

London Bridge is Falling Down:

A Metaphorical Analysis of Eliot's *The Waste Land*

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T. S. Eliot's modernist epic *The Waste Land* takes a seemingly messy, disjointed collection of images and snippets of legend to weave together his understanding of life in interwar Europe. At this time, Europe was trying to rebuild - both the physical reconstruction of decimated cities during war, but also the emotional and moral restructuring of the European people who are trying to find normalcy after being shattered by the unprecedented horrors of trench warfare. To Eliot, Europe is ruined; his society has been fundamentally and irreparably broken, and can never return to the splendor and power it once had. He argues this central conceit through metaphors extended from Fertility and its role in the Life Cycle of Nature.

Eliot begins his poem at the end of the cycle: *The Burial of the Dead*. In this section, he outlines the major elements of his Life Cycle of Nature frame, and introduces scenes that we will see manifested over and over again in coming stanzas.

Right in the first stanza, Eliot introduces the reader to the cycle of months, which metonymically refers to the life cycle of flowers that aligns with the seasons. We saliently understand Springtime as a period of Rejuvenation and high Fertility, when planted seeds sprout and baby animals are born; Wintertime, on the other hand, is the End of Life as most nature cannot survive the cold temperatures, little sunlight, and inclement weather. *April*, harbinger of Spring, is described as *breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain*. In each of these three lines, Eliot describes a Winter past and a Spring present — *dead land*, *memory*, and *dull roots* are all constructed opposite *lilacs*, *desire*, and *spring rain* in such a way that emphasizes their cyclic nature and how Spring is born out of Winter. A fact of the Life Cycle frame is that a period of life is assumed to follow a period of death, and it is

the role of Fertility to bring about this succession. As many an O'Keefe painting may inform, flowers often metonymically refer to sexuality, as they are both beautiful and delicate but also quite literally the sex organs of a flower. We can look in focus at *stirring*, and find a double meaning — it is both a symmetrical construction of physical jostling, like *mixing*, but it also refers to a stirring awake, which experientially means rousing someone from a death-like state, reinforcing the rejuvenation aspect of Spring.

Several key phrases combine metonymic connections between flower and sex with the metaphoric relationship of HUMAN MEMORY CYCLE IS PLANT LIFE CYCLE. Just as a plant is planted, blooms, dies, and blooms once more, a memory is created, relived, forgotten, and remembered. Thus, *memory and desire* are mixed together in Spring, and *Winter* brings *forgetful snow*. Thus, Winter, which metonymically maps to the dormant phase of a Plant Life Cycle, refers to when a memory is forgotten, and in Spring, memories are reawakened by fertile ground.

Generic	Input 1: Plant Cycle	Input 2: Memory Cycle	Blend
Rejuvenation period	Spring - Planting / Sprouting	Rememberance	REMEMBERANCE PERIOD IS (CRUEL) SPRINGTIME
Thriving period	Summer - Blooming	Reliving	RELIVING PERIOD IS SUMMERTIME
Dormant period	Winter - Dying	Forgetting	FORGETTING PERIOD IS (WARM) WINTERTIME
Thing which grows	Plant	(Uncomfortable) memory	MEMORY IS PLANT
Originating space	Earth	Subconscious	SUBCONSCIOUS IS EARTH

As we read through the speaker's description of Spring, we are haunted by his very first statement: *April is the cruellest month*. It's a non-sequitur, considering the generally positive connotations of Springtime and its liveliness. Eliot switches the qualities of Life and Death around, making the cozy, bright Spring *cruel*, and winter, instead of being cold, deathly, and oppressive as commonly understood, *keeps us warm*. Immediately, the reader gets the sense that something has gone wrong. As the poem begins to speak through Marie, we see the a piece of the broader metaphor at play here that brings context to the switch up. In a time when national

identity and the romanticism movement is becoming ever more popular, Eliot positions Marie's discussion of her own national identity as thoroughly vapid and uninteresting, just a part of *drinking coffee, and talking for an hour*. She claims a Lithuanian identity, a nation sandwiched between the powers of Russia in the east and Germany in the west, in a time when all people must face these questions of identity. Marie also omits the first person pronoun in her German speech — a fascinating piece of structural metonymy that alludes to a disconnected personal identity in a sea of shifting national identities. This confusion and introspection is in contrast to Winters of her past, where Marie went sledding with her family as a child and *there [she] felt free*.

For Marie, those memories are better left unrelived - she reminisces on her childhood in the snow, where there was genuine fun and excitement sledding with her family. It mocks her today in her vapid and posturing present.

