

The Waste Land

By T.S. Eliot

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THE WASTE LAND
BY
T. S. ELIOT

"Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis

vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:

#####; respondebat illa: #####. "

epigraph

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I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

1 APRIL is the cruellest month, ^{Chaucer}, breeding
2 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
3 Memory and desire, stirring
4 Dull roots with spring rain.
5 Winter kept us warm, covering
6 Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
7 A little life with dried tubers.
8 Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
9 With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
10 And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

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11 And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
12 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch., ^{identity}
13 And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
14 My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
15 And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
16 Marie, hold on tight. And down he went.
17 In the mountains, there you feel free.
18 I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

19 What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
20 Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,

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21 You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
22 A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
23 And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
24 And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
25 There is shadow under this red rock,
26 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
27 And I will show you something different from either
28 Your shadow at morning striding behind you
29 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;

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

31 Frisch, ^{Wagner} weht der Wind
32 Der-Heimat zu

33 *Mein Irisch Kind,*

34 *Wo weilest du?*

35 "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;

36 "They called me the hyacinth girl."

37 —Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,

38 Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

39 Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither

40 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,

41 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

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42 Oed' und leer das Meer.

43 Madame Sosostriis, famous clairvoyante, ^{clairvoyant},

44 Had a bad cold, nevertheless

45 Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,

46 With a wicked pack of cards, ^{cards}. Here, said she,

47 Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,

48 (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)

49 Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,

50 The lady of situations.

51 Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,

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52 And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,

53 Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,

54 Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find

55 The Hanged Man. Fear death by water, ^{water}.

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

57 Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,

58 Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:

59 One must be so careful these days.

60 Unreal City,

61 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,

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62 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

63 I had not thought death had undone so many.

64 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,

65 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.

66 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,

67 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth, ^{woolnoth} kept the hours

68 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

69 There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson!

70 "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae, ^{mylae}!

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71 "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,

72 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

73 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

74 "O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,

75 "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!

76 "*You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!*, ^{baudelaire} "

II. A GAME OF CHESS

77 The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
78 Glowed on the marble, where the glass
79 Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
80 From which a golden Cupidon, ^{cupidon} peeped out
81 (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
82 Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
83 Reflecting light upon the table as
84 The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
85 From satin cases poured in rich profusion.

86 In vials of ivory and coloured glass
87 Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
88 Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
89 And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
90 That freshened from the window, these ascended
91 In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
92 Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
93 Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
94 Huge sea-wood fed with copper
95 Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
96 In which sad light a carvèd dolphin swam.

97 Above the antique mantel was displayed
98 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
99 The change of Philomel, ^{philomel}, by the barbarous king
100 So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
101 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
102 And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
103 "Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
104 And other withered stumps of time
105 Were told upon the walls; staring forms
106 Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
107 Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

108 Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
109 Spread out in fiery points
110 Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

111 "My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
112 "Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
113 "What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
114 "I never know what you are thinking. Think."

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

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117 "What is that noise?"
118 The wind under the door.
119 "What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
120 Nothing again nothing.
121 "Do
122 "You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
123 "Nothing?"

124 I remember
125 Those are pearls that were his eyes., ^{pearls}
126 "Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

127 But
128 O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag, ^{rag}—
129 It's so elegant
130 So intelligent

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131 "What shall I do now? What shall I do?"
132 I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
133 "With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
134 "What shall we ever do?"
135 The hot w[a]ter at ten.
136 And if it rains, a closed car at four.
137 And we shall play a game of chess,
138 Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.
139 When Lil's husband got demobbed, ^{demobbed}, I said—

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140 I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
141 HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME, ^{hurry}
142 Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
143 He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
144 To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
145 You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
146 He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.

147 And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
148 He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

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149 And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
150 Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
151 Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
152 HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME
153 If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.
154 Others can pick and choose if you can't.
155 But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
156 You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
157 (And her only thirty-one.)
158 I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,

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159 It's them pills, ^{pills} I took, to bring it off, she said.
160 (She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
161 The chemist said it would be all right, but I've never been the same.
162 You are a proper fool, I said.
163 Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
164 What you get married for if you don't want children?
165 HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME
166 Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
167 And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—

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168 HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME
169 HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME
170 Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
171 Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
172 Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. THE FIRE SERMON

173 THE river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
174 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
175 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
176 Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
177 The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
178 Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
179 Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.

