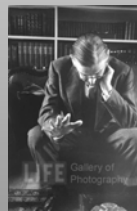


"Let us Go Then You and I" An International Weblog Discussion of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"



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Communication Skills in University Education 2006
Auckland, New Zealand

Overview



T. S. Eliot, theartcompany.com

- Context
- Rationale
- Reflections
- Assignment Details and Design

Context

We came from three contexts, two colleges,
and two countries.



- Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, Sweden
 - Fiction for Engineers: MSc students



- Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina, USA
 - Victorian Literature: MA students
 - American Literature: Undergraduate students

Rationale for Teaching & Learning

- Learning about Modernism and poetry through conversational and reflective writing and reading
- Exchanging perspectives with readers from other contexts to develop critical interpretive practices
- Extending literary understanding with multimodal expressions such as visual images and other media
- Developing contemporary composing abilities by writing and publishing at a blog
- Finding language appropriate to the discipline, audiences, and medium
- Reflecting on the poem, the process, and the learning

Learning about Modernism and poetry through conversational and reflective writing and reading

*"Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent"*

The work I selected to reflect themes of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is **M.C. Escher's "Relativity"** ... a simple pencil work with no color. Figures are wandering around in a **maze** of a house... kind of Mediterranean in terms of architecture,... **but the figures are faceless, moving about in the house without destination or visible purpose.** I feel the painting connects with



the **theme of bleakness and flatness**.... Prufrock/Eliot, like the figures in Escher's "Relativity," wander without destination or purpose, barely aware of each other and alone in their own little seemingly pleasant world (house, in Escher's case). (Erin, Clemson)

Extending literary understanding with multimodal expressions

*"There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet"*



Time, why do you punish me?
Like a wave bashing into the shore
You wash away my dreams.
Time, why do you walk away?
Like a friend with somewhere to go
You left me crying
(Hootie and the Blowfish)

I've always admired the painting by Salvador Dalí: [The Persistence of Memory](#). I think it is representative of The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by the **melting away of time**. The entire poem reflects on time in some form. The word is seen 11 times in lines 23-48. Also, in the song Time by Hootie and the Blowfish the question is asked: "Time, why you punish me? Like a wave bashing into the shore, you wash away my dreams." The song **personifies time and its overwhelming presence**. Time, in a sense, controls everything and we must learn to make the best of what little we have. **Prufrock does not understand this—he is unable to take a stand and do something about his situation.** (Marigrace, Clemson)



Houses of Parliament, Effects of Sunlight in the Fog, Claude Monet, 1904

Exchanging perspectives with readers from other contexts to develop critical interpretive practices

"And seeing that it was a soft October night, Curled once about the house, and fell asleep."

After reading everyone's responses, a lot of my original questions were cleared. A lot of people focused on the main points of the poem; that is, that Prufrock is an extremely insecure and needy man. However other students chose to write about topics such as the setting of the poem and try to draw conclusions from there. Erin noted that the setting reflects parts of Prufrock's personality; the settings are dark and dreary, much like Prufrock himself. Marigrace mentioned that Eliot chose to set his poem in October, a season when nature changes. This could possible reflect Prufrock's insecure personality....Prufrock is as indecisive as the leaves changing in the fall. Again, [thanks] to all of your responses! I think we're all helping each other fully understand this poem. (Allie, Clemson)

Developing contemporary composing abilities by writing and publishing at a blog

*"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?..."*



Study for The First Steps, Brancusi

Hello group! Thanks for your feedback.... :)

I am glad that Matt found my thoughts, on the "In the room women come and go talking of Michelangelo" verse, rather good. I'm been thinking a lot about that verse. I think that the use of mermaids and the fact that they will never sing to him, also might suggest that he feels very separte from society. He can't get that magical love and freedom, which mermaids have. The idea that he is not "one with" society does seem to exist within the poem. For another example he only "watches" the lonely men smoking, indicating that he is not even a part of that group. He feels like he doesn't belong anywhere. I hope you all will have a great week! Best regards, Ana-Marjia (Chalmers)

Finding language appropriate to the discipline, audiences, and medium



Earth from Terra Satellite, Space Today

I am a Chinese with Indonesian citizenship who has been studying in Sweden for the past 2,5 years. I am now taking some courses in new subject of logistics. I have so many interests, among others, poetry since I consider myself as a romantic person. Though, I have no previous experience with poets before. The only poetic phrase I know is 'to be or not to be' which I happen to find of very much. (I do not know if we allow to talk a little personal like this in our letters so if it is not allowed, please tell me later) (Catharina, Chalmers)

My name is Malalai...from Afghanistan..... I also want to respond to Catharina in group one. Yes, you are allowed to talk personally and indeed expressing personal feeling makes your letter more interesting and it gives your letter a variety. I wish everybody a have a successful semester, full of joy and happiness. Sicerely yours, Malalai (Clemson)

Reflecting on the poem, the process, and the learning

*"I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.
I do not think that they will sing to me."*

