

Kurdish Prufrock: Eliot's "Prufrock" and Bekas's "An Autumn Letter". A Comparative Study

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Abstract

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by the famous modern poet T. S. Eliot is one of the masterpieces not only of the poet himself but also of the modern English poetry at large; it, therefore, is widely read and influenced a large number of poets and writers in different parts of the world.

The Kurdish poet Sherko Bekas is one of the outstanding Kurdish men of letters who played a vital role in the development of the Kurdish poetry from its classical and romantic phases into a modern type that divorced the traditional forms of poetry in favour of a poetry that responds to the demands of his people and literature in the last century until the present time. He was a good follower of the world literature and poetry especially the Arabic, Spanish, and English poetry. This led him inevitably to become familiar with the poetry of world writers who influenced him greatly to an extent that he either addressed them directly or borrowed their ideas to compose poems.

In this context, he penned a poem entitled "An Autumn Letter" at the footnote of which he wrote that its idea is taken from a poem by T. S. Eliot. This study therefore, tries to compare and contrast this poem to its mirror idea, Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in order to show the extent of the latter's influence upon the former poem.

Keywords: modern, poetry, Kurdish, influenced, English.

1. Biographical Synonymy

It is well-known that Eliot, as a poet, was an anti-romantic or at least reacted to it and this trend is reflected in his poetry right from the first-period poems. In later poems especially the internationally acclaimed *The West Land*, he turns into a philosophical poet where the misery of the modern man and the pessimism of the modern men of letters are blatantly on display.

With the Kurdish poet Sherko Bekas (1940- 2013) the story seems similar and analogous since, like Eliot, he also focused on the miseries and hardships of man under the yoke of modernity and its complications and exploitations. The features of modernism and postmodernism are not only clear in the context of his deeply buried

ideas; rather he himself stresses them here and there in his lengthy autobiography *Writing with Ashe's Water*. In the first part of the book, for instance, he designates his addressees as follows:

I do not write for one elite, but for all the elites because even within the simple people, there are elites as well. I do not widely open all the gates of poetry; neither block them all; there is always a middle way where I work (2013: 386).

Like Eliot as well; he was one of the pioneers of the modern and postmodern concepts and forms in the Kurdish poetry since he was one of three men who thought of and then started a new literary movement in Baghdad called "Rwanga" in the middle of 1970. The movement aimed at digressing from the traditional literature in general and poetry in particular and giving it a new shape and content. This, however, was not a simple task, but they insisted upon trying it as he stresses:

Rwanga proposed a new philosophy: As far as we are not dead, then we should change and this change is impossible if we do not create a new language in this literature. At that time we believed that literature can not be without a message; not an ideological message but a humanistic one. Rwanga was the first movement that gathered the different trends of thinking around one theatre which was the theatre of modernism (Ibid: 218).

This new trend pushed the Kurdish poets including Bekas, towards the cosmopolitan and urban aspects of the Kurdish society as opposed to the classical and romantic trends that were at work energetically until the middle of the twentieth century in Kurdistan and among the Kurdish poets. In this aspect, he was close to Eliot's philosophy towards poetry which "marks the break from the Romantic tradition of the nineteenth century" (Sen: 49).

2. Anti Love Poems

The ironical title of Eliot's poem may direct the reader astray in the first glance since it directly contains the word 'love'; yet the contents show that the poem is by no means a love poem neither its hero resembles any love hero whatsoever. It would be possible to call him an anti-hero or anti-lover in the traditional meanings of the words. Although the opening line: "Let us go then, you and I" promises some anticipation of a romantic content to follow; yet the reader quickly stumbles at a barrier that distracts him from an emotional quencequence to follow:

When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table.
The patient imagery is by no means an appropriate outcome to be expected in such a situation and context.

The Kurdish poem, entitled "An Autumn Letter", seems to follow strictly the example of Prufrock when it also starts with lines that provide a mixture of love, beauty, and hope on the one hand and sorrow, sickness and pessimism on the hand:

Let us go then, you and I,
It's evening & void streets
wore a yellow sorrow
(Bekas, 2009: 32 , LL. 1-3).