Generic	Input 1: Plant/Memory Blend	Input 2: Marie's Life	Blend (less metaphorical)
Thriving period	RELIVING PERIOD → SUMMERTIME	Summertime (present) in the gardens, discussing identity	TIME WITH MOST DISCOMFORT FOR MARIE IS MOST THRIVING TIME FOR MEMORY
Dormant period	FORGETTING PERIOD → (WARM) WINTERTIME	Wintertime (past) sledding with cousin	TIME WITH MOST ENJOYMENT FOR MARIE IS TIME WITH LEAST MEMORY

We can take Marie's quotation as a microcosm and compare it to Europe as a whole as the macrocosm. Just as Marie rebuilds and restructures her life and social activities as an adult living in the post-war era, Europe must rebuild its cities and social structures living within them. We can map THE LIFE CYCLE OF EUROPEAN CITIES IS THE LIFE CYCLE OF NATURE, while BUILDINGS ARE FLOWERS, and the RUBBLE OF WAR IS THE DEAD LAND. We find numerous entailments to this metaphor. The form metaphor of a flower growing taller and taller and blossoming into beauty is particularly apt to describe building tall new buildings in city centers. The natural and organic spreading growth of plant life is an entailment that is also mapped,

describing European cities as also growing steadily and spreading out. Eliot's spring is *cruel*, and to Marie and thousands of other Europeans, their carefree past seems preferable to the difficult and uncomfortable questions posed to them today.

The next stanza is the only one in this section is in the present tense and describes a literal wasteland, explicitly asserted as completely infertile and impossible for plants to grow in. First, the speaker asks *What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / out of this stony rubbish?*

Generic	Input 1: Nature	Input 2: Europe	Blend
Subject	Plants	Culture, Buildings	BUILDINGS ARE PLANTS
Rejuvenation period	Spring - Planting / Sprouting	Postwar	POSTWAR EUROPE IS TIME FOR REGROWTH
Thriving period	Summer - Blooming	Golden Age of Civilizations	HYPOTHETICAL FUTURE GOLDEN AGE IS THRIVING PERIOD
Death period	Winter - Dying Desert, rock	WWI - Rubble	CURRENT CULTURAL DESOLATION IS A DEATH PERIOD
Catalyst to growth	Fertility	Images	IMAGES ARE FERTILITY

He casts doubt that any real vibrant life can take root in a wasteland of *red rock, dry tree, and dry stone*; all images of both the desolate landscape of the Death stage in the Nature frame, as well as a ghost town ravaged by warfare in the Europe frame. This is because man's memories are reduced to *a heap of broken images*, which fails to fulfill the role of fertility in bringing about growth. One fact of the Nature frame is that, as long as there is fertility, the cyclic motion will continue eternally. If we extend this to the Europe frame we find that without a healthy base of philosophy or memory, there is no hope for Postwar Europe to re-establish itself culturally.

A figure seems to offer an answer:

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.

In one sense, the movement of shadow, referring to a whole day is metonymically referencing the Day cycle, which in turn maps easily to a Life cycle. The figure's shadow is a metonymic reference to the grim reaper, referencing death through the reaper's and the shadow's similar darkness and the flat, prone position of both shadow and corpse. Indeed, the shadow, at the end of the day, has agency to *rise to meet you*, like how, in the legends, simply seeing the reaper means that you have died. A figure standing and facing the sun knows that the sun will rise, fall, disappear, and rise again; just as, perhaps, he expects Europe to be prosperous, go into war, and eventually rebuild itself back into prosperity. Presently, the speaker and the second person both stand in shadow in this red wasteland — just as Europe is in a dark time. However, the speaker suggests that, in truth, the day/night cycle is invalid — his truth is *fear in a handful of dust*. Dust is static and void. It has no cycle. If Eliot believes that the cycle is invalid, then certainly we have no hope leaving this infertile, shadowy, stony desert. The first stanza suggests that physically, buildings are coming back up and bringing painful memories of past grandeur and liveliness with them — in this stanza, we add that this *heap of broken images*, our memories of the past, have nowhere to go and will not be rebuilt — ultimately, they all sum up to as much substance as dust.

The final scene in this section ties these images directly to Eliot's city of London itself - the heart of the English Empire. It is desolate and deathly in all regards, with descriptions mirroring the crowds in the Greek underworld.

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.

Here, it is still a smoggy winter morning in the Unreal City, not spring. In these fields of the dead, the speaker happens upon an acquaintance from the past, named Stetson. Recalling the

primary metaphors of KNOWLEDGE IS VISION, we know the speaker cannot see the man clearly through the smog of industrial London; thus, if KNOWING ACCURATELY IS SEEING CLEARLY and the speaker's history is metonymically alluded to by this character from the speaker's past, we find that the speaker can only vaguely understand their past. The speaker asks, *That corpse you planted last year in your garden, Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?* He alludes graphically to all those who had died in the Great War by forcing a dead soldier from the Europe frame into the Nature Life Cycle frame — have their lives been wasted in vain? There are plenty that may have stunted this corpse's blooming — *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!* Eliot suggests all these maladies - frost, aggressive dogs - may ruin the fertility of the corpse. We should keep in mind that this scene takes place during the Winter, and thus is during the death-period. We recall that, during World War I, families on the homefront were heavily propogandized and did not understand how horrible a beast this war was until the soldiers came home at the end. We would expect that, if Stetson's corpse were to represent a microcosmic version of European cultural identity, then the speaker's fears about the corpse are confirmed. In an act of dramatic irony, Eliot has already told us in the previous stanzas that this cadaver will certainly not bloom, that is, Europe cannot grow back to its previous glory.

