



## The Waste Land and Other Poems

*T.S. Eliot*

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## **The Waste Land and Other Poems** T.S. Eliot

Few readers need any introduction to the work of the most influential poet of the twentieth century. In addition to the title poem, this selection includes "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", "Gerontion", "Ash Wednesday", and other poems from Mr. Eliot's early and middle work.

"In ten years' time," wrote Edmund Wilson in *Axel's Castle* (1931), "Eliot has left upon English poetry a mark more unmistakable than that of any other poet writing in English." In 1948 Mr. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize "for his work as trail-blazing pioneer of modern poetry".

## **The Waste Land and Other Poems Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Waste Land and Other Poems for online ebook**

### **Alice Lippart says**

Very good, but not my favorite.

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### **Agir(????) says**

??? ?? ???? ???? ???? ???? ???? ????

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### **Valerie says**

I once won 50\$ for reciting The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is a coffee shop. Making this the only one of my books to pay for itself in a material way.

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### **Janet says**

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land...

Retracing myself through the labyrinth of the Waste Land. Making an effort this time to read other sources, think about the project of making a mosaic out of a broken world.

Thank God for the Internet--really inspiring to read these dense works and then have access to such a myriad of supplemental sources. I've read this before and always got the gist and the music, but it's really spectacular to be able to get translations, references, allusions, even maps and photographs so easily. I've argued with my daughter about close readings of poetry--she thinks we read in a wee bit too much. And I agree, one should not lose the initial music and mystery to being too literal, and that it is a sign of our contemporary literalism that I'm tempted to google everything... and yet, I don't think it destroys the song and the mystery to actually know what that Italian or German or French poem or song was. It allows the rich, intricate poem or novel (Ulysses, say) to spread out into its variety of sources, unfolding into its matrix of Western Civilization, so that it's not only a text but an education.

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### **Trevor says**

Eliot is such a pompous old fart, how could anyone not love him? When I was still in high school if you wanted to be in the group of people who had any pretensions as ‘intellectuals’ or whatever else it was we had pretensions of – Eliot was de rigueur. I know large slabs of this poem by heart and when I worked as a house painter would quote it at length at the top of my voice when I ran out of Irish songs to sing while I rolled the walls – which probably misses the point of the poem, but I love how it feels in my mouth – like having your mouth full of chocolates and then coffee and then brandy, no, better, Cointreau.

There is something Romantic about this poem, despite it being the definitive Modern poem – all that stuff about, “The chair she sat in...” could be straight from Byron or Wordsworth.

I love the jokes, the sex in a punt and the pocket full of currants and I still love all of the horrible sexual adventures that are all ‘whip it in, whip it out and wipe it’ for the men and so totally unsatisfying for the women. And that bit about fore-suffering all enacted on this same divan or bed with the wee typist woman and her drying combinations, is just so damn good. One final, patronising kiss and gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit.

All the same, this is one of the masterworks of the language, some of it still forms a lump in my throat as the currents rise and fall and I pass through all the stages of my youth and age.

Okay, so maybe I wouldn’t quite agree with him now that ‘if you want to read me, learn my language’ – pretty much meaning learn the whole of European poetry to read a single poem – but very young men find this is exactly the sort of thing that draws one to Nietzsche – and Eliot was always my favourite right-wing wanker.

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### **Jonfaith says**

#### **I have measured out my life with coffee spoons**

I first heard of The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock while listening to a podcast of Entitled Opinions (thanks Tom) last winter. That podcast concerned Dante, however I found Eliot's images both vivid and modern. I then mentally shelved such for a future read. This present week appeared apt. While sorting through Marx and, then, Derrida on Marx and Shakespeare I found the prevailing winds favorable. Diving into such, I didn't care for the titular poem in the collection. The Waste Land and especially Eliot's notes for such strikes me as mere wanking. Oh well, verse isn't my métier, especially those alluding to the Grail. I did like Marina and Two Choruses from 'The Rock'

**I journeyed to London, to the timekept City  
Where the River flows, with foreign flotations.  
There I was told: we have too many churches.**

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### **Bruce says**

Although I have read “The Waste Land” a number of times, it has been a long time since I read it last, and I

have never studied it very thoroughly, having become entranced with “Four Quartets” and devoted most of my time and attention to that magnificent poem. Reading TWL again now, I am once again impressed, however, with its imagery and wealth of allusions. Some of these allusions are ones I recognize, although many I do not. Nonetheless, I am impressed with its modernist mood of enervation and disenchantment, its sense of emotional exhaustion and existential dislocation. Reading it makes me want to study it in depth more carefully and to mine its implications. I shall.