(Note: These lines and the subsequent lines quoted in this paper are parts of the above mentioned poem which are originally written in Kurdish and included in volume 2 of the 8 volumes collected poems of the poet. It is translated into English by the researcher himself).

Despite the promising first line, the heavy stricken successive lines tell of the impossibility of any love song; on the contrary, they foreshadow a heavy and sorrowful story and scene to come. As a direct influence upon the Kurdish poet by the English masterpiece, Eliot's "half deserted streets" turn into "void" ones whose faces have turned pale due to deep sorrows.

The non-love trend continues in the Kurdish poem where every new concept draws the reader away from the expected love -making words and expressions:

**A pale eve
In this autumn's mirror
Is like my own face (LL. 5-7).**

The pale face of the evening could be taken to refer just to misery and sorrow of its carrier and the speaker (most probably the poet himself) links his state of mind and thought to the mentioned pale-looking evening in a clear reference to his own social and psychological state of mind.

The speaker in Eliot's poem roams around the idea of a love relationship and lengthens his story with a number of allusions to stress the fact that he is hesitant in his intended purpose.

"An Autumn Letter" on the other hand, seems to be more direct compared to its model. After just (15) lines in the (75) lines poem, the speaker discloses the addressee of the poem as "oh, my flying poem" (L. 16); thus brushing away any speculation or ambiguity about the character of the beloved at least as one interpretation could imply. So, it can be concluded that neither poem is related to love as a major theme, at least in the literal connotation of the word, though the Kurdish poem seems to be more straightforward in this respect.

3. Subjectivity vs. Objectivity

Eliot's poem differs from the Kurdish poem in a number of aspects on top of which is the character of its speaker. It is beyond doubt that Prufrock is not Eliot for a number of reasons; for instance, Eliot got married while Prufrock did not dare even to propose to the supposed lady. He is a split character where the head and heart are separated and work on completely different levels. Although the opening line of the poem promises a good starting point in the supposed love-meeting; "Let us go then you and I", yet the speaker indulges directly after this line in a number of justifications and obstacles that hinder his progress and explain the great split between his wishes and desires on the one hand and indecisiveness and hesitation on the other hand.

This is a pure postmodern concept which is usually referred to as self-consciousness, and linked by many critics to Eliot's hero in the poem. Some of them regard it as "a split state where the person is aware of himself as well as those who observe him. The element of self-consciousness makes a person inactive as well as indecisive" (Mandal and Modak).

But Eliot himself seems completely different from his hero not only because, unlike Prufrock, he got married, rather because his life story tells of a constant and self-trust character. In this respect, one critic remarks that:

His integrity, constancy of purpose, and fidelity to his inner vision remained unshaken throughout the fifty years of his life in England. Nor did his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism entail a profound change in his mode thought or in the temper of his mind (Press: 73).

Eliot, furthermore, reacted strongly against the romantic tradition of the nineteenth century and this breaking away explains the touch of impersonality in his poetry. For him, the romantic subjectivity was just a source of eccentricity and he believed that a poet should be an observer upon the events and stories of life. He regarded poetry as "not turning loose of emotion but an escape from personality" (qtd in Sen: 16).

As for the Kurdish poet, the story is quite different. Being involved personally in two successive armed struggles and revolutions against the ex-Iraqi regimes that occupied his country and oppressed his people; he allotted a large number of his poetry as a calendar for that struggle and a history of the people who participated in it.

In "An Autumn Letter", the speaker compares the pale evening to his own pale face:

**A pale eve
In this late autumn's mirror,
Is like my own face,
My face of before seven years (LL. 5-8).**

The poem was composed in 1982 in the western part of Iraq where the poet was living in exile. In 1975, the two countries of Iraq and Iran reached an agreement at the eve of a meeting of the OPEC in Algiers under the supervision of the then Algerian president. According to that agreement the Shah regime of Iran consented to stop its support for the Kurdish revolution which was strongly going on against the Baathist regime in Iraq in the northern part of that country (Iraqi Kurdistan) in return to winning ownership upon half of Shat el-Arab (a strategic river that flows between the two countries). As a result, the Kurdish revolution was forced by Iran to stop and consequently, its active members and peshmergas, including the poet, either fled to Iran across the border or were exiled to the southern and western parts of Iraq where they were treated as prisoners of war (including the writer of this paper).

