

## The CEA Forum

Summer/Fall 2009: 38.2

[Next: Filling in the Blanks: They Say, I Say, and the Persistence of Formalism](#)

### GOOGLING ALLUSIONS:

#### TEACHING ELIOT TO THE NET GENERATION

[Ann K. Hoff](#)



For years, I resisted digital pedagogy. My students' propensity to find and use other classrooms' online discussions, endless numbers of un-authored encyclopedia entries, blogs about poets by their untutored fans, and other students' papers fueled my ambivalence. However, students of the Net Generation are not merely computer proficient; they are computer fluent. Students in 2010 address most of their college administrative obligations online; text message and e-mail systems inform them of school closings or class cancellations. Electronic communication is their main mode of interaction with peers and often with their professors. And while it may not occur to my students to turn to the informational notes at the back of a text (or for that matter to read those provided at the bottom of a page), they are quick to "Google" a phrase they suspect to be an allusion. Their instinct, when seeking information, is to seek it online. Do we accept and harness this impulse or resist it? Adopting an informed technological approach to teaching literature has the potential to increase intellectualism and academic rigor rather than reducing either.

In this essay, I offer some of the theory behind my pedagogical change of heart, the sources and resources that enabled such a shift, and the results my students were able to achieve because of it. In particular, I trace the experience of teaching the course "Eliot and Allusion" in a computer-classroom environment. I will also address the merits and drawbacks to teaching with a hypertext version of *The Waste Land*; the efficacy of permitting students to read web-based editions of the texts to which Eliot alludes; and the results achieved by establishing and supporting "healthy" digital research techniques.

My change of heart occurred in the process of teaching an assignment on Eliot and allusion to undergraduates in a Modern Poetry survey course for majors. My assignment specified that students begin with a footnote from an annotated edition of *The Waste Land* and thoroughly investigate the root of one of Eliot's allusions. My directions warned against internet searching, fearing that students would find prefabricated analyses rather than performing their own. The reports I received from students who followed my directions were accurate, obedient, predictable, and dull. The students who defied my instructions and went to the Internet turned in some startlingly insightful and original essays, having found primary sources not noted in our annotated edition or not available in our perpetually underfunded library. Since then, I have altered not only my instructions for this undergraduate assignment, but have altered the syllabus for my graduate-level course "Eliot and Allusion," which I now teach in a computer-classroom, using predominantly digital texts.

Let me first address the use of a hypertext edition for classroom use. The use of hypertext is not without controversy. Some theorists contend, as does David Miall, that the practice of "reading imaginative texts such as novels or poetry, is rendered incomprehensible by the model of reading put forth by hypertext theory" (par. 4). Miall argues that the hypertext experience instills in the reader a "false sense of... freedom" and that "the disembodied nature of electronic text precludes much that is most significant in the process of literary reading, which depends on the reader's affective engagement with a stable text" (par. 4). Certainly, scholars want the stability of Eliot's own notes, and permanent, durable links to reputable scholarship. A sloppy hypertext will not serve any more than a sloppily edited print edition, and Eliot scholars are notoriously hard on sloppy editions of the poet's work. Jim McCue's article "Editing Eliot" asserts that "we are entering a new era in the publication of T.S. Eliot which may well make us nostalgically grateful" for the tight control over Eliot's texts exerted by Faber and the poet's widow, "and persuade us that their custodianship was prudent after all" (2). We do not want to throw our support behind a spate of digital texts that contain the kinds of errors in the Lawrence Rainey edition, which McCue says will "be a source of confusion and bewilderment for years unless it is challenged in detail now" (3). It is, as McCue asserts, "an editor's first duty to present a reliable text" (4). However, a reliable text is not inherently dichotomous to a hypertext.

In fact, some theorists argue that the plasticity of a hypertext presentation enhances the experience of reading works like Eliot's. After all, it is problematic to assert that a text as palimpsestic and metonymic as Eliot's *Waste Land* is a "stable" text. Eliot's poem clearly engages in a conversation about destabilization, and his allusions are multiple and shifting more often than they are stable or certain. Diane Greco, in her article "Hypertext with Consequences: Recovering a Politics of Hypertext," argues that "hypertext invites readers to immerse themselves in a mass of shifting textual and graphical objects whose relations to each other may be far from obvious" (86). Greco further contends that "hypertext actualizes the abstract emphasis on links, networks, webs, paths, and interweavings characteristic of much poststructuralist... literary theory" (86). A hypertext has the potential to heighten the students' understanding of Eliot's sense of tradition, one in which past literatures are actively embodied-networked or interwoven-in new work. However, Greco cautions, this theory must be "founded on a reality of participation rather than on disembodied theorizing" (89). Reading Eliot through hypertext requires the active presence of the editor, instructor, and student—updating, adding,

