

THE TIRESIAS CONSCIOUSNESS

Eiko Araki*

“I wonder—it is possible that I am mad, of course,” a gentleman from Indiana wrote to Eliot some thirty years after the publication of *The Waste Land*, “whether ‘the dead cats of civilization,’ ‘rotten hippo’ and Mr. Kurtz have some tenuous connection with ‘that corpse you planted last year in your garden’?” This bewildered letter was cited by Eliot in “The Frontiers of Criticism.” This too earnest man, Eliot guesses, must have been “slightly touched in one corner of his head from having read *The Road to Xanadu*.” What Eliot is insinuating in this remark is a warning against the kind of literary criticism which attempts to explain poetry by examining its sources; of this Lowes’s work is a good example, though Eliot admits its value as “a fascinating piece of detection.” Trying to establish some connection between *The Waste Land* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as this earnest source-seeker did would seem absurd in the light of Eliot’s view, but there *is* some connection between them. It may not be so ludicrous, if we take into account the fact that Eliot once thought of using a quotation from *Heart of Darkness* as an epigraph to *The Waste Land*.

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Since the long-lost manuscripts of the poem have been brought to light, it is common knowledge that Pound the *sage homme* did much “to turn *The Waste Land* from a jumble of good and bad passages into a poem.” What he contributed for the most part is major surgery, trimming it drastically. At the beginning of Parts I, III and IV of the *ur-Waste Land*, for instance, there had been long and sometimes slack narrative passages, which were excised by Pound, except for the Boston opening of Part I which seems to have been omitted by Eliot himself.

* Associate Professor at Momoyama Gakuin University.

The Conrad quote also suffered the penalty of excision, because Pound doubted if it was “weighty enough to stand the citation.” The epigraph has been replaced by Petronius’s in the published poem. The passage Eliot had in mind as an epigraph for the original manuscript is:

“Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision,—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath—

‘The horror! the horror!’”

This is Marlow’s dispassionate description of Kurtz’s last agnozing moment deep in the dark Congolese forests. Many inquisitive commentators might mislead themselves into various interpretations as regards why Eliot wanted to cite the *Heart of Darkness*. One could assert with the back cover of the Penguin edition of the story that

T. S. Eliot’s use of this quotation from *The Heart of Darkness* [sic] as an epigraph to the original manuscript of *The Wasteland* [sic] was no doubt inspired by his belief that Mr Kurtz, the ambitious hero of the story, stands at the dark heart of the twentieth century . . .

This is one way of putting it. Or with A. Walton Litz one could assume that “the central *persona* of *The Waste Land* owes more to James’s ‘central consciousness’ and Conrad’s detached narrator” and thus conclude:

[T]he debt to Conrad’s narrative method is much more pervasive than any particular connection with the desperate vision of Mr. Kurtz.¹

I find the latter explanation the more convincing, and would-be modern expositors might well favour the latter. For sure Eliot was not in-

¹ A. Walton Litz, “*The Waste Land* Fifty Years After,” in *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land*, ed. A. Walton Litz. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 18. All subsequent references to Litz are from this work.

different to those modern fictional techniques, which were, as he remarked at the end of his essay "Swinburne as Poet," "struggling to digest and express new objects, new groups of objects, new feelings, new aspects, as, for instance, the prose of Mr. James Joyce or the earlier Conrad." The detached narrative method modelled on Conrad may be what he had in mind when he made the citation in the original typescript. But is that all he intended? I doubt if he noticed only its technical aspect. We must think about why he chose this particular passage out of the whole story, for I think what it says cannot be separated from the content of *The Waste Land*, and "the desperate vision of Mr. Kurtz" is, in fact, directly connected with the vision of Phlebas.

In "Death by Water," Part IV of *The Waste Land*, we witness the death of Phlebas the Phoenician. He was "a fortnight dead, / Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / And the profit and loss." This section significantly survived, after Pound's extensive deletion of the shipwreck narrative preceding it. In this Phlebas passage there is a sentence which catches my eye:

As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.

This, I am convinced, portrays a panoramic vision which the Phoenician sailor perceived on the verge of death. The popular belief goes that a dying man sees, in a single moment, all his past rush back in minutest detail, and appear before his eyes either successively or retrogressively or even simultaneously. The reversal of his "age" and "youth" here perhaps means this vision is experienced backwards. This section is, as is well known, originally translated into English from the earlier French poem "Dans le Restaurant":

Un courant de sous-mer l'emporta très loin,
Le repassant aux étapes de sa vie antérieure.

