A Reading of *The Waste Land*

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In the foregoing chapters I have explained *The Waste Land* by using the psychological measures of Zizek’s and Lacan’s thought, which, I believe, will lift us up to a new level beyond various negative or queer readings that regard Eliot’s work as a ruse of misogyny, homosexuality, and self-empowerment. Really, recent interpretations have focused on the deeply personal emotion *The Waste Land* reveals and sought its resource in his private life. But Eliot’s relationship to these questions, the feminine or homosexuality, is far more complex than critics usually concede. In Eliot, psychological turmoil ends not only in the crisis of his personality but also reflects that of human relationships or of social convulsion. Eliot’s mental dilemma represented in his poetry, prose, and drama are outgrowths of his aesthetic creativity as well as his private issues. He seldom writes directly of immediate events. Therefore, our reading should be a composite of responses to the poem’s many layers of mood, theme, and image.

This stance is in line with that of Nancy K. Gish. Gish’s *Gender, Desire, and Sexuality in T.S. Eliot* can be essential reading for queer theory, gender studies, and modernism. Gish, granting that Eliot’s poems, plays, and critical essays are often blatantly misogynist and homophobic, seeks to trace their intricate engagements with multiple forms and degrees of desire, contemporary feminism, the feminine, and homoeroticism. According to Gish, Eliot’s (early) aesthetic theories are inseparable from psychological theories of self, identity, and personal as well as social functions of art (12). In Gish’s argument, the word of “aesthetic” means the way to fuse immediacy and abstraction, personal and impersonal. This idea is close to that of Eliot’s “unified sensibility”. And this poetic fusing of sensation and thought, in the form of representing absence as presence, is developed especially through *The Waste Land* (122).

Succeeding to the issues raised by Gish, Charles Altieri tries to theorize emotions: he finds Eliot’s self-reflective activity, intentionality, in his richest rendering of the qualities of affective life. For
him, Eliot’s new modes of intentionality all are concerned with his handling of affective agency. Any account of the emotions has to articulate what role thinking and imagination play in characterizing human emotions and in connecting these emotions to beliefs and to actions (152). Theorizing about the emotions has to find ways of acknowledging both sets of impulses — toward control and toward allowing our feelings to lead us into potentially new relations with the world and with other people (154). Then assessing the relation of reason to emotions is closely related to the question of how we attribute significant values to our emotional states (156). In doing so, we can find the public extension of our emotions.

Moreover, Charles Altieri sees two parallels between Eliot and Lacan. The first parallel is philosophical. Altieri asserts, “Central to Eliot and to Lacan is a profound suspicion of all romantic expressivist notions of identity, notions that emphasizing getting in touch with some core self and locating basic values in how we make those deep aspects of the self articulate” (161). And the second parallel is logical. Lacanian psychoanalysis and Eliotic irony both take their departure from a strong sense of how these efforts to stabilize a self end up only in displacing our proprial feelings into endless chains of unsatisfying substitutes demanding further substitutes (as shall be later explained, this also is Brooker’s ‘diptych’). Consequently, interpretation of the self seems never to lead back to those necessary sources of our intensities that probably cannot be represented or possessed in personal form.

Hence, we can have the capacity to imagine transpersonal dynamics for our individual emotional states. In other words, Eliot’s poetry transforms the confessional basis for emotion into a ritual basis for enacting and reflecting upon more transpersonal aspects of desire, where attention can be paid to the shared needs and shared despair (164). Therefore, for Altieri, The Waste Land is less a congeries of specific emotions than the articulation of a single complexly interrelated affective state with claims on the lives of an extensive public (166). In sum, for Eliot, as for Freud, the study of the psychology of the neuroses is important for an understanding of the growth of civilization. ^2 Perhaps Eliot’s familiarity of Frazer would have been one of the strongest motives to understand Freud. This relationship makes it possible to see Eliot’s work in the perspective of Lacan and Zizek, I think.

Now it is well known that the title of this section is taken from a sermon preached by Buddha: “all things (of this world) are on fire”. The fire, of course, symbolizes the sterile burning of lust, both in Buddha and St. Augustine, when the wisdom of the East and that of the West encounter. We also can see the encounter between the West and the East in one scene of Heart of Darkness that Marlow had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower.
The first scene of “The Fire Sermon” begins with the following passage:

The river’s tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Needless to say, the passage is an echo of Edmund Spenser’s “Prothalamion” which presents not only, in a flawless pastoral vision, “celebration of the ideals and joys of marriage” (Southam, 121) but also darker feelings, partly because of Spenser’s own “sullein care” caused by his vain effort of getting literary patronage. Therefore, as a projection from “Prothalamion”, the effect of this poem is ironical in expressing the various, often contradictory, experiences of the human beings.

In “The Fire Sermon”, the Thames runs with “stratification and simultaneity” of images (GDS, 132), because this poem makes use of several of the images already developed. In other words, the contrast between Spencer’s scene and the twentieth century equivalent, or that between the sacred and secular, is sharply jarring. And the contrast also can be seen in Matthew Arnold’s “The Scholar-Gipsy”:

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,/And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;/Before this strange disease of modern life,/With its sick hurry, its divided aims,/Its heads o’ertax’d, its palsied hearts, was rife.

