

E Z E K I E L B L A C K

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## Mouthlessness and Ineffability in World War I Poetry and *The Waste Land*

In “Teaching World War I Poetry—Comparatively,” Margot Norris connects Charles Sorley’s poem “When you see millions of the mouthless dead” to an uncanny phenomenon in World War I poetry: “Sorley’s poem is one of a number of poems that invoke the figure of mouthlessness, or the broken mouth or broken teeth, as a trope for the difficulty or inability of soldiers to articulate their experiences” (144-5). Amid the first industrial war, whose novel horrors include tanks, airplanes, machine guns, and poison gas, soldiers could not color their traditional lexicon, a vocabulary born of Victorian ideals, to paint this war’s grim visage, and this insight is familiar to World War I poetry criticism; in fact, Paul Fussell, author of the seminal book *The Great War and Modern Memory*, writes, “One of the cruxes of the war, of course, is the collision between events and the language available—or thought appropriate—to describe them. To put it more accurately, the collision was one between events and the public language used for over a century to celebrate the idea of progress” (169). This phenomenon might seem specific to war poets, but the inability to express the atrocity of the Great War is widespread—despite writers, especially T. S. Eliot, distancing themselves from the World War I poetry tradition. Although T.S. Eliot, like other Modernist poets, does not recognize the work of certain World War I writers as poetry, *The Waste Land* suffers from the same affliction as the war poets: neither Eliot nor the war poets could voice their reaction to the Great War; more specifically, *The Waste Land* and trench poetry struggle with the ineffability of the age through

fragmentary language and images of broken mouths. While “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” contains examples of ineffability, such as the questions “Do I dare?” and “And how should I begin?” this essay will examine *The Waste Land* exclusively (Eliot 4 and 5). Regardless of Eliot’s dedication of *Prufrock and Other Observations* to Jean Verdenal, a friend who died on the battlefield, *The Waste Land* is nonetheless his response to the Great War, hence the title, a reference to No Man’s Land, the torn landscape between the trenches. For comparison, this essay will review the poetry of the trench poets, the poets who indeed saw battle, namely Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and Charles Sorley. With that restriction, all descriptions of mouth trauma will be grounded in personal experience.

Given their mutual linguistic barriers, the bitter relationship between the war poets and the Modernists disgusts many readers, but the rift results from contradictory conceptions of poetry. The greatest example of this difference is W. B. Yeats’ exclusion of the World War I poets from *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892-1935*, where, in the preface, he defends his decision:

I have rejected these poems for the same reason that made Arnold withdraw his “Empedocles on Etna” from circulation; passive suffering is not a theme for poetry. . . . If war is necessary, or necessary in our time and place, it is best to forget its suffering as we do the discomfort of fever, remembering our comfort at midnight when our temperature fell. (qtd. in Hipp 194)

This is a common criticism of World War I poetry, that it is reportage, a “photographic representation” of firsthand experience, never realizing the telos of proper war poetry: universality (Hipp 194). According to Yeats, war poetry is transcendent, a high art, above any particular moment, especially the base struggle to survive, which is reminiscent of William Wordsworth’s definition of poetry: “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” (21). In lockstep with Yeats and Wordsworth, Eliot parrots this concept in his poem “A Note on War Poetry,” a stance that, again, spurns the war poets’ approach:

It seems just possible that a poem might happen  
To a very young man: but a poem is not poetry—

That is a life.

War is not a life: it is a situation,  
One which may neither be ignored nor accepted,  
A problem to be met with ambush and stratagem,  
Enveloped or scattered.

The enduring is not a substitute for the transient,  
Neither one for the other. But the abstract conception  
Of a private experience at its greatest intensity  
Becoming universal, which we call 'poetry',  
May be affirmed in verse. (215-6)

To understand this *ars poetica*, readers must follow Eliot's logic carefully: Eliot claims that poetry is a life and that war is a situation, not a life; therefore, if poetry is a life and war is not a life, then war is not poetry. Although a writer may compose a poem about war, that piece is not poetry because Eliot does not conflate a poem and poetry, which he explains as an "abstract conception / Of a private experience at its greatest intensity / Becoming universal" (216). War poems are about "enduring" life while poetry is "transient" (Eliot 216). Overall, these definitions of poetry squelch the war poets, a maneuver allowing the Modernists to march into the canon unopposed: "Eliot began to clear Georgians and war writers from his fellow Modernists' path to literary ascendancy" (Krockel 103). However, Eliot, though his work would not betray it, felt a distant camaraderie with the soldiers.

