

Revising a Civilization:

T. S. Eliot's Secretive Ambition as *Poems 1919/1920*

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1. The collection in chiasmus

T. S. Eliot's second collection of poems is triplicate; that is, the collection has three distinct but interrelated versions, published in 1919 and 1920. First, the abridged one in pamphlet form was issued by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press in 1919; it was simply entitled *Poems*. In February 1920, two versions followed, each with almost the same 24 poems:¹ the illustrated London edition, which was entitled *Ara Vos Prec* and published by the Ovid Press,² and the definitive New York edition, which was named *Poems*, as with the initial 1919 version, and published by Alfred · A · Knopf. The repeated title, *Poems*, starts the circulative transformation of the 1919/1920 collection, thereby foregrounding the oneness of the collection as a trinity.

Published in the interwar session, the collection is unstable but fruitful as an antiwar achievement. The repeated reference to wars, such as the Trojan War and the Battle of Thermopylae, is combined with the advent of the Savior. The bilingual collection is dedicated to Jean-Jules Verdenal, a French army surgeon who died on the battlefield in 1915.³ The title in enigmatic three words of the London edition means "Now I pray you."⁴ The new face in Eliot's poetry, Sweeney, is attributed to a real boxer, a simulation of crusader.⁵ The collection represents a tragicomedy. In the conflict of pessimism, sarcasm, and humor, the heroes of the poems, almost all of whom narrate the poems, are not successful but survive in the poetic

world including heaven. Fundamentally, the speakers' voice is continued to the final twenty-fourth poem of the American edition, which is a symbol of achievement as double dozens. Moreover, the echoes of the voice reverberate in the reader's mind, all the more because the voice is triplicate.

As a self-corrective bulletin, the interwar collection may be characterized by listing the journalistic summary of each of the 12 new poems:

1. "Gerontion": recollection of an old man facing death
2. "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar": decadent life in Venice
3. "Sweeney Erect": ex-combatant's leave
4. "A Cooking Egg": aftermath in London
5. "Le Directeur": French film-maker on the Thames
6. "Mélange adultère de tout": spying deployed
7. "Lune de Miel": promising artist on honeymoon
8. "The Hippopotamus": salvation today
9. "Dans le Restaurant": cheap trip overseas
10. "Whispers of Immortality": blessing of everyday life
11. "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service": revelation of peace
12. "Sweeney Among the Nightingales": prayer for survival

The two 1920 versions are posited as identical by Caroline Behr (89), like many other critics.⁶ This is perhaps because both contain almost the same poems, simultaneously sharing the major territory for

publication, England and America. There exists, however, a marked difference with the book size, the title, the illustration, and the order of poems, in addition to the replacing of one poem (“Ode”) by a prose poem (“Hysteria”).

Nonetheless, the enigmatic title in Provençal, *Ara Vus Prec*, tends to escape the average reader’s recognition, thus almost invisible, as with the basic title of the 1920 American collection, i.e., *Poems*.

As for the illustrations, exclusively attached to *Ara Vus Prec*, they are only black and white. Moreover, though with complex figures, they represent an ornamental expansion of the first letter of each poem in a medieval fashion as a kind of vignettes. They may be considered a reflection of the perplexed reader’s unfocused vision at first sight of each poem of Eliot’s; reputed as difficult, his poems may well intimidate the reader, and all the more under the mysterious book title in Provençal. The decorated letters are also confusing and attractive, with unidentifiable figures, whether workers or machines. Neither the title nor the vignettes may be seen as inherent in the collection itself. Then, the dazzlingly invisible *Ara Vus Prec* becomes the American version simply named *Poems*, if the difference in the order of poems is not taken into consideration.

In *Ara Vus Prec*, the square vignettes of almost the same size label the poems identical and replaceable, making the order unnecessary. From another angle, the vignettes efface all the poems including themselves.

Eliot’s second collection of poems may thus be viewed as bifurcated into the 1919 and 1920 versions, the latter 1920 version duplicated as two subtexts, i.e., *Ara Vus Prec* and *Poems*.

Symbolized by the self-copied textual body, Eliot’s 1919/1920 collection is, in fact, characterized by duality for unity. The dominant form is quatrain, but the longest poem in the 1920 sequence, “Gerontion,” begins with the 14-line stanza constituting a sonnet. Diversity contrasts with singularity. The titles filled with anonymous proper nouns are as

evocative as the succeeding texts in ellipses. Below the title, the epigraph is frequently long and defamiliarized in various languages, rivaling the main text. The contracted quatrain form of the text conceives semantic expansion. For example, a bachelor apartment quietly turns into “snow-deep Alps.” A French restaurant is suddenly engulfed by the Phoenician sea. The thematic flexibility is merged into factuality. From everyday pictures, flashes scientific refinement and urban sophistication. Philosophical reasoning blends with theological soar. From Venice to Oxford, the Latin cohabits with the Anglo-Saxon. Simulating crossed beams, historicism competes with modernism. Idealism is fused into realism. The overall duality surfaces to the black-and-white embodied by the letters and the sheets of paper in the self-reproductive book. The interwar collection simulates a funeral altar as a self-effacing duality in conflict. The self-effacement equals, however, a transformation for sublimation. The Trinitarian collection’s structural principle is chiasmus within and beyond each poem.

The duality, which weaves up the poetic unity, converges itself into the 1920 American version. With the covering title, *Poems*, the conclusive version lines up the 12 new poems with the old poems in the same number from the author’s successful collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, published previously in 1917.

Eliot’s bilingual 1919/1920 collection is not so highly appreciated as his later reputed works *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. Nevertheless, the playful collection embodies dandyism, without lacking philosophical depth, which even refers to Buddhist metempsychosis. Dandyism is symbolized by “a glass of brandy,” a gift from a mermaid, Doris. The semantic aura sparkled from the economized expression sets up the collection as a rhythmic and engaging artifact, while, at the same time, making itself a partial symbol of avant-gardism. Summed up by the initial poem “Gerontion”’s metaphor, “a wilderness of mirrors,” the satiric collection is an

interwar showcase of T. S. Eliot's techniques for conscientious refinement. At the time of publication, in particular, the task for defense and peace charged by the collection must have been pressing under the menace of another World War. The Trinitarian 1919/1920 collection may be qualified as symbolic in the most positive way among T. S. Eliot's artworks, while simultaneously condensing the features of the Eliotian poetry, as is discussed in the following sections. In other words, the collection represents the poet's will in the double sense of testament and ambition, foreboding another war. At its publication, Eliot was in his early 30s, at the age still eligible for enlistment.