In the Old Testament, ‘tent’ means ‘tabernacle’ or ‘holy place’ (Southam, 121). And ‘the river’ is linked with ‘the tent’ in Isaiah xxxiii, 20–1:

Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts!/Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, an immovable tent,/whose stakes will never be plucked up,/nor will any of its cords be broken./But there the Lord in majesty will be for us/a place of broad rivers and streams,/where no gallery with oars can go,/nor stately ship can pass./For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler,/the Lord is our king; he will save us.” Therefore, “the river’s tent which is never broken is broken” suggests the collapse of some sacred and mystic quality in modern society. The phrase, “…the last fingers of leaf/Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind/Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed./And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors/departed, have left no addresses” shows that “the degradation of modern sex”, as if they were in the aftermath of “the pleasure gardens and bagnios” of the Georgian era, is enacted among sandwich papers, cigarette ends, and empty bottles rather than garlands of flowers and sweet songs” (Gish’s The Waste Land, 73). As a result, the frailty of human relations is revealed in “…departed, have left no
addresses”.

Next, an abrupt transition occurs.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept…
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

Many commentators point out the allusion of Psalms 137: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.” Needless to say, the allusion reminds us of both the inviolability of Zion as the city of God and the sorrow of the Israelites while captive in Babylon. The desolation of those who were exiled from the homeland in which they should naturally live is intensified here. They are stray. So the protagonist weeps as if suddenly stricken with sadness and irreparable loss. At the same time, associated from the meaning of Leman (or leman), we can feel both the fires of lust and the swiftness of time which are sung in Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress”. Youth will be gone and there will be only the grave as a cold blast of punishment. Again, Conrad’s idea of “lurking death” or horror of ordinary experience is repeated with ironical “chuckle” sound.

The next phrase begins with “A rat crept softly through the vegetation/Dragging its slimy belly on the bank…White bodies naked on the lower damp ground/And bones cast in a little low dry garret,…”. Southam points out the fact that Eliot knows that for the soldiers who fought in the trenches in the First World War rats were ominous, familiar and detested (Southam, 122). Therefore, the line makes a sharp contrast with Marvell’s “my vegetable love” which signifies the power of love cultivated and nurtured like a vegetable. Reeves says, “The whole of this verse-paragraph is an impressive vocal performance of emotional release and holding back, of flowing and retention” (63). And in its adjectival amplitude, the horror is conveyed with a Gothic air, Reeves points out (64).

The lines: “While I was fishing in the dull canal/On a winter evening round behind the gashouse/Musing upon the king my brother’s wreck/And on the king my father’s death before him” is associated with J. Weston’s assertion that the Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity and that the title of Fisher is connected with Deities who preserve Life. Unfortunately, the legend of the Grail here is reduced and paralyzed to a sterile scene in the modern waste land. A little further on, the protago-
nist’s musing on the death of his father and brother leads to the scene in *The Tempest* that Ferdinand is thinking of his father, the King Alonso, evoked by Ariel’s music: “Sitting on a bank, Weeping again the king my father’s wrack.” (1.2.389–90). Life, death, and aspiration for restoration are interwoven here. And the motive of “cast-out death” of the poem recurs.

But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
*Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*

“Time’s winged chariot” of Marvell is changed to the modern automobile, “thy marble vault” to “a little low dry garret”, and “The sound of horns and motors”, coming from John Day’s *The Parliament of Bees* as Eliot’s own note shows, is vulgarized to carry a phallic innuendo. The phallus is the symbol of sure, self-identical truth and is not to be challenged. But the ‘phallocentric’ or ‘logocentric’ view of the world is now challenged. At least, male-chauvinism was greatly damaged by the war.

Moreover, from a scene of *The Parliament of Bees*, further from the story of Actaeon in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Sweeney, a crude vulgarian in earlier Eliot poems, can be associated with the huntsman Actaeon, who catches sight of Diana (goddess of chastity) bathing with her nymphs, was turned into a lusty stag, as punishment for seeing her naked (even in this story, the dogs appear as who tear Actaeon’s body to pieces). Thus, the sound of a traffic jam implies that Sweeney visits Mrs. Porter the brothel-keeper and her daughter the prostitute who were notorious among the First World War Australian troops for passing on venereal disease (Southam). So in the scene they would enact a cheap and empty affair. Eliot, in this scene, insinuates a trivial and sordid episode of the war. In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor explains, “the war was fought for “civilization”, at least in its British variant. And yet the massive slaughter turned out to be a greater negation of civilized life than any foe threatened”. Thus, the war was one of the great traumas of modern history, so that old values and beliefs — manliness, honour, loyalty, sacrifice — were no longer secure.

The last two lines, forming a bridge to the next scene, are very impressive. “They wash their feet in soda water! *Et O ces voix d’enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*” (And O, these children’s voices
singing in the dome!) has some significance because of the allusion of these lines. At first glance, the two lines seem to have no relation each other but really together makes a scene. The seemingly obscene “washing their feet” and the choir of feeling make a drama. Hence we should have recourse to F. Kermode’s explanation: “Verlaine’s reference is to the choir of children near the end of Wagner’s opera Parsifal, when Parsifal’s feet are ceremonially washed before he proceeds to the Grail, the sick king is healed, and the wasteland is restored”. And Brooker further amplifies this explanation of Kermode: “We are closer to Eliot’s habitual mode of ironic dialectics if we realize that from one point of view a parody of foot washing and sacred rite of foot washing (Parsifal’s and finally Christ’s) have equal value insofar as they both constitute a transcendence” (135). In any case, both the foot washing of Christ and the purification of the Fisher King are embedded here. In this scene, we can glimpse a possibility to regain the sacred in the world where sacrilege is the prevailing danger. Maud Ellmann claims that a double consciousness pervades the text as if it had been written by a vicar and an infidel.

