A discussion of *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot

St John's College alumni
unofficial email list

December 5, 2003–January 27, 2004

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Transcribed into LaTeX and edited by David Pierce
This version compiled January 22, 2013

Preface

The email discussion presented here was originally translated into LaTeX by me while it was still going on. Now, many years later, I have returned to the editing. I have tried to make the discussion as readable as possible, in part through normalization of capital letters, italics, quotation marks, and so forth. I have corrected misspellings noticed by me or one of the other participants.

At first it was difficult to know what to do with a particular participant's emails. These emails could have extremely long sentences, whose grammatical structure was unclear. At first I simply adjusted the punctuation, added words (in [square brackets]), or suggested removing words (in <angle brackets>). But then I discovered a deeper problem. If a passage in this participant's emails *was* well written, it often turned out to have been taken from an external source. Yet the passage was not identified as a quotation. The participant was careful to identify quotations of other discussants, by using strings of symbols $>$ before, and $<$ after (see page 6). If the participant quoted *himself,* he used the usual quotation marks. But if he quoted from some website, he used no typographical means to indicate this. The only clue might be that the quotation began with a capital letter, but was preceded by a comma. (See page 16.)

I have felt compelled to figure out which parts of these emails have been taken from other sources. All quotations that I have been able to identify are displayed as such, with footnotes giving the sources. All footnotes are by me.

I have all of the original emails on file.

David Pierce
Ankara, April 5, 2011
Istanbul, January 22, 2013

The discussion

1. Mr Gorham. Ms Gillis wrote:

> Hello list folks, I miss you. I have caught up with the list to… September 21! What a strange epistolary novel it is. I can't wait to find out what happens.

Ms Gillis, I have to ask (and will patiently wait for your reply in Spring of 2004): why not just delete or skip a bunch of messages and begin reading from, say, last week?

This reminds me of something I read this week about a man who reads the *New York Times* every day, except that he is behind by some number of years. But still, he reads the whole thing and is trying desperately to catch up. He said he listens to news on the radio, *&c.,* but if a story comes up that may ruin the news he is reading in the *Times,* he turns it off. So for example, he won't listen to the news about the sniper trials because he hasn't gotten to the point yet where the snipers were sniping and doesn't want the story to be ruined for him. I have to say, I found this very odd but also can't help but be amazed and thrilled by such determination.

2. Mr Pierce. See Maugham's story called 'The Outstation'. (It's not the same. The man gets his mail every few weeks, including the newspapers; he reads one a day, from six weeks ago, at breakfast.)

3. Mr Lewis. Mr Pierce, I dusted off my complete short stories of Maugham last night and read the tale and saw immediately why it would stick in your mind, as this is a dark story of obsession and territoriality. I wonder if Evelyn Waugh had seen it when he wrote *A Handful of Dust;* the similarities are striking. I like the idea that social codes become the routine by which we live, obsessively squeezing out contemporary morality and signaling the death of spiritual values. (How *à propos* that the token of his obsession is the newspaper.)

4. Mr Tourtelott. Maybe this particular theme has a start in that clerk in *Heart of Darkness* who insists on dressing for dinner in the middle of the Congo. I wonder if I can find that passage, as it seems to speak to this.

5. Mr Pierce. 'The Outstation' was the Maugham story we read in ninth-grade English. Having read all of Maugham's stories since then several times, I think that 'The Fall of Edward Barnard' might have been good for the high-pressure school where I was. (Edward Barnard gives up a life in Chicago's capitalist class in order to relax in Tahiti; Maugham seems to approve of the choice; the title is ironic.)

What interested me as I re-read 'The Oustation' on Saturday was how the snob was not a racist, and the democrat was. I don't have enough knowledge of the British Empire to say whether Maugham's story represents a real change in imperial attitudes. In Maugham's story, the older guy dearly loves a lord, but has real human sympathy and affection for the natives. (It's not *that* simple; why does he refuse to take a native 'wife'?) The younger guy has no use for the British class system; he also just wants to make the 'niggers' work; for him, raw power is all they understand. Shades of current attitudes towards Iraq, as discussed on the list.

Since you brought up Waugh's *Handful of Dust,* Mr Lewis, I wonder if you have opinions about the meaning of the title, especially as used in Waugh's source, namely Eliot's *Waste Land.* Should I be getting something in particular from the phrase 'fear in a handful of dust'?

6. Mr Lewis. Let me begin[1] by saying the whole quote from *The Waste Land* is:

> 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;
> I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

I don't say that to be pretentious, but rather there is something key here in how I want to answer your question. Namely that there is something in how one moves, how one walks through life that is being drawn into question here. We walk through life and we set our eyes on the shadow, or as I see it, the things of this world. It is a nice analogy of the cave metaphor, that we think we are seeing the truth and instead what we are getting is the illusion, and that life is not being understood, and that

[1] In fact Mr Lewis began by quoting the last email of Mr Pierce (the editor of this document), as on page 6.

Mr. Pierce Wrote:

>>>>>>>>>>>>Since you brought up Waugh’s _Handful of Dust_, Mr Lewis, I wonder if you have opinions about the meaning of the title, especially as used in Waugh’s source, namely Eliot’s _Waste Land_. Should I be getting something in particular from the phrase "fear in a handful of dust"?<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<

Let me begin by saying the whole quote is "... I will show you something different from either your shadow at morning striding behind you or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; I will show you fear in a handful of dust", taken from The Wasteland. I don’t say that to be pretentious, but rather there is something key here in how I want to answer your question. Namely that there is something in how one moves, how one walks through life that is being drawn into question here. We walk through life and we set our eyes on the shadow, or as I see it, the things of this world. It is a nice analogy of the cave metaphor, that we think we are seeing the truth and instead what we are getting is the illusion, and that life is not being understood, and that Elliot feels he must show you something else, he must draw your attention away from the shadow in order to get you to see his point. And so I turn back to Brenda and Tony and their friends and I think about how they walk through life, how they are part of the upper class, and how their lives revolve around the traditions of "polite", well-bred society. There is something rather callous in these people, though, Tony and Brenda, something satirical that Waugh wants me to see; that this

The original of email number 6

Eliot feels he must show you something else, he must draw your attention away from the shadow in order to get you to see his point.

And so I turn back to Brenda and Tony and their friends and I think about how they walk through life, how they are part of the upper class, and how their lives revolve around the traditions of 'polite', well-bred society. There is something rather callous in these people, though, Tony and Brenda, something satirical that Waugh wants me to see: that this wonderfully congenial group live by yet another set of rules, not just the taking of tea and cakes or dressing for dinner, but a subset of social standards; that according to their rules any sin is acceptable provided it is carried out in good taste (to paraphrase Waugh himself).

So I begin to think about the evolution of standards, how the privilege of upper-class society gives birth to unique rituals whose main purpose is to set them apart, to keep them separate from those who don't have the same privileges. And that there isn't really anything else about the rules of the caste system that has any substance, they don't make the upper class better spiritually, only physically, temporally. Now I want to believe that eventually these rules become so important that they drive out other types of rules, rules of morality, but of course appearance is so important, so they remain moral only in so far as appearances demand. And this is why Waugh's story is so harrowing. Because when it's over, when Tony is stranded in the jungle, separated from all he lives for and believes in, when he is separated from custom and tradition, he has nothing to fall back on except what his mind already knows, namely the pretentious set of 'rules' that he can invent provided they are acceptable, and there is no substance here, nothing concrete upon which he can live, and so the sentence in the jungle is a death sentence, but it is the most terrible death sentence because he is morally (and spiritually) bankrupt. He is given his 'fear' that is the fear in a handful of dust.

7. Mr Gorham. I'd say it's worth quoting the whole stanza. I think the beginning lines add a theological tone that is missing if you take the second half by itself.

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> 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,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

There is shadow under this red rock,
(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;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Mr Lewis, you wrote:

> It is a nice analogy of the cave metaphor, that we think we are seeing the truth and instead what we are getting is the illusion, and that life is not being understood, and that Eliot feels he must show you something else, he must draw your attention away from the shadow in order to get you to see his point.

I think this idea of yours fits nicely with the first half of the stanza as well. The shadow of the red rock, for instance, and the parenthetical invitation to come under the shadow.

8. Mr Pierce. Mr Lewis wrote:

> And this is why Waugh's story [*A Handful of Dust*] is so harrowing. Because when it's over, when Tony is stranded in the jungle, separated from all he lives for and believes in, when he is separated from custom and tradition, he has nothing to fall back on except what his mind already knows, namely the pretentious set of 'rules' that he can invent provided they are acceptable, and there is no substance here, nothing concrete upon which he can live, and so the sentence in the jungle is a death sentence, but it is the most terrible death sentence because he is morally (and spiritually) bankrupt. He is given his 'fear' that is the fear in a handful of dust.

What I remember mainly from Waugh's novel is the hell of having to read Dickens over and over to an illiterate man for the rest of one's life. I haven't an idea about whether this fate is particularly appropriate for Tony. Mr Lewis, is Tony a fearful man? He did decide to leave home and go on this Amazon trip in the first place.

Anyway, what is the significance of *dust* for Eliot, and so for Waugh? Somebody has done a lot of work to put together a website on *The Waste Land*:

`http://world.std.com/~raparker/exploring/thewasteland/explore.html`

But the compiler seems to have no specific comment on this line 30 that we are talking about; he just notes the themes of danger, dryness, fear, hands, and 'the drawing of the reader into the poem'.

In *The Principles of Art,* Collingwood says (p. 335) that *The Waste Land*

> depicts a world where the wholesome flowing water of emotion, which alone fertilizes all human activity, has dried up... The only emotion left us is fear: fear of emotion itself, fear of death by drowning in it, fear in a handful of dust.

In his last phrase, Collingwood is merely quoting Eliot, without—it seems to me—explaining him.

Why connect fear with a handful of anything, and why dust in particular?

Should I even be asking this question? I was intrigued by William Blake after reading *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in high-school; but I didn't really appreciate the intensity of Blake's visions until I read the poem with an artificially altered consciousness. Is Eliot's work also something to be read while high? It seems like something one should stay sharp for, although I understand that, according to somebody, reading *The Waste Land* is like listening to a radio in Europe while constantly turning the dial.

9. Mr Tourtelott. I would say that Eliot is absolutely not a poet to read while high, that while one is constantly tuning the dial, each station comes in with great clarity and you need all your wits about you to figure out how the bits relate.

Also, though it may be questionable given that Eliot was not a Christian at the time he wrote *The Waste Land,* I have always read the passage in question in terms of quite orthodox Christian symbolism. The desert landscape is the world of dryness and desiccation from which the living water of Spirit has withdrawn, and the handful of dust is simply the reminder of the earth from which we are created and to which (absent the promise of eternal life) we will inevitably return. In that sense the 'shelter under this red rock' is the shelter of the rock or Petros of the church.

10. Mr Gorham. This too is how I have always read the passage. I took 'a handful of dust' to represent what the human body will ultimately become. I don't know about the biology but I always liked to think that an average human body, when re-dusted, would end up as a handful. And by ‘liked to think’ I mean ‘hate to think’, in other words, he showed me the fear in a handful of dust.

11. Mr Lewis. Mr Pierce wrote:

> What I remember mainly from Waugh’s novel is the hell of having to read Dickens over and over to an illiterate man for the rest of one’s life.

It’s like being buried alive, trapped in the jungle, he finds an inscription in the book of Dickens that indicates the old man never let the previous reader go, and in fact, probably killed him when he tried to escape. That is why I say it is a death sentence, Tony is never going home, and he is living with a madman, and his days are numbered.

> I haven’t an idea about whether this fate is particularly appropriate for Tony.

I can’t say who deserves what particular end, but in the novel these are vain, opportunistic and callous people, and I don’t doubt he probably got what he deserved (see next two comments).

> Mr Lewis, is Tony a fearful man?

I think Eliot is saying we are none of us fearful enough, I think that is certainly the truth in Tony, that he finds his fear in the end, that he is stuck there reading Dickens to the end of his days, that he has a sort of ‘death sentence’ imposed upon him, and who wouldn’t be afraid of that, Tony may have been trying to escape his old way of life, he may have been open to the possibility of change, that would be Waugh’s vehicle for Tony to be able to experience the fear of his almighty end. (See next.)

> He did decide to leave home and go on this Amazon trip in the first place.

Actually this is the one point in the book I was kinda hoping you wouldn’t ask me about. . . because it does complicate my previous analysis, though not much. Basically Tony leaves because he is fed up, his wife is cheating on him, and he is pretty sure she is going to leave him, take the family home *&c.,* so he travels to get away. As I recall he had gone to the jungle once before or knew someone who did, but the details of the first trip elude me. I think Tony is on a quest of self-improvement here, I just think he gets stuck in the jungle before he can muddle his way out of his meaningless and shallow life. That is why I describe the end as harrowing, too terrible for words: knowing you want to better yourself, knowing you want to get away from yourself and make a new start, and finding you can’t, and in all probability <that>[2] you are looking a death

[2] I use angle brackets here around a word in the original email that would be better removed.

sentence in the eye.

Anyway, what is the significance of *dust* for Eliot, and so for Waugh?

I tend to agree with Mr Tourtelott that

> the handful of dust is simply the reminder of the earth from which we are created and to which (absent the promise of eternal life) we will inevitably return.

It is important to remember that Eliot was a perennial snob and that he loved to pull in images from every where to show you haw big his brain is so even though he may not have been a Christian, he would have loved nothing more than to show you how much he knows about it.

> Why connect fear with a handful of anything, and why dust in particular?

As I said before, Eliot is showing you mortality, that this life is an illusion made up of shadow *à la* Allegory of the Cave, Eliot is trying to say that fear is the beginnings of a spiritual awakening, the first step away from the shadow and into the realm of spiritual enlightenment, but that you will never get there if you, like Waugh's depiction of elite English society, <if you> are focused too much on the things of this world.

> Should I even be asking this question?

Absolutely!

12. Mr Lewis. As I said in my previous email, I tend to agree with Mr Tourtelott and Mr Gorham, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, what is being alluded to here are the funerary rites of man. (It is possible that the handful of dust may even refer to the handful of dust that Antigone sprinkles on her brother's corpse.) I only resend because I want to emphasize, as I said before, that

> Eliot is showing you mortality, that this life is an illusion made up of shadow *à la* Allegory of the Cave, Eliot suggests that fear is the beginnings of a spiritual awakening, the first step away from the shadow and into the realm of spiritual enlightenment, but that you will never get there if you, like Waugh's depiction of elite English society, are focused too much on the things of this world.[3]

It is a stark contrast with the Platonic vision though, because I believe Plato says desire leads you to reason, <that> [which] leads you to contemplate the pure forms; that fear is invoked is definitely Eliot tipping his hat to the Christian tradition.

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[3] Unlike Mr Lewis in his original email, I display his quotation of himself *as* a quotation, although there are slight differences from the corresponding passage of his previous email.

> It is important to remember that Eliot was a perennial snob (and an Anglophile) and that he loved to pull in images from everywhere to show you how big his brain is so

(many subsequent authors will later bash Eliot for his continued snobbery and his cold disdainful attitude towards his wife)

> even though he may not have been a Christian, he would have loved nothing more than to show you how much he knows about it.[4]

Eliot in his later years, in good English style, endorses the Anglican Church.

13. **Mr Lewis.** As I said in my previous email,

> what is being alluded to here are the funerary rites of man. (It is possible that the handful of dust may even refer to the handful of dust that Antigone sprinkles on her brother's corpse.)

Allow me to elaborate: There is possibly one if not two other references here to the story of Oedipus and his children:

> 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.

This could be a subtle reference to Oedipus and the Riddle of the Sphinx: 'What walks on four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon and three at night?' Both the riddle and the Eliot quote give this sense of, as I called it, mortality, or the stretch of life that a person is given to walk. All of which tends to make me think that the handful of dust could be something from *Antigone,* where Eliot would be summoning the contrast between the laws of man and the laws of God. Again, the handful of dust (or the fear associated with it) becomes the dividing line between walking the path of shadow (yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death) and walking the path of light. Something which apparently Eliot thinks the Church has failed in its efforts to illuminate. This is after all, from a passage from *The Waste Land* that says

- 'And the dead tree gives no shelter' *i.e.* the cross, or
- 'A heap of broken images' *i.e.* the golden calf,
- 'the cricket no relief' *i.e.* the plague on the Egyptians,
- 'the dry stone no sound of water' *i.e.* Moses striking the rock for water.

Eliot seems to be damning the church for its obsession with the temporal,

[4] See the previous note. Observe the reversal of order of the two quotations from Mr Lewis's previous email.

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess...

Eliot asks us a question, what are the roots that clutch, *i.e.* the roots of the church? If you believe, as I do, that Eliot is being critical, then he is asking, What is at the foundation of faith, what are its roots? Literally, in any old cathedral you look to its roots and you see crypts, the graves, or our very bones holding down the foundation of the church. And why bury these people here? Because they believe their bodies will be reborn, literally remade in the flesh at the end of time: the Church's promise of a bodily reincarnation instead of a reincarnation of the spirit. This idea of the bodily rebirth of man was not part of the early church; it was put forth as a mandate of faith at the council of Nicea in 326.[5] Constantine's armies only later enforced it as a means of converting heretics who shared in the bodily reincarnation of the Dionysian rites, thus won over to the early church transplanting Jesus as Dionysus. Eliot seems to be criticizing the church for the tenets of its faith, saying that they are not of the path to true spiritual enlightenment. It might be said that fear then is caused by the realization that what you believe, what you hold dear, the foundation of your faith and a belief in the afterlife may be called into question: the fear of death, realized and re-realized in the ever-advancing search for enlightenment.

14. Ms Murray. Is anyone going to keep talking about this? I've just caught up a bit, and am wondering about how the two themes of dryness of the Waste Land and the death by drowning work together.

15. Mr Lewis. I will try but I don't want to end up the only one talking here, Eliot is [a] gen[i]us who hides references within references, it only took me four tries to figure out that he was referencing Oedipus and Antigone in the last thread, and you Ms Murray sound like you see more of what is going on here than I. Be that as it may, I will give your query a stab in the dark.

The image of death by drowning begins with a visit to the Tarot reader

> Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,

who speaks of the Tarot cards and the

> Drowned Phoenician sailor

[5] The date is usually given as 325.

—probably a reference to *The Tempest* act 1 scene 2 (note: Penguin edition)—as well as

> Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks.

Belladonna is a siren, a creature who calls men to their deaths by singing, and a man with three staves which I believe is a reference to a sailor of some kind. Sosostris advises the person she is reading, presumably the narrator, a little girl, that while she does not see the Hanged Man, the death of the wicked, <the> she should still

> Fear death by water

—the accidental death, or the death of the innocent. However, the psychic's words are deceptive. Although water implies death in both cases, the theme of the section is that death must precede transformation and rebirth, the spiritual voyage (see previous comments on a handful of dust). Death in this case is tied to religion; in many religions, gods are burned or drowned in effigy so that they may be reborn. In fact, this rebirth, the rebirth of the fertility god *à la* Joseph Campbell, is referred to at the end of the section, with the body of the fertility god being planted and then dug up:

> That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
> Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

The death in this instance refers to the physical (or cultural) death of mankind, and the rebirth is the anticipated spiritual reawakening. I don't think it was mentioned before, so I will add as a final note that all of this takes place in the first section titled 'The Burial of the Dead', which is why I keep coming back to that as the underlying theme.

That is all the ideas I have on water after my cursory reading this morning. I will take a look at your tie in to dryness later unless you have some thoughts here (or if anyone else would like to take a stab?).

16. Mr Billington. Collingwood regards *The Waste Land* as exemplifying his theories of 1) art, 2) the corrupt consciousness, and 3) the remedy.

1. The poem has no instrumental purpose. There are no exhortations to do something, no calls for virtue, no target of satire, nothing to blame, not a thing that amuses or entertains. The poem is not a general report about the failings of others. Eliot is talking first about himself. He began with vague stirrings and converted them to conscious thoughts by feeling his way toward exactly the right words. His only purpose was to discover what his emotions were, exactly.

2. ‘No community altogether knows its own heart; and by failing in this knowledge a community deceives itself’ (p. 336, the last page of the book). Collingwood does say that his countrymen are altogether too much devoted to amusement. It is not clear why. Certainly, because it is so much easier to seek amusement rather than self-knowledge. Perhaps also because of a widely-held false theory of art, namely, that art should amuse or exhort. If so, then Collingwood is telling the artistic and literary critics to get their conceptual framework right. I’ll bet that the genesis of this book was because some critics were misinterpreting Eliot and his social function.

Collingwood’s 1938 political views are not discussed, barely hinted.

> This poem... describes... a disease which has so eaten into civilization that political remedies are about as useful as poulticing a cancer (p. 334).

Maybe Collingwood didn’t intend a link to politics or anti-fascism at all, especially since *The Waste Land* was published in 1922.

3. The remedy for the corrupt consciousness that Collingwood sees is ‘the poem itself’. The remedy is self-knowledge. Eliot’s stories, images, and allusions give voice to what we all knew all along, but weren’t able or willing to say. The poet is the prophet of the community ‘at the risk of their displeasure’. If the readers don’t shirk the hard work of understanding the poem, they will recognize and possess their previously unexpressed truth. That is what artists, critics, and readers should be focusing on.

17. Mr Breslin. Thanks for this summary Mr Billington.

I just had an argument yesterday with a screenwriter friend of mine, whose point of view it is that the role of the artist in American culture is to provide amusement and escape. I was advocating for art that reunites people with their reality, providing a sense of a returning ground beneath their feet, as well as a sense that life is worth living because we are worthwhile and worthy. He remained adamant that such ‘ponderous’ stuff was pretense and simply fooled people with rhetoric. That the best thing an artist can do is make the world pleasant, and help people forget how horrible it is to be alive.

It was sort of like Hollywood arguing with... what? New York? Funny, I can’t think of another distinct cultural/artistic center in the US other than the movie/ tv/music biz as promulgated in LA.