This new situation necessarily changed the poet's face from an active and fire-red face of a free revolutionary man to a pale one under the continuous observation and threats of the Baathist regime at that time. This extract, therefore, leaves no space for any doubt about the identity of the speaker in the poem (the poet himself) and the subjectivity of the poem that reflects the poet's point of view and miserable days in exile.

In his two-volume autobiography, *Writing with Ashe's Water*, the poet refers to the poetic images in his poetry and stresses that he saw most of them in dreams and then put them down into his poems. In the long poem, "Migration" he wrote: "black strings used to come out from my mouth / but their other ends were not seen" (Bekas, 2013: 330). About this line he writes: "I said this image to myself recurrently through dreams after that September Revolution in 1975 was forced to stop" (Ibid). This is another example among a large number of cases that stress the subjectivity in his poetry.

4. Postmodern Features

T. S. Eliot published "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" in 1915 in the Chicago magazine *Poetry* and this puts the poem within the sphere of the modern age, and makes it a modern poem. Yet, it embraces a number of postmodern features and- if read without considering the name of its author and the date of its publication- one can easily regard it as a postmodern poem.

One of the prominent postmodern features in it lies in its ambiguity. The poem contains more than one ambiguous station one of the most obvious ones of which can be seen in "To lead you to an overwhelming question....?" (Southam: 13, L. 10). The poet leaves the question unanswered throughout the poem. Furthermore, he ends the line with four dots as a clear reference to the fact that the sentence is not completed yet. It may refer, as the title implies, to the beloved's question about the intention of the speaker in his proposed walk in the 'half deserted streets' which –logically, is no

more than a love proposal. Yet, it may equally mean interrogation of the social life of the speaker. It could also imply an ordinary invitation by the speaker to see a certain place or scene. These interpretations could hardly be accepted or denied on any supposed idea since the character of the speaker in the poem- as explained earlier- is by no means the poet himself; so, he is simply unknown and unrecognized.

Sherko Bekas in his "An Autumn Letter" follows the example of Eliot's poem at least in the opening lines, and in the same way he keeps the identity of one party ambiguous. The speaker here is clearly the poet himself, yet the addressee remains unknown and ambiguous. This ambiguity in the contemporary Kurdish poetry, as one critic remarks "represents revolt against and rejection of the past thoughts and ideologies. The poets used it as a means of raising voices of dismissal" (Mahmood: 185).

The Kurdish poem is intended for the above mentioned purpose intrinsically and extrinsically since the poet passed (at the time in which he composed the poem) a period of internal and external conflicts with himself and with his environment simultaneously. He was at the heart of the battle for releasing the Kurdish poetry from the restraints of the tradition of his antecedents on the one hand, and with the political situation of his people and country on the other hand albeit under the disguise of ambiguity for the latter purpose:

**When you quit me
My face was
A pointless clear spring.
When your anger blew,
You became dust &
Polluted me (LL. 10-15).**

The 'you' of the extract is the source of every ambiguity like Prufrock's 'overwhelming question'. It could refer to anyone of his bosom friends when he was a peshmerga fighting the ex- Iraqi regime for the freedom of his country and people. It may likewise be a hidden reference to his colleagues in the literary movement that he championed at the beginning of the 1970s because the custom and tradition of his society at that time could not accept his group's poetic philosophy. The addressee could also be his own poetry especially that after those lines, the reader stumbles at an unannounced second person: "Oh, my flying poem / let's re-roam the streets" (LL. 16-17). In this way the poet remains faithful to the principle of ambiguity as one of the outstanding features of post modernity, thanks, at least in this poem, to his giant pioneer.