2. The intertextual fixation

Besides the usage of two languages, English and French, an extensive device for imposing duality in the 1919/1920 collection corresponds to the intertextual superposition. Numerous quotations, picked up by many critics, are discrete examples.⁷ As a covering intertext, the Bible, particularly the Apocalypse with frequent suggestive numerals, should be mentioned first. The Shakespearean echo is reverberated in the 1920 sequence's second poem whose Jewish protagonist in Venice, Bleistein, overlaps the merchant, Shylock.

In the prevailing duality of the collection, the long gerontologic poem insinuates the older roots of English literary history. The contrastive two poems, "A Cooking Egg" and "The Hippopotamus," which are apparently intended for children, can be thought to embody the traditional nursery rhymes in reworked forms: the former as an adulterated story on Humpty Dumpty and the latter as a twisted tale of the jumping cow and dish. Concerning the first verb of "A Cooking Egg," i.e., "sate," B. C. Southam takes it as "the humorous language of childhood" (75). George Williamson sees in "The Hippopotamus" "the naïveté of the nursery tale" (92).

As for "A Cooking Egg," the familiar title easily

evokes a broken egg, named Humpty Dumpty, the hero of a popular nursery rhyme:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses,
And all the king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again. (Hirano 24-25)

A suite of the characters in Eliot's "A Cooking Egg," such as "Lucretia Borgia," "great great aunts," and "Sir Alfred Mond," correspond to the "men" and "horses" in the nursery rhyme, the metamorphoses of an egg. The heroine of the poem, "Pipit," is closely related to the broken hero of the rhyme, repeating "pi" in her name, just like the hero's redundant name "Humpty Dumpty." Both the protagonists open the poem. Furthermore, she was sitting from the beginning of the poem, just like Humpty who "sat on a wall." In the central image of the oval, or circular egg, the poem is a representative of the trilogic collection, foregrounding making, i.e., *poiesis*, through the cooking of language made into various characters. The titling word, "Cooking," is ambiguous and thus meaningful. Grammatically, it may be an adjective, or a present participle. According to Southam (75), as a phrase, "cooking eggs are usually those which are too old to be eaten." The old hero, Humpty Dumpty, is evoked. The poem also heightens the duality of the collection, spreading a constellation of historical figures such as Sir Philip Sidney and Coriolanus. Incidentally, Humpty Dumpty is a hero who became famous in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, adopted from the nursery rhyme. The hero thus reinforces duplicity, connected to mirrors.

As a riddle, the original rhyme throws the question, "What is Humpty Dumpty?" The popularized answer is "an egg" (Hirano 25). In the same way, the reworked poem, "A Cooking Egg," makes the reader think of who the heroine named Pipit is. The quatrain poem is tacit, but intrigues with hints. She may be the

speaker's mistress and domestic who "cook(s)" and "knit(s)," sitting "distan(t)" from him but "upright" with some pride. As "Egg" is equal to "Pipit" through "Humpty Dumpty," the title, "A Cooking Egg," can be rephrased as "A Cooking Pipit." Pipit is thus a cook. With certain "experience," she may be suspected as a former dancer and courtesan. Her ancestors are said to be supportive of "Dance." The speaker "bought" the everyday life with her "behind the screen." Appearing first in the poem, she is connected to "hontes," or disgraces, mentioned in the epigraph. Her name, "Pipit," implies a lower status, meaning a bird and urine.⁸ The intertextual poem evokes the unfortunate heroines in opera, *La Traviata* and *Madam Butterfly*. As with Pipit, each of them constitutes a household as an illegitimate partner, i.e., "demi-mondaine" in French. Since the heroine Pipit is a divided self of Humpty Dumpty, the speaker of the poem, who shares a world with her, may be viewed as Humpty Dumpty himself. In the collection with French poems, the scenes of cancan are equally evoked.

The reader is induced to clarify the heroine's situation, though the quatrain poem only juxtaposes the stanza lacking the binding and conclusive fifth verse. In sum, Pipit is a riddle, replacing an answer, "Egg," with every possibility of metamorphoses vis-à-vis the reader who has not witnessed the provenance of either Pipit or the poem, "A Cooking Egg." The heroine may be an actress in embryo. The text is in a semantic circulation without any solution, paralleling the titling egg's oval form. What the reader can do is only to speculate. The economized quatrain poem weaves up the tantalizing veil of evocations. The quatrain form is a topological transformation of a circle.

The abstract numbers, which are actually mentioned in the enumerating poem, "A Cooking Egg," are 2 (in "We two"), 5 (in "five per cent"), and 7 (in "Seven Sacred Trances"), in addition to 30 (in "I'an trentiesme") in the paratextual epigraph in French. Among them, the prime number manifested

in English, 5, particularly draws the reader's attention, evoking the five elements as the constituents of the world in the ancient Chinese thought ("Gogyo"). The discussion on the five elements is detailed in section 4. The poem, "A Cooking Egg," with the number 5 is, in fact, an icon of fundamentals, beginning with the first "A" in the title and ending with the initials of alphabet, "A.B.C.'s." The starting "Egg" in the title is dual in yellow and white as the possibility of the male and the female, the productive origin. In the image of a broken egg, the poem is a cosmogonic piece, divided into the Trinitarian three parts by a suite of six dots, marked twice in the text. 6 equals 2×3 .

In "The Hippopotamus," duality as principle is presented in the most readable way in the collection as a whole, taking the persuasive tone of the Bible:⁹ the contrast between a mammal in water and a church in stone. The quatrain form systematically works with various divisions ranging from the semantic contrast to the stanza in half.