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc’d.
Tereu

The (ravished) nightingale’s song of “A Game of Chess” recurs as an ironic undertone to those childish voices from Verlaine’s poem. Of course, the word “Tereu” is the Greek vocative form referring to King Tereus who raped Philomela. The most complete account of Philomel in Ovid’s Metamorphoses entails the most sinister and unpleasant tale: Procne avenges Philomela by feeding Tereus the flesh of his own son. Suddenly a cruel memory, trauma, erupts again, and a curse is shouted. The trauma, as we see in “The Burial of the Dead”, is repeated according to Freud’s well-known motto: “trauma is connected to ‘repetition compulsion’”. Lacan claims, “The trauma reappears, in effect, frequently unveiled” (Seminar, XI, 55). And here is the point where the Real disrupts in the smooth running of the Symbolic. If two inferences, of John Peale Bishop that Eliot is Tereus and Mrs. Eliot Philomel and of Brooker that sexual violence and the struggle to speak/sing are clearly weighted with “the emotions and feelings of the writer”, are compatible, “Tereu”, as in Freud and in Lacan, may be a pale incubus who is located between perception and consciousness of representation of art. Thus, Philomela’s excised tongue shows the impotence which forever haunts the
poet because art is a symptom. For all that, we do not always need any one-to-one correspondence in Eliot’s real life, because, in Eliot’s own terms, “he (Shakespeare) attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible” (Essays, 146). For Eliot, this is “a subject of study for pathologists”.

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f. London : documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

“Unreal City”, as Eliot himself points out, is the city full of dreams. The dreams would be of every kind, but, through the dreams, we could simultaneously see the disorders of the city and disturbances of the individual psychic level. In this scene, many images are based on events that actually happened, although some of them, of course, are imaginary. The name “Eugenides” ironically indicates that the merchant comes of good family. Smyrna in Turkey was a source of currants. Therefore some commentators point out that currants are shriveled grapes, hence dried-up fertility symbols. According to Southam, c.i.f. means “cost, insurance and freight”. The second part of the line means that the documents of ownership and transport would be handed to the purchaser in exchange for a bank draft payable on sight. These commercial matters Eliot was familiar with from his work in a bank. Through these, Eliot may see, as Arnold did, Philistines who have faith in machinery, railroads, wealth. The Metropole is a fashionable hotel at Brighton on the south coast of England. As a result, the last three lines, into which some interpreters have read homosexual implications, are a parody of the Grail legend: the Fisher King invites the quester to the Grail castle.

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
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.
I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs,
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
A small house agent's clerk, with one bald stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(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.)
Bestows one final patronizing kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit…

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

“Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.”

When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

In this long quote, Tiresias is the blind prophet of Thebes who is famous for clairvoyance and at the same time for being transformed into a woman for seven years. In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, he knows about the king’s incest and parricide, which brought the plague on Thebes. So the people and the land became infertile: “Thebes is dying. A blight on the fresh crops and rich pastures, cattle sicken and die, and women die in labor, children stillborn, and the plague, the fiery god of fever hurls down on the city…” In Greek mythology, a story tells us that female Tiresias was a prostitute of great renown. In any case, from our knowledge of Greek Tragedy, we can of necessity associate Tiresias with Oedipus. Further, Eliot even regards Oedipus as one of the tragedies of horror as well as Dante’s Ugolino (*Essays*, 79). Nevertheless, Eliot does never refer to Oedipus in *The Waste Land*. But Oedipus really remains hidden behind Tiresias. In other words, Oedipus completely is closed out of the symbolic network of the poem. Therefore, when we read “The Fire Sermon”, the consciousness of Oedipus is required.

The “violet hour” is between day and night. A slight disturbing collocation, “the eyes and back” is both to reach forward and to hold back. “The human engine” both throbs and waits “like a taxi throbbing waiting” (Reeves, 68). This phrase itself contains a caricature of materialism that reductively explains everything in terms of mechanism. This also is related to the line “She smooths her hair with automatic hand”. And when describing this scene, the language is realistic and crude, and traces of opposing feeling appear as usual and intensify the scene by contrast (Gish, 76). Therefore, the subject-object distinctions are tenuous (Reeves, 68). In this scene, what Tiresias sees is that the typist and her lover indulge in “carbuncular caresses” which may suggest venereal disease as “He may have a diseased wench in’s bed. And rotten stuff in’s breeches” (*Women Beware Women*, 2.2. 132-3). Tiresias is involved in the characters and at the same time, like a voyeur (Reeves, et al), is distancing himself from them. So his attitude towards the characters is ambivalent because he is immanent and transcendent towards them. In other words, Tiresias is torn between the characters, as well as between two sides “in his mythically bi-sexual state” (Reeves, 69).
Tiresias is the central character of the poem. Tiresias is the blind seer who can get a clear grasp of the mechanisms at work in self and world. For this character, he is granted authority by the central placement in *The Waste Land*, but his vision is yet limiting and limited (Gish, *The Waste Land*, p. 78). Tiresias is an old man with “wrinkled female breasts”. The infertile breasts can be a symbolic castration cut off from the Real, as Sibyl in the prologue of the poem was. And from his harshly satirical comments, we can know that the typist and clerk appearing in the typist scene as representative office workers in the time belong in the “low” class. In Tiresias’ contemptuous and judgmental tone, the typist’s “food in tins”, “drying combinations”, “bold stares” and “assurance” intensify the infertility of the situation. Next, the line “As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire” refers to a typical snob. Bradford is Yorkshire wool town where fortunes have been made during the First World War (Kermode, 103). But the industrial town then was notorious for pollution and epidemic. Ironically, we can learn a lesson for the image from Creon’s speech: “Money — you demolish cities, root men from their homes” (73). Creon, who too much fears anarchy, decrees the law by which the people live (in Lacan’s phrase, to promote the good of all as the law without limits), but he himself betrays in action the principles he stands for. His fear takes repressive measures, which themselves brought disasters. Even if Creon can rate man superior to woman, his city-state is always threatened with the anarchy of filthy profit. The same goes for our late capitalism society.