Eliot and the other Modernists are infamous for their treatment of the war poets, but Eliot's compassion for the Great War's soldiers, given his friendship with Jean Verdenal, is stronger than readers might assume. In *War Trauma and English Modernism*, Carl Krockel writes, "Eliot . . . identified with the soldiers who were sacrificed in [his] stead. Eliot's relation to the war is dominated by identification with Jean Verdenal, whose death in 1915 sealed Eliot's estrangement from him, imbuing it with a sense of guilt since Eliot had rejected the confused idealism that compelled him to participate in the war" (20). Before the war, Verdenal and many others were characterized by naiveté and enthusiasm, a combination that produced many recruits, and lines such as "Play up! play up! and play the game!" by Henry Newbolt and "swimmers into cleanness leaping" by Rupert Brooke exemplify this sentiment (qtd. in Fussell 25 and 301). Once the war reared its head and people saw the underbelly of Victorian industrialization, they realized the tragedy of

the conflict, how it consumed an entire generation of soldiers. This sense of loss inspired a variety of responses; indeed, in Eliot's case, "Verdenal became an object of melancholy and mourning in *The Waste Land*" (Krockel 20). Krockel adds, "His complex relationship with Jean Verdenal represents his most direct personal link to war; they were both torn between a need for personal experience and impersonal order, which Verdenal attempted to resolve by volunteering for active service" (45). Although Eliot never did enlist, his citizenship was the only obstacle between him and the front: "I should have liked to have gone in to the training corps myself, for the sake of being able to take my exercise with the Englishmen, but they won't take a foreigner" (qtd. in Krockel 45). The front beyond his reach, Eliot had to reinterpret his position at Lloyds to participate in the war: "if I have not seen the battle field, I have seen other strange things, and I signed a cheque for two hundred thousand pounds while bombs fell about me" (qtd. in Krockel 97). Later in life, Eliot was a staunch advocate of *hors de combat*, read Modernist, literature, but his letters reveal a desire to be in the field—even if it entails redrawing the frontline in the latter epistle. Like the war poets who hunker in trenches as they work, Eliot must persevere despite a bombardment, and the product of this perseverance was *The Waste Land*, a poem known for its fragmentation, a symptom of ineffability. Like Eliot, the war poets also developed methods to handle ineffability.

One method that war poets employed was prosopopeia, a technique where the writer speaks for those who cannot, or to use Paul de Man's words, prosopopeia is "the fiction of an apostrophe to an absent, deceased or voiceless entity, which posits the possibility of the latter's reply and confers upon it the power of speech" (926). When fear or death silenced a comrade, poets like Wilfred Owen would allow the soldier to communicate once again. For example, Owen's poem "Has your Soul Sipped?" begins with an address to a rotten casualty:

Has your soul sipped  
Of the sweetness of all sweets?  
Has it well sipped  
But yet hungers and sweats?

I have been witness  
Of a strange sweetness,  
All fancy surpassing  
Past all supposing. (112)

Owen continues his dialogue with an extensive catalogue of life's marvels and then awaits the dead soldier's reply:

To me was that smile,  
Faint as a wan, worn myth,  
Faint and exceeding small,  
On a boy's murdered mouth.

Though from his throat  
The life-tide leaps  
There was no threat  
On his lips.

But with the bitter blood  
And the death-smell  
All his life's sweetness bled  
Into a smile. (113)

The soldier's reply is a mere smile, yet even that expression is extraordinary considering his mouth trauma and the amount of time necessary to establish a stench. This soldier is long dead, but Owen permits him to engage the poem's speaker, something that is impossible without *prosopopeia*; indeed, before Owen grants the power to respond, the soldier seems ill equipped to speak with his "faint" mouth that is "exceeding small" (113). The myriad definitions of *faint*, not to mention the description of the soldier's diminutive mouth, suggest a state of oral nonexistence, but this image can still function within Paul de Man's insight on *prosopopeia*: "Voice assumes mouth, eye and finally face, a chain that is manifest in the etymology of the trope's name, *prosopon poien*, to confer a mask or a face (*prosopon*)" (926). In the final two lines, Owen, because of the soldier's oral disfiguration and vocal disability, fashions a mask that can smile to fulfill the trope's definition. Mouthlessness, however, appears in many poems of the Great War, the most prominent being Charles Sorley's "When you see millions of the mouthless dead."