180 And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
181 Departed, have left no addresses.
182 By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .
183 Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song., ^{spenser}
184 Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
185 But at my back in a cold blast I hear
186 The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

187 A rat crept softly through the vegetation
188 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
189 While I was fishing in the dull canal

190 On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
191 Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
192 And on the king my father's death before him.
193 White bodies naked on the low damp ground
194 And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
195 Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
196 But at my back from time to time I hear
197 The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
198 Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
199 O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
200 And on her daughter

201 They wash their feet in soda water
202 Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!, ^{Verlaine}

203 Twit twit twit
204 Jug jug jug jug jug jug

205 So rudely forc'd.
206 Tereu

207 Unreal City
208 Under the brown fog of a winter noon
209 Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
210 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
211 C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
212 Asked me in demotic French
213 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

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214 Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

215 At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
216 Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
217 Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
218 I Tiresias, ^{tiresias}, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
219 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
200 At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
221 Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
222 The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights

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223 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
224 Out of the window perilously spread
225 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
226 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
227 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
228 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
229 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
230 I too awaited the expected guest.
231 He, the young man carbuncular, ^{carbuncular}, arrives,
232 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
233 One of the low on whom assurance sits
234 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
235 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
236 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,

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237 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
238 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
239 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
240 Exploring hands encounter no defence;
241 His vanity requires no response,

242 And makes a welcome of indifference.
243 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
244 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
245 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
246 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
247 Bestows one final patronising kiss,
248 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

249 She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
250 Hardly aware of her departed lover;

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251 Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
252 "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
253 When lovely woman stoops to folly and
254 Paces about her room again, alone,
255 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
256 And puts a record on the gramophone.

257 "This music crept by me upon the waters"
258 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
259 O City city, I can sometimes hear
260 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

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261 The pleasant whining of a mandoline
262 And a clatter and a chatter from within
263 Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
264 Of Magnus Martyr hold
265 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

266 The river sweats
267 Oil and tar
268 The barges drift
269 With the turning tide
270 Red sails
271 Wide
272 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
273 The barges wash

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274 Drifting logs
275 Down Greenwich reach
276 Past the Isle of Dogs.
277 Weialala leia
278 Wallala leialala

279 Elizabeth and Leicester
280 Beating oars
281 The stern was formed
282 A gilded shell
283 Red and gold
284 The brisk swell
285 Rippled both shores
286 Southwest wind
287 Carried down stream
288 The peal of bells
289 White towers

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290 Weialala leia
291 Wallala leialala

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

296 "My feet are at Moorgate, ^{Moorgate}, and my heart
297 Under my feet. After the event
298 He wept. He promised 'a new start'.
299 I made no comment. What should I resent?"
300 "On Margate Sands.
301 I can connect
302 Nothing with nothing.

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303 The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
304 My people humble people who expect
305 Nothing."
306 la la

307 To Carthage, ^{Carthage} then I came

308 Burning burning burning burning
309 O Lord Thou pluckest me out
310 O Lord Thou pluckest

311 burning

IV. DEATH BY WATER

312 PHLEBAS the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
313 Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
314 And the profit and loss.
315 A current under sea
316 Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
317 He passed the stages of his age and youth
318 Entering the whirlpool.
319 Gentile or Jew
320 O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
321 Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

322 AFTER the torchlight red on sweaty faces
323 After the frosty silence in the gardens
324 After the agony in stony places
325 The shouting and the crying
326 Prison and palace and reverberation
327 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
328 He who was living is now dead
329 We who were living are now dying
330 With a little patience

331 Here is no water but only rock
332 Rock and no water and the sandy road
333 The road winding above among the mountains
334 Which are mountains of rock without water
335 If there were water we should stop and drink
336 Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
337 Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
338 If there were only water amongst the rock
339 Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
340 Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
341 There is not even silence in the mountains

342 But dry sterile thunder without rain
343 There is not even solitude in the mountains
344 But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
345 From doors of mudcracked houses
346 If there were water
346 And no rock
347 If there were rock
348 And also water
349 And water
350 A spring
351 A pool among the rock
352 If there were the sound of water only
353 Not the cicada
354 And dry grass singing
355 But sound of water over a rock

356 Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
357 Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
358 But there is no water

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

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

377 A woman drew her long black hair out tight

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378 And fiddled whisper music on those strings
379 And bats with baby faces in the violet light
380 Whistled, and beat their wings
381 And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
382 And upside down in air were towers
383 Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
384 And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

385 In this decayed hole among the mountains
386 In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
387 Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
388 There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.

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389 It has no windows, and the door swings,
390 Dry bones can harm no one.
391 Only a cock stood on the rooftree
392 Co co rico co co rico

393 In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
394 Bringing rain

395 Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
396 Waited for rain, while the black clouds
397 Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
398 The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
399 Then spoke the thunder

400 DA
401 *Datta:* what have we given?
402 My friend, blood shaking my heart
403 The awful daring of a moment's surrender

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

410 DA
411 *Dayadhvam:* I have heard the key
412 Turn in the door once and turn once only
413 We think of the key, each in his prison
414 Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
415 Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours

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416 Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus
417 DA
418 *Damyata:* The boat responded
419 Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
420 The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
421 Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
422 To controlling hands