Now, on December 20, 2010, I want to update this review, having just reread this book:

"I find it good from time to time to reread Eliot's poetry. He is the spokesman for High Modernism and, although neither currently politically correct nor much in favor in the academy, he articulated a vision of the chaos and disintegration of the modern era and presented a startlingly original kind of poetry that inevitably influenced subsequent literature. I have many “favorites” among his poems; how can one not be captivated by “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, for example? “The Waste Land” is clearly considered by most people as his most important achievement, although it is not the verse that most appeals to me. But I am enchanted by Eliot's allusiveness, by his erudition, by his understanding of culture as both fragmentary and pervasive. I return again and again to this seminal poem, always understanding more of it, always awed by its insights and comprehensiveness. Without knowing this poem, one cannot hope to fully appreciate what to me is his greatest achievement, the lovely and profound “Four Quartets” (not included in this present volume). This latter is one of my very favorite works in English literature – I have audio recordings of it by both Ted Hughes and Alec Guinness, each providing differing and intriguing perspectives – and I reread it or listen to it again at least every year. Eliot is a poet who can be and is both loved and loathed – he is politically conservative, religiously orthodox, elitist, and insufficiently appreciative, for many people, to cultural contributions outside the “dead white male” European tradition - but for anyone interested in literary theory or literary history, he cannot be ignored. I find his work intriguing and perennially compelling, always provocative and challenging, endlessly invigorating."

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### **Michael Finocchiaro says**

One of my absolute favorite poems despite its formidable length.

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### **Lou says**

Probably my favourite poet. Poetry at its most incredible.

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### **Oriana says**

This is one of my favorite books of all time and to prove it, I named my dog Prufrock.

I wanted to put a picture of him here for you SO BAD that after stoically refusing for a million years, I finally opened a Flickr account so I upload my pix on GR.

So here is a shot of the time the cutest dog ever did the cutest thing ever and I actually died.

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## Pamela Shropshire says

It's very difficult to know just how to rate and review a work like this. I won't dare to pretend I understand everything; first of all, I have read very few of the works alluded to, so I didn't "get" much of the meaning directly from my own experience. My edition does have Eliot's notes and additional endnotes as well, but that's not the same as understanding all the subtle nuances that may be in those original works.

Still, I always have believed that poetry can be enjoyed on its own aesthetic merits - the sounds of the words themselves; the alliterations employed; the rhythms used. And in that vein, here are some of my favorite lines:

(from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*)

For I have known them already, known them all -  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;

All of *Prelude 1*

(From *The Waste Land*, V. *What the Thunder Said*)

Lines 331 - 358, that begins:

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...

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## David says

I think "The Waste Land" and the other poems in this collection ("Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and "Gerontion," "Portrait of a Lady" and "Four Quartets") are brilliant. That said, I have to sort of hold T.S. Eliot responsible for everything I hate about modern poetry. Obviously T. Stearns isn't wholly to blame, and I think he has a genius of his own, but I think that his influence on many of his poetic successors has mostly led to a disgusting pretension in poetry, which superficially veils emotions, quotes Latin, and ranks obscurity and abstruseness above art. Yea, I'm staking the claim: **T.S. Eliot is the father of the hipster movement** I mean, what could be more hipster than saying that *Coriolanus* is the greater tragedy to *Hamlet*? ...Right. "Oh yes, of course Fleetwood Mac's "Rumours" was great and all, but have you heard their earlier demos, with Stevie singing in iambs, accompanying herself on the tambourine, and Lindsay Buckingham on the zither? Oh you haven't? It's sublime"

For a American expat working as a bank clerk in London, Eliot was perhaps the first visionary of the caffeinated Brooklyn counterculture-turned-mainstream-turned-counter-culture-ad-infinitum:

Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"

Yea, T. Stearns, let's traipse around Bensonhurst late at night when all the bars stop selling PBRs and take the dusty mixed-nut bowls off the counter, let's wipe the dust off of our hemp-sewn socks, and knock the much off our patent leather high-top shoes, and walk alone and look at the citylights and meditate on what it all means to be alive, and why rents are so high, and what is a good synonym for boredom (boredom - snoredom - apathy - lassitude - yawn - pococurantism (oooh that's a good one) - disinterest - *l'ennui* (ooh, nice use of freshman year French, man, high-five)), and why the sea is boiling hot and weather pigs have wings, etc. etc.

One thing Eliot does master is capturing a rhythm without necessarily having a strict structure.

Unlike many of  
his successors, Eliot's po-  
etry has a meter and rhythm of its  
own,  
maybe inconsistent, but lyrical in its own  
way:  
not just sentences with  
strange line  
breaks.