In any case, as Gish claims, the physical act here is carried out with no feeling except lust and boredom, which are one of opposing feeling mentioned above (77). The scene is depicted by violent tone (“assaults” and “no defense”), but there is no tense feeling. Gish continues, “The typist and clerk give and receive nothing; they engage in the most total contact available to humans and leave each other wholly alone” (77). Because his vanity requires no response, he cannot feel the reality of others. Finally, Tiresias, who encompasses and incorporates all human experience, stays with the corpses which, by the armies of Argos, were cast out to rot outside the walls of Thebes.

Now, Eliot’s note shows:

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.
In this comment by Eliot himself on Tiresias, Denis Donoghue perceives the similar discourse with that on solipsism in Eliot’s *Knowledge and Experience.*

Eliot says,

> The point of view (or finite center) has for its object one consistent world, and accordingly no finite centre can be self-sufficient, for the life of a soul does not consist in the contemplation of one consistent world but in the painful task of unifying (to a greater or less extent) jarring and incompatible ones, and passing, when possible, from two or more discordant viewpoints to a higher which shall somehow include and transmute them (147–8).

Hence, Donoghue, and perhaps Brooker also, draws out a conclusion that Eliot calls this higher perspective Tiresias. We are led to the conception of an all-inclusive experience outside of which nothing shall fall. By melting the characters into each other, Tiresias can inversely connect all the characters of this poem. Gish claims that the introduction of Tiresias signifies that the poem presents not particular experience but the human experience: “And I Tiresias have foresuffered all” (69). Brooker also agrees on this point and says, “Tiresias is the parergon, who takes over the central position, forcing a scattering of merchant, typist, and clerk, along with all human sexuality, into positions on the fringe of perception and concern (143). Brooker goes on to claim, “Tiresias is a subject, the lovers are objects, and the third term, which resolves the subject-object dualism into a unity, is the reader’s mind” (143). Thus, as far as all these arguments go, we are compelled to claim that Tiresias is an “objective-correlative”.

But isn’t it an overhasty reading to say that Tiresias is an “objective correlative”? Here a question arises for consideration: “Can a personage be an objective correlative?” Generally speaking, Eliot’s idea of “objective correlative” falls under the following realm:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of the *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.

Eliot’s discussion proceeds with Shakespeare’s *Hamlet.* According to Eliot, *Hamlet* is an artistic failure because we cannot find an “objective correlative”. The artist, in order to express an emotion, must use events or objects that make a “formula of that particular emotion”. And Eliot contends that
a cause of the failure is in Shakespeare’s technical immaturity in *Hamlet*. But matters are more complicated. *Hamlet* is surely a troubled man. It is possible that perhaps Eliot finds no “objective correlative” because Hamlet’s emotion is not a simple one. In fact, *Hamlet* is faced with many competing emotions. And his actions, as depicted by Shakespeare, are not a formula for any “particular emotion” (the stress is Eliot’s) because he feels no “particular emotion”. In Eliot’s phrase, Hamlet’s reaction “exceeds its object.” And Hamlet’s mental state is confused, and his feigned madness renders his actions even more incomprehensible. As Eliot states, Shakespeare did not find an objective correlative for Hamlet’s reactions. But whereas Eliot’s definition of the objective correlative is a “formula” for an emotion, in Hamlet’s situation no one could be expected to react in a formulaic manner. In this respect, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is necessarily affected with the complexities of Hamlet’s situation, we can say.

Eliot’s topic next moves to the comparison between *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Eliot continues, “you will find that the state of mind of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep has been communicated to you by a skilful accumulation of imagined sensory impressions; the words of Macbeth on hearing of his wife’s death strike us as if, given the sequence of events, these words were automatically released by the last event in the series” (*Essays*, 143). That is, the two scenes in *Macbeth* have the exact equivalent of expressing Lady Macbeth’s and Macbeth’s feelings. Although *Macbeth*, to some critics, is not so inevitable and coherent as Eliot thinks, what Eliot means here is whether a work has a set of objects, a situation, and a chain of events — never a person. Moreover, the artistic ‘inevitability’ that *Macbeth* has and that *Hamlet* hasn’t is partly produced by a skillful contrast between the opposite words, light and darkness, good and evil, hell and heaven. And what is of more importance is the skillful use of the image “dagger” which, I think, is a good example of “objective correlative”.