Original text of email number 18

So I am sitting here trying to tie dryness to drowning and am not getting very far, The absence of water and the thirst for it enter in line 24, "the dry stone gives no sound of water"; in line 42 (24 flipped around), "Oed and leer dos Meer" ("Wide and empty the sea"), water is both a symbol of death and a symbol of life: The fear of death by water is first made explicit by Madame Sosostris. As I said before it is linked to" the rebirth of the fertility god a'la Joseph Campbell, and +is referred to at the end of the section, with the body of the fertility god being planted and then dug up" Caused me to dig out my Frazer's "Golden Bough" And in the section titled, "The killing of the Divine King," it reminds me of Osirus who was thrown into the waters of the Nile and later "fished out" (resurrected), symbolizing the rebirth of the life principle in the spring. This tie in to the seasons reminds me of yet another set of myths, the Grail legends are also derived from those vegetative rites, and it is the Fisher King on whom the health and fertility of the land and people are dependent in these legends. The Fisher King is wounded and, because he is sick, his lands are waste and barren. Again, this reminds me of yet another Oedipus connection; just as in "Oedipus Rex" the plague upon Thebes was due to the crimes of Oedipus against the procreative cycles. Only when the Fisher King is healed through the appearing of a pure soul (Eliot's little girl?) who asks the proper questions can the land again become fertile, hence the connection to dryness. (references within references)

18. Mr Lewis. So I am sitting here trying to tie dryness to drowning and am not getting very far,[6]

> The absence of water and the thirst for it enter in line 24, 'And the dry stone [gives][7] no sound of water'; in line 42 (24 flipped around),[8] '*Oed' und leer das Meer*'[9] ('Wide and empty the sea'),

water is both a symbol of death and a symbol of life:[10]

> The fear of death by water is first made explicit by Madame Sosostris.

As I said before it is linked to

> the rebirth of the fertility god *à la* Joseph Campbell, and is referred to at the end of the section, with the body of the fertility god being planted and then dug up.[11]

Caused me to dig out my Frazer's *Golden Bough.* And in the section titled, 'The Killing of the Divine King', it reminds me of Osiris[12] who[13]

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[6] The comma (followed by a capitalized word) is Mr Lewis's only indication so far that the following text is a quotation from Philip R. Headings, 'Symbols in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*', which is an excerpt from the book *T.S. Eliot* (Twayne Pub., 1964). In his next email (p. 20), Mr Lewis will give a link for this excerpt: `http://cityhonors.buffalo.k12.ny.us/city/rsrcs/eng/eli/elihea1.htm`. The link does not work today (April 3, 2011), but the text is accessible through `http://waybackmachine.org/`. The original email is on page 16.

[7] This word is correctly bracketed in the source, as not being part of Eliot's poem; but it is not bracketed in the email.

[8] The parenthetical numerological observation seems to be Mr Lewis's own.

[9] The email has the same misspelling, `Oed and leer dos Meer`, that is found in the source (where the line is not italicized). Mr Thomas points out to me that 'wide' for 'oede' (or rather *öde*) is probably a mistranslation. Indeed, the small *Collins German Dictionary* (Toronto, 1982) translates the adjective as 'waste, barren', and the noun *Öde* as 'desert, waste(land)'.

[10] This interpolation is perhaps a rephrasing of first part of the continuation of the quoted text, which is, 'water is both a negative and a positive symbol: it may carry Isolde and her healing arts to the dying Tristan, but as yet it is waste and barren.' The source continues, as in Mr Lewis's email, with the mention of Madame Sosostris.

[11] Mr Lewis's quotation of his own earlier email *is* bracketed by quotation marks in his original email (p 16).

[12] Mr Lewis spells it 'Osirus', here and elsewhere. A search of the named section—really Chapter 24—of Frazer's work at `http://www.sacred-texts.com/pag/frazer/gb02401.htm` (April 2, 2011) finds but one instance of the name of Osiris. This instance is in §1 of the chapter, in an account of the mummification of Osiris and other gods.

[13] The three passages that will now be displayed as quotations are also not distinguished as such in Mr Lewis's original email. I shall no longer bother to make such announcements: they would apply to *all* quotations from external sources that Mr Lewis makes. The next three quotations are again from Headings, 'Symbols in T.S.

> was thrown into the waters of the Nile and later 'fished out' (resurrected), symbolizing the rebirth of the life principle in the spring.[14]

This tie-in to the seasons reminds me of yet another set of myths:[15]

> The Grail legends [according to Miss Weston] are also derived from those vegetative rites, and it is the Fisher King on whom the health and fertility of the land and people are dependent in these legends. The Fisher King is [sick, having been maimed (usually a sexual wound);] and, because he is sick, his lands are waste and barren,[16]

Again, this reminds me of yet another Oedipus connection;

> just as in *Oedipus Rex* the plague upon Thebes was due to the crimes of Oedipus against the procreative cycles. Only when the Fisher King is healed through the appearing of a pure soul[17] (Eliot's little girl?) who asks the proper questions can the land again become fertile.

Hence the connection to dryness. (references within references)[18]

19. Ms Murray. Hi Mr Lewis, I Googled around and found some helpful notes to the poem here:

`www.colby.edu/~isadoff/map/Wasteland_Notes.rtf`

These are a little bit more extended than Eliot's own notes, but not overpowering. It was lines 8–18 that got me started. So here's what I found out:

Marie is Marie Larisch, who was cousin to most of the nobility of Europe:

Eliot's *The Waste Land*'. The first quoted passage is preceded in the source by the following: 'One valuable function of the notes, nevertheless, has been to indicate some of the works that most importantly influenced the writing of the poem—among others (as we mentioned) Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Weston's *From Ritual to Romance,* books relevant to much of the basic symbolism used. ¶ In the vegetative rites discussed in both, the figure of the Year-god *was thrown...*'.

[14] In the source, this passage is followed by, 'This ritual also came to be associated with the religious initiation patterns to which primitive people seem to give much more open recognition than do modern civilized societies.' Then comes Mr Lewis's next quotation.

[15] The two passages in square brackets in the following quotation represent ellipses unnoted by Mr Lewis, but supplied by me. Actually, in place of the second bracketed passage, Mr Lewis has 'wounded'. Mr Lewis seems to allude to this passage in his next email.

[16] Mr Lewis's final quotation below immediately follows this in the source.

[17] The source has 'pure fool', without mention of 'Eliot's little girl'.

[18] I can only speculate whether this parenthesis is meant to acknowledge Mr Lewis's debt to other sources, or is merely an allusion to Mr Lewis's remark on page 13 about Eliot's work.

- Archduke Ferdinand, whose asassination started WWI;
- Ludwig II, mad king of Bavaria;
- Rudolph, who was found murdered with his young mistress at a hunting lodge called Mayerling.

This was the Mayerling scandal which led to Marie's rejection from society, as she had been acting as go-between between the archduke and the mistress. Marie then went to live in the mountains of Bavaria, where she felt free. She wrote an autobiography, with which Eliot was familiar; Eliot also met her and it is thought that some of lines 8–18 are derived from the conversation they had. Finally, Marie was big on astrology and suchlike clairvoyance, and was herself asassinated.

So what does this have to do with the poem? Marie told an anecdote about walking about at Starnbergersee, being caught in a rainshower, and taking refuge in the hut of a gaga old woman who said that her son was a fisherman and would soon be back. Further inquiry revealed that he had drowned in the Starnbergersee seven years earlier. Ludwig of Bavaria also drowned in Starnbergersee. So these are the first deaths by water—fisher and king lying at the bottom of the lake, but coming back soon. These deaths seem to point to other bits of the poem:

Of course, the two fellows drowned in Starnbergersee point ahead to the drowned Phoenician sailor & sea-change.

Ludwig II was crazy about Wagner, thus the bits from *Tristan and Isolde.* The love-death of Tristan and Isolde echoes the death of Rudolph & his mistress.

Fisher & king drowned in Starnbergersee point forward to the man with three staves—Eliot says that he associates this Tarot card quite arbitrarily with the Fisher King from *The Golden Bough.* I haven't yet had a chance to look into *The Golden Bough* to find out what the Fisher King's story is.

The wet-dry polarity feeds the image of resurrection also through the references to bulbs, tubers and corpses planted in the garden. They are lying dead under the ground, but the sweet showers of April (or the shower of rain that surprised Marie) bring them back to life. The bulbs bring me to the hyacinths. Strange lines. Maybe the reason the hair was wet in the Hyacinth garden was that whoever the wet-haired-person is has just come up from the bottom of the lake. No wonder then that the hyacinth girl could not speak and her eyes failed.

Finally there's the crowd of dead coming over London Bridge. Somehow I imagine these as the dead of the Great War. Thus this part of the poem vibrates against the Marie-references to the nobility of Europe and all the politics that led to that war.

This is as much as I've come up with so far.

20. Mr Tourtelott. I read the crowd flowing over London Bridge—

> So many,
> I had not thought Death had undone so many

—as an ordinary crowd flowing over London Bridge, all of them trapped in the nightmare Death-in-Life. The poem teems with figures, it seems to me, who are neither properly alive nor dead, whose feelings are anesthetized and routinized. The central figure in that regard—and she is in fact the central figure in the poem—is the typist who, after her meaningless tryst with the young man carbuncular, has the half-formed thought 'Now that's done, and I'm glad it's over.' (Remember that it is of this scene that Eliot says in the notes that 'What Tiresias *sees*... is the substance of the poem.')

21. Mr Lewis. Ms Murray! Good stuff! A few observations before I dash out the door:

> Ludwig II was crazy about Wagner, thus the bits from *Tristan and Isolde.* The love-death of Tristan and Isolde echoes the death of Rudolph & his mistress.

This makes sense. If I remember correctly, isn't there something in *Tristan and Isolde,* where she comes to heal him and all is dry and barren?

> Fisher & king drowned in Starnbergersee point forward to the man with three staves—Eliot says that he associates this Tarot card quite arbitrarily with the Fisher King from *The Golden Bough.* I haven't yet had a chance to look into *The Golden Bough* to find out what the Fisher King's story is.

There is something key to these cards; they are not part of the standard deck; Eliot has changed them to suit his purposes, which lead[s] me to believe that he has reversed the meanings as well. The siren lures us to our death, but is it a physical death or a spiritual one[?] I tend to believe that this section is still very much concerned with the death awakening motif described earlier.

> The wet-dry polarity feeds the image of resurrection also through the references to bulbs, tubers and corpses planted in the garden. They are lying dead under the ground, but the sweet showers of April (or the shower of rain that surprised Marie) bring them back to life. The bulbs bring me to the hyacinths. Strange lines. Maybe the reason the

> hair was wet in the Hyacinth garden was that whoever the wet-haired-person is has just come up from the bottom of the lake. No wonder then that the hyacinth girl could not speak and her eyes failed.

'The hyacinth girl', who may or not be the narrator herself,[19] appears, 'Your arms full, and your hair wet'—[which] implies in this scene that the girl has either just come from a sexual encounter, or that she has just been raped—a possible connection with the Fisher King's wound, which is generally a sexual one.[20] Each of these references to water corresponds to the usually pure symbolism of water, which is then twisted, and in each scene there is some perversion such as rape.

> Finally there's the crowd of dead coming over London Bridge. Somehow I imagine these as the dead of the Great War. Thus this part of the poem vibrates against the Marie-references to the nobility of Europe and all the politics that led to that war.

I have a bit more to add and will try to get it all out later tonight, keep on Googling, there is a ton of stuff out there that can help us. I have found (and borrowed) bits from

`http://cityhonors.buffalo.k12.ny.us/city/rsrcs/eng/eli/waspav.htm`
`http://cityhonors.buffalo.k12.ny.us/city/rsrcs/eng/eli/elihea1.htm`

(so don't hold me to any plag[i]aristic intent).[21] I have also seen links between Eliot and <his relationship between> his friend Jean Verdenal.

> In 1910 T.S. Eliot went to Paris to study for a year at the Sorbonne. He roomed at a *pension* where he met and befriended another young man, Jean Verdenal. Verdenal was killed in 1915 in a World War I battle.[22]

[19] Though I do not typeset it as a quotation, this block of text is evidently adapted from Anya Pavlov-Shapiro, 'The Water Motif—Both Positive and Negative—in Eliot's *The Waste Land*' (For International Baccalaureate English 1998). A link is given below: `http://cityhonors.buffalo.k12.ny.us/city/rsrcs/eng/eli/waspav.htm`. Again, this is not directly accessible today (April 3, 2011), but can be reached through `http://waybackmachine.org/`. The relevant passage reads, 'Next, the narrator describes "The hyacinth girl" (36) (who may or not be the narrator himself): "Your arms full, and your hair wet" (38). It is implied in this scene that the girl has either just been raped, or has had at least a negative sexual experience. Each of these references to water corresponds to the waste land; the usually pure symbolism of water is twisted to become negative, and in each scene there is some perversion such as rape.' Among other things, Lewis has changed Pavlov-Shapiro's 'himself' to 'herself'.

[20] In Mr Lewis's previous email, see note 15 and the quotation following.

[21] See notes 6 and 19 above. I do not know about Mr Lewis's intent; but his quotation of the words of others, without clearly indicating *that* he is quoting, is plagiarism.

[22] Text found at `http://world.std.com/~raparker/pub/jean.html` (April 5, 2011).

Apparently this death highly influenced Eliot's writing of *The Waste Land.*

22. Mr Thomas. Ms Murray and Mr Lewis discuss the Wagner quotations in Eliot's poem. As I recall there are three direct quotes,[23] two from *Tristan* and one from the *Ring.*

Eliot quotes the ditty sung by an unseen sailor at the beginning and also quotes the description of a blank and bare sea at the beginning of Act III.

From the *Ring,* Eliot quotes the nonsense syllables sung by the Rheinmaidens in the first and last operas of the cycle. These, like the sailor's ditty from *Tristan,* are the first things sung.

Mr Lewis seems to be mixing up *Tristan* and *Parsifal,* Wagner's opera about the Grail legend—obviously relevant to the Jessie Weston book that Eliot mentions in his notes as being important to his poem (and which I read once upon a time). While he doesn't quote any from Wagner's text of *Parsifal,* he does quote a line from a Verlaine poem entitled 'Parsifal'[24] (which I haven't read, so I don't know what relation, if any, it has to the Wagner opera).

23. Mr Lewis. Thanks for setting me straight on that. I knew it was somewhere in the recesses of my mind; I just haven't thought about these things in a while and it gets to be a jumble. Honestly, at some points I seem to be hitting the limitation of my insight into *The Waste Land,* while in other places it seems clear as a bell. I imagine that has something to do with the great pains the author took to wrap every nuance into each line (not to mention my own forgetfulness).

24. Mr Tourtelott. I haven't got a copy handy, and I can't claim to have the whole poem in my head, so can somebody tell me if, as I seem to remember. the London Bridge passage comes just after the 'unreal city' passage, in which a number of metropolises of both the ancient and modern world are proclaimed unreal? I think that goes along with my reading of the crowd as walking dead, but of course that particular association falls apart if the passages are at opposite ends of the poem.

25. Mr Lewis. OK, let's see, *The Waste Land* can be found at
`http://world.std.com/~raparker/exploring/thewasteland/explore.html`

[23] At lines 31, 42, and 266.
[24] At line 202.

so don't rush our and buy a copy if you don't have one. 'Unreal city' is <at> line 60 and [London] Bridge comes right after at 62.

26. Mr Lewis. Ms Murray wrote:

> Finally there's the crowd of dead coming over London Bridge. Somehow I imagine these as the dead of the Great War. Thus this part of the poem vibrates against the Marie-references to the nobility of Europe and all the politics that led to that war.

Mr Tourtelott wrote:

> I read the crowd flowing over London Bridge—'So many, I had not thought Death had undone so many'—as an ordinary crowd flowing over London Bridge, all of them trapped in the nightmare Death-in-Life. The poem teems with figures, it seems to me, who are neither properly alive nor dead, whose feelings are anesthetized and routinized. The central figure in that regard—and she is in fact the central figure in the poem—is the typist who, after her meaningless tryst with the young man carbuncular, has the half-formed thought 'Now that's done, and I'm glad it's over.' (Remember that it is of this scene that Eliot says in the notes that 'What Tiresias *sees*... is the substance of the poem.')

The city is real enough and clearly identified as London *vis-à-vis* the Church at Saint Mary Woolnoth, and the bridge as London Bridge, though I think it is not incorrect to assume that it is also the City of the Dead. The conversation with Stetson is an enactment of lines from Baudelaire <which opens>: 'ghosts converse with passers-by in broad daylight', and ends with another line from the same poet, <that> which I translated in my time at SJC: '*Hypocrite lecteur*'[25] —my brother!— bringing the reader into the poem with the other personages. We are none of us exempt from Eliot's damning good graces. This is a very good place draw the line because it takes us back to Ms Murray's question about dryness and water. There is a sort of sense of being in two places at once, of being in time and out of time that is being portrayed here: one the water, a metaphor for the flowing of time; the other the dryness, the Waste Land itself, where there is death and dying and damnation, the cessation of time. *The Waste Land* seems to move in and out of human time, evoking the relativity of Einstein or the theory of Bergson that there is relative mathematical time and perceived human time. The poem moves back and forth juxtaposing the myths and symbolism of the

[25] The email has 'Lecture'.

ancient past with the memories [of] the recent war, stories of London and the present. Consecutively the poem imposes the cycle of spiritual birth, maturity, death and rebirth, as the cyclical core of human spiritual comprehension. To see this he gives us the Oracle, a Sibyl, the blind seer Tiresias and the Tarot attributed to Thoth, councilor to Osiris, whose own fertility ritual took place in the spring, in April.

Ms Murray writes:

> The wet-dry polarity feeds the image of resurrection also through the references to bulbs, tubers and corpses planted in the garden. They are lying dead under the ground, but the sweet showers of April (or the shower of rain that surprised Marie) bring them back to life. The bulbs bring me to the hyacinths. Strange lines. Maybe the reason the hair was wet in the Hyacinth garden was that whoever the wet-haired-person is has just come up from the bottom of the lake. No wonder then that the hyacinth girl could not speak and her eyes failed.

Hyacinth is a name alluding to the old myth,

> Hyacinthus was a charming and handsome Spartan youth, loved by both Apollo and Zephyrus. Hyacinthus preferred the Sun-God to the God of the West, who sought to be revenged. One day, when Apollo was playing quoits with the youth, a quoit that he threw was blown by Zephyrus out of its proper course and it struck and killed Hyacinthus. Apollo, stricken with grief, raised from his blood a purple flower on which the letters 'ai, ai', were traced, so that the cry of woe might for evermore have existence on the earth.[26]

Again there is a sense of being in two places at once, of being in time, in the flower, the temporal, and out of time, the sorrow of the god, that is being portrayed here... I agree with Ms Murray that we should move on to the second section, it just gets juicier.

27. Ms Murray. OK, I've read about the Fisher King—how he's wounded and so infertile and in pain, and his wound causes his country to become a Waste Land. It will stay a Waste Land until the Fisher King is cured, which may or may not be by someone asking the right question. Other ingredients:

- The Grail, which may be a chalice or a cauldron or a fish platter.
- The Fisher King's castle, which looks a lot like Neuschwanstein.
- Parsifal—Wagner again.

[26] Mrs M. Grieve, *A Modern Herbal,* available at `http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/h/hyawil43.html` (April 2, 2011) and other places.

- Isn't there also a lake, as in Lady of the Lake?

The website where I did this reading had a list of modern Grail literature, and this list included David Lodge's *Small World.* I slap my forehead—what an ignoramus I am. I just read *Small World* fairly recently and thought it was just a very amusing academic novel. There's a character named Kingfisher who is cured of impotence when the young hero (Persse, for Percifal, naturally) asks the right question (at an academic conference).

I am going to dip into the second section now. This is fun.

28. Ms Murray. Oh that is good, I like it. The only hyacinth I dredged up was Saint Hyacinth. He did walk on water, left footprints too.

Mr Tourtelott, I think your imagining the many dead as Londoners going about their daily lives makes perfectly good sense. My idea about the war dead comes from the pervasive feeling of that period that *so many* had died. The actual reference is to the processions of the dead in the *Inferno.*

29. Mr Lewis. I too remember seeing a reference to Dante for this line, oh wait, I found it, *Inferno* III, 55–7.[27]

30. Mr Tourtelott. The 'unreal city motif' appears three times in the poem. The first, which we have discussed, is just before the London Bridge crowd. The second is in conjunction with the appearance of 'Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant' who invites the narrator to a (presumably dirty) weekend at the Metropole. A Greek Smyrna merchant is, in the 1920s, a man from an unreal city, the Greeks having been pushed out by Kemal and the city burned. There is no Smyrna anymore at this point, only Izmir. The third repetition of the motif, which I had indeed, as I suspected, confused with the London Bridge section, comes in the final section, with a passage that I think even more explicitly refers to the Great War, its destruction of human life, and its large-scale destruction of civilization as symbolized by the final list of unreal cities:

> What are those hooded hordes swarming
> 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
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

[27] This is Eliot's note to line 63.

Vienna London
Unreal

It is I think especially significant that the list of unreal cities ends with the narrator's own. London, unlike Vienna, may be a capital of the victors, but the war has left it no more real than Vienna, all of whose power and empire have disappeared.

31. Mr Fant. Did this come up earlier? 'I'm not Russian at all, I come from Lithuania, a true German.' Translation of line 12 of *The Waste Land.*

32. Mr Lewis. Section II, 'A Game of Chess', opens with at least five references to famous women and queens of antiquity. The opening passage itself is from *Antony and Cleopatra* (See Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*), Act 2, Scene 2,[28]

> The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
> Glowed on the marble, where the glass
> Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
> From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
> (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
> Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
> Reflecting light upon the table as
> The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
> From satin cases poured in rich profusion;

but he has subtly changed the passage from Cleopatra's barge to a Chair. Another famous queen in a chair is Cassiopeia.

> Perseus had recently slain Medusa, the Gorgon, and had put its head in a bed of coral. He retrieved the head and waved it in midst of the warring wedding party, instantly turning them all to stone. In the group were both Cepheus and Cassiopeia. A contrite Poseidon put both father and mother in the heavens. But because of Cassiopeia's vanity, he placed her in a chair, which revolves around the Pole Star, so half the time she's obliged to sit upside down.[29]

The Cupidon is a naked infantile figure looking like the Roman god of love; and the sevenbranched candelabra, a possible reference to the Pleiades. In line 92 the laquearia is from the *Aeneid.* (See Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land.*) This is from Virgil's description of a banquet given

[28] Eliot's note refers more precisely to line 190; this and the next read, 'The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold'.

[29] The text is on various webpages, such as `http://www.crystalinks.com/cassiopeia.html` (April 2, 2011).

by Dido, Queen of Carthage, for Aeneas, with whom the gods made her fall in love. Just as Queen Cleopatra commits suicide due to her involvement with Anthony, Dido's passion for Aeneas also leads to her suicide. We have seen the narrator, a little girl, consulting a Tarot reader. The images of these women invoke youth and beauty and age and wisdom (second sight?). Does Eliot suggest that the lives of women are as pieces on a chessboard? Have these women been manipulated? And what about the enigmatic last line?

> Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

Taken from the mouth of Ophelia? Is this reference in *The Waste Land* as Ophelia died by drowning while holding flowers just as the flower holding hyacinth girl in Section I? Why are these women, as pieces in a chess game, out of time?

> And we shall play a game of chess, 137
> Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

Eliot means [to] compare the women of *The Waste Land* to the action in Thomas Middleton's play *Women Beware Women* where in act II, scene ii, a woman, Bianca, is seduced by the Duke of Florence in one room (in the play, the upper stage) while in another room a game of chess between Livia and Bianca's mother-in-law has moves paralleling the steps in the seduction. There are as many references to women as sexual objects, both as prostitute:

> 'What shall I do now? What shall I do?' 131
> 'I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
> 'With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
> 'What shall we ever do?'

and in sexual servitude in marriage:

> 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 165
> Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
> And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—
> HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
> HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

Coming from section one where Eliot so strongly invokes rites of passage, spiritual death and rebirth, time and timelessness, it seems here that Eliot is again critical that women seem to have been left out of the equation, that they have been objectified as sexual objects and not afforded the same opportunities. (Reminds me of the arguments about no women on the SJC reading list.) This smacks in the knowledge that Eliot was supposedly not kind to women (or his wife) in real life.

That's all for now!

33. Mr Goree. Ms Murray writes:

> My idea about the war dead comes from the pervasive feeling of that period that *so many* had died.

To whatever extent Eliot was talking about physical death I personally connect it to the flu epidemic that had recently killed more people than the Great War (I think 25 million dead in only 6 months). I'm still torn over exactly what 'death' means at that point in the poem, though.

34. Mr Lewis. Mr Fant wrote: 'Did this come up earlier?' I think so, Ms Murray pointed out:

> Marie is Marie Larisch... Ludwig of Bavaria also drowned in Starnbergersee. So these are the first deaths by water—fisher and king lying at the bottom of the lake

—which seemed pretty comprehensive to me.

35. Mr Lewis. Mr Goree writes:

> I'm still torn over exactly what 'death' means at that point in the poem, though.

What are your choices? By that I mean what are you torn over? As I have said before, my own sense of what death means here comes from the way in which death and rebirth play cyclical roles in the open passages of *The Waste Land.* There is a sense here and hereafter, in time and out of time, being in London, but also, at the same time, being in the city of the dead, torn by war and disease. Again, Eliot uses death as a motif of the vegetal rites of birth, death, and rebirth, the core of the human spiritual experience, whether it is linked to the seasons and agriculture, or in [the] Christian rite of Eucharist. I don't think that the one necessarily excludes the other. There is a sense of this has come before, and here we are, in the after, looking back, trying to make sense of this thing that has happened, are we alive and reborn, or are we a corpse? Has our society crumbled and decayed around us or has it been renewed? I don't think that Eliot wants to answer these question as much as pose them. But his links to the rites and myths of the past are Jungian in that they seems to indicate this is something at the core of humanity, something that we see and will see and then will see again.

36. Mr Fant. Mr Lewis wrote:

> I think so, Ms Murray pointed out... —which seemed pretty compre-

hensive to me.

I meant something far more trivial; there was a recent thread about Lithuanians and their relationship to Germans and anti-Semitism. Realizing the poem predates the Holocaust, I merely want to point out that Eliot appears to have had an opinion about Lithuanians that was expressed in the poem.

37. Mr Lewis. [*The Waste Land,* line 12:]

> Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.

'I'm not Russian at all, I come from Lithuania, a true German.' I see... A few more observations. The gender of the German noun Russin indicates that the speaker is a woman. Note that this line is not in italics as other lines in other non-English languages are.

> As this historical Marie was born into the Wittelsbach royal house of Bavaria, far from Lithuania,[30]

Marie was close to her aunt and became her confidante. In 1877, at the age of 19, a marriage was arranged for her and she became Countess Marie Laris[c]h.

> By her own accounts the Countess had been serving as a go-between for the Archduke Rudolph and Mary—[31]

> The body of the archduke, the heir to the Austrian Empire, was found with the body of Marie (Mary) Vetsera, a baroness who was his mistress.

> —although, in her books, she wrote that she was at times duped and at other times her good-nature was taken advantage of. Despite this, when the affair came to its bloody end she suffered the wrath of the imperial family and became the disgrace of Europe.

Eliot's widow comments in *The Facsimile* (pp. 126-127) that the remarks that Eliot included in *The Waste Land* were taken verbatim from a conversation that Eliot had with the Countess.

38. Ms Eckstrom. If you are working your way through *The Waste Land,* you may want to glance at the new biography of the first Mrs Eliot—Vivian Eliot. The biography is full of florid prose and you will need to supply your own sophistication as to how a poet's life and his poetry overlap (because the biographer is far too simplistic). That said,

[30] Text found at `http://world.std.com/~raparker/exploring/thewasteland/exmarie.html` (April 2, 2011).

[31] The three blocks of text quoted here are found in the order 2, 1, 3 at the page last cited.

the biographer burned her bridges with Eliot's estate and wrote about many topics that scholars who wish to be on good terms with Eliot's estate speak about in hushed terms to their graduate students—and never in print.

I found my reading of *The Waste Land* changed after reading it. I finally 'got' what my old professors from graduate school kept hinting about Eliot's male friendships and first marriage (1915) and how these experiences made their way into *The Waste Land* (1922).

A Johnny may find the gossip in the book unseemly, but *The Waste Land* takes on a great deal of force as an elegiac poem after reading the book.

39. Ms Murray. Mr Lewis, I'm puzzled—I don't think the narrator is meant to be a little girl. The bit at the beginning about going on the sled at the Archduke's is said by Marie as a little girl, but it's just a snip from her conversation. I thought that the narrator was supposed to be Eliot/Tiresias? I haven't gotten very far in the chess game yet—will try to have something to say about it tomorrow.

40. Mr Lewis. Ah yes I was wondering that myself, but since we hadn't crossed that bridge I thought it best to leave it ambiguous at best. I think the best case for her narration is the tense shift after the quote: it reverts back to a past tense introduced in 8–16, that invokes the girl's commentary. However, the last two lines of the English passage introduce the second thematic strain, the concept of time suspended into infinity, the speaker neither living nor dead, looking into 'the heart of light'. The next passage changes tense once again into past present, introducing the clairvoyant Madame Sosostris, and working out this fortune seems to constitute the plot structure for the remainder of the poem. Since multiple shifts exist in this section of the poem, it is difficult to tell who is the narrator. My best guess is the girl, but the suggestion of past present and second sight lend weight to the argument for Tiresias. Time shifts here are important. The future is told by employing a vehicle, the cards, that belongs to the past (Greek or Egyptian). The key is the final passage, a point you introduced Ms Murray, the 'Fear death by water'—the death of the innocent but also the chronological movement of the poem, closely resembling the stream of consciousness, the movement of speech that follows thought, like the conversation between Marie and Eliot, that finally cements for me (although controversially) that it must be the little girl.

41. Mr Breslin. I apologize for the thesis statement in my subject line ('*The Waste Land* = CRAP, *Four Quartets,* a worthy farewell'), while adhering to it.

The Waste Land is Eliot's way of self-indulging in the privileged powers of an educated upper middle class American expatriate.

Four Quartets blossoms all of a sudden into a kind of widening humility that speaks without the insufferable whining and self-pity and throttleable self-consciousness of the much more artificial and inexcusable *Waste Land.*

The Waste Land is High Modernism at its absolute worst—echoing in a tedious and pedantic voice the oh-so-oh-I-am-so-lost-in-between-the-wars-so-I'll-quote-Dante woo woo woo bullshit masturbatory public self-flagellation that weakens its own argument and ought to have remained courageous, sick and silent.

There is no wisdom in it. Pride goeth before a fall.

The wisdom only reaches Eliot, a soul twisted like a trained vine on the *zeitgeist,* in *Four Quartets,* and he proves he read his Wilde, whose voice laughs 'art is knowing when to stop', as Old T.S. knew exactly when to stop when *Four Quartets* finished him.

42. Mr Lewis. Ms Eckstrom writes:

> That said, the biographer burned her bridges with Eliot's estate and wrote about many topics that scholars who wish to be on good terms with Eliot's estate speak about in hushed terms to their graduate students—and never in print.

No news here, try reading Hemingway's *The Garden of Eden* or look at the way males and females switch roles in *A Farewell to Arms.* Guess what, writers are bisexuals, some writers hate women, Eliot was not an exception, other writers even criticized him (Eliot) in their works, look for references to Eliot's marriage in Hemingway's 'Cat in the Rain' or Fitzgerald's 'Mr & Mrs Eliot'. They say everything from that he is a bad lover to he is an obnoxious misanthrope and one should feel sorry for Mrs Eliot. I agree completely, but should this imply he is a bad poet, is *The Waste Land* less of a poem because of it? I am not sure. Is there no wisdom in it as Mr Breslin points out?—

> *The Waste Land* is Eliot's way of self-indulging in the privileged powers of an educated upper middle class American expatriate.

Guess what, so is your St John's education. Get used to it. Eliot is a perennial snob. He doesn't like people, he likes literature, and he knows literature. He also knows language and the arts. To say there is no wisdom is to cut yourself off from the heritage that is Western civilization. To say Eliot is a horrid person is correct, to say that makes him a bad poet, is not. He is dry, urban[e], and without passion, but without wisdom? That seems simplistic, at best, a passionate argument meant to inflame, but without insight, point or place.

43. **Mr Breslin.** I like *Four Quartets* and 'Prufrock'.

I just think self-serious high modernism is bad art. It's a matter of taste.

44. **Mr Pierce.** I wrote most of the following yesterday.

I'm glad people are interested in talking about Eliot's poem. As Mr Billington has also indicated, Collingwood took *The Waste Land* as an outstanding example of good art. This is a reason why I want to make sense of the poem: I enjoy *Collingwood*'s writing. Otherwise I know little of 20th-century poetry.

Eliot's Waste Land is two words, not one. Eliot's name has no doubled consonants. (This corrects the errors in some emails.)

A web-source for the text is

`http://www.bartleby.com/201/1.html`

I took this text and marked it up as a TEX file, from which I created `dvi`, `ps`, and `pdf` files for printing: they are all in the directory:[32]

`http://www.math.metu.edu.tr/~dpierce/poetry/Eliot/wasteland/`

However, I haven't figured out the best way to indent lines with TEX. Can anybody propose any *significance* to the various sorts of indentations used in printed versions of Eliot's work?

I'm also reading (Turkish poet) Nâzım Hikmet's 'epic novel in verse', *Human Landscapes from my Country;* Like Eliot, Nazim uses indentations of various lengths, and Ayşe tells me that Nâzım learned this style from Mayakovsky.

`http://mayakovsky.com/`

(All I know about *him,* I think, is that a poem of his about worker-poets forms a part of a wall-sized collage about the Russian Revolution in the Hirshhorn Museum; the Hirshhorn re-displayed this piece when the USSR fell.)

[32]The address does not exist anymore.

Oh, I compared the text of *The Waste Land* on Bartleby (which is from an early publication) with the text in the book of collected poems of Eliot that I have.[33] I found minor variations, mostly in these indentations. The later version doesn't use an apostrophe in ‘HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME’. Also a 3-letter non-English word in the last stanza is different in the two versions.

In my TeX file, I haven't (yet) edited Eliot's notes (to italicise titles, for example).

About the poem itself: Ms Murray and Mr Lewis, you seem to be approaching it now as a puzzle. That's okay, and I will do the same below.

However, following Collingwood (as I understand him), I would say that our appreciation of the poem *as art* does not require us to understand the allusions. Of course, maybe we can't understand the poem as art unless we are as hyper-educated as the poet himself. In that case, if we don't come to the poem as hyper-educated people ourselves, then maybe we should pass it by.

Now, one allusion I do seem to recognize:

> I do not find
> The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.

I think Mr Lewis mentioned *The Tempest.* In the first scene, Gonzalo finds the boatswain to be destined to hang from the gallows; therefore the boatswain will not drown; therefore nobody else from the ship is likely to drown.

But if the boatswain were not doomed to hang, then Gonzalo *would* fear death by water.

Back to line 2; I read somewhere that it alludes to Whitman's ‘When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed’

`http://www.netpoets.com/classic/poems/070015.htm`

Would Eliot's poem bear line-by-line scrutiny? Probably Mr Breslin has just said ‘No.’

How profound is it to say that April is not only cruel, but cruelest of all months? And what does it mean to mix memory and desire? I can give some answers, but perhaps only as if I were writing a high-school essay.

[33] T.S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950,* San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

April is cruel because it follows winter; but the voice of the first stanza changes over into the voice of one who avoids a harsh winter by going south. Is this important, or is is perhaps inattentiveness on Eliot's part—or on Ezra Pound's part, since he cut a lot out of Eliot's original work?

45. Mr Lewis. Mr Breslin writes

> I just think self-serious high modernism is bad art. It's a matter of taste.

Mr Breslin, I apologize to you and Ms Eckstrom, It was late last night and something you said must have touched a nerve and I did not mean to come off so high-handed, and [I] certainly should never be allowed near a keyboard in such a state of mind. However, your comments about *The Waste Land,* that it is 'High Modernism at its absolute worst' and that 'there is no wisdom in it', intrigue me at second glance, and I invite you, if you are so inclined, to join our conversation, since you seem to have so much insight into the poem, and show us, through your poetic analysis of said poem, how your observations hold up in light of your poetic interpretations. Again we are the 'privileged powers of an educated American upper middle class', and in my view *The Waste Land* is just the kind of poem that our weighty classical education prepares us for. I have no love of Eliot, the man, *per se,* however I do like a good riddle, and cracking the *Waste Land* code intrigues me, Why so many quotes and references, why so many allusions? Eliot showing off? Mr Breslin, Eliot is arguably a genius, *The Waste Land* is arguably a literary giant of the 20th century, and while he is no Joyce, *The Waste Land* no *Ulysses,* surely his motivation (Eliot) is worthy of our consideration. Incidentally, Does anyone know of the *Ulysses–Waste Land* connection? I read somewhere that Eliot was inspired by Joyce's novel when he sat down to write his poem, but I don't enough Joyce to ferret out the references.

46. Mr Thomas. Mr Lewis writes (I've quoted only a fragment of a sentence, but don't think the quotation is misleading for all that):

> Eliot is arguably a genius, *The Waste Land* is arguably a literary giant of the 20th century.

This seems true, of course, but what Mr Breslin said (and I agree) is that the arguments for at least the latter proposition are not strong ones. I myself would argue that Eliot is a minor poet with a strong sense of diction, which carries some of his poems over his lack of originality. I loved Eliot in high school (in the 60s, when modernism was still a secular religion) but became increasingly dissatisfied with him. I reread *The Waste Land* after college, and found it much worse when I knew more about where he was stealing things from. The end of my appreciation of Eliot came when I read through the *Penguin Book of Italian Poetry* (or something like that) and discovered that the first line of 'Ash Wednesday' was lifted wholesale from a famous early Italian sonnet.[34]

One can, of course, treat *The Waste Land* as a puzzle, but treating a poem that way seems to me to diminish its aesthetic point.

(Give me Frost any old day of the week—now there's a poet!)

47. Mr Lewis. Mr Thomas writes

> One can, of course, treat *The Waste Land* as a puzzle, but treating a poem that way seems to me to diminish its aesthetic point.

You say 'seems' like you are not sure. What is a poem, a fancy bunch of words to lift and inspire? Only god can make a tree? Or does it provoke us to think, to look at the world in a new way? Isn't that what Eliot is doing? He borrows pieces from the past, jumbles them up, reshuffles the deck if you will, and then puts it back out in a way that is new and challenging. On the shoulders of giants as it were. Kandinsky writes in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* that to reproduce the art of a bygone age is to produce something stillborn, something lifeless; but is that all that Eliot is doing?

> Many critics have written of the antitheses, the antinomies, and the contrasts in *The Waste Land.* These exist in abundance and are not just accidents of inclusion; they comprise a basic and indispensable aspect of the poem's technique, progression, and meaning. Many such polarities could be identified in the poem: universal-personal, male-female, conscious-unconscious, hope-fear, and others. But the technique of contradiction goes deeper than this in the poem's structure. [Many of its symbols are involved in what I should like to call 'parallelodoxes'.] Many of its symbols [, that is,] simultaneously develop in antithetical directions.[35]

That is what I meant by a puzzle. And this seems entirely new. A bit dry perhaps, but that, for me, adds to the overall tone of the poem.

> (Give me Frost any old day of the week—now there's a poet!)

I am really more of an e.e. cummings man myself.

---

[34] *Perch'i' no spero di tornar giammai* ('Because I do not hope to turn again') `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guido_Cavalcanti` (April 5, 2011).

[35] Headings, 'Symbols in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*' (note 6). The bracketed phrases are supplied by me from the source.

48. Mr Lewis. I've been looking back over the second section trying to figure out what is going on here, but it is proving elusive, I couldn't help but notice that Ms Murray's water allusions have changed, is there a new meaning here:

> 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.

Lidless eyes that recall the Phoenician sailor, the pearls for eyes, taking us back to the previous water allusion, but here the water is avoided, the modernity of the car is used as an escape. Do the trappings of the modern world distract us from our spirituality? Are the old gods of death and rebirth, gone forever? The symbol of water is ambiguous, and is definitely different from line nine of the first section:[36]

> The shower of rain that comes over the Starnbergersee both heralds the summer and makes the speaker run for shelter.[37] The absence of water and the thirst for it enter in line 24, 'the dry stone [gives] no sound of water'; in line 42, '*Oed' und leer das Meer*'[38] ('Wide and empty the sea'),

water carries both positive and negative connotations.[39]

> Both sides of this ambiguous symbol are inconspicuously present in the game of chess: 'The hot water at ten./And if it rains, a closed car at four'; and again the negative side is seen through the allusion to Ophelia, who drowned herself: 'Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.'

(Philip R. Headings)[40]

> Whereas water is usually seen as desirable and purifying; here it is merely for a regular bath, or something to get away from. This is characteristic of the deadening of the people to nature and beauty, as part of their spiritual death. The pair's boredom with life ties into the

[36] Part of the following quotation appeared on page 17; see note 6. The passage quoted here is preceded in the source by 'The symbol of water, for instance, is already present ambiguously in line nine of the first section:'

[37] Mr Lewis inserted a paragraph break here, which is not in the source.

[38] Again, Mr Lewis and the source both have 'Oed and leer dos Meer'.

[39] Mr Lewis's interpolation replaces 'water is both a negative and a positive symbol: it may carry Isolde and her healing arts to the dying Tristan, but as yet it is waste and barren. The fear of death by water is first made explicit by Madame Sosostris.' This is followed in the source by a paragraph break.

[40] Finally Mr Lewis names his source, albeit without having indicated exactly what he has taken from there.

> section's theme that sex without love in the modern world has become a battle within and between the sexes. This is yet another aspect of the waste land, and parallels the negative symbolism of the water; whereas the couple should be happy and loving, they are bored and disinterested, almost at war.

(Pavlov-Shapiro)[41]

49. Mr Thomas. Mr Lewis writes:

> You say 'seems' like you are not sure.

Not at all. I am absolutely sure about how it appears to me. I am not insisting that it must appear to you that way, partly as a matter of courtesy and partly as a matter of principle. The principle is that one can be blinded to actual qualities in works of art for personal reasons, and that others may see such qualities. This principle, on the other hand, when applied to my dislike of Milton, led people to claim that I was simply wrong. (People blinded to actual positive qualities in works of art may also see actual qualities that those who appreciate the work are in turn blinded from appreciating. Wagner is the prime example, for me, of this paradoxical attribute of works of art: one may be blinded by appreciation from seeing the deleterious inherent in the work. Thus, those who hate and those who love a work of art may be both responding to something real in the work.)

There are writers who one must puzzle out to get. But once one has puzzled out what they are getting at, one has to make the further assessment of whether the work of puzzle-decoding was worth it. The rationale that such puzzle-making is a manner of 'making things new' was offered by Gertrude Stein in defense of her odd writings. But other than being fractured, there is often not enough point in Stein to make the effort worthwhile.

James Joyce is also a puzzle-making author. I find his work through *Ulysses* worth it (although some of *Ulysses* is pretty extreme in that regard). After I graduated from law school I thought I would make an effort to get through *Finnegans Wake,* but gave up after about 30 pages. It was clear that, with the help of the various commentaries I had available, I could have made my way through it, but it also seemed that the puzzle making had swamped any real aesthetic impulse and I didn't think that the effort was worth it. (This was the first time, by the way,

[41] See notes 19 and 40.

that I had not completed a book I had started. I even made it all the way through the two volumes of John Gower's *Confessio Amatis,* the Middle English poetic equivalent of disco.)

James Merrill is a puzzle-making poet who I do like, although for me the narrative thread of *The Changing Light at Sandover* was necessary to get me through the puzzle aspects.

And Robert Frost is perhaps the most difficult poet to read well, because he doesn't provide any of the cubist bumps of puzzle-making modernists. That many people find him 'easy' is due, no doubt, to the fact that some of his poems are regularly read in junior high schools.

50. Mr Lewis. [Mr Thomas wrote:]

> There are writers who one must puzzle out to get. But once one has puzzled out what they are getting at, one has to make the further assessment of whether the work of puzzle-decoding was worth it.

Perhaps it is safe to say (if safe has any meaning here) that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. You write, and rather eloquently I might add, of an impressive array of books for which you have had varying degrees of success in decoding, but first and foremost you must like what you do, or you will never find the pleasure in it. When I sit down and take a bite out of a poem, as I often do, I enjoy it. The better the poet, the more fun I have, as I said before, Eliot is interesting because 'the antinomies and the contrasts in *The Waste Land* exist in abundance and are not just accidents of inclusion; they comprise a basic and indispensable aspect of the poem's technique, progression, and meaning.'

I tend to agree with your observation that

> the rationale that such puzzle-making is a manner of 'making things new' was offered by Gertrude Stein in defense of her odd writings. But other than being fractured, there is often not enough point in Stein to make the effort worthwhile.

And while I have no love of Stein, I would only add: What is new? It seems to me that almost everything comes from the reworkings of the past, which makes understanding the past, and how it weaves itself into something like *The Waste Land,* that much more important. (Isn't it at the core of our common education?)

