the classical myth which silences Niobe: while Ovid provides the reader with a third-person narration of Niobe's suffering, Daniels, in this transgeneric moment, portrays Niobe as a character with her own voice. Niobe's dramatic monologues, which are marked with inverted commas in the sequence, support this stance. By using a characteristic paratextual element in dramatic works, Daniels both challenges the speechlessness of Niobe in the classical myth and highlights the effects of voicing available in lyric poetry.

All these cross-genre references show that Daniels' *The Niobe Poems*, as a lyric sequence, contains narrative, dramatic and lyric elements within itself.⁵⁷ The poems that constitute the fictional dimension of the sequence exemplify the narrative impulse. The transgeneric moments, apparent in the organization of the text, are reminiscent of drama. The lyric spirit is evident in the ritualistic dimension of the text. While the dominant genre is the lyric, the reader may recognize various effects of other genres at specific moments in the text. From this respect, Daniels' play with the idea of the Ovidian mutability is also visible at the formal level: while the body in pain metamorphoses into a silenced rock in the classical myth, *The Niobe Poems* makes use of this trope of flux in its form to represent private suffering by using the diverse features of the three main genres.

⁵⁷ This fusion is reminiscent of Gérard Genette's well-known concept of "archigenres", a term by which Genette (1979/2014) refers to the idea that a "genre can always contain several genres" within itself because the defining criteria for genres is not restricted to purely formal categorizations but include the consideration of thematic elements associated with lyrical, epical, and dramatic works (pp. 26-27). For Genette's views on early strict generic categorizations and their shortcomings, see "The Architext".

3.6 Conclusion

Analyzing *The Niobe Poems* in light of these four parameters (the focus on the subjective, lyric address, lyric temporality, and intense formal structuring) shows that Kate Daniels does not simply rewrite the Niobe myth in another third-person narrative with a plot that represents individual suffering as inexpressible. Nor does she ignore the path Ovid hints at for recovery from grief. Indeed, she could change the instructive maxim of the myth by writing a narrative in which Niobe recovers from her excessive grief by sharing it with others. However, Daniels also seeks to promote the reader's participation into the world of the text to practice feeling for another and to understand the significance of responsiveness in the communication of suffering. Hence, she revisits the myth in a lyric sequence and this strategy enables her to move from the mythic narrative to the ritualistic dimension of lyric poetry. By foregrounding the performative aspect of the genre, Daniels turns her work into a shared experience, whereby the social bearing of lyric poetry becomes apparent: a lyric poem may stand as an artifact made for the benefit of others. Although it is commonly viewed as the realm of the private, the genre has a public dimension, which is evident in the way it publicizes the individual and refashions its participants. Daniels makes use of this potential of the lyric to construct an alternative avenue for the communication of private suffering.

CHAPTER 4

REVISITING THE COSMIC WAR WITH LYRIC DEVICES:

OSWALD'S *MEMORIAL*: AN EXCAVATION OF THE *ILIAD*

Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilles
and its devastations, which put pains thousandfold upon the
 Achans,
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls
of heroes, but gave their bodies to the delicate feasting
of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was accomplished (Homer, trans.
1974, Book 1, ll. 1-5).⁵⁸

In *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* (2011), Alice Oswald revisits the soldiers of the Trojan War and their violent, bloody, and painful deaths. The existing scholarship on the poem mainly focuses on the original way Oswald, as a classicist and poet, receives the conventions of the Homeric epic and oral tradition.⁵⁹ However, her most radical move has not been acknowledged yet: despite the fact that it has various story lines within itself, Homer's the *Iliad* is dominated by the frame narrative of Achilles' wrath. Oswald finds the control of this main narrative over various readings of the text problematic and decides to honor what she calls "the dazzling discontinuity" in the background by removing it (Oswald 2011b). I believe that critics have overlooked how the poet, in the much quoted "Preface", emphasizes the generic mutation she employs for such a reworking:

This version, trying to retrieve the poem's *enargeia*, takes away its narrative, as you might lift the roof off a church in order to remember what you're worshipping. What's left is a bipolar poem made of similes and short biographies of soldiers, both of which derive (I think) from distinct poetic sources: the similes from pastoral lyric (you can tell this because their metre

⁵⁸ Whereas I refer line numbers in the quotations from Homer's the *Iliad*, I give page numbers in those from Oswald's *Memorial* due to the fragmentary form of the text, including gaps at various points.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Stephe Harrop's "Speech, Silence and Epic Performance: Alice Oswald's *Memorial*" and Elizabeth Minchin's (2015) "'Translation' and Transformation: Alice Oswald's Excavation of the *Iliad*".

is sometimes compressed as if it originally formed part of a lyric poem); the biographies from the Greek tradition of lament poetry. (p. 1)

As a translator and paraphraser of the *Iliad*'s atmosphere, instead of its story, Oswald rehandles the Homeric epic material with lyric devices by omitting its narrative and combining pastoral lyric conventions and lament poetry, corresponding to elegy in contemporary terminology. For this reason, I argue that her work is characterized by a generic shift and hybridity: there is a movement from the world of epic to that of the lyric, and what Oswald calls the bipolarity (p. 1) of *Memorial* stems from this reworking of the Homeric text. Writing a discontinuous series of fragments, Oswald composes a lyric sequence that resists its narrative impulse and foregrounds the lyric mode. That Oswald puts great emphasis on the lyric aspect of the sequence is visible in the vocal effects the poem tries to create: it gives voice to a chorus of mourners (instead of a single lyric persona), singing a fragment for each soldier. Kate Kellaway (2011) states in her review that by commemorating each and every soldier, “[w]hat Oswald does is to give each doomed person an extra breath of life, a moment in the sunlight of her attention, even though, sometimes there is little or nothing to record about the life. It is death that characterizes the man and each death is different”. As argued before, the privacy of suffering leads to a suffocating experience. If death is one of the most “private” moments that make a person who (s)he is, suffering at the moment of death is the apex of pain’s inexpressibility. Sensitive to the aftermath of violence in war, hence to suffering, death, loss, and mourning, Oswald takes up such a challenge in her revisiting of each soldier’s moment of death. Thus, the significance of her rewriting the cosmic war with lyric devices is found in the way Oswald utilizes the social uses of the genre to articulate the experience of the soldiers on the brink of death. This chapter explores Oswald’s generic experimentation by focusing on how she employs lyric devices in *Memorial*

to portray the suffering and death of these soldiers without subjugating them to the heroic ideal or any other ideological narrative stemming from it. While paying tribute to the privacy of each soldiers' suffering, Oswald also points to the mourning of the anonymous chorus and the grief of soldiers' families. Thereby, the sequence shows the publicization of suffering and portrays death as a universal tragic human condition. Scarry's ideas on suffering in war and the four lyric parameters I employed, namely the focus on subjectivity, lyric temporality, lyric address, and intense formal structuring, form the theoretical framework of this analysis. In the first part, I briefly analyze the terminology Oswald brings up in her "Preface" to discuss why the tradition of ancient lament songs can be seen as a predecessor of the lyric and how it might be functional in the communication of suffering. Secondly, the model of lyric subjectivity, temporality, address, and intense formal structuring that Oswald's fragments offer are explored with regard to the lyric rehandling of the Homeric epic. There is a specific focus on how Oswald's sequence of fragments seeks to make the suffering and death of soldiers relevant to the contemporary reader through the deictic devices of the lyric.

4.1 A discussion of Oswald's terminology in the "Preface": Elegy, epic, and the classical lament tradition

Although elegy has been employed by various Anglo-American poets through the ages, there has been no consensus on a single definition. Especially when it is used in adjective form, namely "elegiac", it may refer to a mood rather than a genre. Still, in English poetry, there have been two principal meanings associated with the term "elegy": "a song of lamentation, in particular a funeral song or lament for the dead; and, in addition, meditative or reflective verse, more properly termed elegiac poetry"

(Kennedy, 2007, p. 2). The two meanings show why elegy in verse has been classified mostly as a sub-genre of lyric poetry: namely, its association with songs, which chimes with the foregrounding of rhythmical articulation in the lyric, and its relation to subjective feelings and thoughts, as the words “meditative” and “reflective” denote. Furthermore, both of these meanings can be traced back to the lyric tradition, which flourished in classical Greece. Hence, if we are to look at an elegiac poem written by a twenty-first century author who revisits classical traditions, it is essential to go back to the ancient heritage of the genre, which will prove that there is a mutual relationship between past conventions and contemporary experimentations, serving as a crux for Oswald’s treatment of the genre.⁶⁰

In “Ancient Greek Elegy”, Gregory Nagy (2010) elaborates on the origin of the genre by presenting the two senses in which the word “elegos” and its derivatives, “elegeion” and “elegeia”, are used in the classical period: “[o]ne sense had to do with the singing of a sad and mournful song, to the accompaniment of a wind instrument called the aulos” and “[t]he other sense had to do with the rhythm of two particular verses combined as a couplet”, which are the elegiac hexameter and the elegiac pentameter (p. 13). While its musical aspect leads to the elegy’s association with classical lyric poetry, the use of the hexameter line built a connection between elegy and epic. Nevertheless, in terms of personal subject matter, brevity, and focus on the subjective, the boundaries between elegy and epic were clearly set. Ian Rutherford (2009) notes this relation by singling out differences between these two:

⁶⁰ Indeed, this triggers different problems for the conceptualization of the term: although it is common to trace its foundations to antiquity, there is still no consensus on the origin of elegy. As Budelmann (2009) states, “[c]lassicists use ‘lyric’ in both a narrow and a comprehensive sense. The narrow sense excludes two major genres, elegy and iambos, while the comprehensive usage includes them” (p. 2) In line with the comprehensive approach and the contemporary view of elegy as a genre mostly depending on individual sensations and the representation of the somatic, I treat elegy in verse as a sub-genre of lyric poetry, the roots of which can be traced back to the classical lament tradition.

