Before the 1996 publication of “Prufrock’s Pervigilium” in T. S. Eliot’s writing notebook, *Inventions of the March Hare*, critics had to analyze “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” without being able to openly discuss Prufrock’s nighttime walk through a seedy neighborhood. Interpretations from this period typically read Prufrock’s indecisiveness as part of his psychological makeup. However, this paper restores the “Pervigilium” to “Prufrock,” allowing us to understand him as a character paralyzed by the widespread social problem of syphilis. Indeed, Eliot wrote much of “The Love Song” and all of the “Pervigilium” shortly after spending the 1910-1911 academic year in Paris, where an epidemic of venereal disease haunted young men. Europeans mainly blamed prostitutes for spreading the infection, and in the half century preceding Eliot’s arrival to the French capital, harlotry became a popular topic in Parisian painting and literature. Looking at “The Love Song” and the “Pervigilium” in the context of the syphilis epidemic and its representation in French art yields quite a different understanding, particularly of Prufrock’s undecided, hesitating nature. This paper argues that the “Pervigilium” reveals Prufrock’s fear of syphilis and anxiety about understanding women’s social cues.