*Je ne peux pas mentir.* Placet rithimorum.

He is also a master of allusion, which spans all of time, and does not belong to a singular era. He borrows from Shakespeare, from Homer, Henry James, all sorts of authors and thinkers and tinkerers, and blends them with the lowbrow culture which was pervasive in his day, and has a bold rhythm which is counter to its highbrow literary past. However, despite the highbrow-lowbrow contrast, the varied allusions form a beautiful fugue of meaning, which says something about society as a whole in a realistic way. Dovetailing off of Eliot's convergence of the high and low brow cultures in poetry, there is a kind of split between the ultra-obscurism of Wallace Stevens (whom I adore) and Hart Crane, and the self-indulgent colloquiality of Auden, Berryman, etc. While I think these are talented poets, I think they fall short of the kind of musicality of Eliot's poetry. However, I think poetry these days (which isn't to say all of it, or necessarily much of it, but rather the sort of stock-persona of poetry) is highly self-indulgent and pretentious.

*In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.*

In Williamsburg the hipsters come and go  
Talking of Michel Foucault.

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### **Jason Koivu says**

Hey, three stars from me for poetry is good! Why? Because I don't like the stuff. Yep, I'm a savage heathen.

I *LOVED* the stuff as a teen. I wrote notebooks filled with poetry (or at least something like poetry) back then. Somewhere along the line I lost my taste for it and now I can barely stand it.

Enter T.S. Eliot and his highly vaunted "The Waste Land". In some distant past, when I was in college or maybe it was even high school, I was told by teachers just how good this poem was. I don't remember any of them explaining why. We never read it in class, although it is fairly short. I don't even recall being assigned the poem to read on my own. So I didn't.

However, not having read something that "everyone else" has read really bothers me. The title floats about in my subconscious mind, occasionally whispering to me, "What, *War and Peace*? That book you haven't read yet, but everyone else has? Yes, that's still sitting unread on the shelf in the other room...just a few feet away. I hear it's good! But it's more of a book for *real* readers..." My brain is a dick. But it does get me off my ass, and so I finally recently read *The Waste Land and Other Poems*, not to mention *War and Peace*.

Once upon a time schools taught children...I was going to go on, but no, that sums it up. Once upon a time schools taught children. They were made to learn Greek and Latin. They knew the classics. And some of them later became writers themselves and they wrote poems like those found in this book, filled with references lost on ill-educated clods like myself. One day when I grow up I'm going to learn how to understand "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "Sweeney Among the Nightingales". But this is not that day!

No, these days I must be satisfied with remaining mired in my miserable ignorance, pleased to comprehend a mere portion of these poems. I am at least thankful to have grasped, and even enjoyed, parts of "The Waste Land" and others. To be honest, I wished I hadn't understood some of these, because they were stomach-churning. Sing-songy purple poetry (Is that a phrase? It is now!), whose titles I'll refrain from mentioning so as not to sour anyone's favorites, made me gag, cringe and convulse. Yes, it's better than anything I've ever written, but that doesn't improve it any in my mind.

This is not for me. That rating includes three very subjective stars. It's merely my opinion, part of which takes into account my enjoyment level while reading. That pool was barely half-full.

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### **Joseph says**

In the upcoming book *The World Broke in Two* by Bill Goldstein, Virginia Woolf is pleased by hearing "The Wasteland" read by Eliot. Several times she mentions that she has not read the poem but only listened to it. I did the same with the Audible edition. There is something to gain in listening.

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## ?Tash says

Never fails to give me goosebumps.

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## Becky says

### 3.5 stars

I have wanted to read *The Waste Land* since seeing various quotes taken from it strewn throughout Stephen King's works. My favorites are

*"I will show you fear in a handful of dust."* and  
*"This is how the world ends / Not with a bang, but with a whimper."*

Those quotes have always given me a little thrill when I see them mentioned in other books and novels, and they seemed to indicate to me that Eliot would be right up my alley, because it seemed that his work is dark, and a little twisted. I am not a poetry fan, but I thought that I might like Eliot despite that.

And I did, mostly. I grabbed this from the library, and read most of the 88 pages on the walk home. It was a lovely, although windy, day, and I just enjoyed the walk home with my nose stuck in a book.