Mr Breslin writes of wisdom, I don't know from wisdom, but I don't usually spend my day thinking about things like 'universal-personal, male-female, conscious-unconscious, hope-fear'[42] and so, when I find these things in a poem that causes me to think about those things and how they appear in my own life, I tend to believe a poem has done its job, regardless of much (or how little) the poem made me work to get there.

I don't really want to argue, it seems to me a waste of energy, and because in reading your last response I get the sense that we are not so different. I am just not so ready to dismiss Eliot as some. The poem is interesting. Many of its symbols simultaneously develop in antithetical directions. I like being asked to hold two different and antithetical ideas in my head at the same time, and, after reading some of their posts, I would think that would also appeal to a great many 'listers'.

51. Mr Goree. Just bouncing onto a new topic here:

My introduction to Eliot (outside of seeing *Cats* in high school) was in my senior language class at SJC. We read *Murder in the Cathedral, The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets.*

At that point in my life I wanted to be a professional composer, was completely immersing myself in Schenker, did my preceptorial on Beethoven's string quartets, and I had for my senior language tutor Ms Blettner, who had also been my sophomore music tutor.

So, I ended up reading Eliot looking to see how he addressed the questions of structuring a work of art over an extended period of time, like composers do (after 'Burnt Norton' I saw there was nothing at all novel about my approach, except to me).

My analysis of *The Waste Land* was hopeless, because I didn't 'get' sonata form at that point. But I turned a corner (after and thanks largely to the Beethoven precept) with 'Burnt Norton'. It hit me that if *The Waste Land* or any of the *Quartets* were pieces of music, you would of course repeat section III after playing section IV; it usually doesn't even need to be marked. 'Fire Sermon' is a scherzo and 'Death by Water' is its trio. It was the same problem of '3, 4, and 5 in 1' that composers always face and that lead[s] to the 'sonata form' in the first place. For me, at least, hearing 'Fire Sermon' as a *frame* for 'Death by Water' rather than as just a predecessor finally made the whole poem 'work'.

The downside of looking at the poems this way was that I almost never bothered to figure out what the words 'meant'; I only thought about their rhythm, their sound, and sometimes the images they brought to my mind

[42] See page 35.

(I still don't know what the Sanskrit at the end means; I just know it sounds like thunder to me).

Does anybody else read Eliot that way? Or, does anybody feel that it does violence to his work to barely care about what the words mean?

52. Mr Lewis. Mr Goree writes:

> The downside of looking at the poems this way was that I almost never bothered to figure out what the words 'meant'; I only thought about their rhythm, their sound, and sometimes the images they brought to my mind (I still don't know what the Sanskrit at the end means; I just know it sounds like thunder to me).

[From Eliot's note on line 402:[43]]

> 'Datta, dayadhvam, damyata' (Give, sympathize, 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.

[From a supplement to that note:[44]]

> The Hindu fable referred to is that of gods, men, and demons each in turn asking of their father Prajapati, 'Speak to us, O Lord.' To each he replied with the one syllable 'DA', and each group interpreted it in a different way: 'Datta', to give alms; 'Dayadhvam', to have compassion; 'Damyata', to practice self-control. The fable concludes, 'This is what the divine voice, the Thunder, repeats when he says: DA, DA, DA: "Control yourselves; give alms; be compassionate." Therefore one should practice these three things: self-control, alms-giving, and compassion.'

Also [from Eliot's note to the last line of the poem]:

> Shantih. Repeated as here, is a formal ending to an Upanishad. 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is a feeble translation of the conduct of this word.[45]

[Mr Goree again:]

> Does anybody else read Eliot that way? Or, does anybody feel that it does violence to his work to barely care about what the words mean?

I often read poetry trying to decipher the meter first, the words second. There are allusions to music in the section you speak of, and I don't think

[43] This is the line number of the printed text cited in note 33; but the site `http://eliotswasteland.tripod.com/` (April 3, 2011) numbers it as 401.

[44] The following can be found for example at the site just cited, or at the link provided by Ms Murray (p. 18).

[45] The text cited in note 33 has '"The peace which passseth understanding" is our equivalent to this word.'

it accidental that you should compare it to a sonnet. Line 192 references *The Tempest,* Act I, Scene ii:

> [FERDINAND:]
>
> Where should this music be? i' the air or the earth?
> It sounds no more: and sure, it waits upon
> Some god o' the island. Sitting on a bank,
> Weeping again the king my father's wreck,
> This music crept by me upon the waters,
> Allaying both their fury and my passion
> With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it,
> Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.
> No, it begins again.
>
> ARIEL *sings:*
>
> 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

Incorporating music and yet another 'death by water'. I have to admit the musical aspect of it never occurred to me. Why does the nightingale sing in the desert? What is the Shakespearean rag?[46] Music and *The Waste Land,* very interesting Mr Goree.

53. Mr Goree. Mr Lewis writes:

> What are your choices? By that I mean what are you torn over? As I have said before, my own sense of what death means here comes from the way in which death and rebirth play cyclical roles in the open passages of *The Waste Land.*

But I see two deaths in *The Waste Land.* There's the Fisher King / Robert Graves / Death That Leads to Rebirth / That's Why April is Cruel 'death', the death that life comes back from, and there's the Soul Sucking / Dysthymic / Dystopian 'death', the death that doesn't seem to lead to regeneration.

Compare Marie in 'Burial of the Dead' with the woman Tiresias sees in 'Fire Sermon' (who I guess I see as an older Marie after the aristocratic way of life disappeared). There was something... maybe not erotic, but

[46] Eliot has 'Shakespeherian', but this is never noted in the discussion.

something like erotic, in the sled and hyacinth scenes. But the actual sex scene in 'Fire Sermon' is about the least erotic description of sex I've ever read:

> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which are still 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.

Something has died between the sled ride and then.

I don't know. Maybe Eliot's point was that having your soul die also leads to a rebirth. That's not how I feel about the poem, though: I feel like some kinds of death do just send you underground to wait until spring, but other kinds 'mummify' you and I don't see Eliot offering a way out. To myself I called the 'good' kind 'wet' deaths and the 'bad' kind 'dry' deaths (hence my mummification image).

If I knew that the rain ends up saving the dry red people I would probably say that Eliot is saying all kinds of death lead to rebirth. I don't see that (I don't see the ending as 'hopeful' in any sense), and so I don't think Eliot considers all kinds of death to be equal.

54. Mr Thomas. Mr Goree writes:

> The downside of looking at the poems this way was that I almost never bothered to figure out what the words 'meant'; I only thought about their rhythm, their sound, and sometimes the images they brought to my mind (I still don't know what the Sanskrit at the end means; I just know it sounds like thunder to me).
>
> Does anybody else read Eliot that way? Or, does anybody feel that it does violence to his work to barely care about what the words mean?

As I said, I was mostly interested in Eliot in high school. (In speech tournaments I had some success with recitals of part 2 of *The Waste Land.*) I mostly didn't pay attention to what the words meant, but I did love the 'music' of it. I think that my decline in appreciation may have been occasioned upon my increasing comprehension of the allusions he made.

Whether this way of reading Eliot does violence or not is a matter of opinion. In many respects, I would argue that the multiplicity of allusions and actual theft of words may have been somewhat necessary to

Eliot as a compositional matter, but may not be the respect in which the poems really come across well. Just as Berg, for example, used strict dodecaphonic procedures and musical acronyms (if that's the word I want) in composing his violin concerto: one doesn't really have to know how this all works to respond to the beauty of that piece. Thus, ignoring the technical mechanics of creation doesn't constitute 'doing violence to' a work of art. What seems odd is to class the linguistic meaning of words as mere technical mechanics of creation in a poem, since this is true for few other poets.

55. Mr Thomas. Mr Lewis writes (again I quote only a fragment of his sentence):

> I don't think it accidental that you [Mr Goree] should compare it to a sonnet.

Actually, I don't think Mr Goree compared *The Waste Land* to a sonnet. He used the term 'sonata form', which refers not to the form of a sonnet, but to a form usual in Classical and Romantic music. (I'm using the term 'Classical' not in its wider application, but in its narrower use to refer, basically, to Hadyn, Mozart and Beethoven.) If he had compared the big poem to a sonnet, the correct term would have been 'sonnet form'.

56. Mr Lewis. Thanks, I apologize for being so sloppy, and I will endeavor to try harder for you in the future Mr Thomas.

57. Mr Goree. Mr Lewis [quotes:]

> 'Datta, dayadhvam, damyata' (Give, sympathize, control).

Ah, thanks. I actually think I remember 'datta' from my *Teach Yourself Sanskrit* book that I keep starting (mostly I just remember the declension of *ashva* [horse] and page after endless page of sandhi tables).

> and I don't think it accidental that you should compare it to a sonnet.
> Line 192 references the Tempest Act I...

Oops... did I say sonnet? I meant sonata. *The Waste Land* reminded me of the musical sonata form because both use nested structures in groups of 3, 4, and 5 to present contrasting themes as a whole over a period of time.

> Incorporating music and yet another 'death by water'. I have to admit the musical aspect of it never occurred to me. Why does the nightingale sing in the desert? What is the Shakespearean rag?

We listened to a record of *The Waste Land* read by Alec Guinness once... his Shakespearean rag was a little disappointing.

Where I saw music in *The Waste Land* was in its larger structure; it's like a 'classical' (*i.e.* Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven) symphony, with 5 sections:

I. Two contrasting themes are exposed and developed.
II. Two contrasting themes are exposed but not developed.
III. A single theme is varied.
IV. A contrasting theme is exposed very delicately (in the symphony III is repeated here).
V. A single theme is contrasted with alternatives.

I was just surprised at how well *The Waste Land* matched that pattern, though after reading 'Burnt Norton' later I realized this was probably quite deliberate on Eliot's part.

58. Mr Lewis. I am still working on a response to your Hyacinth post but allow me to quip…

> Oops…did I say sonnet? I meant sonata. *The Waste Land* reminded me of the musical sonata form because both use nested structures in groups of 3, 4, and 5 to present contrasting themes as a whole over a period of time.

No you got it right, it was I who was sloppy…

> We listened to a record of *The Waste Land* read by Alec Guinness once…his Shakespearean rag was a little disappointing.

That's too funny…

> I was just surprised at how well *The Waste Land* matched that pattern, though after reading 'Burnt Norton' later I realized this was probably quite deliberate on Eliot's part.

Again I would just like to compliment you on this bit of insight, I have never seen or read anything on this, it strikes me as wholly original. Well done!

59. Mr Goree. Mr Thomas writes:

> In many respects, I would argue that the multiplicity of allusions and actual theft of words may have been somewhat necessary to Eliot as a compositional matter, but may not be the respect in which the poems really come across well.

Kind of like Ives's music (who takes it to the extent of ripping himself off in his later works). Maybe it's part of modernism.

> Just as Berg, for example, used strict dodecaphonic procedures and musical acronyms (if that's the word I want) in composing his violin concerto: one doesn't really have to know how this all works to respond to the beauty of that piece.

I'll confess first that I love and have always loved dodecaphonic music. But I don't get any particular joy out of the 'connect the dots and find the tone rows' analysis that I see everywhere. I see dodecaphony (and atonalism in general) as tools a composer can use to emphasize the non-tonal aspects of the music and their role in creating structure; as with any tools they may or may not be interesting but ultimately they are not really the point of the piece.

I wonder if that's how I'm treating Eliot: the allusions and borrowings in *The Waste Land* (props to whoever pointed out that it's two words—my bad) are ways to divorce the poetry from literal narrative or description. Berg gives us tones (calling it 'atonal' is incredibly deceptive in my opinion) that we are finally free to consider and enjoy independently and without expectation, and which each contribute uniquely to the structure of the piece rather than hinting at a preordained problem and solution. I don't think Eliot took his poetry that far (or even that poetry as I know can go 'that far' or would want to), but I see similarities—certainly I wouldn't say that *The Waste Land* had a 'plot' or even a 'subject' in the most basic sense, any more than Berg's concerto is in a 'key'. But both pieces have remarkably deep and fascinating (to me, at least) structures, which are revealed in ways not traditional to the medium.

I wonder if Eliot's allusions and thefts are similar to Berg's allusions and theft[s] (the chorale in movement 4 of the Concerto comes to mind). In both cases I hear something intellectually familiar but I experience it as something new; I have to confront it in a way that is not as comfortable as before. I get that feeling more strongly with Berg than with Eliot but that may just be because I know a lot more about music than I know about poetry.

> What seems odd is to class the linguistic meaning of words as mere technical mechanics of creation in a poem, since this is true for few other poets.

That's what seems odd to me about it as well, and makes me question whether I'm right to do so.

60. Mr Lewis. [Mr Goree wrote:]

> I feel like some kinds of death do just send you underground to wait until spring, but other kinds 'mummify' you and I don't see Eliot offering a way out. To myself I called the 'good' kind 'wet' deaths and the 'bad' kind 'dry' deaths (hence my mummification image).

I agree that these ideas of death play out in antithetical roles, that they are of being in time and out of time. One:

- The water, a metaphor for the flowing of time.
- A stream of consciousness.
- The here and now of this mortal coil.
- The physical death that Eliot is confronting (possibly the death of his friend, Jean Verdenal, possibly the soldiers of WWI or the victims of the flu pandemic).

The other:

- The dryness.
- The Waste Land itself, where there is death and dying and damnation.
- The cessation of time.
- The mummified corpse frozen for all eternity.

> If I knew that the rain ends up saving the dry red people I would probably say that Eliot is saying all kinds of death lead to rebirth. I don't see that (I don't see the ending as 'hopeful' in any sense), and so I don't think Eliot considers all kinds of death to be equal.

I question whether or not the water can save anybody: I tend to think of the drowning, the reference to Ophelia. I agree in that I don't think 'hopeful' is what Eliot is after; I think he is trying just as hard to sort out these questions as we are, placing us in the poem along side of him *à la* Baudelaire. As I remarked in the section on the handful of dust: There seems to be a contrast between the bodies in the crypts waiting to be reborn, and the parishioners in the pews looking for salvation. I keep coming back to the water, baptism or drowning. I agree when you [say] that all kinds of deaths are not equal, the Hanged Man, the death of the wicked, death by water, the accidental death, the death of the innocent. I think back to how the little hyacinth girl resembles the drown[ed] Ophelia, for me it all comes down to the myth of Hyacinth:

> Apollo, stricken with grief, raised from his blood a purple flower on which the letters 'ai, ai', were traced, so that the cry of woe might for evermore have existence on the earth.[47]

There are some deaths so terrible that God writes the name of the deceased in eternity, and there are some that never look away from the shadow, the things of this world, who dash into the car to get out of the rain, but ultimately die sad little deaths that are empty and meaningless.

61. Mr Thomas. Mr Goree writes:

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[47]See page 24.

I'll confess first that I love and have always loved dodecaphonic music. I wonder how many people can make that claim. As for me, my early musical loves were always of twentieth century music, and it took me a fair amount of effort to 'get' baroque, classical and romantic music. I still recall the first time I heard 'Ionization'—I was probably in the 4th or 5th grade, and it spoke to me immediately. I also recall seeing a PBS (actually—it would have been a 'NET' [National Educational Television network]) broadcast of *Moses und Aron* (an opera that I will be attending at the Met tonight, in fact) in the mid-60s. I got the impression that the opera was by Stravinsky (it's actually by Schoenberg), and searched in vain for a recording of it for years. (Record store clerks all assured me, correctly, that Stravinsky had written no such opera, but failed to note that a guy named Schoenberg had.)

The first opera I ever saw, when I was 10, was Honneger's *Joan of Arc* (written as an oratorio, actually), presented by the Santa Fe Opera, with Vera Zorina in the lead role. (Joan is a speaking part, and spends the entire opera strapped to the stake which will eventually burn her; in Santa Fe the stake was composed of red neon light tubes, which made a startling effect when they came on at the end.)

In high school, I actually wore out LPs of music by Varese (*Amériques*) and Stravinsky (*Rite of Spring* and *Les Noches*).

One of the advantages of living in New York right now is that there are musicians of very high caliber who play a lot of the music of the Second Vienna School: I'm talking in particular of the Met Opera Orchestra and James Levine. They don't just play the operas—they also perform in a series of concerts at Carnegie Hall, both the orchestra as a whole and the chamber ensemble. In March the chamber ensemble will be performing a set of works by Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, and in May the complete orchestra will perform Schoenberg's *Pelleas* and Berg's violin concerto (with Christian Tetzlaff as the soloist). And one of the most magnificent concerts I've seen was their performance of Schoenberg's *Guerre Lieder* (which is not a 12-tone work, but is rather the apotheosis of Wagnerian chromaticism).

The music of the Second Vienna School depends so intensely upon precision and the precise timbre of the instruments playing it, that superlative performances can make the music sing in a way that inferior performances do not. I recall, for example, seeing *Wozzeck* (which is actually not dodecophonic, although one couldn't really tell just from the way it sounds) at the Met a few years back. The orchestral playing was so precise, that I for the first time understood why it was that Benjamin Britten had hoped to study with Berg. The orchestration of *Peter Grimes* was virtually copied from the orchestration of *Wozzeck,* although the thematic material is radically different; I don't think I could have heard that without an almost supernatural precision from the orchestra. (And, of course, both operas concern protagonists who are outsiders in their own society.)

62. Mr Thomas. I wrote:

> The music of the Second Vienna School depends so intensely upon precision and the precise timbre of the instruments playing it, that superlative performances can make the music sing in a way that inferior performances do not.

This I probably stated a little opaquely. It is a truism that superlative performances are better than inferior ones, but I was aiming at a different point. The easiest way I know to state it is to compare the mature operas of Verdi and Wagner. Both are better heard in good performances than in bad ones, but the main point of a Verdi opera will be hearable even in a truly lousy performance, whereas at some point in the spectrum from good to bad, a mature Wagner opera just stops making any sense at all. It becomes a random assortment of notes played and sung, to no apparent purpose. And some of this is due to the fact that Verdi was a practical man of the theater, whereas Wagner was something of a lunatic. Wagner wrote music that no one could play, when he wrote it, and that people had to learn how to play. (The first time the prelude to Tristan was played in Paris, for example, the critical reviews were mostly just baffled, and many people could not conceive of this as being music at all.)

The music of the Second Vienna School is more like that of Wagner, in this respect, than Wagner's itself. Indeed, Schoenberg at some point remarked that coming generations would come to appreciate his works only when musicians learned to play them well, which he thought would take a generation. The Met's productions of the two Berg operas and of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* are all relative successes at the box office as well as in the opinion of the cognoscenti.

63. Ms McLaughlin. Mr Lewis apparently [quoted] (I seem to have missed a digest):

'Datta, dayadhvam, damyata' (Give, sympathize, control)

That's a nice demonstration of the *Indo-* in Indo-European.

- *datta* = *dare* (Latin),
- *damyata* = tame, dominate, domicile.

64. Ms Eckstrom. I think that some novels and poems (and religious texts) are best read in a group—I think that the more 'puzzling' poets are like that.

I think it is an interesting aesthetic category. As a side note—the Eliot book I mentioned isn't an exposé on Eliot's homosexual forays. It is more a long catalogue of an almost pathological lack of generosity (and betrayals) and plenty of grinding financial struggle[s] that result in incredible unhappiness for all those around him.

On that happy note...

65. Ms Eckstrom. I am trying to reconstruct this from memory, but if you are interested, I think that the link is Ezra Pound and the little magazines and at least two women—Dora Marsden and Sylvia Beach—who were interested in modernism and supported modernist writing in various ways.

The Waste Land is dedicated to Pound and if you live around NYC, I *think* that the New York Public Library at 42nd street has the original *Waste Land* with Pound's corrections and suggestions in its Rare Book Collection. If I remember, there is a copy with blue pencil and red and one was Eliot's corrections and the other was Pound's. But I think anyone with some time might find the magazines. I haven't worked on this stuff for a long, long time. I bet everything is on line these days.

The little magazines [*The Dial, The Egoist, The Vortex* (?)] are fun to see. I like to see what advertisements/articles ran next to the serial publication of *Dubliners* or *The Waste Land.* [I'd love to see an anthology of poetry that published poems that way!] Eliot and Pound were both editors at *The Egoist* and Eliot was editor at *The Dial.* I cannot remember if *Ulysses* was published serially before it came out as a book.

If I remember, Eliot reviewed *Ulysses*—before *The Wasteland* was published but only just (I'm not checking these facts—they are from a muddled memory). Virginia Woolf read it as well (while attempting to write her own great modernist novel) and had scathing things to say about it but kept her remarks to her diary (I think). But I think you can see *Ulysses*'s influence on her own experimentation as a novelist.

Finally, Pound was a great friend to both Eliot and Joyce (he introduced Eliot to his first wife and tried to help Joyce as much as he could with $$$ and encouragement).

Finally, I think that April is the cruelest month because it is easier to remain dormant—it is a little like waking from anesthesia.

66. Mr Breslin. Mr Thomas—

I enjoyed reading *Finnegans Wake* for the entertainment of it. Burgess helped me with that. But it is also tedious and ridiculous by turns.

Frost is damnably difficult to read well, perhaps the single most difficult poet in English.

67. Mr Breslin. Hi again Mr Lewis—

First of all no apology necessary whatsoever.

Mainly, you don't seem to be understanding what I'm saying. Or maybe you are and I'm not noticing. I'm saying I *love Four Quartets* and I'm very fond of 'Prufrock', but I think *The Waste Land* is a kind of pretentious half-joke played on scholars, critics, and the intellectual elite of Eliot's day. I do not find the imagery, music, or resonance of *The Waste Land* to be particularly memorable or impressive.

Four Quartets, in fact, is far and away one of my desert island books, and I read it several times a year. It is absolutely astonishing out loud, and so well done that it takes my breath away.

And it contains as much despair and bleak existential whining as *The Waste Land* but adds a certain pathos, humility and reflective depth.

68. Mr Breslin. Mr Goree writes:

> Does anybody else read Eliot that way? Or, does anybody feel that it does violence to his work to barely care about what the words mean?

Hi—I often read *Four Quartets* for the music and just let the meanings blur off in the background, sometimes decoded and sometimes not. Poetry in general is not about 'meaning' anyway. I think if you can get at what a poem means in some sort of obvious or final way, it's pretty flimsy stuff. This is precisely what frustrates my current lit students about *King Lear.* They want a script that explains itself somehow, and Shakespeare just plum refuses to let that happen in any way that one can nail down or hold still.

In fact I think a greater violence is done to poetry through over-analysis and a disregard for the sounds.

