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ECHOES OF "CANTO III," "CANTO IV," AND "CANTO XXXII" IN "THE WASTE LAND"

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine the three allusions to Dante's *Inferno* which Eliot outlines in the notes on "The Waste Land." By drawing upon minute details from "Canto III" this work parallels the London clerks from "The Burial of the Dead" with the uncommitted in Hell's vestibule. This article conveys how Eliot's vision is reminiscent to that of the pilgrim, but also how it differs from the pilgrims account as well. This article also proposes an explanation for Eliot's evocation of "Canto IV," as well as its effect on Eliot's vision. By drawing upon certain echoes from Dante's portrayal of Limbo, this article conveys how "Canto IV" reverberates in the London clerks segment of "The Burial of the Dead," but also how it challenges some aspects of the clerks portrayal. With regards to Eliot's allusion to "Canto XXXII" in "What the Thunder Said" this article sheds light upon a parallel with Cocytus, rather than with Ugolino.

Keywords: *T.S. Eliot, Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, The Waste Land, Modernism.*

In the notes on "The Waste Land," Eliot outlines three distinct instances in which he alludes to Dante's *Inferno.* The first allusion proceeds from lines fifty-five to line fifty-seven of "Inferno III." The reference in question echoes the pilgrim's account of a legion

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of damned souls, who pursue a waving banner "along the banks of a great river."[1] Upon catching sight of the convicted, the pilgrim describes the following scene:

> And I, looking more closely, saw a banner
> that, as it wheeled about, raced on—so quick
> that any respite seemed unsuited to it.
>
> Behind that banner trailed so long a file
> of people—I should never have believed
> that death could have unmade so many souls.[2]

Eliot's second allusion proceeds from lines twenty-five to twenty-seven of "Inferno IV." In this instance, Eliot reverberates the pilgrim's depiction of the "melancholy valley"[3] which imprisons "the many multitudes— / of infants and of women and of men."[4] Although Dante "[stares] steadily / to learn what place it was surrounding me,"[5] he is unable to see pass the mist which consumes the abyss. Relying solely on his hearing, the pilgrim describes the following:

> Here, for as much as hearing could discover,
> there was no outcry louder than the sighs
> that caused the everlasting air to tremble.[6]

In his end notes, Eliot indicates that his third reference to Dante's *Inferno*, proceeds from line forty-six to forty-seven of "Canto XXXIII." Eliot's allusion echoes Ugolino's confinement in the Eagles' Tower,"[7] where he, along with his two sons, are imprisoned. During his exchange with the pilgrim, Ugolino evokes how the tower was

[1]. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2018), https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/
[2]. Dante, "Canto III."
[3]. Dante, "Canto IV."
[4]. Dante, "Canto IV."
[5]. Dante, "Canto IV."
[6]. Dante, "Canto IV."
[7]. Dante, "Canto XXXII."

locked and how they were sentenced to death by starvation. Ugolino recalls this event in the following lines: "below, I heard them nailing up the door / of that appalling tower."[8]

In the notes to "The Waste Land," Eliot also indicates that each allusion to Dante's *Inferno* has a corresponding entry in his poem. For example, Eliot's allusion to "Canto III" reverberates in the following lines from "The Burial of the Dead;" "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many."[9] Similarly, Eliot indicates that his reference to "Canto IV" echoes in the subsequent line: "Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled."[10] Lastly, Eliot's allusion to "Canto XXXIII" resonates in the following passage from "What the Thunder Said:"

> Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
>
> Turn in the door once and turn once only
>
> We think of the key, each in his prison
>
> Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison.[11]

In "A Talk on Dante," Eliot states that he has "borrowed [these] lines from [Dante], in an attempt to reproduce, or rather to arouse in the reader's mind the memory of some Dantesque scene."[12] He goes on further by explaining that he "gave the references in [his] notes, in order to make the reader who recognized the allusion, know that [he] meant him to recognize it, and know that he would have missed the point if he did not recognize it."[13] In explaining "The Waste Land," however, Eliot is infamously deceptive. "His notes (…) added as an afterthought to the original poem – tend to confuse the reader as much as they assist."[14] This results in a "a perceived tension between the experience

