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Breaking the “Spell of Tradition:”  
Ezra Pound’s Co-Creation of T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*

Amanda Zeligs

Professor Patricia Wallace  
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## Introduction

*The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot is a modernist icon. The poem, structured in fragments and told through the perspective of the all-seeing, hermaphroditic Tiresias, depicts the urban landscape of postwar London. It is a brilliant work of literature because it lives at the level of sound and image. We attribute this brilliance to Eliot, but it is through Ezra Pound's revisions that the poem in its current form came into being.

To appreciate Pound's dedication to the poem and his vision of modernity, I delve into the facsimile of the transcript and look closely at craft. Although Pound's edits are present throughout the early drafts, I look specifically at "The Fire Sermon" and "Death by Water," which reveal Pound's vision for the poem and exemplify the startling effects of his revisions. Pound is a masterful editor because, depending on the needs of the poem, he can shift his editorial scope. To bring Eliot's rhythmic and sonic sensibilities into being, he makes micro changes that subtly destabilize the structure, rhythm, and rhyme of the poem. His minor excisions also restrain the evidence of Eliot's personal anxieties in relation to class, gender, and the act of writing poetry. Although Eliot himself makes the famous and influential claim for impersonality in his critical essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," it is Pound who ultimately removes the presence of the author from the poem. Pound's revisions not only demonstrate his attention to detail, but also his ability to step back from the poem and make macro contributions by cutting or preserving large sections.

In making these changes Pound crosses the line between editor and author. While the editor modifies, the author creates. Eliot undeniably authors the poem because he crafts together the content, a mix of original verses and literary, historical, and philosophical allusions. But Pound plays an equally important role because he provides the vision and intention for the poem.

Thus, through revision, Pound co-creates *The Waste Land* as an original and iconic poem. In a letter to John Quinn on 21 September 1922, Eliot alludes to Pound's role in creating *The Waste Land*:

In the manuscripts of *The Waste Land* which I am sending you, you will see evidences of his work, and I think that this manuscript is worth preserving in its present form solely for the reason that it is the only evidence of the difference which his criticism has made to this poem. I am glad that you at least will have the opportunity of judging this for yourself. Naturally, I hope that the portions which I have suppressed will never appear in print and in sending them to you I am sending the only copies of these parts. ("Letters" 748)

It takes a certain kind of person to have not only the audacity, but also the wherewithal, to unapologetically transform another author's work. Pound is that kind of person. The facsimile and transcript of the manuscripts of *The Waste Land* (which did not remain nearly as suppressed as Eliot hoped they would) reveal Pound's ruthless editorial hand and its transformative affect on the poem.

In order to appreciate Pound's profound contributions to the published version of *The Waste Land*, it is important to understand the foundation of Pound and Eliot's personal and editorial relationship and the circumstances surrounding the composition of the poem. According to Lyndall Gordon's definitive biography *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, Eliot first met Pound in 1914 "at a time when [Eliot] was more or less resigned to an academic career in philosophy" (Gordon 98). Pound, already established in London's literary milieu as a contributor to the *Egoist* and *Poetry*, saw in Eliot tremendous potential and "turned him fully in the direction of a poet" (Gordon 98). Although Pound actively promoted Eliot's literary career and "concerned himself with the material details of Eliot's life—his jobs, his poverty, his need for contacts and publication" (Gordon 101), Eliot was making a living as a bank clerk and his only prominent literary success to date was "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In the midst of composing

*The Waste Land*, Eliot suffered a nervous breakdown and “was given three months’ sick leave from the bank” (Gordon 172) to see a specialist in Lausanne, Switzerland. It was in this fragile psychological state that he wrote the first incarnation of “The Fire Sermon” and placed himself, and the draft of the poem, entirely under Pound’s guidance.

Pound’s revisions of *The Waste Land* reveal two essential aspects of his character, the first being his confident sense of modernism. Pound’s vision for Eliot’s poem, clearer at times than Eliot’s own, stems from the tenets of Imagism, a movement in poetry for which Pound is largely responsible. In the essay “A Few Don’ts,” originally published in 1913 and again in “A Retrospect” in 1917, Pound outlines the principles of his Imagist aesthetic:

1. Direct treatment of the ‘thing’ whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. (Pound 3)

These guidelines cut away at superfluities in regards to both diction and rhythm, leaving the pure images to present “an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time” (Pound 4). In clearly defining the elements of Imagism, Pound attempts to move poetry away from the nineteenth century, which he sees “as a rather blurry, messy sort of period, a rather sentimentalist manner sort of period” (Pound 11). Retrospectively, he seems to possess an instinctive sense of the evolution of literature. However, at the time, I imagine that dismissing the work of the previous century as a mess took a rare form of nerve. It is with this nerve that Pound approaches *The Waste Land*, and the poem is the better for it.

In “A Few Don’ts,” Pound claims that he makes his comments about the shortcomings of nineteenth century literature “without any self-righteousness, with no self-satisfaction” (Pound 11). I cannot help but scoff at these disclaimers. Pound is both self-righteous and self-satisfied, not because of the previous century’s poetic failures, but because he now believes that he has the

opportunity to shape the future of poetry. And he conceives of himself as worthy of the task.

Thus, the second aspect of Pound's character so apparent in his revisions of *The Waste Land*: his self-assured personality. Whereas Eliot is plagued by indecision (take, for instance, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"), Pound is bossy and fearless, and he *knows*. He knows what he wants poetry to become:

As to Twentieth century poetry, and the poetry which I expect to see written during the next decade or so, it will, I think, move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be what Mr. Hewlett calls 'nearer the bone'. It will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, its interpretative power (of course poetic force does always rest there); I mean it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din, and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. As least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither. (Pound 12)

Pound's vocabulary alone—he describes different forms of poetry as "poppy-cock," "granite," or "emotional slither"—shows his brazen discernment. Pound's revisions to *The Waste Land* are, in part, the result of his relentless sense of knowing. In Eliot's poem, Pound sees the potential for the realization of his vision of modern poetry. Pound writes to Scofield Thayer, Eliot's "poem is as good in its way as Ulysses in its way—and there is so DAMN little genius, so DAMN little work that one can take hold of and say 'this at any rate stands, and makes a definite part of literature'" ("Letters" 640). Pound is passionate about the creation of good literature. He personally invests himself in the revision of *The Waste Land* because, with Eliot's raw talent and Pound's confidence, they have the opportunity to create the blueprint for modern literature, to create a work that "at any rate stands."

## TEXT OF THE FIRST EDITION

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives 220  
 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. 230  
 He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,  
 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold 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; 240  
 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 patronising kiss,  
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

She turns and looks a moment in the glass, 250  
 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.  
  
 'This music crept by me upon the waters'  
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.

Fig. 1  
 T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922) 220-58. Print.

### 1. Not Interesting Enough as Verse to Warrant So Much of It

“The Fire Sermon’s” description of the typist and the clerk is one of the most memorable sections of *The Waste Land* and demonstrates Eliot’s rhythmic and dramatic power. His skillful use of rhythm, rhyme, and sound creates variation and anticipation in the verse, emphasizes central characters, and generates interplay between the form and content. In the manuscript, however, that rhythmic sensitivity, which Eliot so powerfully displayed in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and would later become a hallmark of the “Four Quartets,” is often absent. It is revision—Pound’s revision—that brings it into being. We see Eliot’s rhythmic and sonic stumbles not only in the drafts of the section on the typist and the clerk, but especially clearly in a section Pound cut in its entirety from the poem, one that focuses on the female poet Fresca.

In order to illuminate the magnitude of Pound’s revisions—the way these revisions helped release into being a consummate section of *The Waste Land*—I will first explore the craft and skill that make the published version of “The Fire Sermon” so remarkable (see fig. 1). Eliot opens the scene between the typist and the clerk with a single sentence spanning nine lines. He captures the essence of the violet hour—an indistinct moment in time—by creating space and variation within the syntactical unit. The repetition of long vowel sounds elongates the verse: the long ‘i’ in “violet,” “eyes,” “like,” “I,” “Tiresias,” “blind,” “lives,” “strives,” “typist,” and “lights.” These sounds are sonically wide; the reader must linger on each one. The way the sentence breaks across the lines similarly gives the reader pause. The sentence begins with dependent clauses: “At the violet hour,” “...when eyes and back turn / Upward from the desk,” “...when the human engine waits / Like a taxi throbbing waiting.” Dependent clauses, by their nature, create expectation for the inevitable independent clause; the unexpected line breaks



within each clause sustain this feeling. The reader anticipates both the resolution of the dependent clause and the subject of the independent one. This balance between a sense of waiting and the fulfillment of expectation is an embodiment of the moment the scene describes.

Eliot supplements the syntactical space in the verse with rhythmic variation. The metrical lengths of the lines, syllabically waxing and waning, are unpredictable. The short line, “At the violet hour, when eyes and back” (215), precedes the metrically longer “Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits” (216). The rhythm once again contracts with “Like a taxi throbbing waiting” (217) and expands: “I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives” (218). Because of the significant contrast between the line-lengths, the shorter lines produce sonic breathing room while the longer ones are almost too full—bubbles on the verge of popping. The rhythmic patterns of the sentence, an uneven inhale and exhale, undergo a shift in the final line, a series of monosyllabic words: “Her stove and lays out food in tins.” Here, as the content narrows from the broad setting to the habitual actions of the typist, the verse’s sinuous quality gives way to shorter, more mechanical sounds because the language exemplifies the typist’s automated actions.

Eliot’s finely tuned ear and his skillful deployment of rhyme and rhythmic variation are fundamental to his presentation of Tiresias, the poem’s dual-gendered, prophetic observer. Tiresias, who first appears in the “violet hour” of “The Fire Sermon,” is integral to the conceit of *The Waste Land*. In the notes of the published version, 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 women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (148 n218)

(Pound's revisions, discussed later in the chapter, demonstrate that he too understands Tiresias's centrality.) Although Tiresias, as the omniscient narrator, is never entirely absent from the poem, in "The Fire Sermon," Eliot foregrounds Tiresias twice. Eliot first signals the narrator's presence on line 228 with varied rhythm and a hint of rhyme. Eliot's use of rhyme both highlights Tiresias's initial appearance and directs the reader to the subjects of his clairvoyance:

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. (220-3)

Here, "lives" rhymes with "strives," "see" with "sea," and "lights" is a partial rhyme with "tins." The entrance of rhyme—which emphasizes Tiresias's clairvoyance throughout the section because the first word predicts the coming rhyme—marks the narrowing of his all-seeing gaze to the actions of the typist.