Wonderful idea, Fredick! :) "I am quite sure though, that it has quite little to do with love to some woman or person. I think it more has to do with love to writing But what really caught my attention about this statement is your comment about the poem really being about writing itself (or more specifically the writing of poetry). Then more I think about it the more it makes sense. What if the mermaids who wont sing are actually the muses of his poetry? What if what he really is worried about is that the "muse of poetry" might leave him and he will be unable to write great poetry? What if this is a love song to the "muse," more like a plea to the "muse" to come and visit him? . . . I'll have to think on it more.... (Amanda, Clemson)



Odysseus and the Sirens, John William Waterhouse, 1891

Reflections

- Writing and reading on the Internet, students learned about using blogs to communicate to multiple audiences.
- By collaboration and assignment design, teachers were able to deal with variations in course levels and purposes.
- The blog helped overcome boundaries of time and place and allowed for multimodal expressions to be shared.
- Student-directed group discussions and teacher-designed overall focus demonstrated the power of interactive communication for learning the subject and for experiencing literary interpretive practices.
- Conversational discourse and the genre of letters created intercultural communities of shared interest that strengthened expertise in composing and publishing.

Reflections

- Some students thought the conversation became repetitive.
- A few students felt that the discussion did not lead to a consensus interpretation of "Prufrock."
- A few students were unhappy with differing levels of experience in reading and discussing poetry.
- Copyright issues meant using lyrics without audio for representing music.

Reflections

... Oskar hit upon many major themes of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock:" the boredom, the nothingness, the contrast between and the title, the speaker's insecurity. Other themes appeared randomly. The **theme of time** was one such idea that morphed throughout the blog. For instance, "... Julia...found evidence that his "'obsession' with time [was] a clear sign of the speaker's youth." **Hello unexpected plot twist!**

I weighed in...to suggest that the speaker's way of thinking about time could be more an indicator of his maturity than his actual age. **So the discussion went from an observation of the use of time in the poem to the relevance of time to the speaker's age to the inference that the use of time is really a function of the poet's youth and inexperience. This was both intriguing and frustrating. I found many valuable insights that greatly extended my understanding. At other times we seemed on a wild goose chase.** (Susan, Clemson, from her Portfolio Introduction)

Assignment Details and Design: Letter 2

Letter 2, approximately **250 words**, addressed to everybody in the group.

To preserve the conversational structure of the discussion, please provide a **greeting and signature** with each message, naming the group or person to whom you are writing and signing each letter.

Use either your full name or your first name with last initial and identify your class and university (for example, "Pat Smart, American Lit, Clemson" or "Maria L., Chalmers, Fiction").

Assignment Details and Design: Letter 2

Read all the letters already posted by members of your group.

In your Letter 2, **addressed to your entire group**, refer specifically to **at least two members of the group by name**, attempting to cite at least two groupmates whose Letter 1 submissions have not already been cited by others. Please respond to at least one person not in your class.

Identify and explain how one or more keywords and reflective comments by groupmates contributed to your understanding of the poem. ... ways in which their interpretations are **similar to and/or different** from your own. This response can also be **personal**, connecting your own understanding and experience with what you learned from reading the poem and from your group. Don't hesitate to quote briefly from your groupmates' letters and from the poem.

Generating Engaged Online Discussions

from *Ten Tips for Generating Engaged Online Discussions* by Katherine Fischer, Donna Reiss, and Art Young

These guidelines should be adapted to course content, design, and emphasis, as well as to the type of electronic communication (email list, discussion board, or blog, for instance).

- ❑ Carefully **integrate** electronic discussions into course goals.... Participation should be mandatory, and **on-time participation** is crucial to establishing a conversational, academic exchange.
- ❑ Give students **credit** but not necessarily grades.... Without intervening in the students' discussion, you may provide **feedback** ...mentioning insightful ideas generated by the discussion and encouraging further reading, thinking, and conversation.

Generating Engaged Online Discussions

- ❑ Offer precise **directions** with **clear expectations**: scope, approach, tone (courteous and respectful of various viewpoints), length (minimum and maximum—we recommend **250-350 words**), diction (such as "edited conversational"), form or genre (letter or memo or report), and deadlines for each post. Perhaps provide a **model** of a good post.
- ❑ Consider integrating Internet **research**, in which students include and discuss relevant Web sites as active links in their messages to each other, for example, a misconduct case from **Ethics in Science** or a Pre-Raphaelite painting from the **Victorian Web**. When appropriate, encourage students to incorporate **visual images and multimedia**.
- ❑ Encourage or require students to **quote** from the textbook, from your lectures and materials, and from their classmates' posts when they respond to each other and when they write their tests or papers on topics they discussed online. Provide a model for **informal documentation** for these source references.

Thank You



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Cross-Cultural Collaborations

<http://wordsworth2.net/projects/crossculturalcollabs>

Ten Tips for Generating Engaged Online Discussions

<http://wordsworth2.net/activelearning/ecadiscustips.htm>

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza più scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

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.

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

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 indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
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,
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?

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!]
It is 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.

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,
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,
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,
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:
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;
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.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

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.

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.