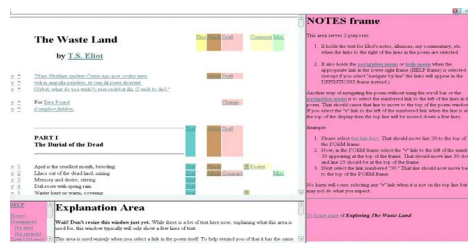
correcting, and evaluating the sources to which the text may lead. Such participation must be tethered to a reliable (and to concede a point) relatively stable hypertext.

There are several hypertext versions of Eliot's *The Waste Land* available, and their usefulness varies significantly. On one end of the spectrum stand hypertext editions one must prepare students to avoid at all costs such as the abysmal version of *The Waste Land* posted by Mark Zimmerman as part of his [Encyclopedia of the Self](#). Zimmerman links random words throughout the text to online dictionary definitions. For scholarly purposes, it is not helpful to read entire passages of Latin, German, or Greek (phonetically rendered) without translation, and then to be provided with links to online dictionary definitions for "memory" and "desire."

In the middle ground are texts like *The Waste Land* as presented through [Tripod.com](#). This version is passable, though not much more useful than a good annotated print edition. The editor (unnamed) notes that Eliot's own notes (which appear in black text) have been "supplemented by additional notations" which appear in green. The editor takes the bulk of these notes from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature's* 6th edition and from B.C. Southam's *A Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot*. However, the editor does not tell us if *all* the notes come from these two sources. This hypertext operates in two frames and provides fair translations of foreign language phrases, Eliot's original notes, and even some links to related items. However, the links are not to primary sources, but to related encyclopedia entries whose authority is suspect. For example, rather than linking directly to any of the available translations of the tale of Philomel, this hypertext links to an encyclopedia entry about Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. References to *Fleurs du Mal* are not linked to Baudelaire's poems, but to a brief biographical sketch of Baudelaire. Several items seem unduly incomplete. Eliot's note containing his quotation from Dante's *Purgatorio* (to which he alludes in line 428) remains *sans* translation, and Eliot's note that line 431 alludes to Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* is not linked to Kyd's full text, nor to an excerpted, pertinent passage from the play. [1]

On the higher end of the scale is a hypertext edited by [Arwin von Arum](#). Arum offers Eliot's original notes, passable translations, and the standard informational notes one finds in a decent annotated print edition, but includes some delightful additions. Arum's edition notes that Eliot's line "In the mountains, there you feel free" is a "translation of the opening of a Bavarian folksong celebrating King Ludwig and lamenting his drowning" (l. 18), and his note for "Son of Man" not only provides the usual biblical citations and excerpts, but also a passage from a secular source: H. Haggard Rider's *King Solomon's Mines*. In this text, Umbopa the Zulu "endows his Western Companions with some Zulu wisdom about life..." (according to the hyperlink to line 21). In all, Arum's edition is interesting, but the editor notes that it is incomplete. Certainly, professors employing this hypertext edition should either locate Arum's primary sources for themselves (for verification of their authenticity) or ask students to do so.

The best of the hypertexts I examined was [Exploring The Waste Land](#) edited by Richard A. Parker, from 2002. Parker's hypertext includes a site description, a site map, and instructions on how to bookmark the site. The hypertext itself has presentation modes for large monitors, smaller monitors, for older hardware and software, and for use by the sight impaired. The [large-monitor framing](#) suited our classroom best, and we used it consistently. Parker's hypertext contains one large window bordered by four smaller frames. In the main window, Parker offers the text of Eliot's poem. In the right-hand margin, he places the following color-coded links: cross-references (blue), Eliot's notes (yellow), allusions (brown), Eliot's draft materials (pink), questions for students (olive), commentary by the editor (cream), and miscellany (green).



