*S’io credesse che mia risposta fosse @A persona che mai tornasse al mondo, @Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse. @Ma percioche giammai di questo fondo @Non torno vivo alcun, s’i’odo il vero, @Senza tema d’infamia ti rispondo.@*Let us go then, you and I, @When the evening is spread out against the sky @Like a patient etherized upon a table; @Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets, @The muttering retreats @Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels @And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells: @Streets that follow like a tedious argument @Of insidious intent @To lead you to an overwhelming question ... @Oh, do not ask, “What is it?” @Let us go and make our visit. @@In the room the women come and go @Talking of Michelangelo. @@The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes, @The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes, @Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening, @Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains, @Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys, @Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap, @And seeing that it was a soft October night, @Curled once about the house, and fell asleep. @@And indeed there will be time @For the yellow smoke that slides along the street, @Rubbing its back upon the window-panes; @There will be time, there will be time @To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet; @There will be time to murder and create, @And time for all the works and days of hands @That lift and drop a question on your plate; @Time for you and time for me, @And time yet for a hundred indecisions, @And for a hundred visions and revisions, @Before the taking of a toast and tea. @@In the room the women come and go @Talking of Michelangelo. @@And indeed there will be time @To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?” @Time to turn back and descend the stair, @With a bald spot in the middle of my hair — @(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”) @My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin, @My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin — @(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”) @Do I dare @Disturb the universe? @In a minute there is time @For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse. @@For I have known them all already, known them all: @Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, @I have measured out my life with coffee spoons; @I know the voices dying with a dying fall @Beneath the music from a farther room. @               So how should I presume? @@And I have known the eyes already, known them all— @The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase, @And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, @When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, @Then how should I begin @To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? @               And how should I presume? @@And I have known the arms already, known them all— @Arms that are braceleted and white and bare @(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!) @Is it perfume from a dress @That makes me so digress? @Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl. @               And should I then presume? @               And how should I begin? @@Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets @And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes @Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ... @@I should have been a pair of ragged claws @Scuttling across the floors of silent seas. @@And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully! @Smoothed by long fingers, @Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers, @Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me. @Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, @Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis? @But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed, @Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter, @I am no prophet — and here’s no great matter; @I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker, @And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker, @And in short, I was afraid. @@And would it have been worth it, after all, @After the cups, the marmalade, the tea, @Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me, @Would it have been worth while, @To have bitten off the matter with a smile, @To have squeezed the universe into a ball @To roll it towards some overwhelming question, @To say: “I am Lazarus, come from the dead, @Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all”— @If one, settling a pillow by her head @               Should say: “That is not what I meant at all; @               That is not it, at all.” @@And would it have been worth it, after all, @Would it have been worth while, @After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets, @After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor— @And this, and so much more?— @It is impossible to say just what I mean! @But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen: @Would it have been worth while @If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl, @And turning toward the window, should say: @               “That is not it at all, @               That is not what I meant, at all.” @@No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; @Am an attendant lord, one that will do @To swell a progress, start a scene or two, @Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool, @Deferential, glad to be of use, @Politic, cautious, and meticulous; @Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse; @At times, indeed, almost ridiculous— @Almost, at times, the Fool. @@I grow old ... I grow old ... @I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled. @@Shall I part my hair behind?   Do I dare to eat a peach? @I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach. @I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. @@I do not think that they will sing to me. @@I have seen them riding seaward on the waves @Combing the white hair of the waves blown back @When the wind blows the water white and black. @We have lingered in the chambers of the sea @By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown @Till human voices wake us, and we drown.@@