69. Mr Billington. Ms Murray quoted Helen Vendler:[48]

> understood style as personality, style as the actual material body of inner being. Before I could make out, in any paraphrasable way, Stevens' poems, I knew, as by telepathy, what they meant emotionally:

Collingwood would recognize this. He says paraphrase and description belong to categorization, to 'things of a certain kind'. That is a kind of clarification, of course. But he contrasts that kind of clarification with expression (in his sense, which of course is art), which is unique, particular, and inseparable from its means of expression. Expression in this sense presents 'a certain thing', and no other will do.

Collingwood insists on the difference, maybe because it obviously helps in his craft vs. art argument. He doesn't apply it, even in the *Waste Land* discussion. I get the sense that he doesn't know what else to make of it, maybe because he isn't a literary critic. Or maybe he gets Eliot directly, as Vendler gets Stevens. I suppose most people have to puzzle out the major allusions in *The Waste Land.* After we can paraphrase and describe its action and themes, the next step is to connect Eliot's imagination and feelings to his stylistic originality, to the direct power of his words. As Vendler says:

> I was overcome by a desire to know how that perfusion, which somehow bypassed intellectual translation, was accomplished. All my later work has stemmed from the compulsion to explain the direct power of idiosyncratic style in conveying the import of poetry.

That would be nice to know. I think I'll look up some Vendler. Thanks.

70. Mr Billington. Mr Breslin wrote:

> I was advocating for art that reunites people with their reality, providing a sense of a returning ground beneath their feet, as well as a sense that life is worth living because we are worthwhile and worthy.

By 'their reality', I suppose you mean an inner emotion or state. You once remarked how your high school girls noticed that high school boys act like Homeric heroes, which is quite a leap across time and culture.

Humanity's preoccupation with complex inner emotions has been remarkably stable, beginning with the Gilgamesh epic. Has your screenwriter friend written scripts that did not touch in some way upon love, the death of a friend, the defeat of the villains, deliverance, or the fight against all odds? It was all chase scenes and explosions?

> He remained adamant that such 'ponderous' stuff was pretense and simply fooled people with rhetoric.

[48] Apparently in an email that I did not save.

That's possible. Would it make a difference if the stories were noble lies? The Christmas season gives me lots of opportunities to ponder whether I'm being fooled with amusement, escapism, and rhetoric. The same goes for the patriotic speeches on the 4th of July.

71. Mr Breslin. Mr Goree writes:

> Berg gives us tones (calling it 'atonal' is incredibly deceptive in my opinion) that we are finally free to consider and enjoy independently and without expectation, and which each contribute uniquely to the structure of the piece rather than hinting at a preordained problem and solution. I don't think Eliot took his poetry that far (or even that poetry as I know can go 'that far' or would want to), but I see similarities—

Mr Goree—I'm not sure how poetry could accomplish an effect like that of 12-tone music, since we automatically attach meaning to words or at least start to look for it. It would be difficult to use language in a way where every word had equal weight with every other word. (Eliot hints toward this perhaps in part V of 'Little Gidding'). I wonder if the libretti of certain postmodern operas like *Einstein on the Beach* come close, or perhaps the sound-lyrics of Meredith Monk. Or the mystical revelry in sound of that sound-poet whose name escapes me at the moment. Hugo Ball! Damn, glad I remembered his name. Would have bugged me all night.

72. Ms Eckstrom. From a Google search:

> As Joyce began writing *Ulysses* in Trieste, he was approached by expatriate American writer Ezra Pound, who worked as foreign editor of an American magazine, *The Little Review.* Pound sought material for serialization in the magazine, and Joyce agreed to submit installments of *Ulysses* with Pound as an intermediary. Serial rights were purchased by *Little Review* financial backer John Quinn, a New York attorney. From the first installment in 1918, censorship issues dogged *Ulysses,* eventually forcing a halt to its serialization in 1920.[49]

(Sylvia Beach published it by subscription in Paris in the end.)

So—although the two works share the same formal publication date (1922), it is clear that at least some sections of *Ulysses* were public while

[49] This text was not distinguished as a quotation in the email, but it is found on the web at a number of sites, including `http://www4.uwm.edu/libraries/special/exhibits/clastext/clspg158.cfm` (April 5, 2011), which another site, `http://forum.quoteland.com/eve/forums/a/tpc/f/2911947895/m/901104691`, names as the source.

Eliot was writing *The Waste Land.*

73. Mr Nease. I happen to posssess a copy of Victor Purcell's *The Sweeniad*—a parody/criticism of Eliot's work, originally published under the pseudonym 'Myra Buttle'. Given the current discussion—(Purcell's inside-the-Sweeniad parody is referred to as 'The Vacant Mind'):

Sunday is the dullest day, treating
Laughter as a profane sound, mixing
Worship and despair, killing
New thoughts with dead forms.
Weekdays give us hope, tempering
Work with reviving play, promising
A future life within this one.
Thirst overtook us, conjured up by Budweisserbrau
On a neon sign; we counted our dollar bills.
Then out into the night air, into Maloney's bar,
And drank whiskey, and yarned by the hour.

* * * * *

Earthly Limbo,
Chilled by the raw mist of a January day,
A crowd flowed down King's Parade, so ghostly.
Mowed down by the centuries, so ghostly.
You barely heard the gibbering and the squeaks
As each man gazed in front with staring eyes,
Flowed past Caius insurance Offices
To where the clock in Trinity Great Cort
Marked off the hours with male and female voice.
There I saw one I knew, and hailed him shouting,
Muravieff-Amursky!
You who were with me up at Jesus,
And fought in my battalion at Thermopylae!
Your brain-box stopped an arrow, you old cadaver.
Are you Hippolytus, killed by your horses' hoofs, (6)
Revivified by Aesculapius?
'I sometimes think there never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled.'(7)
'If winter comes can spring be far behind?'(8)

* * * * *

Notes

6. . . . Originally a vegetation myth, but here, for the sake of poeric consistency, Aesculapius administers arsenic instead of elixir to Hip-

polytus.

7. FitzGerald, Omar Khayaam. 'The Rose' = Pernicious Anemia.

8. Shelly, Ode to the West Wind. For Winter read Spring, and Vice Versa.

11. 'The Sage follows nature in establishing social order, and does not invent principles out of his own head.' Since this is a rational statement in authentic chinese it is thought to have slipped in by mistake for a quotation from Mr Pound.

12. From an ancient Egyptian inscription. Literally, 'Thy breath of life is sweet in my nostril.' 'Life' here is an occult symbol for death.

16. Reproduced by permission of the Westminster City Council.

'The Vacant Mind' contains allusions and adaptations from thirty-five different writers in twenty languages, including Pali, Sanskrit, Aramaic, Tagalog, Swahili and Beche-de-mer.

(I myself am not fond of *The Waste Land.*)

74. Mr Thomas. Mr Breslin writes:

> Mr Goree—I'm not sure how poetry could accomplish an effect like that of 12-tone music, since we automatically attach meaning to words or at least start to look for it. It would be difficult to use language in a way where every word had equal weight with every other word.

I don't think that every note is supposed to have 'equal weight' with every other in 12-tone music, whatever that would mean. Obviously different notes have different imports throughout a piece. Were it not so, one would have not a piece of music, but a mere aggregation of notes. Bad serialist music is just that, by the way: a random aggregation of notes.

75. Mr Jacobs. Mr Breslin writes:

> I think *The Waste Land* is a kind of pretentious half-joke played on scholars, critics, and the intellectual elite of Eliot's day.

I generally agree with this statement, *however...*

1. There really in no other way to put this: The poem sounds good. For some reason that slips my mind, I had reason to sit-in in an undergraduate lit class a few years ago. In that particular class, the teacher played a recording of a Shakespearian actor, probably Olivier, reading *The Waste Land.* It was a remarkable experience in that I did not see a single yawn or eye-roll. The students were transfixed by the 'sound' of the poem. Any poem of that length that can claim, and then maintain, the interest of a group of college freshmen deserves study.

2. I think it would be hard to argue that *The Waste Land* was not the most influential poem of its day. In fact, one could make a sound argument that the poem affected the society as a whole during the inter-war period. How many poems have had such influence beyond the poetry-reading milieu? I can't think of any.

76. Mr Goree. Mr Breslin wrote:

> Mr Goree—I'm not sure how poetry could accomplish an effect like that of 12-tone music, since we automatically attach meaning to words or at least start to look for it. It would be difficult to use language in a way where every word had equal weight with every other word.

I think that ('equal weight' for all tones in a piece of music) was Schoenberg's goal. I don't think it's the only goal of dodecaphonic music or atonal music in general. And I see a big difference, anyways, in seeking equal weight for all tones (whatever that may mean to the composer and listener) and equal weight to all *notes*. Schoenberg, and certainly Berg, did not write music where all notes were of equal importance or musical significance, even if they worked to free the audience from our tonal expectations about those notes.

You have a point: musical notes rarely have significance external to the work itself (the only ways a note can point to something outside of the piece of music are onomatopoeia and borrowing from other works—and serialist composers do both of those extensively), while words in a poem nearly always do. So of course any comparison between the two forms is going to miss something important.

77. Mr Goree. Mr Jacobs wrote:

> Any poem of that length that can claim, and then maintain, the interest of a group of college freshmen deserves study.

Somebody mentioned earlier that Frost gets bad criticism because he's read in high schools. As different as they are, I think Eliot and Frost have the same problem: they both wrote poems that 17-year-olds enjoy reading. It can be hard to look back at how stupid I was at 17 and still respect the poetry I liked then; though it helps to remember that when I'm 37 I'll no doubt think I'm just as stupid now. But, I have to say Frost speaks to me more now than Eliot does. Not to keep dragging composers into this, but it's like Copland. We all played or heard *Appalachian Spring* in middle school; after that it's very easy to overlook the subtlety and brilliance of Copland's music. At any rate, I think the similarities between Frost and Copland are much more striking than the similarities between Eliot and any of his contemporary composers.

78. Mr Lewis. Thanks Mr Breslin, I have to admit I missed a lot yesterday, Down with the chills and a terrible stomach cramp, which is why I was near the PC all day, though I am much better today, and not that it would matter as I am off to *LOTR ROTK*!!!

PAL (who also Loves 'Prufrock' as it was the first major poem I ever read and made me fall in love with poetry. . .)

79. Ms Murray. I think I'm getting a feel for the chess game section now—life and death together in childbirth and the consequent mutilation and isolation of women.

To backtrack for a second, the bit in Part I, 'I. . . go south in the winter.' Ha! This is Persephone! The dolphin in line 96 led me to Persephone's mom, Demeter, who is portrayed with a dove in one hand, a dolphin in the other. The dolphin in the chthonic tradition is apparently a womb symbol—there was some fertility ritual in which you eat a fish which is reincarnated as the baby. There is cannibalism in the Philomel story too. . . Before I leave Demeter and her fish, we should probably also notice that her story parallels that of the Fisher King—*i.e.* she withholds crops during the winter, but later restores the land's fertility. Oh, and one more thing, Demeter, like Medusa, has snaky hair—'spread out in fiery points'.

On to the chess game: the dressing table scene I think of as the classical section. We have allusions to Dido and Cleopatra, who died for love, of flame and poison respectively; and Philomel. I think Mr Lewis already did the story of Philomel, but let me repeat anyway: a king rapes his sister-in-law Philomel and cuts out her tongue. In revenge, the wife kills the king's son and serves him for supper. Compare at the end, Lil's sister (call her Phil) sitting in the pub talking about Lil and Albert. Poor Lil with two kids and bad teeth because of the pregnancies, and Albert wants to mutilate her by having all her teeth pulled. Meantime, Lil's poisoned herself with the stuff she took to induce a miscarriage, and now her own sister Phil is messing around with Albert. But this Phil has her tongue cut out too—*i.e.* her story is cut short by last-call just as she's getting to the good part. Gammon—what a great word! Phil went to her Lil's for a bit of hot gammon, ham, for supper. Gammon also means backgammon or to win at backgammon, and clearly Phil and Lil are playing some sort of game that Phil thinks she's winning, and maybe this connects with a chess game, recalling that the title of the section refers to a play in which a chess game and a seduction are happening in parallel on stage. Finally, gammon can be a verb, to deceive.

Then at the end the reference to Ophelia, another who died for love, and a death by water.

But back to the dressing table. Even though the scene is opulent, what with mirrors and candles and jewels, it's kind of tawdry. Synthetic perfumes—yuck, the kind you buy at the drugstore by the quart. Vials are 'coloured glass', not alabaster; the mantle is 'coloured stone', some kind of dyed something. Mention of base-metal copper in this context surprised me, as I expect only silver and gold in such a scene.

The 'sylvan scene' line: Eliot points to Milton as the source of the phrase, with Satan sneaking around peeping into Eden through a thicket (like the cupid peeping through the fruited vines), but I rather like this bit from Dryden's *All for Love* (a remake of *Antony and Cleopatra,* I too love the web):

> ANTONY:
>
> I'm now turned wild, a commoner of nature;
> Of all forsaken, and forsaking all;
> Live in a shady forest's sylvan scene,
> Stretched at my length beneath some blasted oak,
> I lean my head upon the mossy bark,
> And look just of a piece as I grew from it;
> My uncombed locks, matted like mistletoe,
> Hang o'er my hoary face; a murm'ring brook
> Runs at my foot.

Well. If that doesn't sound like a corpse sprouting in the garden, I don't know what would.

That's all I've got right now, guess I'd better do some work.

80. Ms Murray. We often hear 'use the delete key', and truly when I think the conversation is going off, I try to encourage and participate in the more promising threads. But it's not that simple. Those of us for whom the digest is the best option, we have to scroll through page after page after page of ((... ((drivel))...)). First, it's depressing. Second, bad drives out good. It's like being hit with a goddam firehose.

Joanne

Disappointed but not surprised that we only managed to talk about 2 sections of *The Waste Land.*

81. Mr Lewis. Are we done? That's sad. I thought Mr Goree had done an excellent job of introducing Part III in his Eliot and Music post and I admit I am a bit slow to respond because he had given me more to think about than time allows, as I am quite busy getting ready for my show on the 9th of January and we are going out of town for the last two weeks in December so I don't have much time, anyway I hope to have a little something on 'The Fire Sermon' by this weekend, but let me know if I shouldn't bother.

82. Mr Goree. Ms Murray wrote:

> Disappointed but not surprised that we only managed to talk about 2 sections of *The Waste Land.*

Sniff I talked about III and IV as a scherzo and trio, and about the utter un-erotic-ness of the sex scene in III...

'Fire Sermon' and 'Death by Water' are the 'crux' of the poem, to me at least.

I'd be happy to finish a thought I had but edited from my 'Eliot and music' post (I led up to this but didn't make it clear):

Because of how familiar I am with the large musical forms that I feel Eliot is imitating in *The Waste Land,* I hear 'Death by Water' as coming in the middle of 'Fire Sermon' rather than after it. That is, I see it sort of as a vision that is above and simultaneous with the dust and dreariness of 'Fire Sermon'. I don't finish 'Fire Sermon' and then turn some corner and come to the stillness of 'Death by Water'; I hear them as both happening at once, with 'Fire Sermon' all around 'Death by Water' on every side (sorry for the confused time and space metaphors there).

I don't have any argument to persuade anyone else to hear it that way other than my belief that Eliot was basing the form of his poem on the Classical symphony, and in a symphony that's how III and IV would work.

How do you see the transition between 'Fire Sermon' and 'Death by Water'?

83. Ms Murray. Oh—we're *not* done! I just thought we'd been swamped out! carry on!

84. Ms Murray. Oh, I apologize to Mssrs Lewis and Goree both. I just assumed the topic had been swept away. I will go home now and read 'The Fire Sermon'.

By the way, what does this mean: ‘I think we are in rats’ alley, where the dead men lost their bones’? How do dead men lose their bones?

85. Mr Tourtelott. I’ve always assumed that, if you’re in rats’ alley, and dead (thus a corpse, or more likely skeleton), you lose your bones by having the rats drag them away to gnaw on.

I don’t suppose I can sign that ‘cheers’, can I?

86. Ms Murray. But, see, Mr Tourtelott, it seems more usual for a corpse to lose everything *but* the bones, til nothing is left but a sun-bleach skeleton. And in any case, is this something to say to your wife when she’s already acting a bit skittish?

Of course you can say cheers.

87. Mr Tourtelott. [Ms Murray wrote:]

> And in any case, is this something to say to your wife when she’s already acting a bit skittish?

No, but given that Viv was always feeling skittish, or as people in Texas say ‘nervous’, and that Tom was something of a prig (and a prick), I think of that line as delivered wearily, as a way of saying, ‘We’re dead and just gnawing on each other.’ Now admittedly, if you say that, then the answer to the old women’s magazine question ‘Can this Marriage be Saved?’ is ‘No.’ (Does anybody remember which that column was in? I can remember the column, but given that Mother subscribed to both *McCall’s* and *Redbook,* I don’t know which it was .)

Cheers.

88. Mr Goree. I took that to mean that the spiritually ‘dead’ lost their… *ahem* … potency.

89. Ms Baumgarten. I’m pretty sure ‘Can This Marriage Be Saved?’ is a *Ladies Home Journal* feature.

90. Mr Tourtelott. Thank you, Ms Baumgarten. I think that’s right and, believe it or not, that is the kind of question that causes me to lose sleep at night, so you’ve done a good deed for a shut-in.

91. Ms Collins. It is indeed a *Ladies Home Journal* feature. One joy of the internet may be never losing sleep over questions that Google can answer instantly. The trade-off is you can stay up much too late reading stupid back articles of said feature at

`http://www.lhj.com`

On the other hand, it could make one grateful to be single.

92. Ms Baumgarten. They even have a website now! I have many fond memories of Betsy McCall paper dolls. I even had a paper doll set for my paper doll. *McCall's,* alas, turned into *Rosie,* which is no more.

93. Ms Murray. Potency, ah. Thank you, Mr Goree.

94. Ms Eckstrom. In Shakespeare's *Tempest,* the dead do lose their bones:

> 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 (Act i. Sc. 2).

As for Mrs Eliot's nerves, I always understood that poor Mrs Eliot had a problem like that of the woman in the Gospels who touched the hem of Jesus' robe: In the words of one of my old Southern professors, she 'hemorrhaged'. These days she would have been given something aking to Hormone Replacement Therapy. You see it in Eliot's poetry with references to 'blood on the sheets' which otherwise don't make sense.

95. Mr Lewis. The meaning of this line seems to change for me every time I look at it, this may refer to the rat-infested battle trenches of World War I. In which case it refers back to the city of the dead, rat-infested, or like a graveyard, the home of men's bones, being picked clean by rats as in my reference to graves in my handful of dust critic, or this may also have the sexual connotation of a penile erection. It allows one to consider reading 'bones' as 'vitality'. In contrast to the vitality of the contemporary women, like queens on a chess board, or sitting on burnishe[d] thrones, the contemporary games are empty and end in stalemate, in contrast to the depth and suffering of Philomelas (which reminds me of Mr Goree's observations about sex in the second section). Again as I look at these lines I see it recall the Invitation to the Reader in the Baudelaire reference, drawing the reader into the poem with the we reference. Then, even as this line casts back into the past of the poem I also look forward: Eliot suggests in his notes that he means [to] compare Part II, line 115:

> I think we are in rats' alley
> Where the dead men lost their bones.

to Part III, line 195:

> White bodies naked on the low damp ground
> And bones cast in a little low dry garret,

Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.

That's all I have so far.

96. Mr Lewis. I was at the DMA last night with my 5-year-old daughter taking advantage of the 'free Thursday night' policy and we wandered through their 'Celebrating 100 Years' exhibit. When we came to the end we passed through a large dark room with a 20-foot screen standing in the middle. On both sides a projection was being shown, that was essentially the same: a man in a blue oxford shirt, khakis and tennis shoes would approach the screen in sloooow motion, approaching from great distance, would come to a stop inches from the camera in full view, and then, on side A, a trickle of water would begin to fall that would become a deluge that would consume the man until he completely vanished, the water would gradually come to a stop and then from the distance the man would begin his approach again, on side B the same, only at the base a small flicker of flame that would grow to consume him, die out and begin again. As I stood watching side B I suddenly slapped my forehead and said, 'Oh my god!—It's the Fire Sermon!' Fire as the thing that consumes us, the eternal, but also the passions of man, hatred, grief and despair. Also sorrow, lamentation, birth, death, misery, and infatuation. Fire is also the traditional part of the midsummer festivals of early Western civilizations. The juxtaposition of the display's fire/water smacks in the face of *The Waste Land*'s death by water/death by dryness motifs. What is striking for me is the contrast that seems to begin in earlier sections (chiefly II for me) that the vulgarity and shallowness of the modern is contrasted with the beauty, simplicity and depth of the past. The Thames, 'sweet Thames', is swollen with the leavings of promiscuity and modern life, What was once ritualistic and meaningful is now empty and dirty, though I would not go so far as to say that Eliot is merely invoking the 'good old days' of the past in preference of modernity.

It may also be worth noting that the exact middle of the poem, which is 422 lines long,[50] falls within this section, and that thematically, it could be argued that the climax of the poem falls within this central passage, between 217 and 247 (the exact middle of section III). That makes me think of Mr Goree's insights into the sonata form of this poem and the 'framing' of this poem. (Sorry Mr Goree, that's all I could come up with on that.) Again the sexual attitude[s] of men and women are called into

[50] It is 434 lines in the text cited in note 33.

question, but is it the fire of lust, or the indifference to chastity that is being illustrated? I remember a section described in *The Power of Myth* by Joseph Campbell where a young couple would go into a hut and would be 'coupled', the supports of the hut would be torn away and the couple would perish in the collapse of the dwelling, the wood would then be set to flame and the subsequent bonfire would be the center of a ritualistic feast and dancing. Tiresias is witnessed this, at the center of the poem, the timeless quality of an action affected by time-wrought changes, suggesting perhaps that the only salvation is death, because out of death is rebirth, but that we have corrupted this, so what can come of the future? As a seer, he can tell us, does he tell us here, can we again be reborn? There is again an echo of Dante's *Purgatory* in this passage, but this purgatory is without purpose. Everything here is meaningless, and unrelated, the gramophone stops with a reiterated 'la la' at the end of the song, all of this pointless seduction has been foretold by Tiresias, the fire is put out by the complete indifference to the body and the spirit. (That neither gets exemplar[y] treatment I think to be key). Both Buddha and Christ taught of moral virtue as the road to timeless salvation of the soul. The Fire Sermon *quâ* Sermon on the Mount: whether it is blissful eternity (Christ) or annihilation (Buddha) both conceived of fire as the symbol for the destructive elements in life. The broken prayer of St Augustine (that he may be a fire brand plucked from the burning) reminds me of Dido's suicide swallowing a burning coal, but also, as it is in the end of the section, leads to a possible suggestion of purification in the next section. (By water? Baptism? Rebirth?)

