

*poetry from the city,
from the intellect*

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock¹

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno viva alcun, s' i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.²*

Does Prufrock ever leave his room?

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the
window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the
window-panes,
Ticked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Flipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

¹ *J. Alfred Prufrock* The name is likely taken from the The Prufrock-Littau Company, a furniture dealer located in St. Louis, Eliot's birthplace.

S'io credesse ... ti rispondo Italian: "If I thought that my reply were given to anyone who might return to the world, this flame would stand forever still; but since never from this deep place has anyone ever returned alive, if what I hear is true, without fear of infamy I answer thee," Dante's *Inferno* 27.61-66; Guido da Montefeltro's speech, as he burns in Hell.

And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
25 Rubbing its back upon the window panes;
There will be time, there will be time³
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days⁴ of hands
30 That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

35 In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
40 With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat,⁵ my collar mounting firmly to the
chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple
pin—
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")
45 Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them
all—
50 Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall⁶

³ *there will be time* See Ecclesiastes 3.1-8. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal ..."

⁴ *works and days* Title of a poem by eighth-century BCE Greek poet Hesiod.

⁵ *morning coat* A formal coat with tails.

⁶ *with a dying fall* In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* 1.1.1-15. Duke Orsino commands, "That strain again, it had a dying fall."

Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?

55 And I have known the eyes already, known them
all

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated; sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
60 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them
all

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
65 Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table; or wrap about a shawl;
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?

* * *

70 Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of
windows? ...¹

with the removal

* I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.²

* * *

75 And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

¹ ... The ellipsis here makes note of a 38 line insertion written by Eliot, entitled *Prufrock's Pervigilium*. The subtitle and 33 of the lines were later removed.

² *I should ... seas* See Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 2.2, in which Hamlet tells Polonius, "for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backwards."

80 Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
brought in upon a platter;³
I am no prophet⁴—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
85 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat,
and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
90 Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball⁵
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus,⁶ come from the dead,
95 Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;
That is not it, at all."

infinitely possible

And would it have been worth it, after all,
100 Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled
streets,⁷
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that
trail along the floor—
And this; and so much more?—
* It is impossible to say just what I mean!

Prufrock's impotence: can't act

³ *brought in upon a platter* Reference to Matthew 14.1-12, in which the prophet John the Baptist is beheaded at the command of Herod, and his head presented to Salomé upon a platter.

⁴ *I am no prophet* See Amos 7.14. When commanded by King Amaziah not to prophesy, the Judean Amos answered; "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a farmer of sycamore fruit."

⁵ *Squeezed ... ball* See Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" 41-42: "Let us roll our strength and all / Our sweetness up into one ball."

⁶ *Lazarus* Raised from the dead by Jesus in John 11.1-44.

⁷ *sprinkled streets* Streets sprayed with water to keep dust down.

*paralytic: Preface subjectivises empty;
Caught in subjectivity*

But as if a magic lantern¹ threw the nerves in patterns
on a screen:

Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:

"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

* * *

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress,² start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence,³ but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a
peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the
beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing,⁴ each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

—1915, 1917

¹ *magic lantern* In Victorian times, a device used to project images painted on glass onto a blank screen or wall.

² *progress* Journey made by royalty through the country.

³ *high sentence* Serious, elevated sentiments or opinions.

⁴ *I have ... singing* See John Donne's "Song": "Teach me to hear the mermaids singing."

Preludes⁵

I

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
5 And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
10 On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

2

The morning comes to consciousness
15 Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled⁶ street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
20 That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

3

You tossed a blanket from the bed,
25 You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.
30 And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters,
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters;
You had such a vision of the street

⁵ *Preludes* In Parts 3 and 4 of this poem, many of the images and details of setting are taken from Charles-Louis Philippe's novel *Bubu-de-Montparnasse* (1898).

⁶ *sawdust-trampled* Sawdust was placed on the floors of bars and restaurants to absorb dirt.

The Waste Land

The title and plan of Eliot's groundbreaking poem *The Waste Land* were substantially influenced by Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), which details the various legends of the Holy Grail and explores the influence of pre-Christian religions on these legends. According to most accounts of the Grail, the sacred vessel lies in the heart of a (formerly fertile) Waste Land that is now stricken with drought and presided over by a Fisher King who is cursed with impotence. The land and its king can be saved only from permanent sterility by a knight who is able to pass several tests and attain the Grail, thus bringing about regeneration. Overlaying this myth with a modern setting and numerous cultural references, Eliot shows that a similar sterility plagues a contemporary society characterized by casual sexuality, blatant materialism, and industrial exploitation of nature.