(click [here](#) for an enlarged image of Parker's site)

Additionally, Parker individually numbers each line of *The Waste Land* which eases citation, navigation, and cross-referencing. Parker's text is complex enough to give students the clear sense that Eliot's allusions are metonymic and palimpsestic; his presentation is clear enough to permit intuitive navigation. Parker provides sound translations and links to pertinent passages from the sources of Eliot's allusions. In places where Eliot's allusion has multiple roots, Parker allows the reader to witness that multiplicity. [2]

There are, of course, shortcomings to even this hypertext. Parker's internal links are thorough, but some of his external links have passed out of usage. Another limitation to reading Eliot's allusions metonymically through this hypertext is that Parker rarely links to a full text—despite widespread availability. The result is that students may read, for example, the passage from Shackleton's *South* that Parker found pertinent to Eliot, but may miss other elements of the full text that Eliot might have appreciated, and which might connect fruitfully to *The Waste Land*. Finally, Parker's hypertext bears a flaw that seems endemic to any electronic text—nearly as soon as Parker ceases to update it, it ceases to function perfectly. Were Parker's text to remain at the cutting edge of Eliot scholarship, he would need to tend it constantly (and into perpetuity) as the primary and secondary texts to which it may link are updated on the web.

Of course, this limitation does not mean that hypertext reading isn't fruitful. It offers a plasticity that my students found especially useful in reading and understanding Eliot. In particular the cross references helped several students trace a mention or a theme—such as the images of hair, wheels, or bones—through the text. While many graduate students may find Parker's questions for students a little rudimentary, my undergraduate students found them helpful. Finally, Parker's hypertext edition of *The Waste Land* offers students the opportunity to see, alongside the poem itself, the literary history to which Eliot alludes. This proximity, and indeed the physical layering of screens, helped students understand crucial elements of Eliotic philosophy: that all wars are the current war, that all despair is current despair, all hope is current hope, and that all literature informs new literature. The hypertext embodies Eliot's belief in a living literary tradition.

The hypertext was only a small part of our classroom interface with digital scholarship. Ideally, the pedagogy of teaching Eliot to the Net Generation should not be limited to a mode of presentation, but should extend to research techniques. I acknowledge that the merits of digital research are not a foregone conclusion, and that many scholars (in the humanities especially) find digital scholarship controversial. However, as Sean Latham points out in his article "New

Age Scholarship: The Work of Criticism in the Age of Digital Reproduction," whether we like it or not, "the digital age has begun to dawn in the humanities" (411). Latham acknowledges that "the digital text seemingly makes reading too easy, allowing one to search out specific terms without the labor required to place them in their proper contexts" but he notes that there are compensatory features to digital research (417). First, he notes that materials "that could once be accessed only through travel and research grants, can now be culled quickly" over the internet (418). Latham argues, however, that we would be remiss to treat these technologies as mere labor-saving devices. He argues that search engines and digital archives enable "a radical sort of contextualization" in which "terms are sometimes jarringly counterpoised with the click of a mouse" (419). He observes that scholars using search engines "have the potential to uncover previously unglimped constellations of terms and ideas precisely because we can deliberately search for two or more terms, mapping out sites of conjunction that might otherwise go unnoticed" (419).

The kind of surprisingly successful "hits," which Latham asserts are enabled by digital research techniques, became the delight of my classroom experiences while teaching Eliot through digital technology. A student Googling "Philomel and England" discovered the *HMNZS Philomel* was an active ship during WWI patrolling off the coast of Smyrna. Another Googled "bones and dust and England" and found a strange newspaper article from 1822 that claims that England commercialized as fertilizer the remains of its soldiers lost in the Napoleonic wars. Other students simply located primary texts that our library would not have been able to provide for them.

One of the delights in teaching students in the Net Generation is that you can guide them to so many more of the texts to which Eliot alludes than was once possible (or practical), since most are now available (often as the full text) via the web. I was able to lead my students to the [Wagner Library](#), which includes the complete vocal scores for *Tristan and Isolde* and *Götterdämmerung*, as well as other scores, translations of his prose, correspondence, and articles about the composer. Students can also listen to performances of the opera as performed by [Leonard Bernstein](#) at veoh.com, or watch [Leopold Stockovsky](#) conduct the orchestra's overture on YouTube. Much more than a quick footnote noting the source of Eliot's allusions, the students can immerse themselves in the kind of cultural experience that moved Eliot to quote the composer so extensively.

What's more, the canonical texts that are considered foundational to *The Waste Land* are also widely available online. Dante's [The Divine Comedy](#) (as translated by Longfellow) is available in full through Everypoet.com. Students can read the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* in their entirety or search by canto at Everypoet.com. The Milton Reading Room at Dartmouth provides an online edition of [Paradise Lost](#). The Shakespeare texts to which Eliot alludes in *The Waste Land* are all available at a site called [OpenSourceShakespeare.org](#). This site, which has been in operation since 2006, features the 1864 Globe Edition of the complete works of Shakespeare as well as a concordance and some amusing statistics. Keyword and advanced search options allow students to find more of *The Waste Land*'s phrases amidst the Bard's work than are noted in any current annotated edition of Eliot's work.

