

20 "THE WASTE LAND" BY TS ELIOT (Feb 2020)

I've been staying recently with my mum, Pauline, in Colwyn Bay and over breakfast she was talking about how my dad and she met at the Institute in London (UCL), where they were training to be teachers. They sang in a choir together and they also met at a poetry society, where one evening she was amused to hear someone reciting what she remembered as:

“.....Under the bim
Under the bam
Under the bim bam tree...”

“I don't know *what* it was supposed to be all about, but I remember it being so funny and strange. I don't suppose it's a real poem...?”

Munching toast smothered with the excellent marmalade made by Chris, my mum's former carer, (I had just put in an order for 28 more pots), I read out the “Fragment of an Agon” by TS Eliot that she and my father must have been listening to. She found it, once again, very amusing at first but was rather more thoughtful when we reached the lines from Sweeney about:

“Birth, and copulation, and death.
 That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:
 Birth, and copulation, and death.
 I've been born, and once is enough.
 You don't remember, but I remember,
 Once is enough.

.....SONG BY WAUCHOPE AND HORSFALL
SWARTS AS TAMBO. SNOW AS BONES

.....Under the bamboo
Bamboo bamboo
Under the bamboo tree
Two live as one
One live as two
Two live as three
Under the bam
Under the boo
Under the bamboo tree.

.....Where the breadfruit fall
And the penguin call
And the sound is the sound of the sea
Under the bam
Under the boo
Under the bamboo tree.”

As it happens, I had been thinking a lot about Eliot and “The Waste Land”, which I studied in school and have often taught. Driving through London, once again I was reminded how much of the City crops up. Having lived with the poem for over 50 years, I thought that I might this month offer up a few thoughts to join the simply masses of articles and learned books out

there on Eliot. This, however, will be much less learned and more just a private reflection on where *I've* got to with it as a poem and what I find valuable, and fascinating about it. I'm not sure if I'm addressing well-versed aficionados, who know it far better than me, or readers who are coming to it for the very first time, but given that it is considered a very "difficult" text by most scholars, I shall try and keep my thoughts as simple as possible.

In the Appendix at the end, you will find the full text of "The Waste Land" (1922) with Eliot's notes, and also the full "Fragment of an Agon", which is the second half of the two "fragments" that make up TS Eliot's equally extraordinary and intriguing poem (or drama), "Sweeney Agonistes," which he published after "The Waste Land" in 1926 and 1927. There is speculation that far from being 'unfinished' poems, these "fragments", like the "fragments I have shored against my ruin" in "The Waste Land", were always ever going to be conceived as "fragments", in that elusive, elliptical way that Eliot has.



It's best, I think, NOT to think of "The Waste Land" as a difficult text. Eliot was a very clever and erudite scholar, highly versed in English Literature AND French literature AND Italian literature and Greek and Latin. The poem is crammed with allusions to Shakespeare, Dante, Baudelaire, the Bible, Greek Tragedy, and much besides. What was *he* trying to prove?!

Don't let us be put off by all of that – we cannot hope to match his learning and, in the end, none of it matters that much: the allusions *allude*, and Eliot provided helpful notes for most of them so that readers can steer their way around the poem. Part of what I like about the poem is that we are probably not supposed to ferret too far in trying to connect all the fragments, and thereby trying to elucidate a "message". As I hope to show, I think that just the opposite is the case.

Eliot published it in 1922, not long after the Great War, the 'war to end all wars', that had wiped out a whole generation and scarred most of the countries of Europe that were now swiftly being reshaped by the Versailles

Treaty. On one level, "The Waste Land" charts a strangely mythic "land" that appears to have suffered what we would now call an 'apocalyptic event'. The land is not only "wasted", in the sense of ruined, but it is also full of 'waste', not excluding the allusions that litter the poem like outdated (? but *are* they outdated?) refuse. People seem like zombies at times, living, moving and above all, talking, but as if they were 'the living dead':

"A crowd flowed over London Bridge
I had not thought death had undone so many..."

On another level, the poem is full of hints and reflections of his own personal life. TS Eliot had married Vivienne (or Vivien) Haigh-Wood in 1915. It was a disastrous marriage – Vivien(ne) was not his equal intellectually and she had all sorts of mental hang-ups about her class origins and her health (including heavy periods, mood swings and fainting fits). Tom, himself, was a naïve, 26-year-old virgin, who saw marriage to a Brit as a means of staying in

Britain (*and* becoming British) rather than doing what his parents wished which was to return to Harvard and get a good teaching job there. Ezra Pound, a friend, had helped make him feel that his poetry was good enough for him to try to begin a career as a poet. Vivien(ne) and he married on the hoof, without knowing much about each other.