The ironical ascension of the animal hero makes the poem a parodic fable. The picture of the hero hippopotamus's salvation in heaven is comical but far-fetched, so that the reader may doubt, if not reject, the realization. The hippo with an imposing weight is supposed to be distant from the airy virgins in heaven, who kissed the animal, according to the poem. The described church does not seem effective for salvation, bathed in earthly thrive.

The reader is invited to ameliorate the unsatisfying situation, all the more because the poem appears a reworked text of the nursery rhyme on the illusory flight of a cow, a dish, and a spoon. The watery hero, hippopotamus, may be viewed as a transformation of the milky cow in the rhyme:

Hey diddle diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon. (Hirano

21-22)

The 1919/1920 collection makes an engaging blend of new and old. The textual doubleness is, however, merged into a single word such as the title in a word of a poem, which is represented by the enigmatic title of the long poem, “Gerontion.”

3. The significance of “Gerontion,” the first poem

The interpretation of the 1919/1920 collection is directed by the crowning poem of an imposing length, “Gerontion.” The poem is the longest among the 12 new poems in the first sequence of the 1920 collection in two versions. The second sequence consists of the well-known old poems from the precedent 1917 collection. The long poem is not seen in the abridged 1919 version.

The belated title as a word, “Gerontion,” is a success for refreshment. Though with the heavy classical sound, the meaning of the word is difficult to grasp. It immediately catches the interpreter’s attention, without giving him/her a solution. The word appears a private proper noun, though tending toward abstraction with the suffix “-ion.” “Gerontion” is attractively mysterious, seeming like a compound. The inside repetition of “-on” contributes to a doubling. Nonetheless, the word is singular, embodying the principle of the dual 1919/1920 collection. “Gerontion” is orally suppressing, but semantically promoting.

Under the resounding title, the poem hastens to offer the reader some hints for clarifying the meaning of “Gerontion.” It is legitimate to relate the word, sounding like a proper noun, to “an old man” who appears at the beginning of the poem. Many critics agree to the meaning of the word “Gerontion” as “a little old man,” referring to the Greek etymology.¹⁰ Then, the word may be viewed as a transformed French word “géronte,” meaning an old comedian. The first abrupt proper noun also makes the reader

think of its relation to “Genesis,” the adventures of God. It may also be a combination of “Genesis,” “Creation,” and “gentile.” The religious number 7 is repeated in the collection. 7 equals 2+5.

As one of the longest poems, “Gerontion” is a showcase for the collection; in other words, in the poem, the characteristics of the collection are intensively displayed. The quick change of scenes is represented by the juxtaposition of verbs: “keeps the kitchen, makes tea, / Sneezes.” Philosophical reasoning is economized in paradox: “Unnatural vices / Are fathered by our heroism.”

This initial poem is lengthened, embodying an arboreal development, which is discussed in detail in the next section.

4. The burial of five elements

Each poem of the 1919/1920 collection may be viewed as a poetic expansion of each of the five basic elements, i.e., “tree,” “fire,” “earth,” “metal(-gold),” and “water,” which were considered to make up a cosmos in circulation and succession by the ancient Chinese concept. Furthermore, each poem can be thought to be developed by the combination of each element and the omniscient but invisible element, “water.”

Typically in the first 1920 sequence, the syntactical flow of each poem is frequently blocked by the oxymoronic use of philosophical terms (e.g. “juvencence,” “Defunctive,” and “Polyphiloprogenitive”), insinuating proper nouns (e.g. “Burbank,” “Madame Blavatsky,” and “Piccarda de Donati”), and abrupt colloquialism (e.g. “merds,” “ham,” and “droppings”) and the repetition of the same words (e.g. the iterated “give” in the first announcing poem, “Gerontion”). Generally, the sentence structure of the poems is simple, taking the form of A is/do B without any subordinate clause. The directing model is “Here I am,” the first declaration of the long poem “Gerontion,” with the possibility of slight modulation. The continuation of sentences is often forced by the

coordinate conjunctions, “and,” “but,” and “for.” The dominant form of the collection, i.e., the octosyllabic quatrain, restricts the syntax, which is viewed as “angular” by Williamson (89). The restrictiveness of the quatrain form is also qualified as “epigrammatic,” “smart (and) jaunty,” and “fireworks” (Ward 41, 65, and 52). Moreover, the quatrain is only a part of a sonnet, a synonym of concision.¹¹ The octosyllable is shorter than the popular decasyllable in pentameter.

Despite, or rather due to the simplicity, the sentence is recurrently frozen by the above-mentioned self-assertive words. The big words are, nonetheless, simultaneously enhancing themselves beyond the reader’s reach, because of their shocking effects. It is the meaningful adjectives, such as “peevish,” “miasmatic,” “piaculative,” and “controversial,” that frequently appear in their parasitic form and try to keep the lyrical movement of the poems against the blocking words. The prototype of the connective adjectives is “etherized” in the first poem of the second sequence, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” The most famous development is “the cruellest” in the succeeding *The Waste Land*, published in 1922. The adjectival connection sounds, however, juvenile.

The accumulated words of saturated meanings give the image of being entangled and fused into a new general word, a synonym of “Poems,” the generic title of the collection. The author may intend a subversion, or at least a defamiliarization of everyday language, through the scrambling of words in the 1919/1920 collection. In a sense, the superposition of the surface words, which are actually used in the poems, and the nascent words, which are produced by the reader’s interpretation, corresponds to that of the surface words and the presumably hidden words representing the five Chinese elements. The combination of the textual actualization and the reading potential embodies a part of the prevailing dualism of the collection. Generally, a poem may be viewed as a word within a word, as is suggested by Paul Valéry. According to Valéry’s definition (611),

poetry corresponds to language within language. Poetry represents, in fact, duality as double density in the signifier and the signified.

Among the three versions of Eliot’s 1919/1920 collection, the definitive American edition pushes the reader to trace the movement of the five dissimulated elements-words, the seeds of the surface text, with the self-reflexive and theoretical title, *Poems*, and its advancing length of 24 poems.

