explain this use of language except by suggesting that if the common arrangements of words issue from the common sense of time, Eliot's arrangements issue from the quarrel between time and myth: I assume that myth is a way of breaking the chain of time, the chain of one thing after another. Eliot is using words as if their first obligation were neither to things nor to time. Philip Wheelwright has called this kind of imagination 'archetypal', the imagination 'which sees the particular object in the light of a larger conception or of a higher concern'. Nearly everything in Eliot's language can be explained by his feeling that the truth of things resides in an indeterminate area: neither subject nor object, but a state compounded of both; neither time nor eternity, but a state in which the double obligation is registered; neither man nor God, but a being, conceivable in words but not in fact, who is vouched for not in identifiable speech but in language itself, eventually to be invoked as Logos. I am not indeed maintaining that the word 'rat', in 'The Fire Sermon', has ceased to observe all relation to a certain rodent, but rather that the word is a double agent, it accepts the friction between reality and language, but it does not give total allegiance to either party. On one side stands the world of things; on the other, a rival world of dissociated forms, Platonic cities. Between these worlds stands the individual word, maintaining a secret life, double allegiance or double treachery.

It is characteristically American of Eliot to place these inordinate burdens upon language and the poetic imagination. The imagination must do nearly everything because reality cannot be relied on to do much. In the relation between reality and the imagination, he has established conditions extremely favourable to the imagination. This is only another way of saying that language commands the otherwise empty space between consciousness and experience, consciousness and action, consciousness and the earth.

ROBERT LANGBAUM

The Walking Dead†

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In The Waste Land, the buried life manifests itself through the unconscious memory of figures from the past. There is already some reaching toward this method in "Prufrock," where Prufrock consciously thinks he might have been John the Baptist, Lazarus, Hamlet. But the

emphasis is on the ironical disparity between these legendary figures and Prufrock's actual character or lack of character. Prufrock does not in fact fulfill the destinies of these legendary figures. In *The Waste Land*, however, the speakers do in spite of themselves unconsciously fulfill destinies laid out in myth; and their unconscious identification with the legendary figures who have already walked through these destinies gives them the only identity they have.

Compared to the characters in *The Waste Land*, Prufrock, for all his lack of vitality, has the sharp external delineation of a character in, say, Henry James. He has a name (a characterizing one), a social milieu to which he genuinely belongs, a face (we all have our idea of what he looks like, probably like Eliot). Prufrock has—his deliberate trying on of masks is a sign of this—a clear idea of himself. The characters in *The Waste Land*, however, are nameless, faceless, isolated, and have no clear idea of themselves. All they have is a sense of loss and a neural itch, a restless, inchoate desire to recover what has been lost. But in this very minimum of restless aliveness, they repeat the pattern of the Quest. And it is the archetypal Quest pattern, exemplified in the Grail legend, that gives whatever form there is to the protagonist's movement through the poem.

We would not know what to make of the characters were it not for the intrusion of a narrating consciousness that assimilates them to figures of the past. This is done through the double language of the Stetson passage. The same purpose is accomplished in Part II through shifting references. Part II opens with an opulently old-fashioned blank-verse-style description, not so much of a lady as of her luxurious surroundings. The chair she sits in reminds us of Cleopatra's "burnished throne" and the stately room of Dido's palace, while a picture recalls the rape of Philomela. The shifting references—showing how Eliot mythologizes his unhappy marriage—suggest that the lady is seductive, but that she is also, like Cleopatra with Anthony and Dido with Aeneas, one of those who is in the end violated and abandoned by a man. The theme of violation takes over; for the picture shows Philomela's change, after her rape, into a nightingale whose wordless cry rings down through the ages:

So rudely forced; yet here the nightingale  
FILLED all the desert with inviolable voice  
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,  
"Jug Jug" to dirty cars.  

The nightingale's voice, the story's meaning, is inviolable; but the violation of innocence in the waste land goes on.

When the lady finally speaks, she utters twentieth-century words that her prototypes of the past would not have understood: "'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.'" We gather from the passage
that the lady is rich, that her house is filled with mementoes of the past which she understands only as frightening ghosts, that the protagonist to whom she speaks is her lover or husband, and that he has in some special modern sense violated her. The violation would seem to lie in his inability to communicate with her:


(112-14)

The modern situation is unprecedented and meaningless; therein lies the poem's negative impulse. But deep down these people are repeating an ancient drama with ancient meanings; therein lies the poem's positive impulse. The shifting references to various ladies of the past evoke the archetype that subsumes them—the archetype already revealed in Part I, where the protagonist has his fortune told by Madame Sosostris. "Here," she says, pulling a card from the ancient Tarot deck, "is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, 'The lady of situations" (49-50). Because all the ladies referred to are Belladonnas, we understand the character of our modern rich lady and the character—in the abrupt shift to a London pub—of the working-class Belladonna who tells a friend of her efforts to steal away the husband of another friend, another Belladonna, who has ruined her health and looks with abortion pills. Beneath the meaningless surface, the underlying tale tells again of violation in the desert—violation of innocence, sex, fertility.

The protagonist's card is "the drowned Phoenician Sailor." This explains not only the Stetson passage, but also the protagonist's reflection after his card has been drawn: "Those are pearls that were his eyes" (48). The line is from Ariel's song in *The Tempest*, addressed to Prince Ferdinand, who thinks his father, the King of Naples, has been drowned. Lines from *The Tempest* keep running through the protagonist's head, because *The Tempest* is a water poem in which all the human characters are sailors, having sailed to the island. Drowning and metamorphosis, the consolation in Ariel's song, relate to drowning and resurrection in the cult of the Phoenician fertility god Adonis (an effigy of the dead Adonis was cast upon the waves, where resurrection was assumed to take place).1

Among the other Tarot cards named is "the one-eyed merchant"; he turns up in Part III as the Smyrna merchant who makes the protagonist a homosexual proposition. Eliot in a note explains his method of characterization:

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 figures either on the Tarot cards, or in some cases frankly imagined by Eliot to be on them, provide the archetypes from which the nameless, faceless modern characters derive identity. Tiresias, not a Tarot figure but the blind hermaphroditic prophet of Greek mythology, appears only once—in the Part III episode about another violated Belladonna, the typist whose mechanical fornication with a clerk leaves her neither a sense of sin nor a memory of pleasure.