The second section, *A Game of Chess*, describes two scenes featuring women in one-sided conversations. In the first, a woman sits in her ostentatiously decadent throne room, preparing for a date as she experiences gradually worsenening psychosomatic hallucinations. The second scene takes place in a bar, where one woman recounts her chat with her friend Lil, whose husband is returning home from war and the woman tries to persuade Lil into spending money to make herself beautiful in order to ensure her husband's faithfulness.

The opening of the first woman's parlor is described in words nearly identical to that of Shakespeare's Cleopatra; while Eliot muses *The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne, Glowed on*

the marble, Shakespeare describes *The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, Burn'd on the water.*

And with this he begins an intensely detailed lavish description of her parlor. In one corner, there lies symbols of Cleopatra's lustful energy and privileged excess. There is a glass *held up by standards wrought with fruited vines / From which a golden Cupidon peeped out / (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)*. We recall the Fertility frame, where fruited vines are associated with childbearing and the standards around which the vines are wrapped are a more phallic symbol. Simultaneously, the collection of cupids also directly invoke the Fertility frame as mythic symbols of sex. The decadence continues in jewels and satin, and a collection of unstopped *strange synthetic perfumes, unguent, powdered, or liquid — troubled, confused and drowned the sense in odours*. We find all our senses totally barraged by this woman's material wealth, that drugs her and muddles all her senses. Once again, if Knowledge is Vision, or more generally, Knowledge is Sensing, then Cleopatra's understanding of the world must be significantly impeded by this parlor.

In the other corner stands a *sevenbranched candelabra*: a menorah. By itself, it harkens back to the story of Hanukkah, and by metonymic extension it refers to the eternal divinity itself. However, when this menorah is placed inside this gaudy room, the cloying ornamentation in the room distorts and exaggerates the menorah until it becomes a caricature of itself. The ornamented glass doubles the candelabra's flames; the perfumes are highly flammable and *ascended* *In fattening the prolonged candle-flames, Flung their smoke into the laquearia, Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling*. Even the flames themselves, influenced by these vapors, glow green and orange.

The final image is a painting in the center of the room, hanging above on the mantel. It depicts the legend of Philomel. In the legend, the king Tereus is married to Procne, Philomel's sister. Tereus rapes Philomel, then cuts off her tongue so that she is unable to accuse him. Philomel tells Procne about the event by way of weaving a tapestry depicting her story, and the enraged Procne feeds Tereus his own son. The gods, having had enough, transform Philomel into

a nightingale, Procne a swallow, and Tereus a hawk. We are driven back to the Fertility frame.

Rape is an act of sex, but a vicious and violent one, and not part of the classic love and childbearing trope. Indeed, it seems that even today the nightingale is still trying to seek justice: she cries ‘jug, jug’, but nobody is here to understand it. There is clearly something amiss in the classic life cycle in this case.

The final element in this scene is the woman in this parlor herself. She is going mad, and speaking to a voice that she cannot see nor hear clearly. We are reminded that it is her gaudy decorations amplifying the candelabra’s light that muddles her senses. She asks what the voice is thinking, to which the voice replies, *I think we are in rats’ alley / Where the dead men lost their bones*. This description of the utmost poverty is in stark contrast to what she sees as a grandiose home. She hears other sounds and feels paranoid, frantically asking “*What is that noise?*” over and over, which the speaker assures her is merely the wind, it’s nothing. The only thing the speaker remember is, cryptically, *those are pearls that were his eyes*. Indeed, we have seen the eye pearls already — in the first section, the clairvoyant Sosostriis predicted a vision of a drowned sailor with pearls for eyes, and warned against death by water. It mirrors Stetson’s buried corpse, as Stetson was a sailor himself, *in the ships at Mylae*. We recall the corpse as metaphorically referencing the

cultural identity of Europe, which has failed to take root to regrow.

We return to the woman’s parlor. In the revolutionary period of the mid to late 1800’s, the romantic nationalists painted goddesses of Freedom, Libery, Democracy and the Nation. In Eliot’s Europe, this goddess has gone mad - her senses are assaulted by her own excess and privilege, and divinity and spirituality, once hallmarks of a grounded cultural society, has been distorted and transformed into a technicolor mockery of



Phillip Veit. (1848). *Germania*.

itself. All our goddess can see in her muddled vision is images rape and torture, and the voices in her hallucinating head tell her that she is in a rat's alley, lying with corpses. Even in this diseased state, she must act normal. At home, *her hair / Spread out in fiery points / Glowed into words* in fits of insane rage; she confesses that she tries her hardest to hide these flaws in the public eye, stating "*I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street / With my hair down, so.*" She knows it's a desperate camouflage that won't last forever as she frantically asks the voices for help.