97. Mr Goldsmith. To the discussants of *The Waste Land:* You guys make me feel like some kind of mouth-breathing cretin with your giant memory tanks and your transcontinental attention spans. Thanks. No, really. Your discussion moved me to read the poem for the (kicks dirt and looks sheepish) first time. Keep talking, I'll just listen.

98. Ms Eckstrom. I just remembered a St John's connection to T.S. Eliot. When I read Eliot's controversial lectures 'After Strange Gods' (given at UVa in 1933) I noticed that he thanked his host, Scott Buchanan (I think it was Buchanan and not Barr, but it was one of the two). The controversial nature of the lectures (which the Eliot estate did not allow to be reprinted) was that Eliot seemed to be having Nazi sympathies:

> The population should be homogeneous; where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious

> or both to become adulterate. What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion combine to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable.

I wrote Winfree Smith (a tutor at St John's) and asked him if he had gone to the lectures (since he had been at UVa at the time and was a protégé of Buchanan's) and what the audience's response was. He wrote me back a wonderful letter and said that no, he hadn't gone, it was spring and he was in love... (A nice way to think of Winfree for those of us who knew him in his later years.)

99. Mr Tourtelott. Ms Eckstrom's mention of 'After Strange Gods' reminds me of another (and extremely unpleasant) possible significance for the appearance of rats in various sections of *The Waste Land*—namely, the pervasive use in popular anti-Semitic literature of the interwar period of the association of Jews with rats. This imagery is all over the place in the 20s and 30s, culminating in Goebbels's famous propaganda film *Der Ewige Jude,* and it seems to me explicitly used in one of Eliot's other poems—is it 'Gerontion'?—in the lines

> And the jew squats on the windowsill, the owner,
> Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp.

The association with the rats in *The Waste Land* may be, in W-speak, subliminable, but it seems to me that it is there.

(On a brighter note, it's always seemed to me that Winfree was as good an advertisement for Anglicans as Eliot was a bad one.)

100. Mr Billington. Ms Eckstrom wrote:

> I think there is something to the idea of poetry as music.

Mr Breslin quoted Mr Goree:

> Does anybody else read Eliot that way? Or, does anybody feel that it does violence to his work to barely care about what the words mean?

and responded

> Hi—I often read *Four Quartets* for the music and just let the meanings blur off in the background, sometimes decoded and sometimes not. Poetry in general is not about 'meaning' anyway.

Okay then, which lines of *The Waste Land* should we treat as music and just let the meanings blur off?

The only thing that struck me was 'the young man carbuncular'.

Eliot can be heard reading *The Waste Land* at

`http://town.hall.org/Archives/radio/IMS/HarperAudio/011894_harp_ITH.html`

101. Mr Tourtelott. Actually, 'the young man carbuncular' seems to me a quite meaningful phrase. That particular detail—that he's nastily pimpled—sets up the the tone of utter abhorrence with which the assignation is presented. He's 'one of the low' and an arriviste, or at least a striver—that's why his self-assurance is compared to 'a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire', as who should say a silk hat covering a sow's ears. 'Carbuncular' may have a kind of music, but it's the Bronx-cheer note of a kazoo, if it does.

102. Mr Lewis. Mr Jones wrote:[51]

> And, I now have 2 weeks off! Don't tell me the fiery discussions are going to die down now that I do have some time and energy to participate!

Never fear Mr Jones—there are still two sections of *The Waste Land* to be discussed, and it sounds like quite a few listers like Frost. I was wandering about Half Price books in Dallas yesterday looking for a bit of good reading for the holidays and found myself wondering what others were going to sink their teeth into. I finally landed on a Sufi poet named Hafiz, not a bad bit of poetry, reminiscent of Rumi or Rilke, anyway does anyone else have a good line of some holiday reading?

103. Mr Jones. I am hoping to finish *Schopenhauer and the Wild Years of Philosophy* which I started back in August but had to put down to prepare Geometry and Applied Math lessons. (And apparently my first foray into teaching geometry went well—my students' scores on the ridiculous but highly valued state test were equivalent to those of the 25 year veteran teaching the other sections. So, whether I really did well or not, I got some nice pats on the back.)

But now I guess I'll go downstairs and find my wife's copy of *The Waste Land.* I could use some literature exposure right now. And I did read Maugham's 'The Outstation' the other night after it was mentioned on the list.

104. Mr Billington. Mr Tourtelott wrote:

> Actually, 'the young man carbuncular' seems to me a quite meaningful phrase.

Yes, I know. Carbuncles, the round cut of certain jewels, glow with the inner fire of life. Jewels feature in the city in Revelations. Maybe the young man has a jewel in his cravat-pin. Or the tip of his circumcised pe-

[51]In another email that I did not save.

nis looks like a carbuncle. Carbuncles, the pimples, would be contracted from whores in the anti-city of Babylon. So Eliot has chosen a word with Mr Lewis's contrary meanings again.

However, I still want to stick with the music or form of it. Form is the content-as-arrangement. So I'll try to keep the content, but change the form:

- 'the carbuncular young man': this is prose. The stricter rhythm is important.
- 'the carbuncled young man': no rhythmic flow, no music.
- 'the young man be-pimpled': something wrong with the short i.
- 'the spotty young man': in a British accent, that's not too bad, but it is surface description only, and of course no double meaning.
- 'the youth carbuncular': nope.
- 'the spotty youth': that's okay for a high school boy, but doesn't connect with the self-importance of a Bradford millionaire.

And makes a welcome of indifference.

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn.

105. Mr Lewis. Since this thread is titled Eliot and Music and not *The Waste Land* and music... It seems to me the opening of 'Prufrock' is more rhythmic, well, perhaps lyrical than musical, still I find the phrase 'Let us go then you and I... ' and essentially the following 8 or twelve lines to be quite flowing and beautiful and wondered what you would say about those line[s] Mr Billington?

106. Mr Lewis. OK, to recap:

> Death by water, which in Section I was to be feared, has become by Section IV ambiguous—suggesting both the dissolution of physical death and the promise of resurrection in the Year-god ceremonies, Christian baptism, the Easter pageant, and the other chief symbolic patterns used.[52]

So I ended my discussion of [the] Fire Sermon *quâ* Sermon on the Mount email with

> the broken prayer of St Augustine reminds us of the burning coal used to purify Isaiah, also a fire brand plucked from the burning reminds me of Dido's suicide swallowing a burning coal, is used in the end of the section as a possible suggestion of purification in the next section. (By water? Baptism? Rebirth?)

[52] Headings (note 6).

and so I began looking at 'Death by Water', Section IV, and found the link between death and baptism in line 319 that refers to Paul's letter to the Romans VI 2–4:

> How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us [as] were baptised into J.C. were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so should we walk in newness of life.

Actually the more I look at this the more I wonder what in the heck Paul is talking about... but that is another story.

The wheel is the wheel of the drown[ed] Phoenician's ship, the wheel of fate that found the sailor drown, the fulfillment of the prophecy that we have seen. Fear death by water, now we are in the section 'Death by Water', the poem has come around, are we reborn? The wheel is the wheel [of] Budd[h]ist reincarnation, is the road to resurrection and rebirth prepared here? The whirlpool (another wheel) threatens to destroy us even as we are promised new life. however, in light of Mr Goree's observations about the lack of rebirth, Phlebas's drowning as a death by water, seems to bring no resurrection, although there is a strange sense of peace in the death. Again there is a passage that seems to draw us into the poem, the ambiguous 'You who turn the wheel'—the sailor? or the reader?

107. Ms Eckstrom. I think this part of *The Waste Land* is so icky—not bad, but just icky.

Since the first line of the poem ends with 'breeding' we might expect something passionate, painful, or tragic, but instead we get two modern lovers:

> He, the young man carbuncular, 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 Bradford millionaire.
> The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,][53]
> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
> Exploring hands encounter no defence;

[53] These three lines were an ellipsis in the original email.

> 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.)
> Bestows one final patronising kiss,
> And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...
>
> 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.'
> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone.

Tiresias who is there to judge who gets more pleasure out of sex—women or men—must have a hard time choosing. They are both indifferent. He seems to think it is his due (for no particular reason since he is not heroic—he isn't even a house agent, he is a *small* house agent's clerk!) and she is indifferent. They eat canned food and listen to canned music, even her hand is 'automatic'. I think the carbuncles are part of the revulsion of it all. Think of the contrast to the Wagner! That is not to say that they don't have the other references.

108. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> So I ended my discussion of [the] Fire Sermon *quâ* Sermon on the Mount email with 'the broken prayer of St Augustine reminds us of the burning coal used to purify Isaiah, also a fire brand plucked from the burning reminds me of Dido's suicide swallowing a burning coal, is used in the end of the section as a possible suggestion of purification in the next section. (By water? Baptism? Rebirth?)' and so I began looking at 'Death by Water', Section IV, and found the link between death and baptism in line 319 that refers to Paul's letter to the Romans VI 2–4:

My line 319 in its entirety is 'Gentile or Jew'. How do you get a link to Romans 6:2–4?

> The wheel is the wheel of the drown[ed] Phoenician's Ship, the wheel of fate that found the sailor drown, the fulfillment of the prophacy that we have seen. Fear death by water, now we are in the section 'Death by Water', the poem has come around, are we reborn? The wheel is

> the wheel [of] Buddhist reincarnation, is the road to resurrection and rebirth prepared here?

I see the water imagery (rain to river to sea to rain) as the cycle of experience, the natural cycle, the wheel of earthly life. Fear death by water because you don't escape from the whirlpool. Fear the handful of dust because it really is death. Eliot looks for an escape from the cycle by the apocalyptic fire, thunder, wind, and bird images, but each is thwarted.

So it seems to me that Eliot considers Buddhist escape or Jewish deliverance. Paul's rebirth-by-baptism language doesn't fit the pattern.

109. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> It seems to me the opening of 'Prufrock' is more rhythmic, well, perhaps lyrical than musical, still I find the phrase 'Let us go then you and I...' and essentially the following 8 or twelve lines to be quite flowing and beautiful and wondered what you would say about those lines Mr Billington?

That 'Prufrock' is lyrical, metrical, and flowing because Eliot is writing a poem of exile, a lament about a world to which he doesn't belong ('I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas'). By choosing to write under the discipline of rhyme and meter, he evokes the world that is a continuous whole, but then says that it is closed to him.

In contrast, *The Waste Land* is discontinuous, associational, like the switching of the radio dial as Mr Pierce said. The broken syntax, the changing tenses, the uncertainty as to who is speaking, and the puns, mimic the voice of an oracle. Or the other way around, that because Eliot chose to write in free verse, we get the sense that the poem is discontinuous, *&c.*

110. Mr Lewis. Sorry about the lateness of my reply, I have been with my in-laws for 2-1/2 weeks... Mr Billington wrote:

> My line 319 in its entirety is 'Gentile or Jew'. How do you get a link to Romans 6:2–4?... So it seems to me that Eliot considers Buddhist escape or Jewish deliverance. Paul's rebirth-by-baptism language doesn't fit the pattern.

O.K when I left off we were at:

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

> 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
> O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
> Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

> Here, the narrator is holding up Phlebas as an example of one who died for a good reason: Phoenician sailors were responsible for developing, and (through trade) spreading both religion and what has become our modern alphabet. This is a parallel with the idea that drowning is positive, and essential to rebirth.[54]

The rising and falling again seem to me to be a similar to the shadow at morning striding behind you or your shadow at evening rising to meet you, the cyclical motion of life but also the disintegration of the flesh, the old life, and the mystery, half heard, of the new life, 'Entering the whirlpool' in one terrifying moment of surrender results in peace 'free of attachment' (Fire Sermon)—free of 'the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell'. It is no longer necessary to measure life in terms of age or youth because he is free of chronological time. (The risen Christ?) I remembered the Pauline saying 'I am neither Gentile or Jew' and did a quick sweep in my Biblical concordance to find the reference that contained a water and a burial motif in Paul, and remarkably it contained the same birth and rebirth imagery as in our *Waste Land* passage (coincidence?), that we are dead to our old lives and reborn in Christ, the parallels were too remarkable not to mention. The wheel is a multiple reference, the wheel of fortune, of Buddhist doctrine, and the wheel of resurrection. The death by water foretold in Section I and fore-suffered in II and III [is] realized in IV, the fortune fulfilled, the prophecy realized. So as in Paul, the road to resurrection and rebirth has been prepared. So it seems to me that as you say Paul's rebirth-by-baptism language does fit the pattern.

111. Mr Lewis.

M. Billington Wrote:

> So it seems to me that Eliot considers Buddhist escape or Jewish deliverance. Paul's rebirth-by-baptism language doesn't fit the pattern.

So looking ahead I also notice that the beginning of Section Five introduces three themes, the first of which is derived from Luke XXIV 13–31,

[54] Pavlov-Shapiro (note 19).

the section that recounts the resurrection. The opening lines of the section are an echo of lines 19–24 in Section I, again a reference to the crucifixion/resurrection. A Pauline reading of the end of Section IV links the starting point of Section V, linking the Christian myth (the mysterion of life and death) to the vegetation myths. 'He who was loving is now dead.' Who is he? Phlebas? Yes. But also Christ, Adonis, The Fisher King, the Phoenician *&c.* And 'We who were living are now dying' in the sense of St Paul. This is the most interesting point in the poem, to me because is suggest that we whose lives were once enriched by figures of faith, heroes, demigods, and gods, no longer respond to them. 'Here is no water.' Recons to the rock imagery in the beginning of the poem, the cry of the Israelites in the desert before Moses strikes the rock, Belladonna, the lady of the rocks, comes to a culmination here. The passage of Lines 346–358 indicates an agony for water, and possibly an agony for baptism and salvation of the symbolic level. Eliot explains 359 in his notes, but does not do so completely. Her[e] is the Fisher King, the man of the Tarot with 3 staves, Frazer's Hanged Man and Christ all come together, the hooded figure the resurrected Christ of Luke XXIV 15–16.

112. Mr Lewis. I thought I would finish the section in my own mind at least, I hope there are no objections. So I have been thinking about what I wrote last, namely:

> 'He who was loving is now dead.' Who is he? Phlebas? Yes. But also Christ, Adonis, The Fisher King, the Phoenician *&c.* And 'We who were living are now dying' in the sense of St Paul. This is the most interesting point in the poem, to me because is suggest that we whose lives were once enriched by figures of faith, heroes, demigods, and gods, no longer respond to them.

And I think I like it because it reminds me of [what] one of my favorite authors Jung proposes. Now understand that the opening of Sect. V introduces at least three themes, the first I have covered, the second, according to Eliot, a sizeable reference to Jessie Weston's book on the Grail legend, where she maintains that these legends are accounts of initiation employing a mystery ritual and claim knowledge of a future life, divided into two parts, a higher and a lower life (divine and physical). Now I know little of Miss Weston's book but I do know it discusses the 'tradition of the Perilous Chapel' and is reminiscent of the test for the lower initiation. Eliot's 'Decayed hole among the mountains' is a reference to the return to the Chapel Perilous, the horrors preceding the vision are the horrors one witnesses on approach to the Chapel Perilous, which is in a cemetery, the Cemetery Perilous, of course, that is also full of horrors, such as Eliot's 'dry bones'. Now I realize this is a bit of a stretch so have your way with me, but these dry bones are the parallel to the figures I spoke of before are represented here, the dry bones can do us no harm. So in terms of Jung and his Archetypes, there is always a danger that the soul or psyche may not return from a voyage through such horrors, that one might perish in the desert, or permanently pass into unknown realms, the Chapel Perilous set to accommodate those that do not pass this quest. Eliot says that this decay, is the decay of Eastern Europe, but then as cultural decay it is also the loss of values, the Jungian Archetypes that no longer hold sway, have lost their meaning to us, their myths and ultimately our own, *i.e.* the mist of the dying and rising Christ have no meaning any longer.

> 'Datta', to give alms; 'Dayadhvam', to have compassion; 'Damyata', to practice self-control. The fable concludes, 'This is what the divine voice, the Thunder, repeats when he says: DA, DA, DA: "Control yourselves; give alms; be compassionate." Therefore one should practice these three things: self-control, alms-giving, and compassion.'[55]

What is given? The self entering the whirlpool? What is the response to compassion? The reference to Dante—Eliot points [out][56] in his note—is the prison of self in which each man is locked. What is controlled? Literally in the poem the boat, the boat the heart, the heart surrenders its blood, the sky the rain,

> This insistence[57] is followed later by relief: '...Then a damp gust/ Bringing rain' (393–4). Finally, rain has come to the waste land, bringing with it the rebirth and cleansing that it has traditionally symbolized. This is a double symbolism in that the symbolism of the water has reverted from a perversion back to its normal meaning, symbolizing the approaching end of the waste land. The rain falling on the parched earth is a metaphor for the reawakening of the people shell-shocked from the world war, ready to begin their lives again.[58]

The three together comprise the theme of this section. In this passage, control refers to regaining control of your life, in particular to the Fisher King legend, in which a king's land falls to waste when he himself is diseased. This is paired with lines [424–6]:

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[55] See page 40.

[56] Mr Lewis's email reads: `The reference to Dante- Eliot points in his note is the prison...`

[57] The reference in the source text is to the 'idea of aridity'.

[58] Pavlov-Shapiro (note 19).

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?

This means that the Waste Land is coming to an end—that the king is at last returning to health and returning to control.

That's all I have. Goodnight.

113. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> evening rising to meet you, the cyclical motion of life but also the disintegration of the flesh, the old life, and the mystery, half heard, of the new life, 'Entering the ehirlpool' in one terrifying moment of surrender results in peace 'free of attachment' (Fire Sermon)

I don't see either terror or surrender here. Maybe peace, but more likely simple cessation. 'As he rose and fell / He passes the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool.' I suppose it depends on what 'passes' means. He could be passing by the stages, or passing through them again, or passing to the other side, *i.e.* outside the cycles.

> contained a water and a burial motif in Paul, and remarkably it contained the same birth and rebirth imagery as in our *Waste Land* passage (coincidence?), that we are dead to our old lives and reborn in Christ, the parallels were too remarkable not to mention.

Rebirth is explicit in Paul, but I don't see rebirth in this poem. Stillbirth is more like it.

> The wheel is a multiple reference, the wheel of fortune, of Buddhist doctrine, and the wheel of resurrection.

Wheels, swells, tide, time and space, cycles, and Buddhist rebirth all symbolize the same thing. In contrast, resurrection/Christian rebirth is a leap above the plane of the wheel. IMHO, the 'wheel of resurrection' is an oxymoron.

> The death by water foretold in Sect. I and fore-suffered in II and III [is] realized in IV, the fortune fulfilled, the prophecy realized. So as in Paul, the road to resurrection and rebirth has been prepared.

It's clearly death by water, but I don't see resurrection. Maybe rebirth to the stages again. Do you really see Section IV as hopeful, a fortune fulfilled? If so, why does Madame Sosostris tell us to 'Fear death by water'?

'Consider Phlebas' could be a warning instead.

114. Ms Murray. I've gone ahead to the thunder section—now I am curious what I will decide about whether there is resurrection in this poem, I'm only still stuck at the beginning of the section.

I am struck by the pure feeling of the horror of approaching death. I ask myself how the poem works to do this, and I start to have a theory when I look at the sequence of nouns in the second stanza—

water rock
rock water
road road
mountains mountains
rock water
water rock
(sweat feet sand)
water rock

...you get the idea. it's *really* dry.

I wonder about the red faces in line 322 and repeated in line 344—maybe they are the beginning of the hallucinations. I think that the 'sound high in the air' and the 'hooded hordes' are hallucination, and the word 'unreal' is the moment of death.

Then comes the bit starting with the woman fiddling whisper music on her long black hair. This part makes no sense to me at all. bats, towers, voices singing. How does this fit in?

115. Mr Lewis. [Mr Billington wrote:]

> I don't see either terror or surrender here. Maybe peace, but more likely simple cessation. 'As he rose and fell / He passes the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool.' I suppose it depends on what 'passes' means. He could be passing by the stages, or passing through them again, or passing to the other side, *i.e.* outside the cycles.

You jump into a whirlpool and you are not terrified? OK, that aside, According to Frazer, the dead god (usually in effigy) is tossed into the sea and then welcomed back when [he] is reborn at the end of his journey (returned via the current). Thus the rising and falling on this level symbolize the relinquishing of the 'natural man' to the 'current of the sea'. The surrender is the surrender of self, the rising and falling then committing oneself to the water; in the Christian cult, the rising and falling is likened to dipping oneself in the baptismal font. (Death and baptism linked in Paul.) I am not going to push this Paul thing too much more but the links to section V, that opens with Luke version of the resurrection, the reference to Gentile and Jew that is from Paul, and the insinuation of baptism all seem to suggest that a reading of Paul is one of the many meanings that is given here.

> Rebirth is explicit in Paul, but I don't see rebirth in this poem. Still-

> birth is more like it.

Is it possible that you don't see rebirth because as I pointed out in my Eliot commentary on Sect. V, the myths and heroes of old are dead, And 'We who were living are now dying' in the sense of St Paul. Because it suggest[s] that we whose lives were once enriched by figures of faith, heroes, demigods, and gods, no longer respond to them. You can't feel the rebirth of the Fisher King because you are in the Waste Land. In my bit on Sect. V it seems linked to the return of the Fisher King and I quote myself here, 'the Fisher King legend, in which a king's land falls to waste when he himself is diseased. This is paired with lines [424–6]:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?

This means that the Waste Land is coming to an end that the king is at last returning to health and returning to control.'

> IMHO, the 'wheel of resurrection' is an oxymoron.

Oops!, my bad.

> It's clearly death by water, but I don't see resurrection. Maybe rebirth to the stages again. Do you really see Section IV as hopeful, a fortune fulfilled? If so, why does Madame Sosostris tell us to 'Fear death by water'?

Not resurrection, baptism, resurrection of the king occurs in Sect. V.

> 'Consider Phlebas' could be a warning instead.

