**Prufrock & Hamlet (in Colours)**

**Afterlife - Relationship – Meaning – Final combination**

**The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock** (1915, by T.S. Eliot)

*… since never from this abyss / Has anyone ever returned … I answer you*. [Dante, *Inferno*]

**Dante quote: link to the epic & the afterlife, the absence of love & connection,**

Let us go then, you and I,  **the theme of meaning, & and the final 10 lines**

When the evening is spread out against the sky   
Like a patient etherized upon a table;   
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .  
Oh, do not ask, ‘What is it?’  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go Repeated reference – ironic?  
Talking of Michelangelo. the women & great art (epic Italian & Biblical)

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,   
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create, Combo of allusions  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

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

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 bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
[They will say: ‘How his hair is growing thin!’]  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—  
[They will say: ‘But how his arms and legs are thin!’]  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase, **Is this how he imagines**  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, **them killing his spirit?**  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, Modern link to etherized & nerves?  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
And should I then presume?  
And how should I begin?

. . . . .

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. Ocean

. . . . .

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its **crisis**?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon a platter Biblical  
I am **no prophet**—and here’s no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker, Mythic  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
**To have squeezed the universe into a ball   
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,**  
To say: ‘I am Lazarus, come from the dead, Biblical  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all’—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
Should say: ‘That is not what I meant at all.  
That is not it, at all.’

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen: Modern  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
‘That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant at all.’

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; Renaissance & great art   
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach. **Ocean**  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. &

**Mermaids:**

I do not think that they will sing to me. **relationship, meaning, & death**

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black. Epic & mythic

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

**Quintessence of dust (*Hamlet*2.2. 255-278)**

Dramatic context – negative – positive

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, **we were sent for**. dramatic, interactive context

HAMLET: I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation  
prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king political level on which R & G spy  
and queen moult no feather. I have of late—but and Hamlet acts & plays it up:   
wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, forgone all does he really “know not”?  
custom of exercises; and indeed **it goes so heavily   
with my disposition that** this goodly frame, the ↓ ↑   
earth, **seems to me a sterile promontory,** this most ↑ ↓ ↑ **How does Shakespeare use**  
excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave **space and verticality?**  
o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted  
with golden fire, **why, it appears no other thing to** ↓ **How does this philosophical   
me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. soliloquy fit into the**   
What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! ↑ **larger dramatic context?**  
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how   
express and admirable! in action how like an angel! **How do these similies work with**  
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the **the overall spatial arrangements?**  
world! the paragon of animals! **And yet, to me,** ↓ **what is this quintessence of dust?** man delights not  
me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling return to dramatic context  
you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ: My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts. They never seem to

HAMLET: Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'? understand each other

ROSENCRANTZ: To think, my lord, if you delight **not** in man, what   
**lenten** entertainment the players shall receive from Hamlet will use the players  
you: we coted [passed] them on the way; and hither are they as an instrument  
coming, **to offer you service**. in his revenge

**To be or not to be (3.1. 57-89)**

**To be, or not to be: that is the question: the question of suicide**  
**Whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer**  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, troubles & suffering  
**Or to take arms** against a sea of troubles,  
**And by opposing end them?** **To die: to sleep; metaphor**   
**No more;** **and by a sleep to say we end**   
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, **‘tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished.** **To die, to sleep;  
To sleep: perchance \* to dream: ay, there’s the rub;\* conceit  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come   
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,\*  
Must give us pause:** **there’s the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life;**  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man's contumely,\*  
The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay,  
The insolence of office and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
**When he himself might his quietus\* make  
With a bare bodkin?\*** who would fardels\* bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
**But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country from whose bourn\* new metaphor**  
**No traveller returns,** **puzzles the will** **& conceit**  
**And makes us rather bear those ills we have**  
**Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o’er\* with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith\* and moment\*  
With this regard their currents turn awry,\*  
And lose the name of action.**

**\* perchance** = perhaps **rub** = crucial difficulty or problem**coil**= coil or confusion, turmoil  **contumely** = insolence or insulting language  **quietus** = death, release  **bodkin** = small sharp instrument or pin to pierce clothing  **fardels** = burdens  **bourn** = boundary line, limit; also, goal or destination  **sicklied o'er** = unhealthily covered  **pith** = essence; also, forceful and precise expression  **moment** = importance  **awry** = off course

**The high and the low, the up and the down, the positive and the negative**

**Alas, Poor Yorick! (5.1. 165-194)**

[The scene is in a churchyard, next to a graveyard with unearthed skulls. Hamlet is with his best friend Horatio, and he is holding the skull of the court jester Yorick.]

*Hamlet:*Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: **a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times;** **and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it.** Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? [lacking cheek or jaw + dejected] Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, **let her paint an inch thick**, to this favour [facial appearance] she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee,

Horatio, tell me one thing.

*Horatio:*What's that, my lord?

*Hamlet:*Dost thou think **Alexander** looked o' this fashion i'the earth?

*Horatio:*E'en so.

*Hamlet:*And smelt so? pah! *[Puts down the skull]*

*Horatio:*E'en so, my lord.

*Hamlet:*To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole [beer keg hole]?

*Horatio:*'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

*Hamlet:*No, faith, not a jot [bit]; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel? / Imperious **Caesar**, dead and turn'd to clay, / might stop a hole to keep the wind away: / O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe, / should patch a wall to expel the winter flaw!