Generic	Input 1: Woman's Parlor	Input 2: Europe	Blend
Subject	Woman	National Identity	NATIONAL IDENTITY IS WOMAN (GODDESS FIGURE)
Quality of Subject	Woman's mental health	Nation's Cultural Integrity	NATION'S CULTURAL INTEGRITY IS WOMAN'S MENTAL HEALTH
Instrument	Sevenbranched Candelabra	Spirituality	SPIRITUALITY IS THE CANDELABRA
Thing that instrument emits	Candelabra's Flames	Spiritual Doctrine	SPIRITUAL MESSAGES ARE THE CANDELABRA'S FLAMES
Distorter	Mirror & Decorations	The Elite	THE ELITE IS THE MIRROR AND DECORATIONS
Role of Distorter	To exaggerate and distort the Candelabra's Flames	To corrupt religious doctrine	CORRUPTION OF DOCTRINE IS THE EXAGGERATION OF THE CANDELABRA
Catalyst for growth	Seeing Rape of Philomel (Infertility)	Understanding one's own Immorality	UNDERSTANDING ONE'S IMMORALITY IS SEEING THE PAINTING
"True" environment	Rat's Alley	Cultural Wasteland	WASTELAND IS BACKSTREET ALLEY

Thus, Eliot provides the reader with an intensely detailed scene that ties into itself elements of many frames. What does this tell us about Europe? We know from *The Burial of the Dead* that Eliot's society is attempting to rebuild itself, but there are cultural issues akin to infertility that make this rebuilding impossible and painful. The first half of *A Game of Chess* expands this from the angle of Ideology and Idealism. In our scene, the NATION IS THE

WOMAN in the romantic art-nouveau tradition, oft pictured with flag, sword, and olive branch leading her people to glory. DOCTRINE IS THE CANDELABRA which was built based on divinity, righteousness, and genuine goodwill. It also provides light, which we know to represent Knowledge. Prior to the war, nationalist ideology was enlightening and provided citizens of Europe with the drive and acumen to cast off the shackles of monarchy and create modern democracies. THE ELITE ARE THE WOMAN'S DECORATIONS. This metaphor is clear, because of how the ostentatious jewelry and perfumes are available only to the privileged. They tote images of fertility, with vines and cherubs, seemingly offering hope for regrowth; but we are reminded that there is an artificiality to them, as they magnify and distort the once-wholesome light of the candelabra. The mirror which reflects and doubles the candelabra's light is *glass*, not crystal; the perfumes that fatten and recolor the candelabra's flames are *strange and synthetic*. The Dogmas that once led the Nation to greatness now confuse and torment it. Eliot certainly understands the pretentious posturing of the cultural elite in postwar Europe, as he described how Marie must examine her own nationality defensively, as though she were being accused. Philomel had to weave a tapestry to alert others of her predicament; now, the tapestry of her story hangs on this woman's mantel, but she is too drugged by her surroundings to understand.

There are certainly fascist and antisemitic undertones that can be drawn from this scene. The menorah, besides being a symbol for divinity in an abstract sense, is easily identified as a salient and direct symbol for Judaism, and this section can be interpreted as the dazzling light of Jewish influence disorienting and drugging Eliot's nationalist icon. It is no secret that Eliot held quite conservative views. The woman asks the unseen speaker what he is thinking, to which he responds, *I think we are in rats' alley* — he comments on how the luxury and decadence surrounding her is a façade for deep-seated issues that she is not sober enough to see. But the way that Eliot has identified Jews as rats in other works, most famously in his poem *Burbank*

with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar suggests a more direct and disturbing point that can be derived from this portion of the text.

The second passage in *The Fire Sermon* features one woman's dialogue, peppered with the barkeep's reminders that she and her friends should leave. She recounts her recent chat with Lil, a woman whose husband left for the war. Lil had been recovering from the side effects of a recently induced abortion which wrecked her health, and the woman at the bar argues that, in her current state, no man would want her; if she wanted her husband to be faithful when he returns, then she should pay for a new set of teeth and tidy herself up.

Once again, we see a question of broken fertility. In an aside, the speaking woman mutters (*She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.*), which is her explanation of why Lil chose to abort her most recent baby via poison pills prescribed by a chemist. Lil's own fertility has been pushed to the breaking point, yet both her husband and her friend here are pushing her for more: *What you get married for if you don't want children?* argues the speaking woman. They are entirely unsympathetic to her personal ills; to them, Lil's only goal in mind should be keeping her man, remaining his sexual object at all costs — even her health and life. Her friend has good intentions, perhaps, but the way that she talks about her with snide asides, compounded with the fact that we are learning about Lil's story solely through this woman's gossiping, shows that this woman cannot be said to have respect for Lil. Lil even accuses our speaker of considering having an affair with her husband:

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.