The French version of the equivalent passage is more specific about

going through the stages of the sailor's life.

This part of the poem, cryptically succinct due to Pound's Caesarian operation, has puzzled many critics, but I think the line "He passed the stages of his age and youth" may be explained as referring to this curious phenomenon. One critic relates this passage to D. G. Rossetti's sonnet *The House of Life* LXII¹ in which is written an instantaneous recollection of his past life experienced by a drowning man:

Lo! the soul's sphere of infinite images!
 What sense shall count them? Whether it forecast
 The rose-winged hours that flutter in the van
 Of Love's unquestioning unrevealed span,—
 Visions of golden futures: or *that last*
Wild pageant of the accumulated past
That clangs and flashes for a drowning man.
 [italics mine]

Henri Bergson was keenly interested in the panoramic vision said to be perceived by a dying man. It gave strong proof of his conviction that no memory is buried in utter oblivion and that time lost can be restored in its entirety under certain circumstances. Georges Poulet examines this phenomenon, taking it for spontaneous spatialization of time, in contrast with the Bergsonian fluid continuity of memory. I am greatly indebted to his illuminating essay on Bergson, entitled "Bergson—le thème de la vision panoramique des mourants et la juxtaposition," included as an appendix to *L'Espace proustien*. Incidentally, he prefixes this essay with Rossetti's poem given above. Poulet quotes from *Matière et Mémoire* one of those passages where Bergson considers this phenomenon:

Or c'est un fait d'observation banale que l'« exaltation » de la mémoire dans certains rêves et dans certains états somnambuliques. Des souvenirs qu'on croyait abolis reparaissent alors avec une exactitude frappante; nous revivons dans tous leurs détails des scènes d'enfance entièrement oubliées; nous parlons des langues que nous ne nous souvenions même plus d'avoir

¹ Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 328.

apprises. Mais rien de plus instructif, à cet égard, que ce qui se produit dans certains cas de suffocation brusque, chez les noyés et les pendus. Le sujet, revenu à la vie, déclare avoir vu défilier devant lui, en peu de temps, tous les événements oubliés de son histoire, avec leurs plus infimes circonstances et dans l'ordre même où ils s'étaient produits.¹

Poulet then enumerates various instances of this hypermnesiac phenomenon reported by psychologists and expressed in literary works. This phenomenon is certainly applicable to Phlebas's case of drowning.

I think the Phlebas passage of Part IV leads us back not only to the drowned Phoenician sailor of Part I introduced by Madame Sosostriis (and this is the reason why Pound insisted, in reply to Eliot's humble query, that Phlebas of Part IV should not be deleted but was "needed ABSOlootly"), but also to the Conrad epigraph, for the citation recapitulates the same reenactment of one's prior life. Let me quote the sentences just before the epigraph.

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair.

Then comes the opening line of the epigraph.

Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? . . ."

The former quotation gives the details of the expression on Kurtz's face provoked by the agony of immediate death. "[A]n intense and hopeless desire" Marlow saw on his face accompanies the concentration of all his attention, of all his senses and of all his organs. His tension reaches its height at this point. But at the same time the crisis of death

¹ Georges Poulet, "Bergson—le thème de la vision panoramique des mourants et la juxtaposition" in *L'Espace proustien*. (Gallimard, 1963), pp. 140-1. Also in Henri Bergson, *Oeuvres*, 2^e éd. Edition du Centenaire. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 295.

suddenly robs him of his attention to life which has hitherto preoccupied his consciousness. A calm feeling of relaxation, a kind of apathy almost, supersedes the intense condition of strain and attention. Here lies the essentially Bergsonian paradox. According to Poulet, Bergson did not ascribe the recovery of memory to tension or rigidity of spirit, as most predecessors did, but, on the contrary, to the slackening of its habitual tension. Our consciousness is habitually directed to our immediate life. A mere switchover of the direction of consciousness is enough to revive the forgotten details of memory.

Kurtz is thus abruptly cut off from attachment to this world. He forgets "the profit and loss" of his trade, finally puts himself at the mercy of the whirlpool, as Phlebas did, and just then he can recover and possess his past. This is like a sudden illumination. That which has been veiled from his eyes is disclosed in a flash. "[T]hat supreme moment of complete knowledge" in the epigraph means the moment when the ultimate truth of life as "desire, temptation, and surrender" is revealed and presented to him in consequence of an act of self-abnegation.