With the second interjection of "I Tiresias" (228), Eliot again varies the rhyme scheme and meter. Tiresias' importance is evident through the short, syntactically straightforward lines that characterize his perspective: "I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs / Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest— / I too awaited the unexpected guest" (228-30). While the description "old man with wrinkled dugs" invokes the previous image of "wrinkled female breasts," the stresses on "old," "man" and "dugs," sonically invigorate the description and emphasize the dual gender central to Tiresias. Eliot shifts the rhythm again in the final couplet, which contains two balanced lines with distinct caesuras. "Perceived the scene" is countered by "and foretold the rest." The same occurs in the following line: with "I too awaited," the reader prepares for the sound of the second shoe falling, "the unexpected guest." The sense of sonic equilibrium supports Tiresias' role as a neutral, removed observer. The sonic variation in this excerpt

highlights central details of the section: Tiresias is half-man, half woman; predictive rhymes mark him as all seeing; there is a mood of waiting and expectation; and the typist is about to receive a visitor.

Tiresias, as the omniscient narrator, guides the reader through the poem's fragments. Always a few moments ahead of the impending action, he directs the reader's gaze to scenes that capture the degraded urbanity of postwar London. In "The Fire Sermon," Tiresias's sight reveals the dispassionate encounter between two urban inhabitants: the typist and the clerk. As Tiresias's view of the typist comes into focus, Eliot shifts to a regular alternating rhyme scheme: "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, and camisoles, and stays" (224-7). Here, the first, third, and fourth lines are pentameters. Eliot prevents the verse from becoming too even by inserting the longer line "Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays" (225). The multi-syllabic "combinations" and the three stressed syllables at the end of the line, "sun's last rays," distract from the sentence's regular structure; they underscore the image of unmentionables strewn across a humble flat and serve as the most significant characterization of the typist.

When "the young man carbuncular" (231) enters, the poem shifts to a series of quatrains with alternating rhyme schemes ("ABAB"). Eliot maintains this rhyme scheme with minor metrical variation—10- to 12-syllable lines—throughout the entire episode between the typist and the clerk. Take, for instance, the description of the clerk making his first physical move: "Flushed and decided he assaults at once; / Exploring hands encounter no defense; / His vanity requires no response, / and makes a welcome of indifference" (235-8). Every line in this description is end-stopped. This predictability makes me feel like I am walking the perimeter of a

square, and each line ending alerts me to the presence of a corner. Here, predictable rhythmic structure assists the poem, underlining and registering its central content: it embodies the absence of affect in the characters' reactions. The stability of the verse's rhythmic structure contrasts with the narrative of sexual violation. As the typist and the clerk go through the paces of the encounter—the meal, indifferent sex, hasty departure, and post-coital reflection—the meter and rhyme scheme, like the characters, remain unaffected. The young man himself is not even the primary actor in encounter: the subject of the clerk morphs into “hands” and then “vanity,” replacing the individual with disembodied parts. Eliot's verse makes it clear that it is ultimately the clerk's “vanity” that “welcomes” the typist's “indifference.”

The typist also expresses no emotional response to the “assault.” Eliot writes: “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: I'm glad it's over’” (249-252). Once again, Eliot uses a mechanical formal structure and the inner thoughts of the characters to underline the way the heightened moment of intercourse is routine and emotionless. Variation in sound is seductive: when desire disappears from both action and thought, the poem becomes sonically rote. Because the predictable rhythm and rhyme and the dispassionate characters detract from the intimacy of the events conspiring, I feel detached from the scene (as does the typist), a reluctant voyeur rather than participant. The presence of a parenthetical Tiresias, lurking in the background—“And I Tiresias have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed” (243-4)—is an image for the voyeuristic detachment of the reader. To obliterate the emotional intimacy from the episode, Eliot not only creates distance between the lovers, but also, by removing rhythmic variation and sonic seduction, between the reader and the text.



4

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 enough as verse  
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The typist home at teatime, who begins  
~~to~~ clear ~~the~~ ~~table~~ ~~away~~ her ~~broken~~ breakfast, lights  
 Her stove, and lays out squalid food in tins;  
 Prepares the room and sets the room to rights.

Out of the window perilously spread  
 Her drying combinations meet the sun's last rays,  
 And on the divan piled, (at night her bed),  
 Are stockings, dirty camisoles, and stays.

A bright kimono wraps her as she sprawls  
 In nervous torpor on the window seat,  
 A touch of art is given by the false  
 Japanese print, purchased in Oxford Street.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dug,  
 Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest,  
~~Knowing the manner of these crawling bugs,~~  
 I too awaited the expected guest.

A youth of ~~twentysans~~, spotted about the face,  
 One of those simple loiterers whom we say  
 We may have seen in any public place  
 At almost any hour of night or day.

Fride has not ~~fixed~~ him with ambitious rage,  
 His hair is thick with grease, and thick with scurf,  
~~perhaps~~ his inclinations touch the stage -  
 Not sharp enough to associate with the turf.

He, <sup>is</sup> the young man carbuncular, ~~all stare~~  
 Boldly about, in "London's one cafe",  
 And he will tell her, with a casual air,  
 Grandly "I have been with Nevinson today".

Perhaps a cheap house agent's clerk, who flits  
 Daily, from flat to flat, with one bold stare;  
 One of the low on whom assurance sits  
 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.

He munches with the same persistent stare,  
 He knows his way with women (and that's that!)  
 Impertinently tilting back his chair  
 And dropping cigarette ash on the mat.

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 unreprieved, if undesired.

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Fig. 2  
 T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*; a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including  
 the Annotations of Ezra Pound (Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace  
 Jovanovich, 1971) 44. Print.

It was not always like that. Despite the brilliance of Eliot's ear, evidenced in "Prufrock" and later in the "Four Quartets," Eliot's early drafts of the typist and the clerk lack sensitivity to the interplay between rhythm and content. Rather than mastering and varying form, he becomes trapped by it. Perhaps Eliot, unsure of his poetic abilities, feels that he must risk the quality of his verse in favor of adhering to literary conventions of the time. Pound's edits identify the hazards of this restriction to his craft.

The first difference between the two versions is structural: the episode's original incarnation is broken into end-stopped, four-line stanzas, bracketed off from one another (see fig. 2). While in the published poem the scene is set through a sense of space and anticipation, in the draft, the end-stopped stanzas, made up of mostly end-stopped lines, create disorienting pauses and obstruct the description of the setting. In "A Few Don'ts," Pound advises against such punctuation pitfalls: "Don't make each line stop dead at the end, and then begin every next line with a heave. Let the beginning of the next line catch the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want a definite longish pause" (Pound 6). The scene exposition stretches across three stanzas and is full of "heaves." Eliot begins the version in the facsimile with "ABAB"-rhymed quatrains: "At the violet hour, the hour when eyes and back and hand / Turn upward from the desk, the human engine waits— / Like a taxi throbbing waiting at a stand— / To spring to pleasure through the horned or ivory gates" (121-4). The rhythm, repetition, and images in this sentence are surprisingly, for me, heavy-handed. I find myself lost in the repeated conjunctions in the first line—"eyes and back and hand" (121)—and struggle to regain focus by the time Eliot clarifies the action of the body parts in the second: "Turn upward from the desk..." (122).

Pound takes issues with the simile in these lines: the comparison between the ambiguous "human engine" and the taxi, "throbbing waiting...to spring" confuses Pound. He writes, "Taxi

spring??” (43). Good question. This image is even more perplexing when combined with the reference to the “horned and ivory” gates that Aeneas encounters in the underworld. In an attempt to both clarify the images and make the allusion fragmented, Pound draws a line through the reference in the first of the two drafts and turns it into a parenthetical phrase in the second. The images are compelling alone but feel like too much when stuffed into a single quatrain with a regular rhyme scheme; they fit together like mismatched puzzle pieces and fail to provide a clear picture. Pound’s demand for clarity is a step towards freeing the images from the confines of rigid form.

In the draft, the structural limitations that Eliot imposes on his verse not only inhibit the clear presentation of images, but they also delay the appearance of the typist unnecessarily and hinder the momentum of the poem. Pound’s revisions, in accordance with his Imagist aesthetic, rescue Eliot’s readers from boredom, redundancies, and obvious rhymes. (Who would have thought Eliot’s readers would ever have to be rescued?) When the typist finally enters the scene in the third stanza (“The typist home at teatime, who begins / To clear away her broken breakfast, lights / Her stove, and lays out squalid food in tins, / Prepares the room and sets the room to rights” (129-32)), Pound comments that this “verse [is] not interesting enough as verse to warrant so much of it” (45). He was right. Confined to the quatrain, Eliot over-extends the description of the typist and slows down the actions of the poem. In “A Few Don’ts,” Pound’s essay on the tenets of Imagism, he warns writers against such behavior. With the bossiness typical of Pound he says, “If you are using a symmetrical form, don’t put in what you want to say and then fill up the remaining vacuums with slush” (Pound 7). For Pound, boring equals slush. Pound’s revisions, informed by his confident understanding of the Imagist aesthetic, force

Eliot into the style of saying that becomes characteristic of *The Waste Land* and, in turn, modern poetry.

The second significant difference between the two versions of the poem is Eliot's use of rhyme scheme. According to Pound, "A rhyme must have in it some slight element of surprise if it is to give pleasure, it need not be bizarre or curious, but it must be well used if used at all" (Pound 7) With this principle in mind, he resorts to bracketing the entire third stanza and writing "qui dira les gaffers de la rime" (45), which roughly translates as "O, who can tell the wrong-doings of Rhyme?" (Verlaine). In this section of Eliot's draft, such wrong-doings of rhyme are abundant. The rhymes here—"begins" / "tins" and "lights" / "rights"—are neither unexpected nor inventive; they click into place in a predictable way. Eliot is not "using rhyme well" because the rhyme is solely a function of the structure rather than integrated with the content. Here, the rhyme controls the characterization of the typist. Pound, through revision, shifts the balance of power back to the content, thus freeing Eliot and the poem from the wrong-doings of rhyme.