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

It's a bold and pointed remark, and our speaker doesn't even refute it.

Since Lil is the one with fertility issues, we can examine her as the source for the Fertility metaphor towards the target of Europe. Just as our speaker has certainly overstayed her welcome at the bar, it seems Lil has overstayed her welcome as a childbearer. We harken back to the barren wasteland where no plant can take root - Lil has become similarly barren, pushed to her breaking point where it is no longer wise for her to have more children. However, everyone around her insists on keeping up her look, so that she remains sexually desirable, and they discuss this as though it is self-evident fact. In the Europe frame, we find a similar situation. SOCIETY IS THE GOSSIPS, CULTURAL IDENTITY OF EUROPE IS LIL, and WORLD WAR I IS LIL'S ABORTION PILLS. All of society is expecting Europe to resurrect its former glory, and Europe is forced to go through the motions, by rebuilding buildings and other physical alterations. Eliot argues once again that this is a façade, that Europe's infertility runs deep.

Generic	Input 1: Lil's Situation	Input 2: Europe	Blend
Subject	Lil	National Identity	NATIONAL IDENTITY IS LIL
Quality of Subject	Lil's Fertility	Nation's Cultural Integrity	NATION'S CULTURAL INTEGRITY IS LIL'S FERTILITY
Appearance of Subject	Lil's Teeth	Nation's Culture on the Surface	NATION'S CULTURE ON THE SURFACE IS LIL'S TEETH
Destroyer of Quality	Abortion Pills	WWI	WWI IS ABORTION PILLS
Subject's Procedure	Lil's Childbirths	Past rebuildings of society	PAST REBUILDINGS OF SOCIETY ARE LIL'S PREVIOUS CHILDBIRTHS
Perceivers of Subject	Gossiping Women in the Bar	Society	SOCIETY IS THE GOSSIPING WOMEN
Entailments/ Inferences	The more children Lil bears, the weaker she becomes	The more crises a civilization rebuilds from, the weaker and more diluted its cultural identity becomes	

We even have an entailment to this specific metaphor - it would hurt Lil more to attempt childbirth again than to not, because Lil's abortion was not a typical childbirth and harmed her deeply. Similarly, because of the particularly violent nature of the Great War it would perhaps hurt Europe even more to attempt to rekindle former glory now than to not do so. We see now, in

the flesh, another reason why April is the cruellest month: Eliot constructs this scene for us to take pity on Lil; she cannot defend her own health in the face of the expectations of the overbearing crowd around her. By extension, we find ourselves sympathetic to Eliot's Europe, where it is almost unreasonable bullying to expect it to still be fruitful.

The third, and longest, section of the poem is *The Fire Sermon*. It is named after a discourse delivered by the Buddha comparing material wants to burning fire - quick, passionate, deluding, and ultimately transient. According to Eliot's own footnotes, this is comparable in scale and importance to Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. It features an image of the Fisher King from Arthurian legend fishing in the Thames, then we have a voyeuristic vision on acts or suggestions of sex - in the first, the speaker is invited to join what is commonly understood as a homosexual affair; in the second, we watch the mechanical, unfeeling sex between a man and wife. Finally, he takes us on a journey via boat, where he blends together autobiographical experiences with a gossiped affair with the Queen Elizabeth and an Earl.

The first two stanzas of *The Fire Sermon* describe the Thames and its banks. Once, it was beautiful and grand, as Eliot quotes writings and paintings of yore where nymphs frolicked on its shores. Today, while the Thames' water itself is not littered, its banks are dull, brown, and those aforementioned nymphs have long gone:

*The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.*

As our speaker sits amongst slimy rats in the vegetation surrounding the *dull canal* that the Thames has become these days, he reveals his identity as the Fisher King as he is *Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him*. In Arthurian legend, the Fisher King was directly descended from a long line of kings tasked with protecting the Holy Grail. After getting an injury to the thigh or groin, he is rendered infertile and crippled, and his

country and land becomes infertile as well. Unable to produce an heir to protect the Grail after he passes, he spends his day fishing on the river since he cannot go out to hunt, waiting for a fabled hero to save him. A crucial part of healing the Fisher King, according to this legend, is to ask *what ails you?*, a question that only the most morally and spiritually pure may ask. But the inability for the questing knight to ask this question leaves him out journeying pointlessly for years, and according to some retellings of the legend, the Fisher King might not be healed at all.

In this stanza, we also get images of the trench warfare itself, with another scurrying rat *dragging its slimy belly on the bank*, while around him are *white bodies naked on the low damp ground / And bones cast in a little low dry garret* — unmistakable references to the horrific scenes of wasteful death that the soldiers had to witness. Journals from the time recount the ailment of trench foot, when one's feet begins to rot after soaking for weeks in the soggy and slimy mud of the crevices, as well as mass graves, where rats would chew through the cadavers of soldiers who died by the thousands from ever more disastrous methods of war.