The fact that the metrical scheme included a hexameter line allowed for the use of epic vocabulary and may well have influenced the development of the genre: it was different enough from epic to allow for the expression of personal themes, but close enough to discourage the use of undignified subject matter.

Thanks to this metrical parallelism, the representation of the personal in elegy was granted with the dignity of epic material. The implication is that not only the themes of cosmic war, violence, and communal lifestyle, but also the experience of the individual in distress matters. Moreover, there are some textual moments when the two genres overlap. In spite of the thematic contrast between epic and elegy, epic poems mostly subsume mourning songs under themselves and refer to the voices of the bereaved. The mourning for Hector in the last book of the *Iliad* (Trans. 1974) stands as an example:

And when they had brought him inside the renowned house, they laid
him
then on a carved bed, and seated beside him the singers
who were to lead the melody in the dirge, and the singers
chanted the songs of sorrow, and the women were mourning beside them
(Book 24, ll. 719-722).

These mourning songs are called “lament poetry” or “songs of lament”, defined as “an act of singing in response to the loss of someone or something near and dear, whether the loss is real or only figuration” (Nagy, 2010, p. 13).⁶¹ Throughout its evolution, elegy, in Anglo-American poetry, has depended on this ancient heritage: as seen in the quotation above, a deceased body becomes the concern of another person or a group of people and triggers an artistic response, whereby loss, suffering, and death are communicated through the act of mourning. The ethical gist of this sub-genre, hence, relies heavily on one’s reaction and responsiveness to the pain and demise of another as well as giving voice to individual grief. In British literature,

⁶¹ Classical elegy, on the other hand, is the monadic poetry “evolved from traditions of singing songs of lament”, and although classical elegy acquired diverse functions, its age-old association with mourning songs is the result of its link to lament tradition (Nagy, 2010, pp. 13-14).

Lord Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850/1935) is a well-known example of an elegy written in a sequence. Composed after the death of Tennyson's friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, the sequence represents the poet's private grief. The fifth poem acknowledges the inexpressibility of such an experience of individual suffering by saying:

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within. (ll. 1-4).

Referring to how words fail to articulate his plight after the death of Hallam, Tennyson points to the impossibility of representing individual grief. Oswald's sequence, however, diverges from such modern elegiac sequences as she refers to the Greek tradition of lament poetry in her "Preface" to *Memorial*. She explains how the Homeric epics provide the reader with such scenes:

There are accounts of Greek lament in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. When a corpse was layed out, a professional poet (someone like Homer) led the mourning and was antiphonally answered by women offering personal accounts of the deceased. I like to think that the stories of individual soldiers recorded in the *Iliad* might be recollections of these laments, woven into the narrative by poets who regularly performed high epic and choral lyric poetry. (pp. 1-2)

It does not escape the reader that Oswald does not simply use the term "elegy". Instead, she builds a relationship between a contemporary lyric sub-genre and its classical precursor; lament songs. Besides contributing to the evolution of elegy, laments songs have two other links to lyric poetry: First, Oswald's emphasis on these lines as sung/ spoken attests to the understanding of the lyric Culler (2015) presents in his *Theory of the Lyric*: it is not traditional mimesis, in the sense that it does not simply offer an imitation of character and action, but stands as a special sort of a speech act, which may include minimal action and/ or characters without spoiling the non-mimetic enterprises of the genre (p. 35). Secondly, there are indeed classical

lyric poems imitating the three-part pattern of lament songs, composed of a direct address, a narrative of a past event or possibilities in future, and re-addressing, which appears with a focus on grief and disappointment, caused by loss. As James Bradley Wells (2016) explains, Sappho's Fr. 31 (which has been briefly discussed in the Introduction) imitates this lament pattern by inverting the genre: instead of death, the occasion here is love loss, hence not grief but desire is the dominant motive in Sappho's parody (p. 166). By employing the lament tradition in a transformational manner, Oswald parallels the challenge taken by the only woman lyric poet from early Greece the contemporary reader knows. This is in line with how she, in a covert manner, places herself in a lineage of poets in the "Preface": by referring to "a professional poet (someone like Homer)" who led the mourning ceremony and was answered by the chorus of female mourners in turn (Oswald p. 1), and to choral lyric poets, Oswald seems to imply that she "writes and speaks as the latest in a long line of artists" whose works have represented "the collective participatory performance of lamentation through the medium of individually-authored texts" (Harrop 81).⁶² So, Oswald's poem delves into the intricate relation between the individual and the collective. This seems to be the reason why she refers to choral lyric poets, instead of monadic ones, as their poems revolve around public issues while keeping its main focus on the individual.⁶³

⁶² Oswald's move tallies with the idea that elegies are forms that are characterized by references to older texts. In Kennedy's (2007) words, elegy stands as a "self-conscious" performance in which the elegist asserts his own poetic skill and becomes part of a pre-existent tradition or lineage of similarly skilled poets (p. 13). For instance, Milton in "Lycidas" and Arnold in "Thyrsis" reworked Theocritus' formula presented in his "First Idyll". In addition to these intertextual connections, we see this reworking at the thematic level of "First Idyll" itself: Theocritus presents a poetic competition where Thyrsis, a shepherd-poet, mourns the death of a shepherd-poet, namely Daphnis, to win a prize.

⁶³ Oswald's reconceptualization of these lines as lament songs uttered by a chorus of mourners has further significance in terms of the reliving of trauma through repetition. In this respect, Cathy Caruth's binary model of death and survival as two interrelated causes of traumatic repetition, which she explains in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996, p. 64), may shed light on Oswald's re-visioning of the *Iliad*: mourners try to come to terms not only with the death of soldiers, but with the fact that they have survived. Their songs realize the traumatic revival of the past in the present. However, such a

Moreover, Oswald's choice is of utmost importance at this point due to the link between lament and epic. As Murnaghan (1999) states, "lament is at once constitutive of epic and antithetical to it, one of epic's probable sources and a subversive element that can work against what epic is trying to achieve" (p. 203).⁶⁴ Hence, Oswald works with material that is at the very core of and yet marginal to Homer's text. The word she uses in her title, namely "excavation", seems to serve this purpose: Oswald "excavates" in the sense that, instead of constructing a new poem, she traces lyric elements in the ancient epic, and finds them in mourning songs and pastoral similes.⁶⁵ This strategy enables her to employ generic mutation to revive the individual in the communal world of epic without subordinating it to any ideological narratives of the Trojan War. In Oswald's poem, collective connotations are reserved to echo suffering at multiple levels. This is evident not only in her reference to mourners in the "Preface" (who, according to Oswald, speak these lines), but also in the way she portrays the families of dead soldiers in the poem. For instance, the fragment on the death of Alcathous says

Somebody's husband somebody's daughter's husband
 Stood there stunned by fear
 Like a pillar like a stunted tree
 He couldn't bend his stones

He couldn't walk his roots
 His armour was useless it simply
 Cried out and broke open oh
 There stood ALCATHOUS and a spear

reading remains limited in scope as Oswald does not give any information about the members of this chorus. Instead, she briefly mentions them in her "Preface" to explain her take on the Homeric epic.

⁶⁴ This ambiguous relation mainly stems from gender roles embedded in these genres. The world of epic is associated with the male whereas the female has a limited place and role in it. The classical lament tradition, on the other hand, has been mostly recognized as the realm of women.

⁶⁵ This can be compared to Adrienne Rich's well-known "Diving into the Wreck" (1973/1975), which reflects the poet's anti-war and feminist concerns. In Rich's poem, the speaker is intended to resurrect "the wreck and not the story of the wreck/ the thing itself and not the myth" (ll. 62-63), since in myths, the effects of dominant sociocultural forces may overshadow the private. In a similar vein, Oswald uses the metaphor of going deeper in her title to revive moments of soldier's painful deaths without portraying them as part of the heroic ideal, which justifies the causes of violence and suffering in war in the *Iliad*.

Knowing nothing of his wedding
Not knowing his feelings or his wife's face (pp. 48-49)

While in Homer's Book 13 (Trans. 1974) the reader learns that Alkathoös is the son-in-law of Anchises and his wife's name is Hippodameia (ll. 429-430), Oswald keeps them anonymous and uses the phrase "somebody's". Underpinning the inevitability of death in battlefield as a universal tragic human condition, this strategy further highlights the anonymity of loss and grief. Some pastoral similes in *Memorial* contribute to the representation of mourning, as the stone that "stands by a grave and says nothing" (47) exemplifies. In the *Iliad*, the reader encounters violence, anger, and conflict at various realms of nature, humans, and gods. In Oswald's poem, however, the suffering and death of the soldiers are echoed both at the social (thanks to the representation of grieving families and the chorus of mourners) and at the cosmic level (as pastoral similes indicate). Like most of the pastoral similes in *Memorial*, the fragment on the stone, which could not say anything in the face of death, is repeated twice. This repetition not only enforces the song-like quality attached to lyric poetry, but also supports the impression of an echo, hence the communalization of the individual. Alkathous could do nothing other than scream, hence could not articulate his suffering at the moment of death. Yet, in Oswald's text, the reader sees that his private suffering and death meet communal acknowledgement. At this point, the anonymity of grief is functional in abstaining from imposing any frame narrative on the personal experiences of these soldiers.