This collection included the following (listed from the Table of Contents):

- The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

- Preludes

- Gerontion

- Sweeney Among the Nightingales

- The Waste Land

I. The Burial of the Dead

II. A Game of Chess

III. The Fire Sermon

IV. Death By Water

V. What The Thunder Said

Notes on 'The Waste Land'

- Ash-Wednesday

- Journey of the Magi

- Marina

- Landscapes

I. New Hampshire

II. Virginia

III. Usk

- Two Choruses From 'The Rock'

I liked most of the poems here, and in fact I can't really say that there were any that I did NOT like, but I just find it really difficult and distracting to read in verse. I really enjoyed the feeling and imagery of these poems, but I still feel like I'm just not perceptive enough to catch everything and to understand the symbolism or meaning or depth of the poetry. This is my own failing, due to my own preference for reading

prose rather than verse, but unfortunately, I have to take it out on poor Eliot.

I did like it, but I just feel like I should have loved it. I feel a little bad for not loving it, and for only being able to give this one 3 1/2 stars, but such is life. I will try more Eliot though, maybe. At least he writes interesting stuff... ;)

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## **Seemita says**

Thomas Stearns Eliot. A lot is hidden between those three words. A whole world perhaps. A depth measured by many oceans, a mystery viewed from bewitching lenses, a song marrying numerous notes, a candle thriving on inexhaustible wax.

During his writing season, that spanned over three decades, T S Eliot penned many evocative and luscious poems, with his pen always leaving a signature cryptic mark over his dotted sheets. Often a source of delusion to an enthusiastic poetic heart, his labyrinthine lyricism was like a lashing downpour on a parched heartland: one surrendered to the torrent at the risk of bearing undecipherable strokes on one's soul. I belong to this clan.

In this volume, his celebrated and most popular poems rub shoulders with their relatively lesser known but still dense cousins. And while my soul may curse my mind for being picky about Eliot's poems, I might go asunder for a while and share with you three gems, whose themes, narratives, cadence and wholeness can be adorned by adjectives from the 'superlative' family alone.

### **THE WASTE LAND**

In his most celebrated poem, his thoughts, meandering through five reverberating alleys of melancholy and despair, purport to create an image that oscillates between our meretricious values and late realizations. It begins with *The Burial of the Dead* where a collage of pictures bearing subdued trees, stony lands, dried showers and insipid sun leaves a young girl with a heavy heart who is further introduced to the throbbing futility of it all.

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.

Leading us to the next alleys, Eliot plays *A Game of Chess*, issues *A Fire Sermon*, condemns us to a *Death by Water* and lets us hear *What The Thunder Said*. All through this trail, we are trembling; more with remorse or excitement, is something we can't guess without ambiguity. Touching the themes of vengeance, repentance, nostalgia, penance and decay, he halts at "*Datta, Dayadhvan and Damyata*" as the final rousing call. This mantra in Sanskrit translates to "Give, Sacrifice and Control" respectively. This trinity, capable of resurrecting our being in a more dignified and buoyant fabric, is left for the reader to comprehend and validate.

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

---

## **GERONTION**

Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after dinner sleep  
Dreaming of both.

Thus starts this splendid poem, which is a mighty paean to a person's journey from youth to mellow. And as always detected by a fatigued eye, this journey is laden with discolored beliefs and stung steps.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. Think now  
She gives when our attention is distracted  
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
That the giving famishes the craving. Gives too late  
What's not believed in, or is still believed,  
In memory only, reconsidered passion.

---

## **ASH WEDNESDAY**

We are always in a vicious circle of creation and destruction. This engaging activity provides momentum to our lives and reinforces our core strength.

I rejoice that things are as they are and  
I renounce the blessed face  
And renounce the voice  
Because I cannot hope to turn again  
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something  
Upon which to rejoice.

A pity, then, that we can't always control this rigmarole. What if, dotting the circle, we reach a point from where a deviation threatens to derail our movement, propelling our faith engine to go kaput? The tumultuous fall, then becomes impossible to confine in words, for it pervades everything: our skin, our bones, our heart. Should we be foolish enough to expect a hand to pull us out of this ditch, at this hour, when all we have done till now, in our sturdy capacity, is overlook meek yet expectant eyes? Is hope of such benevolence, an absurdity? Well, there is someone, indeed, to whom we can always look upto.

Will the veiled sister pray  
For children at the gate  
Who will not go away and cannot pray:

Pray for those who chose and oppose.

---

"*Shantih Shantih Shantih* - The Peace that passeth understanding."

These poems are like pearls; the metaphorical oyster may pose a formidable guard but caress it with patience and stimulate it aloud and it will open up to a mesmerizing world of mellifluous prose and inspiring gist.

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### **Jonathan Terrington says**

#### My ode to T.S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot,  
You walked among the stars  
In your words,  
light trails blazing.  
Master of the modern,  
Ruler of the poetic.  
There is, and was, no poet to compare.  
Your mythology and legend stand immense.