Generic	Input 1: Fisher King	Input 2: Europe	Blend
Subject	Fisher King	National Identity	NATIONAL IDENTITY IS FISHER KING
Quality of Subject	Fisher King's Fertility	Nation's Cultural Integrity	NATION'S CULTURAL INTEGRITY IS THE FISHER KING'S FERTILITY
Destroyer of Quality	Injury to the thigh/groin	WWI	WWI IS THE FISHER KING'S INJURY
Inferences:	Percival must ask the right question in order to heal the King	Europe's populace must interrogate themselves, to find the root cause of what is ailing Europe.	

The Fisher King was an early example of how authors used a single body as a microcosmic blend to its kingdom. The Fisher King's country's prosperity is directly tied to his own health. In Eliot's poem, this character muses on his time in the war - perhaps, where he was injured in the first place. The corpses thrown into the ground on the front lines were certainly not ones for flowers to grow out of. We see Eliot's Fisher King as yet another metaphor for Europe's

infertility, but with a new entailment: if Percival, the knight who is questing to heal the Fisher King, represents the people of Europe trying to rebuild the fabric of their society, perhaps they are not asking the right questions to heal their country. If all goes according to legend, then by merely identifying the problem can you begin to heal it.

With the following scenarios, Eliot identifies what he believes to be the ailment that lies at fault for the Fisher King's impotence. The first scene features Mr. Eugenides, a merchant from Smyrna, in modern-day Turkey. We return to the setting that we ended *The Burial of the Dead* with - Unreal City, once again smoggy and in the midst of winter, though this time the day has progressed from dawn to noon. Mr. Eugenides's appearance is unkempt and *unshaven*, and he carries *a pocket full of currants*. Like a raisin, his snack is wrinkled and small, a dried and pathetic version of the fertile berry seed it once was. He asks the speaker to lunch and a weekend in hotels in Brighton, a city which was just beginning to gain infamy as the central hub of the underground queer community (Brighton Ourstory). The whole scene is littered with vulgarity for Eliot - from Mr. Eugenides's appearance, to his speech, to his proposition. Homosexual intercourse is, certainly, the ultimate non-productive intercourse in Eliot's eyes.

Next, we witness a typist, preparing dinner for her husband who has yet to come home. It appears sad and dull, as

Out of the window perilously spread

Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)

Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

It's a meager living arrangement: her sofa doubles as a bed, and on it sprawls her underwear. The poem enters a light ABAB rhyme scheme, almost mockingly mimicking a romantic song and dance, as we watch the scene move on. The man returns, eats his dinner, and has sex with his wife totally void of romantic passion.

*Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defence;
 His vanity requires no response,
 And makes a welcome of indifference.*

Generic	Input 1: Scene of the Typist	Input 2: Europe	Blend
Subject	Typist	National Identity	NATIONAL IDENTITY IS THIS COUPLE'S RELATIONSHIP
Object	Young Man	European Society	EUROPEAN SOCIETY IS YOUNG MAN
Quality of Subject	Typist's Passion in the Relationship	Nation's Cultural Integrity	NATION'S CULTURAL INTEGRITY IS TYPIST'S PASSION
Contributor to Quality of Subject	Gramophone	Lowbrow Pop Culture	LOWBROW POP CULTURE IS THE GRAMOPHONE
Role of Subject	Young Man's Predatory Sex	Society's Treatment of Culture	SOCIETY'S TREATMENT OF CULTURE IS THE YOUNG MAN'S SEX

This young man couldn't care less if his wife is enjoying the session or not. Indeed, she does not encourage him, nor does she stop him from his advances - Eliot's language in this section is clearly predatory despite the woman's surface indifference, and Eliot gives him no positive descriptors, from his pimpled appearance to his sour morals. When it is all over, the couple shares a final kiss, and as the husband stumbles away, all she can think of is "*Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over*" as she puts on a record. She is passive and totally apathetic to resist advances she knows she doesn't want. Eliot calling the carbuncular a '*lover*' is done so in the most sarcastic way, as there is truly no love on either side of the relationship here.

To Eliot, both sexual encounters are equally infertile. There is no romance or passion to this couple's relationship, and all this that we witness is purely performative and mechanical. The man is predatory, ugly, and selfish, the woman is vapid, weak, and cannot stand up for herself. We return to our Fisher King: What ails him?