Vivien(ne) became more and more unstable (disdained by Virginia Woolf and her set) and Eliot became unhappier and unhappier. It wasn't until 1930 that they separated (on religious grounds he wouldn't countenance divorce) and she was finally committed to an asylum in 1938. She was probably suffering from bipolarity and paranoid schizophrenia, and recent revelations from her diaries tragically show that she could not accept that their marriage was over – she had delusions that “Tom” had been kidnapped and would return and be nice to her.



But, Eliot himself was someone whose conception of women remained suspect all his life. Most of the women who people his early poetry are either depressed or manic or sex-crazed. Eliot's vision of sex seemed to hinge on a fear of women's sexual impulses. Sexual relationships in his work are stilted and sordid: most women seem to be prostitutes, air-heads and go-getters. This, of course reflects the *zeitgeist* of the time; Eliot was no better and probably little worse than many of his generation.

The poem as we have it is not just Eliot's. Ezra Pound annotated it and helped pare it down to what it now is. Eliot, strangely, first thought of calling it “He Do The Police In Different Voices”, referencing Dickens' last complete novel “Our Mutual Friend”, where Betty Higden addresses the Boffinses, who are illiterate:

“[. . .] I aint, you must know,” said Betty, “much of a hand at reading writing-hand, though I can read my Bible and most print. And I do love a newspaper. You mightn't think it, but Sloppy is a beautiful reader of a newspaper. He do the Police in different voices.”

Voices mattered to Dickens enormously (he made a fortune travelling around Britain and the States doing dramatic readings - very much an actor *manqué*) and voices matter equally in this poem, just as they do in the “Fragment of an Agon” where the ‘poem’ becomes more of a poetic ‘drama’.

As everyone has noticed, “The Waste Land” is a poem of very many *voices*, all confusedly clamouring to be heard. The poem suggests that modern life, polluted London, post-war Europe are all breaking down people's ability to communicate with each other. The voices are often strained and anxious, unable to tap into each other.

“My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
 Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
 What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
 I never know what you are thinking. Think.”

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

“What is that noise?”

The wind under the door.

“What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?”

Nothing again nothing.

“Do

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

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

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

Thanks to the internet, we are now able to study, if we care to, the annotated manuscript which Pound worked on. <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/manuscript-of-t-s-eliot-the-waste-land-with-ezra-pounds-annotations> . Eliot's disdainful attitude to women comes across in some of the discarded fragments:

Fresca in other time or place had been
A meek and lowly weeping Magdalene;
More sinned against than sinning, bruised and marred,
The lazy laughing Jenny of the bard.
(The same eternal and consuming itch
Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
Or prudent sly domestic puss puss cat,
Or autumn's favourite in a furnished flat,
Or strolling slattern in a tawdry gown,
A doorstep dinged by every dog in town.
For varying forms, one definition's right:
Unreal emotions, and real appetite.
Women grown intellectual grow dull,
And lose the mother wit of natural trull (*prostitute*)

(It continues disparagingly.... down Page 2 of "The Fire Sermon")

Although, therefore, the finished poem lays claim, in a sense, to a sort of objective approach to European culture and history through these different voices, there seems also at times to be an external 'persona', a sort of narrator who could stand for the poet, and there is, I think, an equal amount of *subjective* (but disguised) prejudice, confession, disclosure, almost pleas for help. The persona (and one can guess that the persona is not very distant from the writer) is clearly 'drowning', almost as much as "Phlebas the Phoenician", who quite literally *has* drowned in the poem. How and why the persona is so at sea is not immediately clear.

From yet another point of view, "The Waste Land" is, as I was sensing, a celebration of London. Eliot became a London banker and in 1925 joined the board of what was later to become Faber and Faber, the London publishing company which he later headed, publishing not just his own work but strings of important writers. London (and the Thames) runs throughout the poem; water, ambiguously, is an important image or symbol, for it can drown, yet it is also life-giving. London is a big, dirty, busy, sordid city, yet it is also a great capital

historically, connecting people and businesses, and London is at the heart of whatever culture is still to be found. Eliot's own enthusiasm for the city shines through in the poem, and *that* was what I was thinking about as I was driving up through the centre of London with Vicki just five days ago, before coming down to Colwyn Bay: how the poem is saturated with glimpses of London.

“Unreal City
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon
 Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
 C. i. f. London: documents at sight,
 Asked me in demotic French
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
 Followed by a week-end at the Metropole.”