Pound also objects to Eliot's use of poorly executed rhymes because they produce unoriginal images. Part of Eliot's description of the typist revisits images from an earlier poem: "A bright kimono wraps her as she sprawls / In nerveless torpor on the window seat; / A touch of art is given by the false / Japanese print, purchased in Oxford Street" (137-140). As Pound notes, "mix up the couplet & grishkin not good—" (45). He is referring to Eliot's "Whispers of Immortality:" "Grishkin is nice: her Russian eye / Is underlined for emphasis; / Uncorseted, her friendly bust / Gives promise of pneumatic bliss" (45 n2). Again Pound exhibits a canniness for originality and structure. The dense images and irregular rhyme in the original stanzas do not work as couplets in this new context. Pound also circles "bright" and draws lines below "sprawls," "nerve," and "tor;" he turns "window seat" into a parenthetical phrase and removes



“purchased in Oxford street.” He is editing out the pieces of verse that fail to hold both Pound’s, and the reader’s, interest. And I see his point: regarding the description of the typist, there is too much of it. Pound sees that the aesthetic of the poem is contingent upon its fragmented nature. When Eliot lingers too long on a single form, rhythm, or subject matter, the imagist “glimpse” runs the risk of becoming a fully formed narrative—a story that literary greats have told before.

Pound also takes issue with the rhymes present in Tiresias’ second appearance. Eliot rhymes the line “I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs” (141) with “Knowing the manner of these crawling bugs” (143). Pound draws a line through the latter phrase and writes in the margins “Too easy.” Talk about the “wrong-doings” of rhyme! The line is too easy because it is predictable: two monosyllabic words and the same vowel. It is too easy because of the heavy-handed commentary on the typist and the clerk. To Eliot, the characters may resemble the insects of the human race, but the reader—not sharing Eliot’s judgmental perspective—may arrive at a different, less harsh conclusion. The typist and the clerk behave mechanically, but they are still human. Pound understands that if Tiresias makes the comment about “bugs,” then he is too narrowly interpreting the scene before him and risks alienating the reader.

When the draft of the poem finally arrives at the long-suspended encounter between the typist and the clerk, the regular meter and rhyme scheme have been in place for a dozen stanzas. There is no rhythmic transition to signify the event. By the time the sex is over, the episode has completely lost its momentum. Consider the clerk’s exit: “—Bestows one final patronising kiss, / And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit; / And at the corner where the stable is, / Delays only to urinate, and spit” (177-80). Pound crosses out these lines and writes, “probably over the mark” (47). Once again, Eliot relies on an “easy” rhyme—“unlit” and “spit”—to express a crude and disturbing revulsion for the clerk, limiting readers’ abilities to form their own judgments.

The versions of these stanzas in the finished poem are tighter. Eliot does away with the quatrains completely and ends the lengthy stanza at “unlit.” This brings the rhyme scheme and encounter to an abrupt halt as opposed to the inertia of the earlier version. Eliot cuts superfluous transition words and adopts Pound’s suggestions to destabilize the verse, moving it away from the safe content of easy rhymes, over-used images, and familiar narratives. These revisions create fragmented images, move the scene along, and clarify the perspective of Tiresias. As an “all-seeing” narrator, Tiresias does not also have to be “all revealing.” Eliot needs to strike a careful balance between knowing and disclosing, and it’s Pound’s revisions that sharpen this state of equilibrium.



As important as Pound’s edits are to Tiresias’ narration of the typist and the clerk, that section of the manuscript is the least of Pound’s editorial problems. In the original draft of “The Fire Sermon,” before the typist and the clerk even come on the scene, the reader has to wade through a heavy-handed parody of Alexander Pope’s *The Rape of the Lock*. The long prelude is a portrait, composed entirely of rhymed couplets, of Fresca, rising from her slumber:

“Admonished by the sun’s inclining ray, / And swift approaches of the thievish day, / The white-armed Fresca blinks, and yawns, and gapes, / Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes” (1-4). These lines, heavy with multisyllabic words such as “admonished” and “approaches,” weigh down the language and slow the exposition of the scene. The verse does not embody the qualities of the sun and the day; it minimizes them. The clunky lines seem to go on forever without variation. For instance, Eliot’s overuse of repeated short ‘a’ sounds—“admonished,” “and,” “approaches,” “day,” “armed,” “Fresca,” “yawns,” “gapes,” “pleasant,” “rapes”—makes

## THE FIRE SERMON.

Admonished by the sun's inclining ray,  
~~and swift approaches of the thievish day,~~  
 The white-armed Fresca blinks, and yawns, and gapes,  
 Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes.  
 Electric summons of the busy bell  
 Brings brisk Amanda to destroy the spell;  
 With coarsened hand, and hard plebeian tread,  
 Who draws the curtain round the lacquered bed,  
 Depositing thereby a polished tray  
 Of soothing chocolate, or stimulating tea.

Leaving the bubbling beverage to cool,  
 Fresca slips softly to the needful stool,  
 Where the pathetic tale of Richardson  
 Eases her labour till the deed is done.  
 Then slipping back between the conscious sheets,  
 Explores a ~~page of fiction~~ as she eats. *the Daily Mirror*  
 Her hands caress the egg's well-rounded dome,  
 She sinks in reverie, till the letters come. ]  
 Their scribbled contents at a glance devours,  
 Then to reply devotes her practic'd powers.

"My dear, how are you? I'm unwell today,  
 And have been, since I saw you at the play.  
 I hope that nothing mars your gait,  
 And things go better with you, than with me.  
 I went last night - more out of dull despair -  
 To Lady Kleinwurm's party - who was there?  
 Oh, Lady Kleinwurm's monde - no one that mattered -  
 Somebody sang, and Lady Kleinwurm chattered.  
 What are you reading? anything that's new?  
 I have a clever book by Giraudoux.  
 Clever, I think, is all. I've much to say -  
 But cannot say it - that is just my way -  
 When shall we meet - tell me all your manoeuvres;  
 And all about yourself and your new lovers -  
 And when to Paris? I must make an end,  
 My dear, believe me, your devoted  
 friend".

This ended, to the steaming bath she moves,  
 Her tresses fanned by little flutt'ring Loves;  
 Odours, confectioned by the cunning French,  
 Disguise the good old hearty female stench.

*artful*

Fig. 3

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*; a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound (Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) 22. Print.

the lines sonically boring. There is too much of the same sound crammed in a small space. Eliot's ear is off! He is repeating the vowel sounds to the detriment of richer, more complex verse. Fresca's narrative continues in this rhythmic equivalent of a flat step for 72 lines. Pound slashes the entire episode (see fig. 3).

Pound does away with these verses because he knows that Eliot's poetry is capable of being more than just poorly executed mimesis of Pope. Eliot once wrote of Pound: "I have met very few people in this life that care about poetry; and those few, when they have the knowledge...know how to take from every poet what he has to give, and reject those poets who whatever they give always pretend to give *more* than they do give" ("Introduction" xxi). He offers a parenthetical anecdote as evidence:

I remember that Pound once induced me to destroy what I thought an excellent set of couplets; for, said he, "Pope has done this so well that you cannot do it better; and if you mean it as a burlesque, you had better suppress it, for you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope—and you can't." ("Introduction" xxi)

Pound, never one for sugarcoating, is right: Eliot, at this stage in his career, cannot write better verse than Pope. He cannot beat Pope at his own game; he has to change the terms. Through revision, Pound pushes Eliot to cultivate an original voice.

*The Rape of the Lock*, the subject of Eliot's ill-fated imitation, is a famously satirical epic in both subject matter and form. Eliot's drafted section on Fresca is thus a parody of a parody. Compare Eliot's lines above with Pope's: "Sol thro' white Curtains shot a tim'rous Ray, / And op'd those Eyes that must eclipse the Day; / Now Lapdogs give themselves the rowzing shake, / And sleepless Lovers, just at Twelve, awake" (Pope 13-17). While the events that conspire in both Eliot's and Pope's stanzas follow a similar linear narrative, Pope's version has a lightness and elegance that Eliot's lacks. Take, for instance, Pope's repeat of soft consonant sounds "sol," "shot," "shake," "sleepless," "thrice," "slipper," "sylph." The sonic effect of this consonance

produces not rhyme, but harmony. In contrast, Eliot fills his lines with rhyming vowels, hard sounds, and powerfully accented syllables, particularly in alliterative pairs, such as “busy bell” and “brings brisk.” What was he thinking? While Eliot disrupts the scene with the notion of rape (even if he is alluding to Pope and the unauthorized trimming of an unruly curl), Pope lingers in the space between being asleep and awake with lovers, lapdogs, and airy spirits. Eliot, his stride heavy here, cannot mimic the effervescent quality of Pope’s verses. Pound cuts the couplets; Eliot should not even try.

The Fresca section is also plagued by superfluties. It is unsurprising that Pound finds the passage tedious; in “A Few Don’ts” his first piece of advice is “use no superfluous word” (Pound 7). Eliot extends the description and depicts Fresca writing an excessive letter (see fig. 3, pg. 18): “I went last night—more out of dull despair— / To Lady Kleinwurm’s party—who was there? / Oh Lady Kleinwurm’s monde—no one that mattered— / Somebody sang, and Lady Kleinwurm chattered” (25-8). Eliot hardly says anything substantive in these lines: they are full of meaningless “chatter” and “no one that matters.” The verse is also boring because of the overly regular syntactical arrangements. Although he interjects commentary—“more out of dull despair” (25)—and breaks up the syntax over several lines, the sentence proceeds in too standard a fashion: subject (I), verb (went), adverb (last night), object (Lady Kleinwurm’s party). The combination of the regular syntax and regular rhyme scheme provide a monotony of regularity. I long for variation to rescue me. Pound shrewdly comments, “rhyme drags it out to diffuseness” (39).