That Oswald specifically points to the antiphonal nature of lament songs supports this communalization of the private. When Nagy (2010) elaborates on three main characteristics of lament songs, he specifically draws attention to this feature: due to the antiphonal response of an ensemble of women, lament is viewed as "a communalizing experience", leading to "a communalization of emotions, in all their

diversities” (p. 22). What’s significant and distinctive in the lament tradition, hence, is that the personal is paralleled at the level of the communal. As it has been argued in the introduction, this has been one of the main characteristics of lyric poetry, and classical lament poetry, in this respect, stands close to the lyric. Actually, lyric poetry originally has communal connotations as it “was from its inception a term used to describe a music that could no longer be heard, an idea of poetry characterized by a lost collective experience” (Jackson, 2012, p. 826). Likewise, collective undertones are evident in Oswald’s employing the lost communal tradition of classical lament songs, which publicize private emotions without restricting the act of mourning to a single person. This is the main characteristic that distinguishes Oswald’s work from modern elegiac sequences. Unlike modern elegies, in which the mourner tends to be a bereaved individual, Oswald’s use of the term “antiphonal lament songs” suggest a group of mourners, composed of a poet and women, exchanging words and cries among them, hence reminding the reader of the lost choral lyric tradition.⁶⁶ As Michael Silk (2009) observes, “there have been many significant poetic engagements with Greek lyric poems over centuries, but there is no later equivalent to Greek lyric poetry as such” (p. 385). This is especially the case when the topic is the distinction between the dominant understanding of the personal in modern poetry, in which any wider community is “either absent or problematic” and the conceptualization of the individual in classical poetry, which relies on “a representative communal voice” (Silk, 2009, p. 375). Oswald rehandles this issue by revisiting a predecessor of a lyric sub-genre, namely lament songs, which offer the publicization of the private through a collective experience as the choral lyric poems once did. Oswald’s use of the poetic

⁶⁶ There are various forms in which the lament is presented: “with a soloist, accompanied by chorus only in the refrain; with a chorus alone; with one or more soloists and a chorus, singing antiphonally; and finally, in the form of an imagined dialogue between living and dead” (Alexiou, 2002, p.131).

nexus between classical and contemporary texts and genres underpins the understated aspect of the lyric in the modern age.

Furthermore, Oswald underscores the plurality of voices in a different way. Although the members of the chorus of mourners belong to a specific community in traditional laments (Nagy, 2010, p. 21), Oswald's chorus of anonymous woman mourners does not refer to a single and homogenous group: she does not define them in terms of nationality, culture or any other kind of background.⁶⁷ The text does not indicate who is speaking, but is composed of fragments, which include biographies of both Greek and Trojan soldiers, major and minor ones, without building any hierarchy between them.⁶⁸ The variety of soldiers in terms of their profile and background story is paralleled by the multiplicity of mourners. So, it is not possible to identify a specific group who mourn for these dead people. Like the anonymity of some of the families in Oswald's text, the reader cannot recognize whose loss the poem talks about. Instead, there is a heterogeneous group whose members share the common denominator of feeling for another's suffering and hence echo it in their mourning songs. Here, what makes Oswald's imagined mourners a group is that they all give voice to suffering and loss. As referred to in the introduction, Susan Sontag (2004), writing on war photographs, underlines the difficulty of becoming a community in the face of another's suffering since a photo triggers multiple yet conflicting opinions: a victory for some will be a sign for revenge, sorrow, or defeat (p. 13). The suffering and death of these soldiers, in Oswald's case, are the shared concern of a bunch of women for whom there is no victory or defeat. As it is a

⁶⁷ In this respect, the comparison between Alice Oswald and Adrienne Rich is not limited to the metaphor of digging used in the rehandling of mythic material, but there is also a parallelism in terms of promoting anonymity: the two woman poets abstain from attributing their texts only to themselves, but encourage the conceptualization of a collective and anonymous group of women. Rich showed this stance when she won the National Book Award with her book *Diving into The Wreck* (1973) in 1974 and accepted it in the name of all woman writers, including unknown ones.

⁶⁸ The term "biographies" refers to the fragments in which short individual stories of soldiers are presented in *Memorial*.

rewriting of the *Iliad*, the war is of course always present in absentia in *Memorial*. Yet, in line with her lyric rehandling of the Homeric epic, Oswald focuses on the momentary experiences of these soldiers, or in her words, focuses on the moments when they act “[I]ike a deer in the hills wounded / Keeps running in pain” (p. 47) towards their death. Mourning their loss by communicating such an experience of suffering and death is the only reason why these lamenters’ voices merge into each other. Hence, the incommunicable experience itself becomes the channel, and even the cause of communication.

Moreover, by stressing the antiphonal structure of lament songs, Oswald makes the reader reconsider the dynamics of the Trojan War. Helen Foley (2001) observes that, through women’s lament songs, we witness a reaction against public ideology about death and glory (p. 14). In Oswald’s reimagining of soldiers’ biographies as lament songs, there is a movement from the glorious and communal world of epic to that of the lyric foregrounding the body in distress. The heroic ideal, the main ideology the narrative supports, offers mourners consolation in the Homeric epic. Although elegy’s defining trope is “a movement from grief to consolation”, by which “it seeks to transcend the suffering that provides the occasion for its composition” (Hurley & O’Neill, 2012, p. 101), Oswald’s text does not offer such a relief, thus ceasing to be a conventional example of the genre. However, there is another sort of consolation Oswald offers in term of the communication of suffering: stating that she imagines these biographies as songs chanted by others, Oswald does not only portray her poem as a special speech act, but also highlights that there is a group of people, who both acknowledge another’s suffering at the moment of death and themselves suffer because of the loss. Thus, she foregrounds how the genre opens up new avenues for the communication of private pain.

4.2 Lyric subjectivity, lyric temporality, lyric address, and intense formal structuring in *Memorial*

As stated before, the frame story of Homer's the *Iliad* revolves around Achilles, with his wrath and *aristeia*. For Cedric Whitman (1966), Achilles' struggle is not solely about Briseis and/ or protecting his honor. Rather, it is "a struggle for identity, of locating one's place in the world, and of deciding which values may aid one in finding his place in things" (p. 197). So, at the very core of the text, the reader realizes an identity problem, namely the endeavor of an individual who asserts himself as a subject. However, in line with the epic mode, this is represented with reference to greater ideals and values, through numerous narrative threads and interludes of similes. Excising this main narrative and employing lyric devices, Oswald explores the subjectivity of all other soldiers located at the background in the Homeric epic.

As Nerys Williams observes (2011), readers tend to consider the lyric as a personal "expressive" poem, therefore, expect a lyric poem to posit the self "as a primary organizing principle of the work" (p. 27).⁶⁹ According to this understanding, "expressiveness" in lyric poetry is viewed as a detailed representation of the self the poetic persona offers. In lyric sequences, the portrayal of the persona is enriched through the narrative aspect attached to the work. The reader may witness changes in the mood of the speaker over time as the sequence progresses at the fictional level. Oswald's going back to the classical lament tradition, on the other hand, complicates the matter at the hand: first and foremost, lament songs are always sung collective, so there are multiple mourners, voices, selves and bodies. Furthermore, as Oswald

⁶⁹ As stated in the introduction, recent trends in studies on lyric poetry have negated this view as they promote a global and transhistorical understanding of the genre, which does not restrict it to first-person poems. Although it might seem strange to the twenty-first century reader, choral lyrics, as mentioned before, were common in classical times, hence, not self-reflexivity but the focus on the subjective was an imperative.

keeps the mourners anonymous and just mentions them in the “Preface” as those who speak these lines, the only subjects whose experiences are presented in the poem are soldiers.⁷⁰ Indeed, this portrayal chimes with how we, according to Paul de Man (1985), conceive lyric poetry as “the phenomenalization of the poetic voice” (p. 55). In other words, we believe that we are hearing a voice when we read a lyric poem. Oswald presents a similar tactic in reimagining biographies as lament songs as she lends a phenomenal form to voice by attributing it to the mourners. Moreover, as Culler (2015) observes, the lyric focus on human voices creates effects of voicing and aurality simultaneously (p. 35). So, in Oswald’s generic transformation, the implication is that there isn’t only those who talk of other people’s private suffering and death, but also potential hearers (readers in this case): the community; that is, the group of mourners, will get wider. Her sequence of lyric fragments, thus, promotes collectivity and stands almost as a lyric practice for the ethical principle of responsiveness to the pain of others.

This is most evident in the lines where Oswald refers to a “you” without specifying an addressee. Indeed, the formulaic structure of “I” and “you” was common in classical laments, however, unlike Oswald’s use of pronouns (in which there is no mention of “I”), these subject positions were reserved for the mourner and the dead. Yet, in *Memorial*, “you” refers to an unspecified person who “can” bear witness to the suffering of a soldier. The fragment on Echeopolus exemplifies this instance:

ECHEPOLUS a perfect fighter
Always ahead of his men
Known for his cold seed-like concentration
Moving out and out among spears
Died at the hands of Antilochus
You can see the hole in the helmet just under the ridge

⁷⁰ Occasionally, what their family members go through is included, yet these details constitute only a small part of the biographies and similes.