It would take too long to provide a commentary on the whole of “The Waste Land”, and besides, there are plenty of good commentaries to be found if you wish for help in tracking down more allusions or finding out what others think is going on. My own point of view is that Eliot deliberately wanted to *swamp* us (drown us?) with ideas of ‘disconnectedness’ (fragmentation, rupture, dislocation, bewilderment – what has come to be known as ‘anomie’, all the infections of modern life). As an aesthetic, this tendency is linked firmly to what we now know as “modernism” - artistic responses to the fractures and differing viewpoints of early modern twentieth century life. Think of cubism, jazz, Stravinsky, Dada, the sculptures of Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, novels like “Mrs Dalloway”, “Ulysses” – all trying (as Pound exhorted) to “Make it new!” – all trying experimentally to find different modes to deal with what was felt to be this new and threatening, post apocalyptic world.

What I wish to do, then, is to focus just on the *ending* of the poem (and I note, in passing, that from the annotated pages, it seems that Pound had little to do with those final concluding lines). The ending is, of course, where usually the writer tries to formulate some conclusion or leave us with a reflection that draws some of the preceding threads together.

That, however, doesn't seem to happen very satisfactorily, in this poem. Just as Sweeney is later to say in the “Fragment of an Agon”,

“For when you're alone
 When you're alone like he was alone
 You're either or neither
 I tell you again it don't apply
 Death or life or life or death
 Death is life and life is death”

so, one of the voices in “The Waste Land” at the end, which *may* (or may not) be the poet's voice, leaves us with a paradoxically ambiguous conclusion: an *aporia*, something that seems like a logical impossibility, something that *is* and *is not* at the same time. The ending, I think, also links up interestingly with an important essay that Eliot was writing at the time: “Tradition and the Individual Talent”.

Here, first of all, is the ending of “The Waste Land” :

Then spoke the thunder

DA

Datta: what have we given?

My friend, blood shaking my heart

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract

By this, and this only, we have existed

Which is not to be found in our obituaries

Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider

Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor

In our empty rooms

DA

Dayadhvam: I have heard the key

Turn in the door once and turn once only

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison

Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours

Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA

Damyata: The boat responded

Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded

Gaily, when invited, beating obedient

To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina

Quando fiam ceu chelidon—O swallow swallow

Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

The Thunder seems to “speak” with three cryptic pronouncements: “Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata”, which, Eliot's notes tell us, correspond to “Give”, “Sympathise” and “Control”.

I am intrigued by what the persona *claims* to have ‘given’ – “The awful daring of a moment's surrender”. Surrendering *of what* and *to whom*? Match this important sounding ‘surrender’ to another “surrender”, which is repeated, in Eliot's essay of the same period.

What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

In Eliot's thinking, the artist has to abandon his personality (or hide his real emotions?). This would seem to me to be almost an abandonment of "control" in the artistic sense. Later in the essay, he writes:

There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. **The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done.** And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

So, the command to "give", here, is not what you or I might suppose: 'a generous offering', but rather a self-denying, self-sacrifice in the name of art. But I would rather argue that, although Eliot might aspire to this god-like "impersonality" in his art, it is, however, a sense of the *personal* behind the poem – the poet's messy love-life, Vivien(ne)'s mental instability, the fear and despair that are there just below the surface - that give this poem its human force.

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

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

"On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing...."

Behind such enigmatic, equivocal words lie horrors of the heart that will later lead to poor Vivien(ne) being locked up in an asylum, consigned eventually to an early death in 1947.

The second command: "Sympathise", is given with the grim suggestion that "we" are all locked in our own private cells of existence. The poem demonstrates frequently this aspect of the lives and voices under scrutiny. Coriolanus, tellingly, was unable to sympathise with the people of Rome, scorning them and rejecting any hint of compromise. So far, the poem is ending darkly and forebodingly.

“Control” is the third command, and this needs careful unpicking:

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

It begins positively (“calm”, “Gaily”) but if the persona here is addressing a lover (or Vivien(ne)?), then is there not something suspicious about the phrase, “obedient To controlling hands”? Is control a positive or a negative? What ‘control’ later put Vivien(ne) away?

The concluding images and allusions that the poem leaves us with, still under the heading of “Control”, are diverse and dark. First, we are given the maimed “Fisher King” from Jessie Weston’s “From Ritual to Romance” (looking at the connections between the Arthurian romances and early Christianity) and ‘he’ (the persona?) is on an arid plain, “fishing”, which seems lonely and ambiguous. Kings shouldn’t *need* to fish, alone on an “arid” (wasted) plain. If the Fisher King is the same voice that says, “These fragments I have shored against my ruin”, then all the allusions throughout would seem to be the sum of what may have been ‘caught’ by the persona/Fisher King. All the allusions are aimed in some way at the need for a *reformation* of the “Land” (or society, or Europe, or the modern world...) as in a ‘refiner’s fire’, as if the land has to be purged, reborn and life allowed to flourish again. What sort of control is being imagined here. Is the Fisher King in control or have things got beyond control?