[8]. Dante, "Canto XXXII."
[9]. T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," Poetry Foundation, accessed September 12, 2022. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land
[10]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[11]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[12]. T.S. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," *The Kenyon Review* 18, no. 2 (1952): 181.
[13]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[14]. Oliver Tearle, "A Summary and Analysis of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land," https://interestingliterature.com/2016/10/a-summary-and-analysis-of-t-s-eliot-the-waste-land/

of the text and the experience suggested by the notes"[15] which often make "reference to 'the plan.'"[16]

This tension is also present in his lecture at the Italian Institute in London, where Eliot would "[lead] critics into temptation"[17] once more. When addressing his allusions to Dante's *Inferno* in "The Waste Land," Eliot would omit his reference to Ugolino in "What the Thunder Said." Eliot would go on to discuss only the correspondence between "Cantos III—IV" and "The Burial of the Dead" by saying the following:

> Readers of my 'Waste Land' will perhaps remember that the vision of my city clerks trooping over London Bridge from the railway station to their offices evokes the reflection 'I had not thought death had undone so many;' and that in another place I deliberately modified a line of Dante by altering it— 'sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled.'[18]

Regardless if Eliot was "imitating,"[19] or if he was "debarred from quoting or adapting at length,"[20] or if he "borrowed and adapted freely,"[21] his main "intention of course, was (…) to present to the mind of the reader a parallel (…)."[22]

How then should we interpret the parallel between "Canto III" and lines sixty-two to sixty-three from "The Burial of the Dead?" How exactly are we supposed to understand the echo of the pilgrim's words in the context of Eliot's "vision of (…) [the] city clerks trooping over London Bridge from the railway station to their offices."[23] The most plain way of illustrating this parallel – the way in which Eliot intended it to be conveyed in the notes to "The Waste Land" – is in relation to the uncommitted in the vestibule. The "miserable people"[24] which the pilgrim observes in "Canto III" "are (…)

[15]. Lawrence Rainey, *Revisiting The Waste Land*, (Pennsylvania: Yale University Press, 2005), 36.
[16]. Rainey, 37.
[17]. Rainey, 37.
[18]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[19]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[20]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[21]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[22]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[23]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[24]. Dante, "Canto III."

the souls of people 'who lived without disgrace and without praise.'"[25] They were "neither (…) faithful to God nor rebelled against Him but were 'for themselves.'"[26] For this reason they "run after a banner, an activity that symbolizes their failure to follow any cause — any banner — while alive."[27] Proceeding from the manner in which the pilgrim gazes upon the tragedy of the damned and proclaims: "I should never have believed / that death could have unmade so many souls,"[28] and, subsequently, the way in which the speaker at this point in "The Waste Land," utters, "I had not thought death had undone so many,"[29] the plain parallel would have us observe that the two crowds are reminiscent.

Although this echo is one of the "integral elements in his effect,"[30] the parallel between Eliot's clerks and Dante's uncommitted does not rest solely on this one broad reference. This is because Eliot believes that "in writing poetry every word on the page should be designed to count."[31] Thus, when analyzing Eliot's poetry, we must pay full attention to every word,"[32] as "even in those parts of the poem where we may think we know where the meaning of the poem lies, there may be other things going on in the background which we are at best only partly aware of."[33] It is precisely in this background that Eliot conveys his allusions with greater intensity. Through minute echoes, which resonate from individual words or phrases, Eliot reverberates atmospheres, settings, and motifs which further intensify the vibrancy of his allusions.

Let us, then, re-examine Eliot's allusions to "Canto III" and "Canto IV" not in terms of the plain references which Eliot outlines in the notes to "The Waste Land," but in terms of the minute echoes which shed further light on the association between the London clerks and the condemned in the vestibule and Limbo. To begin with, lets us pay specific attention to the manner in which Eliot describes his London clerks, namely as "a

[25]. Teodolinda Barolini, "Inferno 3: Crossings and Commitments," in *Commento Baroliniano* (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2018), https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-3/
[26]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[27]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[28]. Dante, "Canto III."
[29]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[30]. F. O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot (Michigan: Boston and New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935), 52. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015003856344&view=1up&seq=7&skin=2021
[31]. Matthiessen, 52.
[32]. Matthiessen, 52.
[33]. Tearle, "A Summary and Analysis of T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land."

crowd."[34] Of particular importance to the "subtle aura of association"[35] between the London clerks and Dante's "long file (…) of people"[36] is specifically the usage of the word "crowd," as the pilgrim too speaks of the convicted in such an indefinite sense.