Once again, consider Pope’s verse: “Thrice rung the Bell the slipper knock’d the Ground,  
/ And the press’d Watch return’d a silver Sound. / *Belinda* still her downy Pillow prest, / Her  
Guardian *Sylph* prolong’d the balmy Rest” (Pope 17-20). Pope’s poetry exhibits sonic control

and mastery. In the manuscript, Pound notes that it was a “Trick of Pope etc not to let couple[t] diffuse ‘em” (39). Because the couplet is such a small structural unit, it thrives only when there is tension between expectation and variation. Pope manipulates language to create more jarring and unexpected movement. He shortens words—“knock’d,” “press’dm,” “return’d.” He also plays with syntax, reversing the order of subject and verb in “thrice rung the bell,” and separating the adverb “still” from the verb “prest” in “still her downy pillow prest.” These variations push the verse toward surprise, lightness. In contrast, Eliot is a slave to rhyme. While revision might tighten the language and shift the power back to Eliot, Pound decides the passages are ultimately not worth salvaging.

Pound wants Eliot to “do something different” (23 n1). Eliot’s *Fresca* is the derivative of a derivative—*The Rape of the Lock* is a derivative form, a satire of the classical epics of Homer and Vergil. Pound’s destruction of this section in Eliot’s draft is indicative of a more pervasive editorial intention. He wants—really wants—the content and sound of *The Waste Land* to be new and “modern.” Because Eliot’s text frequently alludes to literary traditions of the past, Pound’s revisions work to shift the balance from tradition to innovation to make the familiar new. Eliot echoes fragments from the work of past writers, but Pound sees that Eliot has to create a new design. *Fresca*, embedded in a linear chain of events and rhymed couplets, is too similar in form and content to Pope’s *Belinda*, yet not delicate and varied enough to make it new. In cutting 72 lines, Pound forces Eliot to retune his ear and sharpen the sonic and structural qualities of the “modern” urban encounter between the typist and the clerk. Pound’s revisions push Eliot artistically. They push him away from the safety of what he knows about literature and writing and force him to discover his distinctive sonic and rhythmic sensibilities to find his own voice.

## 2. Perhaps Be Damned

In the published version of *The Waste Land*, the moment between the half-formed characters of the typist and the clerk is fleeting. Eliot offers a glimpse into the characters' lives, and the episode enters and exits the poem without fanfare, as do so many other memorable images. *The Waste Land* we know is fragmented and image based—it is “modern.” As the previous chapter demonstrates, the swiftness yet effectiveness of the scene results in part from Eliot's sonic and rhythmic brilliance; it is also a product of Eliot's apparently impersonal and confident portrayal of the events. However, in the manuscript, Eliot's anxieties (of which there were many, as we know from Gordon's biography), especially around issues of gender, writing, adolescence and class, seep into “The Fire Sermon.” Dualities—male and female, lower class and upper class, past and present—are the source of these anxieties. They are present first in the portrayal of Fresca and, then in the characterization of the typist and the clerk. Pound's revisions erase the evidence of Eliot's doubt and angst, while affirming the centrality of the hermaphroditic Tiresias, in whom these dualities exist without anxiety.

In the published poem, Eliot hardly takes time to give the readers a sense of the characters before they tumble into bed. The typist gets six lines of characterization, the most significant being the description of her intimates strewn about the flat: “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” (224-7). Here, Eliot reduces the woman to delicate articles of clothing; he reveals little about inner life. Eliot also truncates the young man's characterization, introducing him with a pithy three line simile—“A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare, / One of the low on whom assurance sits / As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire” (232-4)—and then immediately proceeds with the character's sexual



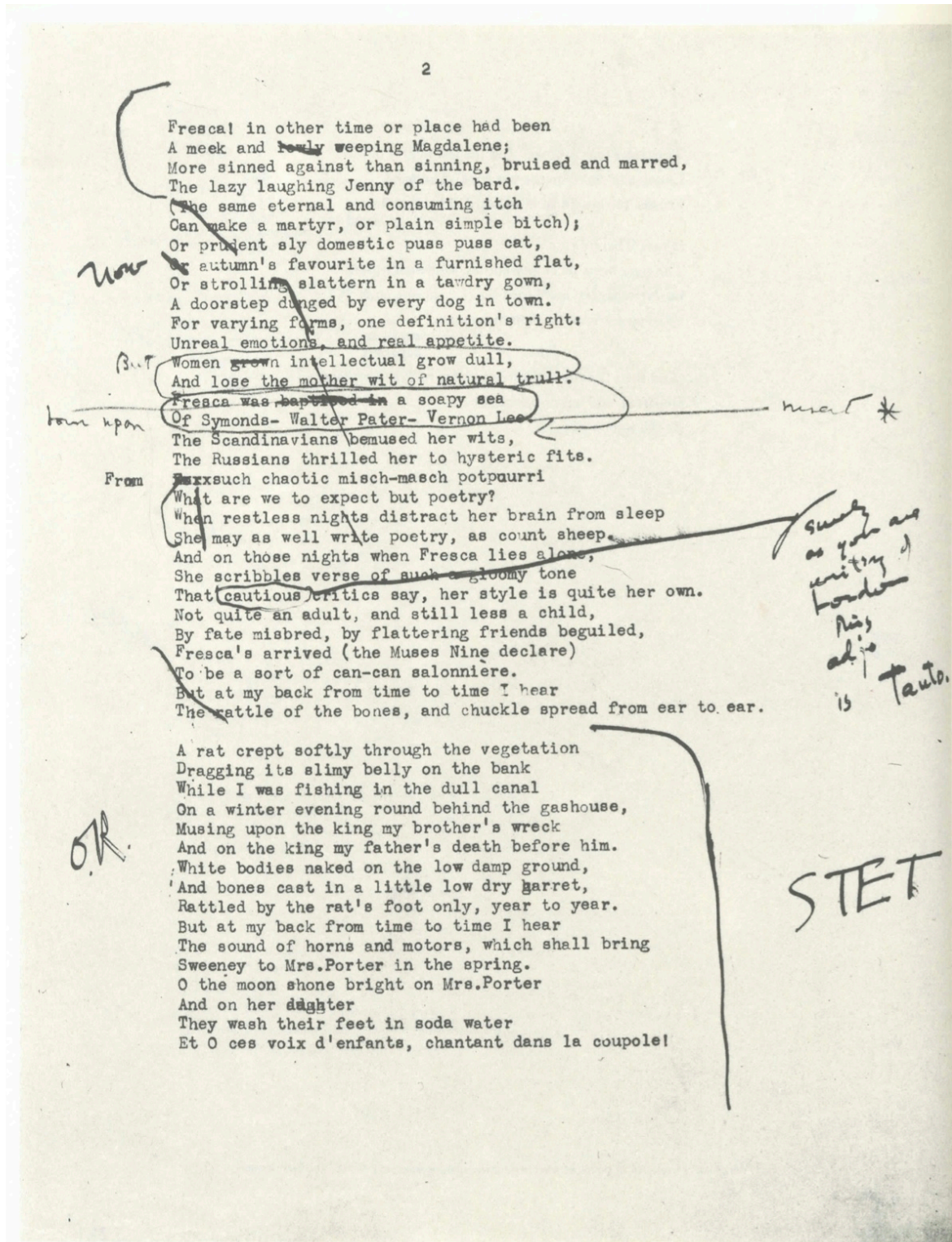


Fig. 4

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*; a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound (Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) 26. Print.



intentions. Like the typist, the clerk becomes that which he wears, in this case an emotional mask rather than clothes: “a bold stare” (233) and “assurance” (233). His outer shell is deliberate, much like a millionaire donning a silk hat.

Aside from Tiresias’ parenthetical interjection, reminding me of my own voyeuristic participation in the text—“(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)” (243-6)—the entire physical encounter spans only eight lines. It begins unceremoniously with the clerk’s “unreproved, if undesired” (238) caresses and “assault” (239) and concludes with the bestowal of “one final patronising kiss” before descending into darkness. The scene works like a well-oiled machine because of the swift characterization and progression. The brevity of the episode fits with the layers of fragments central to *The Waste Land’s* aesthetic.



The poem was not always so tight and confident a sequence of fragments. In the manuscript version, Eliot allows his anxieties to infiltrate his verse. One facet of his insecurities relates to his intellect and the act of writing, and like many male writers before him, he genders these insecurities female. In the draft of the poem, after Eliot’s parody of Pope, his verses about Fresca turn broadly to the subject of women and literary tradition (see fig. 4): “Women grown intellectual grow dull, / And lose the mother wit of natural trull. / Fresca was born upon a soapy sea / Of Symonds—Walter Pater—Vernon Lee” (54-7). This opening set of couplets reiterates a standard poetic convention of ridiculing educated females. Eliot draws Fresca into this category of learned women through association with “Symonds,” “Walter Pater,” and “Vernon Lee,” references to “critics of the Renaissance” who are both visionaries of past literary aesthetics and “the source of Fresca’s culture” (27 n3). Ann Douglas, in *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan*

in the 1920s, explains that this disparaging treatment of women relates to the intentions of the modernist movement:

White middle-class women had seized the reins of national culture in the mid- and late-Victorian era...this was the first generation of women to explore, however imprecisely, the notion of “matriarchy,” or female-dominated society, and to make it their goal and ideal...The moderns aimed to ridicule and overturn everything the matriarch had championed. (Douglas 6)

The extended description of Fresca, the most fully developed female character in the original draft of *The Waste Land*, associates women with wasted intellect and antiquated literary traditions. Pound draws diagonal lines through these verses because it is more effective to show how literary aesthetics can be “overturned” than to “ridicule” them while adhering to established forms. Thus, he turns *The Waste Land* toward modernism not through the negative representation of women, but through their relative absence.