With its disparate images, ever-shifting narrative events, and seemingly random structure, *The Waste Land* embraces the fragmented present while looking back to a more coherent past. Allusions to seventeenth-century poets, to Chaucer, to Shakespeare, to Dante, to pre-Socratic philosophers, and to works of history and anthropology, such as James Frazer's twelve-volume anthropological study *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), gesture towards the presence of a recurring order beneath contemporary history and indicate the possibility of regeneration. The poem's disconnected and highly allusive character (which gives it a sense of difficulty more often heightened than alleviated by Eliot's copious notes) provoked charges of intentional obscurity upon the poem's publication, but Eliot maintained that any poetry developed out of such a complex and various society must itself be various and complex.

By its very nature, *The Waste Land* seems to resist order and any cohesive account of meaning; its complexity and ambiguity make possible a variety of interpretations. Even the identity of its narrator is unclear: are all the disparate voices filtered through any single voice? And, if so, is the voice that of the blind prophet Tiresias, or some other nameless

narrator, or is the speaker Eliot himself? This very complexity may in large part be responsible for the continued vitality of the poem, however. Eliot's friend Conrad Aiken maintained that the poem was important primarily for its private "emotional value," and that readers should rely as much on their first responses to the diverse elements of the poem as on the copious and ever-expanding body of scholarship surrounding it. As much as *The Waste Land* has taken its place as a central document of the modernist movement, it retains as well the ability to speak directly to readers.

*The Waste Land*¹

"Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illα: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω."²

For Ezra Pound
il miglior fabbro.³

¹ [Eliot's note]. Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean [Sir James Frazer's 1890 to 1915 twelve-volume] *The Golden Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes *Adonis*, *Attis*, *Osiris*. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognise in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.

² *Nam ... θέλω* Latin and Greek: "For once I saw with my own eyes the Sybil at Cumae hanging in a cage, and when the boys asked her, 'Sybil, what do you want?' she responded, 'I want to die.'" From the *Satyricon* of Petronius Arbiter (first-century CE Roman writer). The most famous of the prophetic Sibyls of Greek mythology, the Cumaeen Sibyl received immortality from the god Apollo, but neglected to ask him for eternal youth.

³ *il miglior fabbro* Italian: the better craftsman. This compliment was originally paid by Dante, in his *Purgatorio* (26.117), to the Provençal poet, Arnaut Daniel. Eliot adopts it for his dedication to fellow expatriate and Modernist American poet, Ezra Pound (1885–1972), who played a key editorial role in the poem's production.

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD¹

April is the cruellest month, breeding
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
 Memory and desire, stirring
 Dull roots with spring rain.

5 Winter kept us warm, covering
 Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
 A little life with dried tubers.

Smith (S) Summer surprised (us) coming over the Starnbergersee²
 With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
 10 And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,³
 And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt
 deutsch.⁴

And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
 My cousin's, he took me out on a sled, WWX
 15 And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
 Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
 In the mountains, there you feel free.
 I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches
 grow

20 Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,⁵
 You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
 A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
 And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no
 relief,⁶
 And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

¹ THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD Reference to the Anglican Order for the Burial of the Dead.

² Starnbergersee Lake near Munich, Germany.

³ Hofgarten Public park in Munich.

⁴ Bin ... deutsch German: I'm not Russian at all, I come from Lithuania, a pure German.

⁵ Son of man Eliot's note cites Ezekiel 2.1, in which God addresses Ezekiel, whose mission will be to preach the coming of the Messiah to unbelievers, saying, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

⁶ cricket no relief Eliot's note cites Ecclesiastes 12.5, in which the preacher speaks of the fearful deprivations of old age: "Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets ..."

25 There is shadow under this red rock,⁷
 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
 And I will show you something different from either
 Your shadow at morning striding behind you
 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;

30 I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind

Der Heimat zu

Mein Irisch Kind,

*Wo weilest du?*⁸

35 "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
 They called me the hyacinth girl."
 —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
 40 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

*Oed' und leer das Meer.*⁹

Madame Sosostris,¹⁰ famous clairvoyante,
 Had a bad cold, nevertheless

45 Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
 With a wicked pack of cards.¹¹ Here, said she,

⁷ There is shadow ... rock See Isaiah 32.2, in which the blessings of Christ's kingdom are described: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

⁸ Frisch ... du? German: "Fresh blows the wind to the homeland—my Irish child, where do you tarry?" From Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), 1.5–8; this is a sailor's lament for the girl he has left behind in Ireland.