Where the point of the blade passed through
And stuck in his forehead
Letting the darkness leak down over his eyes (p. 14).⁷¹

Due to the vocal and aural effects of lyric poetry, the reader may think of these lines as utterances, and “you” in this case, as an address to him/ her. As W.R. Johnson (1982) argues, although modern poets discarded this idea by promoting a new understanding of lyric poetry, this model of an “I” speaking to a “you” has been central to the Western lyric tradition since the classical period in which the genre was epideictic and performative (p. 34). On the other hand, even in later written lyrics, one can observe allusions to this model since it has turned into a characteristic effect of the genre. For this reason, it would be misleading to interpret this structure only as a “direct address to the audience sitting in front of the performer” (Culler, 2015, p. 201). Instead, as Culler (2015) states, this model offers iterability and textuality (p. 201), which turn such direct addresses into potentialities: there is no stable “you” for the lines above, but each reader fills this subject position when s/he reads the text. As Emile Benveniste (1966/1971) argues, the pronoun “you” can only be actualized in the instance of a discourse in which the speaker appropriates the position (220). Each time a reader goes through the line, s/he is told that s/he can see the hole in Echepolus’ helmet. So, *Memorial* takes cognizance of the reader’s ability to recognize another’s suffering, which is upheld with the use of the pronoun “you” and the modal verb “can”. Oswald’s reader is expected to participate in the song of the mourners so much so that s/he can acknowledge Echepolus’ suffering by visualizing his wound.

As stated in the introduction, lyric poetry enriches the way it communicates ideas through its intense formal structuring: through aural or visual means, the form

⁷¹ I have written the soldiers’ names as they appear in the quoted poem.

of a lyric poem may support the theme, mood, or emotion it represents. Inviting the reader to look at Echeopolus' wound, Oswald employs a similar strategy through the use of the fragmented form of the sequence. The etymology of the term "fragment" goes back to the Latin "fragmentum" and refers to "remnant" (Elias, 2004, p. 1), hence the word evokes the concept of a "ruin". In line with this, *Memorial* stands as a ruin: the text itself visually offers a manner of representation, which gives the impression of an incomplete or broken work rather than an organized sequence. By playing with the materiality of the text, Oswald creates the visual effect of a ruin, composed of scattered and broken fragments. When the topic is classical literature and its material aspect, fragmentation always has the connotations of a ruin. As Richard H. Armstrong (2016) states, "[g]enerally when we speak of the 'survival' of texts, as distinct from their transmission, we are talking about their persistence as physical objects" (p. 28). The materiality of classical texts has always been foregrounded due to gaps in them.⁷² For this reason, Armstrong (2016) proposes to think of antiquity as a "wound, not a world you can visit" (p. 28), by which he means that the reader gets the impression that the material survival of these text has always been at stake, which is reflected through their physicality. Oswald makes use of this mindset when she rehandles the *Iliad* with lyric devices. Her focus on Echeopolus' injured body at the thematic level finds a correspondence in the form of the sequence, which is reminiscent of a wound waiting to be acknowledged. By imitating architectural ruins at the visual level of the text, Oswald's sequence explores what the geography of individual suffering would look like: the fragment itself, as a mutilated textual body, is a kind of wound, almost like a limb or like the injury that is visible beneath Echeopolus' helmet. The very fragmented form of the poem, thus,

⁷² This is especially the case with classical lyric poetry: anyone reading classical lyric poems will encounter fragmented texts, along with the editor's interpretation of them, as the very nature of these "broken" poems demands such explanations.

creates the effect of looking at the wounds of the soldiers. In this respect, the sequence self-reflexively communicates its ethical and social concerns at the formal level.⁷³ The fact that Oswald gives her work a ruinous structure has further significance because another influence of the ruin on us, according to Bois (2011), is to make us acknowledge that we “also inhabit a ruin, a body that is doomed to decay and death, destruction that ends with bones and ashes” (p. 668). So, in the face of the ruin, we tend to become self-conscious of our corporeal existence, and self-reflexive in terms of acknowledging that of others. Therefore, the fragmented structure of *Memorial* becomes a way to enhance the reader’s capacity to realize his/ her own vulnerability and to feel for others: in this case, Echepolus’ wound not only points to his individual suffering, but to the precariousness of bodily existence.⁷⁴ This strategy is radical in the sense that the formal structuring of the sequence promotes ethical self-reflexivity regarding the somatic nature of human beings.

Furthermore, it does not escape the reader that the poetic persona employs the present tense when s/he uses the device of lyric address whereas the suffering of Echepolus at the moment of his death is presented in the past tense.⁷⁵ On the one hand, this contrast between past and present is found in classical lament poetry in terms of the mourner’s comparing his/ her own fate with that of the dead (Alexiou, 2002, p. 165). Yet, in Oswald’s fragment, the speaker briefly describes the major personal traits of the soldier in the first three lines, then moves to the moment he

⁷³ Even the term “excavation” Oswald employs in her subtitle underpins the materiality of the text and its vulnerability just as archeological excavations are among the ways of recovering ancient texts. Like incomplete, fragmented, and broken classical texts which need archeologists to find them and literary critics to interpret them, these soldiers, dying in painful ways, are waiting for someone to acknowledge and give voice to what they are going through.

⁷⁴ For the significance of acknowledging this common vulnerability in preventing suffering, see Judith Butler’s *Prearious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004).

⁷⁵ Henceforth, as a matter of convenience, the terms “persona” and “speaker” in singular are employed to refer to the mourners whom Oswald identifies as the singers reciting these lines. Still, it should be noted that we cannot know how Oswald imagines these fragments to be performed as lament songs. There might be certain lines sung by a member or the leader of the chorus or the chorus might sing all lines collectively.

died, and inserts a line in the present tense only when she employs the pronoun “you”. Hence, the way she builds a relation between past and present seems to differ from traditional laments as the fragment does not offer any information about the mourner(s). Instead, the link in Oswald’s sequence seems to depend upon the use of lyric temporality. As explained in the introduction, lyric poetry is marked with a special kind of temporality: when a lyric subsumes the representation of a past event within itself, it endows it with significance in the lyric present (Culler, 2015, pp. 36-37). In Oswald’s fragment on Echeopolus, an importance is attached to making the reader part of the singing community whose members feel for another. The past actions of the soldier are narrated to communicate his suffering and death to other individuals, who “can see the hole in the helmet” (p. 14), as Oswald says. Here, the reference to the reader’s gaze on Echeopolus’ wound in the present tense stands for the acknowledgement of his pain at the moment of dying, taken as the most private and suffocating experience of suffering.

Comparing Oswald’s fragment with Homer’s lines on Echeopolus in Book 4 (Trans. 1974) lays bare the changes that the lyric mode triggered in the representation of individual suffering in *Memorial*:

Antilochos was first to kill a chief man of the Trojans,
valiant among the champions, Thalysias’ son, Echeolos.
Throwing first, he struck the horn of the horse-haired helmet,
and the bronze spearpoint fixed in his forehead and drove inward
through the bone; and a mist of darkness clouded both eyes
and he fell as a tower falls in the strong encounter. (ll. 457-462)

There is no place for lyric address and temporality in Homer’s epic, and the whole event is presented in the past tense. Moreover, while Oswald just mentions what makes Echeopolus a great soldier; that is, his being always ahead of others and having sharp concentration (p. 14), Homer defines Echeopolus in terms of his nationality and position among other fighters by stating that he is one of the courageous leaders in

the Trojan army. This discrepancy between the two passages reveals the difference between two genres, namely epic and lyric poetry, in terms of the place of the individual in them: for Oswald, the individual soldier is not linked to the communities he fights with or against. Instead, her aim is to build a connection between this individual in distress and a potential community that the lyric present may offer. On the other hand, Homer positions Echeolos as a member of a larger group of soldiers, and this is the only relationship that matters in the domain of the epic. It makes Echeolos who he is, and therefore, in Homer's text, his suffering is subsumed under the greater ideals of valiance and honor. This is in line with Scarry's (1985) idea that war leads to "the citation of one side's death as certification of either its victory or its defeat" due to the referential instability of the body, which confers "its reality on whatever outcome occurred" (p. 117). The *Iliad* provides such a representation of Echeolos' suffering and death: as a chief man of the Trojans, his defeated body becomes the failure of the Trojan army whereas it is a great achievement on the Greeks' part. By removing this narrative thread full of collective connotations, Oswald turns Echeolos into an individual soldier whose wound only authenticates the reality of his own suffering and death.

