

The Waste Land

Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:
Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν 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, 15
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow 20
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
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 25
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. 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.
Od' und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostris, 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,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. 65
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! 70
'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!'

Questions:

1. Identify and explain how the author sets a dark tone for poem in this section.
2. Identify how Eliot shifts among several disconnected thoughts, speeches and images in this section of the poem.
3. Explain the symbolic significance of lines 1-18, which discuss the natural cycle of the passing of the seasons. (see notes below for guidance)
 - a. Summer - The references to Germany are intended to bring World War I to the reader's mind (remember, the poem was published in 1922).
 - i. The places and use of German language are meant to invoke an image of war
 - ii. The reader is left to ponder: Who are the dead that are being buried in this section? The soldiers, the other casualties, society?
 - b. Winter – The season changes as Marie and the sledding incident is introduced.
 - i. In line 18 Marie notes, "In the mountains, there you feel free," implying that when she is not in the mountains, she does not feel free. In other words, Marie feels trapped, just as humanity feels trapped in its own waste land.
 - ii. In line 27 Eliot writes, "I will show you something different" inviting the reader on a journey or tour of this barren land. Possibly viewing and acknowledging the waste of the land will lead to rebirth.
4. The Unreal City is London. Explain how Eliot establishes the inhabitants of London as alive in a physical sense but dead in all other ways.