⁹ Oed' ... Meer German: "Desolate and empty is the sea." Eliot's note cites *Tristan und Isolde* 3.24, in which Tristan lies dying, waiting for his beloved, Isolde, to come to him, but there is no sign of her ship on the sea.

¹⁰ Madame Sosostris This name is often thought to have been "unconsciously" borrowed by Eliot from the name of the fortune-teller Madame Sosostris in Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow* (1921). It may more plausibly have derived from the Greek word for saviour, *soterios*.

¹¹ [Eliot's note] I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards, from which I have obviously departed to suit my own convenience. The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part V. The Phoenician Sailor and the Merchant appear later; also the "crowds of people," and Death by Water is executed in Part IV.

Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes.¹ Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,²

The lady of situations.

Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,³
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

The Hanged Man.⁴ Fear death by water.

I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.

Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,

Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,⁵

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

I had not thought death had undone so many.⁶ *Dante*

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,

And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

The Man with Three Staves (an authentic member of the Tarot pack) I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself. [The Tarot pack, generally used for fortune-telling, consists of 78 cards in four suits—cups, wands, swords, and pentangles. It originated in France and Italy in the fourteenth century.]

¹ *Those are ... eyes* From Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* 1.2.397–403: "Full fathom five thy father lies; / Of his bones are coral made; / Those are pearls that were his eyes; / Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange: / Sea nymphs hourly ring his knell: / Burden. Ding-dong. / Hark! Now I hear them—ding-dong bell."

² *Belladonna* Italian: beautiful woman. Also another name for the poisonous plant deadly nightshade, once used for cosmetic purposes by Italian women; *Lady of the Rocks* Possible ironic reference to Leonardo da Vinci's painting *Madonna of the Rocks*.

³ *Wheel* Wheel of Fortune.

⁴ *Hanged Man* This man's self-sacrifice in the role of fertility god is necessary for the annual rejuvenation of the land.

⁵ *Unreal City* Eliot's note cites the following lines from the 1859 poem "Les sept vieillards" by poet Charles Baudelaire: "Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves, / Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant." (French: "Swarming city, city full of dreams, / Where the daylight specter intercepts the passerby.") "The City" is the name for London's financial district, located north of London Bridge.

⁶ *so many ... so many* Eliot's note cites Dante's *Inferno* 3.55–57: "such a long stream / of people, that I would not have thought / that death had undone so many." This is spoken by Dante soon after he has entered the Gates of Hell in the company of Virgil, his guide through the underworld.

Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth⁷ kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.⁸
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying
"Stetson!"⁹

70 You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!¹⁰
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
75 Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!¹¹

You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"¹²

2. A GAME OF CHESS¹³

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,¹⁴
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
80 From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra

⁷ *Saint Mary Woolnoth* Church in King William Street. Eliot joined a campaign to have this church, and others like it that were slated for demolition, preserved.

⁸ [Eliot's note] A phenomenon which I have often noticed.

⁹ *Stetson* Eliot, when questioned, maintained this was a reference to the average City clerk, and not, as some had suggested, to Ezra Pound, whose nickname was "Buffalo Bill."

¹⁰ *Mylae* The Battle of Mylae (260 BCE) took place in the trade-based First Punic War between the Romans and the Carthaginians.

¹¹ *Oh keep ... men* Eliot's note cites the dirge in John Webster's play *The White Devil* (1612) 5.4: "But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men, / For with his nails he'll dig them up again." Sirius, the Dog Star, heralded the annual flooding of the Nile in Egyptian mythology.

¹² *hypocrite ... mon frère* French: "Hypocrite reader—my double—my brother!" Eliot's note cites the preface of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*.

¹³ *A GAME OF CHESS* Title of Thomas Middleton's 1624 satirical political drama. In Middleton's play *Women Beware Women*, a game of chess distracts a mother-in-law, preventing her from noticing that her daughter-in-law is being seduced upstairs. Each move in the chess game mirrors a move in the seduction.

¹⁴ [Eliot's note] Cf. Antony and Cleopatra, 2.2.190. [This is the beginning of Enobarbus's description of the first meeting of Antony and Cleopatra: "The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Burned on the water."]