Sorley's sonnet displays another aspect of ineffability, the institutional elimination of voice. Like the machinery around them, soldiers are best when they perform a given task as automatically as possible. When given the command, soldiers must go over the top, for example, without fear or second thought, and only training

can shorten the time between order and action. In Sorley's poem, soldiers are so well conditioned that they march even in death: "When you see millions of the mouthless dead / Across your dreams in pale battalions go" (89). Such obedience is the stuff of victory, and mouthlessness here represents the soldiers' subordination. Many critics plumb the transformation from autonomous civilian to anonymous soldier, but Richard Badenhause and Douglas Kerr say it best:

[Critics] inevitably remark upon the military's manipulation of the new recruit during its endeavors to mold him into a nameless, faceless, subservient subject. . . . Douglas Kerr pauses momentarily to note how . . . "The dream of the army's training manual was of a totally controlled, totally efficient society, in which each soldierly body performed the tasks for which it had been moulded, so reliable an instrument that ideally the whole thing could still function . . . without supervision" (Badenhause 268).

The millions of soldiers in the poem rival that very society that Kerr mentions, and as they march into a realm beyond life, a realm beyond their commanders' control, they heed their orders just the same: clockwork automata. Perhaps the dream in which the soldiers tread is an officer's dream, the one who drilled them with the training manual. Next, Sorley writes, "Say not soft things as other men have said, / That they'll remember. For you need not so. / Give them not praise" (89). Reminiscent of Owen and *prosopopeia*, Sorley is the mouthpiece for his silent companions, which is a common duty among war poets: "It becomes the writer's task to reinvigorate the departed soldiers by speaking for them and to pay homage to the fallen comrades by documenting the conditions of battle both for inexperienced civilian readers back home as well as for posterity" (Badenhause 268). Although civilians attempted to assist soldiers in face of modern warfare, their efforts often felt paltry, thus the need for war poets to elucidate the population.

Thanks to soldiers' trouble communicating their circumstances, there was a schism between those on the frontline and those at the home front, and the war poets would act as liaison for the two, disparate groups. Sorley's "When you see millions of the mouthless dead" is one example, but Siegfried Sassoon's "Glory of Women" is another. After the speaker complains about women's ineffectual interest in the war, he says, "You can't believe that British troops 'retire' / When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run, / Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with



expedite the scrutiny of communiqués; for instance, to illustrate the military's workload, its first print run of post cards numbered one million (Fussell 186). Again, much like the training camps that soldiers must endure, the military's appetite for automatization hastened the soldiers' inability to describe the war: "[T]he war probably accelerated the twentieth's century's loss of faith in language to transcribe literal meaning. The army's official language only encouraged this erosion when supplying formulaic means of written communication like the Field Service Post Card" (Badenhausen 271). To my knowledge, there are no poems that refer to the post cards, but the attrition of humanity is a frequent theme, especially in Isaac Rosenberg's "August 1914":

Three lives hath one life—  
Iron, honey, gold.  
The gold, the honey gone—  
Left is the hard and cold.

Iron are our lives  
Molten right through our youth.  
A burnt space through ripe fields,  
A fair mouth's broken tooth. (217)

Of life's triptych, the speaker is bereft of both honey and gold, that which is sweet and valuable, so only iron remains, casting an image of a rigid, numb construct, the fighting machine that the army desires. Instead of a golden, mellifluous voice, the soldier mouth can but muster a "broken tooth" (Rosenberg 217). In "August 1914," the speaker sloughs off his humanity as he fights, and this deterioration of personality is one objective of the Field Service Post Card: "As the first widely known example of dehumanized, automated communication, the post card popularized a mode of rhetoric indispensable to the conduct of later wars fought by great faceless conscripted armies" (Fussell 186). Overall, a soldier's urge to speak, when possible, is not shared by his superiors. Censorship's power to silence a soldier stations it with other forms of mouthlessness and ineffability.

The war poems "Has your Soul Sipped," "When you see millions of the mouthless dead," "Glory of Women," and "August 1914" house examples of "mouthlessness, or the broken mouth or broken teeth," as Norris says, and although this is an incomplete survey, it is nonetheless representative of World War I poetry's employment of the mouthless trope, granting readers a glimpse into the poetic representations

of ineffability (144). These include prosopopeia, anonymity via training, schisms between citizens and soldiers, shell shock, and censorship. This linguistic collapse symbolized by mouthlessness would reverberate throughout twentieth-century literature, specifically throughout *The Waste Land*, Eliot's attempt to poeticize the Great War's aftershocks. Eliot and most other civilians were shaken by the war's magnitude, and many ventured to transcribe that emotion. While readers view the Modernists and the war poets as incongruous movements, some Modernists, despite their efforts otherwise, share some similarities with the war poets. Such is the case with Eliot and ineffability.