Barolini explains that "as a punishment within this punishment Dante has devised the idea of non-recognition."[37] She elaborates further by writing that:

> The deprivation of recognition in this vestibule takes on more significance when we consider that a major feature of Dante's *Inferno* is the craving for recognition of the souls whom Dante meets. All the way to the very bottom of Hell, the souls desire to have their stories told by Dante when he returns to earth, seeking a kind of immortality through his narrative.[38]

In "Canto III," "Dante has devised a *contrapasso* that includes anonymity."[39] Upon passing through the gates of Hell, Dante deliberately describes the convicted through a series of negations, one of which accentuates their namelessness."[40] The pilgrim thus speaks of "miserable people,"[41] of "sorry souls,"[42] and of "wretched ones."[43] The anonymity of these souls is further amplified by Virgil, who "instructs Dante: (…) 'let us not talk of them, but look and pass on.'"[44]

At first glance, Eliot too deprives the London clerks of an identity. This is evident in the way in which they are portrayed – merely as "a crowd"[45] comprised of "many."[46] We would have never been able to identify these people as clerks, nor recognize the fact they are making their way "from the railway station to their office,"[47] had Eliot not clarified this in his Dante lecture. Although, Eliot reverberates Dante's

[34]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[35]. Frederick Locke, "Dante and T.S. Eliot's Prufrock," *The John Hopkins University Press* 78, no. 1 (1963): 52.
[36]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[37]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[38]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[39]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[40]. Anthony Oldcorn, "Canto III" in *Lectura Dantis: Inferno: A Canto-by-Canto Commentary* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 41.
[41]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[42]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[43]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[44]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[45]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[46]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[47]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.

contrapasso in "Canto III," he departs from it as well. Amidst the nameless crowd which traverses London Bridge, the speaker at this point in the poem, recognizes one soul in particular, whose name he voices. "There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!'"[48] the speaker exclaims. Similarly, Dante too recognizes a soul in the vestibule. Amidst the "long (…) file of people,"[49] Dante " recognized the shade of him / who made, through cowardice, the great refusal."[50] The soul in question is presumably Celestine V, who abdicated five months after he was elected pope. Even when the pilgrim "recognized the shade of him,"[51] (just as Eliot identifies Stetson), he does not voice his name.

> That said, we must remember that the text deliberately 'refuses' to record the name of 'colui / che fece per viltade il gran rifiuto.' As we saw above, the narrator is crystal-clear about Dante's recognition of the soul ('vidi e conobbi'), thus indicating that he could have identified him if he had chosen to do so. In other words, the name is deliberately withheld and erased.[52]

With the naming of this one soul, Eliot breaks away from Dante's contrapasso.

Eliot echoes "Canto III" in two other ways as well. One way of interpreting the parallel between the uncommitted in the vestibule and the London clerks is in relation to their whereabouts. As the souls in "Canto III" "were neither for good nor evil but only for themselves (…) they are neither in Hell nor out of it. Eternally unclassified, they race round and round (…)."[53] Ciardi explains that "the law of Dante's Hell is the law of symbolic retribution. As they sinned so are they punished. They took no sides; therefore, they are given no place."[54] It is no coincidence, then, that Eliot uses the phrase "flowed over London Bridge"[55] to reverberate the reckoning of the souls in the vestibule. The fact that the clerks are positioned over the Themes and not on either the north, nor the south bank of London, indicates that they are, as the souls in the vestibule, "morally in-

[48]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[49]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[50]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[51]. Dante, "Canto 3."
[52]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[53]. John Ciardi, "Canto III" in *The Inferno* (New York: Signet Classics), 45.
[54]. Ciardi, 45.
[55]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."

between."[56] The "geographically neutral [and] geographically in-between"[57] clerks, conform to Dante's "spectrum whereby the vice of these souls is to be in the middle"[58] – forever suspended between the north and south banks of London, unable to pass the divide. If we consider the two banks of the Themes as symbols for Heaven and Hell, then the clerks, like Dante's uncommitted, are also received by neither. Their punishment is to senselessly flow over this "*limen,*"[59] just as Dante's uncommitted "race round and round (…)."[60]

The second way in which we can interpret the parallel between the London clerks and the uncommitted in the vestibule is in relation to Charon. Towards the end of "Canto III" the pilgrim speaks of the bargeman of the underworld, who ferries a second group of damned souls from one shore of the Acheron to the other.