Reflecting light upon the table as
 The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
 85 From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
 In vials of ivory and coloured glass
 Unstoppers, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
 Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
 And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
 90 That freshened from the window, these ascended
 In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
 Flung their smoke into the laquearia,¹
 Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
 Huge sea-wood fed with copper
 95 Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured
 stone,
 In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
 Above the antique mantel was displayed
 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene²
 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
 100 So rudely forced;³ yet there the nightingale
 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
 And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
 * "Jug Jug"⁴ to dirty ears.
 And other withered stumps of time
 105 Were told upon the walls; staring forms
 Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
 Footsteps shuffled on the stair.
 Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
 Spread out in fiery points
 110 Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
 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."

¹ *laquearia* Latin: paneled ceiling. Eliot's note cites Virgil's *Aeneid* 1.726, describing a banquet given by Queen Dido of Carthage for her soon-to-be lover, Aeneas: "Burning lamps hang from the gold-paneled ceiling, and torches dispel the night with their flames."

² *sylvan scene* Eliot's note cites Milton's *Paradise Lost* 4.140, which describes the Garden of Eden seen through Satan's eyes.

³ *The change ... forced* Eliot's notes for this passage cite Greek poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6, which tells the Greek myth of Philomela, who was raped by King Tereus of Thrace (her sister's husband) and had her tongue cut out before being changed into a nightingale.

⁴ *Jug Jug* In Elizabethan poetry, a conventional representation of a nightingale's song. Also, a crude reference to sexual intercourse.

115 I think we are in rats' alley⁵
 Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"

The wind under the door.⁶

"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"

120 Nothing again nothing.

"Do

You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you
 remember

Nothing?"

I remember

125 Those are pearls that were his eyes.

* "Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag⁷—

It's so elegant

130 So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"

"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?

What shall we ever do?"

135 The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the
 door.⁸

When Lil's husband got demobbed,⁹ I said—

140 I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME¹⁰

Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.

⁵ [Eliot's note] Cf. part 3, line 195 [of *Metamorphoses* 6].

⁶ *The wind ... door* Eliot's note cites a line from John Webster's *The Devil's Law Case* (3.2.162). A patient who is believed to have been stabbed to death groans in pain, prompting the surgeon to ask, "Is the wind in that door still?"

⁷ *O ... Rag* Reference to a popular American ragtime song performed in Ziegfield's Follies in 1912.

⁸ [Eliot's note] Cf. the game of chess in Middleton's *Women Beware Women*.

⁹ *demobbed* Demobilized; released from military service.

¹⁰ *HURRY ... TIME* Expression used by bartenders in Britain to announce closing time.

He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you

To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
 You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
 He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
 And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
 He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
 And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
 Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
 Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.
 Others can pick and choose if you can't.
 But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
 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.)

The chemist^o said it would be alright, *pharmacist*
 but I've never been the same.

You are a proper fool, I said.
 Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
 What you get married for if you don't want children?

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,^o *smoked ham*
 And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
 Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
 Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night,
 good night.¹

3. THE FIRE SERMON²

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind

175 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are *clever and pretty*
 departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.³

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
 Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
 Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs
 are departed.

180 And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
 Departed, have left no addresses.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept ...⁴

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,

Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.

185 But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear
 to ear.⁵

A rat crept softly through the vegetation

Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

While I was fishing in the dull canal

190 On a winter evening round behind the gashouse

Musing upon the king my brother's wreck

And on the king my father's death before him.⁶

White bodies naked on the low damp ground

www

² THE FIRE SERMON. Sermon preached by the Buddha against passions (such as lust, anger, and envy) that consume people and prevent their regeneration.

³ Sweet Thames ... song. Eliot's note cites the refrain of Edmund Spenser's *Prothalamion* (1596), a poem that celebrates the ideals of marriage, written to commemorate the joint marriages of the two daughters of the Earl of Worcester.

⁴ By the ... wept. Reference to Psalm 137, in which the Hebrews lament their exile in Babylon and their lost homeland: "By the rivers of Babylon, there sat we down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." For Babylon Eliot substitutes "Leman," the French name for Lake Geneva. "Leman" is also a medieval word meaning sweetheart.

⁵ But at ... ear. Eliot's note cites Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress": "But at my back I always hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near" (lines 21-22).

⁶ And on ... him. Eliot's note cites Shakespeare's *The Tempest* 1.2.388-93, in which Ferdinand, shipwrecked on the shore, is prompted by Ariel's music to ponder the supposed drowning of his father, King Alonso: "Sitting on a bank, / Weeping again the king my father's wrack / This music crept by me upon the waters, / Allaying both their fury and my passion / With its sweet air." Eliot also quotes from this passage on line 257.