The first poem of the American version, “Gerontion,” may be considered the developed combination of the first element, “tree,” and the overall “water.” The tree-like poem embodies the old man named Gerontion’s recurrent and illogical thought, which ironically simulates avant-gardism in upheaval and disorder. The repeated adjective, “dry,” paradoxically emphasizes the existence of water. The anti-hero’s branched thought is backed up by the five senses, which are actually mentioned in the poem. Gerontion is “A dull head among windy spaces.” Trees are, in fact, enveloped by air. Also in the poem, the personified tree sheds “tears.” With the suffix for covering abstraction, “ion,” the anti-hero “Gerontion” represents all the mortal mankind. The symbolic “wrath-bearing tree” with “tears” thus means Gerontion. The connection of the anti-hero and the element “tree,” a material for construction, is reinforced by the expression, “An old man in a draughty house.” According to J. C. Ransom, “Gerontion is of the seed of Adam” (169). The old hero, who is “driven” by the wind (“the Trades”), is a transformation of three mortal characters, “De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel,” supposedly cremated and “whirled” in “fractured atoms.” The hero, Gerontion, is thus an atom, that is, an element. Furthermore, the first protagonist of the opening poem, which simulates Genesis with the repeated biblical term, “word,” represents the first element, “tree.”

The second poem with the titling word, “Cigar,” represents “fire.” The obscure epigraph in Latin reinforces the image of fire with the ending term,

“fumus,” meaning smoke. The ungrammatical and most emphasized expression in the poem, “Lights, lights,” definitely connects the poem to the second element, “fire.” The overall element, “water,” is expanded, transformed as the Venetian canals. The reminiscence of the first element, “tree,” lingers in the title, taking a vegetal form of paper, “Baedeker.” The anaphoric title foregrounds the second-ness of the poem with the repeated letter, “B,” which is capitalized three times.

In the next third poem, the speaker-hero, designated as “me,” is equal to a “shore” and the “rocks” in the appositional relation, thus representing the third element, “earth.” The titling hero, “Sweeney,” is, in fact, a human figure as an earthly lump, according to Genesis. At the center of the poem, the Emersonian maxim, which is marked by parentheses, reinforces the connection of the earth and the humans with the expression, “The lengthened shadow of a man.” In the epigraph, the conglomeration of earth, “the rocks,” predominates the other maltreated elements, “the trees” and “all,” with the “groan,” the directing voices. Concurrently, the earthly hero, “Sweeney,” is foregrounded with the upright position from the very beginning of the poem, as being “Erect” in the title. B. G. Lockerd, Jr. indicates the title as echoing a “scientific designation for mankind, *homo erectus*” (131).

The covering element, “water,” manifests itself both at the beginning and the ending of the poem in the form of “shore,” “sal volatile,” and “brandy.” The evaporating salt, or “sal volatile,” confirms the coalition of the element, “earth,” and the element, “water,” with the biblical implications. The final heroine, “Doris,” foretells the coming of the next golden poem: her name “Doris” includes gold, or “or” in French.

The fourth poem, “A Cooking Egg,” represents the fourth element, “metal(-gold),” summed up by the expression, “the penny world.” In the poem, the oxymoronic word, “penny,” is foregrounded most by the first interrogative sentence, which abruptly

appears after a suite of descriptive sentences. The word develops into “Gold” at the end of the stanza. Another remarkable word, “trumpets,” in a secluded sentence, rhymes with “crumpets” appearing two lines below. The metallic “trumpets” may thus be assimilated with the sweets made from egg, i.e., “crumpets.” Moreover, in the Apocalypse, trumpets are presented in the image of gold. The yellow egg is thereby golden. The title of the poem, “A Cooking Egg,” is a camouflage of “A Golden Egg.”

The image of water is noticeable from the beginning. The titling word, “Cooking,” designates the water in the kitchen. In the epigraph, the French verb, “ay beues,” meaning “drank,” is seen. The word, “Heaven,” repeated throughout the poem, leads to tears. The “snow-deep Alps” are also mentioned, suggesting the continuous metamorphosis of water. At the end, tears flood out from “weeping multitudes.”

The next fifth poem embodies the concluding element, “water,” with the juxtaposition of short lines for the image of the flowing river, the Thames. The poem is in French, thus invisible to the monolingual reader. A suite of scenes presented by the poem is deployed along the water: the river Thames and its drain (“égout”). The poetic world is filled with air, which is stunk by the protagonist, “Le Directeur.”

In the sixth French poem, the speaker-hero may be viewed as a transformation of the element, “tree,” neighboring water: he is situated in an oasis and on the beach (“côtes”). Simulating vegetal propagation, he continuously changes his job. All the occupations are, however, related to paper: the reading professor, the philosopher, the lecturer, the writing journalist, and the banker with notes. The powerful transformation is reflected in the punning words: the covering “piste,” which evokes the botanical “pistil” and the abrupt interjection, “tra la la,” echoing the word “tree.” The final puzzle, “Mozambique,” represents the concentration of the element “tree” as a former British colony, or plantation.

In this poem, which is the first one of the second chain of five elements, the collection’s structural

principle of chiasmus is typically rendered, taking the first unconventional expression: “En Amerique, professeur; / En Angleterre, journaliste; /.”

The next “Lune de Miel,” the second poem in the second chain of the five elements, foregrounds the image of fire, presenting a newly-married couple in passion. Their passion is in two meanings, i.e., love and suffering. They are on a poor and troublesome honeymoon. The ambivalence is embodied by the titling moon, “Lune” in French, as an illuminated mirror of the cosmic fire, the sun. Another word in the title, “Miel,” meaning honey, is a source of the image of water, which flows throughout the poem, transformed as the passionate couple’s sweat (“sueur”) and the strong wind (“tournoie le vent”).

The eighth poem, “The Hippopotamus,” foregrounds the image of earth, presenting the animal hero sinking in “the mud.” He is personified as a noticeable lump of “flesh and blood.” According to Genesis, the man was made from earth. The humanness of the poem is strengthened by the appearance of “saints” and “virgins” at the ending of the poem. The mortal hero’s counterpart, “the True Church,” is said to be firm, placed “upon a rock.” The apocalyptic scene of the hero’s rising to heaven is filled with the image of water, originating from the purifying “Blood of the Lamb.” In contrast, the church is covered with “mist” on the earth. The combination of earth and water is stabilized by “the damp savannas,” from which the earthly hero is risen to heaven.