Importantly, these “fragments” like little seeds of hope (“shored against my ruin”) are totally negated by one of the final lines: “Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo’s mad again”. In “The Spanish Tragedy” an early precursor of “Hamlet”, Hieronymo has to feign madness in order to avenge his son’s death, using the device of the “play within a play” (as in “Hamlet”), but in doing so, he becomes mad. The line itself has a double meaning – it could mean I’ll oblige you” or it could mean “I will give you your just desserts”. If the claim of producing real or assumed ‘madness’ is the poem’s true *raison d’être*, then heaven help us! Unless, that is, as in Virginia Woolf’s “Mrs Dalloway” (1925), mental instability turns out almost to be a *healthy* reaction to the unhealthy ‘stability’ of the ‘Establishment’, the accepted world of men like Sir William Bradshaw and Hugh Whitbread, the oily courtier, (who himself has a wife who is ailing. Mrs Dalloway, herself, is as anxious and unstable in her thinking as many of the voices in the poem. Her instability allows her to see through the pompous vacuity of Bradshaw, Hugh Whitbread and the Establishment, and to sympathise fully with the other anxious and unstable characters, Peter Walsh, her daughter Elizabeth, Septimus Smith, importantly, and his wife Lucrezia.

The final declarations in the poem, seem to me to undercut pretty well *everything* that has gone before. Eliot’s poem (the poet remains hidden throughout) *suggests* a possibility through cultural referencing (“Tradition”) of some sort of rebirth. However, in terms of “Individual Talent”, he is simultaneously organising a devastating annihilation of hope, despite the (for me, ironic) “Shantih, shantih, shantih” (Peace, peace, peace) at the very end. “London Bridge is falling down...” There is no sense of any real, lasting relief from the agonised, dissatisfied, helpless, sometimes despairing utterances that have been somehow spliced together.

Earlier one of the voices declaimed,

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.

But “The heap of broken images” is surely the same as “these fragments I have shored”. Will they be an adequate sea-wall or not? The question is left wide open, I think.



This aporia at the heart of the poem, a sort of running contradiction, is the same as that found in Sweeney’s “Agonistes” in which there is both innocence *and* experience. (This, by the way, is Francis Bacon’s tryptich: “Sweeney Agonistes”!)

Sweeney (a mythical figure in Celtic lore – a king who is driven mad by the curse of a saint, Ronan) is here portrayed as a ‘Donald Trumpian’ brutish macho, hardly aware that he exists, and yet he is also the embodiment, in a modern sense, of ‘Everyman’. He wants his idyllic desert island with his ‘girlfriend’ Doris (the reference to Gauguin is very telling, surely? Gauguin wished to find a Rousseauian innocence in Tahiti, but he was instrumental in abusing very young Tahitian women and generally becoming part of all that was hideously corrupt about colonisation), but there is little promise of any utopia on the island. Instead Sweeney talks darkly of:

“Any man might do a girl in
 Any man has to, needs to, wants to
 Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.”

I see strong affinities in Becket’s “Waiting for Godot” where a similar aporia of hope AND despair is set up throughout. Irony is the main vehicle of all Eliot’s works, “Old Possum’s Book of Cats” included. Think, for example, of “In my beginning is my end.” from “East Coker” in “Four Quartets”. “The Waste Land”, it seems to me, rejects simplistic solutions and is content to leave us with paradox, mystery, enigma, elliptical references and, above all, allusions to our ‘cultural heritage’. Will these be enough to save us? Can “Tradition” really come to our rescue and make sense of our new world, full of the horrors of the recent war?



Maybe. Eliot certainly believed in literature and scholarship. But in this poem, the question, I think, is left wide open.

Confusing?

Eliot's answer might be, "Well, *living* is confusing. To be living in the modern world and to be *untroubled* might be a worse response than to feel that solutions, answers, redemptions are at hand". This, finally, is *why* I keep returning afresh to the poem, which I feel I know so well and yet which each time seems to slide away from being pinned down and fully explicated.

(City of London in 1920)

A crowd.....
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
 There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying "Stetson!
 You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
 That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
 You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

We, as readers ("hypocrite lecteur(s)?), *also* become flooded, drowned out by disembodied, decontextualized voices in a 'fragment' of a drama, which tantalises us as we try, constantly but helplessly, to impose our *own* order and significance on what we are 'hearing', and that effort leaves us at the end with our imaginations spinning backwards AND forwards.

Could it drive *us* mad?

(St Mary Woolnoth
 designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor)



APPENDIX

T.S. Eliot (1888–1965). **The Waste Land.** 1922.

*Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:
Σιβυλλα τι θέλεις ; respondebat illa: ἀπο θανεῖν θέλω.*

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering 5
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten, 10
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie, 15
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, 20
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, 25
(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. 30

*Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu,
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?*

“You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; 35
They called me the hyacinth girl.”
— Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, 40
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Öd’ und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostriis, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless 45
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations. 50
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man. Fear death by water. 55
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City, 60
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, 65
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying “Stetson!” 70
You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?

Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
 Or with his nails he'll dig it up again! 75
 You! *hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!*”

II. A GAME OF CHESS

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
 Glowed on the marble, where the glass
 Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines 80
 From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
 (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
 Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
 Reflecting light upon the table as
 The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
 From satin cases poured in rich profusion; 85
 In vials of ivory and coloured glass
 Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
 Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
 And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
 That freshened from the window, these ascended 90
 In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
 Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
 Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
 Huge sea-wood fed with copper 95
 Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
 In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
 Above the antique mantel was displayed
 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
 So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale 100
 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
 And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
 “Jug Jug” to dirty ears.
 And other withered stumps of time 105
 Were told upon the walls; staring forms
 Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
 Footsteps shuffled on the stair,
 Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
 Spread out in fiery points 110
 Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

I never know what you are thinking. Think.”

I think we are in rats' alley 115

Where the dead men lost their bones.

“What is that noise?”

The wind under the door.

“What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?”

Nothing again nothing.

120

“Do

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

I remember

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

125

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

But

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag—

It’s so elegant

So intelligent

130

“What shall I do now? What shall I do?

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

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

What shall we ever do?”

The hot water at ten.

135

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.

When Lil’s husband got demobbed, I said,

I didn’t mince my words, I said to her myself,

140

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

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

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

To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.

You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,

145

He said, I swear, I can’t bear to look at you.

And no more can’t I, I said, and think of poor Albert,

He’s been in the army four years, he wants a good time,

And if you don’t give it him, there’s others will, I said.

Oh is there, she said. Something o’ that, I said.

150

Then I’ll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

If you don’t like it you can get on with it, I said,

Others can pick and choose if you can’t.

But if Albert makes off, it won’t be for lack of telling.

155

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.

(And her only thirty-one.)
 I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
 It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said. 160
 (She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
 The chemist said it would be alright, but I've never been the same.
 You *are* a proper fool, I said.
 Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
 What you get married for if you don't want children? 165
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
 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
 Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight. 170
 Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
 Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

III. THE FIRE SERMON

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
 Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
 Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed. 175
 Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
 The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
 Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
 Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
 And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors; 180
 Departed, have left no addresses.
 By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...
 Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
 Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
 But at my back in a cold blast I hear 185
 The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
 While I was fishing in the dull canal
 On a winter evening round behind the gashouse. 190
 Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
 And on the king my father's death before him.
 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. 195
 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.
 O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
 And on her daughter 200
 They wash their feet in soda water
Et, O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

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

Unreal City
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon
 Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants 210
 C. i. f. London: documents at sight,
 Asked me in demotic French
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
 Followed by a week-end at the Metropole.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back 215
 Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
 Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
 I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
 Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see 220
 At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
 Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
 The typist home at tea-time, clears her breakfast, lights
 Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
 Out of the window perilously spread 225
 Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,
 On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
 Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.
 I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest — 230
 I too awaited the expected guest.
 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. 235
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.

Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defence; 240
 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 245
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
 Bestows one final patronizing kiss,
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit...

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
 Hardly aware of her departed lover; 250
 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 smooths her hair with automatic hand, 255
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

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

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

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

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

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

“On Margate Sands. 300
 I can connect
 Nothing with nothing.
 The broken finger-nails of dirty hands.
 My people humble people who expect
 Nothing.” 305

la la

To Carthage then I came

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

burning

IV. DEATH BY WATER

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

315

A current under sea

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

Gentile or Jew

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

320

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

After the torch-light red on sweaty faces
 After the frosty silence in the gardens
 After the agony in stony places
 The shouting and the crying
 Prison and place and reverberation
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
 He who was living is now dead
 We who were living are now dying
 With a little patience

325
330

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

335
340
345

If there were water

And no rock
 If there were rock
 And also water
 And water
 A spring
 A pool among the rock
 If there were the sound of water only
 Not the cicada
 And dry grass singing

350

But sound of water over a rock 355
 Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
 Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
 But there is no water

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

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

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
 And fiddled whisper music on those strings
 And bats with baby faces in the violet light
 Whistled, and beat their wings 380
 And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
 And upside down in air were towers
 Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
 And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains 385
 In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
 Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
 There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
 It has no windows, and the door swings,
 Dry bones can harm no one. 390
 Only a cock stood on the roof-tree
 Co co rico co co rico
 In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
 Bringing rain

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

DA 400

Datta: what have we given?
 My friend, blood shaking my heart
 The awful daring of a moment's surrender
 Which an age of prudence can never retract 405
 By this, and this only, we have existed
 Which is not to be found in our obituaries
 Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
 Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
 In our empty rooms

DA 410

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

DA

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

I sat upon the shore
 Fishing, with the arid plain behind me 425
 Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam ceu chelidon—O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie 430
 These fragments I have shored against my ruins
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih

NOTES

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* (Macmillan). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do; and I recommend it (apart from the great interest of the book itself) to any who think such elucidation of the poem worth the trouble. To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean *The Golden Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes *Attis Adonis Osiris*. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognise in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies.

