

Poetry, Weltschmerz, And A learning From Experience

In personal terms I have found in many of the poems of TS Eliot an expression far more succinct, apt, and numinous than my own many wordy effusions about what I believe I have learned about my now regrettable extremist past.

Perhaps most apt is his *Ash Wednesday* and verses such as:

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessed face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice

And pray to God to have mercy upon us
And pray that I may forget
These matters that with myself I too much discuss
Too much explain
Because I do not hope to turn again
Let these words answer
For what is done, not to be done again
May the judgement not be too heavy upon us

For what can or should we, we the remorseful, do to perhaps change others? For what I have so slowly discovered over a period of some fifteen years is that, for many individuals, their personal experience, their personal suffering, their exposure to Numinous Art, does not necessarily mean a personal learning that engenders a new perception of one's self and of the world. Did, for example, the numinous music of JS Bach, the numinous poetry of TS Eliot, change the perception of life of so many that they felt compelled in their majority to change, evolve, perhaps disregard, entities such as governments and nation-States? Of course not.

Thus where now are we the few, the remorseful, who have changed? It seems we are left with only numinous music and numinous Art, and with our own wordy most fallible effusions. But, in memoriam:

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. [1]

And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. [1]

And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. Either you had no purpose
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
And is altered in fulfilment. [1]

And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel [2]

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only

There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. [3]

Any comments by me are superfluous.

David Myatt
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[1] TS Eliot, Little Gidding

[2] TS Eliot: Ash Wednesday

[3] TS Eliot: The Waste Land