The following passage from Bergson, whose lectures Eliot once attended in Paris, is relevant here.

Mais si notre passé nous demeure presque tout entier caché parce qu'il est inhibé par les nécessités de l'action présente, il retrouvera la force de franchir le seuil de la conscience dans tous les cas où nous nous désintéresserons de l'action efficace pour nous replacer, en quelque sorte, dans la vie du rêve. Le sommeil, naturel ou artificiel, provoque justement un détachement de ce genre.¹

The French philosopher attests that only when we are liberated from our actual life, that is, at the moment of detachment or disinterestedness, can the past get over the threshold of our usual self-regarding consciousness and be revived. Such a moment occurs, to use again Bergson's words, "dans des cas exceptionnels," "dans certains cas de suffocation brusque, chez les noyés et les pendus." But the moment of

¹ Bergson, p. 295.

detachment is not reserved to the drowning only. I may remark in passing that the so-called dark night, recognized in both Jungian and mythical rebirth patterns, is on a par with this state of disinterestedness. The concepts only differ in the degree of effort required to reach that state. Bergson also thinks that "sommeil" is favorable to "détachement," which again reminds us of Eliot's other exceptional case.

Quoting the same paragraph from Bergson, Kristian Smidt relates it to Eliot's essay on John Marston,¹ in which Eliot compares an underlying "pattern" or an "exceptional consistency of texture" found in Marston's tumultuous and ferocious play to "the kind of pattern which we perceive in our own lives only at rare moments of inattention and detachment, drowsing in sunlight." Bergson's belief that "sommeil" incites a sudden intuitive illumination is, accordingly, in parallel with Eliot's statement. Drowsiness and sunlight equally recall to us his later use of the rose garden image where the pattern is experienced as real, as the absolute reality, in "the moment in and out of time."

Such "rare moments of inattention and detachment" as in the rose garden are, therefore, essentially coincident with Kurtz's "supreme moment of complete knowledge." Marlow recollects that Kurtz's final judgement on the world ("The horror!") "had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth—the strange commingling of desire and hate." But to see the horror, which is inaccessible to ordinary people, is at least "a moral victory." Both Phlebas and Kurtz caught sight of the hidden truth, comparable to the reality glimpsed in the rose garden, which humankind cannot bear very much. So we can assume with Poulet that dying men are seers or visionaries, who, detached from their immediate life, can paradoxically recover what has been lost. By losing all they regain all. They dream rather than live their existence. In this respect artists are more or less seers like the dying. Bergson writes elsewhere that artists can get into immediate communication with things, and bring to light the profound reality which is hidden to people because of their habitual attention to life. It is, as Marlow acutely re-

¹ Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot*, revised ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 175-6.

marked, "as though a veil had been rent"—a veil which is interposed between nature and us, and moreover between us and our own consciousness: a thick veil for ordinary people, a light veil almost transparent for artists and poets.¹

This recovery of time through memory seems related to what Bergson calls *durée pure*, comparable to a musical harmony in which each separate note makes a composite whole—the music of our interior life, as it were. Eliot further extended this assumption and made the revived past synonymous with the historical tradition, the private consciousness with the universal consciousness. For Eliot all times and all places thus become identical in a way. From this derived his "historical sense" involving "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" and "a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe . . . has a simultaneous order," expounded earlier in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." To such spatialization of time Bergson would have been fundamentally opposed.

I do not intend to go into the complex details of Bergson's philosophy, nor its influence on Eliot; I just wish to suggest how the original epigraph from *Heart of Darkness* is relevant to the Phlebas passage, in terms of the Bergsonian recapture of time through consciousness. We must take into consideration the fact that Eliot hit on this epigraph in the course of elaborating the manuscript, that is to say, when there still existed the long narrative episodes which were eventually discarded. Apart from the Fresca couplets of Part III, I think, two of those episodes were intended to give us the concrete details of "memory and desire": one is the banal opening passage of fifty-four lines describing a night in the town, and the other the passage placed before the short lyric on Phlebas telling of a voyage and a subsequent shipwreck. For that matter both of them can be taken for a series of memories passing before the eyes of Kurtz and Phlebas.

Be that as it may, we must now move on to the general relevance of the Conrad epigraph to the whole poem, and try to find in what way Eliot thought it "much the most appropriate . . . and somewhat eluci-

¹ Cf. Bergson, "Le Rire," pp. 458–62.

dative.”