In a similar vein, Oswald eliminates some details about the soldiers' families. For instance, in her fragment on Pedaeus, she states that he was the son of his father's mistress only with one line. In the *Iliad*, however, the reader encounters the names of the father and the mother along with a short narrative on them given in three lines. What's more, whereas Oswald mostly employs Homer's anatomical language instead of a conventional lyrical voice with a sentimental tone, she makes use of lyric devices to indicate the generic mutation, as the fragment on Echeolos demonstrates. In articulating the moment of Pedaeus' death, Oswald's lyric impulse

is visible in her word choice. Whereas Homer (Trans. 1974) tells in detail how the sharp spear struck Pedaios “behind the head at the tendon, / and straight on through the teeth and under the tongue cut the bronze / blade” (Book 5, ll. 73-74), Pedaeus in *Memorial* “[f]elt the hot shock in his neck of Meges’ spear / Unswallowable sore throat of metal in his mouth / Right through his teeth” (20). Here, it is clear that Oswald heavily borrows from Homer’s anatomical language. As Scarry (1985) notes, it is common to describe pain by objectifying and externalizing it as a weapon acting upon the body, which might be real or imagined, and various disciplines, such as medicine, literature, and law, make use of this strategy (pp. 15-16). Indeed, Scarry herself points to how Homer employs this tactic in his epics. So, Oswald’s move is, on the one hand, conventional. On the other hand, her originality lies in the way she hints at the experience of the individual. Through the use of the word “felt”, Oswald signals how Pedaeus himself experiences this moment of suffering and death. Instead of describing the way the spear enters the soldier’s body (as Homer does), Oswald portrays the sensations it creates in the body of this soldier in terms of how it felt and tasted. Even if there is no conventional lyric I who talks of his/ her somatic experience, Oswald includes such subjective sensations thanks to her slight revisions. Moreover, Oswald’s lyric reworking of the Homeric epic is visible in the syntax, which mirrors the experience of suffering thanks to its formal structuring: instead of saying Pedaeus felt the hot shock of Meges’ spear in his neck, she employs the phrase “his neck of Meges’ spear” (p. 20). It is as if his neck does not belong to Pedaeus anymore. This is in harmony with the experience of suffering: The etymology of the verb “suffer” comes from Latin *sufferre*, meaning “bear” (*Origins* 3298). It denotes a lack of agency as it points to a situation in which the individual is acted upon and forced to endure distress. The implication is that Pedaeus cannot feel

as the owner of his body anymore. On the other hand, this is counterbalanced by Oswald's play with vocabulary: by dwelling on Pedaeus' sensations, she restores his individuality when he is on the verge of losing it.

The foregrounding of the subjective in *Memorial* and its difference from the epic mode are also clear in Oswald's fragment on Eniopeus. Driving the chariot of Hector, Eniopeus is wounded by the spear Tydeus threw, who actually aimed to strike Hector. After giving all these details, Homer (Trans. 1974) moves to how immediately "another bold charioteer" replaces him: it was not / long that the horses went lacking a driver" (Book 8, ll. 126-127). He continues with the narration of events in the battlefield, which portrays Eniopeus as an interchangeable element in the war instead of a subject. In *Memorial*, Oswald eliminates this reference to the other driver, as it downplays the subjectivity of this soldier by turning him into a part of a greater mechanism. She also removes the detail that Hector was the intended target of the spear that kills Eniopeus. Instead, the persona in *Memorial* says Eniopeus "[d]rove Hector into battle / Into the terrifying anti-world of the wounded / The wheels kept slewing over bodies" (p. 30). In the *Iliad*, it is the heroic world of skillful warriors, charioteers, and soldiers who continue to fight no matter what happens. In *Memorial*, however, the reader encounters wounded bodies in pain and corpses. Yet, the suffering and death of each soldier still deserve recognition. As the spear hits Eniopeus, Oswald's persona speaks of his experience without making him part of a larger narrative thread. Again, the omission of narrative elements in Oswald's poem points to her search for an avenue for the articulation of individual pain in the lyric mode.

The fragment on Agastrophus supplies the reader with another example about Oswald's lyric rehandling of the experiences of the wounded soldiers. In the scenes

before and after the death of Agastrophus, the *Iliad* portrays various exchanges of dialogues among soldiers challenging each other. In *Memorial*, however, these dialogues are left out. Instead, the persona offers Agastrophus' internal monologue after he has been stabbed with a spear, which is Oswald's original contribution. Here, the shift from the dialogue to the monologue epitomizes the movement from the narrative aspect of the Homeric epic to the lyric, especially with regard to the nineteenth-century understanding of lyric poetry as an account of a first-person voice reflecting upon him/ herself. John Stuart Mill's (1833/1981) idea that "all poetry is of the nature of soliloquy" (p. 349) as "poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude" (p. 348) epitomizes this stance. Likewise, lying wounded, Agastrophus questions his act that leads him to death: "[w]hat was I doing thinking I could walk / Through all that iron on my own" (Oswald, p. 42). Instead of a heroic death, we see a tragic one in which the individual recognizes his somatic limits. Again, this reflects Oswald's lyric rehandling of the *Iliad*: Agastrophos, in Homer's epic, is a glorious chief, who is courageous enough to keep attacking the enemy even when his horses and back-up men are not nearby. Hence, he lost his life while he was fighting against other "champions" (Homer, trans. 1974, Book 11, l. 342). In *Memorial*, on the other hand, he is depicted as an individual, recognizing his weaknesses. As an ordinary human being with his flaws, he regrets his decision, a portrayal, which undermines the heroic framework found in Homer's poem. This humanization of Homer's larger than life soldier is important as the lyric, according to Helen Vendler (1997), offers a voice that resembles "a 'real voice' coming from 'a real mind' like our own" (p. 18). Likewise, the lyric stance in *Memorial* strips the individual body of larger ideological frameworks found in the *Iliad*. Moreover, as stated before, the view of the lyric as an isolated individual speech has been revised

by different theorists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For instance, Vendler (1997) revisits Mill's argument when she defines lyric as the genre representing "the performance of the mind in *solitary* speech" (pp. 1-2). Her concept of the lyric is distinct from Mill's with regard to her emphasis on the publicization of this private speech: for Vendler (1997), the lyric offers "an utterance for us to utter as ours" (p. 18). This is in line with the recent search for a more transhistorical and universal concept of the lyric, which can go beyond the cliché of first-person self-expressive monologues and emphasize its public aspect through its iterability. Keeping in mind Oswald's reimagining of these lines as a song sung by mourners, the reader can see the publicization of Agastrophus' internal monologue. This is paralleled by the involvement of the reader who, by going through these lines, participates in the communication of this private moment. In addition, the way Oswald plays with the formal structuring of the lyric contributes to the reader's experience: she does not use any punctuation marks in *Memorial*, and in this fragment, she does not employ quotation marks to signal Agastrophus' monologue either. This lack of inverted commas reinforces the idea that his last sentences become the words of the mourners and the reader as they repeat these lines. The omission of quotation marks highlights the lyric act of publicizing the individual, no matter how private the depicted moment is.

The contrast between lyric and epic modes in terms of the representation of the individual is best exemplified by how Oswald, in a subversive manner, borrows the Homeric catalogue when she lists the names of the soldiers at the beginning of *Memorial*. Oswald begins her text with the list of dead soldiers, written all in capital letters. In line with the title she chooses, these eight pages are frequently compared to wall-mounted plaques in contemporary martyrs' memorials. Hence, the list, first and

foremost, evokes the necessity of remembering those who suffered in the Trojan War. In this sense, it functions as all memorials do: they link the past to the present and each visitor confirms this connection. Furthermore, it is closely linked to the catalogue of ships in the *Iliad*, which Homer (Trans. 1974) introduces with the following lines stressing the faculty of memory:

Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos.
For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things,
and we heard only the rumour of it and know nothing.
Who then of those were the chief men and the lords of the Danaans?
I could not tell over the multitude of them nor name them,
not if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, not if I had
a voice never to be broken and a heart of bronze within me,
not unless the Muses of Olympia, daughters
of Zeus of the aegis, remembered all those who came beneath Ilion.
I will tell the lords of the ships, and the ship numbers. (Book 2, ll. 484-493)

With this invocation to the Muses, the narrative suspends for a moment, and the reader hears the poetic persona stressing his shortcomings as a human being: for him, it is impossible to remember the names of all Greek leaders, hence, he asks for the help of the Muses. This weakness is presented by highlighting the incompetence of various body parts, such as the tongue and mouth, associated with the voice: even if he had ten of them, it would not be enough to call these names. At first sight, this strategy might seem similar to that of Sappho's in her Fr. 31. As briefly examined in the Introduction, the persona in Sappho's poem states that parts of the body do not help her articulate the condition of her body in crisis. Yet, even after she claims so, she exactly does the opposite: she turns to her body to give voice to what she first reflected as inexpressible. However, Homer's speaker employs a different strategy and calls for divine inspiration. In this manner, before the text proceeds to narrate the war itself, the poetic persona signifies its cosmic nature by signaling the monumentality of the task of reporting it: even listing all the chief men of the Danaans is impossible for a human being, let alone all fighting soldiers regardless of

their nationality. The reference to the Muses, to divine beings, in this case, stands as an authentication device, and the sheer number of the Danaan leaders not only gives an effect of credibility to the event as something historical, but also underscores the Trojan War as a phenomenon that defines Greek culture.