Again, we see a battered downtrodden woman who cannot speak for herself, whose opinions are overridden by conniving and unsympathetic men and societies at large. If we once again make the parallel construction that CULTURAL IDENTITY OF EUROPE IS TYPIST WOMAN and POSTWAR SOCIETY IS YOUNG MAN, we see quite clearly that the way that society treats the Europe he has in mind is very much bordering on rape. The women that Eliot describes speak up and defend themselves as little as Philomel did. They have intercourse not for the purpose of bearing child — indeed, the woman’s surroundings are disheveled and she is not ready to become a mother. Instead, the young man takes advantage of his sexual object and uses it to fill his base desires. In the Target Europe frame, we would find that European society makes a fool out of European culture by blaspheming it with disregard for its integrity. The gramophone that the typist puts on after the encounter likely represents the lowbrow popular culture that Eliot complains is dulling the once pristine cultural identity of Europe.

The final scene of this section is a song on a boat, once again in the Thames. As the speaker courses down the river passing by English landmarks, we find that this time around, the river is quite polluted: *the river sweats / oil and tar*, and *the barges wash / drifting logs / down Greenwich reach*. On this boat sit the Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester, Robert Dudley, rumored at the time to have had an affair which conservative peers were strongly against. The Queen’s image as the Virgin was paramount, as she leveraged her potential to be married as diplomatic power against Sweden, Spain, Austria and France. Despite her clear love to Dudley and declaring him her favourite, it would have been politically unwise to marry him, thus all their trysts had to be kept hush-hush (Loades, 42-50). We witness their intercourse as the speaker recounts, *By Richmond I raised my knees / Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe*. And it is perhaps the next stanza that is most telling:

“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?"

With heart being the classic locus of emotion and romance, we find Elizabeth admitting that her heart is buried deep underground to hide it from sight. The common KNOWLEDGE IS VISION metaphor arises again, in that her metonymic symbol of affection and true love must be hidden from society's sight, thus this sexual relationship must be kept secret. Her lover promises a 'new start', a rebirth that Elizabeth can undergo through marriage. But both the reader and the speaker know that such a marriage is impossible — we've recognized since the very first line that, at this stage, such efforts towards regeneration, their relationship's Spring phase, is merely a cruel exercise. Indeed, Elizabeth understands that her utmost responsibility is to her people, her *humble people who expect nothing*. In this case, this *nothing* is a tall order: they expect Elizabeth to uphold her virginity.

The entailments of Elizabeth's tale are a bit different than those of the previous images we've seen. This time, we see social pressures force her away from her true passionate idealistic love. She is made to parade false purity to impress and appease her own countrymen and those abroad. The Queen is perhaps the most easy character to draw onto the cultural identity of England, having reigned over a particularly prosperous time in English culture, presiding over Shakespeare whose works are so often referenced within this very poem. If we import all these relationships from the source to the target, it doesn't necessarily make complete sense. Dudley is the Queen's forbidden, unspoken goal. To join him in holy matrimony could have been disastrous to her future political affairs. We find similarities between this woman's predicament with Lil's, in which any chance at rebirth - for the Queen, a figurative one, and for Lil, a literal one - would spell failure. What Eliot imagines as the goal for his society would be something positioned directly opposite all the sin that he has brought up.

The fourth section, *Death by Water*, is a short song, returning to our dead sailor. Here in the deep sea, the dead sailor is totally null and void. There is no hope for any continuation of Life Cycles. He has forgotten *the profit and loss*, and has passed the *stages of his age and youth*. To Eliot, the ocean is the ultimate void. There is evidence of some movement - *deep sea swell, current under sea*, and a *whirlpool* in the center. However, in the grand scale of the endless deep, these movements are trivial and forgettable. All sorts of poets have used the sea as counterpoint against the sky and salvation. In the sea there the depth is near-infinite, the ultimate nihilism. If *The Fire Sermon* was seeking to find the root cause of society's cultural downfall, then *Death by Water* is the pessimism that there is really no hope for renewal. The last line plays like a biblical premonition:

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

Eliot breaks the fourth wall here, and accuses the reader directly. One day, he says, we will die and be forgotten.

The final section, *What the Thunder Said*, brings its inspiration from another Indic tradition: the Upanishads of Hindu belief. What drew Eliot to the Catholic faith was dogma, mysticism, and storied tradition that his original Unitarian church did not provide (Spurr 2010). As we see now, his interest in Indic religion and philosophy lies on the same interest, pulling inspiration from its mythos and history.

We return to the red rocky wasteland from *The Burial of the Dead*. Crowds have gathered here, waiting to die.

*He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience*

Keeping in tone with the Revelations apocalypse theme of the section, we find references to past messianic figures turned on their head. Jesus Christ was described in Revelation 1:18 as

he that liveth, and was dead; but Eliot uses a form metonymy, flipping the present and past to signify the absence of Jesus. The same happens in the following lines, where his descriptions of the rock and water alludes to a tale of another messiah, Moses in Exodus, where he strikes a rock in the desert at Horeb and water flows forth. In this hellscape, *here is no water but only rock*, which Eliot repeats over and over again. We can feel the desperation in the dying people's voice as they thirst for sustenance, but nobody will come. The last time we were here, we were beckoned into the shade to be taught the lesson that our lives amount to nothing but a handful of dust. This time, there is no such shelter from the sun.

