

Principles of Literary Study

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review: speakers/addressees

- ▶ Wheatley
 - ▶ the poem tells you about the speaking situation
 - ▶ not just the content but the form too: limits
 - ▶ but: limits can give rhetorical advantages (“Remember, *Christians*”)
- ▶ Melville
 - ▶ takes advantage of the freedom we allow lyric speakers
 - ▶ speaking from nowhere, to no one
 - ▶ Warner: but then again, speaking very particularly to a historical situation

Warner: motive and thesis

- ▶ motive: textual problems and global ones
 - ▶ What is most interesting to me is a paradox in its redemptive language. (41)
 - ▶ I would like to know more about the genealogy of this abstraction, *violence*, and about its secular deployment. (45)
- ▶ thesis: small, large
 - ▶ The line, in short, encapsulates the dilemma of Northern liberal intellectuals. (42)
 - ▶ The point I want to make here is that neither violence nor redemption comes with uncontested valuations. (46)
 - ▶ I have tried to show here that the apparently simple act of naming violence...in fact mobilizes a complex structure of feeling, made possible by a vast historical background and a lot of textual condensation. (54)

Warner: analysis

The rhetorical exclamation is in parenthesis, I think, partly because it sits oddly against the picture of the innocent suffering that has preceded it. If any agent has injured these men, it can only be their own former state of deception—fame or country. (49)

We are not told who is undeceived about what. (50–51)

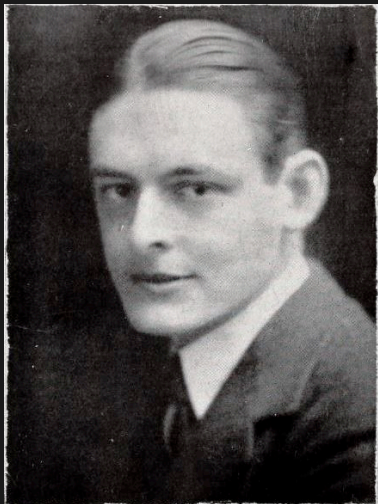
The line itself lingers in parentheses, floating free of its scene. Its picture of subjectivity, apparently merely negative, is in reality mediated by the conventions of lyric, with its eternal, placeless, overheard speech. (Warner, 51)

who hears the poem?

We should say that eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists' in the poet's mind.

John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties" [1833], in *Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical* (London: Parker, 1859), 1.71.

T.S. Eliot



T.S. Eliot, photograph by Emil Hoppé, *Shadowland* 8, no. 1 (March 1923): 51, [Internet Archive](#).

1888	b. St. Louis
1906–14	Harvard AB, MA (philo)
1914–15	Germany, then London
1915	“Prufrock”
1915	m. Vivien Haigh-Wood
1916	A.B.D.
1917	<i>Prufrock and Other Observations</i>
1917	clerk at Lloyd’s Bank, London
1920	<i>The Sacred Wood</i> (essays)
1922	<i>The Waste Land</i>
1922	founds journal <i>The Criterion</i>
1925	editor at Faber & Faber
1927	Church of Eng. baptism, UK citizenship
1943	<i>Four Quartets</i>
1948	Nobel Prize
1965	d.

themes (1): what will grow?

April is the cruellest month (1)

What are the roots that clutch, what branch can grow
Out of this stony rubbish? (19–20)

“That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
”Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?” (71–72)

It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.) (159–60)

But there is no water (358)

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant. (395–97)

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me (423–24)

themes (2): sex in the wrong

The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced (99–100)

But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring. (196–98)

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence; (239–40)

“After the event
He wept. He promised ‘a new start.’
I made no comment. What should I resent?” (297–99)

The awful daring of a moment's surrender (403)

themes (3): European crisis

Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's (11–12)

I had not thought death had undone so many (63)

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said—
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME (139–41)

The nymphs are departed. (175)

Burning burning burning burning (308)

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal (373–76)

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down (425–26)

themes (4): fragments

for you know only

A heap of broken images (21–22)

this card,

Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. (52–54)

And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; (104–5)

“Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?” (126)

I can connect
Nothing with nothing. (301–2)

These fragments I have shored against my ruins (430)

reference

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

Petronius, *Satyricon*, ed. Michael Heseltine (London: Heinemann, 1913), §48. [Perseus Project](#).

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Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih (433–34)

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Thunder, that divine voice, repeats the very same syllable: “Da! Da! Da!”—Demonstrate restraint (*dāmyata*)! Demonstrate bounty (*datta*)! Demonstrate compassion (*dayadhvam*)! One should observe the same triad—restraint, bounty, and compassion.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 5.2.3, in Patrick Olivelle, ed. and trans., *The Early Upanishads: Annotated Text and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 156, [ProQuest](#). The “triad” of virtues repeats the syllable again: *damaṃ dānaṃ dayām*. Olivelle says the BU is one of the oldest Upanishads; “placing them in the seventh to sixth centuries BCE may be reasonable, give or take a century or so” (12).

commentary track

Not only the title, but the **plan** and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge)...Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies. (Notes)

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I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards. (46n.)

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a “character,” is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (218n.)

(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.) (243–46)

next: more big open poems

- ▶ “Corsons Inlet” is an NJ poem
- ▶ print out Rich, Ramanujan