5. Startling Imagery

In addition to its attention-catching epigraph, Eliot's poem is embedded with poetic images, but unlike its predecessors, the images are strange and startling:

**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. (LL. 15-18).**

The image of the fog that is likened to a cat which 'rubs its back upon the window-panes' is far from normal metaphors and similes that the first time readers of the poem may expect. The yellow fog and the yellow smoke are necessarily connected to the urban and industrialized life of cities. As smoke and fog usually move slowly, they may refer to the hesitant progress of Prufrock in his love-making proposal. They may also reflect the foggy and dirty atmosphere of the city-life to which, it seems, Prufrock and his beloved belong. Even more emphatically, the poet proves his excellent ability in creating poetic images that turn the attention of the readers through unfamiliarizing the familiar poetic images and devices:

**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.
(LL. 91-94).**

To squeeze the universe into a ball is more than just a dead or even sleeping metaphor. The paradoxical situations are there to startle and take the poem away from any normal passage of poetic image. It is a stark contradiction to collect the universe into one single question and address it to the beloved. The poem is actually embedded with such images that make it a postmodern poem written in a time when postmodernism in literature was just in its mother's womb.

The Kurdish poem that imitates Prufrock in one way or another is also rich in this aspect and the poet treats it artistically and consciously. He focuses upon these kinds of images everywhere throughout the poem in an attempt to convey what he feels and what he complains of to the reader:

**The long streets
That like our
Lengthy staying-ups
Come to no end.
(LL. 19-21).**

He composed the poem in 1982 when he had been exiled by the ex-Iraqi regime to Al-Anbar province in western Iraq and his family was alone in a small town there. Being away from his country and people and living among strangers whom he regarded as enemies to his people necessarily filled him with sorrow and passive emotional states of mind. It seems that the most difficult times he had to pass alone where the lengthy nights without people to speak to and friends to share miseries with.

The hyperbolic expression of the last line shows clearly his mind- state and the severe conflict he was suffering from. Like a postmodern poet and observer, he follows his favorite method of presentation to send messages that need special readers to consume and reveal:

**Let's again
Embrace the orchards,
Whose trees leaves
Are full and dense,
Can not be counted nor end.
(LL. 24-27).**

Inviting the addressee through the opening word 'let's' does not seem abnormal, but what follows startles the reader (or listener) since the poet recited a large number of his poems through T.V. interviews and programs. The metaphorical embracing of the personified orchards connotes more than just romantic interest in nature. The orchards the speaker refers to are, most probably, those that he was forced to leave behind in Kurdistan when he was exiled. He shares huge secrets with the orchards but he does not dare to disclose them due to the critical situation he was living in at that time.

Both the speaker and the leaves of the trees are dense and both are calm and speechless. And this, once again, proves that the speaker in the poem is the poet himself and he had to take refuge in such techniques to evade harsh and expected consequences in case his messages were more clear and straightforward.

Another postmodern feature which can be traced in both texts is juxtaposition that gathers the literary devices of "pastiche, collage, montage, and contrast between grand past and trivial present" (Mandal: 3). In this aspect, both poems are indebted directly or indirectly.

In the case of Eliot's poem, the concept of indebtedness seems more obvious and more straightforward. In the line "And indeed there will be time" (Ferguson: 1341) for instance, Eliot seems to evoke an idea from Andrew Marvel's "To His Coy Mistress" where the lover is in a hurry in his love-proposal and –using the carpe diem

technique- tries to convince his beloved that time is too short and it should be employed before it is too late:

**Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
(Ibid: 479).**

What Prufrock puts forward, however, is at a stark contrast to that of the lover in Marvel's poem. Justifying his hesitation, Prufrock says: "And indeed there will be time"; thus postponing his intended love-proposal. So, Eliot's idea in Prufrock is indebted to Marvel's poem and it can be seen as a pastiche to it in the opposite direction.

But the concluding lines of the poem do not meet any prophesied result that the reader may make when he starts reading the poem. It is true that "we have lingered in the chambers of the sea" (L. 129) is "the song of the mermaids" who "sing about their living deep in the bottom of the sea and being garlanded by sea-girls with red and brown sea-weeds" (Sen: 48); but at the final line the tone of the speaker is abruptly changed. "Till humn voices wake us, and we drown" (L. 131) is no more than awakening the reader and Prufrock himself to the fact that all the preceding ideas and expressions were day-dreams awakened by the harsh reality of the age.