¹ Good night... night. Ophelia's last words in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (4.5.72-3) before she drowns herself. These words are taken by her father as evidence that she had been driven insane by Hamlet's seeming indifference to her.

195 And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring¹
Sweeney² to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
200 And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water³
*Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole.*⁴

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
205 So rudely forc'd.
Tereu⁵

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna⁶ merchant
210 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,⁷
Asked me in demotic⁸ French

¹ [Eliot's note] Cf. [John] Day, *Parliament of Bees*: "When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear, / A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring / Actaeon to Diana in the spring, / Where all shall see her naked skin..." [According to classical myth, when the hunter Actaeon saw Diana, goddess of chastity and the hunt, bathing naked with her nymphs, she changed him into a stag and set his dogs upon him.]

² *Sweeney* Character in two earlier poems by Eliot, "Sweeney Erect" and "Sweeney Among the Nightingales."

³ [Eliot's note] I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these are taken: it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia. [One version of this ballad, which was sung by Australian soldiers in World War I, is as follows: "O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter / And on the daughter / Of Mrs. Porter / They wash their feet in soda water / And so they oughter / To keep them clean."]

⁴ *Et O ... coupole* French: "And O those children's voices singing under the cupola." Eliot's note indicates that this is the last line of French poet Paul Verlaine's sonnet "Parsifal" (1886). Verlaine refers to the opera *Parsifal* (1882) by Richard Wagner, in which a choir of children sings while the innocent knight Parsifal has his feet washed before entering the Castle of the Grail.

⁵ *Tereu* Latin vocative form of Tereus, who raped Philomela.

⁶ *Smyrna* Port city in western Turkey.

⁷ *C.i.f. ... sight* Eliot's note explains that "C.i.f." means that the price includes "cost, insurance, freight to London," and that "documents on sight" indicates that "the Bill of Lading, etc., were to be handed to the buyer upon payment of the sight draft."

⁸ *demotic* Popular; vulgar.

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel⁹
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.¹⁰

215 At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine
waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias,¹¹ though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
220 At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,¹²
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins:
Out of the window perilously spread
225 Her drying combinations¹³ touched by the sun's last rays,

⁹ *Cannon Street Hotel* Hotel near the Cannon Street train station, a terminus for travelers to and from the continent.

¹⁰ *Metropole* Large hotel on the seashore at Brighton.

¹¹ [Eliot's note] Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem. The whole passage from Ovid is of great anthropological interest. [Eliot then quotes in Latin the passage from *Metamorphoses* that describes Tiresias's sex change. Jove, who had drunk a great deal, "jested with Juno. He said, 'Your pleasure in love is really greater than that enjoyed by men.' She denied it; so they decided to seek the opinion of the wise Tiresias, for he knew both aspects of love. For once, with a blow of his staff, he had committed violence on two huge snakes as they copulated in the green forest; and—wonderful to tell—was turned into a woman and thus spent seven years. In the eighth year he saw the same snakes again and said: 'If a blow struck at you is so powerful that it changes the sex of the giver, I will now strike at you again.' With these words she struck the snakes, and again became a man. So he was appointed arbiter in the playful quarrel, and supported Jove's statement. It is said that Saturnia [Juno] was quite disproportionately upset, and condemned the arbiter to perpetual blindness. But the almighty father (for no god may undo what has been done by another god), in return for the sight that was taken away, gave him the power to know the future and so lightened the penalty paid by the honor."]

¹² [Eliot's note] This may not appear as exact as Sappho's lines but I had in mind the "longshore" or "dory" fisherman, who returns at nightfall. [Eliot refers to seventh-century BCE Greek poet Sappho's poem, known as Fragment 149, in which Hesperus, the evening star, brings home "all things the bright dawn disperses," including "the sheep, the goat, the child to its mother."]

¹³ *combinations* Undergarments that combined the chemise and panties.