423 I sat upon the shore
424 Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
425 Shall I at least set my lands in order?
426 London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

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427 *Poi s'aspose nel foco che gli affina*
428 *Quando fiam ceu chelidon* — O swallow swallow
429 *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*

430 These fragments I have shored against my ruins
431 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
432 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

433 Shantih shantih shantih

Footnotes

epigraph This is a quote from the first-century Roman prose work *Satyricon* (c.54-68) believed to be by Gaius Petronius (27-66CE). Eliot translated the epigraph as follows: "I saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her: 'Sibyl, what do you want?' she answered: 'I want to die.'" - [TH]

Chaucer The first line of *The Waste Land* alludes to the General Prologue of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which opens with a "description of Spring characteristic of dream visions of secular love" (Harvard). Chaucer's poem begins, in modern English, as follows:

When April with its sweet-smelling showers
THas pierced the drought of March to the root,
And bathed every vein (of the plants) in such liquid
By which power the flower is created;
When the West Wind also with its sweet breath
In every wood and field has breathed life into
The tender new leaves, and the young sun
Has run half its course in Aries,
And small fowls make melody,
Those that sleep all the night with open eyes
(So Nature incites them in their hearts),
Then folk long to go on pilgrimages,
And professional pilgrims to seek foreign shores,
To distant shrines, known in various lands.... (General Prologue, 1-14)

You might consider how Eliot's version compares to this source text.
- [TH]

identity In this passage, the female speaker's statement, "I am not Russian at all; I come from Lithuania, really German," introduces the theme of fragmentation and displacement that permeates the poem. The speaker's identity is shaped by multiple cultural influences, resulting in a fragmented sense of self. She does not fully identify as Russian, Lithuanian, or German, but as a hybrid of all three. This complex identity further highlights the themes of displacement and cultural conflict throughout the work.
- [ZO]

Wagner These lines are quoted from Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), a German opera based on a 12th century chivalric tragic poem *Tristan and Iseult*. There are multiple different versions of the story, but at root, it is a Celtic legend about tragic love; the knight Tristan has been tasked with accompanying the Irish maiden Iseult to be married to his uncle, the King of Cornwall. On the way, Tristan and Iseult fall deeply in love, which causes many tempestuous problems. The story became very popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially among the Pre-Raphaelites, a group of artists and writers influenced by Romanticism who sought inspiration in Italian Renaissance art and medieval courtly themes. The image included here, by the Pre-

Raphaelite painter John William Waterhouse, is *Tristan and Isolde with the Potion* (1916), via [Wikimedia Commons](#). Tristan and Iseult are on the ship heading for Cornwall and Iseult's marriage; they are drinking a love potion. The lines are from the first act of *Tristan und Isolde*, and are sung by an anonymous sailor about his lover, left behind in Ireland. Translated, the lines read "Fresh blows the wind / homeward: / my Irish maid, / where do you linger?" A later line (42, below) from the same opera, "Empty and desolate is the sea," sandwiches Eliot's description of the first meeting between the "hyacinth girl" (36) and her lover, who remembers being struck by her and feeling "neither / Living nor dead" (39-40). (

- [TH]

clairvoyant This noun comes from the word "clairvoyance", which in the French means clear-sighted. A clairvoyant is what we would now call a psychic, someone who can see things that are not physically there. Madame Sosostris is a fortune teller who has a reputation as "the wisest woman in Europe." The -e is added to the word clairvoyant to make it feminine in the French (OED).

- [CP]

cards A character in Eliot's poem visits a famous fortune teller, and the following lines describe the tarot cards she received at a reading. According to Elizabeth DeBold of the [Folger Shakespeare Library](#), tarot originated in 14th-century Egypt, and traveled to Europe during the Renaissance.

- [TH]

water Water is a prevalent motif throughout *The Waste Land*. Water is often associated with regeneration/rebirth, but here and elsewhere, it is associated with death.

- [CP]

woolnoth Saint Mary Woolnoth is an Anglican church in London, first built in the 12th century, then rebuilt on several occasions. The photograph included here, from about 1900, originally from the Library of Congress, shows the church in its modern form, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoore and opened in 1727. This is likely very close to what Eliot would have seen. It is possible that the site had been a place of worship for 2000 years ([Wikipedia](#)).

- [TH]

mylae [The Battle of Mylae](#), a naval battle won in 260BCE by Roman naval forces.

- [TH]

baudelaire This is an allusion to the last line of Charles Baudelaire's introductory poem "Au Lecteur [To the Reader]" from his collection *Fleurs du mal [Flowers of Evil]* (1857-1868). The line reads, "Hypocritical reader, --my twin, --my brother!" You can read Baudelaire's poems [online](#).