The following poem in French, “Dans le Restaurant,” makes up for the speaker-hero’s spoiled dinner with the brightness of metal(-gold). The waiter, who displeased the speaker with pointless chat, was compared to a fork (“fourchette”), a metallic tool in an ironical enhancement. Aggressiveness connects the waiter to a fork. Lockerd qualifies the waiter as “grotesque” (136). The word, “fourchette,” is emphasized most in the poem; it is in the first apposition, foregrounded by the commas, at the center of the curse to the waiter. The final far-fetched stanza

reinforces the image of metal(-gold); the highlight is tin (“etain [sic]”) in the shipwrecked cargo. The stanza is revised for the fourth metal(-gold) part of *The Waste Land*.¹²

The prevailing image of water, successively transformed as a rainy episode with a drooling dog, the waiter’s saliva, and hot water for bath, finally expands as the Phoenicien sea.

The next piece, “Whispers of Immortality,” presents the endless transformation of water from the airy “Whisper” in the title to the physical “marrow,” superimposed on the picture of corpses dissolved into the earth. The watery move threads the words for evaporation: “Whispers,” “marrow,” “pneumatic,” “effluence,” “Distil,” and “smell.” At the end of the poem, the blood rephrased as “lot” circulates in the human body. The word “lot” is a substitute for water as a colloquial expression for a body liquid, according to *An Encyclopaedic Supplement to the Dictionary for the General Reader*.

The second-to-last poem, entitled “Mr. Eliot’s Sunday Morning Service,” represents the first element, “tree,” reminding the reader of the principle of duality for unity, with the imposing weight of books, mentioned or suggested: *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlow, the Bible with “the Word,” and the books by “Mr. Eliot.” Books are composed of paper, which is made from vegetable fibers. The expression, “Sunday Morning Service,” and the repeated word, “school,” add the image of numerous books. Parts of the Bible are subsequently developed into the religious paintings and the euphoric but everyday scenes of insects (“bees”) and Sweeney. Following the coinage of the first lengthened adjective, “Polyphiloprogenitive,” the vegetal development is extolled by the expression, “Blest office,” which designates the flowers’ reproductive function. The image of water still asserts itself with a suite of words, “Drift,” “mensual (menstrual),” “water,” “Stirring,” and “bath.”

The last twelfth poem in the first sequence, “Sweeney Among the Nightingales,” lines up various

characters in a starlight from “Orion” and “the Dog,” simulating a curtain call. With the first capitals and the semantic flamboyance, the stellar names are emphasized most in the poem, thus foregrounding the element, “fire.” The stars are “burning gas,” according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2000 ed.). As cosmic torches, they are sophisticated in the later *Four Quartets*.¹³ According to Southam, Orion is “one of the brightest in the night sky” (90). Just like the previous poem, the reappearing hero, Sweeney, is compared to a bird, “Among the Nightingales,” as the title suggests. Sweeney may be viewed as a phoenix, this reviving firebird. The revival is actualized at the ending of the poem: The Greek hero, Agamemnon, rises from his “shroud.” The poem and the first sequence are closed in the image of flooding water from Agamemnon’s blood and the nightingales’ “liquid droppings.” Representing a source of life, water promotes the revival of the dead hero, besides staining his “shroud.”

In addition, the nightingales’ flowing songs are related to water, because they “sang within the bloody wood.” Their song may have watered the wood for it to be “bloody,” or wet. Moreover, the covering song overlaps with the “liquid droppings.”

The second sequence of 12 old poems begins with the earth poem, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” With the explicative word, “then,” in the first sentence, the poem is around the speaker-hero’s decision to advance on the “streets,” that is, on earth. The designation, “Song,” in the title suggests the spreading of the element, “water,” continued from the last poem and beautified with mermaids at the end of this earth poem. The epigraph in Italian also connects the previous poem to this poem, presenting the words spoken by Count Guido da Montefeltro in Dante’s *Inferno*, according to Southam (37); the Count is in a prison of flame in the underworld.

The next poem, “Portrait of a Lady,” represents metal(-gold), featuring a rich, old woman who causes a “hammering” and “mechanical” noise in the speaker’s brain. The backdrop for her aggression is

the wintry “smoke and fog,” turned into her props, cups of tea, as the metamorphoses of the dominant water.

The fifteenth poem, “Preludes,” spreads an infiniteness of water, which even cradles the night dreams in human brains. The poem opens with the world flooded by “a gusty shower,” which is closed for a storage of “fuel.” The fuel is in the image of liquid as a target of the final stanza, which begins with the imperative, “Wipe,” for removing moisture.

The sixteenth poem, “Rhapsody on a Windy Night,” follows a somnambulist’s vision mingled with “memory.” Memory is almighty as a “key,” originating from “geranium,” a kind of tree. The flowering plant, “geranium,” may be viewed as a dissimulated heroine of the poem, like the hyacinth girl in *The Waste Land*. The titling word, “Rhapsody,” etymologically means “to stitch.” The thread for stitching should thus be vegetal.

The prevailing element, “water,” follows the main element, “tree,” concentrated as the smell of “Cologne,” coming from a “rose.” The water asserts itself in the word of foreign origin, “Cologne,” of which the first letter is preponderantly capitalized.

The next piece, “Morning at the Window,” pops up an everyday scene in the sunlight, which is summarized as “breakfast plates.” Thus, the sunlight from the cosmic fire is the key for weaving up the poem. The residue of the night lingers in the “fog,” wetting both inside and outside the human body. Concerning the wet soul in this piece, Lockerd points out Heraclitus’s connection between the soul and “aethereal fire” (129).

Beginning with the title that includes the place name, “Boston,” the following poem is based on the element, “earth.” The earthliness is deployed by the protagonists of the poem, “The readers,” mentioned first and compared to “a field,” as well as by the word, “street,” repeated three times in the short framework of the poem. At the end of the piece, the suite of incarnated earth, “Rochefoucauld,” “I,” and “Cousin Harriet,” sublimates earthliness. Engulfing

the earthly humans compared to “corn,” the omniscient water exercises its power as the “Sway(ing)” “wind” from the beginning of the poem, which is its summarizing part.