On the other hand, Oswald, unlike Homer, lists all the soldiers without referring to their roles in the *Iliad*'s narrative structure: she does not even employ sentences but gives all the names in a dull manner, which chimes with her non-narrative focus. Moreover, in harmony with the egalitarian spirit of contemporary Anglo-American lyric poetry, her list encompasses all the soldiers even minor ones. While the *Iliad* employs the device of the catalogue before it presents the narrative of the war, Oswald, as she indicates in her "Preface", "presents the whole poem as a kind of oral cemetery- in the aftermath of the Trojan War, an attempt to remember people's names and lives", which, in her view, "doesn't need too much context" (p. 2). She foregrounds the idea that she is not interested in defining a society's culture by referring to the destructiveness of an army, but in the outcome of violence. Thus, she evokes the names of those who have died in painful ways. Her text stands as an "oral cemetery" in the sense that all parts, including the list at the beginning, are reimagined as lament songs to which the mourners give voice. So, unlike the epic persona who undermines his/ her own capacity for articulating the names of Greek leaders and resorts to the goddesses of memory, Oswald offers a chorus of human mourners whose whole concern is to vocalize the plight of all the soldiers who endured agony in the war. Thereby, she spotlights the human ability to feel for another. She does not need any other context as her text has its own coherence as "an antiphonal account of man in his world" (p. 2). With this phrase, Oswald does not only point to the phenomenalization of voice that the lyric mode presupposes but

also underlines the idea that there are various human voices reserved for these soldiers in their “world”, so there is no need for divine intervention in Oswald’s text.⁷⁶ Her list compels the contemporary reader to reaffirm such an ethical connection between people when the topic is the invisible geography of private suffering whereas the Homeric catalogue of the ships emphasizes the huge scale of the war by outlining the geographical background of the Greek leaders. As Scarry (1985) observes, war makes an army stand as “a single embodied combatant, with the real human body’s elemental duality of being at once capable of inflicting injury and of receiving it” (p. 70). Homer’s representation of Greek chief men, with all their ships, soldiers, and weapons seems to depend on such a collective understanding, which is designed to define who the Greeks are and how ready they are to injure and to be injured. Again, we encounter the dichotomy between the individual and the communal: while Oswald’s lyric mode points to the physicality of bodies with an implication that their individual suffering at the moment of death will be communicated, Homer evokes that of leaders, their crew, and armament, which matters in the domain of epic as they all make the Greek army a huge collective body ready to fight. Moreover, we see the opposition between two different understandings of poetry offered by two distinct genres: by invoking the Muses, Homer’s epic persona reflects poetry as a transcendental medium beyond human limitations. According to Edith Hall (2016), ancient Greek epics often propose such a definition of poetry, which “allows the poet to range across time, allowing abstract

⁷⁶ Here, it is important to note that the term “antiphonal” not only alludes to polyphony and a multiplicity of voices, but also to the question and answer structure, which shows that “responsiveness” to and the “communication” of suffering and death were indispensable elements in the classical lament tradition. There are moments in *Memorial* where this structure is invoked with questions, such as the fragment on Imbrious which ends with the question of “[h]ow can you kiss a rolling head” (46). In the Anglo-American tradition, this convention has evolved into elegiac questions, which according to Sacks (1985), is especially functional in terms of the mourner’s redirecting himself/ herself to the external world to cope with grief (p. 22). For further information on elegiac questions, see Sacks’ *The English Elegy*.

thought, historical record and prophecy” and this aspect of epic poetry underpins the representation of things that are not empirically discernible (p. 515). However, as seen in the quotation above, the persona may address the Muses even when he lists material stuff, namely ships and human bodies. That divine beings are called on at this moment downplays the material nature of listed people and things. The overriding impulse of Oswald’s list, on the other hand, is to foreground the somatic by highlighting the materiality of the body: in harmony with the bodily concern in lyric poetry, she employs the voice of people (mourners), instead of divine entities and identifies each soldier as an individual with his own distinctive body. In her lyric revisiting of the Homeric epic, poetry is not portrayed as a vehicle designed to represent abstract concepts or immortal beings who can go beyond human mental categories, but is used to communicate the somatic, which can remain under- or unrepresented despite its empirically discernible tenor. Thus, Oswald reveals the lyric focus on worldly concerns, which shows the genre’s relation to social and ethical issues.

Furthermore, taking the lament tradition as a precursor of elegy (hence of lyric poetry) and relying upon the vocal quality Oswald attaches to her text, one can argue that the names of these soldiers, listed at the beginning, function as lyric address. In this case, if we interpret the beginning of the text as a series of apostrophes, Oswald’s lyric and Homer’s epic stand in opposition to each other again in terms of the different types of invocations they employ: whereas Homer invokes divine entities, namely the Muses, Oswald addresses deceased soldiers. According to Culler (2015), apostrophes are employed in lyric poetry, especially in elegies, to endow loss with a meaning in the present and lyric temporality serves this purpose: “loss can be narrated but the temporal sequence is irreversible, like time itself.

Apostrophes displace this irreversible structure by removing it from linear time and locating it in a discursive time.” (p. 227). The result is “a play of presence and absence governed not by time but by poetic ingenuity or power” (Culler, 2015, p. 227). Oswald’s list of dead soldiers seems to employ a similar strategy: although she is addressing absence, deceased individuals in other words, she grants them with the presence of lyric utterance. Through apostrophes, lyric poetry dares to address all kinds of things we think of as unaddressable, such as winds, urns, stars and the sun (Culler, 2015, p. 229), and Oswald makes use of this lyric device to show that even the past suffering of deceased soldiers can matter in the domain of the lyric due to its unusual temporality.

Moreover, for Culler (2015), lyric address is always both direct and indirect due to its “triangulated” structure: when a poem addresses a person, thing or absence thereof, it always indirectly appeals to the reader (p. 15). This is what makes apostrophe a different figure of speech: “it makes its point by troping not on the meaning of a word but on the circuit of communication itself, foregrounding the fact that this is an utterance of a special kind, marked as voicing”, which lifts lyric poetry “out of ordinary communicational contexts” and turns it into “a special sort of linguistic event” in the lyric present (Culler, 2015, p. 213). Indeed, this is most evident in the classical lament tradition itself where addressing the dead in various ways always simultaneously addresses the members of a community, making them shoulder the burden of feeling for another person. Hence, in Oswald’s case, it can be argued that from the very beginning of the text she addresses the reader and gives him/ her special responsibility. That her list demands an emotional reaction is underpinned by the device of lyric address, which does not give any contextual information but foregrounds the act of communication itself at the lyric present.

It should be noted that this move is also Oswald's play with the classical lament tradition itself. As stated before, there are three parts in classical lament songs and there are addresses at the beginning and end of these songs. However, it was generally forbidden to call the dead by his/ her name even in these parts, as it was believed that "mention of the dead man's name would cause the return of his spirit, and it was therefore avoided" (Alexiou, 2002, p. 232). For Oswald, promoting the anonymity of the mourners communicating another's suffering seems to be essential especially because this move underlines the idea that everyone can feel for another. Yet, soldiers cannot be anonymous since it would reduce them to be a member of a greater community as they are in the realm of the Homeric epic.

By focusing on the bodies of Homeric soldiers with lyric devices, *Memorial* shows its interest in the individual. However, it also hints at its preoccupation with subjectivity by different means. For instance, there might be no pronouns for the speaker in Oswald, so no subject positions are openly reserved for the persona, which makes her work different from conventional lyric sequences dominated by the voice of a single speaker. Yet there are moments when she borrows from the conventions of elegy to indicate a poetic subject. As stated before, elegy relies on the connection between the mourner (along with his/ her present) and the deceased (with his past actions). Kennedy (2007) interprets this link by focusing on how the death, or in other words "dissolution" of a person foregrounds instability and precariousness, thus leading to anxiety and triggering the speaker's wish to confirm his/ her own coherence, survival, and identity (p. 24). For him, "[i]n this context, the task of elegy, the poem that habitually begins in silence or confusion, is to produce the elegist's own coherent self" (Kennedy, 2007, p. 24). Indeed, a similar feature can be observed in lyric sequences. As stated in the previous chapter, Roland Greene

(1991) elaborates on the early examples of the genre by referring to how they tend to revolve around the sensations and actions of a stable self (pp. 13-14). In elegiac lyrics, the construction of a single persona gains new significance as it is juxtaposed with the decease of another individual, which points to the precariousness of somatic existence. In the opening section of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850/1935), for instance, this is presented through the speaker's insecurity regarding faith:

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow. (ll. 21-24)

There is a hint of hesitation in the speaker's voice as he cannot "know" the existence of God so as to prove the validity of his faith. Still, he reassures himself that the universe can still retain its order if he believes that the shaft of light he observes in the middle of darkness takes its source from God. Thus, he concludes that he has no reason to doubt his faith, which he uses to explain not only the order of the universe but also his very somatic existence in it. The reader witnesses that the speaker goes through fluctuating thoughts, thus instances of instability, but he reaches a moment of certainty, supplying him with a sense of relief regarding his belief, his conceptualization of the world, and his place in it. Kennedy (2007) traces a similar strategy, namely a movement from incoherence to the formation, or at least indication, of a coherent persona in English elegies and he specifically dwells on Andrew Bailey's "Lodestar, Polestar" (2005), written in memory of another poet, Peter Redgrove. Bailey's poem ends with "an image of stars rotating round a single star" echoing Milton's "Lycidas" and Shelley's "Adonais" (Kennedy, 2007, p. 26). This image of a single star exerting its influence over other stars, for Kennedy

(2007), stands for the influence of Redgrove as a poet over other authors (p. 26).⁷⁷

This image in Bailey's poem is on the one hand "wildly proliferating", and on the other hand, "dissipating" (Corcoran, 1993, p. 145). While the image signals the sprawling effect of the star, it foresees its disappearance. In this manner, it hints at the inspirational and mortal aspects of poets simultaneously.