> And here, advancing toward us, in a boat,
> an aged man—his hair was white with years —
> was shouting: "Woe to you, corrupted souls!
>
> Forget your hope of ever seeing Heaven:
> I come to lead you to the other shore,
> to the eternal dark, to fire and frost.[61]

Eliot's depiction of the London clerks as having "flowed over London Bridge"[62] thus appears symbolic, as it echoes the fate of the damned, who await Charon to transport them *over* the Acheron. If London Bridge symbolizes Charon's barge – the ferry that bridges the two shores of the Acheron, just as London Bridge connects the two sides of London – and if the Thames is representative of Acheron, then the "crowd [which] flowed over London Bridge"[63] is reminiscent of the crowd which the pilgrim observes flowing

[56]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[57]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[58]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[59]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[60]. Ciardi, 45.
[61]. Dante, "Canto III."
[62]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[63]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."

"across the darkened waters"[64] on Charon's ferry. Thus, the "dead sound on the final stroke of nine,"[65] can function as a metaphor for "Charon's cruel words,"[66] who signals, just as *"Saint Mary Woolnoth"*[67] does in "The Burial of the Dead," the time for the departure of the dead souls, who "are eager for the river crossing."[68] It is only after Charon symbolically ferries the London clerks over the Acheron that they can transcend the "liminal space"[69] of London Bridge (a metaphor for the vestibule itself) and "[flow] up the hill and down King William Street"[70] – Eliot's metaphor for Limbo.

If we adhere to the first interpretation and view the clerks as condemned within the representative limen which is London Bridge, then the accompanying echoes from "Canto IV" have a distorting effect. This disruption proceeds from the fact that in "Canto III," "we have not yet fully entered Hell itself; [as] to enter Hell we must cross the river Acheron."[71] Even though the clerks reverberate the condemnation of the uncommitted, whose "spectrum (…) is to be in the middle"[72] Eliot infuses, rather paradoxically so, his vision with echoes from beyond the Acheron, more specifically from Limbo – the first circle of Dante's Hell. To illustrate this, let us pay specific attention to the line preceding the clerks traversal over London Bridge, namely: "under the brown fog of a winter dawn."[73] Although, Eliot does not indicate this in the notes to "The Waste Land" this fog is reminiscent of the mist which the pilgrim describes in "Canto IV."

> That valley, dark and deep and filled with mist,
> is such that, though I gazed into its pit,
> I was unable to discern a thing.[74]

[64]. Dante, "Canto III."
[65]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[66]. Dante, "Canto III."
[67]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[68]. Dante, "Canto III."
[69]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[70]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[71]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[72]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[73]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[74]. Dante, "Canto 4."

It is in the veil of this fog that the "crowds—the many multitudes— / of infants and of women and of men"[75] wander along the "melancholy valley"[76] of Limbo. Similarly, it is under the shroud of a reminiscent "fog"[77] that the London clerks now "[flow] over London Bridge."[78]

This association is contradictory as the clerks are prisoners in the metaphorical vestibule which is London Bridge. Like Dante's uncommitted they are damned to be "geographically neutral [and] geographically in-between"[79] with no prospect for the river crossing. By virtue of Dante's design they are destined to "remain for eternity in this liminal space"[80] which, as Barolini explains, confines them in a state of absolute fixity.