The central consciousness, which intruded through the double language of the Stetson passage and the cultural memory of Part II’s introductory passage, now takes on the name of Tiresias: “I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled legs / Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest.” After the scene has been enacted, Tiresias interjects:

(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.)

(228–29, 243–46)

Again we are enabled to understand the contrast between the passionate auspicious fornications of the past and this modern perfunctory performance. Again we are reminded that this scene is nevertheless a reenactment. Sexual union was used in the fertility ceremonies to promote by sympathetic magic the fertility of the soil. But modern sexuality is sterile.

Through the Tiresias consciousness in him, the protagonist repeatedly finds an underlying ancient pattern but also sees that in the modern situation the pattern does not come to the preordained conclusion. This gives a direction to his Quest—to complete the pattern by restoring fertility. It is a sign of their connection that Tiresias appears as a stand-in for the protagonist in just the scene the protagonist can only have imagined.

To say that all the characters meet in Tiresias is to suggest that archetypal identities emerge from larger archetypes, in the way smaller Chinese boxes emerge from larger. The Smyrna merchant, identified with the Tarot one-eyed merchant, propositions the protagonist, who is identified with the Phoenician Sailor. Yet we are told that the one-eyed merchant melts into the Phoenician Sailor; so that the protagonist really stands on both sides of the proposition. In the same way the protagonist
is identified with the Quester of the Grail legend, who sets out to find the Grail and thus cure the ailing Fisher King whose wound, symbolizing a loss of potency, has caused the land to lose fertility. The protagonist is the Quester inasmuch as he moves through the episodes of the poem to arrive at the Perilous Chapel. But in the following lines he is the Fisher King, whose illness is in some Grail romances assigned to the King's brother or father:

While I was fishing in the dull canal  
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse  
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck  
And on the king my father's death before him.

(189–92)

He is also—according to the method of shifting references—Prince Ferdinand (from whom, in *Tempest* II.i. 390–91, the last two lines derive), Hamlet, Claudius: all of whom have to do with dead kings who in turn recall the murdered kings of vegetation ritual. All this combines with the modern industrial setting to portray the modern moment with modern voices and collapse them into timeless archetypes. At the end of the poem, the protagonist is both Quester and Fisher King; he is the Fisher King questing for a cure: "I sat upon the shore / Fishing, with the arid plain behind me" (V. 423–24).

Since the protagonist plays at one and the same time both active and passive roles, we must understand all the characters as aspects or projections of his consciousness—that the poem is essentially a monodrama. It is difficult to say just where the various characters melt into the protagonist and where the protagonist melts into the poet. We have to distinguish the scenes in which the protagonist himself plays a part—the recollection of the Hyacinth garden, the visit to Madame Sosistris, the meeting with Stetson, the scene with the rich Belladonna—from the scenes in the pub and at the typist's. We can either consider that the protagonist overhears the first and imagines the second, or that at these points the poet's consciousness takes leave of the protagonist to portray parallel instances. I prefer the first line of interpretation because it yields a more consistent structure on the model of romantic monodrama. In *Faust* and *Manfred*, the other characters do not have the same order of existence as the protagonist because the protagonist's consciousness blends with the poet's. We must understand the other characters, therefore, as ambiguously objective, as only partly themselves and partly the projection of forces within the protagonist and ultimately within the poet. If we take the line that Eliot's poem is what the protagonist sees, then Tiresias becomes the figure in which the protagonist's consciousness blends perfectly with the poet's so that the protagonist can see imaginatively more than he could physically.
(Tiresias’ hermaphroditism characterizes the all-inclusive poetic imagination; Pound in one of his annotations to the manuscript calls Eliot Tiresias.)

But the poet’s consciousness is itself an aspect of the age’s. We get the overheard scraps of conversation, miscellaneous literary tags, and incoherent cultural recollections that would stock a cultivated mind of 1920—an agitated mind in which the fragments recur compulsively. This is where Western culture has come to, the poem is telling us, as of 1920. The protagonist’s consciousness emerges from the collective consciousness of the time as another nameless, faceless modern voice. The protagonist has no character in the old-fashioned sense; for he acquires delineation or identity not through individualization, but through making connection with ancient archetypes.

MARIANNE THORMÄHLEN

[The City in The Waste Land]†

In The Waste Land, as in most of those Eliot poems which are soaked in urban imagery, a small number of fixed topographical features keep cropping up. Not unexpectedly, the most frequent one is the street motif which, Rudolf Germer argues, stands for the ugliness and repulsiveness of reality.

Basically, the street looms as the only alternative to the closed room—“I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street / With my hair down, so”—and yet it constitutes no escape from private agony. Emerging into the street from a person-to-person deadlock in a shuttered room can be no relief, since there is no communication with the passers-by either. At times in Eliot’s early poetry the street is not only a scene but an agent, as when it pursues Prufrock or decoys the walker, by means of lamplight patterns, to a spiritual crucifixion (“The Little Passion: From ‘An Agony in the Garret’”, p. 52 of the Notebook).

In “Preludes”, the street is equipped with rational faculties (“You had such a vision of the street / As the street hardly understands”). Usually, how-

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