


POETRY
 SHAHIDUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY

Flashback

The idea of this poem came to Shahidul in 2012, soon after his Sussex MA dissertation on Modernism, where Eliot was one of his objects where he analysed, among other works, T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland*.

The DS fit and reviews team would like to remind all that the *Wasteland* was first published in October 22; and so it is an anniversary tribute of sorts.

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"Honi soit qui mal y pense."

-- Edward III

I
Delta is the fertile land, breeding
Saligia in the burning month, mixing
Decet and love-dust, stirring
Piercing passion with glycerin tears.
Night keeps us warm, flooding
Earth in pale descent, covering
Bottomless pits with coloured cobwebs.

We believe in change that
Dull roots anchored in the stony rubbish
Where rattling bones rule.
You promise me a handful of fear
Where there is no fear.
You promise me forgetful rain and
I forget what I am.
I am not what I am, and emerge
In your shadow, out of
Genetically modified seed.

What is that change that
Comes like lightning with a voice
Of thunder that promises
Death in Sun?

What change? What?
I am unwanted, yet exist
To your vexation. You lullaby me
To perpetual sleep with
Unbearable lightness of pain,
Which you call peace.

The Wall Street merchant walks along
The silk road to sell himself
And to buy himself, keeping
A bagful of bubbles on his left shoulder
And a bagful of nukes on his right.
Prospero steps on the dry stone
To interpret my nightmare as bliss.

II
Madame Scylla lost her
In the sinkhole of greed,
"What dost thou desire?" cried he
Before falling down.
Her semi-banded clairvoyant twin beats
The unfinished voice.

Madame Scylla lost her
Hubby dear
In the sinkhole of greed,
"What do you want?" cried he
Before falling down.
The lady of situations visits
Her clairvoyant twin
The Prince
At rhythmic beat
To fulfil the unfinished voices.

Seven albatrosses are hovering
Over the half-dried ocean.
They are flying in the air.
She stands there alone
With a parasol to protect herself
From the burning fire.
One must be so deceptive these days.

III
I went to Coronation Street for
The break of dawn
Belinda sitting next to me
Probably sharing pieces of her mind
With people she thinks her friends
Or friends' friends, and probably
Letting her smoky coffee
Become dead cold.

I know she is unwell this week
So go to Eglington's flat to
Fall flat on her. Belinda thinks
A long day's journey into night.

I need I do, later, in rat's alley
Where the self-conscious men lose their mind.
You don't have to worry about breaking it
Or watering it.
My modest proposal is: children are burden;
Why not be done with them?
Sweet Nile, run softly.
Sweet Ganges, run softly.
Till I purify you to purify me.
Sweet Thames, run softly.
Till I muse upon my shadow upon you.

Unreal city.
Under whose brown fog rises
Forgetful memory and desire
She forgot to wish me
Happy Birthday
Because she was too preoccupied
To go to JFK
At the wrong hour.
Her days are numbered.
She is burning.
I am burning.

IV
Madame Nadiya is communal because
She wears a hijab.
Monsieur Tony is secular even though
He wears a turban.
Who is the coloured person that walks around?
The white man is burdened:
He denies that he is coloured.
The black man is blessed:
He cannot be white.
Gentle or lew, you, who turn the wheel
Without looking to windward,

International law justifies
Ethnic cleansing and genocide
(They differ from each other
As syllables in a word).
In Italy, Bosnia, Myanmar:
White House at Downing Street
Entertains Agamemnon with
The delectable Arab manakeesh
In the plains of Mesopotamia
While others lick saliva
For other secretive dishes:
The Great Wall beside Red Square
Entertains Madame Scylla with
The luscious Rohingya curry
In the plains of the Himalaya
While others lick saliva
For other secretive dishes.

I come to save, and not destroy:
North and North
Trumpet the game of thrones
Because they are savious.
East and West and South
Await the whirlwind's paradox.
To be or not to be is that the question.

When drones and rockets
Shower a handful of death
Upon the wedding guests
And the Fathers of Men,
When shelters are destroyed
To legitimate the illegitimate,
When vans ride humans and
Cars and bombs join
Hand in hand to promote
Blood on the dance floor,
UNOIC offers
Passivity, patience, and sanction
To appease Grendel
Because Beowulf is no more.

Grendel home and abroad accuses them
For creating havoc and insecurity
And promoting it all around.
He confirms who is with him;
And who is against him;
There is no purgatory;
Power makes a man perfect.

Prey as they are, they pray
To Grendel's mother without knowing that
Some animals are more equal than others.
They look from Grendel to his mother,
From his mother to Grendel,
But fail to realize which is which.
Et tu, madame?

I see things falling apart –
Humanity, morale
Society, individuality
Crack and reform and burst in the violet air
London

Paris
Washington
Moscow
Beijing
New Delhi
MOSSAD
CIA
FSB
MI6
RAW
MSS
Moriarty
Irreal.

VI
Eyes cannot hear, ears cannot see
Hand fails to taste, tongue fails to conceive
Heart fails to report my dream.
Unrealized disgrace lies the head
That wears the crown.

Da is speechless,
History is blind,
Civilization is exhausted,
Shanthi is dead.
The violet sky waits for me with stretched hands.
The dead-end is where I have shored
Against my ruins.
Astyanax by any other name
Would still be Astyanax.

The wheels of the nations go
Round and round
All through the life
Sun, beginning, sans end, sans motion.
Poor Tiresias lost vision twice
Now cannot see
The fond parent of the mortals
Nor can see the future
Because there is none.
Life is a tale told by an idiot
Whose name is Nobody.

I am Nobody. Are you Nobody, too?
Let's count the grass under our boot-soles
Because we don't want to rage against the dying of the light.
Because we are Hamlet's siblings.
Because we meditate, like the Chorus
On the murder within the house and beyond,
Because we want to be in chains everywhere.
Because we are the dead people society,
Because we count on the forgetful grass,
Which promises us digital peace.
Nothing to be done!...

THE WASTE LAND

BY
T. S. ELIOT

"NAM Sipylum quidam Cumis aga ipsa uox eius
vici in oscula predora, et cum illi pueri dicuntur;
Sipylus vi dicitur respondere illis; audirem illas."

NEW YORK
HORACE LIVRIGHT

Consider Abraham, who was once more handsome
And taller than you.

Hurry up please it's time
You told me to be aware of my brothers and sisters
Monstrous as they are, all drowning
You told me to go to the moon to buy a flat
In Grenfell Tower
You told me to go to Mars to colonize it
Other than the world and the empty chapel
As it stands now, always sans sporadic Sundays.
My friend, it is a moment's surrender.
But what have we given up?
If I go to the moon or Mars or our Andromeda
And carry the haunted soul that
Rapes me, what good can it offer
Except dry bones in our empty rooms?

V
Sand valley.
Under whose brown fog of a Spring Dawn
A crowd flowed across the border.
I could not imagine death had undone
So many victims of identity.

Green valley.
Under whose brown fog of a Monsoon Dusk
A crowd flowed across the border.
I could not imagine death had undone
So many victims of identity.

Who is the bird who hides always beside you?
When I count, there are two of you.
But when I look deep the dark labyrinth
There is always another working behind you.
Who always mediates the war deeper between the two.
Who is that in the middle of the two?

Under region.
Under whose brown fog of a Winter Noon
Rape is experimented on
Pre-Helen up to post-Hecuba
Beside the bleak Taj
Cow slaughter precedes manslaughter