The following golden piece reports the death of the rich heroine, “Aunt Helen,” leaving a fair amount of property. Her old treasure is symbolized by a German “clock” on the “mantelpiece.” The clock is defamiliarized by the international qualification, “Dresden.” “Mantel” may be viewed as an anagram of “metal.” The image of water is foregrounded at the center of the poem, because the protagonist’s action, “wiped,” is featured by a dash. The image of liquid naturally evokes mournful tears.

In the next poem, the heroine, “Cousin Nancy,” explores the “barren” land, fostering it in the image of water. Her cultivation takes the milking “cow-pasture” as an outpost. The prevailing water is crystallized as “glazen shelves,” the source of energy for her dauntless exploration. Concerning the explored land, Lockerd takes the earth as the “element that symbolizes solidity” (117).

The poem entitled “Mr. Apollinax” foregrounds the titling hero backed up by the element, “tree,” successively transfigured into tea in the “tinkl(ing)” “teacups,” “birch-trees,” “shrubbery,” “a slice of lemon,” and a “macaroon,” i.e., the cookie with coconut or almond, the vegetal ingredient, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (2000 ed.). The connection of the vegetal and the liquid is represented by the “seaweed” that adorns the hero’s hair. The sea water is compared to the mental force emitted from the hero in hysteric laughter.

In the next poem, “Hysteria,” the anti-heroine’s explosive laughter is connected to fire. Her “teeth,” along which the laughter comes out, are compared to “accidental stars,” the cosmic fire. The word “tea” is repeated twice for quenching the dishonored scene.

The second-to-last poem, “Conversation Galante,” emphasizes humanness, thus earthliness, by personifying the heroine, “the moon,” as “the eternal humorist.” Moreover, the heroine is the interlocutor of the

speaker, “I,” in the poem as a conversation between the two.

The image of water is hidden in the qualification to the heroine, the moon: “sentimental.” According to *Kenkyusha’s New English-Japanese Dictionary for the General Reader* (2nd ed.), the expression “be sentimental” is equalized to “be easily moved to tears.”

The final poem, “La Figlia Che Piange,” expands from a golden maxim, “weave the sunlight in your hair,” placed at the beginning of the poem. The shining hair with sunlight should be blond, i.e., golden. The first imperative, which starts the poem, reinforces the image of superlative, together with the golden maxim placed two lines below. The second imperative, appearing just below the first one, suggests the hidden water kept in “a garden urn.” The image of water is also contained in the poem’s Italian title, which means “The Daughter Who Cries.” The title shows a combination of a golden girl and transparent tears.

The collection ends with the last golden poem and returns to the first tree poem through the invisible stream of water, following the movement of the five peer elements. The distribution and circulation of the elements in the American version emphasize the Trinitarian unity of the 1919/1920 collection. The collection secretly claims that a poem is a single and expanded word.¹⁴ Simultaneously, the omniscience of the element “water” suggests soothing tears. The meaning of the conclusive title of the collection, *Poems*, is dual: the collection shows what the poem is, and at the same time, the word “poem” is a synonym of “peace.” In the collection, tears are shed by everyone, i.e., “weeping multitudes.” The establishment of global peace needs every hand in democracy represented by the cooperative five elements.

5. The literary appropriation of surrealism

The 1919/1920 collection embodies the ideal

turned into the real in the first place, and subsequently vice versa, in its image of circulative unity. The ideal means language, a suite of words. Fundamentally, poetry is a product of language. Eliot's surreal collection foregrounds the basics of poems. The collection's mimetic picture with an ex-boxer, Sweeney, is ironic but vivacious as a parodic farce. It criticizes the interwar society, simultaneously trying to enhance it. It is a requiem for suppression and salvation.

The visual art developed at that time, such as surrealist paintings and cinema in black and white, suggests itself as an avant-gardist source of inspiration for the collection. Influenced or not, the abstract leaps of the 1920 poems evoke the contemporary American painter, Georgia O'Keeffe's poetic deformation. The Eliot collection represents an experiment for setting up an avant-gardist expression, but the expression is entirely verbal for conveying messages. The messages are nonetheless apparently far-fetched, imposing a task of interpretation on the reader.

The difficulty of the 1919/1920 collection resides in its metonymical structure. The first sequence of 12 new poems typifies the stylistic feature, while the second sequence of old poems from the 1917 collection works as an archetypal basis in its lyrical stream and conceptual detachment. In the first sequence, on the whole, each sentence is simple and grammatical. It is also mimetic, though nuanced with a gradation of decipherable metaphors, mythological or exotic. For instance, in the eleventh poem, "Bees" quickly correspond to "sutlers" in the restricted framework of the poem. The metaphoric density, or "complexity" in P. Reinau's term (52), stabilizes each word. In parallel, the poems accumulate mock facts as dry, or indifferent reports. The qualification "dry" is a key concept, repeated at the head and the end of the first long poem, "Gerontion." The dry locution sometimes causes slips of tongues, such as the ellipsis of subjects, but the slips are understandable. The juxtaposition of nouns does not destroy the grammatical

mold. "The smoky candle end of time / Declines" is easily rephrased as "The smoky candle out of time / Declines." The problem is that the reported facts are not connected to each other by the contextual description. It seems a particle of an invisible whole, paralleling each poem as a development of each of the five Chinese elements. In the first poem, the self-reflexive expression, "fractured atoms," is meaningful, designating components of corpses.

The partialness in each poem is visually conveyed by the quick exchange of flashy scenes. For example, in the initial poem, "Gerontion," just after the sudden advent of Christ in the form of a tiger, three kinds of trees abruptly appear. The trees are immediately followed by anonymous people, who are juxtaposed in puzzling actions. At the end, Gerontion's speculations are unexpectedly presented as a spider-web. In the next poem, the second hero, Bleistein, quietly replaces the first one with an anagrammatic name, Burbank, like a twin. In the final poem of the 1920 sequence, the obscure hero, Sweeney, is identified with the celebrity, Agamemnon. The dazzling change of visuality makes the reader unconsciously accept the metonymical structure of the collection. The quatrain form evokes a screen.