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

[Line 20](#) Cf. Ezekiel [II, i](#).

[23](#). Cf. Ecclesiastes [XII, v](#).

[31](#). V. *Tristan und Isolde*, I, verses 5–8.

[42](#). Id. III, verse 24.

[46](#). I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards, from which I have obviously departed to suit my own convenience. The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part V. The Phoenician Sailor and the Merchant appear later; also the "crowds of people," and Death by Water is executed in Part IV. The Man with Three Staves (an authentic member of the Tarot pack) I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself.

[60](#). Cf. Baudelaire:

"Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant."

[63](#). Cf. *Inferno*, III. 55–57:

"si lunga tratta
di gente, ch'io non avrei mai creduto
che morte tanta n'avesse disfatta."

[64](#). Cf. *Inferno*, IV. 25–27:

“Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
 “non avea pianto, ma’ che di sospiri,
 “che l’aura eterna facevan tremare.”

[68](#). A phenomenon which I have often noticed.

[74](#). Cf. the Dirge in Webster’s *White Devil*.

[76](#). V. Baudelaire, Preface to *Fleurs du Mal*.

II. A GAME OF CHESS

[77](#). Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, [II., ii](#). l. 190.

[92](#). Laquearia. V. *Aeneid*, I, 726:
 dependent lychni laquearibus aureis
 incensi, et noctem flammis funalia vincunt.

[98](#). Sylvan scene. V. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, [IV](#). 140.

[99](#). V. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, Philomela.

[100](#). Cf. Part III, l. [204](#).

[115](#). Cf. Part III, l. [195](#).

[118](#). Cf. Webster: “Is the wind in that door still?”

[126](#). Cf. Part I, l. [37](#), [48](#).

[138](#). Cf. the game of chess in Middleton’s *Women beware Women*.

III. THE FIRE SERMON

[176](#). V. Spenser, *Prothalamion*.

[192](#). Cf. *The Tempest*, [I, ii](#).

[196](#). Cf. Day, *Parliament of Bees*:
 “When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear,
 “A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring
 “Actaeon to Diana in the spring,
 “Where all shall see her naked skin...”

[197](#). Cf. Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress*.

[199](#). I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken; it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia.

[202](#). V. Verlaine, *Parsifal*.

[210](#). The currants were quoted at a price “carriage and insurance free to London”; and the Bill of Lading, etc. were to be handed to the buyer upon payment of the sight draft.

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

...Cum Iunone iocos et maior vestra profecto est
 Quam, quae contingit maribus’, dixisse, ‘voluptas.’
 Illa negat; placuit quae sit sententia docti
 Quaerere Tiresiae: venus huic erat utraque nota.
 Nam duo magnorum viridi coeuntia silva
 Corpora serpentum baculi violaverat ictu
 Deque viro factus, mirabile, femina septem
 Egerat autumnos; octavo rursus eosdem
 Vidit et ‘est vestrae si tanta potentia plagae,’
 Dixit ‘ut auctoris sortem in contraria mutet,
 Nunc quoque vos feriam!’ percussis anguibus isdem
 Forma prior rediit genetivaeque venit imago.
 Arbiter hic igitur sumptus de lite iocosa
 Dicta Iovis firmat; gravius Saturnia iusto
 Nec pro materia fertur doluisse sui que
 Iudicis aeterna damnavit lumina nocte,
 At pater omnipotens (neque enim licet inrita cuiquam
 Facta dei fecisse deo) pro lumine adempto
 Scire futura dedit poenamque levavit honore.

[221](#). This may not appear as exact as Sappho’s lines, but I had in mind the “longshore” or “dory” fisherman, who returns at nightfall.

[253](#). V. Goldsmith, the song in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

[257](#). V. *The Tempest*, as above.

[264](#). The interior of St. Magnus Martyr is to my mind one of the finest among Wren’s interiors. See *The Proposed Demolition of Nineteen City Churches*: (P. S. King & Son, Ltd.).

[266](#). The Song of the (three) Thames-daughters begins here. From line 292 to 306 inclusive they speak in turn. V. *Götterdämmerung*, III, i: The Rhinedaughters.