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.^o
 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dug^o
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
 I too awaited the expected guest.
 He, the young man carbuncular,^o arrives,
 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
 One of the low on whom assurance sits
 As a silk hat on a Bradford¹ millionaire.
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defence;
 His vanity requires no response,
 And makes a welcome of indifference.
 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.²)
 Bestows one final patronising kiss,
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit ...

corset
 breasts
 pimply

indifferent
 son

"This music crept by me upon the waters"⁴
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
 O City city, I can sometimes hear
 260 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
 The pleasant whining of a mandoline
 And a clatter and a chatter from within
 Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
 Of Magnus Martyr⁵ hold
 265 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.⁶

The river sweats⁷
 Oil and tar
 The barges drift
 With the turning tide
 Red sails
 270 Wide
 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
 The barges wash
 Drifting logs
 275 Down Greenwich reach
 Past the Isle of Dogs.⁸
 Weialala leia
 Wallala leialala⁹

Elizabeth and Leicester¹⁰ / tragic

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;
 Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
 "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."^o
 When lovely woman stoops to folly and³
 Paces about her room again, alone,
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

¹ Bradford Textile center in industrial Yorkshire, many of whose residents became extremely wealthy during the textile boom that accompanied World War I.
² I who ... dead In *Oedipus Rex*, by fifth-century BCE Greek dramatist Sophocles, Tiresias perceives that the curse of infertility that plagues the people and land of Thebes has been brought upon them by the unwitting marriage of Oedipus to his mother, Queen Jocasta. In book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus journeys to the underworld, where he consults Tiresias.
³ When ... and Eliot's note cites Oliver Goldsmith's novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1762), in which Olivia, returning to the place where she was seduced, sings: "When lovely woman stoops to folly / And finds too late that men betray / What charm can soothe her melancholy, / What art can wash her guilt away? / The only art her guilt to cover, / To hide her shame from every eye, / To give repentance to her lover, / And wring his bosom—is to die."

⁴ [Eliot's note] V. [I.e., "see," from the Latin *vide*.] *The Tempest*, as above.
⁵ [Eliot's note] The interior of St. Magnus Martyr is to my mind one of the finest among [Sir Christopher] Wren's interiors. See *The Proposed Demolition of Nineteen City Churches* (P.S. King & Son, Ltd.).
⁶ *Inexplicable ... gold* Reference to the slender Ionic columns inside the church.
⁷ [Eliot's note] The Song of the (three) Thames-daughters begins here. From line 292 to 306 inclusive they speak in turn. V. *Götterdämmerung*, 3.1: the Rhine-daughters. [Eliot refers to Wagner's opera *The Twilight of the Gods*, in which the Rhine maidens lament the theft of the Rhine's gold, which has also robbed the river of its beauty.]
⁸ *Isle of Dogs* Peninsula formed by a bend in the river Thames. Opposite this peninsula, on the south side of the Thames, lies the London borough of Greenwich.
⁹ *Weialala ... leialala* In Wagner's opera, this is the ecstatic cry repeated by the maidens as they guard the lump of gold in the river.
¹⁰ [Eliot's note] V. Froude, *Elizabeth*, Vol. 1, ch. 4, letter of De Quadra to Philip of Spain: "In the afternoon we were in a barge, watching the games on the river. (The queen) was alone with Lord Robert and myself on the poop, when they began to talk nonsense,

280 Beating oars
The stem was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
285 Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers
290 Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
295 Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."¹

"My feet are at Moorgate,² and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised 'a new start.'
I made no comment. What should I resent?"

300 "On Margate Sands."³
I can connect
y Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands,
My people humble people who expect
305 Nothing."
la la

and went so far that Lord Robert at last said, as I was on the spot there was no reason why they should not be married if the queen pleased." [Eliot refers to *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth* (1856-70), by James Anthony Froude. Froude quotes from a letter by Alvarez de Quadra, Bishop of Aquila and Spanish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth's court. De Quadra believed the young queen would marry Lord Dudley.]

¹ *Trams and ... canoe* Eliot's note cites the lines from Dante's *Purgatorio* (5.130-36) that he parodies: "Remember me, who am La Pia [Piety]; / Sienna made me and the Maremma undid me"; *Highbury* Middle-class suburb in north London; *Richmond and Kew* Areas of London located on the Thames in southwest London. Between them lies Kew Gardens.

² *Moorgate* Area in the east of the City.

³ *Margate Sands* Primary beach in the Kent seaside resort of Margate.

To Carthage then I came⁴

Burning burning burning burning⁵
O Lord Thou pluckest me out⁶
310 O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

4. DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.

315 A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.

Gentile or Jew
320 O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as
you.

5. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID⁷

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places

⁴ *To Carthage ... came* Eliot's note cites the opening of Book 3 of *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*: "To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears."

⁵ [Eliot's note] The complete text of the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount) from which these words are taken, will be found translated in the late Henry Clarke Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* (Harvard Oriental Series). Mr. Warren was one of the great pioneers of Buddhist studies in the Occident.