Oswald ends her poem with a similar image of a star, which flourishes at first, and then, vanishes.

Like when god throws a star
And everyone looks up
To see that whip of sparks
And then it's gone (p. 84)

After depicting Hector's death, Oswald's text continues with ten pastoral fragments, all referring to communities in natural life. Unlike the previous usage of similes, Oswald does not repeat these ten stanzas. However, she ends with the fragment above which is repeated twice like most of the pastoral similes employed between biographical fragments. This last repetition does not seem to be solely a formal choice to create effects of rhythmic articulation but might have a further meta-poetic significance: although Oswald's elegy is not written for a poet, it is evident that she reworks the Homeric epic and extends her thanks to Homer in the acknowledgements. For this reason, the star that everyone looks up at might be interpreted as Homer, along with his epics, and Alice Oswald herself, like any other poet rewriting or adapting these texts, becomes part of the "whip of sparks" stemming from the star. Like Tennyson's "beam in darkness" in *In Memoriam* (1850/1935, l. 24), Oswald's sparks point to one's relation to and place in the universe. In this manner, she self-consciously (as stated before, elegy is always a self-conscious form) confirms her identity as a poet. The sequence begins with the

⁷⁷ Here, it should be noted that both Milton and Shelley wrote their elegies for poets, John Keats and Edward King respectively, as Bailey does.

list of soldiers' names, continues with the fragments of biographies and pastoral similes, and ends with a simile, which covertly indicates the formation of another subjectivity, who inscribes herself into the text by employing a poetic convention. Stephen Burt (2008) calls this tradition "stellification", which poets use when they "depict persons as stars, in order to admire them, to declare them unique, or to say that they are out of reach" (p. 81). Thanks to this device, Oswald covertly acknowledges her source of inspiration, Homer, within the text. Furthermore, the repetition of this last simile, contradicting with the previous ten pastoral fragments, almost indicates that Oswald herself might be taken as a star, a poet, who will trigger other authors with her texts. The very last line, "[a]nd then it's gone" (p. 84), might signal finality; however, that there is not even a final full stop clashes with what the sentence asserts. The meaning of the statement does not find a correspondence at the textual level. The last sentence and the lack of a final full stop suggest that whereas there will be no end to the textual proliferation both poets are part of, the mortality of these "stars", as sources of inspiration, is indicated in line with the genre Oswald employs. The very confirmation of the elegist's identity is paralleled with the acknowledgement of her vulnerability to dissolution. Hence, even in the closing similes, she remains loyal to the emphasis on the somatic in lyric poetry, this time by evoking the mortality of her own body. Thereby, she once again underlines the need for ethical self-reflexivity when the issue at stake is the precariousness of bodily existence.

4.3 Conclusion

All in all, one of the most original moves in Oswald's rewriting, which has not been acknowledged yet, is the generic mutation she employs thanks to the use of lyric

devices. With this formal experimentation, Oswald builds a link between classical and contemporary genres and opens up alternative avenues for making the suffering and death of soldiers relevant to the reader. Thanks to this strategy, the bodies of the soldiers in *Memorial* do not authenticate the frames of thought in the epic world of the *Iliad*. Although lyric sequences may include narrative elements, Oswald's work does not even mention the disastrous political power of Agamemnon, Menelaus' desire for revenge, the terrifying wrath of Achilles, and the catastrophic decisions of the Olympian gods. The implication is that if such a model of the cosmos is indifferent to individual suffering, there is a need for a crucial change in the frames of meaning. Oswald carries out this social mission through her lyric rehandling of the *Iliad*. Her poem communicates the suffering and death of each soldier and echoes them in the song of mourners, the grief of family members, and pastoral similes, thus laying bare the tragic condition of human beings: no matter how massive or skillful the fighters are, they are vulnerable due to their somatic existence. In the face of this reality, *Memorial* warns the reader against the dangers of ideological frame narratives, which can downplay the subjectivity of the individual by subsuming his/her suffering and death under the so-called "greater" causes.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

This study has sought to demonstrate that the selected contemporary poets, namely Ted Hughes, Kate Daniels, and Alice Oswald, employ similar lyric devices and rely on the same four lyric parameters in their sequences, revisiting classical narratives on individual suffering in the lyric mode to communicate private pain. Yet, these three poets utilize the genre of the lyric sequence in disparate manners, especially in terms of the way they play with narrative elements. In his *Prometheus On His Crag*, Ted Hughes focuses on Prometheus' ritualistic punishment, taking place in an extended and iterative lyric present. He implies a narrative progress in a quite unexpected and ambiguous manner in the last poem, depicting Prometheus' release from his chains. Still, the closing poem foregrounds the lyric aspect of Hughes' sequence through its use of semiotic modes of communication, including pre-linguistic sounds and kinetic imagery. Unlike Ted Hughes, Kate Daniels abundantly employs narrative elements in her *The Niobe Poems*. Her take on the narrative aspect of the genre is found in the intersubjective model of the lyric persona she constructs through the use of multiple Niobes, each having a different background and story. Thus, *The Niobe Poems* does not offer a single extended narrative, deriving from the account of a stable speaker, but many under-developed narratives implied by a babel of voices. Of the three sequences analyzed in this study, Alice Oswald's *Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad* stands as the most radical take on the genre as she deliberately downplays the narrative impulse of the lyric sequence by omitting the main plot and sub-stories of the Homeric epic. Instead, she creates effects of voicing and hearing by relying on the classical tradition of lament songs, a tactic which foregrounds the age-old

relation not only between lyric poetry and music but also between the lyric and the construction of a fictional human voice. That the selected poets utilize a variety of strategies in terms of the coexistence of lyric and narrative traits in these sequences attests to the flexibility of the genre, paving the way for the alternative conceptualizations of the lyric subject, lyric temporality, and plot-like functions in sequences.

Although these poets make use of similar generic features, the reader can observe differences in the ways they employ lyric devices in their selected sequences. In terms of the lyric focus on the subjective, two different strategies stand out: Hughes upholds the traditional view of a single lyric persona. His sequence offers an extended representation of the plight of the body in pain by focusing on a single subject in a lyric sequence, which opens up possibilities for depicting the tortured body as a locus of empowerment and disempowerment, drawing attention to the ambiguous model of agency embedded in private suffering. Unlike Hughes, Daniels and Oswald prefer a treatment of the lyric subject that promotes the notion of plurality: Daniels' intersubjective persona and the shift from the mythic frame to the ritualistic mode of the lyric I exemplify her experimentation with the lyric subject. Her sequence is characterized by a diversity of voices instead of a monolithic understanding of the lyric persona. Likewise, chiming with egalitarian concerns in contemporary Anglo-American poetry and showing how shifting generic frames results in different focuses, Oswald's *Memorial* dwells on the individual experience of every single soldier died in the Trojan war.

Standing as one of the most distinguishing devices of the genre, lyric address also occupies an important place in these poets' endeavors to communicate

individual suffering, especially in Daniels' and Oswald's sequences. Ted Hughes does not often rely on this generic device. He addresses the persona in his lyric sequence by repeating the title as the first sentence and the title of some of the individual poems, thereby refrain and lyric address merge into each other in Hughes' rehandling of the myth in the lyric mode. Daniels relates the disastrous event that befell modern Niobe to the reader by employing the deictic address "you", thus highlighting the need for responsiveness to another's pain. This direct address also reminds the reader of his/ her own embodiedness, thereby the sequence emphasizes the common condition of vulnerability. In a similar vein, Oswald presents the difference between the epic conceptualization of characters and the lyric treatment of the subject through her use of lyric address. While an individual soldier is a part of the communities he fights with in the world of the Homeric epic, Oswald builds a connection between the body in pain and the potential community lyric address may offer. Oswald's most experimental touch on lyric address is found in her rehandling of the Homeric catalogue: including a list of all soldiers at the beginning of the sequence, she addresses and thus commemorates dead soldiers without referring to their positions in the armies.

Although the selected lyric sequences employ plot-like structures in terms of temporality, the ritualistic lyric present is crucial in their attempt to articulate momentary sensations associated with private suffering. Moreover, in the lyric now, the lyric reader/ audience and the persona in pain meet in the same time zone, a moment which can be described as an ethical encounter that can encourage the communication of pain. Hughes' sequence stands as a state of limbo, without a beginning or an end. This liminal temporal structure of the sequence parallels Prometheus' experience of time as a never-ending present while he is subjected to

torture. Kate Daniels does not limit her use of lyric temporality to the representation of an iterable and thus ritualistic present. She also utilizes various temporal schemes available in the genre of the lyric sequence, such as moving from the past to the present and including recollections of past events to unravel their significance for the present moment. Although *Memorial* deals with the past suffering of deceased soldiers, Oswald's addressing dead soldiers enables her to grant them a presence in the lyric discourse, a strategy often employed by elegists in reviving the past through the use of the lyric now.

