

Dr. Theresa Thompson  
English 3120  
Fall 2009

## **T. S. ELIOT, *THE WASTE LAND* (1922)**

### Original Title: "He Do the Police in Different Voices"

- ◇ Louis Althusser: *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*
  - "Ideology is a 'representation' of the **imaginary** relationship of individuals to their **real** conditions of existence."
  - Police: "Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects."
    - ◇ RSA: Force us to comply to the "rules."
    - ◇ Authority of ISA: Willing compliance to these "police."
- ◇ Peripatetic Vision: POV Wanders from person to person, place to place, era to era.
- ◇ Paratactic Voices: voice set beside voice w/o connective conjunctions.
- ◇ The **Cumaen** Sybil and the Cave of a Thousand Mouths
  - Petronius Quote: "For once I saw with my own eyes the Cumaen Sibyl hanging in a jar, and when the boys asked her, 'Sibyl, what do you want?' she answered, 'I want to die.'"
    - ◇ Sybil's prophetic voice, caged--a toy in a jar.

## I. The Burial of the Dead

- ◇ ISA: Christian Religion and Mysticism
- ◇ *Canterbury Tales*, Pilgrim's Voice: "April is the cruellest month, breeding" (1)
  - "Winter kept us warm, ..." (5)
  - "Summer surprised us..." (9)
- ◇ Voice of Modern Prophecy: "Madame Sosostris.../ Fear death by water" (43-55).
- ◇ ISA: Anglican Book of Common Prayer
  - BCP: "Raised in Incorruption": I Cor. 15.20-26
    - ◇ "...I die daily. If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."
  - "I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing" (39-40)
  - "Looking into the heart of light, the silence" (41).
  - "Unreal city, ..." (60-8)
  - BCP: "In the midst of life, we are in death."
    - ◇ BCP: "He that raised up Jesus from the dead, will also give life to our mortal bodies."
    - ◇ "That corpse you planted..." (71-6)

## II. A Game of Chess

- ◇ ISA: Male / Female Relationships
  - Just games?
- ◇ Middleton: Women Beware Women
  - Series of conflicts between men and women
- ◇ Pope & Virgil (76-96)
- ◇ Ovid: "Procne and Philomela" (97-110)
  - "But Tereus did not kill her; he seized her tongue / With pincers.../ The mangled root / Quivered, the severed tongue..."
- ◇ Unsympathetic, "severed" voices: No connection with each other, other classes, or the past.
  - Married couple? One speaks, one thinks. (111-138)
  - Pub at closing time (139-172)
    - ◇ Time is running out--should be culmination, but we can't pull it together.

### III. The Fire Sermon

- ◇ ISA: Traditions
- ◇ Poem's pivotal point, structurally.
- ◇ Sets past traditions next to barren present (173-184)
  - Death, the Eternal footman (185-6)
- ◇ Gautama Buddha's "Fire Sermon": all is on fire.
  - Mr. Eugenides (207-14)
  - Sex w/o meaning or love (222-256, 292-99)
  - St. Augustine *Confessions*: "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet" (306-310).
- ◇ Repeat images:
  - Rats (death), jug jug jug (rape), sailors, "Unreal City"
  - Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* & rivers of time (266-77)
- ◇ Pilgrimage becomes quest of the Fisher King (187-192)
- ◇ Prophetic Voice:
  - Tiresius, who was both man and woman (182, 215-249)

### IV. Death by Water

- ◇ ISA: Life as business. (311-13)
- ◇ Phlebus' Baptism (314-17)
  - More peaceful to drown than to burn?
- ◇ Emily Dickinson's "I felt a funeral..."
  - Phlebus forgot us, but we dare not forget him (316-321)

### V. What the Thunder Said

- ◆ Psalm 77: 17-20
- ◆ What happens after death? (322-34)
- ◆ Pilgrimage & Quest
  - Luke's two disciples along a road & Shackleton's journey to the South Pole (360-366)
  - Chapel Perilous & Lancelot (386-390)
- ◆ To survive the journey hangs upon an "if" (335-46)
- ◆ Voice of the thunder (400-34)
- ◆ Thunder is from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad
  - In the beginning there was nothing whatsoever in the universe. By Death, indeed, all this was covered...
  - Then He moved about, worshipping Himself. From Him, thus worshipping, water was produced.
  - He desired: "Let me sacrifice again with the great sacrifice." He was tired and he practiced austerities.
- ◆ ISAs: No more than "fragments shored against my ruins."

### Da! Da! Da!

- ◆ Gods, men, and asuras—all three descendants of Prajapati—lived with him for a time as students. Then the gods said: 'Teach us, sir!' In reply Prajapati uttered one syllable: 'Da.' Then he said: 'Have you understood?' They answered, 'Yes, we have understood. You said to us, "'Damayata—Be self-controlled.'" 'Yes,' agreed Prajapati, 'you have understood.'" Then the men said: 'Teach us, sir.' Prajapati uttered the same syllable: 'Da.' Then he said: 'Have you understood?' They answered, 'Yes, we have understood. You said to us, "'Datta—Be charitable.'" 'Yes,' agreed Prajapati, 'you have understood.'" Then the asuras said: 'Teach us, sir.' Prajapati uttered the same syllable: 'Da.' Then he said: 'Have you understood?' They said, 'Yes, we have understood. You told us "'Dayadhvam—Be compassionate.'" 'Yes,' agreed Prajapati, 'you have understood.'" The storm cloud thunders: 'Da! Da! Da!—Be self-controlled! Be charitable! Be compassionate!'" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.2:1-3)