[279](#). V. Froude, *Elizabeth*, Vol. I, ch. iv, letter of De Quadra to Philip of Spain:
 “In the afternoon we were in a barge, watching the games on the river. (The queen) was alone with Lord Robert and myself on the poop, when they began to talk nonsense, and went so far that Lord Robert at last said, as I was on the spot there was no reason why they should not be married if the queen pleased.”

[293](#). Cf. *Purgatorio*, V. 133:

“Ricorditi di me, che son la Pia;
 “Siena mi fe’, disfecemi Maremma.”

[307](#). V. St. Augustine’s *Confessions*: “to Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears.”

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

[309](#). From St. Augustine’s *Confessions* again. The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident.

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

In the first part of Part V three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston’s book), and the present decay of eastern Europe.

[357](#). This is *Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*, the hermit-thrush which I have heard in Quebec County. Chapman says (*Handbook of Birds in Eastern North America*) “it is most at home in secluded woodland and thickety retreats.... Its notes are not remarkable for variety or volume, but in purity and sweetness of tone and exquisite modulation they are unequalled.” Its “water-dripping song” is justly celebrated.

[360](#). The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton’s): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted.

[366–76](#). Cf. Hermann Hesse, *Blick ins Chaos*: “Schon ist halb Europa, schon ist zumindest der halbe Osten Europas auf dem Wege zum Chaos, fährt betrunken im

heiligem Wahn am Abgrund entlang und singt dazu, singt betrunken und hymnisch wie Dmitri Karamasoff sang. Ueber diese Lieder lacht der Bürger beleidigt, der Heilige und Seher hört sie mit Tränen.”

[401](#). “Datta, dayadhvam, damyata” (Give, sympathise, control). The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka—Upanishad*, 5, 1. A translation is found in Deussen’s *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, p. 489.

[407](#). Cf. Webster, *The White Devil*, V, vi:

“...they’ll remarry
Ere the worm pierce your winding-sheet, ere the spider
Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs.”

[411](#). Cf. *Inferno*, XXXIII, 46:

“ed io sentii chiavar l’uscio di sotto
all’orribile torre.”

Also F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 346.

“My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it... In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.”

[424](#). V. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*; chapter on the Fisher King.

[427](#). V. *Purgatorio*, XXVI, 148.

“Ara vos prec, per aquella valor
‘que vos guida al som de l’escalina,
‘sovegna vos a temps de ma dolor.’
Poi s’ascose nel foco che gli affina.”

[428](#). V. *Pervigilium Veneris*. Cf. Philomela in Parts II and III.

[429](#). V. Gerard de Nerval, Sonnet *El Desdichado*.

[431](#). V. Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*.

[433](#). Shantih. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. “The Peace which passeth understanding” is a feeble translation of the content of this word.

FRAGMENT OF AN AGON

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: SWEENEY. WAUCHOPE. HORSFALL. KLIPSTEIN.
 KRUMPACKER. SWARTS. SNOW. DORIS. DUSTY.
 (All PRESET IN SCENE)

SWEENEY:I'll carry you off
 To a cannibal isle.

DORIS: You'll be the cannibal!

SWEENEY:
 You'll be the missionary!
 You'll be my little seven stone missionary!
 I'll gobble you up. I'll be the cannibal.

DORIS: You'll carry me off? [To a cannibal isle?](#)

SWEENEY: I'll be the cannibal.

DORIS:I'll be the missionary.
[I'll convert you!](#)

SWEENEY:I'll convert you!
 Into a stew.
 A nice little, white little, missionary stew.

DORIS: You wouldn't eat me!

SWEENEY:Yes I'd eat you!
 In a nice little, white little, soft little, tender little,
 Juicy little, right little, missionary stew.
 You see this egg
 You see this egg
 Well that's life on a crocodile isle.
 There's no telephones
 There's no gramophones
 There's no motor cars
 No two-seaters, no six-seaters,
 No Citroën, no Rolls-Royce.
 Nothing to eat but the fruit as it grows.
 Nothing to see but the palmtrees one way
 And the sea the other way,
 Nothing to hear but the sound of the surf.
 Nothing at all but three things

DORIS:What things?

SWEENEY: Birth, and copulation, and death.
That's all, that's all, that's all, that's all,
Birth, and copulation, and death.

DORIS: I'd be bored.

SWEENEY: You'd be bored.
Birth, and copulation, and death.

DORIS: I'd be bored.

SWEENEY: You'd be bored.
Birth, and copulation, and death.
That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks:
Birth, and copulation, and death.
I've been born, and once is enough.
You dont remember, but I remember,
Once is enough.