⁶ [Eliot's note] From St. Augustine's *Confessions* again: The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident. [Eliot refers to 10.237-38 of the *Confessions*: "I entangle my steps with these outward beauties, but thou pluckest me out, O Lord, thou pluckest me out."]

⁷ [Eliot's note] In the first part of Part 5 three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book); and the present decay of eastern Europe. [Journey to Emmaus: See Luke 24.13-31, in which Jesus, after being resurrected, joins two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, but they do not recognize him; *Chapel Perilous* The final stage of the Grail quest.]

The shouting and the crying
 Prison and palace and reverberation
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead¹
We who were living are now dying
 With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock
 Rock and no water and the sandy road
 The road winding above among the mountains
 Which are mountains of rock without water
 If there were water we should stop and drink
 Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
 Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
 If there were only water amongst the rock
 Dead mountain mouth of carious² teeth that cannot spit
 Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
 There is not even silence in the mountains
 But dry sterile thunder without rain
 There is not even solitude in the mountains
 But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
 From doors of mudcracked houses
 If there were water

And no rock
 If there were rock
 And also water
 And water
 A spring
 A pool among the rock
 If there were the sound of water only
 Not the cicada³
 And dry grass singing
 But sound of water over a rock
 Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees⁴

Drip drop drip drop drop drop
 But there is no water

360 Who is the third who walks always beside you?⁵
 When I count, there are only you and I together
 But when I look ahead up the white road
 There is always another one walking beside you
 Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
 365 I do not know whether a man or a woman
 —But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
 370 Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
 375 Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal⁶

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
 And fiddled whisper music on those strings
 380 And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall

remarkable for variety or volume, but in purity and sweetness of tone and exquisite modulation they are unequalled." Its "water-dripping song" is justly celebrated.

⁵ [Eliot's note] The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted. [Eliot refers to Sir Ernest Shackleton's third journey to the Antarctic (1914-17), during which he and his men attempted to cross the Antarctic ice cap on foot. See *South: The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition, 1914-1917* (1919).]

⁶ *What is that ... Unreal* Eliot's note for these lines quotes in German Herman Hesse, *Blick ins Chaos: Drei Aufsätze (A Glimpse into Chaos: Three Essays)*: "Already half of Europe, already at least half of Eastern Europe, on the way to chaos, drives drunk in sacred infatuation along the edge of the precipice, singing drunkenly, as though singing hymns, as Dmitri Karamazov sang. The offended bourgeois laughs at the songs; the saint and the seer hear them with tears." Dmitri Karamazov is a character in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-80).

¹ *After the torchlight ... dead* References to the events from the betrayal of Christ to His death.

² *carious* Decayed.

³ *cicada* Grasshopper. See Ecclesiastes 12.4: "Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."

⁴ [Eliot's note] This is *Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*, the hermit-thrush which I have heard in Quebec Province. Chapman says (*Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*) "it is most at home in secluded woodland and thickety retreats. ... Its notes are not

And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
385 And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted
wells.

*Also
Europe?*
In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.¹

390 It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Down? Co co rico co co rico²
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
395 Bringing rain

India
Ganga³ was sunken; and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.⁴

400 The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
DA⁵

expensive
Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender

¹ *There is ... home* The Chapel Perilous appeared to be surrounded by death and decay; these nightmare visions were meant to induce despair in the questing knight. Once inside the Chapel, the knight's courage would be tested with further horrors.

² *Only a ... rico* The crowing of the cock signals the coming of the morning and the departure of ghosts and evil spirits, as in *Hamlet* I.1, when Hamlet's father's ghost disappears with its call. Also, in the Gospels Peter repents his repudiation of Christ after the cock crows.

³ *Ganga* The Ganges, a sacred river in India.

⁴ *Himavant* Sanskrit: snowy. Adjective used to describe the Himalayas.

⁵ [Eliot's note] "Datta, dayadhvam, damyata" (Give, sympathise, control). The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad*, 5, 1. A translation is found in Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, p. 489. [Eliot refers to the Hindu fable in which gods, men, and demons, each, in turn, ask the Lord of Creation, Prajapati, "Please instruct us, Sir." To each he utters the syllable "Da," and each group interprets the answer differently: "Damyata," practice self-control; "Datta," give alms; "Dayadhvam," have compassion. According to the fable, "This very thing is repeated even today by the heavenly voice; in the form of thunder, as 'Da,' 'Da,' 'Da,' which means: 'Control yourselves,' 'Give,' and 'Have compassion.'"]