The negative depiction of Fresca is not simply a reflection of modernism but is also a product of Eliot’s personal anxieties about his relation to poets of the past and about the act of writing poetry as gendered female or adolescent. He writes of Fresca:

The Scandinavians bemused her wits,  
The Russians thrilled her to hysteric fits.  
For such chaotic misch-masch potpourri  
What are we to expect but poetry?  
When restless nights distract her brain from sleep  
She may as well write poetry, as count sheep.  
And on those nights when Fresca lies alone,  
She scribbles verse of such a gloomy tone  
The cautious critics say, her style is quite her own. (58-66)

In the draft, Eliot relegates the act of reading and writing poetry to Fresca’s pastime. Her influences, “the Scandinavians [who] bemused her wits” (58), and “Russians [who] thrilled her to hysteric fits” (59) constitute “a chaotic misch-masch potpourri” (60). Such a description may be more applicable to Eliot’s fears about the text of *The Waste Land* itself than Fresca’s fictional

poetry. By referencing, manipulating, and de-contextualizing fragments from many intellectual and literary sources, including canonical texts like Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Eliot represents classical literature in a groundbreaking form. But it surely made him nervous to do it. The landscape of these literary fragments—drawn from a wide array of cultures, time periods, and authors, though quite pointedly not from the sources of Fresca's inspiration—is potentially (as Eliot undoubtedly feared) chaotic.

Eliot's belittling of Fresca's poetic talents reveals his own self-consciousness about the work of literature he is creating and his fears about how this work will be received and interpreted. This fear, in part, drives Eliot to include the notes at the end of the poem. In "The Ecstasy Influence" Jonathan Lethem sees these notes as another manifestation of Eliot's anxiety: "The body of Eliot's poem is a vertiginous mélange of quotation, allusion and "original" writing ... Eliot evidenced no small anxiety about these matters; the notes he so carefully added to *The Waste Land* can be read as a symptom of modernism's contamination anxiety" (Lethem 61-2). Unfortunately for Pound, his editorial reach—which results in the removal of both Fresca and evidence of Eliot's other anxieties—does not extend to the notes.

Eliot describes Fresca as only endeavoring to compose poetry when she is unable to sleep, and even then, the verses are "scribbles." The use of "scribbles" aligns the act of writing poetry with indecipherable marginal notes and children wielding crayons, with adolescent poetic attempts, the very form that Eliot—with Pound's help—is resisting. In the same vein, Pound slashes the final lines of the section, in which Eliot describes Fresca as both adolescent and a can-can salonnière: "Not quite an adult, and still less a child, / By fate misbred, by flattering friends beguiled, / Fresca's arrived (the Muses Nine declare) / To be a sort of can-can

salonnière” (67-70). Fresca’s intellect is caught between childhood and adulthood; the Muses, purveyors of artistic talent, thus reduce her to a “can-can salonnière” (70). Describing the composition of poetry as “scribbles,” and mocking the influence of the muses, reflects Eliot’s own challenges in writing *The Waste Land*; he found himself struggling to finish the poem. During one of their frequent lunches, he confessed to Conrad Aiken “how he would come home from work, sharpen his pencil, and then be unable to write” (Gordon 188). It is likely that some of Eliot’s many difficulties in writing *The Waste Land* take root in his prior poetic successes. Perhaps because “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” was composed when Eliot was only 22 years old (Gordon 33), concerns that he, like Fresca, would never be more than an adolescent poet permeate the early draft of *The Waste Land*.

By undermining educated women and then subsequently connecting them to the act of writing poetry, Eliot projects himself—with emphasis on anxieties concerning his poetic talents and creation—onto a female character. Pound excises from the draft this demeaning portrayal of women and the notion of poetry as trivial because, in the universe of Eliot’s poem—the original modernist poem, as Pound conceived of it—these portrayals are too inextricably linked to the author’s personal anxieties. Pounds’ revisions show his belief that, for *The Waste Land* to emerge as a definitive modern work, its contents must be rid of uncertainty about poetry itself and rid of Eliot’s anxiety about poetry and gender.



In the original draft of “The Fire Sermon,” Pound also excises significant portions of the descriptions of the typist and the clerk where the details seem too heavy with traces of Eliot’s own preoccupations about class. Eliot’s class anxieties stem from a disdain for the ordinary, something he hoped to never be. As Gordon explains, Eliot views urban, post-war London as “contaminated”—and portrays it as such—because it is full of mundane people (Gordon 543).

Pound's edits level "the build-up of [this] contamination" (Gordon 181) in the poem. In removing much of the excessive and prejudiced class commentary in Eliot's portrayal of Londoners, Pound aligns the poem with his conception of imagism and clarifies the perspective of Tiresias. In "A Few Don'ts," Pound advises writers to "use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something" (Pound 5). Pound removes the condescending portions of the typist and the clerk's characterizations because they do not "reveal something;" they do not accurately reflect what Tiresias sees. Rather, they are a product of the original draft's rigid structure and Eliot's anxieties. It is not that Pound didn't share Eliot's class disdain. He too was a snob. However, he sees that condescension has no place in the impersonal modernist poem that Eliot—with Pound's considerable help—is creating.

Unlike the rapidly sketched, six-line description of the typist in the published version, in the draft her pattering around the house continues for three quatrains (see fig. 2, pg. 6):

The typist home at teatime, who begins  
 To clear away her broken breakfast, lights  
 Her stove, and lays out squalid food in tins,  
 Prepares the room and sets the room to rights.

Out of the window perilously spread  
 Her drying combinations meet the sun's last rays,  
 And on the divan piled, (at night her bed),  
 Are stockings, dirty camisoles, and stays.

A bright kimono wraps her as she sprawls  
 In nerveless torpor on the window seat;  
 A touch of art is given by the false  
 Japanese print, purchased in Oxford Street. (129-40)

Compared to the varied meter of the published version, the steady rhythm of the early draft lulls the reader into witnessing the typist's household chores. The regularity of the verse is a way for Eliot to judge her manner of living; it is as if he is saying that she lives a meaningless life of routine. Eliot's opinion of the typist's class status also emerges through his diction. He describes

the typist's food as "squalid" and under-things as "dirty." These adjectives are digs; they demonstrate that the messiness—and he identifies that mess with class—of ordinary life repels him. Thus, he uses language to assert class distinctions, situating both himself and the reader at a distance from the typist. In the published poem, the abbreviated description of the typist reduces the class judgment and separation, providing the reader with a glimpse rather than a full-fledged account complete with condescension.

The characterization of the clerk is similarly questionable because it is not the product of a neutral observer like Tiresias. Eliot fills the quatrains by describing the clerk making small talk—"he will tell her, with a casual air, / Grandly, "I have been with Nevinson today"" (147-8). He name-drops the painter Christopher Richard Wynne Nevinson to elevate his own societal status (Cork). Eliot also details the young man's mannerisms, how he chews, seduces, sits, and smokes. The clerk "munches with the same persistent stare, / He knows his way with women and that's that! / Impertinently tilting back his chair / And dropping cigarette ash on the mat" (161-4). I repeat Pound's earlier comment: this verse is "not interesting enough as verse to warrant so much of it." The descriptors "persistent" and "impertinently" reveal Eliot's revulsion at the young man's lack of refinement. This disdain is a product of Eliot's own anxieties about his class status. Gordon provides a biographical basis for this insecurity: "Eliot puzzled and alarmed his parents by staying in London in 1915 instead of finishing his doctorate at Harvard and spending years writing poetry that was published only sporadically and in little-known magazines" (Gordon 17-8); while struggling as a poet, he made a living as a "poor clerk" (Gordon 18). The draft of the poem does not need to belabor the clerk's posturing and Eliot's disgust with it; the subsequent physical interaction between the typist and the clerk reveals the façade without implicating the author.

These descriptions, flickering traces of Eliot's own anxieties and, as such, "merely personal," fall under the category of "Too Much Information." They jeopardize the neutrality of Tiresias's narration and tell the reader what the impending actions should show, stalling the advancement of the scene and detracting from the fragmented and fleeting nature of the poem. Pound's edits begin the work of extracting Eliot's preoccupations about class from the descriptions of the characters; unlike Eliot, Tiresias has the capacity to observe without passing judgment.



Pound cuts the section on the carbuncular young man not only because of Eliot's anxiety-fueled class commentary, but also because, within the description of the clerk, he identifies elements of Eliot's insecure self-conception. Eliot begins the characterization with superficial first impressions: "A youth of twentyone, spotted about the face / One of those simple loiterers whom we say / We may have seen in any public place / At almost any hour of night or day" (145-8). The clerk is pockmarked and unremarkable. While the description helps the reader picture the man's physical features, the details are stereotypical. Then Eliot's conjectures about the clerk's personality begin. The young man's "pride has not fired him with ambitious rage" (149); he is more inclined to "touch the stage" (151) because he is "not sharp enough to associate with the turf" (152) of the business world. Eliot seems to be entertaining fantasies about the clerk's inner life and his occupational desires; the poem slows down.

I get caught on Eliot's speculations and find the notion of the clerk as an actor confusing. I can only justify Eliot's knowledge of these details when I interpret them as a description of the poet himself. How can I focus on the overall purpose of the sexual encounter, detached and unsettling, if I am contemplating the clerk's (or Eliot's) future starring roles? The characterization extends tangentially for another 12 lines before the clerk makes his first physical

move. On this page of the facsimile, Pound's notes are a mess of circles, crossed-out passages, and handwritten comments. When he underlines, "One of the simple loiterers" (145), he may see how Eliot is lingering on the edge of literary greatness but conceives of himself as too "simple" to achieve it. Amidst Pound's marginalia, a single adjective stands out: "Personal" (45).

As Pound's marginal comment indicates, the physical descriptions of the clerk too much suggest Eliot's self-view, particularly concerning his physical qualities. For example, the clerk, although prideful, has "hair...thick with grief, and thick with scurf [dandruff]" (150) and may be better suited for acting than an ordinary profession. This description recalls "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem whose brilliance stems from Eliot's "objective correlative" treatment of insecurity and indecision. Eliot writes, "And indeed there will be time / To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?' / Time to turn back and descend the stair, / With a bold spot in the middle of my hair—(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')" ("Prufrock" 37-41). Prufrock's anxieties about his appearance, his receding hairline and the accompanying gossip, elucidate the speaker's paralysis when faced with the poem's "overwhelming question" (10): "Do I dare / Disturb the universe" (45-6).