Kenneth Muir notices that Macbeth observes the functioning of his own organs with a strange objectivity: in particular, he speaks of his hand almost as though it had an independent existence of its own. After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are obsessed by the thought of their bloody hands. Macbeth speaks of them as ‘a sorry sight’ and as ‘hangman’s hands’. And Lady Macbeth urges him to wash the ‘filthy witness’ from his hand. The question of objectivity holds better for the dagger. The image of ‘dagger’ not only links the scenes but also interlaces one scene and a foul incident behind the scene. For instance, the phrase, “why did you bring these daggers from the place?/They must lie there: go, carry them, and smear/The sleepy grooms with blood” suggests Macbeth’s murder of Duncan acted behind the scene. Moreover, as in the next scene, a dagger completely acquires its own existence, i.e. the dagger is completely detached from Macbeth:
Is this a dagger, which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling, as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation, Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form palpable
As this which now I draw. (Act", scene 1, 33-41)

Like this, a dagger links the scenes together and produces inevitability there. Then, the dagger can be an “objective correlative.” Thus the superiority of a drama depends on whether it has a good objective correlative or not. For Eliot, the difference between Hamlet and Macbeth is in this point.

At this point, we are forced to further extend the idea of “objective correlative” hitherto considered. V.J.E. Cowley points out that a possible source of Eliot’s “objective correlative” is J.H. Newman’s Sermon XLI.10 Granting that there has been considerable discussion concerning possible sources for Eliot’s idea of “objective correlative”, he postulates that Christ would be the ‘formula’ for the divinely enlightened mind’s emotions.

In Newman’s University Sermon preached between 1826 and 1843, J.H. Newman argues under the theme that love is the safeguard of faith, “The divinely-enlightened mind sees in Christ the very Object whom it desires to love and worship, — the object correlative (Italics are mine) of its own affections; and it trusts Him, or believes, from loving Him”.11 Here Christ is the very object that generates love of him. In other words, through Christ, we can share true love and worship, so that our affections can rightly respond to Christ, are united in him. I believe that Cowley’s conjecture is relevant, because the idea of ‘objective correlative’, in its function, more exactly corresponds with the idea of Newman than those of other writers, e.g. that of G. Santayana. So we are called upon to provide personal element for the idea of ‘objective correlative.’ In other words, a person can be an ‘objective correlative,’ as well as a set of objects, a situation, and a chain of events.

Here, let us pause awhile to reflect on Brooker’s idea of “diptych”. The idea of “diptych”, in a sense, is an application of Bradley’s pairing concept of “Reality and Appearance” to literary form. In this idea, a text as appearance has a subtext as reality, or subtexts, just as “A Game of Chess” is built on a Shakespearean basis. There, what we cannot see is as important as what we can see. And what we cannot see is nurtured by Eliot’s consciousness of tradition. One story is buried in another,
or one scene features two or more contemporary or past figures, i.e. as in ‘The Burial of Dead’. Moreover, “diptych” is another form of “juxtaposition” used in The Burial of the Dead”, that is, instead of juxtaposing the opposites in visible form, it is a way to allusively put the Lady of the Rocks” behind “the lady of situations”. The idea of “diptych” is in line with Eliot’s consideration of the relation between “the surface and the depths”. Eliot draws this idea from A. Tennyson. Eliot says, “Tennyson’s surface, his technical accomplishment, is intimate with his depths: what we most quickly see about Tennyson is that which moves between the surface and the depths, that which is of slight importance. By looking innocently at the surface we are most likely to come to the depths, to the abyss of sorrow” (Essays, 337). Another source for the idea lies in a lesson that Eliot learned from Baudelaire, i.e. in exploring “the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic”. In this way, Brooker’s idea of “diptych” can be extracted from Eliot’s criticism.

Furthermore, Eliot’s poetic method is inextricably tied up with the psychology of unconsciousness. Eliot remarks, “This (in a poet’s expression the disparity between the mood of his generation and the mood of his own) is not a question of insincerity: there is an amalgam of yielding and opposition below the level of consciousness (334). This phrase is very Freudian, because it refers to Freud’s “the existence of unconscious mental processes alongside the conscious ones (TT, 117). From this perspective, we can say Eliot’s poetry consists of “the co-existence of perception and memory”. When we read The Waste Land, what is at stake is this double consciousness. Ruth Ronen’s explanation of the interrelation of psychoanalysis and art complements this idea of Eliot. For Ronen who follows the psychoanalysis of Freud and Lacan, art is a language of the unconsciousness, and to engage in artistic production is to engage with one’s symptom. Ronen claims that art is an effective way of concealing the Real and, at the same time, by the very act of concealment, art opens up a way for an encounter with the Real (909). To push this discussion further, Tiresias can be a concealing/revealing figure.

As we can see in Oedipus the King and in Antigone, Tiresias is extremely reluctant to offer the whole of what he sees in his visions. He, concealing the secret, reveals it to Oedipus. This concerns with the essential mode of the being of Tiresias: doubleness. To put it in Brooker’s way, Tiresias is “throbbing between two lives,” male and female, real and ideal, fact and fiction (14). In other words, Tiresias is a complexly bicephalous being, seeing each of many oppositions, mediating between the gods and mankind, male and female, blind and seeing, present and future, and this world and the Underworld.

Following Julia Kristeva, Maud Ellman argues, “‘Throbbing between two lives’, Tiresias could be
seen as the very prophet of abjection, personifying all the poem’s porous membranes” (264). In this case, the term “abjection” means “the state of being cast out”, though commonly it means downcast in spirits: but “abjection” may refer to the waste itself, together with the violence of casting it abroad. Although this idea originally derives from Kristeva, the abject is that which “disturbs identity, system, order, rather than disease or filth or putrefaction. It is the “in-between, the ambiguous, the composite”. Moreover, in Ellman’s discussion, the corpses signify the “utmost of abjection”. The phrase “I who have sat by Thebes below the wall/And walked among the lowest of the dead” well expresses this condition. There the collapse of boundaries centrally disturbs the text, be they sexual, national, linguistic, or authorial. The wall suggests the fragile border between subject and object, between inside and outside. The outside and inside of the wall both can be easily threatened with disaster. So to speak, Thebes is *miasma* on account of sterility, disease, and death, and Oedipus is *agos* as an abjection (Kristeva, 85): “Drive me out of the land at once, far from sight./where I can never hear a human voice” (*Oedipus the King*, 1571). And Oedipus at Colonus completes his life as a blind outcast, not as a king.