Readers must remember that Eliot's compassion for the soldiers of the Great War begins with Verdenal, whom he channels in the first section of *The Waste Land*; however, like Owen and the other war poets who speak for these soldiers, Eliot must overcome their silence, which Krockel affirms, "Verdenal and the dead of war form the ordering silence of *The Waste Land*" (119). In the first stanza of "The Burial of the Dead," Eliot resurrects Verdenal with the use of second person, so as Eliot speaks, Verdenal, dead since 1915, stands beside him (Fussell 302):

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain.  
Winter kept us warm, covering  
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
A little life with dried tubers. (53)

Read on its own, the poem never identifies the additional individual that warrants "us," but if readers delve into Eliot's commentary, they will understand that Verdenal is present in the poem: "The second line mentions lilacs, which is perhaps the most direct reference to Verdenal, as Eliot in a 'Commentary' of April 1934 recalls Verdenal 'waving a bunch of lilacs'" (Krockel 121). From almost the first line, Verdenal, a soldier who presumably suffered the same inability to formulate the war experience, influenced the poem, which might explain its initial enjambment: the hesitant, fragmentary collection of present participles echoes the vocal patterns of shell-shocked soldiers (Badenhausen 272). Additionally, the caesura before each enjambed participle imitates a stutter, a frequent speech impediment of soldiers like Owen. Later in the stanza, Eliot proceeds to a portray children sledding, and again, Verdenal is the fulcrum of this otherwise inexplicable scene: "Even the

words of Marie point back nostalgically to Eliot's year with Verdenal since they are a reminiscence of his visit to Munich in 1911, where he had a conversation about sledding with Countess Marie Larisch" (Krockel 121). Like a traumatized soldier who calls out for his mother, Eliot and Verdenal yearn for the comforts of an innocent childhood; in fact, nostalgia, i.e. "[m]emory and desire," powers much of the fragmentation of the first stanza, which includes collection of remembrances (Eliot 53).

Verdenal also lingers in the second stanza of "The Burial of the Dead," and this stanza is the first to admit the difficulty of speech forthright in *The Waste Land*. Again, the poem preserves the second person, so readers can assume that Verdenal remains, but without that assumption, the hyacinth is still a flower of mourning: "The 'hyacinth' of the ancient Greeks was different to the one known by this name today; they saw the letters 'AI', spelling out a cry of woe in its petals, and imagined it as a memorial to a young man loved and accidentally killed by Apollo" (Krockel 120). Because Eliot did not dissuade Verdenal from volunteering and because their relationship did not have any closure, perhaps Eliot's survivor's guilt impels him to choose the hyacinth over, say, the lily, another flower bound to death; indeed, perhaps the hyacinth better symbolizes Eliot's guilt because he can project himself onto Apollo, the god of poetry, who, after he kills Hyacinth, transforms him into the eponymous flower, which likewise commemorates Verdenal in this stanza. The correlation does not end there, though, because Verdenal drowned at Gallipoli, a fact that appears in this excerpt (Fussell 301-2):

—Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, *and your hair wet*, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (Eliot 54; emphasis added)

In the section "Death by Water," Phlebas the Phoenician sailor shares Verdenal's fate, another compelling correlation, but to examine these few lines here, readers see a microcosm of a war poet's trials: witnessing a fellow soldier perish, drown in this case, would cause psychological strain, which manifests as blindness, deafness, numbness, and muteness—all found in this quotation and all indicators of shell shock (Krockel 120). Although critics should not argue that Eliot had shell shock, his poetry does parallel that of the war poets: "The problem for survivors of the war

came in efforts to communicate the war's full impact, to forge an authentic voice that could give expression to what was perceived during the conflict as to some degree inexpressible" (Hipp 9). Eliot must write despite the ineffability the war triggers, and similar to this section, "A Game of Chess" also borrows from another myth to explore the Great War.