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The consciousness containing both past and present, which we have discussed so far, is a prerequisite to the structural patterns of *The Waste Land*, coupled with the avowed mythical pattern drawn from Jessie Weston's book and *The Golden Bough*. Eliot concretely embodies this consciousness in one personage, Tiresias the seer and the dying man. The momentary revelational consciousness accessible only in exceptional cases thus gains fixity and permanency in Eliot's ingenious device of this mythical figure. I wish tentatively to call this consciousness the “Tiresias consciousness.” Langbaum in “New Modes of Characterization in *The Waste Land*” mentions it in passing as a term to sum up this figure;¹ I apply this term to the consciousness discussed above, and plan to develop the idea here. The Tiresias consciousness, as such, establishes identities of times, places, and also persons. In the now too famous notes for *The Waste Land* Eliot writes:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a ‘character,’ is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. 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 notes, Eliot later confessed, were added after the first appearance of the poem in *The Criterion* and in *The Dial* “in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter.” Even if they are an afterthought, the fusion of all personalities, together with the device of setting up Tiresias or the like as an all-embracing personality, seems to me what Eliot intended from the start. He only proposed in the notes a center of consciousness to keep the readers from bogging down in utter confusion. Otherwise it would be difficult to see in Tiresias the protagonist

¹ Robert Langbaum, “New Modes of Characterization in *The Waste Land*,” in *Eliot in His Time*, p. 107.

of the poem. If the Conrad epigraph had survived, Eliot might have included Kurtz's name in this note.

This intricate merging of the protagonist into other personages, as suggested in the annotation, is by no means a new scheme for Eliot. Before considering how central is the Tiresias consciousness to the whole poem, I will glance over Eliot's earlier poems for such examples and see how they serve as types of Tiresias.

The split in Prufrock of a person's self into "you and I" already anticipates this poetic method. The "you" is taken for an Arnoldian buried self, an unconscious and suppressed counterpart of the "I." Furthermore, Prufrock tries to project his consciousness into other people and things, "as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen." He says to himself that he might have been John the Baptist, Lazarus, Prince Hamlet, and that he "should have been a pair of ragged claws." Curiously enough, Prufrock's state of mind is so close to the external world, say, the yellow fog and the somber streets, that they are almost identical. This line of condensation of a figure into a set of objects or facts is further worked out in "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night"; in these poems it is hard to distinguish between subject and object. To sum up, Prufrock is there as a central consciousness, though divided between two selves, embracing all these might-have-been figures and even external objects, to express a particular emotion.

Gerontion is, as is often argued, perhaps the most likely precursor of Tiresias. Eliot once wished to print "Gerontion" as a prelude to *The Waste Land*, but was dissuaded by Pound. More depersonalized still than Prufrock, though perhaps less so than Tiresias, Gerontion provides a good example of an "objective correlative" embodying the horror of a life without passion or faith. Into his "thoughts of a dry brain," which are perhaps not very far from the dying vision of Kurtz, are woven all the images of the poem. Gerontion is also indistinguishable from the various *personae* of the poem: the debauched Jewish landlord, a group of perverted cosmopolitans and those people whirling aimlessly in the universe. All of them, linked together, along with other images, make up the consciousness of the old man.

Phlebas is another case of *dédoublément de personnalité*, who in the course of time is imperceptibly merged into Tiresias. The appearance of Phlebas in the conclusion of "Dans le Restaurant" seemed so abrupt and out of context that it presented many problems to the commentators. In this poem a tattered old waiter speaks of his experience of "un instant de puissance et de délire," which is in turn shared by a snobbish gentleman: "De quel droit payes-tu des expériences comme moi?" I think this commonness of experience is emphasized by the glimpsed vision of the drowned Phoenician sailor, which, as we discussed earlier, brings all times into one. At the end of the poem these two modern men become forcibly united with the ancient Phoenician, and the English version of the poem goes so far as to include the readers ("Gentile or Jew").

Before going on to Tiresias, I want to point out that among the miscellaneous poems bundled together with the original draft of *The Waste Land* there is a short untitled piece which seems to prepare directly for Tiresias.

I am the Resurrection and the Life
 I am the things that stay, and those that flow.
 I am the husband and the wife
 And the victim and the sacrificial knife
 I am the fire, and the butter also.