Here Tiresias is much closer to Antigone because he shares his love among the dead as Antigone does. As Zizek claims, for Lacan, Antigone is a forerunner of Christ’s sacrifice” (*The Sublime*, 116), perhaps because her way is to share her love, not to share her hate. The corpse is the most abominable. Burial is a means of purification, but it is impossible. Then Tiresias stays with the most abominable. Even behind the scene, the image of Christ is secretly at work: that of Christ who stays with those at the bottom. In this reading, the abject is edged with the sublime (Kristeva, 11).

Therefore, Tiresias is a signifier which implicates the signified, Christ, we can say. Christ cannot be positively signified; it can only be shown, in a negative gesture, as the inherent failure of symbolization, as in the case of Oedipus. Christ can be discerned only via its traces (never many in number) in the figure of Tiresias. In a Freudian phrase, “behind the manifest personality another personality remains concealed” (*TT*, 117). That is, Tiresias is a substitute for Christ. This is not only another form of “diptych”, but a good objective correlative, through which we can approach another blind outcast Oedipus, Antigone, and Christ. Thus, when we can feel Christ behind Tiresias, we can answer both Donoghue’s demand that poetry should go beyond the phase of consciousness which Eliot calls Tiresias (227) and Brooker’s demand that we should transcend the moral point of view. After speaking at the center of the entire poem, Tiresias finally exits from the scene groping his way without any escort in darkness. Lacan’s statement of Antigone that metamorphosis has come down through the centuries hidden in the works of Ovid and regains its former vitality, its energy, during that turning
point of European sensibility, the renaissance, and bursts forth in the theater of Shakespeare. This also can be true of Tiresias. Thus, Tiresias is again revived by Eliot after Tennyson’s and Arnold’s preceding attempts.

In the next scene, beginning with “She turns and looks a moment in the glass” and ending “And puts a record on the gramophone”, a kind of crotchet is depicted. In “The Psychologist’s Treatment of Knowledge” of Knowledge and Experience, his first premise is that the ideas of a great poet are never arbitrary and that in great imaginative work the connections are felt to be bound by as logical necessity as any connections to be found anywhere (Knowledge and Experience, 75). With the premise, Eliot goes to the consideration of “ideas”. For Eliot, ideas are not objects, but a half-way stage between existence and meaning. In a sense, ideas come from giving meaning to objects. In order to get ideas, we need both the existence of objects and adding of meaning to them. Applying this discussion to the issue of will, it also arises in a conflict. In that point, idea and will are common. From a purely external point of view there is no will. Then we need a certain empathy, viz., any work of subject.  Eliot says, “we observe a man’s actions and place ourselves partly but not wholly in his position; or we act, and place ourselves partly in the position of an outsider. And this doubleness of aspect is in fact the justification for the use of the term (will)”(81). In other words, will is not a character of consciousness purely, and at the same time it is not at all a character of things as such. Hence Eliot draws a conclusion that will belongs to a place half-way between object and subject.

From these discussions, Eliot classifies that attention also belongs in the class of half-objects. Introducing Bradley’s theory of attention as an attempt to reduce attention to something else without knowing what that something is, he accepts Bradley’s idea that we cannot attend to several disconnected objects at once; we organize them into a single object. Eliot considers the meaning of the idea as follows: “That the world, so far as it is a world at all, tends to organize itself into an articulate whole. The real is the organized” (82); though, for Lacan, even this real after all is elusive. Anyhow, what is guessed from this is that crotchet or caprice is the state that attention is distracted with several disconnected objects at once. It also is a state that we cannot organize disconnected objects into an articulate world. So to speak, the typist is a woman who cannot articulate the world into the real. Her attention ceaselessly moves. Then she lives in the unreal world.

The line “When lovely woman stoops to folly and”, according to Eliot’s own note, comes from Olivia Goldsmith’s novel, “The Vicar of Wakefield”. The folly of a woman and her lover’s betrayal depicted there also is incorporated in this scene. But their lovemaking, in reality, is what dismisses
each other, so that death does never visit her as a resolution of her guilt. In this regard, they are in sterile burning. The typist never pines after her lover, soon caught by the caprice.

Next, the scene of Ferdinand musing on his father’s death is again brought back: “‘This music crept by me upon the waters’/And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street” (*The Tempest*, 1.2.391). In *The Tempest*, the line “Allaying both their (the waters’) fury and my passion/With its sweet air” follows after it. Ferdinand is easily manipulated by music which was then believed is a sovereign remedy against despair and melancholy. Moreover, in the scene when a person lay dying, the tolling of a bell is sounded. But in “The Fire Sermon”, the sight is transformed into the following: “Southwest wind/Carried down stream/The peal of bells/White towers/Weialala leia/Weialala leilala”. “Southwest wind”, as can be seen in Caliban’s brawl with Prospero, is something ominous: “A south-west blow on ye./And blister you all o’er!” (1.2. 324–5). But “the pleasant whining of a mandolin”, perhaps played by one of the buskers, mocks and ease Ferdinand’s word ‘crept’. But we cannot easily determine the tone of the scene. Gish says, “this passage is perhaps the most positive and accepting in the entire poem” (79).