It should be noted that, despite the quick change of scenes, the whole collection is kept in serenity. The protagonists of the poems do not fling themselves to violence. The sedentary ex-boxer, Sweeney, stands up only to shave himself. His counterpart, Agamemnon, is dead in the woods. The dramatic apex is represented by a poor honeymoon of an anonymous couple.

In the collection, the stimulation caused by the sharpened point feels real, which imposes the metonymical structure of the collection, i.e., the reinforcement of the pointed end. The forceful minimum is symbolized by the anonymous hero Sweeney's "razor on his leg." In other words, the description of small but reflexive actions such as shaving, gashing, scratching, drooping, taking a bath, and drawing a stocking up, gives an impression that it

actually touches the reader's body with more or less sensation. This corresponds to the "nervous shock" in the collection's own vocabulary. The whirling "atoms" and the epileptic fits also draw the reader's attention to the minuscule outpost with stimulation. The positive feeling is given by a paralyzing "coffee-cup" and "a glass of brandy." The reference to the saved money, i.e., "penny," "Exchequer Bond," and "actionnaires (stockholders)," is tickling. The collection simulates a poisonous medicine.

The main characters in the collection are featured in the action that fixes them to the bottom: Sweeney "straddled," Pipit sat, the honeymooners rest in the blanket, the hippo dwells "in the mud," and Phlébas drowned. The oppression of the protagonists is unexpected and shocking, thus difficult to overcome. The stabilizing action makes the simple sentence structure of the collection, A is/do B, unshakable, by simultaneously imposing the single verb, this signifier of the action, which is to be written down. In the collection, the verb is destined to be heavy from an early stage. In the second sentence of "Gerontion," the echoing verb, "fought," stands independently after a comma without any complement like a tombstone. The self-sufficient verb promotes the disconnection in the syntactic continuity, thereby making each word separate from each other. The verb is fundamentally for connection with influential force toward neighboring terms in syntax. The seclusion of each component of the sentence is typically expressed by the difficult nouns, which are "dry" and "stiff" in the collection's vocabulary, simulating stuffed specimen: for example, "epicene," "vertebrate," and "league."

Each word as a metonymy is both ethereal and dense, embodying, as it were, the aesthetics of brandy. The term "brandy," which appears after a heroine's bath in the third poem, concentrates the characteristics of the 1919/1920 collection in duality: painful auto-sublimation through auto-re-creation in danger of sadomasochism. The collection compared to the alcohol represents, in fact, sophistication and smartness. Brandy is the distilled wine, which is

purified twice ("Brandy"). In the collection, the word "brandy" is enhanced with the qualification "neat." It is also shining in the heroine's brightness: her name, Doris, includes the French word meaning "gold," i.e., "or."

The poetics in brandy represents both pain in war and asceticism after war. In the collection, brandy is modestly shown in a glass held by the golden heroine. The glass is, however, powerful, offering twofold salvation from brandy, i.e., the wine purified twice.

The frequent reference to degrading scandals, such as fire, fits, and adultery, contributes to impose the metonymic structure of the collection, lingering in the shocked reader's memory.

At the time of publication, the insinuating particles presumably caused the contemporary reader nightmarish sensations. The short reference to money, particularly "Exchequer Bond," evokes the local war actualized by transcontinental capitals accumulated in the global penetration of cash flow. The burning of a princess's "shuttered barge" suggests a crime for murder or insurance, which may lead to an international conflict. The sudden fall of "Spanish cape" on the ex-boxer Sweeney opens a gate to Asia, warning the reader of World War II and atomic bombs. Nevertheless, the tacit reference does not reveal historical facts hidden behind its suggestive words. The reader is given the possibility to overcome the challenging visions, whether obscene or annihilating.

The reader is riveted to the business of real life, this seemingly trivial but the most pressing metonymy, in the apparently avant-gardist text in upheaval. Fundamentally, language represents everyday-ness, used commonly. The circular unity of the collection is ascribed to the reader's concentration on living his/her own daily life. The first directing poem, which is the recollection of an old man facing death, restrains the interpreter's irresponsible digression throughout the collection. The name "Gerontion" leads to "guérison," meaning recovery. The intransitive verb, "fought," which is mysteriously repeated twice

at the beginning of the poem, echoes the aftermath of World War I. The seclusion is pleasant, though the reader stays masochistically docile. The oral sequence of the poem is rhythmical, giving many tongue twisters such as “Blistered in Brussels,” “The red-eyed scavengers,” and “Polyphiloprogenitive.” The poetic sound is also conflictive.

The text presents a mosaic of everyday scenes, each of which is rendered in a sophisticated but comprehensible way, though the need of dictionaries is suggested by Reinau (52). For example, in the tenth poem, the decay of the dead is eclipsed only by the metaphorical swell, “Daffodil bulbs.” In the next poem, the respectable Greek letters represent the sedative effects of religious routines. Secluded in the small framework for defamiliarization, the ordinariness becomes attractive, as if in “Daguerreotypes and silhouettes” in the fourth golden poem, “A Cooking Egg.”

The reader is thereby induced to complete the whole picture of everydayness, filling in gaps among the mosaic scenes. For instance, the Russian beauty, Grishkin, should be married to somebody, but not to the “Brazilian jaguar.” A suite of scenes in the circular collection, which fill up the dualistic collection, paradoxically culminate with the decayed dead for revival. The hopeful scenes as representing partial revival sadistically motivate the secluded reader to active construction. The circulation changes into linear advancement under the power of suppression, the collection’s other movement, concurrently with the poems in syntactical progression. The advancement is accelerated by the voluntary reader’s world-making.

The square quatrain squeezes its verses both vertically (or semantically) and horizontally (or syntactically) to push forth a summarizing word.

The 1919/1920 after-war collection directs him or her to re-create everyday life. The romantic leap of artful illusion is suppressed. The collection thus seems, in a sense, weak as an artwork, but it is a requiem aiming for survival.