There are abundant sources for the Greek and Roman texts to which Eliot alludes. John Dryden's translation of Virgil's [Aeneid](#) is available on line through [The Internet Classics Archive](#). Oxford University Press provides the A.D. Melville translation of Ovid's [Metamorphoses](#). The "[Pervigilium Veneris](#)," or the "All Night Vigil of Venus" (to which Eliot alludes in line 428: "[Quando fiam uti chelidori](#)" or "when shall I be as the swallow") is also available in side-by-side Latin and English versions through Geocities.com. [The Satyricon](#) (as translated by Alfred R. Allinson) is available through a site delightfully named "The Above Average Typist." Bulfinch's [Mythology](#) is available through both Google Books and also through Bartleby.com, though most readers will find the Bartleby.com version more easily accessible. An additional encyclopedic source that proved useful was the site [The Greek Mythology Link](#) which is a collection of myths edited by Carlos Parada, author of *Genealogical Guide to Greek Mythology* (1993). This text helped students understand the role [Tiresias](#) played, not only as a blind prophet who had lived as both man and woman, but also as the seer who, in [Seven Against Thebes](#) informed the King that he must sacrifice his son for the salvation of his country (Aeschylus' text is also available through the Internet Classics Archive).

Texts that are less familiar to students, though to Eliot's sensibilities no less canonical, are also available online, making it more likely that students will read them in their entirety rather than perceiving them as obscure, peripheral, or side-notes in an Eliot-shaped catalog of literary history. Sir Thomas Kyd's [Spanish Tragedy](#) is available through Google Books. [3] Webster's [The White Devil](#), to which Eliot alludes in line 407 of *The Waste Land* is available through the Gutenberg Project. Spenser's [Prothalamion](#) may be read through the American Libraries Internet Archive. Bartleby.com offers the text of Sir James George Frazer's [The Golden Bough](#), and Oliver Goldsmith's [The Vicar of Wakefield](#) is available through Fullbooks.com. Verlaine's poem "[Parsifal](#)" is available at a site that subsequently links to Wagner's libretto by the same name, a linkage that my students found delightfully palimpsestic.

The full text of Gérard de Nerval's sonnet "[El Desdichado](#)," to which Eliot alludes in the final lines of *The Waste Land*, is available in the original French and with a passable translation at Everything2.com. A Google search also turns up a brief biographical note about [Nerval](#) written by Petri Liukkonen, which notes that Nerval was "the original dedicatee of Baudelaire's poem '[Un Voyage a Cythere](#)' which later became a part of [Fleurs du Mal](#) (to which Eliot also refers). Baudelaire's [Flowers of Evil](#) can also be read in translation through the American Libraries Internet Archive.

There are several versions of *The Book of Common Prayer* available on line—including the 1789 edition which each carries the [Burial of the Dead](#) ceremony to which Eliot alludes. There are also other sites offering texts for the [Order for the Burial of the Dead](#) as practiced by other orthodox Christian denominations for the purposes of comparison. There are myriad other sources that help students grapple with Eliot's Anglican and Biblical allusions. Among the most fruitful is an Apologetic entitled "[The Son of Man: A Study in a Title of Jesus](#)" by Toby Jepson which offers a thorough concordance of the phrase accompanied by a discussion of each mention's implications.

A site entitled [Fish Eaters](#) provided a fascinating history of the [Sibyls](#) and their depictions in early Christian history. The student who used this site was intrigued by a tantalizing version of the myth of the Cumaean Sibyl not mentioned in any of the footnotes in our annotated editions. In this rendition of the Sibyl's tale, the prophetess "brought nine books to the kind Tarquinius Priscus" which contained a divination of how the city would falter and rebuild itself (par. 14). She asked "three hundred philippics" as a price for the nine texts which the king refused (par. 14). The Sibyl then destroyed three of the books and demanded the same "three hundred philippics" for the remaining six books. The king again refused. Eventually, with his city failing around him, the king bought the last three books for the price of the original nine, and was left with an incomplete, but still valuable, prophecy to guide him in the rebuilding of his city. The Fish Eaters site bases its information on (and provides links to excerpts from) [The Eclogues](#), by Virgil, [Hortatory Address to the Greeks](#), by St. Justin Martyr, [To Ancyolitus](#), by Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, [Exhortation to the Heathen](#), by St. Clement of Alexandria, [Divine Institutes](#), by Lactantius, [On the Anger of God](#), by Lactantius, [Oration of Constantine](#), by Eusebius, [City of God](#), by St. Augustine, and [Prophecy of the Tiburtine Sybil](#) (author unknown). These links served as a treasure-trove in locating possible roots of Eliotic allusions.