Eliot's selection of mythology thus far has reinforced the concept of ineffability, and the same holds true for the second section, which incorporates the story of Philomela:

Above the antique mantel was displayed  
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene  
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king  
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale  
Filled all the desert air with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears. (56)

Essentially, the "barbarous" Tereus rapes Philomela, and to guarantee that she cannot accuse him of the crime, he slices off her tongue (Ovid 146-7). Afterward, Philomela serves Tereus his deserts when she tricks him into eating his son, but when he tries to finally slay Philomela, she morphs into a bird and escapes (Ovid 150-1). Because this story, like many World War I poems, hinges on mouth trauma, it opens a door to a wider discussion of ineffability, such as Krockel's observation that the myth "connotes the violence of war, with the victims' cries being ignored while the violence continues. Also it implicates the poet as nightingale whose song is polluted by the relentless sordidness of reality" (Krockel 122). If a soldier did emerge from battle, words might escape him when he recounts his tale, oral disfiguration or no; likewise, Philomela qua nightingale, though ready to sing of Tereus' offense, cannot articulate anything beyond "Jug Jug" (Eliot 56). An example of a catch-22, the impaired Philomela is not equipped to speak, while the unimpaired nightingale is equipped to speak—but not a language others can comprehend. This either-or situation is endemic to war poets because when words do not escape them they fall on mud-clogged ears or "dirty ears" as Eliot prefers (56), a possible reference to the quagmire of the trenches. Together, Hyacinth and Philomela illustrate the dilemma of World War I poetry, that speechlessness is not always subject to physical mouthlessness.

Later in this section, Eliot writes about his marriage to Vivienne, drawing a comparison between marital problems and war. Here, there are references to both silence and the battlefield:

‘Speak to me Why do you never speak. Speak.  
‘What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?  
I never know what you are thinking. Think.’

I think we are in rats’ alley  
Where the dead men lost their bones. (Eliot 57)

Eliot’s appropriation of battle language via “rats’ alley,” synonym for the trenches, is appropriate because life with Vivienne was a martial life, one consumed with anxiety and rapid-fire orders (57). For example, the series of commands and questions above are so clouded by the fog of war that the question mark of the interrogative sentence “Why do you never speak” evaporates. To this inquiry about silence, Eliot responds that they are in the trenches, again linking war and figurative mouthlessness. As a matter of fact, some critics expound upon the association between Eliot’s marriage and war:

Eliot consistently explains, or explained away, the problems of his marriage in terms of the war. The wedding was “hastened by events connected to the war”, since he was taking on the responsibility of financially supporting Vivienne in the wake of her family’s recently strained circumstances. However, he found it very difficult to honour this pledge to her, complaining to Conrad Aiken in August 1915, “What I want is MONEY! \$! £!! We are hard up! War!” (Krockel 92-3)

This financial state left the couple reliant on Bertrand Russell, who lent them his apartment, which ultimately lead to an affair between Vivienne and Russell (Krockel 93). Although this was a personal blow to Eliot, his reaction is reminiscent of soldiers who dealt with marital betrayal. “Doctors treating soldiers,” Krockel explains, “often faced a similar uncertainty since the fidelity of the wife at home was one factor among many in establishing the aetiology of trauma sustained in the war zone” (104). Infidelity contributed to the soldiers’ trauma, of which mutism is a symptom, and this impotence of voice dominated Eliot from 1918, roughly the

time that he discovered the affair, to the composition of *The Waste Land* (Krockel 103 and 105). In Eliot's words, he could "hardly think or talk" during this period (qtd. in Krockel 105). Vivienne is one source of mouthlessness in the poem, and Lil is another.

The latter half of "A Game of Chess" details the hardships of a new mother as she aborts her child. Because of the mother's poor oral hygiene, the weight of the situation registers on her sunken face, like that of a crone's, frail and vulnerable: "He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you / To get yourself some teeth," and later

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.  
(And her only thirty-one.)  
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,  
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.  
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.) (Eliot 58)

Similar to the broken tooth in "August 1914," toothlessness is more than a literal loss: it represents the figurative loss of power and effectiveness, hence the connotation of the word *toothless*. Like mouthlessness in the war poems, toothlessness is a symbol of ineffability. As soldiers failed to describe the unspeakable destruction of tanks, airplanes, machine guns, poison gas, and other inventions, Eliot, vicariously through Lil, cannot overcome the awe that subways, telephones, radios, film, and abortion pills, those trappings of modernity, inspire. Essentially, the technology of the age had moved beyond the reach of the population's tongue. The mere inclusion of the abortion pills, one critic suggests, springs from the prevalence of certain wounded veterans and the technological advancements they require: "[I]n France they were referred to as *les grands mutilés* [the grievously wounded] and *les gueles cassées* [the broken faces], and their appearance in civilian society there and elsewhere was both commonplace and harrowing" (Garner 505). To help these maimed soldiers assimilate into society, the army had to devise a solution. The practice of plastic surgery in its infancy, the military's medical corps would hire sculptors to hide what the scalpel could not reconstruct, and soon, the artists would fit these soldiers with tin masks painted to match prewar photographs (Garner 506). The amalgamation of sculpture and plastic surgery also influenced other forms of collaboration:

[A]s the examples of facial injury and reconstructive surgery make clear, during the modernist period, the fields of medicine, art, and theatre interacted with each other in intricate, mutually defining ways. Some of these relationships, the kind most familiar to literary and theatrical history and to the history of art, involved appropriation, with one field serving as the subject of another. (Garner 506)

Surgery and sculpture are one example of creative crosspollination, but there are also seeds of medical breakthroughs in Eliot's work, such as the "patient etherised upon a table" and the abortion pills above (3). The dialogue at the end of "A Game of Chess" helps further establish the correspondence between *The Waste Land* and war poetry, especially regarding ineffability's two major components: mouthlessness and toothlessness.

In previous paragraphs, mythology revealed the extent of Eliot's speechlessness, but religion only compounds his silence. "The Fire Sermon," the third section of the epic, alludes to Psalm 137: "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . . / Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song, / Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long" (Eliot 60). The psalm itself reads, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, then we remembered Zion" (qtd. in Malamud 41). In this passage, the Jewish people are in exile, far from their home in Jerusalem; likewise, Eliot effectively exiled himself when he traveled to Switzerland, "by the waters of Lake Leman (Lake Geneva)," to improve his mental health (Malamud 41). The Great War was a sea change for twentieth-century society, and its wake left many people, especially Eliot, emotionally stranded. Alongside other issues in his life, this led to Eliot's nervous breakdown, hence the identification with the psalm as he seeks his cure: "Eliot means to appropriate the psalm's poignant and helpless lament, and to equate that lament with his own frustration at being unable to hold together the chaotic fragments of his cultural or his personal past (as the Jews in Babylon feared that they would forget their culture from Jerusalem)." (Malamud 41). Malamud says that Eliot's treatment "was the catalyst . . . for the organization and ordering necessary to create the poem," but Malamud and other critics also observe an inverse relationship between the treatment and the poem, i.e. the poem was the treatment (41). For example, Hipp says, "Eliot, in fact, wrote his stability back into existence" (6). Although Hipp's conclusion would be difficult to substantiate, it does coincide with the cure of some war poets, such as Owen, whose poetry, for example, "reveals the method by which poetry could possess a

therapeutic function for the sufferer of shell shock” (Hipp 52). When Owen first arrives at Craiglockhart Military Hospital, he “appears reluctant or incapable of putting the full extent of his suffering into words,” but he “will be seen to eliminate his inability to confront his condition by means of the construction of strategies of self-revelation and self-healing achieved within [his] poetry” (Hipp 53-4). There is similar success for Eliot that readers can tease from Hipp’s book *The Poetry of Shell Shock*: Eliot’s “psychological torment had reduced the normally active, industrious and controlled poet to a state of emotional paralysis, where his voice as an artist had been effectively rendered mute,” but thanks to language itself through the repetition of mantras, his “therapy turned the victim of paralyzing emotional torment once again into an active creative agent whose creations contributed to his emotional stability” (Hipp 6). In conclusion, Eliot’s reference to Psalm 137 and Leman, both of which point toward his speechlessness, allows readers to discuss his treatment, which, like Owen and the war poets, was grounded in poetry. Despite the Great War’s theft of their voice, it was language that ultimately restored these individuals.

Ineffability assaults the war poets from all sides—physically, mentally, environmentally, and societally; likewise, Eliot’s own ineffability is polyvalent, revolving around mourning, infidelity, mythology, technology, and religion. For Eliot, though, there is apotheosis because the last section “What the Thunder Said” contains a variety of noise: From the “cicada / And dry grass singing” to the “Murmur of maternal lamentation,” from the “Tolling reminiscent bells” to the cock’s “Co co rico co co rico,” all of which are punctuated by the thunder’s onomatopoeic “DA,” a cacophony disrupts *The Waste Land*’s silence (Eliot 66-69). Eliot even contributes to the din with “Shantih shantih shantih,” a moment of catharsis, one that is inaccessible to the war poets, many of whom died in the field. Both Eliot and the war poets share a certain mouthlessness, but he is able to ascend the fray and lift his voice in future poetry. The war poets, on the other hand, are stuck in the mud, lost, like the corpse that never sprouts in “The Burial of the Dead” (Eliot 55). That said, voice should be listed alongside the dead as a victim of the war.

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