> Hell is precisely a condition in which the soul is permanently oneself as on earth: unrepentant and unameliorated, with no hope of change or growth. The sinner who did not repent of his sins while alive, who did not find a way to change while still on earth, is fixed for eternity with his sins.[81]

Yet, Eliot disrupts the eternal order of Dante's Hell by introducing change. In his Dante lecture, he would confirm, although in brief, that "I deliberately modified a line of Dante by altering it.'"[82] This modification dramatically distorts Dante's concept of damnation, which conveys the idea that "the sinner who did not repent (…) his sins while alive, who did not find a way to change while still on earth, is fixed for eternity with his sins."[83]

The London clerks, however, are not fixed in a particular sin, nor are they punished in any one particular way; rather, they fluctuate between the sins and punishments of "Canto III" and "Canto IV." Had Eliot not distorted the fixity of "Canto III," he ought to have evoked the "strange utterances, horrible pronouncements, / accents of anger, words of suffering / and voices shrill and faint" which proceed from the torment

[75]. Dante, "Canto 4."
[76]. Dante, "Canto 4."
[77]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[78]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[79]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[80]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[81]. Barolini, "*Inferno* 14: Sunt lacrimae rerum."
[82]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[83]. Barolini, "*Inferno* 14: Sunt lacrimae rerum."

of the souls in the vestibule. Yet, Eliot does not. Instead of evoking the loud wailing of these souls, Eliot speaks only of sighs. In the notes to "The Waste Land," Eliot indicates that these sighs emanate from the following passage from "Canto IV:"

> Here, for as much as hearing could discover,
> there was no outcry louder than the sighs
> that caused the everlasting air to tremble.
>
> The sighs arose from sorrow without torments,
> out of the crowds—the many multitudes—
> of infants and of women and of men.[84]

How, then, can the clerks suffer and not suffer at the same time? How can they be simultaneously uncommitted and damned in Limbo?

Rainey proposes that "those depicted"[85] in "The Burial of the Dead," "form the second of the two classes of people who inhabit the modern waste land."[86] Nonetheless, I do not believe that this is the case. In "The Burial of the Dead" Eliot speaks of "a crowd"[87] as opposed to the crowds. What is more, in his Dante lecture, Eliot clearly indicates that the crowd is cohesive –comprised of clerks.

> Whether Eliot included these specific and genera references deliberately, whether he fully apprehended the part they play in the poem, and whether he tried to mask and muffle them by ironic and misleading references in his notes, are questions which cannot profitably be taken up here. Eliot himself was the only possible source for an answer, and it is most probable that if one had applied for it the oracle would have been dumb or cryptic.

Although we cannot fully unravel the ambiguity which surrounds the clerks, we can find means by which to throw further light on their nature. One such perspective comes from Robert Day, who argues that both the clerks, as well certain segments from

[84]. Dante, "Canto 4."
[85]. Rainey, 118.
[86]. Rainey, 118.
[87]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."

"The Waste Land" are "in part a work of reminiscence"[88] of "the actual geography of the City, London's financial district."[89] By drawing upon "non-literary data— physical facts and things which Eliot had recently seen or heard, selected because he knew or felt them to have a special poetic significant,"[90] Day discerns that:

> The London references are not merely incidental, nor accidental; 'what Tiresias sees' is in part the actual City of London just after the first World War; and the polarities of The Waste Land arise perhaps as much from the poet's recent experiences as they do from the Grail quest or the Tarot pack.[91]

During the time when Eliot was writing the "The Waste Land," his experience was precisely that of a clerk. "Eliot was a bank clerk by necessity, and the [experience] of the clerk, which he was daily obliged to assume (…)"[92] echoes in the background of his London visions. These experiences are reverberated through St. Mary Woolnoth, "located directly across narrow Lombard Street from the offices of Lloyd's Bank"[93] – the same bank where Eliot worked from 1917 to 1925. Day expands on the significance of St. Mary Woolnoth in Eliot's vision, by writing the following:

> St. Mary Woolnoth is the bankers' church (…) kept open at unusual hours so that the members of the financial community may be refreshed in any spiritual dryness that may visit them. But it is 'up the hill,' far from water, and surrounded by banks, with the Bank station of the Underground system disgorging directly beneath it.[94]

When we consider the London references from this perspective, we can perceive their function as a recollection of Eliot's own experience as a clerk. For example, "the 'final stroke of nine,' to a man who kept banker's hours, marked the beginning of another

[88]. Robert A. Day, "The 'City Man' in The Waste Land: The Geography of Reminiscence," *Modern Language Association* 80, no. 3 (1965): 285.
[89]. Day, 286.
[90]. Day, 285.
[91]. Day, 285.
[92]. Day, 285.
[93]. Day, 286.
[94]. Day, 289.

day among the drafts and in-voices."[95] What is more, "Eliot's note in line 68, 'A phenomenon which I have often noticed' becomes a triumph of bitter understatement"[96] for any clerk, who is faced with another day of labors. Rainey's preposition thus becomes untenable, as Eliot presents us with a glimpse into the lives of a specific group of people, namely the bankers of London's financial district.