*Prufrock* works because it ruminates on the personal in an impersonal and controlled way. Eliot is able to remove much of himself from the poem by projecting his insecurities onto the character of Prufrock. However, as Pound knows, *The Waste Land* is no sequel to *Prufrock*, and Tiresias is no J. Alfred. On some level, Eliot also knows this. Despite the personal anxieties present in the original draft, Eliot's philosophy about writing calls for a separation of the poet's personality from his work. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," published a year before *The Waste Land*, he writes:

...the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar



5

6

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 beneath the wall  
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.

-Bestows one final patronising kiss,  
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit;  
~~And at the corner where the stable is,~~  
~~Delays only to urinate, and spit.~~

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,  
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;  
 Across her brain one half-formed thought ~~may~~ pass:  
 "Well now that's done, and I am glad it's over".

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

"This music crept by me upon the waters"  
 And along the Strand, and up ~~the~~ Cannon Street,  
 Fading at last, behind by flying feet,  
 There where the tower was traced against the night  
 Of Michael Paternoster Royal, red and white.

*E. P.*

*make up  
 12. minor*

*if you know  
 you Tiresias  
 know damn well  
 or  
 else you  
 don't.*

Fig. 5  
 T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*; a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including  
 the Annotations of Ezra Pound (Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace  
 Jovanovich, 1971) 47. Print.

and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality. ("Tradition" 15)

Eliot knows that his anxieties, inextricable from his sense of self, have "no place" in *The Waste Land*; however, knowledge and execution are not one in the same. It is through Pound's revisions that Eliot separates the intrusion of personality from the content. Pound, in keeping with Eliot's vision of art, ensures that the personal, which may have brought Eliot his early literary successes, would not be reprising its role in this icon of modernist poetry.



In the original draft of *The Waste Land*, Eliot's anxieties not only manifest in content, but also emerge through diction. Pound removes these instances of uncertainty because Tiresias, not Eliot, is the narrator. In the description of the clerk, 'perhaps' occurs twice, as if Eliot is unwilling to commit to his own images. As stated previously, Eliot speculates about the young man's career aspirations: "Perhaps his inclinations touch the stage" (151). "Perhaps" occurs a second time when he describes the young man's current occupation: "Perhaps a cheap house agent's clerk, who flits / Daily, from flat to flat, with one bold stare" (156-7). Considering the strict metric form of this draft (the lines are mostly pentameters), this "perhaps" gives over syllabic space to a word that undermines the narrator's omniscience. Pound circles the first occurrence and draws a line through the second. In the margins he writes: "Perhaps be damned." As Gordon so aptly put it, "Pound could be ruthless" (Gordon 186). Pound reiterates his aversion to uncertainty when Eliot writes of the typist, "Across her brain one-half-formed thought may pass: / "Well now that's done, and I'm glad it's over"" (183-4). Pound circles and draws a line through 'may.' This is Pound's editorial genius. He reminds Eliot about *who* is making the observations. Pound writes (see fig. 5), "make up yr. mind you Tiresias if you know know damn well or else you don't" (47).

In the draft, Eliot allows the expression of his own anxieties about class, sexuality, and writing to leak into Tiresias' observations. However, Pound understands the implications of Tiresias' role as narrator: a clairvoyant, who perceives and foretells all scenes, does not have vague visions. In removing Fresca and the sections of the typist and clerk that associate both males and females with Eliot's anxieties, Pound sets the stage for Tiresias, the embodied union of the two sexes. Tiresias, confident in what he knows and sees, allows for maleness and femaleness, tradition and innovation, normality and preeminence to coexist without anxiety. Thus, Tiresias' narration serves as a way for Eliot to escape the personality that he advocates against in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Pound identifies the central nature of the character, and through frank, even bossy, marginalia, forces Eliot to commit to its realization. Pound is surely aware of Eliot's anxiety about his writing, but he knows that Tiresias—burdened by knowledge but never uncertainty—is not the medium for conveying self-doubt.

## TEXT OF THE FIRST EDITION

'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?'  
 'On Margate Sands. 300  
 I can connect  
 Nothing with nothing.  
 The broken fingernails of dirty hands.  
 My people humble people who expect  
 Nothing.'  
     la la  
 To Carthage then I came  
 Burning burning burning burning  
 O Lord Thou pluckest me out  
 O Lord Thou pluckest 310  
 burning

## IV. DEATH BY WATER

PHLEBAS the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,  
 Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell  
 And the profit and loss.  
                             A current under sea  
 Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell  
 He passed the stages of his age and youth  
 Entering the whirlpool.  
                             Gentile or Jew  
 O you who turn the wheel and look to windward, 320  
 Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

## V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

AFTER the torchlight red on sweaty faces  
 After the frosty silence in the gardens  
 After the agony in stony places  
 The shouting and the crying  
 Prison and palace and reverberation  
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

Fig. 6  
 T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922) 220-58. Print.

### 3. He Saves the Sailor

In the final version of *The Waste Land*, “Death by Water” follows “The Fire Sermon.” This is the shortest of the published poem’s five sections (see fig. 6) and the only one without explanatory notes. The sailor did not always exist in this pure form. His presence in the final version is owed entirely to Pound. Pound crosses the lines between editor and author of *The Waste Land* because he has a vision for the poem and stubbornly pursues its realization. While Pound’s role in shaping the poem is primarily evident in his cuts, his editorial influence is not confined to cutting. The content he saves is equally as telling as the content he expurgates.

Eliot’s imagist and rhythmic brilliance is at its finest in the published description of the sailor. There are no unnecessary characterizations, allusions, or narratives to wade through. There are no notes to explain the images. He depicts the sailor simply as he is: “a fortnight dead” (312), “entering the whirlpool” (318) and “once handsome and tall as you” (321). The musicality of the verses reflects the content of the poem. For instance, the repetition of stressed ‘f’ sounds in every other word “Phlebas,” “Phoenician,” “fortnight,” and “forgot” in the first and second line creates a sonic and rhythmic rise and fall, mimicking the movement of the ocean. Within this rise and fall, Eliot creates variation, such as the three stressed monosyllabic words at the end of the second line: “deep sea swell” (313) and the shortened third, fourth, and eight lines.

Eliot is also successful in this section because the sailor’s metaphorical movement through the stages of life—stages the reader presumably experiences—makes him easier to connect with than many of the other characters in the poem. Eliot presents the sailor, a timeless figure and symbol of destiny, without judgment; thus he becomes universally relatable. The sailor’s relationship with the reader is also evident in the second person warning that concludes the section: “Gentile or Jew / O you who turn the wheel and look windward, / Consider Phlebas,

who was once handsome and tall as you” (319-21). The address to “you” makes the notion of steering and looking towards the wind suggest control and direction in the readers’ own lives. Eliot draws a specific parallel between the reader and Phlebas in the final line. Even the qualities of being “handsome and tall” cannot change one’s fate. In this moment in the published poem, I am struck by the feeling that *here* is Eliot’s brilliant ear and *here* is his vision: he knows where the poem is heading and that the sailor is a central character on that journey.

In the final stages of composing *The Waste Land*, Eliot defers to Pound concerning what to remove from the poem and what to keep. Although the image of the sailor appears throughout the original manuscript, Eliot begins to doubt Phlebas’s importance in light of Pound’s other cuts. In a letter from January 1922, Eliot writes to Pound addressing his criticisms regarding *The Waste Land* manuscript. After confirming several changes, Eliot poses a series of questions regarding the text. In reference to the sailor, he asks, “Perhaps better omit Phlebas also???” (“Letters” 629). The three question marks and the use of the “damned perhaps” emphasize Eliot’s anxiety (the same anxiety that Pound filtered from the poem). Pound responds with his characteristic confidence: “I DO advise keeping Phlebas. In fact I more’n advise. Phlebas is an integral part of the poem; the card pack introduces him, the drowned phoen. [Phoenician] sailor, and he is needed ABSolootly where he is. <Must stay in.>” (“Letters” 630). This exchange—amusingly casual and grammatically unsound—reveals Eliot’s trust in Pound and Pound’s certainty about his own vision of Eliot’s poem.

Pound saves the sailor because he sees the character’s relationship to the larger themes of the text. As Pound’s letter implies, the sailor and his drowning are necessary details because they are the products of fate. For this reason, the sailor connects to Tiresias, a character Pound previously solidified: while Tiresias foresees destinies, the sailor undergoes them. Once again,



Pound's edits enact Eliot's own philosophies about writing. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot writes, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material" ("Tradition" 12) Pound's revisions help Eliot separate the two sides of his life as a writer—the sufferer and the creator—into the characters of Phlebas and Tiresias.