- [TH]

cupidon The scene described by the speaker features banners adorned with fruit-bearing vines and a standard depicting a golden "Cupidon," an alternate name for the Roman god of love, Cupid. The use of Cupidon in this context evokes themes of desire, fertility, and the pursuit of romantic love. The image of Cupidon peeking out from behind the banner may also imply a sense of voyeurism or hidden desire, contributing to an undercurrent of sexual tension in the scene. This lush, sensual

imagery is suggestive of the speaker's heightened sensibility, and highlights the poem's themes of passion and desire. The image included here, via [Wikipedia](#), shows a Roman copy of an original Greek sculpture of *Eros Stringing His Bow* .

- [ZO]

philomel An allusion to the ancient Greek story of Philomela, which was recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 6.412-674 . In the story, Tereus, King of Thrace, marries the Athenian Procne. Procne asks her husband to bring her sister, Philomela, to visit her in Thrace. Tereus rapes Philomela, and to keep her from telling her sister of the assault, he cuts out her tongue. Philomela communicates her story to Procne by weaving a tapestry showing the events. The two sisters avenge the abuse by killing Itys, Procne and Tereus' son, and baking him into a pie which Tereus eats. The women flee, pursued by Tereus; the gods transform the three into birds--Philomela becomes the sweet-singing nightingale.

- [TH]

pearls Throughout *The Waste Land* , Eliot refers to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* . This is an allusion to I.ii.394-398, when Ariel sings about a drowned man undergoing "a sea-change / Into something rich and strange." The words suggest the fate of Ferdinand's father, whom he believes lost at sea.

- [TH]

rag Though Eliot has made changes to the language, *That Shakespearian Rag* is a ragtime tune from 1912 (Parker, "[Songs in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land](#) "). Ragtime was a progenitor of jazz, the rhythms of which influenced Eliot's style.

- [TH]

demobbed Colloquial British expression for "demobilized," specifically, released from military service. Lil's husband likely served in World War I (1914-1918).

- [TH]

hurry The barkeep is informing the patrons of closing time.

- [TH]

pills The speaker is referring to medication that induces abortion.

- [TH]

spenser An allusion to Edmund Spenser's poem "[Prothalamion](#)" (1596), which celebrates the marriage of two "nymphs." Nymphs are female water spirits of classical myth, but the word also suggests young women in general. A prothalamion is a type of poem that celebrates a coming marriage.

- [TH]

Verlaine In this line, the speaker directly alludes to the last line of the French poet Paul Verlaine's sonnet "Parsifal": "And, O those children's voices singing in the dome!" The sonnet is a meditation on art and the power of music; it reflects the poet's response to hearing [Richard Wagner's opera Parsifal](#) , which is a major intertext to Eliot's poem. The use of this allusion adds an extra layer of meaning to the poem. The inclusion of French in the midst of an English poem could also

suggest a sense of cultural dislocation or separation. Additionally, the image of children's voices singing in a dome may represent a symbol of purity and innocence that contrasts with the themes of corruption and decay present elsewhere in the poem. To learn more about Verlaine, see [the Poetry Foundation](#). To learn more about Wagner's role in "The Waste Land," see this scholarly essay by Philip Waldron, "[The Music of Poetry: Wagner in *The Waste Land*](#)". You can read Verlaine's poem in the original French and in English translation [here](#).

- [ZO]

tiresias In Greek mythology, Tiresias is a blind prophet who also lived as both a man and a woman. He was instrumental in the action of Sophocles' Oedipus plays, and he also appeared in Homer's *Odyssey*.

- [TH]

carbuncular Used here as an adjective, "carbuncular" comes from the word "carbuncle," which is an lesion on the skin that is irritated and filled with pus, and overall is unpleasant to look at (OED n3).

- [CP]

Moorgate Dating back to the Medieval period, Moorgate was the last of the old gates to be built in the Roman defense wall that surrounded the fort of Londinium, now London. The original Roman walls were built 100-400 CE, but Moorgate was originally a secondary gate that was expanded in 1415. It led to the marshy Moorfields area in the north of London. It was demolished in 1762. To learn more about the [London Wall](#), see [Wikipedia](#). The image here, also via [Wikipedia](#), shows an 18th-century engraving depicting Moorgate before it was demolished.

- [CP]

Carthage This is a reference to the ancient city of Carthage, which was located in what is now Tunisia. Carthage was a major center of trade and civilization in the ancient Mediterranean world, but it was destroyed by the Romans in the Punic Wars in the 2nd century BCE. The use of Carthage in the poem may suggest themes of destruction, decay, and the decline of civilization. The city of Carthage has been interpreted as a symbol of the failure and fall of human civilizations, which can serve as a warning for modern society. The image included in this annotation, [via Wikimedia Commons](#), shows a representation of the ancient city from the Carthage National Museum in Tunisia.

- [ZO]