Although we have shed some light on the image of the clerks in Eliot's poem, the questions as to how one crowd can reverberate echoes from the vestibule and of Limbo still remains. Tearle proposes that "the world of the 1920s modernist long poem is a phantasmagoria."[97] As such, I believe, it allows for a composite of "Inferno III" and "Inferno IV" to occur in the "visionary and phantasmal planes"[98] of Eliot's London vision. "There is a hallucinatory and dreamlike quality [99] to Eliot's clerks which "fitted admirably to Eliot's London phantasmagoria."[100] The dreamlike atmosphere of Eliot's vision of the clerks is implied through the repetition of the verb "flowed"[101] which indicates the "dreamlike movement"[102] of his crowd. "To create an image that is neither wholly real nor wholly imaginary is crucial to the poem's effectiveness,"[103] as only through it, I believe, Eliot can sustain his "amalgam dream allusion."[104] It is also by virtue of the "dreamlike elements"[105] of this scene that Eliot can convey the implications of both "Inferno III" and "Inferno IV" through the "crowd [which] flowed over London Bridge."[106]

If we adhere to the second interpretation and view the clerks as reminiscent of the second group of souls which the pilgrim speaks of in "Canto III" – those who cross the Acheron on Charon's ferry – then the echoes of "Canto IV" take up a more complementary character. Barolini explains that "Canto III" "is about crossings: whether

[95]. Day, 289.
[96]. Day, 289.
[97]. Oliver Tearle, *The Great War, The Waste Land, and the Modernist Long Poem* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 60.
[98]. Tearle, 60.
[99]. Tearle, 60.
[100]. Day, 289.
[101]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[102]. Tearle, 60.
[103]. Tearle, 60.
[104]. Tearle, 60.
[105]. Tearle, 60.
[106]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."

passing through the gate of Hell or passing over the River Acheron."[107] By virtue of the Charon metaphor, Eliot's clerks symbolically transcend the "liminal (…) space"[108] of the vestibule (i.e. London Bridge) by flowing over the Thames (i.e. the Acheron) and crossing over to London's financial district (i.e. Limbo). Barolini explains that "the crossing of the river marks the completion of the transition and the arrival into a new state"[109] which, for the souls in Dante's vision marks the beginning of a new canto; and for Eliot's vision a new kind of echoes.

When viewed in relation to "Canto IV" the encounter with Stetson also takes up a different character. I have outlined that one of the punishments which Dante devises in the vestibule is that of anonymity. We can recall how the pilgrim encounters a figure (presumable Celestine V) whom he recognizes, but whose name he does not record. We can also recall, how this is deliberately done by the pilgrim in order to facilitate that anonymity of the damned, who yearn for recognition. In his references to "Canto III," I have pointed out that the narrator's encounter with Stetson breaks away from Dante's contrapasso, as Stetson is referred to by name and thus given recognition. Yet, when we view the narrator's encounter with Stetson in the context of Eliot's references to "Canto IV" we can discern that his acknowledgement is complementary.

> "While the names of the cowardly souls in the previous canto are erased from memory, the names of the virtuous pagans live on, winning them glory on earth and even, says Dante — displaying his humanistic values — a special status in Hell. Their names live on, because texts record them."[110]

Dante records the names of the virtuous pagans, as he revered their achievements.[111] To an extent we can also say that the narrator at this point in "The Waste

[107]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[108]. Barolini, "Crossings and Commitments."
[109]. Teodolinda Barolini, "Inferno 4: Non-Christians in the Christian Afterlife," in *Commento Baroliniano* (New York: Columbia University Libraries, 2018), https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-4/

[110]. Barolini, "Non-Christians in the Christian Afterlife."
[111]. Barolini, "Non-Christians in the Christian Afterlife."