Mrs. Eliot's note tells us that this poem is influenced by the Sanskrit scripture *The Bhagavad-Gita*. Setting aside its influence, this poem is a typical instance of the speaker's projection of himself into others that even have antithetical qualities; he in turns plays both active and passive rôles, the executioner and the victim. It is not difficult to see here the poet's desperate wish to have the conscious self so transparent as to be one with anything, anybody. Suffice it now to say that this prophetic tone and bisexual nature evokes none other than Tiresias.

Tiresias is indeed an archetypal figure of all-inclusive consciousness in that he is both man and woman as well as prophetic seer. And these two unique aspects are interrelated in terms of his erotic experience.

In the published poem Tiresias is introduced after the description of the violet hour of the Unreal City and just before the typist episode (Tiresias's appearance here is quite apposite) in these words:

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing beteen two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see. . . .

"Throbbing between two lives" is taken to refer to his bisexuality ("two sexes meet in Tiresias") in view of Eliot's note which quotes from the Ovidian myth of Tiresias. His bisexuality looks more like an evolution, exaltation of two sexes or going beyond sexuality, rather than a retreat into the primitive, undifferentiated state of being, for it facilitated his merging into various characters. He can be all people and all things. And as a blind prophet he can see all things. Eliot once thought of naming the protagonist "John," associating him with St. John the Divine in the Revelation. In the fortune-telling section of the original manuscript he inserted in parentheses a line which was cut out by Pound "I John saw these things and heard them." Presumably this might suggest that Eliot wanted to establish in the poem a particular center of consciousness which could be a prophetic seer, either mythological or angelic.

Tiresias's capacity to *see* is analogous to that of a dying man. It has "nothing to do with what is ordinarily called sight," as David Ward points out, regarding accordingly the substance of the poem as "visionary or prophetic experience."¹ Just as Kurtz and Phlebas *see* in their mind's eye, as it were, so does blind Tiresias. And what they *see* is the substance of life, the ultimate truth. Besides, all of them "can perceive but cannot act, . . . can understand and remember but cannot communicate," as Litz puts it in speaking of the tragedy which underlies all Eliot's poetic career (p. 21). Since they are dying, they can do nothing but *see*. Starting from the Sybil of the present epigraph, passing on to the protagonist in the hyacinth garden, and then to Madame Sosostriis (whose clairvoyance, however, seems rather bogus), and

¹ David Ward, *T. S. Eliot Between Two Worlds: A Reading of T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 70-1. The subsequent reference to Ward is from this work.

finally to the inspired madman Hieronymo, there are many seers whose inherent ability is somehow withheld or manifested but partially. Each of them is to be regarded as representing an aspect of Tiresias. This calls to mind that the precursors of Tiresias also partake of this aspect: at once alienated and somewhat aloof from the generality of people, both Prufrock and Gerontion are something of prophets. "I am no prophet—," cried Prufrock; but this humble resignation of his rôle paradoxically suggests that he is inwardly conscious of his potential capacity. Gerontion at times also has the prophet's detached tone. They can see what life is, what sexual desire is . . . without going into action.

Significantly enough, the original subtitle to Part II of *The Waste Land* is "In the Cage," probably derived from Henry James's novella in which a girl is described as being trapped in a similar situation. The general title to Parts I and II in the draft is, incidentally, "He Do the Police in Different Voices" from Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. Helen Gardner supposes that "He Do the Police in Different Voices" is "another and unpoetical way of saying 'I Tiresias have foresuffered all.'"¹

(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.)

This is the third declaration of the speaker's identity. The important point is that the old Greek prophet offers a historical perspective, while the ventriloquist Sloppy does not. At this very moment, the scene being enacted, the callous sexual union of the typist and the clerk comes to consummation. Placed almost half way through the poem, whether by chance or not, this passage is in fact a literary climax and a turning point of the poem. Tiresias recognizes with disgust and loathing the endless meaningless repetitions of human experience in this love (or rather loveless) affair enacted before his eyes. All human history since

¹ Helen Gardner, "The Waste Land: Paris 1922," in *Eliot in His Time*, p. 78.

Thebes is assimilated into this one *persona*. But Tiresias, who sees and foresuffers all, can predict here no more than what is to take place "on this same divan or bed." On the face of it he is a wearied *voyeur*. He can do nothing about it.

