

T. S. ELIOT (1888-1965)

The Waste Land

*I. The Burial of the Dead* (lines 1-30)

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
 Memory and desire, stirring  
 Dull roots with spring rain.  
 5 Winter kept us warm, covering  
 Earth in forgetful snow, feeding  
 A little life with dried tubers.  
 Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee<sup>1</sup>  
 With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,  
 10 And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten<sup>2</sup>,  
 And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.  
 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm'aus Litauen, echt deutsch<sup>3</sup>.  
 And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke'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,<sup>4</sup>  
 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,<sup>5</sup>  
 And the dry stone no sound of water. Only  
 25 There is shadow under this red rock,<sup>6</sup>  
 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
 And I will show you something different from either

<sup>1</sup> Lake a few miles south of Munich.

<sup>2</sup> A small public park in Munich.

<sup>3</sup> I am not Russian at all; I come from Lithuania, a true German.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ezekiel 2.1 [Eliot's note]. Here God is addressing Ezekiel.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ecclesiastes 12.5 [Eliot's note]. The verse is part of the preacher's picture of the desolation of old age.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Isaiah 32.2.

Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
 30 I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

(lines 60-68)

60 Unreal City<sup>7</sup>,  
 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.<sup>8</sup>  
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,<sup>9</sup>  
 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.<sup>10</sup>

1922

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Baudelaire: '*Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves, / Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant*' [Eliot's note]. The lines are quoted from 'Le Sept Vieillards', poem 93 of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Inferno* 3.55-57 [Eliot's note].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Inferno* 4.25-27. [Eliot's note].

<sup>10</sup> A phenomenon which I have often noticed [Eliot's note]. St. Mary Woolnoth is a church in the City (the financial district of London); the crowd is flowing across London Bridge to work in the City.