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 mudcracked houses

This is, truly the ultimate barrenness. Monstrous creatures like crawling bats spin as we reach eveningtime in the Unreal City. Added to this hellscape, we see towers falling from the sky, fallen great kingdoms from ages past. London joins the group, and we are in the graveyard of civilizations.

But just when we think that all the world is doomed, there is a glimmer of hope a hemisphere away, in the form of a flash of lightning over the Ganges river. Following the lightning, the rain begins to fall, and we hear the booming of the thunder across the Indian landscape. According to Upanishad legend, the gods, the humans, and the demons all sought wisdom from the God of Creation, Brahma. He responds with one word: Da, and each group interpreted the statement in their own way. The celestials, who lived a live of sensual excess and pleasure, interpreted the Da as Damyata, the Sanskrit word for restraint. Thus, they practiced

self-restraint, and became wiser. The humans were greedy, and wanted to hoard everything by nature; they heard Da as Datta, the Sanskrit word for giving. Thus, they tempered their greed with charity. The demons were cruel and injurious to others, and heard Da as Dayadhvam, the Sanskrit word for mercy. Thus, they countered their cruelty with mercy. (Nikhilananda)

Eliot quotes these three lessons directly in the poem and waxes poetic on moralistic lessons. First, he examines *what have we given?* Eliot describes the act of giving as almost terrifying: *My friend, blood shaking my heart / The awful daring of a moment's surrender.* However, ultimately, the backbone of a righteous society is generosity for the sake for goodness itself, not for recognition *found in our obituaries*, nor postmortem love *in memories draped by the beneficent spider*, nor wealth *under seals broken by the lean solicitor*. On the lesson of mercy and compassion, he critiques society's self-centeredness and egotism, picturing each man locked in his own jail cell, thinking only of freeing himself. Finally, on the lesson of self-restraint, he praises the ones who conform to structures of control, whether political or religious, and stick to their place: *your heart would have responded / gaily, when invited, beating obedient / to controlling hands.*

The poem closes out with a final scene with the Fisher King. He is resigned and has accepted the imminent death of himself and his kingdom; indeed, the infertility of his land seems permanent. His lands remain drought-ridden and arid, and a children's nursery rhyme recounts: *London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down* — the most salient entity in the Frame of his kingdom collapses around him. We recall that while it is raining in India, Europe is still the horrid red hellscape. In a variety of different languages, he revisits fleetingly various metaphors and messages he has left throughout the poem. From Dante's *Inferno* he mentions stepping into purifying fire in Italian, like those burning flames of *The Fire Sermon*. In Latin, he begs, *When shall I be like the swallow?* returning to the legend of Philomel on the encrusted mantelpiece. In French, he mentions *la tour abolie* of the Prince of Aquitaine, a destroyed tower not unlike the Fisher King's own London Bridge. He claims to use these fragments to protect against his ruin,

before lightning strikes thrice more and a quiet prayer beckons the poem to its close with the onomatopoeia of rain — *shantih shantih shantih*.

Generic	Input 1: Seeds	Input 2: Memory Fragments	Blend
Actor	Farmer	Eliot	ELIOT IS A FARMER
Object	Seed	Memory Fragments	
Role of Object	Grow into plants	Recall the past	NATION'S CULTURAL INTEGRITY IS LIL'S FERTILITY
Quality of Object	Different types of seeds	Diverse experiences and life lessons	NATION'S CULTURE ON THE SURFACE IS LIL'S TEETH
Catalyst for action	Rain	Self-reflection	WWI IS ABORTION PILLS

It's an elegant end to a hulking epic, largely because of how it becomes meta-poetic and references itself back into its core metaphors. We have seen over and over again how Eliot's postwar society is culturally infertile. The act of reciting the themes is like sowing a final crop of seeds all over foreign lands, containing the lessons that he has learned through the course of this poem. He says that *these fragments I have shored against my ruins*. Having gained omnipotent vision over the whole work, we can safely say that the Fisher King is now identified with Eliot himself. The Role of the Seed in its own frame is to grow into a plant while the role of the Memory in its own frame is to look into the past. We recall our Europe is Nature blend — if we generalize that to a Civilization is Nature blend, can combine all three together. As a seed grows from sprout to plant, it is nourished by rain; as our civilization grows to serve its people, it is nourished by self-reflection, and is based in the memories, lessons, and teachings of those who came before it.

Ultimately, Eliot has crafted a delicate tale, spiderwebbed with references, that outlines through metaphor after metaphor his opinions on morality and culture as a staunch conservative. Through his glorification of tradition and references to the great Classics, we can understand why

he is frustrated with the radical questioning of long-held cultural norms that new movements like Dadaism practiced. While to the pessimistic Eliot, Europe is more or less doomed, he finds hope in faraway cultures; perhaps there is a fertile crescent in Asia, where his model of society can be reborn.

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