Several non-western texts are also readily available through the web. Peter Harvey's [Introduction to Buddhism](#), an excellent and thorough study of the history and practice of Buddhism, is available through Google Books. [The Fire Sermon](#), or Aditta-pariyaya Sutta, is available with commentary and history through the Buddha Sasana Home Page. An [abbreviated translation](#) (with much of the repetition removed), accompanied by a brief passage "about the Fire Sermon," is available at Aimwell.org. One student used Peter Harvey's text in conjunction with websites about the [Dharmachakra](#) (or Buddhist Wheel Symbol) in her exploration of the repeated images of the wheel. Asserting that the wheel (commonly read as a nautical reference, an allusion to the Tarot deck, or as an allusion to Ezekiel) also functions as a metaphor through which Buddhists understand [The Middle Path](#), she wrote an interesting reinvestigation of Eliot's use of Buddhist ideas and images throughout the poem.

The Hindu texts to which Eliot alludes, including the [Brihadaranyaka Upanishad](#) (in its exhaustive entirety), are available through the [Advaita Vedanta Library](#), which is supported by the Advaita Ashram in India. Additionally, a very useful and comprehensive work entitled [Vedic Experience](#), authored by the Director of the Yuva Foundation in India, is available through Scribd.com. I also located a source that my students found pertinent to understanding Eliot's interest in Vedic thought. "[The Progress of Insight](#)," by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, is available through Aimwell.com and describes the Vedic philosophy concerning the "Purification by Knowledge and Vision in the Course of Practice" in terms of its several stages. Each of these stages echoes Eliot's most familiar themes: "Knowledge of Dissolution," "Awareness of Fearfulness," "Knowledge of Misery," "Knowledge of Disgust," "Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance," "Knowledge of Re-observation," "Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations," "Insight Leading to Emergence," and "Maturity of Knowledge." One student made good use of this source by asserting that the Vedic concepts described in "Knowledge of Misery" and "Knowledge of Disgust" correspond with Eliot's hyper-awareness of decadence, misery, and disgust throughout *The Waste Land*.

There are also several sites that connect Eliot's overlapping allusions whose nexus is the closing of churches in London in the early 1920s. By clicking a PDF link at the *New York Times* website, one can view the [1920 article](#) entitled "Plea for London Churches; Court of Common Council Condemns Plan to Tear Down Nineteen." Eliot's [1921 letter](#) to *The Dial* protesting the proposed demolition is available through Richard Parker's site *Exploring Eliot*. Additionally, there are websites for both St. Magnus Martyr and St. Mary Woolnoth (the two churches Eliot mentions by name). The website for the church of [St. Magnus Martyr](#) offers a thorough history of the church as well as a virtual tour that shows the columns of the church which Eliot describes as "Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold" (l. 265). As a building that was destroyed and restored several times, Magnus Martyr's history echoes Eliot's pervasive worry over whether a ruined London will be restored. Magnus Martyr is also known as the Fisherman's church, and the website recalls that clergy and their parishioners were once "called to order for dallying in taverns and fishing at the 'tyme of dyvyne services' instead of paying attention to their services" ("History" par. 4). Such dalliances parallel that of the carbuncular clerk and the typist whose rendezvous precedes the mention of the church in Eliot's "Fire Sermon" section.

The church of [St. Mary Woolnoth](#) shares a similar history with the church of Magnus Martyr in that it was ruined and rebuilt several times. A website dedicated to London architecture offers a full history of the church, and notes that during the time Eliot was writing, the church was forced to sell its crypt to the City & South London Railway for the construction of the Bank tube station. In addition to the church's contemporary pertinence in *The Waste Land*, the church connects (not surprisingly) to another of Eliot's allusions: Sir Thomas Kyd was baptized there, and his father was a churchwarden.