The reader is subsequently pushed to construct a

new society after war, or “cultiver notre jardin” in the enlightenment thinker Voltaire’s terms. The effects of the collection are endless, by way of the reader’s deconstructive interpretation. What can be unanimously deduced from the collection is, at least, the message that the ideal produces the real. In the dualist principle, the schizophrenic poems conceal the ordinary message. Ordinariness is a characteristic of modernist art, the foregrounding of the present, or here-and-now. Concurrently, surrealism is a foregrounding of ordinariness. The 1919/1920 collection is an angelic arrow for directing the reading community. Using language, this first medium of human communication, the collection secretly endeavors to renew culture, which is yet to be human-centered. Language is attached to the human brain in the form of knowledge, the habit of neurosis. Culture cannot go beyond the framework of humanness, destined to re-creation. It is thus only human beings themselves that can save human beings.

6. Making a new culture through search of others and translations

The 1919/1920 collection represents a symbol of newness, shooting metonymical shocks. Moreover, the dominant duality in conflict makes the whole collection a furnace of incessant regeneration.

A solid model for re-creation is not presented in the implicit collection. Nevertheless, its mosaic scenes of life emit light for advancement, embodying the possibility of survival in the collection’s circular movement. The pacifying collection is, and must be, modest but challenging.

The stimulant but ambiguous collection paradoxically seeks for the reader, its closest other, for it to be established as a meaningful artwork. The collection in need simultaneously represents dying soldiers on the battlefield. The text’s desire for the interpreting other is seen in the enumeration of proper nouns including Gerontion, Sweeney, Pipit, and Madame Blavatsky. The collection needs the reader’s

interpretation, i.e., translation in C. S. Peirce's concept for its own survival.¹⁵ In the overall circulation, the collection grows meaningful more and more, gathering increased readers' interpretations. The collection aims at becoming a word charged with meanings, created by the cooperation of the author, the text, and the reader. The biblical word for salvation is mentioned four times in the 1920 sequence of the American edition: twice in small letters in the first poem, "Gerontion," and twice with an initial capital letter in the second-to-last poem, "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service." The circular collection, which is generally in the quatrain form, is intended to be transformed into a single word: word as a conceptual framework that conceives any unified verbal signs, whether it be nouns, verbs, or adjectives, including the readers' interpretations and the readers themselves. Both the stuffed term and the metonymical structure symbolize the collection seeking for an almighty word which represents an eternal individual. The collection is a restricted but erasable canvas for re-creation. Without presenting any glorious happenings, the collection concentrates on the sketch of everyday scandals. With repeated references to Christianity, the modest collection embodies a white book allowing endless, if not Sisyphean, re-creation for salvation. The curious repetition of bath scenes also draws emptied sacredness with utmost potential for innovation.

The collection represents a new formation, while being simultaneously a re-creation of cultural heritage. The saturated duality in the poems claims that the human creation is both a new making and a reworking, i.e., translating. It is new, because it occupies new space in an incessant flow of time. It is old, because it is made of existing materials by the human beings in a monistic line of life. The collection, finally named *Poems*, is a reconsideration and definition of making, i.e., *poiesis*: making is inseparable from, or rather, continued to, translating. The collection aims for a new establishment, both cultural and human, after the destructive World War.

The hints for translation/interpretation are given

by the mysterious numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7, which are presented on parade in the golden quatrain, "A Cooking Egg." The poem also evokes the oval zero. The abstract numerals are bare, inviting any concretization, for instance, the development into the five Chinese elements. The concretization makes the reader innovative, while translation approaches creation. In this world of recycle, creation is basically translation.

The circulative collection aims at complete unity as endless peace and a pacified globe. It also means that the human always stays human, and not beyond, on this earthly ball destined to self-rejuvenation in the limitedness of recycle.

The collection is between the author's two major works, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917) and *The Waste Land* (1922), tending for both. The *Prufrock* poems compose the second sequence of the 1919/1920 collection. The long incantational poem in collage, *The Waste Land*, may be viewed as a unification of the 1919/1920 poems with oral weight. As an antiwar work, the collection relates itself to the musicalized verse, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). The *Book Cats* is an implicit protest against World War II, foregrounding the image of water for tears and catharsis in a tragicomical setting, just like the 1919/1920 collection.¹⁶

As a writer, T. S. Eliot made a continuous effort to re-create, or revise human life, this tragicomical activity which is synonymous with culture, through a symbol-making named poetry.

Notes

- 1 According to J. E. Miller Jr. (343), *Ara Vos Prec* was published in early February 1920, and *Poems* in late February of the same year.
- 2 The initial title *Ara Vos Prec* was later modified to *Ara Vos Prec*.
- 3 The biographical information refers to Gordon 52 and 137.
- 4 The translation is by Miller (343).

- 5 B. C. Southam refers to Conrad Aiken's suggestion that "Sweeney is based upon the expugilist . . . with whom the poet took boxing lessons at Boston" (71).
- 6 See MacCabe 28, Reinau 81, Williamson 87, and Drabble and Stringer 183. Drabble and Stringer posit the publication year of the collection as 1919, thereby neglecting, rather than assimilating, the succeeding 1920 two editions.
- 7 See, for example, Southam, Lockerd, and Williamson.
- 8 According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000 ed.), "pipit" means "a small brown bird with a pleasant song." Omitting the final consonant "t" in "pipit," the rest corresponds to "urine" in colloquial French.
- 9 David Ward takes the poem, "The Hippopotamus," as "a mock sermon" (30).
- 10 See MacCabe 29, Ransom 157, Ward 60, and Williamson 106.
- 11 According to Dominique Moncond'huy, "Le sonnet se définit d'abord par sa concision" (190).
- 12 For the discussion of the fourth part, see Takeda, *Word* 138.
- 13 See the second section of "East Coker" in *Four Quartets*, in which the stellar deployment is featured.
- 14 For a discussion of poem as a word, see Takeda, *Word* 11-17.
- 15 David Savan indicates that, for Peirce, translation equals interpretation (17).
- 16 For a discussion of the *Book Cats*, see Takeda, *Human* 65-89.

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