.....SONG BY WAUCHOPE AND HORSFALL
.....SWARTS AS TAMBO. SNOW AS BONES

.....Under the bamboo
.....Bamboo bamboo
.....Under the bamboo tree
.....Two live as one
.....One live as two
.....Two live as three
.....Under the bam
.....Under the boo
.....Under the bamboo tree.

..... .Where the breadfruit fall
.....And the penguin call
.....And the sound is the sound of the sea
.....Under the bam
.....Under the boo
.....Under the bamboo tree.

..... .Where the Gauguin maids
.....In the banyan shades
.....Wear palmleaf drapery
.....Under the bam
.....Under the boo
.....Under the bamboo tree.

..... .Tell me in what part of the wood
.....Do you want to flirt with me?

.....Under the breadfruit, banyan, palmleaf
Or under the bamboo tree?
Any old tree will do for me
Any old wood is just as good
Any old isle is just my style
Any fresh egg
Any fresh egg
And the sound of the coral sea.

DORIS: I don't like eggs; I never liked eggs;
 And I don't like life on your crocodile isle.

.....SONG BY KLIPSTEIN AND KRUMPACKER
SNOW AND SWARTS AS BEFORE

.....My little island girl
My little island girl
I'm going to stay with you
And we won't worry what to do
We won't have to catch any trains
And we won't go home when it rains
We'll gather hibiscus flowers
For it won't be minutes but hours
For it won't be hours but years

.....And the morning
And the evening
And noontime
 diminuendo

.....And night
Morning
Evening
Noontime
Night

DORIS: That's not life, that's no life
 Why I'd just as soon be dead.
 SWEENEY: That's what life is. Just is

DORIS:What is?
 What's that life is?

SWEENEY:Life is death.
 I knew a man once did a girl in—

DORIS: Oh Mr. Sweeney, please don't talk,
 I cut the cards before you came
 And I drew the coffin

SWARTS:You drew the coffin?

DORIS: I drew the COFFIN very last card.
I dont care for such conversation
A woman runs a terrible risk.

SNOW: Let Mr. Sweeney continue his story.
I assure you, Sir, we are very interested.

SWEENEY: I knew a man once did a girl in
Any man might do a girl in
Any man has to, needs to, wants to
Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.
Well he kept her there in a bath
With a gallon of lysol in a bath

SWARTS: These fellows always get pinched in the end.

SNOW: Excuse me, they dont all get pinched in the end.
What about them bones on Epsom Heath?
I seen that in the papers
You seen it in the papers
They dont all get pinched in the end.

DORIS: A woman runs a terrible risk.

SNOW: Let Mr. Sweeney continue his story.

SWEENEY: This one didn't get pinched in the end
But that's another story too.
This went on for a couple of months
Nobody came
And nobody went
But he took in the milk and he paid the rent.

SWARTS: What did he do?
All that time, what did he do?

SWEENEY: What did he do! what did he do?
That dont apply.
Talk to live men about what they do.
He used to come and see me sometimes
I'd give him a drink and cheer him up.

DORIS: Cheer him up?

DUSTY:Cheer him up?

SWEENEY: Well here again that dont apply
But I've gotta use words when I talk to you.
But here's what I was going to say.

He didn't know if he was alive and the girl was dead
 He didn't know if the girl was alive and he was dead
 He didn't know if they both were alive or both were dead
 If he was alive then the milkman wasn't and the rent-collector wasn't
 And if they were alive then he was dead.
 There wasn't any joint
 There wasn't any joint
 For when you're alone
 When you're alone like he was alone
 You're either or neither
 I tell you again it dont apply
 Death or life or life or death
 Death is life and life is death
 I gotta use words when I talk to you
 But if you understand or if you dont
 That's nothing to me and nothing to you
 We all gotta do what we gotta do
 We're gona sit here and drink this booze
 We're gona sit here and have a tune
 We're gona stay and we're gona go
 And somebody's gotta pay the rent

DORIS:I know who

SWEENEY: But that's nothing to me and nothing to you.

FULL CHORUS: WAUCHOPE, HORSFALL, KLIPSTEIN, KRUMPACKER

.....

When you're alone in the middle of the night and you wake in a sweat and a hell of a fright
 When you're alone in the middle of the bed and you wake like someone hit you on the head
 You've had a cream of a nightmare dream and you've got the hoo-ha's coming to you.
 Hoo hoo hoo
 You dreamt you waked up at seven o'clock and it's foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's
 dark
 And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock for you know the hangman's waiting for
 you.
 And perhaps you're alive
 And perhaps you're dead
 Hoo ha ha
 Hoo ha ha
 HOO
 HOO
 HOO
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
 KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
 KNOCK
 KNOCK
 KNOCK