Land" also revers Stetson because of his presumed involvement in the battle of Mylae for which reason he recognizes him, just as the pilgrim does all those in "Canto IV".

In "What the Thunder Said" Eliot also evokes the *Inferno*. Eliot does so through the following lines: "I have heard the key / Turn in the door once and turn once only / We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison."[112] As in the previous examples, Eliot proceeds from the pilgrim's account "to arouse in the reader's memory of some Dantesque scene."[113] Traditionally this passage has been viewed in relation to Dante's encounter with Ugolino as has been indicated by both Manganiello in *T.S. Eliot and Dante* and by Booth in *Reading the Waste Land from Bottom Up*.[114] Yet, I believe that Eliot's evocation of "Inferno XXXIII" can be interpreted in another way as well.

Even though "the sound of the key in the lock signals"[115] Ugolino's confinement in the tower, I believe that it also indicates the imprisonment of the souls in Cocytus. Upon making their way through the well of Melabolge, Dante speaks of a vast frozen lake. "At this I turned and saw in front of me, / beneath my feet, a lake that, frozen fast, / had lost the look of water and seemed glass."[116] Dante also depicts a myriad of souls imprisoned below the waters of the frozen lake. "So, livid in the ice, up to the place / where shame can show itself, were those sad shades, / whose teeth were chattering with notes like storks,"[117] he exclaims upon seeing them.

It seems to me that Eliot echoes this depiction in the following way. Upon arriving in Tolomea, Virgil warns Dante to "watch how you pass; / walk so that you not trample with your soles / the heads of your exhausted, wretched brothers."[118] As the pilgrim gazes through the waters of the frozen lake, he perceives the "sad shades"[119] which are both confined and "livid in the ice."[120] Eliot echoes the imprisonment of the

[112]. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
[113]. Eliot, "A Talk on Dante," 181.
[114]. For an in-depth discussion on Ugolino's function in this scene, refer to *Reading the Waste Land from Bottom Up*, pages 223-224. Consider also "The Poetics of the Desert" in *T.S. Eliot and Dante*, pages 54-55.
[115]. Allyson Booth, *Reading the Waste Land from Bottom Up* (New York: Palgrave McMillan), 223.
[116]. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
[117]. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
[118]. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
[119]. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
[120]. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."

souls in Cocytus through the line "each in his prison."[121] Just as the damned in "Inferno XXXIII" are trapped below the frozen waters of Cocytus, so too does Eliot present them as "each in his prison."[122]

The nameless group which "[thinks] of the key each in his prison"[123] echoes another side of the pilgrim's vision. In "Inferno XXXIII," Dante's damned "are nameless."[124] The pilgrim describes them as "thousand faces / made doglike by the cold."[125] In "What the Thunder Said" Eliot renders the anonymity of Dante's "thousand faces"[126] through the pronoun "we,"[127] which carries a reminiscent connotation. Throughout *The Devine Comedy*, the pilgrim not only "deprives [the damned] of even the semblance of human form,"[128] he also deprives them of identity[129] to establish their "dead and withered sterility."[130] Eliot echoes the anonymity of Dante's convicted through the unnamed "we,"[131] which further develops "the subtle aura of association"[132] between the two scenes.

Just as "the thousand faces"[133] Dante observes "confirm a prison"[134] with eyes that "proclaim their sorry hearts,"[135] so too the implied "thousand faces"[136] which Eliot evokes with the pronoun "we,"[137] "proclaim their sorry hearts"[138] by tragically acknowledging the prison they are in. "We think of the key, each in his prison / thinking of the key, each confirms a prison,"[139] they exclaim.

121. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
122. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
123. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
124. Oldcorn, "Canto III."
125. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
126. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
127. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
128. Sayers, "Notes on Canto XXXIII."
129. Dante Alighieri. "Notes on Canto XIII." In *The Divine Comedy*. Translated by Dorothy L. Sayers. London: Penguin Classics, 1950.
130. Sayers, "Notes on Canto XXXIII."
131. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
132. Locke, "Dante and T.S. Eliot's Prufrock," 52.
133. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
134. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
135. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
136. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
137. T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land."
138. Dante, "Canto XXXIII."
139. Eliot, "The Waste Land."

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