

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,  
     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 visions and revisions,  
     Before the taking of a toast and tea.

[3]

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

[2,4]

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.

[5]

*S'io credessi che mai risposta fosse  
 a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
 questa fiamma staria senza più scosse.  
 Ma per ciò che giammai di questo fondo  
 non-tornó vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero  
 senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

[0]

Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out against the sky  
     Like a patient etherised 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.

[1]

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?

[6]

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
 Eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
 And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
 When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
 Then how should I begin  
 To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
 And how should I presume?

[7]

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?

[8]

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And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
 Smoothed by long fingers,  
 Asleep...tired... or it malingers,  
 Stretched out 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,  
 I am no prophet - and here's no great matter;  
 I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
 And I seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
 And in short, I was afraid.

[11]

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?—  
 But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
 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.'

[13]

Will human voices wake us, and we drown. [9]  
 By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
 We have fingered in the chambers of the sea  
 When the wind blows the water white and black. [18]  
 Compiling the white pair of the waves plown back  
 I have seen them riding seaward on the waves

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?

[9]

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

[10]

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*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 of the matter with a smile,  
 To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  
 To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
 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'* [12]

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
 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.

[14]

I grow old... I grow old I  
 Shall I wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled. [15]  
 Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
 I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
 I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. [16]  
 I do not think that they will sing to me. [17]