According to Southam’s note, Strand is a London street, leading eastwards towards the City of London. The street is generally said to be a place where London, past and present, is evoked. Queen Victoria Street and Lower Thames Street both are the streets near the River Thames. Brooker remarks, “Pollution and contagion, ubiquitous in cities ancient and modern, are major motifs in this part of the poem” (*GDS*, 144). Needless to say, the pollution is moral as well as environmental. ‘Fishmen’, workers from nearby Billingsgate fish market, are enjoying themselves at lunch in a bar (the fish is a life symbol). And the fine interior of the City church of St Magnus-the-martyr, designed by Sir Christopher Wren, attracts Eliot’s mind.

When I discussed “The Burial of the Dead”, I said that *The Waste Land* has a similar structure with Conrad’s *Heart of the Darkness*. One reason for it is that the two works begin with the image of “Sybil” and close with the image of Buddha, and the Thames runs through each work: “Marlow ceased and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha.” And when Marlow says, “I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams”(70), this landscape exactly overlaps that of London Eliot depicts, i.e. “of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis”. Though I don’t know how much Conrad and Eliot devote themselves to Buddhism, their two works should be read as kinship in mind. For Conrad and for Eliot also, the Thames is a stream of immeasurable darkness.
The song of the Thames-daughters brings us back to the opening section of “The Fire Sermon” again, and once more we have to do with the river and the river-nymphs. Indeed, the typist incident is framed by the two river-nymph scenes. In any case, we can easily connect the river nymphs with the Rhine-daughters of Wagner’s *Gotterdammerung* (Twilight of the Gods) in the last of four operas titled *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. This opera is originally based on Norse mythology which refers to a prophesied war of the gods that brings about the end of the world. But by Wagner the term *Gotterdammerung* is changed to mean a disastrous conclusion of events. The opening of Act III shows that the Rhine-daughters bewail the loss of the beauty of the Rhine occasioned by the theft of the gold and then beg Siegfried to give them back the Ring made from this gold, finally threatening him with death if he does not give it up. Like the Thames-daughters they too have been violated; and like the maidens mentioned in the Grail legend, the violation has brought a curse on gods and men. Especially, a remarkable scene, in relation to “The Fire Sermon”, is that Siegfried and Brunhilde burn on a huge funeral pyre. In contrast, the Rhinemaids return the ring of power to the waters of the Rhine.

The juxtaposition of the contemporary Thames and the Elizabethan Thames is depicted. There we can feel the changing river and changing behavior. Like the Rhine maidens flirting with Siegfried, Elizabeth I entertained the Earl of Leicester at Greenwich House, their river tryst, and they also are flirting on a barge. In a sense, Elizabethan London anticipates the present, and nothing changes. Elizabeth and the typist are alike as well as different. And some details of this scene are based upon the description of the river at the opening to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*: “the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas”. The sounds are crude and heavy, “sweats/Oil and tar,” “swing on the heavy spar,” “The Isle of Dogs.” And the scene is closed with a song of woe: “Weialala leia/walala leialala.” But the Thames daughters speak in tones of unconcern about events that happened while afloat on the river. The Thames never undergoes any dramatic change.

Here the scene returns to the modern one. Highbury is a northern suburb. Richmond and Kew are popular riverside resorts on the river to the west. According to Gish, the song of the Thames-daughters creates a context for their personal histories. Further, what we should notice is the place-names. As in Dante, because the emotion is really part of the place, when we can recall the place, we can recall the emotion involved in the place. Then all places, without ceasing to be literal realities, are symbols of other things. They set up a background for their loss and despair.

Moreover, from Reeves’ comment, we can know the three Thames daughters’ ‘undoings’ are described in terms of bodily parts.
A Reading of The Waste Land

“Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.”

The first daughter is from Highbury, “a gloomy suburb of the petite bourgeoisie,” but her seduction occurred by Richmond. As Eliot’s note indicates, this scene is based on the story of La Pia following that of flood disaster which is told by the second spirit Dante sees: “My frozen body at its mouth the raging Archian found, and swept it into the Arno”. Dante saw a great deal of vice and misery. The word ‘undid’ comes from “Remember me, who am La Pia: Siena made me, Maremma unmade me: ‘tis known to him who, first plighting troth, had wedded me with his gem.” (Purgatorio, Canto V). Siena is the place of La Pia’s birth, and Maremma is the place not merely of her death, but the place entailing a terrible story that she was unmade, i.e. put to death by her husband’s betrayal. Therefore, from this background, we can know the first daughter also was involved in complicated man–woman relationship. Thus, her speech sounds “like a soul speaking from the dead” (Reeves, 76).

“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?”

Moorgate is at the heart of the financial district of the City. When Eliot worked in Lloyd’s Bank, he took the tube to Moorgate station. In this scene, the second daughter ruins herself in Moorgate. Her bodily parts, just like a corpse, are “unsettlingly dispersed and subordinated” (Reeves, 76). Her identity, i.e. her symbolic orders, is dispersed as well. And the second daughter makes no comment while her seducer weeps. She is already estranged herself from him because she cannot share his “new start.” They have no past they can share.