I like that…

116. Mr Lewis. [Ms Murray wrote:]

> water rock
> rock water
> road road
> mountains mountains
> rock water
> water rock
> (sweat feet sand)
> water rock…

I found myself staring at this for half an hour trying to find symphonic structure…

> I wonder about the red faces in line 322 and repeated in line 344—maybe they are the beginning of the hallucinations. I think that the 'sound high in the air' and the 'hooded hordes' are hallucination, and the word 'unreal' is the moment of death.

Lines 322–330 of *The Waste Land* are traditionally read as an allusion to the events suffered by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

> Then comes the bit starting with the woman fiddling whisper music on her long black hair. This part makes no sense to me at all. Bats, towers, voices singing. How does this fit in?

Eliot explains in his notes that these lines, basically 366–76, are visions of chaos in Eastern Europe. The visions borrow horror and fear from the Chapel Perilous, the horrors preceding the vision are the horrors one witnesses on approach to the Chapel Perilous, which is in a cemetery (the Cemetery Perilous, of course), that is also full of horrors. There are many echoes here of previous lines in the poem for hair: see lines 38, 108, 133, and 255. For music there are a million, 31–34, 42, 101–3, 128, 176, 183, 199–206, 253, 256, 277, you get the idea (there are more). Violet air recalls violet hours in Sect. III, whispered music reminiscent of whispers in Sect. IV tolling bells to line 67, it just keeps going on like this, basically as you walk to the Chapel Perilous, your journey takes you back through the poem. Keep in mind that these horrors are now only shadows of their former selves, the[y] cannot hurt you. Mrs. Murray said 'I am struck by the pure feeling of the horror of approaching death.' To which I respond from an earlier note on Sect. V: 'The dry bones can do us no harm. So in terms of Jung and his Archetypes, there is always a danger that the soul or psyche may not return from a voyage through such horrors, that one might perish in the desert, or permanently pass into unknown realms, the Chapel Perilous set to accommodate those that do not pass this quest. Eliot says that this decay, is the decay of Eastern Europe, but then as cultural decay it is also the loss of values, the Jungian Archetypes that no longer hold sway, have lost their meaning to us, their myths and ultimately our own, *i.e.* the mist of the dying an[d] rising Christ have no meaning any longer.'

117. Ms Murray. When I revealed that Lodge's *Small World* is a Grail novel, I think Mr Fant mentioned having recently read it. probably others here are David Lodge fans also (if not, y'all should be). Anyway. I was Googling around about 'Chapel Perilous' trying to really understand Mr Lewis's posts about T.S. Eliot, and I happened across this interview:

`http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/intrvws/lodge.htm`

Whoa! Now I really *am* going to reread *Small World.* I recommend both book and interview.

118. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> Finally, rain has come to the Waste Land, bringing with it the rebirth

> and cleansing that it has traditionally symbolized.

If that is so, then why is April the cruelest month? It seems to me the cycle is coming round again.

> This is a double symbolism in that the symbolism of the water has reverted from a perversion back to its normal meaning, symbolizing the approaching end of the Waste Land.

The sea is death, unless Phlebas 'passes' the stages, which is a new life. (Baptism is death by water, but also rebirth in the spirit.) Rain is life is cruel, unless it brings a flood, which is death. Rivers flow and rise and fall, an endless cycle. Similarly, the Fisher King takes part in the cycle of the seasons.

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?

> This means that *The Waste Land* is coming to an end that the king is at last returning to health and returning to control.

Returning to health, but not by the old myths, I take it? By a Hindu myth, it appears. Yet Eliot uses fishing, shore, and land, all of them part of the old myths, to symbolize the new state of mind. So is he telling us anew an old myth, or making a new one? What does 'fishing' mean?

'These fragments' I assume refers to the poem itself. So the poem is the salvation, as Collingwood said, if it can create a new state of mind. To do that, the poem spends most of its lines discussing the failure of the old myths. Maybe Eliot hasn't figured out what the new myth is. Maybe he is just clearing the ground.

119. Mr Lewis. I should probably read this [*Small World*], as I am just as confused about what I have written as anyone. Obviously, I don't really have an in depth knowledge of the Chapel Perilous, or *The Waste Land* for that matter, though I have enjoyed what I have learned, most of what I posted I gleaned from reading Eliot's notes, and similar commentary, and then trying to sort it out in my own language to the best of my ability, adding a little St John's Shine to keep it interesting.

120. Mr Lewis. [Mr Billington wrote:]

> If that is so, then why is April the cruelest month? It seems to me the cycle is coming round again.

April is the Easter month, evoking concepts associated with the death and resurrection of the Christ. It is a vehicle to immediately introduce fertility rites into this poem. The major thematic strain is initiated in the title of the first section and its juxtaposition with the first line.

> Returning to health, but not by the old myths, I take it? By a Hindu myth, it appears. Yet Eliot uses fishing, shore, and land, all of them part of the old myths, to symbolize the new state of mind. So is he telling us anew an old myth, or making a new one? What does 'fishing', mean?

Fishing is the idleness of sitting around while your kingdom falls to ruin. (More see below.)

> 'These fragments' I assume refers to the poem itself. So the poem is the salvation, as Collingwood said, if it can create a new state of mind. To do that, the poem spends most of its lines discussing the failure of the old myths. Maybe Eliot hasn't figured out what the new myth is. Maybe he is just clearing the ground.

The last ten lines of the poem are almost all allusions. They are the broken fragments (of truth?) left standing in the Waste Land. There are references to the Fisher King (fishing). The king must do something more than sit and fish while the ruins of his kingdom collapse around him (London Bridge is falling down). There are fragments from tragedies akin to *Hamlet,* fragments of Dante, who meets the poet suffering for his lustful life on earth, fragment[s] from a song about spring and fulfillment, and finally fragments from a sonnet, of a lost poet trying to rebuild his lost heritage. And it is there that I begin to see the light. If you will allow me to digress a bit, it took me back to my days in Grad. School when I was studying the first few hundred years of Christianity and I was sitting in a class that was predominantly Methodist and Presbyterian ministers when it was asked how they had each individually gone about justifying to their respective ordination committees whether or not they believe that Jesus was the divine Son of God *à la* the Nicene Creed—'God from God, Light from light'—, and the simple majority admitted that no, in fact they did not hold this opinion. The reasons differed, as did the justifications, but it had a profound effect on me, I scooped my jaw up off of the table and said something like 'What the Hell are you all talking about?'

In retrospect, I realize, I was witnessing first hand the decay of the myth that is modern Christianity. And what is the culture doing about it? They look around, to Gnosticism, to the cult of Mithras, to the Cathars of 11th-century France. Eastern mysticism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Bahaism, classical mythology and more are woven into a catch-all creating a story that taps into the deep wells of emotions that we bring to religion in a world suddenly gripped by competing religious visions, and faiths that have lapsed with time. But if you think about it, it begins to make sense, you can say what a new myth is, new myths aren't just going to be taken out of the air, you take the meaning[s] that have always been there and see how they have changed, reshuffling the deck as it were, and isn't this what Eliot gives us, fragments that are the new deck, 'the truth that passes all understanding'.

121. Mr Lewis. [Mr Lewis himself wrote:]

> But if you think about it, it begins to make sense, you can say what a new myth is, new myths aren't just going to be taken out of the air, you take the meaning[s] that have always been there and see how they have changed, reshuffling the deck as it were, and isn't this what Eliot gives us, fragments that are the new deck, 'the truth that passes all understanding'.

There are a few typos in this last sentence, and I wanted to be clear. New myths aren't taken out of thin air. You can't say today I will make a new ritual and that ritual will be X. The new myths are born out of a process that we see in our own culture, and one that Eliot evidentially saw in his. That there is a passing away with values, and that new beliefs are formed, only slowly, out of what has come before, this is important, because it is the reforming ou[t] of the past that makes these new myths palatable. Because they are already part of our ongoing tradition; except that our traditions, like the rituals in a church, have become diluted over 2000 years, and we begin the arduous task of casting about to make sense of what it is we are doing and why, the old explanations only hold up so long before the[y] too become tired and empty, and what are we left with, look what the matrix did, an amalgamation of Philosophy, Theosophy and religion, trying to make sense of a world that doesn't seem real, and if this world isn't real, what are the other possibilities? Heaven? The Waste Land? And eternity in the Chapel Perilous? Yuck.

Anyway a good example of this transmogrification is the birth of the ritual surrounding the Last Supper, taking the meal of Passover and having it become a new ritual of Eucharist.

122. Ms Murray. OK, I'm caught up and now know that 'Chapel Perilous' is the same as the Grail chapel, and it's where the knight must ask a question (any question? only the right question?) to revive the Fisher King and his kingdom. Asking and answering questions and knowing the magic word, I guess, are pretty standard elements of all manner of myths, legends and fairy tales. Does anyone find this element in Eliot?

(By the way, Mr Lewis, I don't think that reading David Lodge's novel would be particularly helpful for deciphering Eliot, but I expect that all the things we've learned about Eliot and the Grail legend would make Lodge vastly more entertaining than he already is.)

I've always thought that 'April is the cruelest month' meant that the reawakening of nature was like your foot going to sleep and then waking up—desirable but painful while it's happening. It also makes me think of the reading we are doing for the Pittsburgh seminar: Yi-Fu Tuan's The Good Life. Tuan points out that in the lushest, most fecund environments, like farms or jungles, one is always in the presence of death. Most of the cute little baby rabbits born in April have been eaten by hawks & cats by May; the deer eat half of what you plant in the garden. Winter and the desert are pure and still.

123. Mr Lewis. [Ms Murray wrote:]

> Tuan points out that in the lushest, most fecund environments, like farms or jungles, one is always in the presence of death. Most of the cute little baby rabbits born in April have been eaten by hawks & cats by May; the deer eat half of what you plant in the garden.

We seem to have come full circle as Eliot intended (?). In his notes he says, he is indebted to *The Golden Bough:* 'I have used especially the two volumes *Adonis, Attis, Osiris.* Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to the vegetation Ceremonies.' The title, 'The Burial of the Dead', recalls Osiris, whose rituals took place in spring. Usually a time of Blooms, birth and celebration. Instead we have death, mutilation, and suffering. April, by these standards, would seem to be cruel.

124. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> April is the Easter month, evoking concepts associated with the death and resurrection of the Christ. It is a vehicle to immediately introduce fertility rites into this poem.

I'll say again that the two myths above have quite different shapes. A death-and-resurrection myth is U-shaped. A fertility myth is circular, or if you stretch out the time element, a sine wave.

> But if you think about it, it begins to make sense, you can say what a new myth is, new myths aren't just going to be taken out of the air, you take the meaning[s] that have always been there and see how they

> have changed, reshuffling the deck as it were, and isn't this what Eliot gives us, fragments that are the new deck, 'the truth that passes all understanding'.

I like that part about the reshuffling of the deck. The 'new' myth assigns new meaning to the old symbols. The old symbols wear out, I suppose, because the felt needs have changed. The 'new' myth addresses the new felt needs. Naturally, that leads to the question, what are Eliot's new felt needs?

Maybe more answerable, since it may actually be in the poem, is, which shape do you think is Eliot's new myth, U-shaped or sine wave, or since April is the cruelest month, something else?

125. Mr Billington. Ms Murray wrote:

> Asking and answering questions and knowing the magic word, I guess, are pretty standard elements of all manner of myths, legends and fairy tales. Does anyone find this element in Eliot?

If there is a magic word, it would be 'DA', coming from an inanimate entity. It is spoken three times, and each time the listeners hear a different word. It sounds to me like the message either isn't really there, or will always be misinterpreted. Whatever we hear will be wrong, including this poem.

> I've always thought that 'April is the cruelest month' meant that the reawakening of nature was like your foot going to sleep and then waking up—desirable but painful while it's happening. . . Winter and the desert are pure and still.

So in which category, or neither, is Eliot at the end of the poem:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?

Ms Murray, you found the shift key![59]

126. Mr Lewis. [Mr Billington wrote:]

> I'll say again that the two myths above have quite different shapes. A death-and-resurrection myth is U-shaped. A fertility myth is circular, or if you stretch out the time element, a sine wave.

I guess I have a hard time accepting that birth/resurrection isn't circular (yes I see that once Christ is risen it is done) but then again, we celebrate it every Easter. Christ has died/Christ has Risen/Christ will Come again (perhaps to die?) seems circular to me. Eliot links the Easter celebration

[59] My normalization of capitalization obscures the meaning of this comment.

to the recurring vegetation rites, in much the same way. That leads to the question, what are Eliot's new felt needs? My first intuition, usually not my best, is that he is pointing to a time of healing in the aftermath of WWI. The war still on everyone's mind, the loss of children, fathers, friends, must have had a terrible psychological impact on society and left a hole in their spirituality, what is this for? Where are our fathers, our role models now? How can a Christian myth answer these questions, when will they return, when will Johnny come marching home? Never.

> Maybe more answerable, since it may actually be in the poem, is, which shape do you think is Eliot's new myth, U-shaped or sine wave, or since April is the cruelest month, something else?

The Waste Land has been linked to symphonic structure, composed in five movements that are linked by contrapuntal interweaving of a series of recurrent themes which interlace the structure and are derived from time-honored patterns, something Eliot would have consciously [striven] to achieve. Eliot's use of quotation, allusion and adaptation serve to illustrate a sense of the past, involving perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence. The verse patterns of the poem seem to follow the same style, however the verse does vary from section to section providing different rhythms for different functions (some more successful than others perhaps). Eliot writes in his *Use of Poetry* that 'Rhythm. . . works through meanings. . . and fuses the old and trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality.' Perhaps *The Four Quartets* achieved an even far greater control of this verse form than was possible for Eliot in *The Waste Land.* At any point I suggest that perhaps looking at Eliot's use of time may give us some indication of the flow and/or shape of this poem.

The time structure of the poem is intricate and complex, achieved by use of citation, allusion, reference, and adaptation, bringing each outside thing into play in a whole spectrum of associations, connecting to thing[s] referred to the reader in various 'states' of time, real or chronological, mathematical, emotional, and historical, and depend[ing] largely on the reader's involvement with the poem. Eliot dissolves time much the same way Dali dissolves space. Still Eliot seems to be concerned with how the past and present coexist in the now. Much as new myths are made of the broken form of myths pasts and our current emotion, interpretation and philosophy. Every reader will bring a slightly different set of responses, because the poem is not a concrete set of concrete denotative statements, rather it is written to help us achieve our own set of goals while appealing to our logical intelligence. Look at the beginning of the poem, before the 'April is the cruelest month' you find: [trans]

> With my own eyes I saw the Sybil of Cumae hanging in a bottle; and when the boys said to her: '[Sybil, what do you want?]' she replied, '[I want to die.]'

The reader is free to move about the past present interrelationships as he chooses, Eliot's present, readers present, Petronius's present, Eliots past, Sibyl's present, *&c.* The Sibyl was granted perpetual life but not perpetual youth, in short as the Sibyl goes older she ages, just as with our myths, they age and change, the epigraph contains all these suggestions of time level as well as the substance of the poem.

127. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis, you wrote:

> I guess I have a hard time accepting that birth/resurrection isn't circular (yes I see that once Christ is risen it is done) but then again, we celebrate it every Easter. Christ has died/Christ has Risen/Christ will Come again (perhaps to die?) seems circular to me. Eliot links the Easter celebration to the recurring vegetation rites, in much the same way.

I thought you said that resurrection was a leap out of time and space. Hold on to that image. Yes, people need regular reminders of the myth that they live by. Yes, historic Christianity was content to take over the equinox and solstice festivals. (Historic Islam was not content with that.) Yes, Easter today is accompanied by bunnies and eggs. We even see, as early as the New Testament, the vegetative dying God images accumulating around Jesus, a radical departure from the image of the resolutely male, uncreated god of the Hebrews. But since you are conversant with archetypes and symbolic thinking, I hope you can see the practical difference in a life based on a U-shaped story and one based on a sine-wave story.

> How can a Christian myth answer these questions, when will they return, when will Johnny come marching home? Never.

All the usual answers are dry, is that right? It's a Waste Land, but Eliot doesn't despair, he hopes for a way out, through poetry. Or through fishing.

> mathematical, emotional, and historical, and depend largely on the reader's involvement with the poem. Eliot dissolves time much the same way Dali dissolves space.

OK, I can see that. A U-shape is a fight through time to eternity. A sine-wave shape makes its peace with time. How does the dissolution of time lead to shantih? (Sorry if I've gone too far from what you wrote).

Normally, I'd say the dissolution of time is like waking up to reality. But it is unclear in this poem what Eliot is waking up to. Also, waking up is a Buddhist myth, which doesn't fit with the Sanskrit references.

> Every reader will bring a slightly different set of responses, because the poem is not a concrete set of concrete denotative statements, rather it is written to help us achieve our own set of goals while appealing to our logical intelligence.

You're saying Eliot has no proclamation about the way out. How do you interpret 'DA'? Are you saying the way out is to bring our own set of goals to the DA?

128. Mr Lewis. [Mr Billington wrote:]

> I thought you said that resurrection was a leap out of time and space. Hold on to that image.

I have this theory that you don't like to see the waters of Christianity sullied, Mr Billington.

> OK, I can see that. A U-shape is a fight through time to eternity. A sine-wave shape makes its peace with time. How does the dissolution of time lead to shantih? (Sorry if I've gone too far from what you wrote).

No, No, not too far at all, in fact, the idea to follow the dissolution of time came to me as a last grab, I'm glad you find it interesting. Lets see, shantih? Shantih? Oh yes, Eliot's note to line 433 defines Shantih as 'The Peace which passeth understanding.' The Book of Philippians, Chapter 4, verse 7 reads: 'And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'

More Paul I am afraid, but also the Upanishads, the Upanishads are poetic dialogues on ancient Hindu scriptures, and in part commenting on them. The fact that the benediction is in a language so foreign to Western tradition may indicate that the solution is willed, not achieved. This is where I originally got the idea that the poem was written in this manner to appeal to the unique set of responses from each reader, which follows to your comments, namely:

> You're saying Eliot has no proclamation about the way out. How do you interpret 'DA'? Are you saying the way out is to bring our own set of goals to the DA?

This is the thunder speaking. In the *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad* the three offspring of Prajapati—gods, men, and devils—ask him in turn for sacred knowledge. He speaks as thunder and answers Da to each and each interprets the answer differently. They hear damyata, datta and dayadhvam.

(Gods restrain yourselves, men give, demons sympathize.) In *The Waste Land* Eliot uses the different order of datta, dayadhvam, damyata and gives translations of give, sympathize, control, changing the meaning of damyata from self-restraint to control.

> Normally, I'd say the dissolution of time is like waking up to reality. But it is unclear in this poem what Eliot is waking up to. Also, waking up is a Buddhist myth, which doesn't fit with the Sanskrit references.

Honestly, I am not sure what you wake up to, I've read some early Christian Gnostic texts that refer to waking up as well, it is a reference there to waking up to the secret knowledge or gnosis of god, or to the knowledge of the true nature of Christ. I suppose this taints my view a bit. But with the ritualistic chant at the end, it is almost as if the whole poem is a ceremony, like a ritual of some kind, except the ceremony, like the Waste Land, seems to be broken, and so awakening from this leaves on a broken sense of self, not the Buddist Nirvana, not the face of the true Jesus, just a picture of a down trodden king, fishing beside the banks of the ruins of a bygone kingdom. I suppose if we are to make a new myth of this we cannot know what it is exactly—what it is we have made until we are done. For Eliot, there is a sharper, keener perception of what endures and should endure, and incessant demand that all traditions of literature, music, painting, architecture and philosophy be put to their proper psychic or religious use. In that sense, Eliot's message is the message of the Gita (*i.e.* the tolerance preached by the Gita is echoed in Eliot's use of imagery drawn from several religions), of the essential utility of all activity: a message for all time, though it is harder to understand because it must be united from the materials, tone and perspective of his poems.

129. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> I have this theory that you don't like to see the waters of Christianity sullied, Mr Billington.

I don't pay much attention to purity of doctrine, but purity of images, that's another matter.

> This is the thunder speaking.

Yes, but how do you interpret the 'DA'? Should we take it straight up, as some sort of new myth? Or does Eliot consider and reject it? Or is it ironic in some way?

> But with the ritualistic chant at the end, it is almost as if the whole poem is a ceremony, like a ritual of some kind—

It's true that poems and ceremonies are both stylized. But a ceremony is a public, communal event, while this poem seems much more private and individual. It's not a Maya Angelou event. Also, rituals remind us what we already know, but this poem is a puzzle poem. If it is a chant or a benediction, what mental state are the congregants supposed to be in at the end? I guess I'm asking about the content of that shantih.

> —except the ceremony, like the Waste Land, seems to be broken, and so awakening from this leaves on a broken sense of self, not the Buddist Nirvana, not the face of the true Jesus—

The dissolution of time, and your mention of the Upanishads, and the Sibyl, made me think that Eliot's answer is simply the dissolution of the self, like a flame burning out. Not waking up, but the drop of water returning to the sea. But it's hard to actually see this in the poem. 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' would have to be something like the consolation of poetry, before life's smoke wafts away. That is a kind of shantih. I guess it was comfort enough for centuries of Brahmanists.

> —a picture of a down trodden king, fishing beside the banks of the ruins of a bygone kingdom.

I'm not sure the fisherman is the king. In fact, I was wondering if the 'I sat upon the shore. . . ' meant that he, Eliot, was no longer caught in the Fisher King's cycle. He is no longer on the arid plain, either. 'Fishing' might be more like Voltaire's advice to tend one's garden. But then, the images of decay keep right on coming. But then it ends with DA and Shantih. In general, Section V isn't coming together for me.

> In that sense, Eliot's message is the message of the Gita (*i.e.* the tolerance preached by the Gita is echoed in Eliot's use of imagery drawn from several religions), of the essential utility of all activity: a message for all time, though it is harder to understand because it must be united from the materials, tone and perspective of his poems.

Do you see references to the Gita in this poem? The devotionalism of the Gita is quite a bit different from the Brahmanism of the Upanishads.

130. Ms Murray. I am also having trouble pulling things together at the end of this poem.

131. Mr Lewis. Well Ms Murray, Mr Billington, the end may not be far now. . .

Mr Billington:

> In general, Section V isn't coming together for me.