All the three poets strategically use intense formal structuring to comment on what the body in pain goes through. To describe Prometheus' suffocating experience, Hughes utilizes repetitive words and sentence structures, paralleling the ritualistic torture carried out by the eagle. Moreover, he plays with the alignments of lines to reflect on how the body in pain becomes both the locus of pain and site of power: it belongs and does not belong to the victim simultaneously. In her take on the formal structuring of the lyric, Daniels shows the inclusiveness of the lyric sequence as a genre incorporating dramatic and fictional elements within itself. Intertextual references and transgeneric moments in *The Niobe Poems* support this treatment of the genre. Oswald employs fragmentation as the main formal trait characterizing the overall structure of her sequence, a tactic creating the impression of looking at a wound. Thereby, she makes use of the materiality of the sequence to highlight human vulnerability, raising the issue of responsiveness to another's pain.

Informed by recent works on private suffering and contemporary studies on lyric theory, this study has focused on three lyric sequences revisiting classical myths to cast light on the plight of the body in pain. Future studies on the representation of individual suffering in contemporary Anglo-American poetry may approach the topic

from different angles: examining the depiction of private pain in specific poetic movements, such as the Beats, the Movement, or Confessional poetry, might be an alternative methodology for exploring the social capacity of the lyric with regard to the articulation of suffering. Such a study may benefit from poetic manifestos and might pay attention to the sociocultural atmosphere that gave rise to the selected movement. Another point of intervention may be the analysis of a single poet's oeuvre in terms of the way s/he reflects on different types of suffering. Ted Hughes' poetry might be an apt choice for this kind of study due to his cruel and violent conceptualization of the universe in which each being strives for survival. It is also possible to explore how contemporary female poets represent suffering. This topic deserves attention particularly in terms of the link French feminists build between female modes of writing and poetry. Although this dissertation refers to French Feminist texts at various points, such as Cixous' "The Laugh of Medusa", Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language*, and Irigaray's "When Our Lips Speak Together", specifically when the selected sequences lend themselves to such an interpretation informed by this school of criticism, its focus is not limited to the study of poems on suffering written by and/ or about women.

There are references to trauma theory in this dissertation; however, the scope of this study does not encompass lyric sequences that focus on survivors of personal or collective traumas: in Ted Hughes' *Prometheus On His Crag*, the final poem depicts Prometheus' ambiguous recovery, yet Hughes does not touch upon the ways Prometheus deals with this traumatic experience of torture after he is set free. Similarly, although the reader witnesses some glimpses of what the modern Niobe goes through after she loses her child, there is no broader account of how she recovers from excessive grief and gets used to the idea that she can survive after her

son's death. The lack of such an extended portrayal stems from the constant shifting of the poetic personae: all Niobes have different backgrounds and individual stories in Daniels' sequence. In *Oswald's Memorial: An Excavation of the Iliad*, the poet re-conceptualizes the Homeric epic as the lines sung by a chorus of woman mourners. Although they might be regarded as survivors, these women do not have full access to the battlefield, thus to the traumatic experience of soldiers, due to their gender. Moreover, Oswald's sequence does not delve into the experience of these mourners per se. The reader just knows that s/he hears their collective voice owing to Oswald's explanations in the "Preface". Neither pastoral similes nor elegiac fragments give any clue about them. Instead, the sequence solely focuses on soldiers at the moments of their death, and in some cases, their families. In this respect, these three works do not offer an extensive representation of how their speakers cope with their traumatic experiences in their future lives. As Cathy Caruth (2013) argues, trauma refers to an "incomprehensible" experience that cannot be fully grasped by the survivor in the past and thus revived repeatedly in the future (p. 7). Literature's relation to trauma, for Caruth (1996), can be found in how the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of trauma meet in the juxtaposition of knowing and not knowing (p. 3). Likewise, dwelling on the link between literary works and trauma narratives, Laurie Vickroy (2014) asserts, "[a]lthough silence may accompany descriptions of the survivor's experience, fiction provides multiple perspectives that allow readers to meditate on the variety of human responses to shock" (p. 130). But what about the new possibilities lyric poetry may open up for shedding light on trauma narratives? Drawing upon lyric poetry's capacity to articulate the plight of the body in pain, future studies may build upon the re-evaluation of the use of lyric

devices in this study to explore how the lyric might become a locus for representing and coming to terms with personal traumas.

An alternative topic for future studies can be the analysis of lyric poems that revisit representations of suffering in another influential and enduring textual tradition in Western culture, namely Judeo-Christian scriptures. When Scarry (1985) delves into the difficulty an individual has in articulating the plight of his/ her body in pain, she refers to classical Greek models, such as “Sophocles’ agonized Philoctetes”, uttering “a cascade of *changing* cries and shrieks that in the original Greek are accommodated by an array of formal words” (p. 5) and Homer’s recognizing the body’s pain in weapons in the *Iliad* (p. 16). In addition to these classical references, Scarry, in the fourth chapter of her book, delves into the Judeo-Christian framework of belief. Building on Scarry’s account of how these scriptures represent the human body and its vulnerability, it is possible to analyze lyric poems utilizing elements of the Judeo-Christian textual tradition in giving voice to the body in pain. A wider scope can be employed in a comparative study on how lyric poets rehandle classical Greek myths and Hebrew and Christian scriptures in their endeavor to shed light on private pain. Such a study can be informed by various theoretical texts comparing these belief structures, such as Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* in which he favors the pessimistic view of the archaic Greek culture, as demonstrated in classical tragedies, over the optimistic belief system of the Christian doctrine, which, according to Nietzsche (1872/2007), “is, and wants to be, only moral, and which, with its absolute criteria (its insistence on god's truthfulness, for example) banishes art, all art, to the realm of lies, and thus negates, damns and condemns it” (p. 9). As life, for Nietzsche (1872/2007), “rests on semblance, art, deception, prismatic effects”, Christianity leads to hostility to life

itself (p. 9). An analysis of how lyric poetry depicts individual suffering through the use of intertextual references, which refer to different structures of belief in Western culture, can contribute to comparative and interdisciplinary studies on individual suffering and the communal functions of the lyric.

Examining literary works from a perspective informed by a different understanding of pain can also be a subject of inquiry for future studies on literary representations of individual suffering. Such a study may draw upon Talal Asad's (2003) treatment of pain as something intricately related to "how a particular kind of relationship can be inhabited and enacted" (p. 82). In his second chapter in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, namely "Thinking about Agency and Pain", Asad (2003) offers an account of pain and its representability which stands in sharp contrast to Scarry's conceptualization of individual suffering in *The Body in Pain*. Asad (2003) gives the example of a mother whose child is wounded and argues that the mother's suffering, in this case, is "a condition of her relationship" (p. 82). Highlighting the significance of relationships, Asad (2013) argues against Scarry's assumption that to encounter another person in pain is to have doubts about his/ her suffering:

The person who suffers because of another's pain doesn't first assess the evidence presented to her and then decide on whether and how to react. She lives in a relationship. The other's hurt . . . makes a difference to her in the sense of being the active reason for her own compassion and for her reacting out to the other's pain. (p. 82)

Building upon Asad's emphasis on the role of relationships in understanding and responding to another's pain, future studies may analyze models of connections between characters with regard to how they can or cannot pave the way for the communication of pain. As lyric poetry does not tend to dwell on such connections in length, works of fiction and drama might be a more apt choice for this kind of

study due to their dialogic and narrative aspects.⁷⁸ The lyric sequences analyzed in this study, for instance, tend to delve into an isolated mode of suffering: no one hears the cries of Hughes' Prometheus, Niobe's interaction with her husband and friends is very limited in Daniels' *The Niobe Poems*, and Oswald deliberately focuses on each soldier as an individual so as to revive their suffering at the moment of death without linking it to any frame narratives in the *Iliad*.

Finally, although it is not included in the theoretical framework of this study, affect theory may prepare the ground for new approaches to the representation of individual pain in lyric poetry. Although the concept resists a unitary conceptualization, Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010) define "affect" in their introductory chapter to *The Affect Theory Reader*, namely "An Inventory of Shimmers" as "an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities", which "[a]rises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (1958/ 2006, p. 1). Affect theory, according to Seigworth and Gregg (2010), explores "a body's capacity to affect and to be affected" in the sense that how a body, situated in "a world of encounters" turns its affections (its being-affected) into action (capacity to affect)" (p. 2). Situating the body in a web of relations, these critics argue that affect theory opens up possibilities for examining not only somatic forces within the body but also their reflections as seen in the body's projection into the external world. In spite of its resistance to fixed definitions of key concepts, affect theory may encourage further studies on the articulation of private pain in lyric poetry especially because of this crucial link

⁷⁸ The different focuses of these genres also attest to why this study focuses on the use of lyric poetry in the representation of individual suffering; that is, its generic power in publicizing private experiences. It should be added that the lyric sequence, as a genre incorporating narrative elements, borrows from fictional conventions.

between the inside and the outside that characterizes the position of the body in affect studies.⁷⁹

All in all, through an analysis of how the selected lyric sequences engage with the question of private pain, this dissertation seeks to become part of a recent interdisciplinary endeavor, the aim of which is to cast light on individual suffering. It contributes to existing scholarship by addressing a gap with regard to the use of lyric devices in giving voice to the body in pain in contemporary Anglo-American lyric poetry. It aims to encourage future studies on the topic by asking the questions how lyric poetry can deepen our understanding of private pain and what strategies it can offer for the communication of individual suffering.

⁷⁹ Seigworth and Gregg's introductory chapter not only includes a brief review of key texts in the field of affect studies, but also offers a summary of eight major approaches. For more information on the topic, see Seigworth and Gregg (2010), pp. 1-25.

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