Before Pound can affirm the importance of the sailor, he must extract the image of Phlebas from the prison of narrative. The sailor is first introduced earlier on a tarot card in "The Burial of the Dead," which inextricably links him to fate:

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyant,  
 Had a bad cold, nevertheless  
 Is know to be the wisest woman in Europe,  
 With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,  
 Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,  
 (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!) (43-48)

This character recurs in "Death by Water," a section in the original draft entirely devoted to his sea voyages and drowning. As is his way, Pound is not shy about what he does and doesn't like, and he doesn't like the early version of the sailor's storyline because it moves away from the urban landscape of London and into the sea. On the initial handwritten draft of "Death By Water," Pound writes "Bad—but I cant attack until I get typescript" (55). And attack he does. In the draft of sailor's narrative, Eliot falls into the same pitfalls he experienced in describing the clerk and his bored lover. He begins the characterization restricted by quatrains and the familiar click of alternating rhymes: "The sailor, attentive to the chart and to the sheets. / A concentrated will against the tempest and the tide, / Retains, even ashore, in public bars or streets / Something

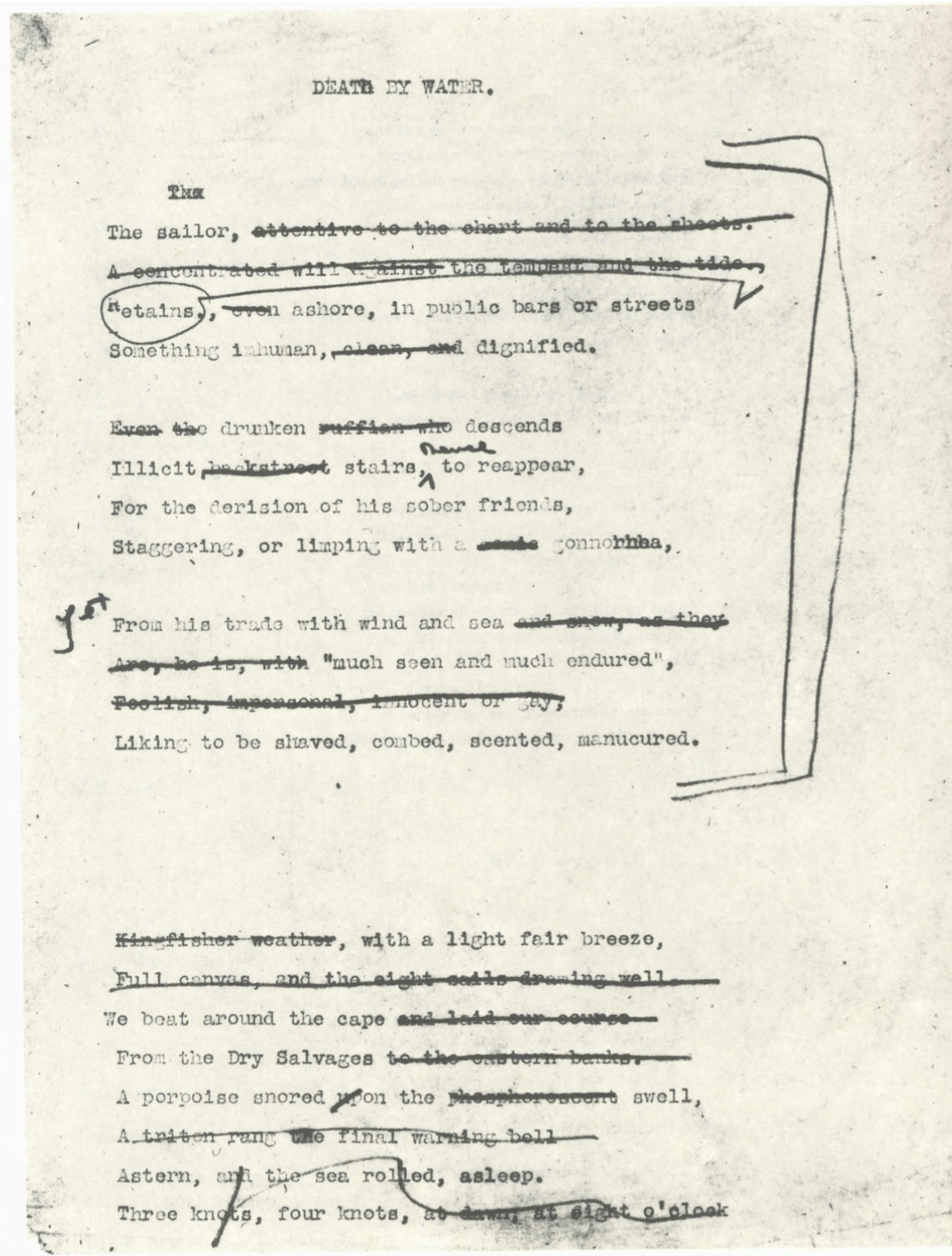


Fig. 7

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land; a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) 62. Print.



inhuman, clean, and dignified” (1-4). Eliot gives the reader expected details about the sailor’s occupational skills—interpreting charts and tides—and then veers towards the abstract: he “retains, even ashore, in public bars or streets / Something inhuman, clean, and dignified” (3-4). Pound warns, “Go in fear of abstractions” (Pound 5) because they contribute no tangible images. The contrast between the predictable rhyme schemes and abstract qualities results in an empty characterization; there is nothing distinctive about the sailor to grab the reader. Through revision and commentary, Pound repeatedly demonstrates that *The Waste Land* is no place for over-interpreted and commented on characters that detract from the structure of fragmentation and the portrait of modern London.

In the draft, the sailor’s tale goes on for four pages, and images of urbanity are nowhere to be found. Pound objects to the entire thing. He offers Eliot few words of advice, preferring to communicate with exasperated brackets, thickly crossed-out lines, and jagged pen marks (see fig. 7). The events progress linearly, reading as more of a sea-log than a poem: “Kingfisher weather, with a light fair breeze, / Full canvas, and the eight sails drawing well. / We beat around the cape and laid our course / From the Dry Salvages to the eastern banks” (13-16). (Eliot will later revisit and transform part of this narrative in the “Four Quartets.”) The narrative—cataloguing sailing conditions, geographical locations, and onboard events—has the potential to become a lengthy odyssey with Christian overtones. Gordon explains Eliot’s connection between Christianity and ocean voyages: “Eliot despised a watered-down Christianity of sweet promises. He looked to the havoc of the sea...Going to sea itself is an act of faith. The sailor drifts in a state of unattached devotion when, suddenly, he hears a bell that warns of death and judgment” (Gordon 361-2). Pound edits down the religious coherence of the sailor’s narrative in part because it is too personal to Eliot’s religious beliefs, but also because it is a remnant of traditional, even biblical,

literary narratives. As, Gordon writes, “Pound thought badly of the narrative in ‘Death by Water’” (Gordon 186). Pound responds in this way because the Christian sailing narrative compromises the fragmented, urban nature of the poem.

But although Pound draws ‘X’ marks through the majority of the original “Death by Water,” the content immediately related to the title of the section, the brief portrait of Phlebas’s drowning, which becomes “Death by Water” in its entirety, remains untouched. Pound’s rare dearth of marginal commentary indicates his approval of a single 11-line stanza. Despite his unwavering confidence, Pound is not so arrogant that he is unable to acknowledge when Eliot’s writing is truly great. Pound saves Phlebas because the figure of the sailor, and the rhythmic drift and pull of the section, embodies suffering and change, and the sailor’s entering and exiting of the text carries this theme throughout the poem. The sections of the poem that Pound fights for are significant because they demonstrate his expansive editorial scope. On the one hand, he can zoom in and extract superfluous words and phrases. On the other hand, he can take a step back and appreciate the passages where Eliot’s poetic power shines.



“Death by Water” is not the only section in the draft where Pound saves significant portions. “The Fire Sermon,” despite the extensive cuts discussed in the earlier chapters, is at times a recipient of Pound’s mercy. Amidst Pound’s thick slash marks and marginal directives in the manuscript, he occasionally bestows the word ‘echt’ on a passage. This is “defined by Pound as ‘veritable, real’” (128 n1). In Gordon’s biography of Eliot, she writes, “What excited Pound was...helpless submission (‘deploring action’) to the stings of fortune, to London’s odour of putrefaction and dull routines” (Gordon 186). Through the sections of the poem that he both removes and saves, Pound causes an “urban documentary...to dominate the poem” (Gordon 187). Pound marks stanzas as true when Eliot presents the characterization of the city not

Fresca in other time or place had been  
 A meek and lowly weeping Magdalene;  
 More sinned against than sinning, bruised and marred,  
 The lazy laughing Jenny of the bard.  
 (The same eternal and consuming itch  
 Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);  
 Or prudent sly domestic puss puss cat,  
 Or autumn's favourite in a furnished flat,  
 Or strolling slattern in a tawdry gown,  
 A doorstep dinged by every dog in town.  
 For varying forms, one definition's right:  
 Unreal emotions, and real appetite.  
 Women grown intellectual grow dull,  
 And lose the mother wit of natural trull.  
 Fresca was baptised in a soapy sea  
 Of Symonds- Walter Pater- Vernon Lee.  
 The Scandinavians bemused her wits,  
 The Russians thrilled her to hysteric fits.  
 From ~~xxxx~~such chaotic misch-misch potpourri  
 What are we to expect but poetry?  
 When restless nights distract her brain from sleep  
 She may as well write poetry, as count sheep.  
 And on those nights when Fresca lies alone,  
 She scribbles verse of such a gloomy tone  
 That cautious critics say, her style is quite her own.  
 Not quite an adult, and still less a child,  
 By fate misbred, by flattering friends beguiled,  
 Fresca's arrived (the Muses Nine declare)  
 To be a sort of can-can salonniere.  
 But at my back from time to time I hear  
 The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation  
 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank  
 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.  
 White bodies naked on the low damp ground,  
 And bones cast in a little low dry garret,  
 Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.  
 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!

→ [Echt]

Fig. 8

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*; a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound (Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) 40. Print.

through the individuals, but through fragmented sounds and textures. When prefaced with this treatment of the city, the subsequent scenes and characters are no longer individual entities but rather threads in postwar London's tapestry. Pound's removal of Fresca and his revisions of the typist and the clerk become clear in light of this realization: fully formed and gendered characters imbued with pieces of Eliot divert attention from the city, which, like Tiresias, is both male and female, old and new. In this way, the poem's 'real' protagonist is the hermaphroditic city itself.

The elusive 'echt' first appears in the draft version of "The Fire Sermon" directly after the conclusion of Fresca's scenes and prior to the entrance of Tiresias, the typist, and the clerk (see fig. 8). The original draft undergoes a dramatic shift as Eliot abandons the clunky allusions to Pope and returns the poem to its foundations, literally. The stanza begins by zooming in on the movements of a rat on the ground and slowly widens to introduce a narrator:

A rat crept softly through the vegetation  
 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank  
 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. (73-78)

Here the images speak for themselves. Eliot does not temper his words with "perhaps" or "maybe;" he captures the rat's movements in a vivid and succinct description and does not interpret the image for the reader. For me, this image raises hackles; I feel "slimy" just reading it. Once the mental image of the rat takes root, Eliot broadens his scope, revealing the proximity of the river: "I was fishing in the dull canal" (75). He completes the syntactical unit with an allusion to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him" (77-8) captures the aftermath of chaos, destruction, and loss, and the narrator's resigned isolation.