The Kurdish poem, "An Autumn Letter" parodies Prufrock in its general idea and techniques though with different methods and consequences. Echoing Eliot's opening line "Let us go then, you and I", Bekas uses the same line six times throughout his poem and at the beginning of the six verses that compose the whole poem; thus using the line as a refrain – it seems- to stress his invitation and demand exactly in the way Eliot uses it in his poem.

This heavy emphasis should inevitably lead the reader to expect a sure positive result and reply for the proposal of the refrained line; yet the final lines shock the first-time reader with a contrary direction of his expectations:

**You did not come to go along,
The night caught my poetry,
You did not come along,
Did not come along,
Did not,
Not.
(L. 70-75).**

These lines could be interpreted literally, metaphorically, and even psychologically. The reader touches the bitter feeling of the speaker in these lines. He is complaining

that what he said before could not be met; that is why the stressed 'not' is repeated recurrently until it becomes one independent and implied sentence that forms the last line of the poem. This is the reality of his feeling and situation which stands at the opposite direction to all his dream-like proposals throughout the poem: "Embrace the orchards", "I feed you its sweet bunch of words", " And wear you its blue sentences", ect. This concluding picture stands at a parallel line with the denouement of Eliot's poem; thus it puts the Kurdish poet at the situation of parodying his English pioneer.

Conclusions

The paper came out with a number of conclusions the most important ones of which are the following:

1. Although T. S. Eliot is regarded as one of the first modern poets and playwrights, the poem under study in this paper exposes most of the characteristics of a post-modern poem.
2. Although the Kurdish poet was not an English speaker; yet the English poetry- among other European poetries- influenced him greatly because he was a serious follower of the world literature in general and poetry in particular.
3. Bekas was faithful to the literary tradition and rule that asks for preserving the rights of every writer and therefore, he referred at the footnote of his poem to the fact that he got benefit from the idea of Eliot's poem; thus proving his indebtedness to the giant Anglo-American poet.
4. The speakers in the two poems are different but the final goal and destination of the poets in their poems are analogous and identical.

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Index 1

An Autumn Letter

Sherko Bekas*

Let us go then, you and I,
It's evening & void street
wore a yellow sorrow
waiting for our walk.

A pale eve

In this late autumn's mirror
Is like my own face,
My face of before seven years,

That time

when you quit me:

my face was

a pointless clear spring,
when your anger blew
you became a dust &
polluted me.

oh, my flying poem

let's re-roam the streets

one by one,

the long streets

that like our

lengthy staying ups

come to no end.

Let's again

Embrace the orchards,

That the leaves of its trees

Like my heart's secrets

Full and dense,

Cannot be count nor end.

Let's go together,

Calm like the dews

On my eyelashes.

Let us go then you and I,
 We are blamed a lot,
 Blame of the rivers
 That we passed by but
 Did not visit their waves,
 Blame of the plants
 We passed by but
 Did not visit their shades
 We are blamed a lot.
 Let us go then you and I,
 The sun is still to climb another hill.

Sun setting is now a curtain,
 Curtain of the houses' windows &
 On the domes and plants.
 The sun now in the pool & on the stands
 Is like a round kindled peacock
 Like a fire's rainbow on water's face.
 Let us go then you and I,
 I want to untie the curtain
 From windows, domes and plants,
 & spread it on your head,
 I want you
 To be purple queen
 Of the evening &
 Me a burned word
 Of this meeting.

Let us go then you and I,
 I have another collection,
 On our way
 I feed you its sweet bunch of words,
 Its red, yellow, and green letters
 To fix on your chest,
 And wear you its blue sentences.
 Let us go then you and I,
 See the sun

Is close to the last hill,
 At once it may jump and threw
 Itself into night's lap.
 You did not come to go along,
 The night caught my poetry.
 You did not to along,
 Did not come along,
 Did not,
 Not.

- The poem is translated by the researcher himself.

Index 2

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
 A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
 Questa fiamma staria senza piu 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 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
 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!)
 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.

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 towards 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.