405 Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider⁶
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
410 In our empty rooms

DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key⁷
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
415 Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus⁸
DA

Damyata: The boat responded
420 Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore
425 Fishing, with the arid plain behind me⁹

⁶ [Eliot's note] Cf. [John] Webster, *The White Devil*, 5, 6: "... they'll remarry / Ere the worm pierce your winding-sheet, ere the spider / Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs." [In this excerpt from the play, the villain Flamineo urges men never to trust their wives.]

⁷ *I have ... key* Eliot's note cites the passage in Dante's *Inferno* 33.46, in which Ugolino della Gherardesca remembers being locked up with his children in the tower, where they all starved to death. Eliot also quotes philosopher Francis Herbert Bradley's *Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay* (1893), p. 346: "My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. ... In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul."

⁸ *Coriolanus* Roman general of Shakespeare's play of that name. A character who is motivated by pride rather than duty, Coriolanus leads the enemy against Rome, the city from which he has been exiled.

⁹ *Fishing ... me* Eliot's note refers readers to Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, chapter 9, "The Fisher King." In this chapter, Weston comments upon the Fisher King's intimate relation with his people and his land, "a relation mainly dependent upon the identification of the King with the Divine principle of Life and Fertility." Weston also argues that "the Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity, and that the title of Fisher has, from the earliest ages, been associated with Deities who were held to be specially connected with the origin and preservation of life."

Shall I at least set my lands in order?¹
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling
down

*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*²
*Quando fiam ceu chelidon*³—O swallow swallow
*Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie*⁴

These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.⁵

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih⁶

—1922

*Journey of the Magi*⁷

“A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.”⁸
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and
women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the
darkness,
And three trees⁹ on the low sky,
And an old white horse¹⁰ galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the
lintel,¹¹
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,¹²
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued

⁷ *Magi* Three wise men who journeyed to Bethlehem to honor Jesus at His birth (see Matthew 2.1–12).

⁸ *A cold ... winter* Adapted from a sermon given by Anglican preacher Lancelot Andrewes on Christmas Day, 1622.

⁹ *three trees* Suggests the three crosses on Calvary, on which Christ and two criminals were crucified (see Luke 23.32–43).

¹⁰ *white horse* Ridden by Christ in Revelation 6.2 and 19.11–14.

¹¹ *lintel* Doorframe.

¹² *dicing ... silver* Allusion to Judas' betrayal of Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and to the soldiers who throw dice for the robes of Christ at His crucifixion (Matthew 26.14 and 27.35).

¹ *Shall I ... order* See Isaiah 38.1, in which the prophet Isaiah counsels the sickly King Hezekiah, whose kingdom has been destroyed by the conquering Assyrians, “Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.”

² *Poi ... affina* Italian: “Then he vanished into the fire that refines them” (Dante’s *Purgatorio* 26.148). Eliot’s note quotes, in Italian, the three lines of the *Purgatorio* immediately preceding, in which the poet Arnaut Daniel, who is in Purgatory for lust, says to Dante “Now I pray you, by the goodness that guides you to the top of the staircase [of purgatory], be mindful in time of my suffering.”

³ *Quando ... chelidon* Latin: “When shall I be as the swallow?” Eliot’s note cites an anonymous Latin poem about Venus and the spring, “The Vigil of Venus,” as well as the story of Philomela, whose sister Procne (the wife of Tereus) was turned into a swallow. “The Vigil of Venus” refers to Philomela and Procne in its closing lines.

Le Prince ... abolie French: “The Prince of Aquitaine in the ruined tower.” Eliot’s note cites French poet Gerard de Nerval’s sonnet “El Desdichado” (1853). One of the Tarot cards shows a tower struck by lightning.

Why then ... againe Eliot’s note cites Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy: Hieronymo Is Mad Againe* (1592). In the play, Hieronymo, whose son has been murdered, is asked to write a play for the court. He responds “Why then Ile fit you (i.e., “I’ll accommodate you,” or “I’ll give you your due”). He writes the play and persuades the orderers to act in it. During the course of the play, his son’s order is avenged.

[Eliot’s note] Shantih. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. “The Peace which passeth understanding” is our equivalent to this word. [The Upanishads are poetic dialogues that comment on the Vedas, the ancient Hindu Scriptures. Eliot’s phrasing derives from Paul’s letter to the early Christians in Philippians 4.7: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.”]