“On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

My people humble people who expect

Nothing.”

la la

Margate is the seaside resort on the Thames estuary, where Eliot tried to recover after the breakdown of his health. Likewise, the third, hinted her lower class origin, cannot synthesize her experience because of her mental disease. Thus, they are all women like the typist. And they share her passivity and disconnection from either moral or emotional involvement in what is done to them. And the level tone in three phrases denotes empty-headedness. Their words are similarly disoriented and disorienting. The woman speaking here has no hope — she too is in the Inferno. She has just completed what Eliot has described in *Murder in the Cathedral*:

No colours, no forms to distract, to divert the soul

From seeing itself, foully united forever, nothing with nothing.15

According to Brooker, the “la la” is the nadir of *The Waste Land*. And just at this point, when all value has disappeared, the voices of Saint Augustine and the Buddha provide fragments of intense concern.

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning

O Lord Thou pluckest me out

O Lord Thou pluckest

burning.

It is a common knowledge that the lines are composed of St Augustine’s *Confessions*, Amos and Zechariah in the Bible, and Buddha’s preaching. The first line comes from St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, III, 1 “I came to Carthage and all around me hissed a cauldron of illicit loves.” Carthage is where the place seethed with sexual provocations and at the same time where God, a devouring fire,
may consume their (the people’s) mortal concerns and recreate them for immortality. Here Carthage is a double-fold image: the fire of ‘concupiscence’ could be finally overcome with ‘a devouring fire’, God (Hebrew, 12, 29). The next three lines come from Amos IV, 11: “I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, said the Lord” and from Confessions, “I entangle my steps with these outward beauties, but thou pluckest me out, O Lord, thou pluckest me out!” Here the past and present wrecked cities are intermingled: Sodom and Gomorrah, Carthage, and London. Needless to say, this matter is universalized beyond the past and present, beyond the national and global. This would be what Freud’s comparison of the past of a city with the psychical past tried to aim at. Finally, the pray for release from enslavement to sense, particularly sex, is issued. Then, the voices of Buddha, Augustine, and the prophets in the Bible, are “presented as an authentic expression of higher wisdom, validated, like the voice of Tiresias, by Eliot’s notes as well as by their juxtaposition to the laments of the victims of desire” (Gish, 83).

Brooker abandons the view that the episode of the typist and the clerk is the product of a prudish mind and adopts the view that the episode is one case of Eliot’s continuing critique of utilitarianism. For Brooker, utilitarianism is based on a simple formula — the greatest happiness (pleasure) for the greatest number, in other words, the greatest utility for the greatest number. Brooker remarks, “Bradley’s attack on Mill and Kant, on pleasure and duty as moral principles, is immediately helpful reading “The Fire Sermon”(150). For Bradley, pleasure for pleasure’s sake is based on naïve individualism, and duty for duty’s sake leads to despotism, so that the opposite tendency is what should be avoided together. One of the main ideas of utilitarianism is in a cynical tone caught by Marlow in Heart of Darkness: “What saves us is efficiency — the devotion to efficiency”(10). On the side of Kant who situates ethics in the real beyond the pleasure principle, Lacan goes further. For Lacan, it is false to try to ground ethics in some calculus (“utility”) of pleasures or gains. But the Kant-derived formalism and utilitarianism both have one big illusion that there is one set of considerations, or mode of calculation, which determines what we ought ‘morally’ to do. For Lacan, the subject acts ethically when she passes through realm of desire and into that of the drive. Desire is ever caught by the symbolic orders, while death drive is not only the potential for utter destruction(destruction drive) but the capacity to create from nothing (creation ex nihilo). Desire is finally defined (limited) by beauty. Desire is the force that compelled the people to move on — and end up in a system in which the great majority are definitely less happy. Brooker says, “She (the typist) is a product of a society which has institutionalized pleasure, which makes sex another duty, like working and preparing food”
This is what Zizek meant when Zizek says our happiness is official desire, as aforementioned. Further, the object of our desire is not something given in advance. Rather, fantasy teaches us what to desire in the first place. And the desire that is realized in this fantasy is not strictly my desire but the desire of the Other. Our desire is for the desire of the Other. What does the Other want from me?

For Lacan, the logical impasse in the discourse of utilitarianism is in ignoring the incompatibility of good between one and others. There is no perfect compatibility of good between one and others. What I want is the good of others in the image of my own. Moreover, the good is at the level where a subject may have it at his disposal. Then we come to pursue our own happiness as impartially as that of my neighbour. Bentham and Mill maintain that happiness includes the happiness of others as well as of ourselves. In a perfect state of the world the coincidence of my own happiness and of all other men’s happiness may be possible, but in the imperfect state it often diverges. In addition, the domain of the good is the birth of the power. The notion of control of the good is essential. And to exercise control over one’s goods is to have the right to deprive others of them. The greatest happiness principle strengthens our sense of positive duties towards others, but weakens our recognition of their rights. More radically, at the root of sex lie subjection and pain. Later, Edward in *The Cocktail Party* answers for Celia’s question of the incompatibility between Lavinia and him, “No — not happy…. The willing self can contrive the disaster/Of this unwilling partnership — but can flourish /In submission to the rule of the stronger partner” (*Collected Plays*, 154).

Now it is Freud that has unmasked what this has effectively meant historically. Lacan contends, “I mean that the power to derive others is very solid link from which will emerge the other as such” (283). Thus, the typist, the clerk, and the Thames-daughters all are the people who are deprived of happiness by the power of others. As a consequence, everyone is sick, that civilization has its discontents (VII, 230). A. Sen and B. Williams assert, “Most human beings have needed, and assuredly will need, to use notions which utilitarianism can neither accommodate nor explain.”

**Notes**