Perhaps the best connections, however, were not sites that I found for the edification of my students, but rather the sites and documents that they found in their own guided research. One student was interested in Eliot's claim that he knew little about the Tarot deck and was inventing the characters he attributes to it. At first, the student was frustrated; library database searches for Eliot and tarot cards turned up only one (albeit excellent) article from 1975. Initial search engine queries turned up only encyclopedia entries on the tarot. Knowing that an online encyclopedia would not satisfy for MA-level research (she wanted both primary and contemporary sources), she refined her Google search to include a request for the "full text" of the Rider-Waite text published in 1910-11, [The Pictorial Key to the Tarot](#). This time her search pulled up a site called Sacred-Texts.com and within this source was Waite's book—organized by section—as well as several other useful texts from Eliot's era including: [The Tarot of the Bohemians](#) (translated by A.P. Morton in 1896), [The Tarot](#) by S.L. MacGregor Mathers (1888), [The Symbolism of the Tarot](#) by P. D. Ouspensky (1913), and [Fortune-Telling by Cards](#) by P.R.S. Foli (1915). Now sufficiently armed with critical, primary, and contemporary sources, the student was able to develop a lovely essay arguing that the changes in the Tarot deck made by Waite in 1909 and 1911 "which had previously been seen as hard and fast messengers of fate" bespoke Eliot's sense that many of civilization's foundations were unstable (Williams 3). The student also argued that the deck's changes echo Eliot's own tendencies to mingle influences because the Rider-Waite deck fuses French and Italian tarot traditions as well as fusing Christian and occult imagery.

Another student decided to track down Eliot's mention of Shackleton's account of his expeditions at the South Pole. [South: The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition 1914-1917](#) is available as a Project Gutenberg eBook. After locating the passage excerpted by Richard Parker in the hypertext edition, which relates the explorers' "constant delusion that there was one more member than could actually be counted" (Note to Eliot line 360), the student delved into the primary source of Eliot's allusion beyond the noted portion. The student found the conversation Shackleton had with his rescuers to be as illuminating as the portion to which Eliot alludes directly. The explorers found rescue in the month of April (1914), the month invoked in the opening line of *The Waste Land*. Further, the exchange between Shackleton's men upon finding their rescuers echoed Eliot's poem. Shackleton asked: "Tell me, when was the war over?" (Ch. 10 par. 26). The rescuer's reply, "The war is not over... Millions are being killed. Europe is mad. The world is mad" echoes Eliot's "Hieronymo's mad againe" (Ch. 10 par. 27; l. 431). The student used these confluences to argue that the experience of the stranded explorers works metonymically throughout *The Waste Land* and that Shackleton's notebooks serve as a more significant source to the poem than the author's coy note intimates.

Another delightful discovery by one of my students was that "[Our Lady of the Rocks](#)" is a man-made island off the shores of Montenegro. In Parker's hypertext, Eliot's invocation of "Our Lady of the Rocks" in line 49 alludes to Pater's Mona Lisa, who "is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants..." (a passage which Yeats repeated in *vers libre* in his anthology of modern poetry). The student did not argue that Parker's allusion was incorrect; clearly the invocation of a woman who "has learned the secrets of the grave" is in keeping with the themes and images of *The Waste Land*. However, the student pointed out that the island off Montenegro has its own symbolic relationship within Eliot's poem. The legend maintains:

...fishermen from Perast found an icon of the Virgin and Christ (which now stands on the altar) on a rock. They decided to sink more rocks and the wrecks of old boats to make an island and on it a church

which would bear the name of the icon. Since then it has been the unwritten promise of Perast sailors to drop a new rock around the island before every voyage they make, as a contribution to the stability of the foundation of the church. (par. 2)

Each year on the 22nd of July, locals perform a traditional celebration in which a convoy of boats, decorated with poplar branches and loaded with rocks, are tied together to carry the local priest and prominent citizens towards the island to fulfill the vows of their ancestors and to drop more rocks around the island (pars. 1-3). My student connected the building of this island not only to Eliot in the lines that name "Belladonna, Our Lady of the Rocks,/Our lady of situations" (ll. 49-50), but to the theme of imperiled sailors throughout the text and in particular to the phrase "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (l. 430). Her essay stressed the multiplicity of meaning in Eliot's allusions.

As previously mentioned, one student took it upon himself to type in the search command "Philomel and England" and uncovered a delightful contemporaneous detail. The [HMNZS Philomel](#) was a small cruiser, commissioned for service in the Royal Navy in 1891 (par. 6). During WWI, she patrolled the coast in the gulf of Alexandretta and lost three men in a skirmish with Turkish troops in January of 1915 (par. 13). In September of the same year, after the unsuccessful invasion of Turkish territory, the British casualties included three of the Philomel's party (par. 14). The Philomel continued its service in the Persian Gulf where she remained on patrol duties until 1917 (par. 15). In 1921, the Philomel left London to return to New Zealand where she became a training establishment. While Eliot's references to Philomel in *The Waste Land* are clearly Ovidian in many respects, the notion that a ship called *The Philomel* lost men to "death by drowning" in the very areas Eliot calls to mind with the Smyrna merchant and the Phoenician sailor, is a powerful example of how Eliot often elides ancient allusions with 1917 London arcana. Of course, this concept is not new to Eliot scholars, but the student's path to understanding it was self-driven, and she uncovered new possibilities for reading the figure of Philomel in *The Waste Land*.