Behold the waste land of the world,  
Behold the glorious prose of a world shaker.  
Though some have called thee,  
Mighty and dreadful plagiarist,  
Such slander upholds your greatness,  
The potency of your reinvention.  
There is a power to you - in rewriting the eloquent

So behold T.S. Eliot.  
A masterful poet.  
One who walked among the stars  
And brought the heavens a little nearer.  
What more can a poet do?

There is a simplicity to the greatest poetry. And at once there is a complexity. There is a simplicity, in that the greatest works of poetry don't contain wordiness or explicitly state their intentions. They strip back language to allow for a nice flow and rhythm to what they are doing. But at the same time there is a complexity generated by a presumed sense of intent and knowledge. The poet assumes that you will get, from the scarcity of language used, what they are aiming to convey. And that is part of the beauty of language, that because the poet strips everything down, there is so much which you can read into and draw as your own understanding of what the poem is about.

And that is what I sensed in *The Wasteland* and the other poems. *The Wasteland* is universally accepted as one of the most important pieces of modernism - regardless of all the arguments about it being a plagiarised piece of fiction. For an interesting breakdown on that idea of plagiarism and literature read this article . And no matter how you read Eliot's work: as a reinvention of older myths and narratives; as a depiction of a destroyed post-war landscape and the people affected by that world; or as a beautiful piece of art; there is so much to gain from reading this work. It really all proves that simply because older ideas are drawn upon and referenced that it doesn't have to be stealing.

Upon further reading and analysis it has come to my attention that what Eliot does in this masterpiece is to both play off the worlds of the common peasants and bourgeoisie with those who would be considered academic royalty. He sets up a comparison of white collar and blue collar workers, essentially creating a poem that works like a giant chessgame. In some ways a game of oneupmanship in which Eliot tells the reader that he is better than them but still sympathetic to them. This can be seen in the classical references to high forms of literary art that Eliot draws upon. But there are also elements in which Eliot shows that he is not supercilious and in fact appears to both sympathise and empathise with the proletariat working class (the second section for instance and in lines such as "consider Phlebas" particularly seem to suggest this).

Regardless of how you want to read it I challenge you to go and read one of the great works of literature. It is a notoriously difficult poem to understand and I know I got very little of it, but it was powerful and moving. And I am now looking forward to further discussion and dissection of this in upcoming classes. Isn't the greatest power of literature apparent in how it lives on after we have read it?

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### Riku Sayuj says

#### **The Unreal Wastelands & Labyrinths - What Memory Keeps and Throws Away; An Exercise in Recollection: in flashes and distortions.**

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You! Hypocrite lecteur! - mon semblable, - mon frère!

---

Chimes follow the Fire Sermon:

A rat crept softly through the vegetation;  
departed. A cold blast at the back, So rudely forc'd, like Philomela.  
It was Tiresias', it was he who doomed all men,  
throbbing between two lives, knowing which?

Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!  
Excuse my demotic French!

\*\*\*\*

Let us go then, him (that carbuncular young man), and you -  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

You may come or go, but speak not  
of Michelangelo.

When there is not solitude even in the Mountains,  
When even the sound of water could dry your thirst,  
Then you can lift your hands and sing of dead pine trees.

Have you yet been led,  
through paths of insidious intent,  
through every tedious argument,  
To that overwhelming question?

\*\*\*\*

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

Sweet Thames, sweating oil and tar,  
Sweet Thames, run on softly till I end my song,  
for I speak not loud or long,  
for I speak not clear or clean,  
for I speak in the hoarse whispers of the last man,  
for it was I who murdered you,  
and Ganga, right under the nose, of mighty Himavant!

You who were living is now dead.  
We who were living are now dying -  
With a little patience!

Break The Bough, and hang yourself from it,  
Sweeney, Prufrock, The Fisher King and the sterile others,  
all will follow first,  
like corpses etherised on well-lit tables.

\*\*\*\*

Remember me, me - Tiresias, once more, for we are all him,  
yet not.

The present will always look at the mirror,  
and see only a Wasteland,  
The Past is always the heavenly spring,

running dry now.

Perspective,  
Thy name is Poetry.

\*\*\*\*

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
These fragments you have shored against my ruins.

Why is it impossible to say just what I mean!

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

shantih shantih shantih

\*\*\*\*

---

You! Hypocrite reader, my likeness, my brother!

---

Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?

---

**João Fernandes says**

*"We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown."*

I may have just found my favourite American poet, even if some of his poems are incredibly religious in nature. *"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"* is absolutely wonderful and has some of the most fluid rhyming I've ever read.

