

ENGL 310 Modern Poetry

February 23, 2007

Section: T.S. Eliot

T.S. Eliot: Two Important Early Poems

Spleen¹

Sunday: this satisfied procession
Of definite Sunday faces;
Bonnets, silk hats, and conscious graces
In repetition that displaces
Your mental self-possession
By this unwarranted digression.

Evening, lights, and tea!
Children and cats in the alley;
Dejection unable to rally
Against this dull conspiracy.

And Life, a little bald and gray,
Languid, fastidious, and bland,
Waits, hat and gloves in hand,
Punctilious of tie and suit
(Somewhat impatient of delay)
On the doorstep of the Absolute.

Silence²

Along the city streets
It is still high tide,
Yet the garrulous waves of life
Shrink and divide
With a thousand incidents
Vexed and debated:—
This is the hour for which we waited—

This is the ultimate hour
When life is justified.
The seas of experience
That were so broad and deep,
So immediate and steep,
Are suddenly still.
You may say what you will,

At such peace I am terrified.
There is nothing else beside.

¹ T.S. Eliot, *Poems Written in Early Youth* (New York: FSG, 1967), 26. Originally published in the *Harvard Advocate* in January 1910.

² T.S. Eliot, *Inventions of the March Hare*, ed. Christopher Ricks (San Diego: Harvest, 1998), 18. This poem, never published by Eliot, was written in his notebook and dated June 1910. Ricks' wonderful edition of that notebook is fascinating in its own right and essential for understanding Eliot's development into the poet of *Prufrock*.