Another student, exploring the implications of Eliot's references to "dry bones," uncovered a fascinating but disturbing document. A mention of an *Observer* article online suggested that, prior to WWI, the British had repurposed the bones of its war casualties, grinding them into dust to use for fertilizer. It was a way of perceiving "fear in a handful of dust" that the student had never considered (l. 30). Further research into the topic revealed a print source, Samuel Hynes's *The Soldier's Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (1998), which includes an excerpt from the November 18, 1922 *London Observer*. The article says that, with the state's blessing, "more than a million bushels of human and inhuman bones were imported last year from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull" (qtd. in Hynes 27). The bones were gathered from "all the places where, during the late bloody war, the principal battles were fought" and that they had gathered the bones "of the hero and of the horse on which he rode" (27). The bones were not laid to rest; instead, the bones were "forwarded to the Yorkshire bonegrinders, who have erected steam-engines and powerful machinery for the purpose of reducing them into a granular state. In this condition, they are...sold to the farmers to manure their lands" (27). The article ends with the perturbing statement that "It is certainly a singular fact, that Great Britain should have sent out such a multitude of soldiers to fight the battles of this country upon the continent of Europe, and should then import their bones as an article of commerce to fatten her soil" (27). [4] The student used this information to underscore his thesis that Eliot poses himself in a parallel position to the prophet Ezekiel, who was led by God to raise the dead from their dry bones.

Another student questioned the validity of this article—asking the student who originally found it whether readers of the article ought to believe this article as sincere, or whether it was some kind of Swiftian satire against the insensitivity of 19th century British agricultural economy. The student then began to ask what, in London society of 1822, would prompt such a satire. He found that London at that time was a veritable war arsenal, the hub of the machinery of war, and that poets of the Romantic period wrote, as Eliot wrote 100 years later, of the potential ruination of England. This student continued to investigate what Romantic poets had written about the dead of the Napoleonic wars. He began looking into the similarities between *The Waste Land* and Blake's long poem *Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, which was published in 1820. The full text is currently available at a site called [The Preterist Archive](#).

In this long poem, Jerusalem serves as the symbolic home of a humanity that has been freed from the chains of Imperialism, commerce, and war as the once great society of Albion falls into decay. In the prefatory note to Blake's text (as it appears in the Preterist Archive), the student learned that the opening lines of Blake's long poem were, in fact, set to music by composer Hubert Perry in 1916 in response to a patriotic request from Robert Bridges and Sir Walford Davies. (The student was also able to listen to a performance of [Parry's setting of Jerusalem](#) on YouTube.) This essay culminated in the argument that the patriotic 1916 setting of Blake's *Jerusalem* differs offensively from Blake's poem in its entirety, whose tone is more in keeping with Eliot's poem of disillusionment. He argues that both *Jerusalem* and *The Waste Land* see England as hellishly endangered by militaristic imperialism.

In all, the papers that I received in the semester in which I "digitized" the teaching of Eliot were more imaginative, contained more primary sources, contained more research into Eliot's environment, and displayed a better sense of Eliot's use of metonymic allusion than essays created in previous semesters. As expected, the majority of students did choose to approach their research by beginning with an online search rather than a database search. What was perhaps surprising is that this "Googling" approach did not result in a battle over whether or not encyclopedia entries constitute MA-level research. Quite the contrary, the students' understanding of what makes a useful and reputable academic source increased exponentially as they worked to connect their online findings to solid primary sources and scholarly books and articles, and as they debated whether online sources were trustworthy or apocryphal.

The most gratifying result of the shift was the level of excitement in the classroom. Students came in excited to share the items they had found, and often helped each other in their research endeavors by putting their peers on the trail of something new and remarkable. One student remarked, in an email after the semester had ended that "only the deluge of information on the Web can really make you understand how big Eliot's project is." She commented that "every allusion connects to yet another allusion, and to 100 more we may stumble across by accident while looking for something else. I always felt that I'd never know what Eliot meant in *The Waste Land* or in "Prufrock," and that may still be true, but now at least I get a sense of how 'overwhelming' his question is."