If we interpret the poem this way, the central point of *The Waste Land* seems not to lie, as is often supposed, in the violent contrast between the present and the past. But, instead, by setting up Tiresias as a figure of all-embracing consciousness, the poem propounds the essential sameness of all times and the fundamental continuity of "the mind of Europe." Walton Litz rightly remarks that "*The Waste Land* is not *about* spiritual dryness, it is about the ways in which that dryness can be perceived and expressed" (p. 7). It is Tiresias's ways of seeing it that the poem, more specifically, concentrates on. He sees and spells out what he sees. The reality of the Unreal City, whatever it may be, is conveyed and presented to us through the Tiresias consciousness. What is more, *we* see how it is perceived and expressed in different voices by Tiresias.

If we believe in Eliot's words that *The Waste Land* is "only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life . . . just a piece of rhythmical grumbling," then his personal grumbling is filtered through the Tiresias consciousness and transformed into a universal one. It is what Eliot calls "the creative eye" in "Euripides and Professor Murray" that enables us to "see the past in its place with its definite differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present." Spender intimates that this "creative eye" is also the "I" of *The Waste Land*,¹ which is, without doubt, Tiresias himself.

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We have thus far seen how the Tiresias consciousness informs *The Waste Land* as a whole. As this consciousness itself stems from the dying vision of Kurtz, *Heart of Darkness* is also central to *The Waste*

¹ Stephen Spender, *Eliot*, Fontana Modern Masters (Glasgow: William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1975), p. 103.

Land.

Now back to Conrad's work once again. There still remains another important thing to consider. We must notice that Kurtz's moment of death is reported by Marlow, as shown by the quotation marks in the epigraph. Marlow sees the vision of horror which Kurtz sees: "It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through," says Marlow. Still, he returns to "the sepulchral city" (Baudelaire's Paris), remaining "loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond." It is left to Marlow's fate to see, appreciate and mediate Kurtz's vision of horror. We can say with Unger that "the moment of Kurtz's tormented vision is transmuted into permanence," so to speak, "in Marlow's 'appreciation' of it,"¹ just as the moment of Phlebas's vision is fixed and eternalized in the Tiresias consciousness. From this we may infer that Marlow is closer to Tiresias than Kurtz in terms of the part he plays, as Litz rightly spotted while speaking of Eliot's debt to "Conrad's narrative method." Both Tiresias and Marlow see and tell us what they see, sometimes adding comments, thereby imposing their point of view upon us. Marlow the narrator is in this sense also a seer and prophet like Tiresias. At the opening of the story, looking towards the Thames stretching before him, Marlow thinks of "very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day . . ." He recalls the ancient incident of the Romans' arrival in England as if it were "the other day," rendering the past tantamount to the present. Thanks to his Tiresias consciousness Marlow can see things in their essential sameness. In this way the Tiresias consciousness constitutes an indispensable structural pattern of both *The Waste Land* and *Heart of Darkness*.

To conclude, I wish to pay attention to the rejected lines of the original manuscript which may confirm this assumption. Just before the first appearance of Tiresias there was a description of the swarming and huddled life of London.

¹ Leonard Unger, *T. S. Eliot: Moments and Patterns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), p. 124.

Knowing neither how to think, nor how to feel,
 But lives in the awareness of the observing eye.
 Phantasmal gnomes, burrowing in brick and stone and steel!
 Some minds, aberrant from the normal equipoise
 (London, your people is bound upon the wheel!)
 Record the motions of these pavement toys
 And trace the cryptogram that may be curled
 Within these faint perceptions of the noise,
 Of the movement, and the lights!

Not here, O Ademantus, but in another world.

This is truly an Eliotic passage where his reaction to the city and its life is rendered most explicitly. —But Pound crossed it out as usual because of Eliot's too overt distaste for the Waste Landers for one thing. Citing these lines, Ward observes that Tiresias "represents the aberrant consciousness which is capable of reading the cryptogram" (p. 71). I find it a plausible explanation. To this I should like to add that Tiresias can not only "read," but also "record" the metropolitan existence without pity or sympathy, in the name of a detached narrator like Marlow. His rôle of narrator is equally important, for *The Waste Land* is about the ways he sees and speaks—he who represents "the mind of Europe." *The Waste Land* is indeed a record of the aberrant but sensitive consciousness that saw the reality of life as "horror."

Perhaps we can assume an identity between Eliot and Tiresias. Then this Eliot-Tiresias, for being aberrant, must be all the more confident of telling the deeper truth, the profound reality, just as mad Hieronymo of the penultimate line must have been, when he wrote a revenge play made up, like *The Waste Land*, from "sundry languages."

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