I sense that, so let's recap and see where the problem lies. . . But I want to say upfront that Eliot was very familiar with the Gita as well as the Upanishads by the time he wrote *The Waste Land,* his message of, as I said,

> The tolerance preached by the Gita is echoed in Eliot's use of imagery drawn from several religions [. . .], of the essential utility of all activity: a message for all time,[60]

is very vivid in *The Waste Land.*

> The Upanishads and The Bhagavad-Gita and concluded with a Sanskrit incantation: Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.[61]

I think I agree with you, Mr Billington, if you mean that Sect. V doesn't seem to come together as well as some of the other sections. It open[s] with references to the Upanishads and the Gospel of Luke, but also the Grail legends, the Chapel Perilous and a citation from Herman Hesse (Eliot's note) that seems to indicate the current status of the turmoil of Eastern Europe. This fragmentary procession continues all the way to the end of the section growing more fragmentary and more obtuse as it goes. We begin with Eastern and Western religions, ancient myths and the present (Eliot's idea that the past and the present are continuously culminating in the now), and end in a now that seems completely foreign and disconcerting. Am I getting this right? I am just trying to summarize a few of our major themes we have discussed, and basically it was thrown out that the fragmentation was purposeful in the coming together of a new myth or myths that stood as a test of what, humanity perhaps, but that there is also a question about the dissolution of time. I think Mr Billington said it best,

> the dissolution of time, and your mention of the Upanishads, and the Sibyl, made me think that Eliot's answer is simply the dissolution of the self, like a flame burning out. Not waking up, but the drop of water returning to the sea. But it's hard to actually see this in the poem.

Amen to that. And so we are left with the central question, which is, I think, about the content of that shantih.

Mr Billington teases us with:

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[60] Mr Lewis does put this passage between quotation marks, but did not say or quote this earlier (unless I lost an email). It is apparently by Swami B.G. Narasingha and can be found at `http://gosai.com/writings/east-meets-west` (April 4, 2011) and other places. The ellipsis noted by me includes, 'Eliot's message is the message of the Gita'; Mr Lewis's words preceding the quote echo this.

[61] This fragment, presented as a complete sentence by Mr Lewis, is the end of a sentence that begins, 'It is significant that two of the ten works that Oppenheimer claimed as most influential were Indian (The Bhagavad Gita and Bhartrihari's *Satakatrayam*) and a third, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot, alluded to the Hindu Scriptures'. One source is `http://www.hinduwisdom.info/quotes21_40.htm` (April 4, 2011).

> 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' would have to be something like the consolation of poetry, before life's smoke wafts away. That is a kind of shantih. I guess it was comfort enough for centuries of Brahmanists.

To which I might add, if I may,

> Mircea Eliade referred to *illo tempore,* a sacred revelation from the long ago, which in enactment, puts one in contact with the ancient power: As it was once, is now and ever shall be, world without end... Amen![62]

This reminds me of Ms Murray's sacred word in the Chapel Perilous, but also the idea that this poem might be spoken as a chant or a benediction.

> We moderns will madly venerate any sacred revelation from the past—Koran, Bible, Bhagavad Gita—which somehow becomes more sacred the more ancient it is regarded to be. But what Martin Buber regarded as a 'spiritual exile' from the Holy Land, that afflicts the modern world, and T.S. Eliot called 'The Waste Land', can be moistened, and sweetened with nectar of living experience.[63]
>
> '... Then a damp gust/Bringing rain' (393–4). Finally, rain has come to the Waste Land, bringing with it the rebirth and cleansing that it has traditionally symbolized. This is a double symbolism in that the symbolism of the water has reverted from a perversion back to its normal meaning, symbolizing the approaching end of the Waste Land. The rain falling on the parched earth is a metaphor for the reawakening of the people shell-shocked from the world war, ready to begin their lives again.[64]
>
> Thus this account, with its honest self-revelation, agonies as well as ecstasies, tell us the same thing said by the Gnostic Jesus: The Kingdom of God is spread upon the Earth and men do not see it! (One of Joseph Campbell's favorite quotes.) [...][65]

Think of the wisdom of the Upanishad,[66]

> which says that there is a special[67] quality of consciousness, in which it may learn to penetrate all of its own potential states: Waking, Dream,

[62]The passage can be found at `http://www.thesoulsjourney.com/foreword.html` (April 3, 2011) where it is attributed to Stephen Larsen.
[63]This quotation is a continuation of the preceding.
[64]This quotation is almost the same as on page 71.
[65]This quotation continues the next-to-last.
[66]The following quotation is from the same source as the previous, and is preceded by, 'Here [Lawrence Edwards] is evoking the metaphysical wisdom of the *Mandukya Upanishad.*
[67]The source has 'an especial'.

> Deep Sleep and *Turiya.* It is just beyond deep sleep that our knowledge of Cosmic Consciousness exists.

I thought this would appeal to Mr Billington who said: 'I thought you said that resurrection was a leap out of time and space. Hold onto that image.'[68]

> It's here all the time (Cosmic Consciousness), only we are unconscious of it.

Who is? Anyone left fishing idly on the bank of the river, the king, Eliot and even the Reader.

> Eliot was well aware that literature has often had an impact on religion, and vice-versa. In most of his work he explored how society encouraged or prohibited religion and literature. He was also preoccupied with the ways in which writers before him had approached questions of faith, such as Dante, Virgil, Shakespeare and Baudelaire. Eliot also believed that a lot of the most remarkable achievements of culture had arisen out of discord and disunity. He thought that society in his own age had broken down to a large extent, as expressed in *The Waste Land.* Writing after the Great War, he felt that modern life was rife with futility and anarchy. It was his interest in the institutions of society that led him to see the importance of communal worship, and the significance of religious practice for entire nations, as well as for individual souls.[69]

What are those practices? For Eliot they are, 'Damyata' (restraint), 'Datta' (charity) and 'Dayadhvam' (compassion) followed by the blessing 'Shantih shantih shantih' rewritten (reorganized) to take on more Christian, or perhaps more universal, meanings.

132. Mr Lewis. For you *Waste Land* junkies—

I was googling about this evening and I found a `pdf` that is a paper on Eliot that talks on the Sect. V material that we have been discussing, it has some of the same ideas I presented in my last email, only it is much better written (no surprise) and has better citations (also no surprise).[70] The [meat] of the information on Shantih lies between pp. 3–6. (Paying close attention to the author's use of quotation.)

The Intellectual and Religious Development of T.S. Eliot
Reflected in Selected Readings of His Poetry
with Emphasis on 'Ash Wednesday'

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[68] The last quoted passage now continues.

[69] From `http://mag.christis.org.uk/issues/67/ts_eliot.html` (April 3, 2011).

[70] This might be interpreted as an admission that Mr Lewis cannot be bothered to cite his own sources.

http://www.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/ts_eliot.pdf

133. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> [Section V] opens with references to the Upanishads and the Gospel of Luke, but also the Grail legends, the Chapel Perilous and a citation from Herman Hesse (Eliot's note) that seems to indicate the current status of the turmoil of Eastern Europe. This fragmentary procession continues all the way to the end of the section growing more fragmentary and more obtuse as it goes.

I think the DA sections are straightforward. Eliot doesn't seem to be playing around. It's not a dream sequence, nor in overlapping voices, nor with ambivalent images. There are only a couple of allusions, to a spider, a solicitor, and Coriolanus. Naugle treated them straight up, as if Eliot meant them as some sort of answer. Here's what the DA says. 'The awful daring of a moment's surrender'. A key and a prison and 'aethereal rumours' of revival. A boat and your heart 'beating obedient to controlling hands'. One interpretation, encouraged by Naugle, is that Eliot is longing for the kind of organized religion which he later comes to in 'Ash Wednesday'. The last 11 lines are saying that he doesn't know how to get there. 'Hieronymo's mad againe.'

134. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:

> —and end in a now that seems completely foreign and disconcerting. Am I getting this right?

Yes, how the DA leads to fishing, or if it does, is a surprise and a jump. In my printed version, there's a blank line between 423 and 424. Lots is supposed to go on in that blank line, I guess.

My problem now is that there is so little textual evidence for our interpretations of fishing and/or shantih. Mr Lewis has suggested

1) that the king is at last returning to health and returning to control,

2) that fishing is the idleness of sitting around while your kingdom falls to ruin,

3) the essential utility of all activity, or

4) a Cosmic Consciousness which is here all the time only we are unconscious of it.

I have suggested that fishing means

1) writing poetry,

2) tending your garden,

3) a simple cessation, or

4) an unrealized longing for organized religion.

I'm all in favor of multiple interpretations which teeter deliciously between high and low. Mr Lewis has suggested that the openness here is positive, that Eliot was attempting to dissolve time and received myths to encourage the reader to bring his/her own meaning to the poem. That's possible, but the indecision in this case doesn't strike me as positive.

135. Mr Lewis. [Mr Billington wrote:]

> I'm all in favor of multiple interpretations which teeter deliciously between high and low. Mr Lewis has suggested that the openness here is positive, that Eliot was attempting to dissolve time and received myths to encourage the reader to bring his/her own meaning to the poem. That's possible, but the indecision in this case doesn't strike me as positive.

I love your use of the word 'deliciously' as I think you summed up exactly my sentiments about this ending, and have come to agree that while my first instinct tells me the end is positive, the reality is far more complex. Thank you for your wonderful comments Mr Billington.

136. Mr Billington. Today I read the essay on Eliot in *Coming of Age as a Poet* by Helen Vendler. We have concentrated on the theme or message, but Vendler has always emphasized the style or discourse.

> Both we as readers, and poets as writers, participate in the necessary belief that it is the urgent theme that drives the writer. So it does—but it is the writing that gives the theme life. How it does so... is the matter of the chapters that follow.

I don't think I have the equipment to get into the hows in *The Waste Land.* However, in *The Waste Land* I can see several of her observations about Eliot and his poetic voice. The young Eliot's

> Protestant ethical seriousness had to find a way to share its own idiom with his satiric irony, his sexual revulsion, his love of philosophical language, his desire for a musical line, and his exacting sense of structural form.

Eventually Eliot discovered what his poetry was meant to do: an

> EEG, an image-coded of graph of the twitches of the nerves as they respond to life's disorders', vibrating 'sometimes towards anesthesia, sometimes towards energy; now towards disgust, now toward ennui; now towards cosmic fear, now towards social agony; now towards romantic longing, now towards a suicidal siren-song.

Finally,

> the force driving 'Prufrock' is Eliot's youthful desire to fuse, in his poetry, his alienated erotic self, his transfixed social self, his intellectual philosophic self, and his introspective artistic self... This discourse—Eliot's newly achieved personal style—is the foundation for *The Waste Land,* where he will complicate it by taking it out of the drawing-room and placing it in larger geographical, historical, and literary contexts. But that is another story.

137. Ms Murray. I don't know what to add about the end of the poem, except that I do just like the image of a person fishing, without knowing what else to make of it. I keep thinking about reminding everyone that it's not the job of the poet to make an unambiguous statement about how things really are, but y'all know that....

Shall we read some more? Maybe some essays about reading poetry? There's '7 types of ambiguity' or George Steiner's 'On Difficulty'. Or we could read some Frost or some Yeats. I am not at all a poetry reader, and so have really very much enjoyed doing this poem here....

138. Mr Lewis. I am very interested in Eliot and Pound's collaboration on *The Waste Land.*

> [Their relationship is particularly useful in a study of twentieth century collaboration because the nature of] the collaboration between the two great poets is clearly documented in Eliot's extant manuscripts with Pound's scrawled markings and marginalia. It is also interesting as an example of an extensive collaboration that has tested the limits of the idea of Romantic authorship for many critics... In short, Pound reduced the poem from over 1000 lines to its current 434. In the process, he focused and limited the poem's message and eliminated a sarcastic tone. The critical view, with only the exception of a handful of scholars, is that Pound's edited version is an undeniable improvement.[71]

[71] James Miller *et al.*, *Collaborative Literary Creation and Control: A Socio-Historic, Technological and Legal Analysis* `http://mako.cc/academic/collablit/writing/BenjMakoHill-CollabLit_and_Control/book1.html`, Chapter 2: 'A Meta-History of Collaborative Literature and Control' `http://mako.cc/academic/collablit/writing/BenjMakoHill-CollabLit_and_Control/x426.html` (accessed April 2,

How?

> The poem would undoubtedly be 'clearer' if every symbol had a single, unequivocal meaning; but the poem would be thinner, and less honest. For the poet has not been content to develop a didactic allegory in which the symbols are two-dimensional items adding up directly to the sum of the general scheme. They represent dramatized instances of the theme, embodying in their own nature the fundamental paradox of the theme.

(To quote from *Modern Poetry and the Tradition.*[72])

> [We shall better understand why the form of the poem is right and inevitable if we] compare Eliot's theme to Dante's and to Spenser's. Eliot's theme is not the statement of a faith held and agreed upon (Dante's *Divine Comedy*) nor is it the projection of a 'new' system of beliefs (Spenser's *Faerie Queene*). Eliot's theme is the rehabilitation of a system of beliefs, known but now discredited. Dante did not have to 'prove' his statement; he could assume it and move within it about a poet's business. Eliot does not care, like Spenser, to force the didacticism. He prefers to stick to the poet's business. But, unlike Dante, he cannot assume acceptance of the statement. A direct approach is calculated to elicit powerful 'stock responses' which will prevent the poem's being read at all. Consequently, the only method is to work by indirection. The Christian material is at the center, but the poet never deals with it directly. The theme of resurrection is made on the surface in terms of the fertility rites; the words which the thunder speaks are Sanskrit words. . . [73]
>
> To put the matter in still other terms: the religious[74] terminology (Christian, Buddhist, Hindu *&c.*) is for the poet a mass of clichés. However 'true' he may feel the terms to be, they operate at a dangerously superficial level as the cliché, and Eliot must begin a process of bringing them to life again. This may account for the method Eliot used in formulating the poem. For the renewing and vitalizing of symbols

2011).

[72] Here the source was named, in the middle of the quotation. The beginning and end of the quotation, and the ellipsis (supplied by the editor) following Mr Lewis's citation, are not clear in the email. The text is at `http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/eliot/wasteland.htm` (accessed April 2, 2011), where the author is named as Cleanth Brooks.

[73] The ellipsis, unnoted by Mr Lewis, is supplied at the end of the email.

[74] The original text has 'Christian' here. It seems Mr Lewis silently changed this and inserted the following parenthetical list of religions. In the original email, as elsewhere, he spelled *etc.* as 'ect.'

> which have aged poorly with our growing familiarity of them demands the type of organization which we have already commented on in discussing particular passages: the statement of surface similarities which are ironically revealed to be dissimilarities, and the association of apparently obvious dissimilarities which culminates in a later realization that the dissimilarities are only superficial—that the chains of likeness are in reality fundamental. In this way the statement of beliefs emerges through confusion and cynicism—not in spite of them.[75]
>
> The textual discontinuity of *The Waste Land* has usually been read as the technical advance of a new aesthetic. The poetics of juxtaposition are often taken as providing the enabling rationale for the accomplishment of new aesthetic effects based on shock and surprise. And this view is easy enough to adopt when the poem is read in the narrow context of a purely literary history of mutated lyric forms. However, when the context is widened and the poem read as a motivated operation on an already always existing structure of significations, this technical advance is itself significant as a critique of settled forms of coherence... This construction, achieved rhetorically, in fact is neither acceptable anthropology, nor sound theology, nor incontestable history, but draws on all these areas in order to make the necessary point in a particular affective climate. (*T.S. Eliot and the Politics of Voice: The Argument of 'The Waste Land.'*)[76]
>
> We have been speaking as if the poet were a strategist trying to win acceptance from a hostile audience. But of course this is true only in a sense. The poet himself is audience as well as speaker; we state the problem more exactly if we state it in terms of the poet's integrity rather than in terms of his strategy. He is so much a man of his own age that he can indicate his attitude toward the Christian tradition without falsity only in terms of the difficulties of a rehabilitation; and he is so much a poet and so little a propagandist that he can be sincere only as he presents his theme concretely and dramatically.[77]

The rest he leaves to the reader.[78]

139. Mr Lewis. I seem to recall early on in the Eliot/Wasteland discus-

[75] Here the quotation of Cleanth Brooks ends, and a new quotation begins. Both are apparently from the same webpage.

[76] The quoted text is again at `http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/eliot/wasteland.htm` (accessed April 2, 2011), where the author is named as John Xiros Cooper.

[77] This is again from Cleanth Brooks, as noted above.

[78] These words are apparently Mr Lewis's own.

sion someone saying that they loved Frost and the Frost was an infinitely superior poet who showed deeper meaning and clarity *&c.* Perhaps they could suggest a Frost poem or two? (Or Yeats, I am a big fan of Yeats.)

140. Mr Lewis. Mr Breslin also suggested that he like[d] the *Four Quartets* if you wanted more Eliot fun in your life. . . Mr Breslin wrote:

> *Four Quartets,* in fact, is far and away one of my desert island books, and I read it several times a year. It is absolutely astonishing out loud, and so well done that it takes my breath away.
>
> And it contains as much despair and bleak existential whining as *The Waste Land* but adds a certain pathos, humility and reflective depth.

141. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis, you deserve our thanks for doing the heavy lifting in this conversation. You always gave me something to think about, clearly stated and well-written too.[79] When I first read *The Waste Land,* it was totally opaque and I wasn't sure I wanted to puzzle it out.

> The poet himself is audience as well as speaker; we state the problem more exactly if we state it in terms of the poet's integrity rather than in terms of his strategy. He is so much a man of his own age that he can indicate his attitude toward the Christian tradition without falsity only in terms of the difficulties of a rehabilitation.

That's very helpful. Eliot can't say 'rebirth' because it would elicit stock responses. He can't even translate the Sanskrit into English. But the words take effect and leave him fishing. Then he doubts and ironizes the whole enterprise. He says he is equipped, then that he is mad. Then come the three words and three shantihs. You suggested that they be read as a public benediction, not as an achieved state of mind. That makes a lot of sense.

Give, sympathize, self-control: are they the solution for Eliot's peace of mind, the solution for what's wrong in Eliot's Britain?

142. Mr Lewis. [Mr Billington wrote:]

> Give, sympathize, self-control: are they the solution for Eliot's peace of mind, the solution for what's wrong in Eliot's Britain?

You got me thinking again, Mr Billington, and we all know how dangerous that can be. . .

I think it is the solution for Eliot's Britain as you say, but it requires a reinterpretation of the poem, where one the reads *The Waste Land* not as a tale of dissolution and despair but one of hope and rehabilitation.

[79] But the quotation below is really from Cleanth Brooks!

> The quotation from 'El Desdichado' [as Edmund Wilson has pointed out][80] seems to indicate that the protagonist of the poem has been disinherited, robbed of his tradition. The ruined tower is perhaps also the Perilous Chapel, 'only the wind's home', and it is also the whole tradition in decay. The protagonist resolves to claim his tradition and rehabilitate it.
>
> The quotation from The Spanish Tragedy—'Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe'—is perhaps the most puzzling of all these quotations. It means, I believe, this: The protagonist's acceptance of what is in reality the deepest truth will seem to the present world mere madness. ('And still she cried ... 'Jug jug' to dirty ears.') Hieronymo in the play, like Hamlet, was 'mad' for a purpose. The protagonist is conscious of the interpretation which will be placed on the words which follow—words which will seem to many apparently meaningless babble, but which contain the oldest and most permanent truth of the race: Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

(*Modern Poetry and the Tradition*)[81]

> ...Like Hieronymo, the protagonist in the poem has found his theme; what he is about to perform is not 'fruitless'.

So I argue that[82]

> *The Waste Land* has been almost consistently misinterpreted, [since its first publication. Even a critic so acute as Edmund Wilson has seen the poem] as essentially a statement of despair and disillusionment, and [his account] sums up the stock interpretation of the poem

by many of its critics.

> Such misinterpretations involve also misconceptions of Elliot's technique. Eliot's basic method may be said to have passed relatively unnoticed. The popular view of the method used in *The Waste Land* may be described as follows: Eliot makes use of ironic contrasts between the glorious past and the sordid present. But this is to take the irony of the poem at the most superficial level, and to neglect the other dimensions in which it operates. And it is to neglect what are essentially more important aspects of his method.[83]

[80] Ellipsis supplied by me.

[81] Again Mr Lewis tersely cites his source, Cleanth Brooks (note 72), in the middle of the quotation, without having noted the beginning of the quotation.

[82] The quotation of Cleanth Brooks now continues. Ellipses are supplied by me.

[83] Here the words have changed to a different author: Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A study of English literary doctrine 1908-1922*, from the same page as Cleanth Brooks and John Xiros Cooper.

> Eliot wrenched his poetry from the self-sufficiency of the single image and the single narrating consciousness. The principle of order in *The Waste Land* depends on

taking the poem from many points of view at the same time,

> a plurality of consciousnesses,

if you will,

> an ever-increasing series of points of view, which struggle towards an emergent unity and then continue to struggle past that unity.

Not unlike the process, one could imagine, of rebuilding a war-torn Europe.

143. Mr Billington. Mr Lewis wrote:[84]

> So I argue that *The Waste Land* has been almost consistently misinterpreted, as essentially a statement of despair and disillusionment, and sums up the stock interpretation of the poem by many of its critics.

Certainly there are lots of images of prisons, falling towers, fogs, unreal cities, rats, deserts, whirlpools, misery, pain, bondage, madness, quests that aren't there. The human figures are parodies of romantic roles. Apparently, Eliot sees something on the other side of the bottom of this hell, as when Virgil leads Dante past Satan and going down is now going up. If it exists, that something is in the 'DA', but the last eleven lines (for me) throw doubt upon the possibility of a comedic ending.

> Eliot wrenched his poetry from the self-sufficiency of the single image and the single narrating consciousness. The principle of order in *The Waste Land* depends on, taking the poem from many points of view at the same time, a plurality of consciousnesses, if you will, an ever-increasing series of points of view, which struggle towards an emergent unity and then continue to struggle past that unity.

I won't disagree with the 'struggle' part. Eliot has to escape from under the ruins of his society, even going so far as to learn Sanskrit. If he can, he will start a new society, or maybe just write more poems, based on those three Sanskrit words, whatever they mean. I suppose this is his poetic life's quest. It's an open question whether Eliot will succeed, but at least he's got large vision, and a large ego. The emergent unity, as I see it, is a unity of the shape of this story, which is an old and traditional shape indeed.

144. Mr Lewis. While still formulating my thoughts on the discussion of the *Four Quartets,* I found this while Googling around early this a.m.

[84]Not really!

Try typing in water, or time, or face and see what happens…Enjoy!

`http://www.missouri.edu/~tselist/cgi/tsebase.cgi`

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Here are listed all people whose emails appear in this document, along with the page of first appearance. Some people appear only once, and incidentally.