#### Notes

[1] Students should be made aware that this hypertext version will appear often in their Google searches as separate hypertexts accessible through a variety of sites (including [StumbleUpon.com](#)). [\[return to text\]](#)

[2] A Swedish Ph.D. student, Jim Barrett, has written and web-published an essay entitled "[The Waste Land: Collage, Hypertext and the Nodes of Meaning](#)" about the efficacy of Parker's hypertext in underscoring Eliot's metonymic

technique. Although the essay is not of much use to Eliot scholars, it offers students a quick guide to reading the Parker hypertext and takes its readers through an example of how Eliot's allusion to the "Unreal City" has multiple sources and implications. (Professors should be aware that a copy of this 8-page essay appears un-authored at [scribd.com](http://scribd.com) and might be fodder for plagiarism). [[return to text](#)]

[3] Parker's hypertext version of *The Waste Land* provides a portion of Kyd's play and a brief analysis of the allusion by Philip R. Headings, but the URL provided in 2002 as a source of its excerpt from the play no longer connects to a working page. [[return to text](#)]

[4] The student's attempt to locate the original *Observer* article online is an example of one of the frustrations of using online archives. While the more up-to-date *Observer* archives do not go as far back as 1822, the archives that do search that far back have lapsed into disrepair. In an email correcting his citation of the link, he writes:

This is the actual page in the Guardian/Observer Digital Archive where I downloaded the November 18, 1822 issue I used for the paper [link excised as a non-working link].

Don't get carried away, though; the site was barely working when I got there two months ago. Seriously, half the buttons didn't work. I think it's an old copy of the archive they've forgotten to take down. (Thus the not-working-ness.) You can still search, but your search is limited to the first five results, and even those don't go anywhere.

It was not uncommon in our classroom experience to come upon sources that promised to be extremely useful but which were, after further examination, not in working order. This does support scholarly concerns over the stability of online research, but the student was, with some patient use of online archives, able to access the article he needed. [[return to text](#)]

N. B. Those texts which are hyperlinked above but not quoted are not included in the works cited list to avoid redundancy.

#### Works Cited

Eliot, T. S. [The Waste Land Annotated](#). Ed. Arwin van Arum. 8 Aug. 2009.

----- [The Waste Land](#). Tripod.com. 8 Aug. 2009.

----- [The Waste Land](#). Exploring *The Waste Land*. Ed. Richard A. Parker. 29 Sep. 2002. 8 Aug. 2009.

["Fascinada, Our Lady of Skrpjel, Perast Islands."](#) 3 pars. Montenegro.com . 8 Aug. 2009.

Greco, Diane. "Hypertext with Consequences: Reovering a Politics of Hypertext." *Hypertext '96*. Washington, DC.: ACM. 1996. 85-92.

["History."](#) 14 pars. The Website of St. Magnus the Martyr Church. 8 Aug. 2009.

Latham, Sean. "New Age Scholarship: The Work of Criticism in the Age of Digital Reproduction." *New Literary History* 35 (2004): 411-426.

McCue, Jim. "Editing Eliot." *Essays in Criticism* 55.1 (2006): 2006. 1-27.

Miall, David S. "Trivializing or Liberating? The Limitations of Hypertext Theorizing." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 32.2 (1999). 15pgs. Proquest. 15 Jul. 2009.

["Record of the HMNZS \*Philomel\*."](#) 22 pars. Appendix VIII. New Zealand Electronic Text Centre: The Royal New Zealand Navy . 8 Aug. 2009.

Shackleton, Earnest. [South: The Story of Shackleton's Last Expedition 1914-1917](#). Project Gutenberg EBook. 8 Aug. 2009.

["Sibyls."](#) 61 pars. Fish Eaters 8 Aug. 2009.

Williams, Whitney. "Playing the Cards of Fate: Eliot's Use of the Tarot in *The Waste Land*." Student Essay. *Eliot and Allusion*. Birmingham, AL: U of Alabama at Birmingham, 2009.

---

**Ann K. Hoff** teaches 20th century American poetry at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Her research interests include poetics, autobiography theory, and gender studies. Dr. Hoff's recent articles include: "'I Said Lifting Belly': Gertrude Stein's Geometric Autobiography," in *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, "Owning Memory: Elizabeth Bishop's Authorial Restraint" in *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, and "'I Was Convulsed, Pitiably Hideous': The Convulsive Patient's Response to Surrealism" in *Journal of Modern Literature*. Her last article for *The CEA Forum* was ["Bishop, the Autobiographical Pact, and Poetic Pedagogy"](#).



Return to [Table of Contents](#)

[Next: Filling in the Blanks: They Say, I Say, and the Persistence of Formalism](#)