Unlike the section on Fresca, identifying the allusions is not necessary for appreciating the verse; the diction alone conveys the notions of deceased kin and devastation, and presents these images without interpretative comment. The overall result is an economic exposition of setting and mood; the decay and degradation is present from the rat to the wrecks. Eliot's subsequent lines confirm these mental images: "White bodies naked on the low damp ground, / And bones cast in a little low dry garret, / Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year" (79-81). These lines are real in both a sonic and imagistic sense. The repetition of "r" sounds—"ground," "garret," "rattled", and "rat"—captures the movements of the rat and also evokes the sound of human skeletons. Here the evidence of death and the presence of the rat converge: nature exists within and around the cycles of civilization. Again, these scenes are presented without commentary. A silent narrator (Tiresias?) fishes and observes but does not define. Here, the reader encounters symbols—the pile of corpses, the bones, the rat—as Pound intended them to be:

"the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object, that if a man use 'symbols' he must so use them that their symbolic function does not obtrude; so that a sense, and the poetic quality of the passage, is not lost to those who do not understand the symbol as such, to whom, for instance, a hawk is a hawk" (Pound 9).

The image of the rat negotiating the decaying bodies can represent the devastation from the recent war, the shift from romanticism to modernity, but it can also stand on its own.

Eliot not only relinquishes unnecessary details, but he also breaks from the rigid rhythms and forms that house them. This passage is different from and more effective than the Fresca episode because it does not imitate another poet's form. Instead, Eliot evokes the ghost of iambic pentameter. For instance, the first line is made up almost entirely of iambs: "The RAT crept SOFTly THROUGH the VEGeTation" (73). However, this rhythm is immediately subverted by beginning the subsequent line with a stressed syllable: "DRAGging" (74). Finally, Eliot grounds

this barely-there iambic pentameter in the two lines of Shakespeare. In this way, Eliot invokes rhythmic traditions while making them new. The shift in rhythms embodies the viscosity of the decomposing ground.

Because Eliot does not adhere to a single sonic structure, but rather allows the content to determine the meter, a musical quality persists. This treatment of rhythm follows another of Pound's tenets of imagist poetry. He advises, "As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome." Eliot regains his ear in this stanza; civilization enters the poem with snippets of song:

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 her daughter  
They wash their feet in soda water  
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole! (82-88)

With song comes rhyme. Here Eliot succeeds at couplets. The beginning of this syntactical unit—"But at my back from time to time I hear" (82), a reference to Marvell's famous Renaissance poem "To His Coy Mistress"—rhymes with the final line of the previous sentence—"Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year" (81). This rhyme creates an unexpected connection between the images of decay and the music playing in the narrator's head.

The couplets are also musical because of the nature of their allusions. The lines "The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring / Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring" reference John Days' poem "Parliament of Bees:" "A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring / Actaeon to Diana in the spring" (147 n197). The subsequent "O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter / And her daughter / They wash their feet in soda water" comes from a ballad of unknown origin; "it was reported to [Eliot] from Sydney Australia" (147 n199). Here, as opposed to

Fresca's verses, the rhymed couplets work in part because of the variation in line length. Their structure is unpredictable: the short line "And her daughter" (86) pleasantly breaks up the rhyme with "Porter" (85) and "water" (87), which occur in the preceding and following lines, respectively. They are also effective because they mark the entrance into the narrator's mind. These rhymed fragments linger almost subconsciously, providing a soundtrack for the scene. The French phrase "Et, O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!" that concludes the stanza, an allusion to Verlaine's *Parsifal* (147 n202), adds to the melody of the stanza simply by switching languages. This sonic choice aligns with Pound's Imagist principles: "Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language, so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement" (Pound 5). The sonic quality of the French is more important to the aesthetic of the poem than its English equivalent.

In the Facsimile, Pound's draws a single line parallel to this stanza and writes "Echt" in parenthesis (see fig. 8, pg. 42). After pages of crossed out stanzas, harsh comments, and illegible squiggles, Pound finds himself with nothing to fix. A half-hearted question mark appears to accompany his underline of the word "shall" but, in the final version, Eliot does not adopt whatever change Pound is suggesting. Through Pound's absence of pen marks, I sense surprise. Or relief. At last Pound finds in this stanza the imagist and rhythmic qualities he has been trying to uncover.

The elusive "echt" appears in the draft of "The Fire Sermon" in a few other places. For instance, in the scene between the typist and the clerk, Pound sees Tiresias's parenthetical aside as "real:" "(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed, / I who have sat by Thebes beneath the wall / And walked among the lowest of the dead)" (173-6). He also

bestows the distinction of “echt” on a stanza adapted from Dante’s *Inferno*—“‘Trams and dusty trees. / Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew / Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees. / Stretched on the floor of a perilous canoe’” (12-15)—which foregrounds the city in the poem. Pound perceives these sections as “veritable” because, as discussed in the previous chapter, both Tiresias and London represent dualities—male and female, old and new, allusion and originality—free from anxiety.



In “A Retrospect” Pound advises, “Be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but have the decency either to acknowledge the debt outright, or to try to conceal it” (Pound 5). In preparation for writing *The Waste Land*, Eliot spent “seven and a half years...accumulating a hoard of fragments” (Gordon 147). As the above adaptation of Dante demonstrates, he references, excerpts, and alludes to these literary puzzle pieces in a variety of ways. Pound’s editorial decisions influence how Eliot repays his debts to other writers. Eliot says himself, “immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better” (“Massinger” 5). Pound teaches Eliot to “steal” and “make it into something better.”

Pound pushes Eliot to use brief allusions—such as those to Dante, Shakespeare, Marvell, Spenser, and St. Augustine among many others—without mimicking the previous authors’ forms or providing commentary on the verse. This practice is successful because it decontextualizes and creates new context for the references. They are fragments recreated in a new series of connections. Herein lies the move towards modernism. Hannah Arendt explains this phenomenon best: “there is no more effective way to break the spell of tradition than to cut out the ‘rich and strange,’ coral and pearls, from what had been handed down in one solid piece” (42). So Eliot, with Pound’s help, cuts the “pearls” from literary tradition and makes them new.



Pound crosses the lines between editor and author because his confident vision of modernism guides his revisions of Eliot's poem. Pound's erasures—the excision of the parody of Pope, rigid rhymes and structure, Eliot's anxieties, and lengthy narratives to name a few—are a form of creation. These cuts profoundly shape the poem, aligning it with Pound's intention for Eliot's work.

As Eliot wrote in the epigraph of the 1925 edition, Pound may very well be “*il miglior fabbro*,” the better craftsman. Certainly, in my reading and rereading of the draft I see Pound's brilliance in that he knew how to guide and shape Eliot's raw talent. However, the distinction of “*il miglior fabbro*” would not have mattered to Pound; for him, the credit of authorship was secondary in importance to the creation of enduring poetry. Part of his co-authoring of *The Waste Land* was the recognition that the poem had the potential for lasting greatness. As Pound himself said, “It is tremendously important that great poetry be written, it makes no jot of difference who writes it” (Pound 10).

## Conclusion

I have spent this past year with my nose pressed up against the manuscript of *The Waste Land*. I have not merely examined Pound's edits; I have inhabited them. As a result of this in-depth exploration, my own writing has transformed, my understanding of the line between editor and author has blurred, and I have gained a new appreciation for *The Waste Land*'s role in the evolution of literature.

Pound's edits transcend time. Each marginal comment, slash mark, and "echt" not only shaped the final version of *The Waste Land*, but, a century later, but have also had a transformative effect on my own writing. In order to convey the differences between the original manuscript and the final version of the poem, I needed to expand my capacity to write about verse. I was able to articulate when a poem was successful or unsuccessful. However, I did not yet have the vocabulary or sensitivity to express *why*. As a result of my close readings of Pound's revisions, I learned to talk about rhythm and sound in ways that I could have never imagined. Pound's authoritative edits also altered the quality of my writing. In the same way that he removed Eliot's doubt from the poem, I felt that I too had to take ownership over my argument. I learned not to temper my assertions with convoluted syntax and weak diction, and removed "perhaps" from my own lexicon. I decided that my careful attention to Pound's revisions of Eliot's verse gave me the authority to confidently convey my argument for Pound as a co-author of *The Waste Land*.

Pound's contributions to the poem have shown me that erasure is a form of creation. Although Eliot is responsible for generating and compiling the content, it is Pound's deliberate excisions—guided by his Imagist aesthetic and confident notion of modern poetry—that determine and clarify the poem's intention. I realize now that in order to decipher *The Waste*

*Land*, readers should not examine Eliot's anxiety-ridden notes on the allusions, but rather the content and revisions of the original draft. The fragmented, urban nature of the poem came into being in part because Pound's revisions push Eliot away from past literary traditions.

Consequently, to interpret the poem, one must not recontextualize each individual reference, but instead acknowledge the traditions that they represent and subvert. Although it would have made "no jot of difference" to Pound, I want him to get more recognition for his role in co-creating the poem. He was not a typical editor working for a publishing company, but a close friend and mentor to Eliot. While Pound undeniably wanted Eliot to be published, his efforts were less about the bottom line and more about the dissemination of "modern" literature. I think that the nature of their relationship, combined with Pound's greater purpose, created an atmosphere that blurred the distinction between editor and author.

My close reading of Pound's revisions to *The Waste Land* has widened my vision of the poem and its role in shaping twentieth century literature. Before undertaking this essay, I possessed only a cursory understanding of *The Waste Land's* significance. With celebrated literary works, I find it is so easy to forget that they were not always like that; they do not simply manifest in their final, polished form. Pound's revisions to Eliot's *The Waste Land* reveal a struggle. Eliot struggles with anxiety, with influence, with "doing something different." Pound's edits compel Eliot to overcome these challenges and make the poem "new." My concentrated exploration of Eliot and Pound's co-authoring of *The Waste Land* has not only show me how their dynamic collaboration produced its iconic result, but has also provided a retrospective ringside seat from which I have witnessed the birth of modern poetry.

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